



# **EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES THREAT ASSESSMENT**

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE POLICE  
VIRGINIA FUSION CENTER**

**NOVEMBER 2008**

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# EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES THREAT ASSESSMENT



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# EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES THREAT ASSESSMENT



## PURPOSE

The purpose of this Threat Assessment is to convey potential threats to educational facilities and related assets in the Commonwealth of Virginia in order to prevent terrorist and insider attacks as well as to increase awareness regarding available threat information. It is anticipated that this assessment will assist homeland security personnel in understanding the potential vulnerabilities to public and private schools, colleges, and universities in order to further assist in responding effectively to an educational facility-related incident. This assessment describes insider threats as well as those posed by domestic extremist and international terrorist groups.

Although there are no identified terrorist threats to Virginia educational institutions and the probability of a terrorist attack on these facilities is considered moderate,<sup>1</sup> schools could be considered a high-value target for attacks and the consequences could be dire. This threat is highlighted by recent shootings and violent incidents that have occurred nationwide as well as terrorist attacks overseas.

The Virginia Fusion Center (VFC) has compiled information from homeland security agencies as well as open sources to create this Threat Assessment. While every effort was made to ensure accurate and thorough reporting of the threat, it is expected that not every school-related incident has been reported to the VFC. Information contained in this Threat Assessment is current as of October 2008.

## OVERVIEW

Educational facilities, students, faculty, and staff members are considered legitimate targets by criminal elements, domestic extremist organizations, and foreign terrorist organizations. Al-Qa'ida and affiliated groups may consider the targeting of schools as theologically sanctioned. These groups also see schools as tactically advantageous soft targets with numerous vulnerabilities. An attack directed at a school could result in high casualty rates, global media coverage, serious secondary economic damage, the creation of fear in the U.S. populace, and the loss of confidence in the U.S. government.

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<sup>1</sup> Educational facilities are soft targets and possess other characteristics that may increase the likelihood of terrorists selecting them as targets. Historical and current data suggests this class of target is not immune from attack. Deadly attacks on schools in the U.S. perpetrated by untrained lone actors suggest that moderate to low trained terrorist operatives could inflict a high level of damage against this class of target with relatively few resources. Information collection on this class of facility is easily accomplished. Al-Qa'ida spokesmen have stated that children are not immune from attacks.



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Secondary concerns identified in this report include terrorist recruiting within Virginia schools, the exploitation of students with a tendency toward lone-actor violence, and the vulnerability of school buses.

The increased attempts of jihadists to radicalize youth on the Internet coupled with the ongoing phenomenon of students of all educational levels carrying out attacks at educational facilities is of concern as there may be students within the educational system in the Commonwealth who desire but lack the motivation to target schools. These students could be exploited by international terrorist entities to carry out attacks or provide inside information to assist with pre-operational planning.

School buses, which have been identified as an important sub-set of local school systems, may be vulnerable due to their ease of access, inherent tactical advantages when used in attacks, and historical data showing a pattern of attacks against this type of target.

## SCHOOLS AS TARGETS

Schools and educational facilities were targeted in 285 terrorist attacks in 2008, representing 3% of the targets attacked.<sup>2</sup> While this may appear to be a low percentage, it is similar to the number of attacks against businesses (3%) and government facilities (4%) during the same period.<sup>3</sup> Compared to the National Counterterrorism Center's (NCTC) data baseline in 2005, attacks on schools rose by 22% but of those attacks reported, there was a 67% increase in the number of school facilities hit in those attacks.<sup>4</sup> These figures may indicate that terrorists are increasingly more interested in garnering media attention through inflicting mass casualties than by attacking critical infrastructure, possibly leading to a greater likelihood of an attack against schools because they are virtually unprotected.

According to a Joint Homeland Security Assessment, there is no credible or specific information regarding pre-operational or imminent plans of attack by terrorist or extremist organizations against U.S. educational facilities.<sup>5</sup> An analysis of the threats to these facilities, a majority of which involved hoaxes and unsubstantiated bomb threats, revealed the incidents were tied to criminal motivation. Although these incidents were

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<sup>2</sup> [National Counterterrorism Center](#): *Report on Terrorist Incidents- 2007*, April 30, 2008; [National Counterterrorism Center](#): *Report on Terrorist Incidents- 2006*, April 30, 2007

<sup>3</sup> [National Counterterrorism Center](#): *Report on Terrorist Incidents- 2007*, April 30, 2008

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> DHS/FBI Joint Homeland Security Assessment: *Recent Wave of School Shootings Is Criminal, Not Related to Terrorism*, October 11, 2006

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criminal in nature with no apparent links to terrorism, there have been several high-profile international terrorist attacks directed toward educational institutions.

The notable death toll and damage criminal elements have inflicted on educational facilities in the U.S. coupled with the publicity these attacks have generated may heighten the appeal of U.S. educational facilities as terrorist targets. The attractiveness of schools as targets is increased by the ease of access to targets, vulnerable building designs, and the potential for causing mass injuries and fatalities to civilians. Terrorists or criminals might also target higher education facilities as they may house sensitive information and potentially hazardous materials.

Virginia's 2,065 local and regional schools and education centers, 695 private schools, and 311 institutions of higher learning and vocational institutions<sup>6</sup> provide numerous targets for criminal and terrorist exploitation.<sup>7</sup> While these numbers may appear small in comparison to other potential targets for attack, the number of potential attack sites coupled with the inherent vulnerabilities previously stated is cause for concern.

## Areas of Concern

Attendees of the 2004 National Association of School Resource Officers Conference were surveyed about terrorists attacking schools in the U.S.<sup>8</sup> Significant findings from the survey include:

- An overwhelming majority of the school-based police officers (92%) agreed that schools are "soft targets" for potential terrorist attack.
- Nearly three-quarters believed their schools are inadequately prepared to respond to a terrorist attack.
- A majority of respondents indicated that their school crisis/emergency plans are not adequate.

