



# Assessment

## (U) Threats to College Sports and Entertainment Venues and Surrounding Areas



IA-0138-09



## **(U) Threats to College Sports and Entertainment Venues and Surrounding Areas**

**26 January 2009**

*(U) Prepared by the DHS/Critical Infrastructure Threat Analysis Division, the South Carolina Information and Intelligence Exchange, and the Michigan Intelligence Operations Center. Coordinated with the University of South Carolina, Clemson University, and Michigan State University.*

### **(U) Scope**

(U//FOUO) The Department of Homeland Security/Office of Intelligence and Analysis, the South Carolina Information and Intelligence Center, and the Michigan Intelligence Operations Center, in coordination with the University of South Carolina, Clemson University, and Michigan State University, have prepared the following threat assessment to assist security planners and law enforcement personnel in monitoring threat information and maintaining a safe and secure event environment for U.S. college sports and entertainment venues and surrounding areas. These areas include entrance and egress routes to the venue, local hotels, restaurants and bars, and parking lots where crowds gather.

(U) **Warning:** This document is UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY (U//FOUO). It contains information that may be exempt from public release under the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552). It is to be controlled, stored, handled, transmitted, distributed, and disposed of in accordance with DHS policy relating to FOUO information and is not to be released to the public, the media, or other personnel who do not have a valid need to know without prior approval of an authorized DHS official. State and local homeland security officials may share this document with authorized security personnel without further approval from DHS.

## **(U) Key Findings**

*(U//FOUO) DHS/Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A), the South Carolina Information and Intelligence Center (SCIIC), and Michigan Intelligence Operations Center (MIOC) have not identified a credible terrorist threat to U.S. college sports and entertainment venues or surrounding areas. The high-profile nature of large collegiate events, however, could make them a possible target for domestic or international terrorists.*

*(U//FOUO) International terrorist organizations, particularly those subscribing to al-Qa'ida's ideology, view sports and entertainment venues and large crowds in the surrounding area as potential targets, but DHS/I&A lacks indications of current attack planning involving these locations and events.*

- *(U//FOUO) Surrounding businesses and transportation infrastructure are especially vulnerable, particularly if attack planners perceive or assess the principal venue as secure.*
- *(U//FOUO) The attack methods terrorists are most likely to use against these locations and events are improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs).*

*(U//FOUO) Domestic terrorist groups do not present a significant threat to U.S. college sports and entertainment venues and surrounding areas. Domestic terrorists have attacked soft targets in the past, however, and some probably continue to view major sporting events in large stadiums and associated events in surrounding areas as possible targets.*

## **(U) Background**

(U//FOUO) Hundreds of U.S. college sports and entertainment venues, including indoor arenas and outdoor stadiums, attract large numbers of spectators. Infrastructure around the venues and campus complexes, including hotels, local businesses, and parking areas, often attract large crowds before and after an event. Some events are particularly high profile, attracting national media attention and crowds in excess of 100,000.

## **(U) Threat Environment**

### **(U) International Terrorist Threat**

(U//FOUO) DHS/I&A, the SCIIC, and the MIOC lack credible or specific information indicating current plots aimed at college sports and entertainment venues but assess that terrorist organizations such as al-Qa'ida, its affiliates, and ideologically similar groups view occupied sports stadiums and arenas as potential targets. Al-Qa'ida's repeatedly stated objectives include causing economic damage, mass casualties, and psychological impact, all of which could be achieved by attacking a large college sporting event.

- (U//FOUO) A posting on a jihadist message board in February 2006, “How You Can Kill Thousands of Americans with a Few Hundred Dollars and Three Men,” advocated targeting U.S. sporting venues and other public facilities during events. The posting did not describe or imply an imminent attack.
- (U) Six al-Qa‘ida-inspired men arrested for plotting to attack Fort Dix also allegedly considered targeting the annual Army-Navy football game.

(U//FOUO) Because of the heavy security presence at many college venues, plotters may also consider attacking surrounding targets such as public transportation, large gatherings, or businesses. Terrorists may be able in some cases to achieve similar impact without having to defeat stadium security.

### **(U) Domestic Terrorist Threat**

(U//FOUO) DHS/I&A, the SCIIC, and the MIOC are not aware of any specific or credible threat posed by domestic terrorist groups or individuals to college sports and entertainment venues. It is less likely that domestic terrorists would be interested in attacking college events in general as they tend to limit their interest to a fairly narrow spectrum of sites and institutions, usually those antithetical to their cause. A domestic extremist may, however, choose to attack a college’s sports or entertainment venue in response to a grievance specific to the targeted institution.

### **(U) Lone Wolf Threat**

(U//FOUO) College sporting events are potentially threatened by lone wolves, so called because they operate individually, with little or no outside assistance or guidance, and can be motivated by wide-ranging factors. Because of their nature and lack of obvious ties to known groups of concern, lone wolves present a particular challenge for law enforcement.

- (U) A heavily armed individual, upset at a local decision to deny his business a liquor license, drove to the site of the 2008 Super Bowl on game day. The subject intended to go on a pre-game shooting rampage, but changed his mind at the last moment and turned himself in to police.
- (U//FOUO) In October 2005, a University of Oklahoma student blew himself up in a park outside the Gaylord Family-Oklahoma Memorial Stadium while a game was in progress. Authorities found no ties to terrorism, but the incident’s proximity to the stadium was cause for alarm.

