



Homeland
Security

Office of Intelligence and Analysis

REFERENCE AID

9 March 2017



(U//FOUO) Overview of Recently Successful or Arrested HVEs' Radicalization to Violence

(U//FOUO) Prepared by the Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A). Coordinated with FBI, DIA, NCTC, and NORTHCOM.

(U) Scope

(U//FOUO) This Reference Aid is based on I&A's review of the radicalization to violence of 39 US homegrown violent extremists (HVEs) who either successfully carried out or were arrested before attempting to carry out attacks in the Homeland between 1 January 2015 and 31 December 2016. It is intended to inform federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial counterterrorism, law enforcement, and countering violent extremism (CVE) officials. For additional information about these HVEs, please see the classified I&A *Intelligence Assessment* "(U//FOUO) Commonalities in HVEs' Radicalization to Violence Provide Prevention Opportunities," published 10 February 2017.

IA-0099-17

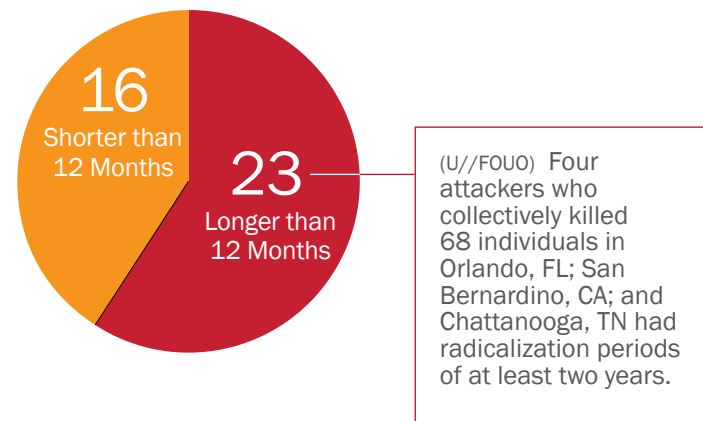
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(U//FOUO) Overview of Recently Successful or Arrested HVEs' Radicalization to Violence

(U//FOUO) I&A reviewed the radicalization to violence of 39 US homegrown violent extremists (HVEs) who either successfully carried out or were arrested before attempting to carry out attacks in the Homeland between 1 January 2015 and 31 December 2016. We found that 23 of the 39 HVEs—including the lethal Orlando, San Bernardino, and Chattanooga attackers—took more than 12 months to radicalize to violence.^{1,2,3} The most commonly observed initial signs of radicalization were posting or discussing violent extremist messages, contact with US or overseas-based violent extremists, and passively consuming violent extremist media.

(U//FOUO) I&A assesses most HVEs prefer mobilizing with like-minded individuals, given that 32 of the 39 HVEs examined pursued plotting with friends, associates, and/or family members. In their plotting, HVEs showed a preference for simple weapons, such as firearms or edged weapons, over improvised explosive devices. Nineteen of the examined HVEs previously exhibited aspirations to travel overseas to support violence, but either failed to act upon or achieve this goal.

(U) RADICALIZATION TO VIOLENCE TIMELINE



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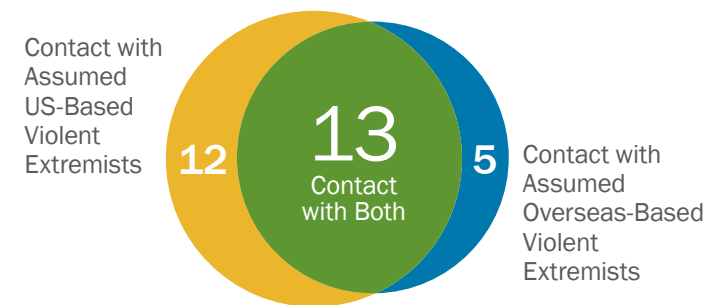
(U) FIRST INDICATION OF RADICALIZATION*



* (U//FOUO) Only the top three categories were included, and some individuals have been double counted.

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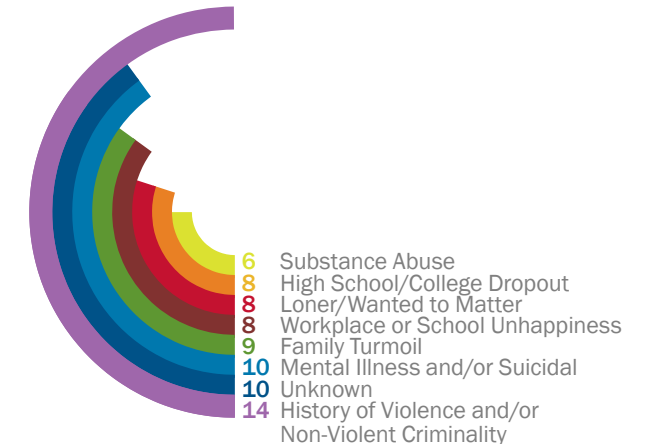
(U) CONTACT WITH VIOLENT EXTREMISTS†



† (U//FOUO) Nine individuals not included due to no identified contact.

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(U) PERSONAL FACTORS DISPLAYED BY EXAMINED HVEs‡



‡ (U//FOUO) Some individuals have been double counted.

