



OFFICE of INTELLIGENCE and ANALYSIS
INTELLIGENCE IN FOCUS

12 FEBRUARY 2021

IA-48266-21

TERRORISM

~~(U//FOUO)~~ Domestic Terrorists Will Pose Increased Threat to Government Facilities, Personnel in 2021

~~(U//FOUO)~~ We judge domestic terrorists will pose an increased threat to government facilities and personnel in 2021, based on increased observable targeting of these entities in the last year and the expected persistence of key drivers for potential violence. This assessment is further supported by domestic terrorists' exploitation of lawful protests and other events to commit acts of violence in proximity to government facilities and personnel and the potential of future similar events that could escalate to violence. We observed a similar general heightened threat environment surrounding the 2016 presidential election season and following year, suggesting that the window for potential violence could persist.

- ~~(U//FOUO)~~ Since late 2019 DHS observed more than a dozen domestic terrorism incidents targeting government facilities or officials, with most occurring since May 2020. This trend generally followed widespread civil unrest, ongoing COVID-19 mitigation measures, and the election season, including the breach of the US Capitol grounds and other restricted areas on 6 January 2021. In addition to the security breach, two pipe bombs were recovered in the general area and a cooler containing a long gun and Molotov cocktails was found on Capitol grounds, suggesting individuals planned for direct attacks.^{1,2,3}
- ~~(U//FOUO)~~ Throughout 2020, some violent actors targeted ideological opponents amidst otherwise lawful protests occurring at or near government facilities. While some of these incidents may not have expressly targeted a government facility, they highlight how government facilities may be impacted by indirect domestic terrorist activity. For example, militia extremists allegedly hoped to capitalize on ongoing lawful protests in Oakland, California, when targeting Federal Protective Service officers outside a federal courthouse.⁴
- ~~(U//FOUO)~~ From the 2016 election season to the August 2017 lethal white supremacist extremist vehicle ramming attack against counter-protestors at a Charlottesville, Virginia, rally, we observed at least 20 domestic terrorist incidents involving violence against elected officials or ideological opponents, providing an example of how the current threat environment could intensify, based on a DHS review of domestic terrorism incidents

(U) Prepared by the Counterterrorism Mission Center. Coordinated within the DHS Intelligence Enterprise (CBP, CWMD, FEMA, ICE, TSA, USCG) and NCTC. For questions, contact ~~(b) (6), (b) (7)(C)~~@hq.dhs.gov

informed by government press releases and press reporting.⁵ This timeframe provided multiple opportunities for domestic terrorists to engage in violence across the country.⁶

~~(U//FOUO)~~ Analysis of Alternatives

~~(U//FOUO)~~ We considered the alternative analysis that domestic terrorists may not pose an increased threat to government facilities and personnel in 2021. One alternative assessment is that domestic terrorism threats will diminish in reported volume and return to pre-2020 levels. This line of analysis would likely require evidence that political and COVID-19 developments have somehow diminished or alleviated domestic terrorists' ideological grievances to thresholds that would lead to a reduction of violence. At this time, we have seen the opposite occur, which has caused us to reject this line of analysis. Recent reporting indicates many domestic terrorists could view the new administration negatively—or as illegitimate—and could use this perception to justify violence against government personnel and facilities as well as other individuals or institutions perceived as supporting the incoming administration. Recent events also highlight the possibility that domestic terrorists could target individuals and institutions perceived as opposing the outgoing administration, regardless of their views on the new administration.

~~(U//FOUO)~~ *Suspected anarchist extremists continue to exploit lawful protests to conduct violence and property damage destructive of critical infrastructure in 2021 and at least low-level violent activity probably will continue at typical rates.* A new surge in prolonged nationwide civil unrest could drive an increase or escalation of this activity, to include lethal violence amidst clashes with ideological opponents. We base this assessment on a persistent history of these actions, only one of which resulted in lethal violence since May 2020. Traditional grievances driving anarchist extremist activity likely will persist, such as those related to immigration policies that have resulted in targeting of DHS facilities.

