



15 March 2019

(U//FOUO) Attacks on Mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, May Inspire Supporters of Violent Ideologies

(U) Scope

(U//FOUO) This *Joint Intelligence Bulletin (JIB)* is intended to provide information on Australian national and violent extremist Brenton Tarrant's 15 March 2019 attacks on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. These attacks underscore the enduring nature of violent threats posed to faith-based communities.^a FBI, DHS, and NCTC advise federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial government counterterrorism and law enforcement officials and private sector security partners responsible for securing faith-based communities in the Homeland to remain vigilant in light of the enduring threat to faith-based communities posed by domestic extremists (DEs)^b, as well as by homegrown violent extremists (HVEs)^c who may seek retaliation. This *JIB* is provided to assist federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial counterterrorism and law enforcement officials and private sector security partners to effectively deter, prevent, preempt, or respond to incidents and terrorist attacks in the United States.

^a (U//FOUO) For the purpose of this *JIB*, the FBI, DHS, and NCTC define faith-based communities as houses of worship (e.g., synagogues, churches, and mosques), cultural community centers, and other establishments or individuals associated with various faiths.

^b (U//FOUO) The FBI and DHS define a domestic extremist (DE) as an individual based and operating entirely within the United States or its territories without direction or inspiration from a foreign terrorist group or other foreign power who seeks to further political or social goals wholly or in part through unlawful acts of force or violence. The mere advocacy of political or social positions, political activism, use of strong rhetoric, or generalized philosophic embrace of violent tactics may not constitute extremism, and may be constitutionally protected. The FBI defines a hate crime as a criminal offense against a person or property motivated in whole or in part by an offender's bias against a race, religion, ethnicity/national origin, disability, gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

^c (U//FOUO) The FBI, DHS, and NCTC define an HVE as a person of any citizenship who has lived or operated primarily in the United States or its territories who 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 whose actions are independent 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.

IA-33512-19

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(U) Attack Details

(U//FOUO) On 15 March 2019, New Zealand police arrested an Australian national who appeared to be inspired by a white supremacist ideology and who allegedly conducted a shooting attack on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. This attack highlights the enduring threat of violence posed to faith-based communities. There are currently 49 victims deceased, and 20 others are listed as being in critical condition following the attack.

- » (U//FOUO) On 15 March 2019, at about 1:40 PM local time, Australian national Brenton Tarrant used firearms to attack the Masjid Al Noor Mosque in the city of Christchurch, New Zealand, before conducting a similar shooting attack at the Linwood Masjid Mosque, approximately four miles away. Tarrant drove to the attack sites and livestreamed a video of the attack. Police also discovered improvised explosive devices in a vehicle connected with the attack. Tarrant is currently the only known perpetrator; however, investigation of his movements and associates continues.
- » (U//FOUO) Tarrant disseminated a manifesto prior to the shooting which detailed his concerns of perceived “white genocide.” The manifesto contains a wide range of anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim views. One reason listed as to why he carried out the attack was “to create conflict...within the United States on the ownership of firearms in order to further the social, cultural, political, and racial divide within the United states [sic].”
- » (U//FOUO) Tarrant claimed to have been planning the attack for two years and recently relocated to New Zealand to live temporarily while he “planned and trained.” He claimed to have chosen to conduct his attack in Christchurch three months prior to show such attacks could happen anywhere.

(U) Mosque Attacks Could Incite Like-Minded and Retaliatory Attacks

(U//FOUO) We are concerned online sharing of Tarrant’s livestreamed footage could amplify viewer reaction to the violent attack and possibly incite similar attacks by those adhering to violent extremist ideologies in the United States and abroad, as well as retaliatory attacks from HVEs and individuals otherwise affiliated with foreign terrorist organizations. Tarrant appeared to have been influenced by prior attacks by violent extremists in the United States and other countries, and we remain concerned that US-based DEs of similar ideologies could become inspired by this attack. Although most HVEs generally do not mobilize to violence in response to specific events and instead are usually influenced by a confluence of sociopolitical, ideological, and personal factors, exceptions may occur and we remain concerned for the potential of retaliatory attacks by some HVEs, as we have already seen calls for attacks by violent extremists online.

- » (U//FOUO) Tarrant claimed Norwegian mass attacker Anders Brevik gave his “blessing” for the attack. Tarrant’s ammunition cases also displayed handwritten names of violent extremists in Canada and elsewhere who previously conducted violent attacks on Muslims or in support of violent extremist ideologies.
- » (U//FOUO) An examination of online jihadist media following the mosque attacks indicates various al-Qa’ida and ISIS supporters are posting attack images to express outrage and are calling upon all Muslims to respond to the New Zealand attacks by launching their own near-term attacks in retaliation.

(U) Outlook

(U//FOUO) The mosque attacks in Christchurch underscore the continued threat to religious institutions by US-based violent extremists. The FBI, DHS, and NCTC urge state and local authorities, as well as private sector security partners, to promptly report suspicious activities related to potential DE attacks or material support to foreign terrorist organizations. For additional information regarding threats to US-based religious entities, please refer to the *JIB* entitled “Continued Interest in Targeting Faith-Based Communities in the Homeland,” published on 22 February 2019.

(U) Indicators

(U) Due to the highly personal nature of radicalization and mobilization to violence, it is difficult to assess specific indicators that are indicative of US-based violent extremists’ intent to commit violence at home or abroad.^d Specific indicators of mobilization to violence can be found in the unclassified booklet, “Homegrown Violent Extremist Mobilization Indicators,” which is available on NCTC’s website at <https://go.usa.gov/xEKgd>.

(U) Report Suspicious Activity

(U) To report suspicious activity, law enforcement, Fire-EMS, private security personnel, and emergency managers should follow established protocols; all other personnel should call 911 or contact local law enforcement. Suspicious activity reports (SARs) will be forwarded to the appropriate fusion center and FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force for further action. For more information on the Nationwide SAR Initiative, visit <http://nsi.ncirc.gov/resources.aspx>.

(U) Administrative Note: Law Enforcement Response

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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 by email at FBI_CTAS@ic.fbi.gov or the I&A Production Branch by e-mail at IA.PM@hq.dhs.gov.

(U) Tracked by: HSEC-8.1, HSEC-8.2, HSEC-8.3, HSEC-8.5

^d (U//FOUO) The FBI, DHS, and NCTC define radicalization as the process through which an individual changes from a nonviolent belief system to a belief system that includes the willingness to actively advocate, facilitate, or use unlawful violence as a method to affect societal or political change.