<sup>6</sup> [Virginia Department of Education: Local and Regional School Centers 2007-2008](#), April 1, 2008 (The total number of schools and regional learning centers is derived from total local schools (1863), total local centers (104), and total regional schools/centers (98) and may not capture all public schools and education centers.); [National Center for Education Statistics: Search for Private Schools](#) (This data is based on responses from a 2005-2006 survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics. The actual number of private schools in Virginia may be greater or less than the number listed because there is no filing requirement for private schools in the Commonwealth); [State Council of Higher Education for Virginia: Overview of Higher Education System in Virginia](#) (The total number of institutions of higher learning includes four-year institutions (15), community colleges (23), junior/transfer (1), private non-profit (70), private for-profit (49), and vocational institutions (153). Not included in this count are 67 out-of-state institutions that may or may not have a permanent physical location in the Commonwealth.); See also Appendices A and B.

<sup>7</sup> See [Department of Education: Annual Report Discipline, Crime, and Violence School Year 2006-2007](#), May 2008; [Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services: The 2007 School Safety Survey Results](#), January 2008

<sup>8</sup> [National Association of School Resource Officers: School Safety Left Behind? School Safety Threats Grow as Preparedness Stalls & Funding Decreases](#), February 2005 (The 22-question survey was distributed to 1,100 school-based police officers; 758 surveys were analyzed.)

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- Over two-thirds indicated that their school emergency plans (i.e. tabletop drills, full scale drills) are not exercised on a regular basis.
- A significant percentage (43%) reported school officials do not formally meet at least once a year with police, fire, emergency medical services, emergency management agencies, and other public safety officials to review and revise school plans.
- Over half of the school-based police officers surveyed indicated that teachers, administrators, and support staff (i.e. secretaries, custodians) do not receive ongoing professional development training on school security and emergency preparedness issues.
- Over 65% of the respondents indicated that school bus drivers along with other transportation personnel have not received training on issues related to security measures, emergency planning and response, terrorism, and associated topics.

The predictable schedule of daily activities with large gatherings of people present at specific times and places is an inherent vulnerability of educational facilities. A related area of concern is the ease of access to this type of information (bell and lunch schedules, significant event schedules, bus routes, pictures, population counts, and staff rosters) via the Internet.<sup>9</sup> On-site surveillance is easy to conduct against a school due to the open nature of these facilities and the lack of exterior surveillance systems. On-site surveillance opportunities are increased in the summer when most personnel, to include school resource officers, are not at the facility. This affords terrorists the opportunity to closely examine a targeted school's construction, facility vulnerabilities, physical security, and critical areas with a low risk of exposure.<sup>10</sup>

The totality of this information indicates terrorists would easily be able to accumulate a significant amount of information with a low risk of exposure, allowing them to develop an attack plan with a high probability of success.

Another area of concern at U.S. educational institutions is a lack of security measures specifically designed to deter or hinder a terrorist attack. Several security deficiencies have been identified in the 2007 Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services

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<sup>9</sup> The [Virginia Department of Education](#) provides a downloadable text file containing the names and addresses of all of the schools in Virginia. Virginia schools can be located on Google Maps. Information regarding schools in Virginia include, but are not limited to: [bell schedules](#), [calendar of events](#), and [schedule of events](#). Fairfax Public schools offer [school information](#) to include the name and photograph of the principal and the number of students that attend each school. Richmond City Public Schools post [bus routes](#) with bus numbers, streets, and times on their website.

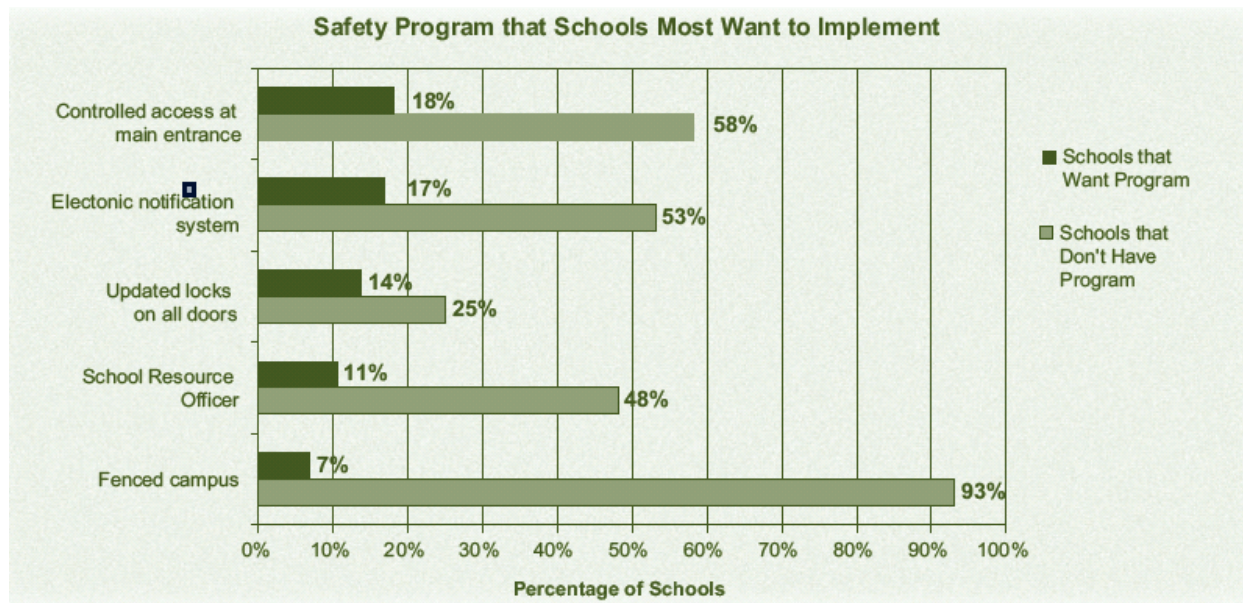
<sup>10</sup> In the early stages of target selection, surveillance activities do not necessitate physical interaction with a target. The al-Qa'ida Training Manual states it is possible to obtain 80% of the information needed in military operations through open sources.