- ~~(U//FOUO)~~ On 20 January 2021, suspected anarchist extremists expressing inauguration-related grievances exploited otherwise lawful protests in Seattle, Washington, according to press reporting.⁷ A federal courthouse was among the buildings where windows were smashed.
- ~~(U//LES)~~ On 18 January 2021, suspected anarchist extremists used hammers and a bike lock to break windows and glass doors at a DHS facility in San Francisco, California, according to DHS reporting.⁸
- ~~(U//FOUO)~~ On 19 July 2019 an anarchist extremist in Tacoma, Washington, who targeted a private detention facility with arson was killed when he engaged responding law enforcement officers with a semi-automatic rifle, highlighting the enduring nature of the threat in the region.⁹

~~(U//FOUO)~~ *Domestic terrorist activities and threats observed in 2020 provide examples of suspicious activities that could be reported to law enforcement and fusion centers.* Suspicious activity reporting may help mitigate or prevent violence targeting government facilities and personnel. The following lists of indicators may be innocuous or constitutionally protected

activities. Instances without a reasonable alternative explanation should be evaluated while considering the totality of the circumstances, additional indicators, or observed behaviors reasonably indicative of terrorism before being reported as suspicious activity.














~~(U//FOUO)~~ **Observation/surveillance:** In early October, 14 militia extremists were arrested for allegedly planning a series of terrorist attacks that included the abduction and potential execution of the Michigan state governor, raiding the Michigan state capitol building, and potentially executing Michigan state government employees, according to a DOJ criminal complaint and open source media reporting. The suspects allegedly conducted surveillance at the governor's vacation home and a bridge in furtherance of the plot.^{10,11}

~~(U//FOUO)~~ **Acquisition of weapons:** Several recent events have been associated with the accumulation of irregular amounts and types of weapons, including the acquisition of firearm parts by individuals who are otherwise prohibited from legally acquiring firearms. During an early January 2020 Second Amendment gun owner rights rally in the state capitol of Richmond, Virginia, three alleged members of a white supremacist extremist group, The Base, were arrested for illegally transporting a machine gun across state lines with the intent to commit a felony.¹² The Base is accused of recruiting members, providing firearms and radicalization training, and using social media messaging to advance its goal of creating a race war and a white ethno-state, according to law enforcement and open source reporting.^{13,14}

~~(U//FOUO)~~ **Expressed or Implied Threat:** While press reporting indicated a significant volume of calls for violence in advance of the 6 January 2021 US Capitol breach, many of these calls were not specific in nature, highlighting the challenges in discerning true threats among vague calls for violence. Future accumulations of online threats, particularly in advance of high profile political or social events, may be noteworthy. As of early December 2020, individuals in at least Texas and California posted unfulfilled threats to carry out violent attacks against political and ideological rivals in reaction to the election's results, according to relevant social media postings.^{15,16} These threats necessarily are incorporated into our analysis that physical facilities, adjacent government work place, and law enforcement conducting official business in the vicinity of threatened individuals could be targeted by individuals or groups.

(U//FOUO) Domestic Terrorism Activity Targeting Government Facilities and Personnel Since 2019

(U//FOUO) The below table shows domestic terrorism attacks and plots targeting government facilities and personnel since 2019. For the purpose of comparison, from 2015 leading up to the 2016 presidential election, we observed at least five plots and attacks targeting the government facilities sector and personnel involving similar tactics observed during the most recent election season. These included an attempted bombing of a Bureau of Land Management facility, "extensive" damage to a city hall building amidst an otherwise lawful protest, a plot to target federal buildings, an assassination plot targeting the President, and a plot to overthrow a state government.¹⁷⁻²¹

