



OFFICE of INTELLIGENCE and ANALYSIS
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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

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)~~ 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.