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School Safety Survey (see chart below).<sup>11</sup> Significant findings from the survey include: 58% of respondents indicated they had no program in place for controlled access at the main entrance; 48% of schools do not currently have a School Resource Officer (SRO) program.<sup>12</sup>



Commercial visitor access to schools is a weak point in school safety. The survey indicates that visitors, parents, and guardians are almost universally required to check-in when they enter the building, show identification to a school employee, and wear some form of identification while on school grounds. Commercial vendors, however, are significantly less likely to have these same constraints.

Past terrorist operations indicate that terrorists will evaluate security measures in order to exploit their weaknesses and overcome their strengths. Impersonation of official personnel through the use of stolen uniforms and vehicles has been successfully employed in conducting pre-operational surveillance and in terrorist attacks.<sup>13</sup> The use of official vehicles, uniforms, and identification articles could conceivably be exploited to

<sup>11</sup> [Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services](#): *The 2007 School Safety Survey Results*, January 2008 (The 48-question survey was distributed to 1,988 public schools operating in Virginia in school year 2006-2007; 99% of the schools completed the survey.) For additional information regarding the survey, see Appendix C.

<sup>12</sup> Of the 955 schools that do not have a SRO program, most (745) are elementary schools. If only non-elementary schools are examined, 25% of schools do not have a SRO program. Other responses indicate that 9% of elementary and 81% of secondary schools have school security personnel present at all times during the day. Only 29% of all schools had an SRO present all day. School security personnel are differentiated from SRO's as they are not sworn law enforcement officers.

<sup>13</sup> FBI: *Terrorists Continue to Impersonate Military and Civilian Officials to Further Attacks*, October 10, 2008

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bypass the existing security measures at educational institutions. Additional areas of concern regarding schools as soft targets include: designated entry and exit points for children that are bused to and from schools at designated times and a lack of physical barriers to achieve significant vehicle standoff or to stop a speeding vehicle.<sup>14</sup> The latter might allow terrorists to maneuver a vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) next to a critical area containing large numbers of students and school personnel.

## INTERNATIONAL THREAT

International terrorist organizations continue to engage in terrorist attacks that have a high probability of success in order to further their objectives. While very few of these attacks have specifically targeted children as the intended victims, they have carried out violence that has invariably placed children at risk of grave injury or death. By choosing to attack civilian targets, terrorists have likely assessed that the maiming and killing of children is acceptable in the furtherance of their cause. As international terrorist organizations have continued to demonstrate their interest in conducting attacks against the U.S. and U.S. interests, both in the U.S and abroad, law enforcement should not discount that terrorists would target entities associated with this vulnerable population.

Several groups with international ties to terrorism in Virginia contribute to the potential threat to educational facilities in the Commonwealth. This threat is highlighted as enrollment in colleges and universities offers terrorists both a means to legally penetrate the borders and a legitimate opportunity to study technical fields which may be of use in future attacks. While al-Qa'ida is assessed to have high intent to cause violence against persons and property, their intention to execute attacks against educational facilities is currently unknown. However, it is probable they have considered such attacks. Al-Qa'ida remains the most viable international terrorist threat to these facilities in Virginia.

### Al-Qa'ida

Publications, announcements, and critical analysis of al-Qa'ida attacks indicate it is probable that the group has considered carrying out attacks against educational facilities in the U.S. While most of these documents do not specifically mention schools, colleges, and universities, they do not eliminate them as targets. Several al-Qa'ida linked publications illustrate the tactical guidance given to operatives in regards to selecting targets that have specific attributes, many of which are common in schools

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<sup>14</sup> [DHS](#): *Schools: Lessons Learned from Site Assistance Visits*, January 2007





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and universities.<sup>15</sup> These documents highlight the terrorist objectives of selecting significant secondary soft targets, killing the enemy, and causing widespread economic impact.<sup>16</sup> These objectives would likely be met if terrorists were to successfully carry out an attack against any educational facility in the U.S. In addition, such an attack may erode public confidence in existing security measures at vulnerable soft targets, and in turn, support for the government.

### *Analysis of Tactics*

Understanding the threat to educational facilities in the U.S. by terrorist organizations such as al-Qa'ida necessitates some analysis of past target selection. A report by the RAND Corporation analyzed the al-Qa'ida targeting process and developed several alternative hypotheses that may lead to the selection of one target over another.<sup>17</sup> The hypotheses discussed below include: coercion, damage, and franchise.

**Coercion Hypothesis:** One of al-Qa'ida's beliefs is that the best way to achieve its goals is to coerce the U.S. and its allies into leaving the Middle East. Their departure from the Middle East is best achieved by raising the human cost of remaining in the region to unacceptable levels. Under this hypothesis, al-Qa'ida selects targets with the goal of maximizing "enemy" casualties. Due to increased security measures around critical infrastructures and in the airways, al-Qa'ida terrorists may determine that it is not possible to produce enough damage or casualties against these targets. As a result, terrorists may decide to maximize the psychological impact of the loss of human life by targeting the most vulnerable population. Irrespective of which school system(s) or educational facility is targeted, striking them would invariably result in lesser numbers of casualties compared to the September 11, 2001 attacks, but the psychological impact would be greater due to the nature of the target. Therefore, high casualty rates would not be necessary for the terrorists to plant the idea in the U.S. populace that the war on terror is not worth the loss of human life.

**Damage Hypothesis:** Under this hypothesis, it is theorized that al-Qa'ida believes that attacking the United States' ability to intervene in the Islamic world is the best way to achieve its goals. The implication of this theory is that al-Qa'ida will attack targets designed to inflict the largest amount of economic damage on the foundations of the

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<sup>15</sup> Schools were one of several potential targets listed in a jihadist publication containing detailed instructions on how to obtain the materials to create and deploy lethal gases. The targets were identified as they have a large number of people within a controlled environment that could contain poisonous gases or have equipment such as central HVAC that would aid in dispersing the poisonous gases. Other targets included: bars and restaurants, theaters, shopping malls, cinemas, and closed-sport gymnasiums. [Open Source Center](#), Al-Mubtakar al-Farid: *System to Disperse Lethal Gases*, October 3, 2006

<sup>16</sup> [IntelCenter](#): *Al-Qa'ida Targeting Guidance – v1.0* April, 2004

<sup>17</sup> [RAND Corporation](#): *Exploring Terrorist Targeting Preferences*, February 28, 2007

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U.S. military, political, and commercial power.<sup>18</sup> Educational facilities, however vital, are not directly linked to economic activity, but attacking such targets could net a crushing secondary blow to the economy. Similarly, al-Qa'ida has determined that indirect economic damage has more far-reaching consequences than the direct effects of the same attack.

