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## Indiana Department of Homeland Security Indiana Intelligence Fusion Center

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## Suspicious Activity Involving Emergency Services and Hospitals

This is a Joint Assessment on the behalf of the following agencies:



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## **(U//FOUO) Suspicious Activity Involving Emergency Services and Hospitals**

*(U//FOUO) Prepared by the Indiana Intelligence Fusion Center (IIFC), Virginia Fusion Center (VFC), Colorado Information Analysis Center (CIAC), Southern Nevada Counter-Terrorism Center (SNCTC), and Illinois Statewide Terrorism and Intelligence Center (STIC).*

### **Scope**

(U//FOUO) The purpose of this assessment is to provide situational awareness of suspicious incidents involving the ESS, as reported by local public safety officials and State and Local Fusion Centers in Indiana, Virginia, Colorado, Nevada, and Illinois.

### **Key Findings**

*(U//FOUO) The IIFC assesses there to be no specific foreign or domestic terrorism threat related to the ESS, to include hospitals, within the jurisdictions of contributing State and Local Fusion Centers.*

*(U//FOUO) Pre-operational surveillance of emergency service facilities, hospitals and fire stations could provide an adversary with emergency procedures and protocols, response time and capabilities, and facilitate access to emergency service uniforms and equipment.*

*(U//FOUO) Attacks on ESS personnel, physical assets, and communication/cyber systems are serious threats to the continuity of operations.*

*(U//FOUO) Enrollment into an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) course provides an understanding of emergency procedures and protocols that a terrorist may use to learn about emergency response vulnerabilities.*

## **Suspicious Incidents in the Emergency Services Sector**

### **EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIAN (EMT) SCHOOLS**

- (U//FOUO) In December 2007, Indianapolis public safety officials reported suspicious activity involving two males of Middle Eastern descent who were enrolled in local EMT classes. The subjects reportedly displayed little interest in learning actual EMT functions; however, they made extensive inquiries regarding EMT communication systems and the response operations of emergency service personnel to fire and hospital staff. According to school officials the subjects engaged in the following suspicious activity:

- (U//FOUO) During the ambulance operations portion of the course, the subjects were reportedly interested only in the radio operations and controls in the driver's compartment of the vehicle.
- (U//FOUO) School officials reported that during the ride-along phase of the course, the two subjects were very inquisitive of firehouse operations and response plans, but uninterested in the actual job of an EMT.
- (U//FOUO) During training at the hospital, the subjects were more interested in security aspects of the hospital and the weapons of on-duty police officers than the actual role of an EMT.

(U//FOUO) On April 13, 2007, the IIFC received a report of a Middle Eastern subject in Dekalb County, IN who enrolled in an EMT class at Dekalb Memorial Hospital. The subject seemed more interested in the operations of the hospital than the EMT class. The instructor noted the man seemed to pay more attention when words like "secondary devices" and "terrorism" were mentioned in the class as it relates to EMTs.

(U//FOUO) On February 26, 2008, the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department-Counter-Terrorism Section (CTS) received a call from an EMT instructor at a local Las Vegas hospital regarding three subjects inquiring about EMT training.

- (U//FOUO) According to hospital officials, the subjects claimed they were foreign doctors and were interested in receiving EMT/paramedic training. The subjects further claimed they were interested in driving ambulances; however, the licensing process was taking too long. They inquired if private courses were available and claimed money was not an issue. When advised the course would take three to six months to complete, the subjects again inquired about taking a private fast-track class.

## HOSPITALS

***(U//FOUO) Hospitals are considered soft targets due to their inherent openness and the significant number of people who visit daily. Additionally, hospitals are usually located close to public transportation nodes. Information about the facilities such as floor plans and maps are easily accessible via the Internet.***

- (U//FOUO) In October 2007, security personnel at a Maywood, Illinois hospital received a report regarding two unidentified males observed in a yellow rental box truck (unknown plate). The complainant advised she overheard one of the suspicious subjects question, "Where you at? You are by Ground Zero? Good, OK."
- (U//FOUO) In December 2007, a Highway Watch member reported suspicious activity involving an unidentified male, of possible Middle Eastern decent, who

was observed photographing and videotaping hospital and transportation infrastructures in Chicago, Illinois. The subject was reportedly traveling on the Chicago elevated train (L-Train) system, utilizing a digital camera to capture images of a major Chicago hospital, a nearby medical school campus and a Veterans Affairs (VA) hospital.

