

Michigan Hutaree militia a cult, experts say

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ANN ARBOR, Mich. (RNS)—When militia expert Jack Kay first ran across a MySpace page for the Michigan-based [Hutaree militia](#) six months ago, he thought it was just another group wrapping itself in God and country. But following raids on the Hutaree militia by federal authorities in three states, Kay said the group went beyond that initial assessment.

“Everything I’ve read about them and on their website establish, to me, that they are a cult,” said Kay, provost and executive vice president of academic affairs at Eastern Michigan University. “They are true believers. They feel they are on a divine mission. They are willing to be martyrs. It goes beyond patriotism and gets into groupthink.”

Even members of other militias describe Hutaree as a cult.

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“You have an older religious leader with several young followers who obey his every command,” said Michael Lackomar, a spokesman for the Southeast Michigan Volunteer Militia, which was not targeted in the raids. His unit has trained with Hutaree in the past.

Nine Hutaree members were charged with planning to kill a local law enforcement officer and to attack the resulting funeral procession, targeting law enforcement vehicles with improvised explosive devices.

“There are a lot of groups that use the rhetoric that this group uses,” Kay said. “Their plans, if what is in the indictment is true, go well beyond that. If what’s in the indictment is true, this would be among the most extreme groups out there.”

On its website, the group uses heavy doses of the Bible to justify its actions and claims members are getting ready to battle the Antichrist.

“Jesus wanted us to be ready to defend ourselves using the sword and stay alive using equipment,” the group’s website says. “The only thing on earth to save the testimony and those who follow it, are the members of the testimony, ’til the return of Christ in the clouds. We, the Hutaree, are prepared to defend all those who belong to Christ and save those who aren’t.”

Donna Stone said her ex-husband, David Stone, the accused leader of the group, pulled her son, David Jr., into the movement. Another son, Joshua Stone, also was charged.

“It started out as a Christian thing,” Donna Stone told the Associated Press. “You go to church. You pray. You take care of your family. I think David started to take it a little too far.”

The wife of one of the defendants described Hutaree as a small group of patriotic, Christian buddies who were just doing survival training.

“It consisted of a dad and two of his sons and I think just a couple other close friends of theirs,” said Kelly Sickles, who husband, Kristopher, was among those charged. “It was supposed to be a Christian group. Christ-like, right, so why would you think that’s something wrong with that, right?”