Understanding al-Qa'ida's tactics is an important part of gauging the economic damage that can be achieved by attacks against educational facilities. A Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) assessment of al-Qa'ida attack signatures indicates that multiple, near-simultaneous attacks against selected targets are an al-Qa'ida trademark.<sup>19</sup> This was seen in the 1998 attacks against the U.S. Embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, as well as the attacks in the U.S. on September 11, 2001. Extrapolating this tactic to attacks on primary or secondary schools in the U.S., al-Qa'ida or their affiliates would conduct near-simultaneous multiple attacks against them. It is estimated that if the attacks occurred on the east coast of the U.S., the result could be the closure of every school system in the country, resulting in far reaching economic consequences. In an interview with the Jihad Online News Network in October 2001, Usama bin Laden estimated that the September 11 attacks inflicted \$140 billion worth of damage to the U.S. economy.<sup>20</sup> Wall Street had a 16% loss (presumably in the value of stocks and bonds), and no business was conducted for a week due to psychological shock. It is clear from this statement that al-Qa'ida leadership is intent on causing economic damage and recognizes the importance of psychological trauma.

*Franchise Hypothesis:* The Franchise hypothesis maintains that al-Qa'ida may not be able to directly control the global jihad due to the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, and therefore will rely on affiliates to carry out the future attacks against the U.S.<sup>21</sup> Included in this hypothesis is the possibility that the franchise cell may not submit their plans to al-Qa'ida leadership for approval, which could result in an increase in particularly heinous attacks. Other information suggests that as al-Qa'ida becomes more of a movement and less of an organization, disconnected cells, affiliates, and splinter groups will become more tactically aggressive, and therefore more deadly, than the parent organization.<sup>22</sup> This aggressiveness could lead to an expansion of the list of acceptable targets.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> CIA: *A Primer of al-Qa'ida's Modus Operandi and Possible Attack Signatures*, July 28, 2004

<sup>20</sup> Foreign Broadcast Information Service: *Compilation of Usama Bin Laden Statements 1994 – January 2004*, January 2004

<sup>21</sup> [RAND Corporation](#): *Exploring Terrorist Targeting Preferences*, February 28, 2007

<sup>22</sup> [Combating Terrorism Center](#): *Harmony and Disharmony: Exploiting Al-Qa'ida's Organizational Vulnerabilities*, February 2006 (This publication provides several detailed scenarios where al-Qa'ida affiliates become more radical than the parent organization. Generally the causes are three fold: 1) Individuals recruited for skills in violence will tend to undertake more violence than desired, 2) Operational units of clandestine organizations see the world



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Analysis of al-Qa'ida in Iraq, arguably more radical than al-Qa'ida central, lends further support to the outlined franchise hypothesis. A 2005 DHS Red Cell report which speculated on a Mussab al-Zarqawi terrorist campaign in the U.S. suggests some parallels between al-Zarqawi's modus operandi and a potential group of al-Qa'ida franchise terrorists.<sup>23</sup> The report suggested that the most prominent of al-Zarqawi's tactics was the preference of attacking easily accessible soft targets to include shopping malls (open air markets), entertainment venues, military recruiting venues, and local and state offices. Other key characteristics of al-Zarqawi's operations in Iraq are the use of fewer operatives and the use of operatives who have little expertise. Because al-Zarqawi did not depend on highly trained operatives, he focused on vulnerable and accessible targets. Similar to al-Zarqawi's tactics, the selection of soft targets might be a necessity for a franchise terrorist cell because they lack the training and technological capability to overcome even limited defenses.

Another 2005 DHS Red Cell Report expanded this idea of franchise terrorists attacking soft targets and suggested a more direct link to schools as potential targets.<sup>24</sup> The report indicated that al-Qa'ida leadership may still want to execute "spectacular" attacks and that smaller-scale attacks as seen in London may indicate that al-Qa'ida related elements might seek to attack a broader range of soft targets. Furthermore, with the dispersal of al-Qa'ida to more loosely affiliated groups, the Red Cell considered that the near-future attacks would be against smaller softer targets rather than moderately hardened targets. The list of soft targets identified in the report included malls, hotels, schools, and public gathering places.

## *Theological Guidance*

According to some interpretations of Islamic law, the targeting of what the West considers civilians or "non-combatants"—specifically women, children, the elderly, and clergy—while engaged in jihad is forbidden.<sup>25</sup> Although this fact is recognized by Usama bin Laden, he stated in a 2001 interview that this prohibition is not always applicable, especially because he believes that the U.S. has killed innocent Muslim women and children.<sup>26</sup> Even though bin Laden did not state that al-Qa'ida will

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differently than their leaders, and 3) Competition for prominence will lead to splinter groups to engage in politically unnecessary or undesirable actions.)

<sup>23</sup> DHS Red Cell Report: *Speculating on an al-Zarqawi Campaign Against the Homeland*, August, 2005 (The report is a product of the DHS Alternative Analysis Unit, which produces independent, speculative, and alternative assessments intended to provoke thought and stimulate discussion. Papers represent an assimilation of opinions, sources, and methodologies including adversary (red) emulation, and not necessarily derived from specific threat reporting. These assessments are not meant to represent a DHS or U.S. Government corporate view.)

<sup>24</sup> DHS Red Cell Report: *Post London Outside Expert View: Thinking Beyond Mass Transit for the Next Homeland Attack*, July 2005

<sup>25</sup> [Strategic Studies Institute](#): *Islamic Rulings on Warfare*, October 2004

<sup>26</sup> FBIS: *Compilation of Usama Bin Ladin Statements 1994 – January 2004*, January 2004

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specifically target children, he issued no statement prohibiting such actions, nor did he express any regret over the death of American children.

