



Homeland  
Security



Federal Bureau  
of Investigation

JOINT INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

## (U//FOUO) Security Awareness Reminder for the 2011 Holiday Season

23 November 2011

### (U) Scope

(U//FOUO) This Joint Intelligence Bulletin provides law enforcement, public, and private sector safety officials with an evaluation of potential terrorist threats during the 2011 US holiday season, extending from Thanksgiving through New Year's Day. This information is provided to support the activities of DHS and FBI and to assist federal, state, local, tribal and territorial government counterterrorism and first responder officials in deterring, preventing, preempting, or responding to terrorist attacks within the United States.

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### **(U//FOUO) Terrorist Interest in the Holiday Season**

(U//FOUO) While we are not aware of any credible terrorist threats to the Homeland specifically timed to coincide with the 2011 holiday season, attempted terrorist incidents during last year's holiday season, as well as intelligence received over the past 12 months, suggest terrorists recognize that the large gatherings occurring during the holiday season provide an opportunity for mass casualty attacks. Attack planning, however, is likely to depend more on terrorist readiness to execute an attack rather than on a desire to attack on a specific date.

- (U//FOUO) As of February 2010, al-Qa'ida was contemplating large attacks in the Homeland on symbolic dates and specifically identified Christmas and other prominent American holidays as key dates, presumably for attacks. We are uncertain how widely al-Qa'ida's interest in timing attacks to symbolic dates has been shared or accepted within the group or among its affiliates and allies, and we have no specific credible information to suggest any plotting targeting the Homeland was developed based on al-Qa'ida's February 2010 intent.
- (U//FOUO) On 26 November 2010, a US citizen was arrested for allegedly plotting to detonate an explosive-laden van at the annual Christmas tree lighting ceremony in Portland, Oregon. This was the first incident we know of in which a homegrown violent extremist (HVE) specifically planned an attack during a holiday event.\*
- (U) On 11 December 2010, an Iraqi-born Swedish citizen attempted to conduct a suicide bombing, probably targeting a crowded pedestrian shopping area in central Stockholm. The device detonated prematurely, killing only the bomber.

### **(U//FOUO) Small-Scale Attacks Remain a Viable Tactic**

(U//FOUO) Based on past terrorist interest, we remain concerned that violent extremists could seek to conduct small-scale attacks during this year's holiday season. Lone offenders, unburdened by organizational constraints that can slow operational decisions by established terrorist groups, could also attempt an attack against easily-accessible, low-security targets.

(U//FOUO) Al-Qa'ida propaganda has encouraged individuals to conduct local attacks in their home country—using simple improvised explosive devices (IEDs) or small arms—that would not require overseas travel for training or communication with known terrorists; such activities would provide opportunities for plot disruption by law enforcement and first responders.

- (U) US-born al-Qa'ida spokesman Adam Gadahn<sup>USPER</sup>, in an English-language video released on 7 March 2010, advocated attacks on Western mass

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\* (U//FOUO) A Homegrown Violent Extremist (HVE) is defined 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 of 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 from a foreign actor.

transportation systems that could bring major cities to a halt, cost the “enemy” billions, and send its corporations into bankruptcy.

- (U//FOUO) In early June 2011, al-Qa’ida released a two-part video online, encouraging Western Muslims to conduct attacks in their home countries using small arms which are easily “attainable in the United States.”

(U//FOUO) Although we judge that al-Qa’ida has not abandoned interest in terrorist attacks approximating the scale of the attacks of September 11, 2001, the group’s Yemen-based affiliate—al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)—has praised relatively inexpensive and smaller-scale attacks. AQAP has publicly championed even its disrupted plots, stressing the economic damage and disruption it has inflicted on the West and how it has forced Western nations to spend a disproportionate amount of money on security.

### **(U//FOUO) Indicators of Possible Terrorist Activity**

(U//FOUO) Although some of the following indicators may constitute constitutionally protected activity, given the context of all available information, they may be indicative of preoperational surveillance or preparation for an attack.

- (U//FOUO) **Suspicious Purchases of Explosive Precursors:** In preparation for his attack on the New York City subway system in 2009, convicted terrorist Nazjibullah Zazi<sup>USPER</sup> made several large purchases of nail polish remover and various “hair salon” products containing acetone and hydrogen peroxide—explosive precursors—from a beauty supply store in Denver, Colorado. Convicted terrorist Faisal Shahzad<sup>USPER</sup> made large purchases of urea nitrate fertilizer, which he believed could act as an explosive precursor, from a local hardware store prior to his failed vehicle-borne IED (VBIED) attack in Times Square.
- (U//FOUO) **Preoperational Surveillance:** On 22 June 2011, Joseph Anthony Davis<sup>USPER</sup> and Frederick Domingue Jr.<sup>USPER</sup> were arrested for allegedly plotting an attack against a Military Entrance Processing Station in Seattle, Washington. The two men purportedly conducted extensive surveillance by driving past and parking at the recruiting station to collect sensitive information regarding security personnel, entry points, security cameras, and security procedures, resulting in a hand-drawn map of the facility, according to court documents.
- (U//FOUO) **Suspicious Questions and Materials:** On 27 July 2011, Naser Jason Abdo<sup>USPER</sup> was arrested at a hotel in Killeen, Texas outside of Ft. Hood. Authorities were alerted to Abdo’s suspicious activities after he allegedly attempted to purchase an unusually large amount of black powder and firearms from a local gun shop. When arrested, Abdo purportedly had in his possession a copy of the *Inspire* article, “How to Make a Bomb in the Kitchen of your Mom,” and Ft. Hood uniform patches purchased from a local military surplus store.

