



(U) 2012 State of the Union Address

Joint Threat Assessment

9 January 2012



Federal Bureau
of Investigation



United States
Capitol Police



United States
Secret Service



Homeland
Security



Washington
Regional Threat and
Analysis Center



Joint Forces Headquarters
National Capital Region

(U) Joint Threat Assessment: 2012 State of the Union Address

9 January 2012

(U) Prepared by the FBI Washington Field Office; the FBI Critical Incident Response Group, Critical Incident Intelligence Unit; the FBI Counterterrorism Analysis Section; the DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A), Homeland Counterterrorism Division, Terrorist Targets and Tactics Branch; Joint Forces Headquarters, National Capitol Region; the United States Capitol Police; the United States Secret Service, Protective Intelligence and Assessments Division; and the Washington Regional Threat and Analysis Center. Contributing information provided by the Transportation Security Administration Office of Intelligence and Analysis, the United States Coast Guard Sector Baltimore, the National Counterterrorism Center, and the Terrorist Screening Center.

(U) Scope

(U//FOUO) This Joint Threat Assessment (JTA) addresses potential threats to the President's delivery of the State of the Union address at the US Capitol on 24 January 2012.

(U) This information is intended to support federal, state, territorial, tribal, and local government agencies and authorities and other entities in developing and prioritizing protective and support measures relating to an existing or emerging threat to homeland security.

(U//FOUO) The information in this assessment is current as of 9 January 2012. Unless otherwise noted, this JTA uses the FBI definition of terms, which may differ from the definitions used by DHS.

(U) Source Summary Statement

(U//FOUO) This assessment includes information from federal and local law enforcement and open sources. The reliability of federal and local law enforcement information sources is generally assessed as **HIGH** (the information is credibly sourced and corroborated). Open source reporting is assessed as **MEDIUM** (the information is credibly sourced and plausible but not sufficiently corroborated to warrant a higher level of confidence, may contain political or journalistic bias, and may be intended to influence as well as inform). Where no source reporting exists, this assessment draws on previous plots involving similar targets to posit the most likely potential threats.

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(U) Key Findings

(U//FOUO) We have no specific or credible information indicating a threat to the US Capitol or the National Capital Region (NCR) to coincide with the 2012 State of the Union address. We assess, however, that al-Qa'ida and its affiliates and allies remain committed to attacking the Homeland and, as of February 2010, al-Qa'ida identified the NCR and the State of the Union address itself as important targets, presumably for attacks. Moreover, homegrown violent extremists (HVEs) as well as lone offenders could view the event as an attractive target, offering the means to inflict casualties and garner extensive media coverage.^{*†} Detecting homeland plots involving HVEs and lone offenders continues to challenge law enforcement and intelligence agencies due to the operational independence of the perpetrators, which can reduce or eliminate preoperational indicators.

(U//FOUO) Robust event security at the US Capitol might cause would-be attackers to engage less secure targets within the NCR during the State of the Union address in order to leverage the media attention and symbolism associated with the address.

^{*} (U//FOUO) FBI and DHS define an HVE as a person of any citizenship who has lived and/or operated primarily in the United States or its territories who advocates, is engaged in, or is preparing to engage in ideologically motivated terrorist activities (including providing support to terrorism) in furtherance of political or social objectives promoted by a foreign terrorist organization, but is acting independently of direction by a foreign terrorist organization. HVEs are distinct from traditional domestic terrorists, who engage in unlawful acts of violence to intimidate civilian populations or attempt to influence domestic policy without direction from or influence by a foreign actor.

[†] (U//FOUO) FBI defines a "lone offender" as an individual who commits terrorist acts alone and without direction from a group or another individual. The perpetrator may have contact with others, but those other individuals are not aware of the perpetrator's plans or intentions.

(U) Event Overview

(U) The President on 24 January will fulfill his Constitutionally mandated requirement to provide Congress information on the “State of the Union.” The State of the Union address, delivered in the House of Representatives chamber at the US Capitol, will be broadcast live with the Vice President, First Lady, Cabinet secretaries, both houses of Congress, Supreme Court Justices, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and other senior government officials in attendance.

(U) International Terrorism Threat

(U//FOUO) We have no specific information indicating a credible international terrorist threat to the United States coinciding with the upcoming State of the Union address, but assess that al-Qa’ida and its affiliates and allies remain committed to attacking the United States. Additionally, we remain concerned that recent counterterrorism successes against terrorist leaders overseas may cause al-Qa’ida or its associates to launch attack plans in retaliation.

