

Reference Aid

(U) Animal Rights Extremism and the Animal Liberation Front

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**Homeland
Security**



**Utah Statewide
Information &
Analysis Center**



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(U) Prepared by the Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A) Homeland Counterterrorism Division, Homegrown Violent Extremism Branch and the Utah Statewide Information and Analysis Center. Coordinated with the FBI Domestic Terrorism Analysis Unit.

(U) Scope

(U) Homeland Security Reference Aids provide baseline information on a range of homeland security issues. This product is one in a series of reference aids that assess the nature and scope of the threat posed to the Homeland by violent domestic and foreign extremist groups. The intent of this product is to inform DHS and other federal agencies involved in countering violent extremism of emerging patterns and trends in violent extremism, and to provide awareness and understanding of the threat to state, local, tribal, and territorial agencies and authorities with responsibilities relating to homeland security. Specifically, it intends to assist in the deterrence, prevention, preemption, or response to terrorist attacks against the United States. To maintain timely and accurate intelligence, DHS encourages state and local law enforcement to provide any updated information they may have concerning the status, composition, or activities of violent extremist groups in their jurisdictions.

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(U) Background

(U//FOUO) The Animal Liberation Front (ALF) is the name of a common animal rights extremist movement whose adherents have conducted criminal acts including vandalism, property destruction, arson, and planting of incendiary and explosive devices. ALF originally formed overseas in 1976 as a splinter group of the violent UK-based animal rights extremist group Band of Mercy. Since its founding, ALF's attacks have caused damage to corporations, businesses, animal research facilities, and property of individuals perceived to be harming or exploiting animals. ALF's illegal actions in the United States are claimed in communiqués published through various Web sites, magazines, and an animal rights extremist press office that professes to have no criminal ties to the movement.

(U) Animal Rights Extremists

(U//FOUO) DHS defines animal rights extremists as groups or individuals who facilitate or engage in acts of violence directed against people, businesses, or government entities perceived to be exploiting or abusing animals.

(U//LES) Recent arrests and convictions of ALF adherents and other animal rights extremists have not discouraged others from conducting violent criminal acts. A body of intelligence and law enforcement reporting over the last two years shows widespread animal rights extremist activity across the United States, particularly in the Pacific Northwest, California, and Utah. Based on the movement's history in the region, Utah law enforcement expects an increase in animal rights extremist activity annually in the period leading up to the mink pelting season.

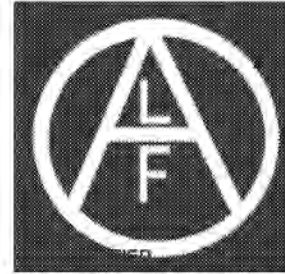
(U) Ideology and Objectives

(U//FOUO) Some animal rights extremists and ALF adherents commit criminal and violent acts based on their belief that animals should have some of the same basic freedoms as humans, including the right to life and to live free from exploitation and torture. ALF's stated goal is to inflict economic damage on individuals or businesses they believe are exploiting or abusing animals, with the intent of making it too costly for them to continue operating. ALF adherents believe their actions are morally justifiable in the cause of saving animal lives and condone the use of violence—including threats of violence, arson, and bombings—in meeting this objective. They believe their actions are morally justifiable because they caution supporters to take precautions against harming humans. Animal rights extremists who have claimed to be acting in ALF's name have yet to kill anyone.

(U) Symbols

(U//FOUO) The most widespread ALF symbol is an encircled letter "A," that includes the letters "L" and "F." The symbol is used on ALF publications and Web sites, and is sometimes found at crime scenes.

(U//FOUO) ALF adherents are known to leave graffiti and messages at crime scenes, usually with a statement threatening the target and claiming responsibility. Previous ALF graffiti has included statements such as: "ALF EYES ON YOU," "GO VIVISECT IN HELL," and the group's initials.*



(U) Encircled letter ALF symbol.

(U) Leadership and Organization

(U//LES) ALF operates under the leaderless resistance model; it has no centralized leadership, formal membership, or coordinating body but is instead a collection of autonomous cells or individuals acting independently.

- (U//FOUO) The criminal actions of ALF adherents are publicized largely through the Web site of the North American Animal Liberation Press Office (NAALPO)^{USPER}, which claims no official ties to animal rights extremists, but posts animal rights extremist-related news and disseminates communiques from animal rights extremists claiming attacks. ALF communiques are also published by other Web sites that openly claim sympathy with the animal rights extremist movement, such as *Bite Back Magazine* (www.directaction.info).

(U//FOUO) The number of animal rights extremists who identify as followers of ALF is difficult to determine due to ALF's lack of organizational structure. Adherents self-identify and not all engage in violent extremism; some ALF members engage in minor criminal conduct.

(U//FOUO) Some ALF adherents are also active in the environmental rights extremist movement and may also commit attacks on behalf of the Earth Liberation Front (ELF). Overlapping participation in criminal acts makes it difficult to attribute animal rights extremists to one particular group or movement.

