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## MINUTEMEN, 1963-1969: EVOLUTION OF THE MILITIA MOVEMENT IN AMERICA, PART I

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The Minutemen was a militant anti-Communist organization formed in the early 1960s. The founder and head of the right-wing group was Robert Bolivar DePugh, a veterinary medicine entrepreneur from Norborne, Missouri. The Minutemen believed that Communism would soon take over all of America. The group armed themselves, and was preparing to take back the country from the "subversives." The Minutemen organized themselves into small cells and stockpiled weapons for an anticipated counter-revolution.

**Date Range:** 1960-1969 (there are a small number of items through 1981)

**Content:** 47,854 images

**Source Library:** Federal Bureau of Investigation Library

### **Detailed Description:**

The word "militia" has been a part of the American vocabulary since colonial days, yet its definition has changed considerably over the years. Groups that were once formed for the protection of all citizens have, in many cases, evolved into radical, right-wing extremists. Due to the extensive media coverage of events such as those in Ruby Ridge, Waco, and Oklahoma City, interest in these organizations has increased dramatically. This collection sets the stage for the political evolution of the contemporary militia movement by detailing the philosophies and activities of one early example of the changed definition of "militia"—the Minutemen. This collection details the philosophy and leader, plans and programs that were the driving forces of the Minutemen organization.

The Minutemen, under the leadership of Robert Bolivar DePugh, a Norborne, Missouri entrepreneur, existed during the 1960s. They were an anti-Communist, militant organization that believed a Communist invasion of the United States was imminent, most likely through internal subversion, and organized violent "counteraction" to prevent the alleged takeover. The organization advocated extremist tactics in what they believed was going to be a guerrilla war against communism on American soil. Organized into secret cells of five to 15 members, the Minutemen stockpiled weapons and trained together to defend the country against what

they deemed "subversives." In scattered incidents throughout the U.S. during the 1960s, armed Minutemen clashed with law enforcement authorities and private citizens.

Minutemen carrying out DePugh's orders and objectives placed armed caches in various locations around the country. They attracted notoriety when this military equipment was discovered by law enforcement. In October 1966, for example, 19 New York Minutemen were arrested in raids and accused of planning to bomb and burn three summer camps in the New York metropolitan area, which the Minutemen claimed were being used by "Communist, left-wing, and liberal" individuals. Huge supplies of weapons and explosives—including rifles, pipe bombs, mortars, machine guns, grenade launchers and a bazooka—were uncovered. Because of faulty search warrants, however, the charges against the Minutemen were dropped in 1971, after lengthy court proceedings.

In addition, the Minutemen used threats against their perceived enemies. In one incident, DePugh's monthly publication, *On Target*, listed the names of twenty Congressmen who had criticized the then-active House Committee on Un-American Activities, warning: "Traitors beware! Even now the cross hairs are on the back of your necks." Eventually the Minutemen's extreme nature and propensity for violence brought them to the attention of the FBI. After a period of protracted surveillance and counterintelligence, the FBI and the Federal Judiciary moved against Robert DePugh and the Minutemen organization; first in Seattle, Washington. DePugh and the Minutemen leadership, upon indictment, went underground.

After being underground for almost a year in 1968, Robert DePugh along with other members were caught and convicted on a variety of charges including firearms violations and sent to prison in July 1969. DePugh's incarceration signaled the fading of the Minutemen as a significant presence among the radical right in America.