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(U) NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO CONSIDERED TRAVELING



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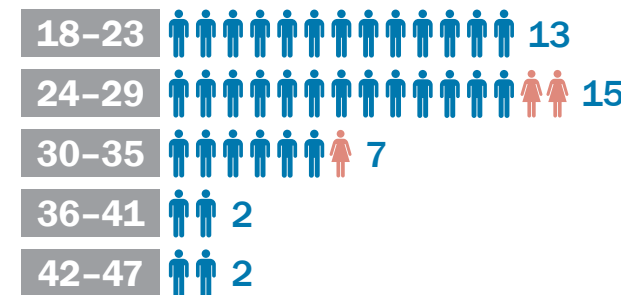
(U) WEAPONS USED OR INTENDED TO BE USED IN PLOT**



** (U//FOUO) One individual not included due to his use of a vehicle as a weapon.

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(U) AGES AND GENDER AT TIME OF ARREST
Median Age 26

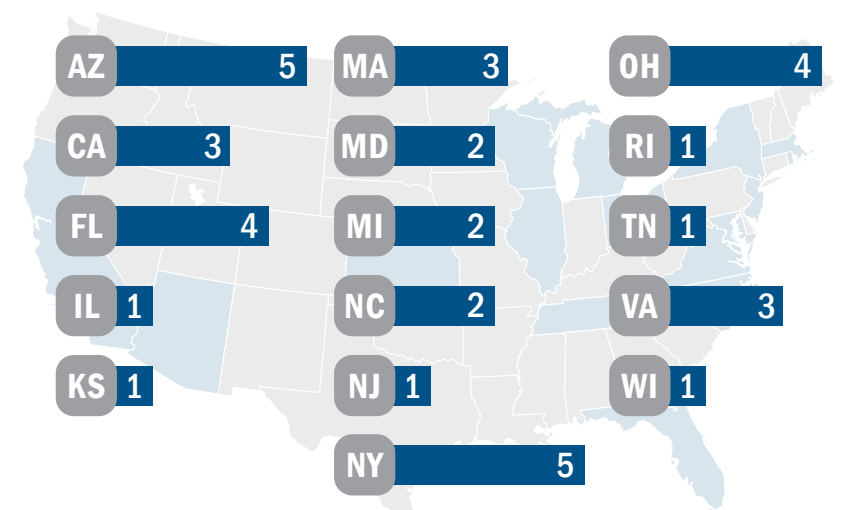


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(U) STATES RESIDED IN



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(U) LONE OFFENDERS⁴ VS. SMALL GROUPS^{||}



^{||} (U//FOUO) For the purposes of this paper, a "small group" is defined as having between two and five known participants who pursued plotting together.

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(U//FOUO) Sources available upon request.

(U) Source Summary Statement

(U//FOUO) We coded each of the 39 HVEs we examined against 36 fields of data, which collectively covered each individual's biographic information, radicalization factors, and mobilization behaviors. We considered UNCLASSIFIED information disseminated by the end of 2016, which included court documents, investigative press reporting from mainstream news outlets we assess are generally free from bias, and DHS travel records. The court documents were key to informing many of our findings about recent HVEs' radicalization and mobilization patterns due to these documents' comprehensiveness, and we have **high confidence** in their reliability because the information was typically derived from federal or state law enforcement investigations which led to the HVEs being arrested and typically charged with engaging in terrorism activities. A version of this Reference Aid was previously released at the SECRET level, which reflected relevant disseminated all-source intelligence reporting but not non-disseminated FBI case information about these HVEs.

(U//FOUO) I&A has **medium confidence** in our assessment that HVEs typically experience radicalization to violence timelines lasting longer than 12 months, which was primarily based on our review of court documents and press reporting from which we were able to determine the first known signs of radicalization to violence among the examined HVEs. We note there are challenges in determining the exact date that radicalization began, which is often a personal and individualized process that is difficult to observe. Should more information become available on some of the examined HVEs' radicalization start dates, it would likely further support our assessment by indicating an earlier start date than we currently documented. We determined the end of each HVE's radicalization timeline based on when they were arrested or committed an attack.

(U//FOUO) I&A has **medium confidence** that we have identified the most common signs of radicalization based on a body of press reporting and court documents detailing the activities and arrests of the examined HVEs. Additional reporting on the online activities of the HVEs, as well as information from the HVEs themselves or their family and friends about possible indicators of their loved ones' radicalization, would further strengthen our confidence in this assessment.

(U//FOUO) I&A has **medium confidence** that we identified the most common mobilization factors among the examined HVEs—to include interest in traveling overseas to support violence, a preference for mobilizing with others, and an inclination towards using simple weapons. This confidence is based primarily on our review of court documents and press reporting. Our confidence would be strengthened with further reporting on why HVEs chose their specific targets, weapons, associates, and other key elements of their mobilization pathway.

(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) Tracked by: HSEC-8.1, HSEC-8.2, HSEC-8.3, HSEC-8.9

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- ¹ (U//FOUO) DHS defines 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 from a foreign actor.
- ² (U//FOUO) DHS defines **radicalization** as the process through which an individual changes from a non-violent 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.
- ³ (U//FOUO) DIA judges eight individuals included in this Assessment, including Garland, TX attackers Elton Simpson and his associates, do not meet the definition of an HVE because DIA assesses these individuals were under the direction of ISIL external plotters overseas.
- ⁴ (U//FOUO) DHS defines a **lone offender** as an individual motivated by one or more extremist ideologies who, operating alone, supports or engages in acts of unlawful violence in furtherance of that ideology or ideologies that may involve influence from a larger terrorist organization or a foreign actor.