(U) Targets

(U//LES) ALF adherents' acts of vandalism, property destruction, arson, and bombings primarily have targeted the agricultural and food industries, fur farms, multinational corporations, pharmaceutical companies, and the animal research industry. They have also targeted organizations that financially support these primary industries, including insurance companies and banks. Animal rights extremists use social networking Web sites to identify employees of targeted corporations for harassment, intimidation, and potential violent action. ALF adherents have also threatened violence against individuals, such as university professors, involved in animal research.

* (U) The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines vivisection as: "the cutting of or operation on a living animal usually for physiological or pathological investigation; *broadly*: animal experimentation especially if considered to cause distress to the subject."

- (U//FOUO) In January 2012, in a communique sent to the NAALPO Web site, anonymous animal rights extremists claimed responsibility for an arson attack against the largest cattle farm in California. The perpetrators used digital timers to initiate the attack—a tactic used previously by ALF—and destroyed 14 cattle trailers. No arrests have been made.
- (U//FOUO) In July 2006, animal rights extremists attempted to attack a California university animal researcher's home with an improvised incendiary device (IID). The device was mistakenly placed at a neighbor's residence and failed to detonate. ALF adherents anonymously claimed responsibility for the attempted attack.
- (U//FOUO) In June 1998, animal rights extremists used IIDs to launch arson attacks against a US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal Plant Health Inspection Service office and a USDA Animal Damage Control facility in Olympia, Washington, causing over \$1,200,000 in damages. The attacks were claimed anonymously by individuals identifying themselves as both ALF and ELF.

(U) Training and Pre-operational Planning

(U//FOUO) ALF offers no formal training for its adherents. Instead, individuals use Web sites to spread ideas and literature on improving operational tactics. Some members of the animal rights extremist movement have also conducted seminars and lectures in support of ALF tactics, teaching attendees about selecting targets, bypassing security measures, and even constructing IIDs. Many of the individuals visiting these Web sites and attending these seminars and meetings are not violent extremists, and many of the discussions and the activities discussed in these forums and in the literature are constitutionally protected.

- (U//FOUO) Online training guides available to ALF adherents provide instructions on avoiding surveillance, sending communiques securely and anonymously, improving computer security, and building IIDs. Publications such as *Arson Around with Auntie ALF* provide instruction on how to commit a variety of criminal acts, including arson; others such as *The Final Nail* and *The Blueprint* provide addresses of possible targets, such as fur farms, research laboratories, and animal production facilities across the country.
- (U//FOUO) Operational guidebooks like *The Animal Liberation Front Primer* and *As Darkness Falls* provide operational planning guidance such as selecting a target, drawing up a plan of attack, performing dry-runs, preparing contingency plans, and developing an exit strategy if an attack must be aborted.
- (U//FOUO) In March 2008, an animal rights extremist previously convicted of a prior ALF arson in 1992 was also convicted for demonstrating how to construct an IID to an audience in San Diego, California in August 2003.

(U) Tactics

(U//FOUO) ALF and other animal rights extremists commit criminal acts such as property destruction, vandalism, and thefts of animals, as well as more serious tactics such as arson and bombings that pose significant risk of death or serious injury. ALF actions can be criminal violations of the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act of 2006, which prohibits attacks and threats against entities associated with an animal enterprise.

- (U//FOUO) On 28 February 1992, an animal rights extremist was convicted for committing arson against an animal research facility at a midwestern university, causing an estimated \$125,000 in damages and destroying research data. The individual was convicted for the crime in 1995 and received a four year and nine month prison sentence.
- (U//FOUO) In 1987, the first US-based ALF arson attack occurred at a west coast university's animal research facility, causing an estimated \$5.1 million in damages to the facility and 20 nearby vehicles. Notes left at the crime scene claimed ALF responsibility for the attack.

(U//FOUO) ALF adherents usually conduct surveillance on potential targets to identify and mitigate potential obstacles to planned attacks, such as security guards, surveillance cameras, and alarm systems. Animal rights extremists also use conspicuous surveillance to intimidate people associated with targeted companies—as well as law enforcement officers—to dissuade them from using animals or interfering with planned illegal operations, according to New Jersey law enforcement reporting. Other intimidation techniques include videotaping individuals, as well as their vehicles and license plates, and posting their personal identifying information on the Internet.

(U//FOUO) ALF adherents have used cyber tools to enhance their security online and have conducted cyber-attacks to achieve their objectives.

- (U//LES) Both ALF adherents and other animal rights extremists use Internet technologies such as Pretty Good Privacy encryption to communicate securely and "anonymizers" to send anonymous communiques claiming responsibility for attacks to ALF-related Web sites, according to a 2004 FBI assessment.
- (U//LES) Animal rights extremists and ALF adherents have committed distributed denial-of-service cyber-attacks against animal research companies, their business associates, and service providers in an effort to make them withdraw financial support for animal research, according to a 2009 FBI assessment.
- (U//FOUO) A 21 July 2011 communique from individuals identifying themselves with the hacker group Anonymous voiced their solidarity with the animal rights extremist movement. Individuals associated with Anonymous' previous attacks have experienced Web site disruptions and defacement, and the theft and release of sensitive information.