- (U//FOUO) On January 12, 2008, two Middle Eastern men were videotaping inside a hospital in Indianapolis. A security officer at the hospital confronted the individuals at which time the men turned the video recorder off. When asked to produce identifications the subjects were unable to do so and proceeded to leave the premises by car.

## **FIRE STATIONS**

***(U//FOUO) Multiple incidents of surveillance at fire stations provide valuable intelligence and may be an indicator of pre-operational targeting of first responders.***

- (U//FOUO) In October 2007, the Las Vegas Police Department observed two males of Moroccan descent parked in a Las Vegas fire station parking lot. When encountered the subjects advised they were looking for a highway. In December 2007, the same subjects were observed by fire department employees at the station loitering near power transformers. Between December 2007 and January 2008 the subjects exhibited suspicious behavior at various Las Vegas fire stations.
- (U//FOUO) The fire stations that reported the incidents above are the primary responding stations to Las Vegas Boulevard where the city's largest hotels, casinos, and resort properties are located.
- (U//FOUO) In March 2008, the Colorado Information Analysis Center (CIAC) released a bulletin seeking information regarding the possible surveillance of fire stations. The CIAC had received reports of possible surveillance of fire service decontamination and hazardous material equipment.

## **ATTACK SCENARIO ASSESSMENTS**

***(U//FOUO) Based on previous assessments, and observed terrorist attacks abroad, the IIFC concludes there are a number of situations where the ESS could be susceptible to an attack within the Homeland.***

(U//FOUO) Past intelligence reports indicate that al Qaeda and other terror networks may try to convince/solicit U.S. hospitals and medical clinics to help them obtain B-2 visas to gain entry into the United States as medical patients.

(U//FOUO) Past assessments indicate the opening stages of terrorist attacks may be directed at U.S. hospitals.

- (U//FOUO) A May 20, 2008 FBI Intelligence Bulletin reported an attempted theft of a radiological element (Cesium-137) at an identified U.S. hospital. Although the Cesium-137 can pose a significant exposure hazard, an insufficient quantity was involved to constitute an acute radiation hazard.
- (U//FOUO) A June 09, 2004 New Jersey Intelligence Bulletin reported hospitals should be concerned with terrorists attempt to take over a hospital in order to create a hostage situation. Similar plans have been found in an al-Qaeda training video.
- (U//FOUO) A June 09, 2004 New Jersey Intelligence Bulletin reported terrorists could launch an assault on a hospital as part of a coordinated terrorist attack on another sector, such as public transportation. The incapacitation of a hospital near the site of another attack would greatly strain health resources and force those injured in the original attack to be rerouted to other area hospitals.
- (U//FOUO) Hospitals could be a primary or secondary target, allowing terrorists to harm first responders, disrupt rescue efforts and generally increase panic. Any inclusion of the healthcare system in a terrorist attack would greatly increase its impact and could seriously impede emergency responders.
- (U//FOUO) Terrorists could convert an ambulance into a vehicle-borne improvised explosive devise (VBIED).

(U//FOUO) Homegrown terrorists and foreign terrorists living in the United States could try to establish themselves as legitimate persons in the community by holding important jobs such as doctors, paramedics, nurses, or EMTs.

(U//FOUO) Terrorists may use the aforementioned professions to gain access to critical infrastructures, large events, or other sensitive areas in hopes of carrying out a large-scale attack producing mass casualties.

(U//FOUO) Using stolen emergency vehicles (i.e. emergency medical services, fire, and police vehicles), terrorists could impersonate and blend in with first responders for the purpose of conducting a VBIED attack.

## Outlook

***(U//FOUO) The IIFC has no evidence of an imminent threat to the Emergency Services Sector or hospitals within the Homeland.*** While there have been links between what is deemed suspicious activity (i.e. pre-operational surveillance activities) and acts of terrorism, there is insufficient evidence at this time to directly link suspicious activity involving the ESS with a planned terrorist attack

**References**

1. DHS Information Bulletin *Potential Terrorist Use of Official Identification, Uniforms, or Vehicles* (Updated) 08 April 2004.
2. Office of Counter-Terrorism New Jersey Intelligence Report 09 June 2004.
3. Office of Homeland Security & Preparedness Bulletin 261 New Jersey 01 December 2006.
4. Colorado Information Analysis Center Report 08-038 *Suspicious Surveillance at Fire Stations* 03 March 2008.
5. Southern Nevada Counter-Terrorism Center Advisory 12 March 2008.
6. FBI Intelligence Bulletin, Targeting Radiological Sources for Theft 20 May 2008.