

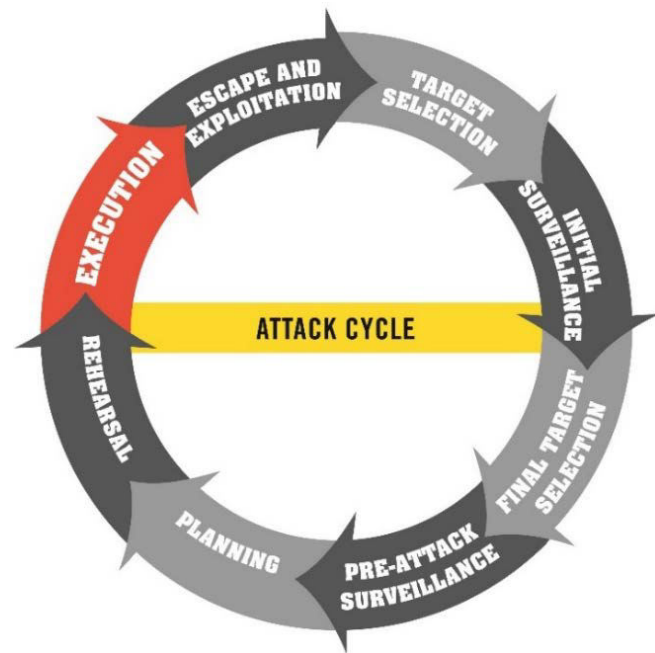
## FIRST RESPONDER'S TOOLBOX

### (U) Terrorist Attack Planning Cycle – A Homeland Case Study

#### (U) INTRODUCTION

(U) This case study is an examination of behaviors that resulted in a disrupted terrorist attack, revealing a cycle of planning and preparation that could provide indicators for preventing similar attempts. The terrorist attack planning cycle is not a static, linear process but rather could begin in any of the several stages with variances in details, sequence, and timing. An individual's mobilization to violence often provides observable behavioral indicators such as, pre-attack surveillance, training, and rehearsal. The indicators potentially allow third-party observers<sup>1</sup> and law enforcement to identify individuals moving to violence, circumstances that may allow for disruption of planned attacks. This product is intended to cultivate an awareness of the planning cycle among stakeholders for identification, mitigation, and disruption of attack planning.

(U//FOUO) Analysis of 57 fully adjudicated FBI international terrorism cases disrupted in the US between 2009 and 2012, revealed that in 84% of the cases, at least one third-party observed concerning behavior<sup>2</sup> that preceded radicalization<sup>3</sup> or mobilization to violence. Additional review of the disrupted international terrorism cases highlight that a majority of third-party observers were individuals with an interpersonal or familial relationship to the subject. Identifying observable behaviors related to the attack planning cycle is a key step to disrupting and mitigating attacks, and highlights the importance of third-party observers in the detection of the attack-planning cycle.



<sup>1</sup> (U) Individuals—such as family members, peers, authority figures, and strangers—whose relationship and level of interaction with a person of concern enables them to witness or become aware of activities or behavior that may indicate radicalization or mobilization to violence.

<sup>2</sup> (U) Broad term used to describe suspicious activity, which could be applied to any criminal intent, and is not as narrowly defined as the indicators of the attack planning cycle.

<sup>3</sup> (U) Radicalization is 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 effect societal or political change.



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### (U) CASE

(U) Law enforcement became aware of John T. Booker Jr., a 20-year-old US citizen from Topeka, Kansas, through a citizen complaint. In April 2015, Booker was indicted on one count of attempting to use a weapon of mass destruction (explosives), one count of attempting to damage property by means of an explosive, and one count of attempting to provide material support to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). This case is an example of a homegrown violent extremist inspired by overseas terrorist groups who exhibited several observable behaviors of the attack-planning cycle that indicated radicalization and mobilization toward violence.

(U) In February 2014, Booker was recruited by the US Army in Kansas City, Missouri, and was scheduled to report for basic training in April 2014. On 15 March 2014, Booker publicly posted on a social media website his intent to “wage jihad” and desire to martyr himself. On 19 March 2014, he reiterated his desire for martyrdom on the social media site by indicating end-of-life preparations, a behavior suggestive of the execution stage of the attack-planning cycle, reportedly observed by third-parties.

(U) On 20 March 2014, Booker was interviewed by the FBI whereby he admitted his intent to commit an insider attack against American soldiers like Nidal Hasan<sup>USPER</sup> at Fort Hood, Texas. Booker stated that he had formulated several plans, which included firing at other soldiers while at the firing range during basic training or during pre-deployment at a military base. Finally, in November 2014, Booker expressed to an associate his desire to join ISIL, showed an online video about suicide bombers and martyrs, and stated that he had wanted to die a martyr since the first time he watched the video.

(U) Examination of the facts in the attack plot revealed that, over some years, Booker had engaged in several behaviors indicative of radicalization or mobilization to violence. The observations were reportedly made by third-parties, some of whom, ultimately reported to law enforcement. It should be noted that although not all third-party observers reported Booker to law enforcement between 2013 and early 2015, the limited number who did resulted in disruption of his plans. The Booker case presents evidence to support the terrorist-planning cycle and proves that recognizing the behaviors in each stage may serve as a guide to disrupt other violent extremists who may be planning a terrorist attack. The following depicts Booker’s activities within each stage of the attack cycle:

### (U) ATTACK CYCLE

(U//FOUO) **TARGET SELECTION:** Encouraging violence toward the military coupled with seeking occupations with sensitive access could be observable behaviors indicative of terrorist-attack planning. A summary of Booker’s activities within this stage of planning includes:

- (U) In early 2013, during a visit to a local military recruitment office (MRO), Booker advised the recruiter that he would “switch sides” and kill US soldiers. The recruiter reported the information to his superior; however, no action was taken. No records of Booker’s visit to the MRO were kept, as he did not make it through preliminary screenings. The superior’s failure to take action and Booker



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not completing preliminary screening allowed Booker to go to another MRO in Kansas and successfully navigate the application process.