While not widely or fully reported, al-Qa'ida spokesman Suleiman Abu Ghaith issued a statement warning of new terror attacks which included the comment, "We have the right to kill four million Americans—two million of them children—and to exile twice as many and wound and cripple hundreds of thousands."<sup>27</sup> Similarly, an al-Qa'ida linked jihadist media outlet released a three-minute video in September 2005 indicating that killing women and children in war is allowed.<sup>28</sup> The video featured graphic pictures of presumably dead Muslim children and captions that read, "They kill our women and children...so we kill their women and children." The video also showed captions of a fatwa issued by a deceased Saudi Salafi cleric in which the cleric claimed it is permissible to kill women and children in war. Other statements on the video suggested bin Laden supported the killing of women and children because the Israelis and by extension the U.S. kill them in Palestine.

## International Incidents

A recently published NCTC report on terrorist incidents further supports the assertion that children are acceptable targets.<sup>29</sup> According to the report, children had a 25% increase in victimization (killed or injured) from 2006 to 2007, with over 2,400 children being killed or injured in 2007. Similarly, students were also victimized by terrorism at a higher rate. Approximately 800 students were either killed or injured in terrorist attacks in 2007, representing an 80% increase over 2006 statistics.

A review of terrorist attacks since the late 1970's reveals that schools and schoolchildren have historically been targeted by terrorists. This demonstrates a pattern of acceptability on the terrorist's part to kill children or target educational facilities. Some of the more significant terrorist attacks against educational facilities and schoolchildren by terrorists include:

- May 8, 1970: Unknown Palestinian terrorists attacked an Israeli school bus that crossed the Lebanese border. The terrorists knew the schedule of the bus and were able to ambush it. Nine children and three adults were killed; 19 others, mostly children, were wounded.<sup>30</sup>
- May 15, 1974: The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine targeted a group of 11th grade students who were on a field trip to the Golan Heights. The

<sup>27</sup> [Daily Mirror](#): War on Terror: Al-Qaeda - We'll Kill 4M More Americans, June 2002

<sup>28</sup> [Open Source Center](#): Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF) Flash Presentation Approves the Killing of Women, Children; Al-Rashidin Army Posts Operations Video, October 2005

<sup>29</sup> [National Counterterrorism Center](#): Report on Terrorist Incidents- 2007, April 30, 2008

<sup>30</sup> [Palestinian Facts](#): Israel 1967-1991: Terrorist Attacks 1970s, May 2007

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children were attacked by terrorists, who dressed as Israel Defense Force soldiers, as they slept on the floor of the school in which they were being housed. Twenty-one children and five adults were killed.<sup>31</sup>

- June 1, 2001: A suicide bomber detonated an explosive device in a crowd of mostly teenagers waiting in line outside a disco in Israel. Twenty-one were killed and over 90 others were wounded. Islamic Jihad and HAMAS leaders praised the bombing in what they described as a legitimate act.<sup>32</sup>
- September 1, 2004: Forty-five al-Qa'ida linked Chechen terrorists took hostage a group of 1,181 schoolchildren and adults at the Beslan Middle School Number One in Russia. The attack took place on the start of the Russian school year referred to as "First September" or "Day of Knowledge". As students and family members attended related festivities, the number of people in schools was considerable higher than usual for a normal school day. Approximately 338 people were killed, including 161 children; nearly 700 were wounded.<sup>33</sup>
- May 6, 2007: Al-Qa'ida supporters in the Gaza Strip attacked the Omariya School with small arms and grenades, reportedly because the terrorists believed girls and boys would dance together at a school event. One person was killed.<sup>34</sup>

## DOMESTIC THREAT

While not motivated by political goals, educational facilities in the U.S. have been the target of bomb and bomb threat related incidents and other school-related crime, violence, and crisis situations directed against students, faculty, and staff members. According to the FBI, approximately 38 threats to schools in the U.S. were received from January 2007 through March 2008.<sup>35</sup> The majority of these incidents were related to bomb threats to primary, secondary, and post-secondary institutions. Schools, colleges, and universities have also been the victims of several high-profile shooting incidents. The shootings coupled with the continued terrorist threat to the U.S. underscores the need for school officials to ensure adequate, updated security measures are in place at educational facilities. As criminal elements and extremist groups, including those in Virginia, remain interested in recruiting vulnerable populations, schoolchildren remain at risk.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid

<sup>32</sup> [Jerusalem Post](#): *Casualties of War: 21 dead, More Than 90 Wounded by Suicide Bomber*, June 3, 2001

<sup>33</sup> [Archangel Group](#): *Terror at Beslan*, 2005

<sup>34</sup> [Jerusalem Post](#): *PA Officials: Al-Qa'ida Attacked School*, May 2007 (Final casualty numbers are those reported by the Russian government. The Beslan fatality and wounded statistics incorporate all of the dead and wounded—not just teachers and students of the school.)

<sup>35</sup> Most of these threats are addressed at the local law enforcement level. The FBI is currently investigating three threat cases based on incident reporting with a possible nexus to terrorism. (DHS/FBI Joint Homeland Security Assessment: *Recent School Shootings Not Related to Terrorism*, May 1, 2008)