(U) Violent Activity in Utah

(U//LES) ALF followers have long been criminally active in Utah, where they employ vandalism, arson, intimidation campaigns, and animal releases to target organizations, activities, and individuals viewed as exploiting or abusing animals. Utah law enforcement has reported anonymous ALF claims of responsibility for attacks against university laboratories and researchers, biotechnology life science facilities, pharmaceutical companies, mink farms, restaurants, and fur and leather stores.

- (U//FOUO) Between April and June 2010, a self-described "ALF lone-wolf" committed a series of arsons against targets in Colorado and Utah, causing \$500,000 in damages to a sheepskin factory; \$20,000 to a leather factory; and \$10,000 to a restaurant that sold the animal product foie gras. The individual is currently serving more than 12 years in federal prison for his role in the crimes but has remained a supporter of the animal rights extremist movement from prison, frequently blogging and participating in interviews about his experiences.
- (U//FOUO) In July 2004, animal rights extremists attacked a western university animal testing facility on behalf of ALF by committing arson against two tractors, causing an estimated \$32,000 in damages. In 2005, two individuals were sentenced to two and a half years in prison for the arson attack.
- (U//FOUO) In March 1997, ALF adherents set fires and exploded five pipe bombs in an attempt to burn down a fur cooperative in Utah. The attack caused an estimated \$1,000,000 in damages to the facility and delivery vehicles. In September 1998, an animal rights extremist confessed to committing the crime on behalf of ALF and was sentenced to pay \$750,000 in restitution and to serve seven years in prison. In August 1999, another animal rights extremist pled guilty for his involvement in constructing the bombs and received a five-year sentence.
- (U//FOUO) The first known ALF-related incident in Utah was a 1992 arson attack against a coyote research facility in Millville, Utah that caused damages estimated at \$100,000. The incident was claimed by ALF in an anonymous communique faxed to local media.

(U) Links to Other Groups and Movements

(U//LES) Due to overlapping ideologies and shared targets, animal rights extremists often claim criminal actions on behalf of groups that may or may not actually exist in any formal sense; such possibly fictitious groups include the "Animal Rights Militia," "Justice Department," or "The Revolutionary Cells." ALF and other animal rights extremists' ideology also overlaps with that of environmental rights extremist movements such as ELF, which shares ALF's philosophy of using criminal action to stop entities they allege exploit, abuse, and plunder the environment. ALF and ELF adherents have previously claimed attacks in joint communiques sent to animal rights extremist Web sites such as NAALPO.

- (U//FOUO) Between 1996 and 2001, members of a violent environmental extremist cell known as "The Family"—with members claiming actions on behalf of both ALF and ELF—conducted over 40 attacks in the western United States

that caused more than \$48 million in damages. Three members remain at large, but 16 members pled guilty to arson and conspiracy charges and received sentences ranging from 3 to 16 years.

(U) Outlook

(U//LES) ALF adherents will likely continue to engage in acts of criminal violence—including arson and property destruction—targeting animal research and businesses that use animals. Although physical injuries stemming from animal rights extremists' attacks historically have been rare, the use of arson and IIDs against infrastructure and facilities increases the likelihood of casualties. ALF and its affiliates will likely continue to threaten university employees associated with the animal industry, particularly animal researchers. We judge that an escalation to more violent tactics such as targeted murder or an intentional mass casualty attack is unlikely.

(U//LES) Utah law enforcement expects an increase in ALF-related activity during the period leading up to the mink pelting season, which runs between June and September each year.

(U) Source Summary Statement

(U) The information used in this Reference Aid is drawn from open sources, FBI Intelligence Bulletins, DHS open source reporting, and court filings. The open source information has been corroborated through other sources and is considered credible. I&A has **medium-to-high confidence** in source reliability, which extends to judgments and conclusions made in this Reference Aid.

(U) Reporting Notice:

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Survey

(U) Tracked by: HSEC-9.1, HSEC-9.2

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Homeland Security

Office of Intelligence and Analysis

I&A Customer Survey

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2. Overall, how satisfied are you with the usefulness of this product?

☐ Very Satisfied
 ☐ Somewhat Satisfied
 ☐ Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied
 ☐ Somewhat Dissatisfied
 ☐ Very Dissatisfied

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- ☐ Integrated into one of my own organization's finished information or intelligence products
☐ Shared contents with federal or DHS component partners
 If so, which partners?
☐ Shared contents with state and local partners
 If so, which partners?
☐ Shared contents with private sector partners
 If so, which partners?
☐ Other (please specify)

4. Please rank this product's relevance to your mission. (Please portion mark comments.)

- ☐ Critical
☐ Very important
☐ Somewhat important
☐ Not important
☐ N/A

5. Please rate your satisfaction with each of the following:

	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	N/A
Timeliness of product or support	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Responsiveness to your intelligence needs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

6. How could this product or service be improved to increase its value to your mission? (Please portion mark comments.)

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