



Countering Violent Extremism

Fact Sheet

Overview

The threat posed by violent extremism is neither constrained by international borders nor limited to any single ideology. Groups and individuals inspired by a range of religious, political, or other ideological beliefs have promoted and used violence against the homeland. Increasingly sophisticated use of the Internet, mainstream and social media, and information technology by violent extremists adds an additional layer of complexity. To counter violent extremism, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is working with a broad range of partners, including state and major urban area fusion centers, to gain a better understanding of the behaviors, tactics, and other indicators that could point to potential terrorist activity within the United States and the best ways to mitigate or prevent that activity.

Fusion centers are state- and locally owned and operated assets that play a vital role in improving the nation's ability to safeguard the homeland. They are focal points within the state and local environment for the receipt, analysis, gathering, and sharing of threat-related information among federal; state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT); and private sector partners. As analytic hubs, fusion centers are uniquely situated to empower frontline personnel to understand the local implications of national intelligence by providing tailored local context to national threat information. Fusion centers support partners at all levels of government and within the Intelligence Community through a variety of activities ranging from improving analytic collaboration across jurisdictional boundaries to helping frontline personnel understand terrorist and criminal threats they could encounter in the field. For fusion centers to engage in effective and meaningful information sharing, they must do so in a manner that protects the privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties (P/CRCL) of all Americans. Fusion centers implement P/CRCL safeguards to protect constitutional rights and to ensure that they are addressing their ethical and legal obligations while engaged in the fusion process.

Fusion centers

play an important role in providing grassroots intelligence, analytic, and information sharing capabilities within the state and local environment to help identify and mitigate threats.

This fact sheet provides an overview of the Department's approach to countering violent extremism and outlines the important role fusion centers play in providing grassroots intelligence, analytic, and information sharing capabilities within the state and local environment to help identify and mitigate threats.

Countering Violent Extremism

DHS's efforts to counter violent extremism are threefold:

- **Better understand the phenomenon of violent extremism**, and assess the threat it poses to the nation as a whole and within specific communities.
- **Bolster efforts to address the dynamics of violent extremism** and strengthen relationships with those communities targeted for recruitment by violent extremists.
- **Expand support for information-driven, community-oriented policing efforts** that have proved effective in preventing violent crime across the nation.

Support for Locally Based Approaches

In support of the *National Strategy on Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism*, the U.S. government has increased its support for locally focused, community-based approaches to countering violent extremism across three broad areas:

- **Enhancing Engagement With and Support to Local Communities:** Our aims in engaging with communities to discuss violent extremism are to (1) share sound, meaningful, and timely information about the threat of radicalization to violence with a wide range of groups and organizations; (2) respond to concerns about government policies and actions; and (3) better understand how we can effectively support community-based solutions.
- **Building Government and Law Enforcement Expertise:** We are building robust training programs to ensure that communities, the government, and law enforcement receive accurate, intelligence-based information about the dynamics of violent extremism. Misinformation about the threat and poor training harm our security by sending stakeholders in the wrong direction and creating tensions within communities.
- **Countering Violent Extremist Propaganda While Promoting Our Ideals:** We will aggressively counter violent extremist ideologies—including on the Internet—by educating and empowering communities and promoting our ideals. In the case of our current priority, we will, through our words and deeds, rebut al-Qa'ida's lie that the United States is somehow at war with Islam.

EMPOWERING LOCAL
PARTNERS TO PREVENT
VIOLENT EXTREMISM
NATIONAL STRATEGY



Role of Fusion Centers

In support of these overarching priorities, fusion centers play an important role in countering violent extremism efforts through their day-to-day activities, including gathering, analyzing, and sharing threat information. Therefore, the Department is continuing to support fusion centers as they share information and develop intelligence products that support their law enforcement customers' CVE efforts, including:

- Building grassroots intelligence and analytic capabilities within the state and local environment so state and local law enforcement partners can understand the local implications of national intelligence and providing tailored local context to national threat information.
- Based upon these analytic efforts, providing state and local law enforcement partners with timely, relevant, and accurate threat analysis, incorporating:
 - Trends or patterns in criminal and terrorist activities.
 - Identified vulnerabilities within a jurisdiction.
 - Indicators and warnings indicative of terrorism or violent crime.
 - How to report suspicious activities to the proper law enforcement authorities.
 - Recommendations for protective measures, preventive actions, or other threat mitigation activities.
- Sharing information with state and local decision makers to assist in the prioritization of resources to mitigate known threats.
- Sharing information with local law enforcement partners to help inform frontline officers in their community engagement efforts, including raising awareness of potential threats in their communities.
- Incorporating local law enforcement information in their analytic efforts, resulting in better-informed, relevant, and actionable products.
- Educating and informing local law enforcement on behaviors and indicators of potential threats, while ensuring the protection of the privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties of individuals and constitutionally protected activities.
- Leveraging Fusion Liaison Officer (FLO) programs to facilitate the exchange of information between fusion centers and their stakeholders, as FLO programs represent a valuable approach to building partnerships between fusion centers and local law enforcement community-policing efforts.