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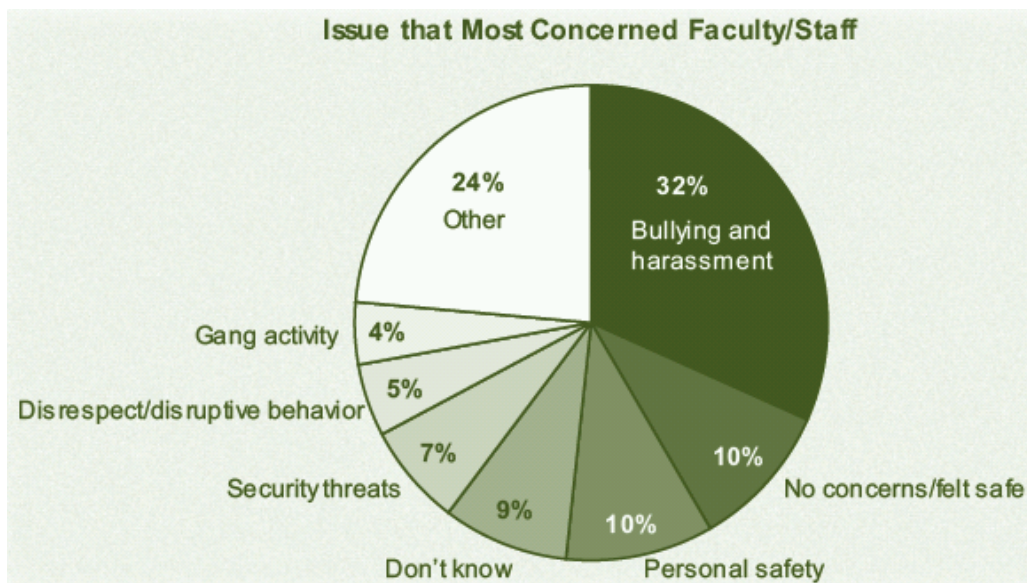
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While the Commonwealth has taken steps to enhance school security at the university level since the Virginia Tech shootings in April 2007, much of this is geared towards responding to an immediate threat. It is uncertain the degree to which primary and secondary schools have altered their security plans to address active shooters. The Virginia Fusion Center does not possess information to suggest that the threat posed by a lone gunman to any educational facility has appreciably changed since 2007. A great deal of this uncertainty is due to the nature of the perpetrator who typically is not identified as a legitimate threat until a crime is committed.

## Internal Threats

As illustrated in the chart below, there are various issues that cause concern among faculty and staff in Virginia schools.<sup>36</sup> In addition to the clearly identified items of concern, 24% of the schools provided a response that was categorized as "other issue". These issues included bus safety, building security/intruders, threats from parents/students, crisis plans, and visitors.



Additional 2007 Department of Criminal Justice Services School Safety Survey results suggest that there may be a potentially significant population of Virginia students who could pose a threat to their schools. Of the schools participating in the survey, 32% (623) conducted a formal threat assessment process at least once during the 2006-

<sup>36</sup> [Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services](#): *The 2007 School Safety Survey Results*, January 2008 (Results represent 37%, or 718, of schools who responded to an anonymous questionnaire.)

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2007 school year in response to a student threat of violence.<sup>37</sup> Twenty-six percent of all schools (514) assessed between one and five threats, 7% assessed between six and twenty threats, and 1% (15) assessed more than twenty threats during the noted school year. Using a threat assessment process, 13% of all schools (256) found at least one student threat of violence to be viable or substantive. Given the deliberate and possibly violent nature of these threats, it becomes necessary to review this threat and for schools to take measures to prevent attacks in their facilities.

According to federal reporting, there have been at least 21 school shooting incidents nationwide since 2006.<sup>38</sup> The seven shootings reported in 2008 (prior to May) all involved lone gunmen and resulted in 10 deaths. Nine shootings occurred in 2007 and five incidents occurred in 2006. The commonality with the shootings appears to be criminal motivation; however, determining this threat is difficult due to the insular nature of their activities. A primary concern regarding students who attack their own school is the high level intelligence they are able to develop during their attendance. These students know who security personnel are and where they are located, which doors are locked, and when and where large numbers of students will be congregated. Detailed attack plans can then be developed from this information, as seen in the assaults on Columbine High School in April 1999<sup>39</sup> and Virginia Tech in April 2007. This inside information combined with widely accessible information on the Internet regarding weapons and attack methodologies suggests the potential for a particularly dangerous and lethal situation. Furthermore, these incidents arguably provide international terrorists with a blueprint for successful attacks against educational facilities and therefore should be paid close attention by law enforcement and homeland security personnel.

## Domestic Incidents

The following is a partial list of some significant domestic shootings and violent incidents that have occurred at all levels of the U.S. educational system in the past several years.<sup>40</sup> These incidents include students as both the victims and the perpetrators.

- May 21, 1998: A 15-year-old opened fire in the cafeteria at Thurston High School (Springfield, Oregon), killing one person and injuring 24. The perpetrator had

<sup>37</sup> Seventy-six percent (1,490) of the schools reported having a formal threat assessment process that they use to respond to student threats of violence.

<sup>38</sup> DHS/FBI Joint Homeland Security Assessment: *Recent School Shootings not Related to Terrorism*, May 1, 2008

<sup>39</sup> Shortly before arriving at the school, the two teenaged perpetrators set up a small fire bomb in a field half a mile away from the school. The bomb may have been placed there as a diversion for emergency personnel. Twelve students and one teacher were killed in the shooting attacks; 23 were wounded.

<sup>40</sup> See additional listing of past school-related incidents in Appendix A ([Virginia Tech Review Panel: Mass Shootings at Virginia Tech April 16, 2007 Report of the Review Panel](#), August 2007) and [National School Safety and Security Services](#)



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been in trouble before for throwing rocks at cars from a highway overpass and once gave a talk in his speech class about how to build a bomb.<sup>41</sup>

- January 29, 2001: A 19-year-old was arrested for planning to launch an attack against De Anza College (Cupertino, California). Police found 30 pipe bombs and evidence that indicated the subject planned to plant bombs and attack the main cafeteria at lunchtime. The plot was uncovered when a photography lab worker called police after developing pictures of the perpetrator with an arsenal of weapons.<sup>42</sup>
- December 21, 2001: Three high school males, aged 15 to 17, were arrested on charges of conspiracy to commit murder and terrorist training activities for allegedly conspiring to detonate explosives at a school (Craig, Colorado) and a courthouse.<sup>43</sup>
- October 7, 2002: The “DC Snipers” selected the Benjamin Tasker Middle School (Bowie, Maryland) as the site of the 9<sup>th</sup> sniper-style shooting. Shortly before classes a 13-year-old student was shot in the chest.<sup>44</sup>
- October 6, 2005: A 21-year-old college student strapped an explosive device to himself and committed suicide by detonating the device approximately 100 yards away from the University of Oklahoma (Norman, Oklahoma) football stadium. There were in excess of 84,500 spectators attending the football game.<sup>45</sup>
- April 16, 2007: A 23-year-old student killed 32 fellow students and faculty on the campus of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Blacksburg, Virginia). The Virginia Tech school shootings consisted of two separate attacks approximately two hours apart.<sup>46</sup>