- (U//FOUO) On 8 October 2011, al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) issued a statement vowing retaliation against the United States for the death of External Operations Commander Anwar al-Aulaqi, and on 20 December 2011 released a video tribute to al-Aulaqi that urges acts of violence in revenge for Aulaqi’s death.^{1,2}
- (U//FOUO) The July 2011 edition of AQAP’s English-language propaganda publication, *Inspire*, memorialized Usama bin Ladin and provided tactical guidance on using an assault rifle and manufacturing peroxide-based explosives. Past issues of *Inspire* suggested a range of techniques to attack the Homeland and have advocated individual acts of violence against the United States.^{3,4}
- (U//FOUO) In June 2011, al-Qa’ida released a video that encouraged followers to participate in individual acts of violence in their countries of residence.⁵

(U//FOUO) Despite the absence of specific information indicating a credible international terrorist threat to the US Capitol, attendees of the State of the Union address, or the NCR to coincide with the speech, we assess that al-Qa’ida and HVEs maintain an interest in attacking targets within the NCR. Detecting HVEs remains difficult for law enforcement and intelligence agencies due to their potentially limited preoperational indicators.

- (U//FOUO) On 28 September 2011, a US citizen was arrested for plotting to fly an explosives-laden remote-controlled aircraft into the Pentagon and the US Capitol building. The suspect allegedly intended to shoot fleeing occupants with automatic weapons.⁶
- (U//FOUO) As of February 2010, al-Qa’ida was contemplating large attacks in the Homeland on symbolic dates and specifically identified 20 January—identified by al-Qa’ida as the State of the Union address—as a key date, presumably for an attack. Additionally, al-Qa’ida identified Washington, DC as an important city where presumably attacks should occur.⁷

(U//FOUO) Although al-Qa'ida and its affiliates and allies may aspire to launch attacks to coincide with specific dates or times, we continue to assess that operational readiness will be the primary driving factor for attack timing. Additionally, robust security at the Capitol during the State of the Union address may cause would-be attackers to engage less secure targets within the NCR during the event in order to leverage the media attention and symbolism associated with the address.

(U) Domestic Terrorism Threat

(U//FOUO) We have no credible intelligence that any identified domestic terrorist group or actor is plotting attacks against the US Capitol or the NCR to coincide with the State of the Union address. We assess, however, that the NCR and entities associated with the US Government will continue to represent aspirational targets for domestic terrorists.

- (U) According to a Justice Department press release, a group of Georgia-based US citizens was arrested on 1 November 2011 for conspiring to obtain an unregistered explosive device and to manufacture ricin toxin for use in attacks against US citizens and government personnel.⁸ The unsealed affidavit documented Washington, DC and federal buildings as desired attack targets.⁹

(U) Lone Offender Threat

(U//FOUO) We have no information that lone offenders are planning to attack the US Capitol or the NCR during the State of the Union address, although they continue to pose a particularly challenging threat due to their operational independence and lack of trusted associates. Lone offenders have recently engaged targets within the NCR, and they remain a significant threat to the Homeland.

- (U) On 23 June 2011 a Virginia-based US citizen was charged with destruction of property and firearm violations involving five separate shootings at military installations in Northern Virginia between October and November 2010.¹⁰

(U) Transportation Threat

(U//FOUO) We have no specific or credible intelligence indicating a threat to transportation systems or infrastructure near the Capitol or within the NCR during the State of the Union address. We do, however, assess that international and domestic extremists have a continued interest in targeting public transportation systems^{11,12,‡}

(U) Criminal Threat

(U//FOUO) We have no information indicating a current, specific criminal threat to the State of the Union address or the NCR during the event, although we assess that entities associated with the US Government will continue to be potential targets for criminal actors.

[‡] (U) The FBI defines a “domestic extremist” as an individual who is furthering their social and/or political goals wholly or in part through activities that involve force or violence and a violation of federal law.

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- (U//FOUO) On 17 November 2011, a US citizen was charged with knowingly attempting to kill the President of the United States by firing several bullets into the south side of the White House.¹³
- (U//FOUO) Non-violent demonstrations will likely persist through January 2012, and participants are expected to be in the proximity of the Capitol and motorcade routes. Although demonstrations have been peaceful, individuals could become violent—a factor that should be considered when assessing officer safety.

