



Emerging Intelligence Report

(U) PREPARED BY WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION DIRECTORATE
CO AUTHOR COUNTERTERRORISM DIVISION

17 JULY 2020
FBI EIR262 20200717

(U) Threat Actors Likely Seeking To Attack Medical Facilities Focused on the COVID-19 Pandemic, Limiting Critical Function Capabilities

(U) This document is classified: Unclassified//For Official Use Only
(U) EIR template approved for fiscal year 2020, as of 1 October 2019.

(U//FOUO) The FBI assesses threat actors^a likely^b are seeking to attack medical facilities in the United States while the facilities are focused on the COVID-19 pandemic, threatening mass casualties and property damage, limiting critical function capabilities performed during the pandemic. This assessment is made with medium confidence,^c based on an FBI investigation and open source reporting with varying degrees of access and corroboration. The FBI makes this assessment based on the key assumption that threat actors seek to further their ideological goals—including societal collapse—and instill fear by exploiting the COVID-19 pandemic to target medical facilities strained by the virus over the near term. If the assumption proves inaccurate, the likelihood of this assessment would decrease as threat actors would be targeting facilities based on convenience or other factors unrelated to the pandemic. The FBI bases this assessment on reporting indicating threat actors reportedly mentioned exploiting the COVID-19 pandemic to further their ideologies by attacking medical facilities. The FBI determined an alternative analysis is unwarranted at this time as there are no significant uncertainties or complexities that could increase the likelihood of an alternative hypothesis.

- (U) According to a *Washington Post* article, based on reporting from several law enforcement sources, on 31 March 2020, a Domestic Violent Extremist (DVE), who was a train engineer, attempted to damage a naval hospital ship docked in the Port of

Los Angeles by purposely derailing the train the DVE was operating. According to statements the DVE made to law enforcement after the derailment, the DVE shared conspiracy theories about the true purpose of the ship, discussed its purpose as “segregating us” and stated, “you only get this chance once...the whole world is watching.”¹

- (U) According to FBI case information, on 24 March 2020, FBI Kansas City disrupted a plan by a racially or ethnically motivated violent extremist to attack a medical center using a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device. The subject cited the increased impact and media attention on the health sector during the COVID-19 pandemic as a reason to accelerate the timing and the selection of a medical facility.²

(U//FOUO) This emerging intelligence report is consistent with the assessments made in a 30 March 2020 joint intelligence bulletin, titled “(U//FOUO) Disruption of a Racially or Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremist’s Plot to Attack a Missouri Medical Center,” and the 7 April 2020 joint intelligence bulletin, titled “(U//FOUO) Domestic Violent Extremists Likely to Continue Exploiting COVID-19 Pandemic to Incite or Engage in Violence.” Specifically, this emerging intelligence report concurs with the assessments that extremists likely will seek to exploit the pandemic using violence themselves or encouraging others. The FBI assesses, in the near term, threat actors

^a (U//FOUO) *Analyst Note:* For the purposes of this emerging intelligence report, “threat actors” refers to criminals; terrorists; homegrown, domestic, and racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists; and lone offenders.

^b (U) See Appendix A: Expressions of Likelihood.

^c (U) See Appendix B: Confidence in Assessments and Judgements Based on Body of Information.

likely will increase attempted attacks against medical facilities as the COVID-19 pandemic continues, causing mass casualties and structural damage that will further tax already overburdened personnel. The FBI assesses, over the long term, threat actors likely will decrease attacks against medical facilities as the United States recovers from COVID-19, allowing these facilities to return to normal operations. Increased reporting and statements by threat actors endorsing attacks proportionate to an escalation in cases and mortalities would support the FBI's assessment. Observable indicators that would suggest the targeting of medical facilities would include threat actors sending threatening emails to medical facilities, threat actors questioning security protocols at medical facilities, and preoperational surveillance "dry runs" in the vicinity of medical facility sites.

(U) If you would like to provide qualitative feedback on this product, please send an email to the appropriate address with the product title as the subject line: DI_Customer_Feedback@fbi.gov; DI_Customer_Feedback@fbi.sgov.gov; or DI_Customer_Feedback@fbi.ic.gov.

(U) FBIHQ Weapons of Mass Destruction Directorate, Chemical and Biological Intelligence Unit (CBIU), Non-State Actor Intelligence Unit (NSAIU), and Counterterrorism Division, Domestic Terrorism Strategic Unit (DTSU) of the FBI prepared this emerging intelligence report. Please direct comments and queries to the CBIU Unit Chief at 1-202-324-2057, NSAIU Chief at 1-202-324-9528, or CTD DTSU Unit Chief at 1-202-324-6015.

UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

(U) Source Summary Statement

(U//FOUO) Reporting in this emerging intelligence report was derived from FBI case information and open source reporting. The FBI case information was deemed most critical to the key analytical judgment and overall assessment, and provided context and corroboration. The FBI case information occurred between 27 March and 8 April 2020, and was current as of 8 April 2020. The open source reporting occurred between 27 March and 13 May 2020, and was current as of 13 May 2020.

(U) Appendix A: Expressions of Likelihood

(U) Phrases such as “the FBI judges” and “the FBI assesses,” and terms such as “likely” and “probably” convey analytical judgments and assessments. The chart below approximates how expressions of likelihood and probability correlate with percentages of chance. Only terms of likelihood should appear in FBI products; the chart includes terms of probability strictly for comparison, as they sometimes appear in reporting of other government agencies. Furthermore, the FBI does not arrive at judgments through statistical analysis and will not use terms of probability to convey uncertainty in FBI external intelligence products.

UNCLASSIFIED

Terms of Likelihood	Almost No Chance	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Roughly Even Chance	Likely	Very Likely	Almost Certain(ly)
Terms of Probability	Remote	Highly Improbable	Improbable (Improbably)	Roughly Even Odds	Probable (Probably)	Highly Probable	Nearly Certain
Percentages of Chance	1-5%	5-20%	20-45%	45-55%	55-80%	80-95%	95-99%

(U) Table showing terms of likelihood aligned with terms of probability and percentages of chance.

(U) Appendix B: Confidence in Assessments and Judgments Based on a Body of Information

(U) Confidence levels reflect the quality and quantity of the source information supporting a judgment. Consequently, the FBI ascribes high, medium, or low levels of confidence to assessments, as follows:

(U) **High confidence** generally indicates the FBI's judgments are based on high quality information from multiple sources. High confidence in a judgment does not imply the assessment is a fact or a certainty; such judgments might be wrong. While additional reporting and information sources may change analytical judgments, such changes are most likely to be refinements and not substantial in nature.

(U) **Medium confidence** generally means the information is credibly sourced and plausible but not of sufficient quality or corroborated sufficiently to warrant a higher level of confidence. Additional reporting or information sources have the potential to increase the FBI's confidence levels or substantively change analytical judgments.

(U) **Low confidence** generally means the information's credibility or plausibility is uncertain, the information is too fragmented or poorly corroborated to make solid analytic inferences, or the reliability of the sources is questionable. Absent additional reporting or information sources, analytical judgments should be considered preliminary in nature.