Date	Location	Tactic	Summary
20 January 2021	Seattle, Washington		Violent actors, including suspected anarchist extremists, smashed windows at a federal immigration court amidst a protest against ICE.
18 January 2021	San Francisco, California		Suspected anarchist extremists used hammers and a bike lock to break windows and glass doors at a DHS facility.
6 January 2021	Washington, District of Columbia		On 6 January thousands of rioters breached the US Capitol grounds, tearing down barricades and storming the US Capitol Building, resulting in the death of multiple individuals. Additionally, law enforcement discovered a cooler concealing improvised incendiary devices and a long rifle on Capitol grounds that may have been intended to aid the rioters in breaching the US Capitol Building.
10 November 2020	New York, New York		A suspected domestic terrorist was arrested for allegedly threatening to target politicians, law enforcement, protestors, and "the FBI building" in response to the 2020 election, including making reference to the Turner Diaries. The FBI seized a semiautomatic firearm and ammunition upon executing a search warrant at his residence. ²²
Mid October 2020	Lansing, Michigan		Between 7-14 October, 14 militia extremists were arrested in relation to an alleged plot to kidnap the Governor of Michigan, 6 of whom were arrested on federal charges and 8 of whom were arrested on state charges.
1 September 2020	Santa Clara, California		A suspected militia extremist was arrested for allegedly sending threatening letters to a county health official in response to locally mandated stay-at-home orders, social distancing measures, and wearing masks to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic. Law enforcement seized over 100 firearms, thousands of rounds of ammunition, and explosives from his residence. ²³
30 May 2020	Las Vegas, Nevada		Three suspected domestic terrorists were arrested in relation to a series of alleged plans to engage in and incite violence amidst otherwise lawful protests, including targeting a US Forest Service ranger station. ²⁴
29 May 2020	Oakland, California		A suspected militia extremist and an accomplice allegedly ambushed two Protective Security Officers outside a federal courthouse. The militia extremist allegedly shot the officers, killing one and wounding the other. ²⁵
28 May 2020	Minneapolis, Minnesota		A suspected militia extremist allegedly fired 13 rounds from an AK-47 semiautomatic rifle into the Minneapolis Police Department's Third Precinct building. He was charged with participating in a riot. ²⁶
28 May 2020	Delaware		A suspected domestic terrorist was arrested in North Carolina, originally for allegedly carrying a concealed weapon. Upon searching his vehicle, police found five firearms as well as explosive materials and instructions. Further investigation revealed he considered attacks against multiple targets, including the incoming POTUS. He stated online "Should I kill Joe Biden?" and on one occasion was reportedly within a few miles of the incoming POTUS's home in Delaware. ²⁷
8 February 2020	Jacksonville, Florida		A suspected domestic terrorist allegedly drove into a voter registration tent organized by the local Republican Party. ²⁸
13 July 2019	Tacoma, Washington		An suspected anarchist extremist set fire to a vehicle and a private detention facility linked to ICE operations using incendiary devices. He was killed when he engaged responding law enforcement with a semi-automatic rifle that malfunctioned. ²⁹
17 June 2019	Dallas, Texas		A suspected domestic terrorist shot at a federal courthouse before being killed by law enforcement in a shootout. ³⁰

Overall Graphic Classification:
UNCLASSIFIED//LAW ENFORCEMENT SENSITIVE

LEGEND



UNCLASSIFIED//LAW ENFORCEMENT SENSITIVE

Source, Reference, and Dissemination Information

Source Summary Statement

~~(U//FOUO)~~ This IIF is based on government press releases and press reporting. We have **high confidence** in the information obtained from government press releases as it derives from law enforcement investigations and court proceedings. We have **high confidence** in the information obtained from press reporting as it consists information provided by law enforcement regarding arrested individuals.

~~(U//FOUO)~~ We have **medium confidence** in our assessment that domestic terrorists probably will pose an increased threat to government facilities and personnel in 2021. New reporting of ongoing threats, attempts, or intent to target government facilities and personnel would increase our confidence in this assessment.

Definitions

~~(U//FOUO)~~ **Anarchist Extremist:** Any groups or individuals who facilitate or engage in acts of unlawful violence as a means of changing the government and society in support of the belief that all forms of capitalism and corporate globalization should be opposed, and that governing institutions are unnecessary and harmful to society.

~~(U//FOUO)~~ **Anti-Government Extremist:** Groups or individuals who facilitate or engage in unlawful acts of violence directed at federal, state, or local law enforcement, other government officials, critical infrastructure or government facilities in order to affect the conduct of a government or influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion, in response to their belief that their liberties are being taken away by the perceived unconstitutional or otherwise illegitimate actions of government officials or law enforcement. Some form of this belief is common to several violent extremist ideologies, including sovereign citizen extremism and militia extremism; anti-government extremists differ from these other categories in that they do not subscribe to these violent extremist ideologies in total, but often adopt elements of these ideologies, including the use of violence in furtherance of their ideology.

~~(U//FOUO)~~ **Domestic Terrorism:** Any act of unlawful violence that is dangerous to human life or potentially destructive of critical infrastructure or key resources committed by a group or individual based and operating entirely within the United States or its territories without direction or inspiration from a foreign terrorist group. This act is a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or of any state or other subdivision of the United States and appears to be intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population, to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion, or to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping. A domestic terrorist differs from a homegrown violent extremist in that the former is not inspired by and does not take direction from a foreign terrorist group or other foreign power.

