

## Group

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links to a YouTube video of the demonstration on UT's South Mall. The involvement of the Patriot Front was first reported by the Texas Observer.

The demonstrators were in violation of a number of UT rules, including a requirement that outside groups be sponsored by a university-affiliated organization, a prohibition on open flames and a ban on masks that conceal identity to hinder law enforcement. UT police responded at 12:04 a.m. Nov. 4, according to records, and the demonstrators immediately left without further incident after being warned that they were not allowed on campus.

The university is seeking permission from the Texas attorney general's office to withhold some records relating to the incident.

A report by the Anti-Defamation League, which tracks hate groups, describes Patriot Front as a Texas-based "white supremacist group whose members maintain that their ancestors conquered America and bequeathed it solely to them. Patriot Front espouses racism, anti-Semitism and intolerance under the guise of preserving the 'ethnic and cultural origins' of their European ancestors."

The Southern Poverty Law Center calls Patriot Front a "neo-Nazi network" that emerged from "internecine quarreling within their original organization, Vanguard America," when far-right groups marched across the University of Virginia campus in Charlottesville in August, touching off violence, including the death of a counterprotester.

The ADL's Center on Extremism has counted 346 in-

cidents since Sept. 1, 2016, of white supremacists peppering college campuses across the nation with fliers, stickers, banners and posters to spread their message. Texas and California had the most incidents, with 61 and 43, respectively. "Those states are home to the most concentrated and active membership for IE and Patriot Front, the groups that most frequently employ this tactic," the ADL said, using an abbreviation for Identity Evropa.

Of 24 colleges and universities in Texas that collectively accounted for the 61 incidents, Texas State University and UT had the most, 11 and 10 respectively, said Carla Hill, a senior investigative researcher with the ADL.

The November demonstration, by what appeared to be more than a dozen people and perhaps as many as two dozen, was a typical example of Patriot Front tactics, which emphasize appearance and imagery, according to the ADL. The participants, described in UT police emails as white men wearing khaki pants and black polo shirts, carried American flags in addition to flaming torches.

Patriot Front's video shows Thomas Rousseau, the group's leader, in front of the statue of George Washington, with the UT Tower in the background, Hill said.

"America, our nation stands before an existential threat," Rousseau, who wore no mask, says on the video. "The lives of your children, your children's children and your posterity beyond that dangle above a den of vipers."

The group's Twitter account has a photo of the demonstration with a caption that says "#American-Fascism is the future that must be."

UT records show that a university information technology specialist looked into the Patriot Front's website, including its domain registration, shortly after the demonstration. The name of the website, bloodandsoil.org, is drawn from a key slogan of Nazi Germany.

"They've taken measures to conceal who registered their website's domain name," wrote Steven Preiss, a UT senior information technology manager, in one email. "They've paid extra to lock down their domain name so that others can't 'poach' and redirect it. I've been digging a little further, but can't really get much more information without legal authority."

Records also show that UT's communications team scrambled that day, a Saturday, to help President Gregory L. Fenves craft a message to the university community that condemned the actions of white supremacists. The UT president has spoken out frequently against hate groups, perhaps most forcefully in November at the Holocaust Museum Houston when he received its Guardian of the Human Spirit Award. Fenves' father is a Holocaust survivor.

"We are living through a time when our nation is experiencing acts — even movements — fueled by hatred, racism, anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim and anti-gay sentiments, and discrimination toward immigrants on college campuses and in our communities," Fenves said in accepting the award. "We must denounce these negative forces. They are inhumane and simply un-American. Too many people do not understand what hatred can lead to — especially organized, legitimized hatred."

Contact Ralph K.M. Haurwitz at 512-445-3604.