### **(U) Insider Threat**

(U//FOUO) Attack planners could attempt to gain entry to a secure college sports venue by leveraging the access of an employee or by impersonating an authorized individual. Counterfeit law enforcement badges and credentials purchased online—often of high



quality and hard to differentiate from legitimate credentials—can facilitate unauthorized entry. Use of illicit credentials to gain access to the grounds of the sporting events may be difficult to detect.

- (U//FOUO) In 2005, an individual impersonating an FBI Special Agent was able to enter secure areas of the track venue during a professional stock car race. Security personnel or staff did not question his presence, and he was able to move freely within restricted areas.

## **(U) Potential Attack Methods**

### **(U) Explosive Devices**

(U//FOUO) IEDs and VBIEDs are the attack methods terrorists are most likely to use against college sports events and surrounding facilities. DHS/I&A, the SCIIC, and MIOC, however, have no specific or credible intelligence that terrorists plan to attack college sporting events in this manner. Attacks on occupied arenas or stadiums using IEDs or VBIEDs would likely inflict mass casualties and cause significant physical damage. An attack against a crowded college sports stadium also would generate extensive media attention for the attacker.

(U//FOUO) IEDs and VBIEDs also are plausible methods for attacking less secure targets in the vicinity of college sports venues.

### **(U) Suicide Bombers**

(U//FOUO) DHS/I&A, the SCIIC, and MIOC lack specific or credible intelligence indicating terrorist interest in using suicide bombers to attack college sports venues or nearby soft targets.

(U//FOUO) Attacking a college sports event with one or more suicide bombers requires the same general materials and widely available knowledge as a remotely detonated IED. Terrorists may be more likely to use suicide attacks during cooler months at outdoor stadiums where the bulky clothing necessary to conceal explosives would not appear out of place. The weather, however, is not judged to be a decisive factor in terrorist planning.

(U//FOUO) The author of the Internet posting “How You Can Kill Thousands of Americans with a Few Hundred Dollars and Three Men” recommended using three to five “blond or black” American Muslim suicide bombers. To avoid detection, the bombers would hide explosive belts under their clothing. The author also outlined how a suicide bomber would detonate explosives inside the stadium, after which other operatives would detonate their bombs at the exit gates where they expected spectators to flee. The author believed the combined explosions would create a stampede that would kill far more people than the bombings themselves.

## **(U) Air Attacks**

(U//FOUO) Use of an aircraft to attack an occupied stadium may be an attractive option for terrorists as the target is easily identifiable from the air and the concentration of people would offer prospects for achieving mass casualties.

- (U//FOUO) Convicted al-Qa‘ida operative Dhiren Barot’s casing reports on commercial facilities contained pamphlets and information about private helicopter companies and heliports, suggesting he considered use of helicopters for attacks.
- (U//FOUO) The use of radio-controlled aircraft also has been discussed as a possible method for delivering explosives or chemical or biological agents. The amount of material such aircraft are capable of carrying is small, but the psychological impact of an overflight visibly spraying even inert liquid could be considerable. DHS/I&A has no reports indicating that any group is planning such attacks.

(U//FOUO) Small aircraft towing banners or airships providing aerial advertising and TV coverage are common at outdoor sporting events. Williams-Brice Stadium, the home field for the University of South Carolina; Memorial Stadium, home field for Clemson University; and Spartan Stadium, home field for Michigan State University, as well as many other major colleges and universities, are located near general aviation airports. The Federal Aviation Administration issues a “Notice to Airmen” prohibiting overflights of stadium events, but no means of enforcement is available at most events.

## **(U) Chemical, Biological, Radiological, or Nuclear Attack**

(U//FOUO) DHS/I&A, the SCIIC, and the MIOC assess that an attack on a college sporting event involving chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear (CBRN) weapons is highly unlikely. DHS/I&A, the SCIIC, and the MIOC lack information indicating terrorists have the materials and expertise necessary to construct and deliver a CBRN weapon.

(U//FOUO) In the event that a CBRN attack is attempted at a college venue, the complex technical hurdles involved in effective delivery likely would limit the attacker’s ability to cause mass casualties. Such an attempt, however, would create a great deal of panic and media attention while potentially rendering the area of attack temporarily uninhabitable.

## **(U) Outlook**

(U//FOUO) DHS/I&A, the SCIIC, and the MIOC assess that occupied collegiate sports and entertainment venues remain an attractive target for international and domestic terrorists. Campus and venue security officials are urged to remain vigilant and immediately report any suspicious activities to law enforcement.

**UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY**

**(U) Reporting Notice:**

(U) DHS encourages recipients of this document to report information concerning suspicious or criminal activity to DHS and the FBI. The DHS National Operations Center (NOC) can be reached by telephone at 202-282-9685 or by e-mail at NOC.Fusion@dhs.gov. For information affecting the private sector and critical infrastructure, contact the National Infrastructure Coordinating Center (NICC), a sub-element of the NOC. The NICC can be reached by telephone at 202-282-9201 or by e-mail at NICC@dhs.gov. The FBI regional phone numbers can be found online at <http://www.fbi.gov/contact/fo/fo.htm>. When available, each report submitted should include the date, time, location, type of activity, number of people and type of equipment used for the activity, the name of the submitting company or organization, and a designated point of contact.

(U) For comments or questions related to the content or dissemination of this document please contact the DHS/I&A Production Branch at IA.PM@hq.dhs.gov, IA.PM@dhs.gov, or IA.PM@dhs.ic.gov.

(U) **Tracked by:** HSEC-010000-01-05, HSEC-021900-01-05, HSEC-030000-01-05, TERR-050100-01-05, TERR-050200-01-05, TERR-050300-01-05.