(U) Cyber Threat

(U//FOUO) We have no information indicating a cyber threat to the 2012 State of the Union address or the NCR to coincide with the event.

(U) Intelligence Gaps

(U//FOUO) Are international terrorist groups or their affiliates and allies plotting to attack the US Capitol or the NCR during the State of the Union address?

(U//FOUO) Are domestic extremists planning to disrupt the State of the Union address by targeting entities associated with the US Government, including the US Capitol?

(U//FOUO) Are unidentified HVEs, inspired by international terrorist groups, planning to attack the US Capitol or the NCR during the State of the Union address?

(U//FOUO) Are unidentified lone offenders plotting to attack the US Capitol or the NCR during the State of the Union address?

(U//FOUO) Will peaceful demonstrations in the area of the US Capitol or within the NCR be exploited by violent actors who will pose a risk to officer safety during the State of the Union address?

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(U) Tracked by: USA-TERR-CTD-AR-0001-12; HSEC-8.1, HSEC-8.2; HSEC-8.6.2.21; HSEC-9.1; HSEC-9.2; HSEC-9.6.2.21

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- ¹ (U//FOUO) Open Source Center; GMP20111010479002; 10 October 2011; "(U//FOUO) AQAP Issues Statement on 'Martyrdom' of Anwar Al-Awlaki"; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; UNCLASSIFIED FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY.
- ² (U//FOUO) Open Source Center; GMP20111220836005; 20 December 2011; "(U//FOUO) Al-Fajr Media Center Releases Anwar al-Awlaki Video 'The Martyr of Da'wah"; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; UNCLASSIFIED FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY.
- ³ (U//FOUO) FBI/DHS; Joint Intelligence Bulletin; 24 January 2011; "(U//FOUO) Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula's *Inspire* Magazine Highlights Range of Homeland Attack Options"; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY.
- ⁴ (U//FOUO) FBI/DHS; Joint Intelligence Bulletin; 19 July 2011; "(U//FOUO) Sixth Issue of AQAP's *Inspire* Magazine"; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY.
- ⁵ (U//FOUO) FBI/DHS; Joint Intelligence Bulletin; 9 June 2011; "(U//FOUO) Al-Qa'ida Video Encourages Western Muslims to Conduct Individual Violent Jihad"; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY.
- ⁶ (U//FOUO) FBI/DHS; Joint Intelligence Bulletin; 28 September 2011; "(U//FOUO) Massachusetts-Based Violent Extremist Arrested for Plan to Attack Pentagon and US Capitol with GPS-Navigated Model Aircraft"; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY.
- ⁷ (U//FOUO) FBI/DHS; Joint Intelligence Bulletin; 20 May 2011; "(U//FOUO) February 2010 Al-Qa'ida Homeland Plotting Priorities Included Symbolic Dates and Major U.S. Cities"; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY.
- ⁸ (U) Press Release; United States Department of Justice; "(U) North Georgia Men Arrested, Charged In Plots To Purchase Explosives, Silencer And To Manufacture A Biological Toxin"; 1 November 2011; UNCLASSIFIED//UNCLASSIFIED; <http://www.fbi.gov/atlanta/press-releases/2011/north-georgia-men-arrested-charged-in-plots-to-purchase-explosives-silencer-and-to-manufacture-a-biological-toxin>.
- ⁹ (U) United States District Court, Northern District of Georgia; "(U) Criminal Complaint Against Samuel J. Crump;" 1 November 2011; UNCLASSIFIED//UNCLASSIFIED.
- ¹⁰ (U) United States Attorney's Office, Eastern District of Virginia; "(U) Criminal Complaint Against Yonathan Melaku"; 23 June 2011; UNCLASSIFIED//UNCLASSIFIED.
- ¹¹ (U//FOUO) FBI/DHS; Joint Intelligence Bulletin; 5 May 2011; "(U//FOUO) Early 2010 Al-Qa'ida Interest in Targeting Trains on 11 September 2011"; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY.
- ¹² (U//FOUO) Transportation Security Administration, Office of Intelligence; 10 November 2011; "(U) Mass Transit and Passenger Bus Attacks"; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY.
- ¹³ (U) United States District Court, District of Columbia; "(U) Criminal Complaint Against Oscar Ramiro Ortega-Hernandez"; 17 November 2011; UNCLASSIFIED//UNCLASSIFIED.

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