**(U) Protective Measures**

(U//FOUO) Protective measures include equipment, personnel, and procedures designed to protect a target area against threats and to mitigate the effects of an attack.

(U//FOUO) The following measures are recommended to mitigate the threat from IED, VBIED, or small arms attacks. These protective measures are applicable for federal, state, local, and private sector partners to protect against the identified attack scenarios:

- (U//FOUO) Establish a public awareness and vigilance campaign to reinforce awareness of the threat environment; if possible, repeat security notices in language(s) germane to the ethnicities particular to the region's demographics;
- (U//FOUO) Ensure that a simple and consistent mechanism is in place to report suspicious activities to local law enforcement;
- (U//FOUO) Implement appropriate protective measures identified during threat vulnerability and risk assessments;
- (U//FOUO) Train and update personnel on all security response procedures and incorporate current and previous threat information into employee briefings;
- (U//FOUO) Confirm communication systems are interoperable between facility or event organizations and local emergency responders. Test communications equipment, including primary and backup systems, frequently depending on the situation and level of threat;
- (U//FOUO) Use internal surveillance systems that can be accessed remotely;
- (U//FOUO) Maintain police presence at strategic locations at high-profile events, specifically at all personnel entrance sites or traffic choke points; post additional security personnel in areas where large groups of people congregate;
- (U//FOUO) Implement canine roving patrols in parking lots and critical facility areas;
- (U//FOUO) Establish a comprehensive security plan and emergency response plan for events;
- (U//FOUO) Identify and pre-designate primary and secondary evacuation routes and assembly areas for building or site occupants;
- (U//FOUO) Develop and exercise procedures for shutting down the facility or event if a threat is deemed too credible to continue operations;
- (U//FOUO) Establish liaison, protocols, and regular communications with law enforcement and emergency responders to clarify and coordinate emergency responses;

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- (U//FOUO) Prevent pattern recognition by an adversary by modifying security procedures—such as the placement of security barriers and timing of perimeter patrols—so they occur at irregular intervals;
- (U//FOUO) Consider using a centralized parking site and shuttle service to keep vehicles away from critical assets. Tow all illegally parked vehicles;
- (U//FOUO) Where possible create vehicle access control points to impede the approach of a VBIED toward its intended target;
- (U//FOUO) Prepare messages to be broadcast over intercoms to instruct personnel about immediate actions to be taken;
- (U//FOUO) Identify procedures for dealing with special needs populations (e.g., physical disabilities, non-English-speaking); and
- (U//FOUO) In the event of an incident, conduct an evacuation of the area surrounding a package or vehicle which is considered a threat, and ensure the evacuation site is a considerable distance away to avoid blast and fragmentation hazards.

### **(U) Outlook**

(U//FOUO) Although leadership losses over the past year have likely degraded their capabilities, al-Qa'ida and allied terrorist groups continue to seek innovative ways to conduct attacks and circumvent security procedures. We remain concerned that the upcoming holiday season will provide attractive opportunities for terrorists and HVEs to target the Homeland. It is imperative that first responders and security personnel remain alert for indicators of attack planning and immediately report any suspicious activity. We continue to operate under the premise that terrorists not yet identified by the Intelligence Community and law enforcement may be operating in the United States and could advance and execute attacks without warning.

### **(U) Reporting Notice**

(U) DHS and the FBI encourage recipients of this document to report information concerning suspicious or criminal activity to the local FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force and State and Major Urban Area Fusion Center. The FBI's 24/7 Strategic Information and Operations Center can be reached by telephone number 202-323-3300 or by email at [SIOC@ic.fbi.gov](mailto:SIOC@ic.fbi.gov). The DHS National Operations Center (NOC) can be reached by telephone at (202) 282-9685 or by email at [NOC.Fusion@dhs.gov](mailto:NOC.Fusion@dhs.gov). FBI regional phone numbers can be found online at <http://www.fbi.gov/contact/fo/fo.htm> and State and Major Urban Area Fusion Center information may be obtained at <http://www.dhs.gov/contact-fusion-centers>. 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 email at [NICC@dhs.gov](mailto:NICC@dhs.gov). 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.

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(U) For comments or questions related to the content or dissemination of this document, please contact the FBI Counterterrorism Analysis Section at (202) 324-3000 or FBI\_CTAS@ic.fbi.gov, or I&A Production Branch staff at IA.PM@hq.dhs.gov.

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**(U) Tracked by:** HSEC-8.1, HSEC-8.2, HSEC-9.1, HSEC-9.2

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