- (U) In December 2014, Booker told an associate that he wanted to attack a local US military target with guns or explosives. He further advised that he frequently observed high-ranking military personnel at his place of employment and that he was contemplating a plan to abduct a high-ranking military officer.
- (U) In December 2014, Booker discussed with an associate his ideas about targeting military members. Booker suggested that using pepper spray or a Taser gun would be helpful in capturing a soldier.

(U//FOUO) **INITIAL SURVEILLANCE:** Surveillance of potential targets may be observable to security guards, law enforcement, and the public. A summary of Booker's activities within this step includes:

- (U) In December 2014, Booker identified potential targets of attack and directed an associate to a local National Guard facility and MRO.
- (U) In February 2015, Booker stated to an associate that he had looked at an MRO located within a local mall, counted the number of doors inside, and estimated the number of military personnel who were usually present.

(U) **FINAL TARGET SELECTION:** In March 2015, Booker evaluated several US military targets and suggested a military base in Manhattan, Kansas, called "the Big Red One" as a good target. Booker presented two associates with primary/secondary travel routes from Topeka to Fort Riley, Kansas, possible on-base targets, and potential base access points.

(U//FOUO) **PRE-ATTACK SURVEILLANCE:** Acquisition of maps or blueprints without a plausible explanation or logical purpose may demonstrate pre-attack surveillance and can be observed by individuals who have access to computer search history, including family, friends, and/or law enforcement with a warrant. Booker's activities within this step of planning include:

- (U) In March 2015, Booker conducted online research regarding population data and found that Fort Riley has a daytime population of approximately 25,000.
- (U) In April 2015, Booker and two associates, identified three potential target buildings located at Fort Riley, including routes to the buildings. Booker used a map to draw arrows on roadways that were potential travel routes through the military base to the target locations.

(U) **PLANNING:** During March and April 2015, Booker took several observable steps to move his attack plans forward.

- (U) **Martyrdom Video/Statement:** On 10 March 2015, Booker and two associates went to Freedom Park near Marshall Army Airfield at Fort Riley. One associate took video of Booker delivering an ISIL message written by Booker. He gave an oath of allegiance to the leader of ISIL and encouraged Muslims watching the video to pledge allegiance and support ISIL.
- (U) **Renting Storage Locker:** On 17 March 2015, Booker rented a storage locker to maintain and



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store items needed for his attack. The funds to rent the unit were borrowed from a co-conspirator who knew that Booker intended to use the locker to construct and store a VBIED and that Booker would detonate the device at Fort Riley. Booker told his associates that his house was not safe to store things as he shared it with his cousin.

- (U) **Purchasing Items for VBIED:** On 25 March 2015, Booker and an associate traveled to local retail locations and purchased several components that could be used to make a homemade explosive and stored the items at Booker's rented storage unit.
- (U) **Transportation of Materials:** On 8 April 2015, Booker transported device components to a second storage unit, where a second associate received them.

(U//FOUO) **REHEARSAL:** Conducting online research for target selection and acquiring technical capabilities without a valid cause can be additional indicators. Although there is no reporting indicating that Booker physically rehearsed his plan, he conducted research online to ensure there would be no premature detonation. In March 2015, Booker told an associate that he had been watching a video of an American Syrian suicide bomber and that he wanted to build and detonate a similar truck bomb.

(U) **EXECUTION:** Booker followed through with his attack plan and insisted on being the one to detonate the VBIED. On 10 April 2015, an associate and Booker transported the VBIED to an entry gate at Fort Riley. Booker believed the gate to be minimally used and one that would permit easy base access. This would allow the VBIED to be brought on-base and detonated while inflicting maximum casualties. Booker was taken into federal custody while he attempted to initiate connections to arm the VBIED.

(U) **ESCAPE AND EXPLOITATION:** Booker perceived religious justification for his actions and wanted his reward in heaven. For these reasons, he had no intention of escaping. He told the two associates that he wanted to ensure that all his debts were paid before committing martyrdom and entering paradise. The day before the attack, Booker gave away important personal belongings to a work supervisor whom he held in high regard. Booker intended to detonate the VBIED and commit suicide while killing as many persons as possible, and/or use a firearm before he died. Booker told an associate that using a suicide bomb was his number one aspiration because he could not be captured, all evidence would be destroyed, and he would be guaranteed to hit his target.

(U) **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:** For additional information, please see the following products which can be found on the Homeland Security Information Network (<https://hsin.dhs.gov/>), the Law Enforcement Enterprise Portal (<https://www.cjis.gov/>), and Regional Information Sharing System (<https://www.riss.net>):

- (U) Case Studies Highlight Radicalization and Mobilization Dynamics (9 November 2016)
- (U) Homegrown Violent Extremist Mobilization Indicators for Public Safety Personnel - 2017 Edition (4 January 2017)
- (U) Radicalization Dynamics, A Primer (June 2012)



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