~~(U//FOUO)~~ **Militia Extremists:** Groups or individuals who facilitate or engage in acts of unlawful violence directed at federal, state, or local government officials or infrastructure in response to their belief that the government deliberately is stripping Americans of their freedoms and is attempting to establish a totalitarian regime. These individuals consequently oppose many federal and state authorities' laws and regulations (particularly those related to firearms ownership) and often belong to armed paramilitary groups. They often conduct paramilitary training designed to violently resist perceived government oppression or to violently overthrow the US Government.

~~(U//FOUO)~~ **Radicalization:** The process through which an individual changes from a non-violent belief system to a belief system that includes the willingness to actively advocate, facilitate, or use unlawful violence as a method to effect societal or political change.

	(U//FOUO) White supremacist extremists: Groups or individuals who facilitate or engage in acts of unlawful violence directed at the federal government, ethnic minorities, or Jewish persons in support of their belief that Caucasians are intellectually and morally superior to other races and their perception that the government is controlled by Jewish persons.
Reporting Suspicious Activity	(U) To report suspicious activity, law enforcement, Fire-EMS, private security personnel, and emergency managers should follow established protocols; all other personnel should call 911 or contact local law enforcement. Suspicious activity reports (SARs) will be forwarded to the appropriate fusion center and FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force for further action. For more information on the Nationwide SAR Initiative, visit http://nsi.ncirc.gov/resources.aspx .
Dissemination	(U//FOUO) Federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial law enforcement and homeland security partners.
Warning Notices & Handling Caveats	<p>(U) LAW ENFORCEMENT SENSITIVE: The information marked (U//LES) in this document is the property of DHS and may be distributed within the Federal Government (and its contractors), US intelligence, law enforcement, public safety or protection officials, and individuals with a need to know. Distribution beyond these entities without DHS authorization is prohibited. Precautions should be taken to ensure this information is stored and/or destroyed in a manner that precludes unauthorized access. Information bearing the LES caveat may not be used in legal proceedings without first receiving authorization from the originating agency. Recipients are prohibited from subsequently posting the information marked LES on a website on an unclassified network.</p> <p>(U) Warning: This document contains UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY (U//FOUO) information that may be exempt from public release under the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552). It is to be controlled, stored, handled, transmitted, distributed, and disposed of in accordance with DHS policy relating to FOUO information and is not to be released to the public, the media, or other personnel who do not have a valid need to know without prior approval of an authorized DHS official. State and local homeland security officials may not share this document with critical infrastructure and key resource personnel or private sector security officials without further approval from DHS.</p> <p>(U) All US person information has been minimized. Should you require US person information on weekends or after normal weekday hours during exigent and time sensitive circumstances, contact the Current and Emerging Threat Watch Office at [REDACTED] @HQ.DHS.GOV. For all other inquiries, please contact the Homeland Security Single Point of Service, Request for Information Office at [REDACTED] (b) (7)(E), (b) (6).</p>