A review of incidents in the U.S. demonstrates students and lone wolf actors have used terrorist tactics such as pre-operational planning and the use of the Internet to assist in attack preparations. Of increasing concern is the use of the Internet by the perpetrators either to prepare for attacks or to garner inspiration from extremist websites to engage in acts of violence and terrorism.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>41</sup> [Washington Post](#): *Youth Jailed in Oregon School Rampage*, May 1998

<sup>42</sup> [International Focus Press](#): *Rage of the Random Actor*, August 2005; [BBC News](#): *Teenager in Court Over Murder Plan*, February 2001 (Police had characterized the perpetrator as being fascinated with the Columbine massacre. Investigators allegedly recovered an audiocassette of the subject expressing sympathy for the two teenagers who carried out the killings.)

<sup>43</sup> [National School Safety and Security Services](#): *School-Related Deaths, School Shootings, & School Violence Incidents*, June 2007 (The terrorist training activities charge is reportedly for a person who demonstrates or teaches someone how to use weapons to cause injury or death.)

<sup>44</sup> [CBS](#): *Sniper Spree*, May 2007 (Fear quickly spread throughout the community. Many parents went to pick up their children at school early, not allowing them to take a school bus or walk home alone. Several area school districts went into lockdown with no recess or outdoor gym classes; other schools took similar precautionary measures.)

<sup>45</sup> [DHS TRIPwire](#): *Oklahoma Suicide Bombing (2005)*, July 2007

<sup>46</sup> [Washington Post](#): *Coverage: Virginia Tech Shootings*

<sup>47</sup> [CBS News](#): *Terrorists Take Recruitment Efforts Online*, March 4, 2007

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## SUSPICIOUS INCIDENTS

While reports of bomb threats at Virginia educational facilities are the more commonly reported threat to the Virginia Fusion Center (VFC), this type of activity does not incorporate all of the reporting that has involved schools. Although it is unclear if any of the identified suspicious activity is related to terrorism, some of the incidents are criminal in nature.

Recent suspicious activity reporting to the VFC has largely been limited to bomb and bomb threat related incidents and other school-related crime. In one instance, a Virginia university student had been implicated in the construction of incendiary devices. In 2007, Mark David Uhl, a former Liberty University student, was arrested for possessing a bomb the night before Reverend Falwell's funeral.<sup>48</sup> When law enforcement searched his vehicle, they found five bombs described as "homemade napalm," a glass soda bottle filled with gasoline, and nails. During the investigation into Uhl's activities, law enforcement discovered plans to disrupt a dance at his former high school with heated pepper spray. Students have also made threats referencing the April 2007 Virginia Tech shootings. Earlier this year, a University of Wise student was arrested for cyber stalking a former girlfriend attending the University of Illinois.<sup>49</sup> His activity also included threats to kill her and a suggestion that he would recreate the Virginia Tech incident.

## Extremist Recruitment

Based on open source reporting, domestic extremist groups and internationally linked terrorist groups have been involved in recruiting in schools, colleges, and universities in the U.S. and Virginia. The recruitment activity related to white supremacist groups has originated from groups in Virginia and other groups in the U.S. In November 2004, a white supremacist hate music recording company called *Panzerfaust* launched "Project Schoolyard USA", which attempted to distribute 100,000 copies of a CD featuring neo-Nazi hate bands to schoolchildren across the country in order to attract young people to the white supremacist ideology.<sup>50</sup> A month later, a white supremacist group distributed Aryan literature to students leaving Harrisonburg High School.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> [International Herald Tribune](#): *Student at College Jerry Falwell Founded is Held After Testimony of Violent Plans*, May 31, 2007

<sup>49</sup> [Roanoke Times](#): *College Student Charged in Online Threats*, March 12, 2008

<sup>50</sup> [Anti-Defamation League](#): *Panzerfaust Records: Distributor of Hate Music*, September 24, 2004 (It should be noted this business may no longer be in existence.)

<sup>51</sup> [Daily News Record Online](#): *Man Distributes Aryan Literature Near HHS*, December 8, 2004

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Among other domestic terrorist groups, including radical animal and environmentalist groups (i.e. Earth Liberation Front, Animal Liberation Front), pinpointing specific recruitment for terrorist activities is more elusive. Information developed about these extremist groups suggests that recruitment likely takes place at gatherings of mainstream groups,<sup>52</sup> which are considered legitimate environmental and animal rights groups. Furthermore, the radicalization and recruitment of individuals to carry out domestic terrorist incidents is decentralized and not specifically directed by the legitimate organizations. Regardless of the group, recruiting is an important activity to identify in regards to the potential for related criminal and terrorist threats.

The threat of radicalization via the Internet is also growing as jihadists and other domestic terrorist groups hone their propaganda skills and further refine their message. Currently, there is no intelligence indicating the radicalization or recruitment of juveniles in Virginia by international terrorist organizations to carry out attacks; however, with the ongoing recruitment efforts by radical foreign and domestic terrorist elements, this scenario cannot be discounted.

Information suggests the Muslim Student Association (MSA) may be the primary conduit through which Islamic radicals access college campuses to promote an extremist Salafist version of Islam which is commonly used as an ideological justification of terrorism.<sup>53</sup> A known radical and subject on the terrorist watch list has visited Virginia universities to include George Mason and Virginia Commonwealth Universities.<sup>54</sup> Internet postings indicate the subject is a regular speaker at MSA events.<sup>55</sup>

## METHODS OF ATTACK

Several categories of information are considered when analyzing possible attack scenarios against educational facilities. These categories include the threat group or individual in question, type of attack, and trends in tactics. While the threat, motivation, and intensity of an attack may vary, the methods and tactics employed by attackers may

<sup>52</sup> Examples: Mountain Justice Summer, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), and Katuah Earth First!

