



U.S. NEWS

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FBI Director Kash Patel says kids are radicalized online

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1 of 3 | FBI Director Kash Patel said online gaming and other virtual platforms are "radicalizing" youth, which causes political violence, during a House Judiciary Committee hearing at the Capitol in Washington on Wednesday. Photo by Aaron Schwartz/UPI | [License Photo](#)



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Sept. 17 (UPI) -- Many teens and young adults become radicalized by online forums, which lead to violent attacks driven by ideology, FBI Director Kash Patel told the House Judiciary Committee on Wednesday.

Patel testified before the House committee a day after testifying before the Senate Judiciary Committee and affirmed that the FBI investigates political violence regardless of the source or who is victimized.

Rep. Becca Balint, D-Vt., accused the Trump administration of "exploiting" conservative activist Charlie Kirk's shooting death on Sept. 10 and said President [Donald Trump](#) called it "far-left violence."

She then cited the shooting deaths of Minnesota state Rep. Melissa Hortman and her husband, Mark, in June by accused shooter Vance Boelter.

Balint called Boelter a "far-right" shooter and said the Trump administration made more than 50 mentions of Kirk's shooting death and only four for the Hortmans.

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She then asked Patel what is being done to "tone down the political violence."

"We are following the money," Patel responded. "People need money to operate. People need money to attack. We are finding the people who support these infrastructure systems."

He said there are "no lone-wolf actors" and many are supported in their efforts, either directly or ideologically.

Balint accused Patel of doing more to investigate attacks on Republicans than when Democrats are attacked and said 96% of politically motivated killings are carried out by "right-wing" attackers.

Patel said the FBI investigates all cases of political violence equally.

Political rhetoric and radicalization of youth

Rep. Wesley Hunt, R-Texas, followed up on Balint's questioning by saying the "left is being whipped into a violent frenzy" when they can't win a case, a debate or an election.

He cited recent studies that show much greater support for politically motivated killings among "leftists" and said it is not "intellectually honest to say this is on both sides."

When Democrats say the president is an "existential threat, Houston, we have a problem," Hunt told Patel.

He cited those who call conservatives fascists, racists, white supremacists and other dehumanizing terms as examples of the problem.

"How many cities have been burned to the ground because of Charlie Kirk's death?" he rhetorically asked. "Exactly none. No violence. No riots. No killings."

Hunt suggested Kirk did not die because of what he said. "He is dead because people listened," he said.

Hunt then asked if there is a rising trend of political violence among the left or right, to which Patel answered that there has been a rise in political violence "on all fronts."

Patel said the "primary problem" is the existence of "too many gaming platforms [and] online platforms where kids can be radicalized without the knowledge of their parents."

Rep. Jared Moskowitz, D-Fla., mentioned conspiracy theories regarding Kirk's death, people celebrating accused murderer Luigi Mangione's alleged shooting death of UnitedHealth Group Chief Executive Officer Brian Thompson and foreign influence operations on political violence.

"How are we going to make sure that we don't let foreign governments pollute children's minds?" Moskowitz asked.

Patel said he would be happy to work with the representative on the matter.

Moskowitz also criticized the Department of Justice's handling of the Epstein files and Patel on Tuesday telling the Senate Judiciary Committee that there is no evidence that [Jeffrey Epstein](#) trafficked girls for anyone but himself.

He asked if Patel would release any names of those who might be mentioned in the Epstein files, which Patel said won't happen because there is no credible evidence of wrongdoing by anyone but Epstein and his jailed accomplice, Ghislaine Maxwell.

Patel's qualifications and leadership were questioned

Rep. Lucy McBath, D-Ga., mentioned recent attacks on a Centers for Disease Control office in Atlanta, an arsonist who targeted Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro, and the shootings of two Democratic Party lawmakers in Minnesota and recent hoax bomb threats made against several historically black colleges and universities.

She asked Patel if such types of violence are acceptable and said they all occurred during his tenure as FBI director.

Patel said the FBI's "number one priority is protecting the nation" and denied that such acts are acceptable.

McBath said his actions suggest otherwise and accused Patel of weakening the FBI by firing decorated FBI agents and "scrapping the tools" needed to fight domestic terrorism.

Patel denied the accusation and said the FBI has 1,700 agents on many cases while investigating "tragic occurrences"

throughout the nation.

McBath cut off Patel and accused him of diverting 120 FBI agents from their normal duties to perform traffic stops at DUI checkpoints and others for immigration enforcement.

Patel said the FBI has arrested 23,000 violent felons and is doing its job.

"Your tenure at the FBI has been tenuous," McBath said, and then accused Patel of using the FBI for political purposes, which provoked a strong response.

"What is it? Are we failing? If we are failing, how are we arresting 23,000 violent felons?" Patel asked McBath.

He said the FBI has captured four of the top 10 most-wanted criminals, which he said is more than the FBI captured over the past four years.

"You don't like me? That's fine," Patel said. "But don't you dare disparage the agents."

Rep. Jasmine Crockett, D-Texas, also criticized Patel's competency as FBI director and said he is the "least-qualified director" in the FBI's history.

"We just need to tell you, 'bye bye,'" Crockett said, then cited what she called "some of your failures."

She accused him of targeting career FBI officials so he could fire them, said many of her colleagues in the Democratic Party have received death threats and claimed the "vast majority of threats are coming from right-wing extremism."

"I don't know who feels safe in this country except for the white supremacists," Crockett added.

She then criticized Patel for twice incorrectly claiming law enforcement had arrested Kirk's suspected shooter and said the only reason he eventually was caught was because his family saw the suspect's picture and convinced him to surrender to local police.

Crocket did not ask Patel any questions or allow him to respond to her accusations.

Republican members defend Patel

Committee Chairman [Jim Jordan](#), R-Ohio, countered Crockett's claim that Patel is unqualified by citing his experience as a prosecutor, public defender, chief of staff for the Department of Defense and other relevant roles leading up to his current position as FBI director.

Jordan also said data show the FBI is much more effective now than it was during its four years under the Biden administration.

Rep. Russell Fry, R-S.C., called Crockett's assertions "clickbait auditions."

Patel responded that he doesn't "give a damn" about her accusations and said she can "come at me all you want. I don't care."

Jordan also cited a recent FBI whistleblower's claims that the Biden administration and FBI officials under it ordered FBI staffers to release information to media, regardless of whether or not it was classified.

The motive was to use media to shape public opinion and "compel action" against Trump, he claimed.

The Wednesday afternoon House Judiciary Committee hearing lasted for nearly five hours.

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