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REFERENCE AID

11 FEBRUARY 2021

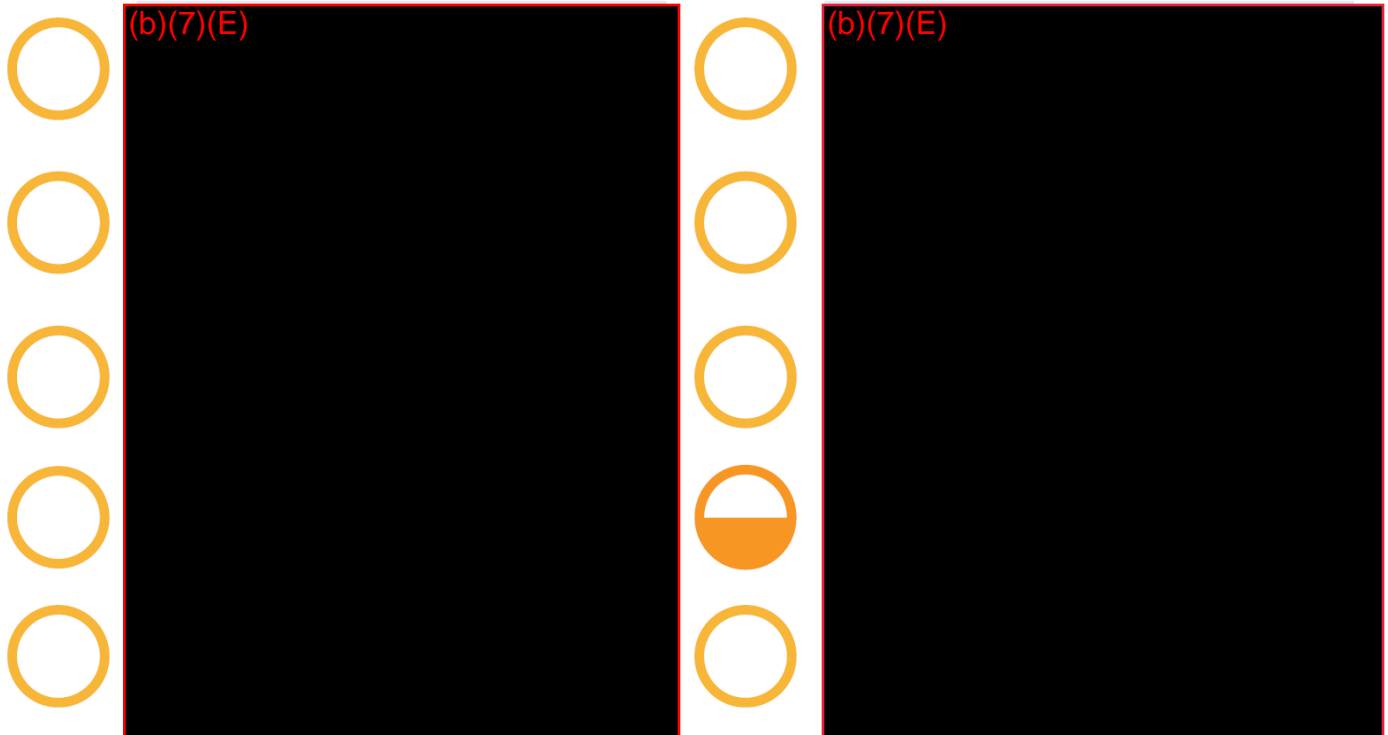
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PUBLIC SAFETY AND SECURITY

~~(U//FOUO)~~ **ADMINISTRATIVE REVISION: Probable Indicators of Violence in the Wake of the US Capitol Breach**

~~(U//FOUO)~~ We assess that a range of possible targets, including government facilities and officials, law enforcement, and ideologically opposed individuals throughout the National Capital Region continue to be possible targets for domestic terrorists in the wake of the breach on the US Capitol. Domestic terrorists – motivated by grievances associated with the exercise of governmental authority, the presidential transition, or conspiracy theories – may particularly exploit First Amendment protected gatherings as a means of cover to commit violence. However, we lack specific, credible threats of violence at this time and assess that an attack could occur with little or no warning. The following chart highlights possible indicators of violence in the Washington, DC area. Some of the observed indicators listed may include constitutionally protected activity and should be evaluated in the totality of circumstances.

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LEGEND



Not Observed



Partially Observed



Observed

Source, Reference, and Dissemination Information

Definitions	(U//FOUO) Domestic Terrorism: Any act of unlawful violence that is dangerous to human life or potentially destructive of critical infrastructure or key resources committed by a group or individual based and operating entirely within the United States or its territories without direction or inspiration from a foreign terrorist group. This act is a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or of any state or other subdivision of the United States and appears to be intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population, to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion, or to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping. A domestic terrorist differs from a homegrown violent extremist in that the former is not inspired by and does not take direction from a foreign terrorist group or other foreign power.
Reporting Suspicious Activity	(U) To report suspicious activity, law enforcement, Fire-EMS, private security personnel, and emergency managers should follow established protocols; all other personnel should call 911 or contact local law enforcement. Suspicious activity reports (SARs) will be forwarded to the appropriate fusion center and FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force for further action. For more information on the Nationwide SAR Initiative, visit http://nsi.ncirc.gov/resources.aspx .
Dissemination	(U) Federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial counterterrorism and law enforcement officials, first responders, fusion centers, and cleared private sector partners.
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