<sup>53</sup> [Investigative Project on Terrorism](#): *Muslim Student Association Dossier*, January 2008 (Salafism is a generic term, referring to a Sunni Islamic school of thought that imitates the ways the Prophet Muhammad and his companions in the 7<sup>th</sup> century practiced their faith. Salafism also stresses a return to fundamentals in pursuit of *pure* or *authentic* Islam. The belief and commitment to the Salafi movement and its aims to purify Islam, which is the foundation on which Usama bin Laden and other jihadist leaders have built their platforms, has been the common factor that has bound together radicalized American Muslims, with various ethnic, national, and linguistic backgrounds.); [Asia Times](#): *The American Path to Jihad*, August 10, 2007; [Washington Post](#): *Spreading Saudi Fundamentalism in U.S.*, October 2, 2003; [Weekly Standard](#): *Wahhabis in the Old Dominion*, April 8, 2002

<sup>54</sup> [George Mason University MSA](#), [Richmond Indy Media](#), [YouTube](#)

<sup>55</sup> Open sources indicate that Imam Siraj Wahhaj, an unindicted co-conspirator in the plot to bomb the World Trade Center in 1993, has spoken at places such as [Vanderbilt University](#) and [Michigan State University](#).

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not have a great deal of variety. The trend data for terrorists is not much different than the tactics historically employed by school shooters in the U.S. who have used small arms or attempted to employ improvised explosive devices (IEDs) to carry out attacks.

Data from terrorist attacks from 2005 through 2007<sup>56</sup> suggests that terrorists will employ armed assaults and bombings as methods to attack targets in the U.S.<sup>57</sup> If current trends continue, available statistics suggest that terrorist attacks against any target are more likely to be in the form of bombings (i.e. IEDs or VBIEDs) or conventional armed attacks. Trends in IED attacks have demonstrated increased incidences of simultaneous bombings, secondary devices, and complex attacks against targets.<sup>58</sup> This determination is further supported in an NCTC report which found terrorists had continued their practice of coordinated attacks and secondary attacks on first responders using IEDs.<sup>59</sup> Attacks classified as “barricade/hostage,” like the Beslan school attack, represented only 1% of the terrorist attacks in both 2005 and 2006 (not listed in 2007), and is statistically the least likely form of terrorist attack, but a Beslan-style attack may be the most desired type of attack due to the resulting media coverage.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, terrorist organizations have been utilizing both targeted and mass hostage taking for several decades, therefore this tactic cannot be fully discounted as a possible method of attack used in the U.S.

## Active Shooter

The deadliest active shooter incident in Virginia occurred on April 16, 2007 at Virginia Tech. The perpetrator, Seung-Hui Cho, attacked students in two separate locations with relatively minimal firepower and devastating results. The shooter was armed with two semi-automatic handguns, 400 rounds of ammunition, a knife, heavy chains, and a hammer.<sup>61</sup> The main assault on Norris Hall lasted approximately 10 to 12 minutes and resulted in 30 students and faculty killed along with 17 wounded. The prior attack at West Ambler Johnston Hall resulted in the deaths of two students and possibly lasted mere seconds. When compared to information developed regarding school shooting incidents in the U.S., the large death toll and the movement of the shooter from one building to another separate the Virginia Tech incident from historical trends.

Analysis of 37 school shootings from 1974 through 2000 produced the following information:<sup>62</sup>

<sup>56</sup> [National Counterterrorism Center](#): *Report on Terrorist Incidents- 2007*, April 30, 2008

<sup>57</sup> DHS/FBI Joint Special Assessment: *Potential Terrorist Attack Methods*, April 23, 2008

<sup>58</sup> DHS: *Trends in Employment of Improvised Explosive Devices*, May 24, 2006

<sup>59</sup> [National Counterterrorism Center](#): *Report on Terrorist Incidents- 2007*, April 30, 2008

<sup>60</sup> [National Counterterrorism Center](#): *Report on Terrorist Incidents- 2006*, April 30, 2007

<sup>61</sup> [Virginia Tech Review Panel](#): *The Virginia Tech Review Panel Report*, August 2007

<sup>62</sup> [USSS/US Department of Education](#): *The Final Report of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the United States*, May 2002

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- 73% of the incidents resulted in one or more students or faculty killed at the school
- 59% of the attacks occurred during the school day
- 95% of the attackers were current students at the school they attacked
- 100% of the attackers were young men or boys
- 81% of the attacks were carried out by a lone assailant
- 61% of the attackers used some type of firearm as the primary weapon
- 46% possessed two weapons

Of note in the report is that 95% of the assailants thought out the attack before committing the crime. In many instances, the attacker's observable behavior prior to the attack suggested he might be planning or preparing for a school attack. After investigating the Virginia Tech shootings, it was determined that the perpetrator planned, rehearsed, and possibly conducted pre-operational surveillance and dry-runs prior to the assault on Norris Hall.<sup>63</sup>

Armed attacks are the most common form of terrorist attack seen around the world.<sup>64</sup> This is cause for concern because these types of attacks have tactical similarities to active shooter incidents that have occurred in U.S. educational facilities. Therefore terrorists have been afforded the ability to gauge the effectiveness of armed attacks against this type of target. While terrorists are arguably the gravest threat to schools and institutes of higher learning, students and unaffiliated lone wolf actors will remain one of the primary and most likely active shooter threats to Virginia educational facilities. Although steps have been taken to improve security at higher education facilities and schools in the Commonwealth, they remain vulnerable to this type of attack. Unfortunately this vulnerability was exploited to great effect during the Virginia Tech incident, and the attack's global broadcast allowed terrorists and other potential assailants to see the devastating impact one armed gunman could have when assaulting an educational facility. Intelligence regarding terrorists and school assailants suggests that they have learned from the attack at Virginia Tech and may be able to employ similar tactics in the future.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> [Virginia Tech Review Panel](#): *Mass Shootings at Virginia Tech April 16, 2007 Report of the Review Panel*, August 2007 (A troubling tactic identified in past active shooter incidents is the use of diversionary incidents and the potential for active shooters to indirectly engage first responders at the scene. Analysis of the Columbine High School shootings demonstrates the perpetrators time detonated an IED a distance from the school. This served to pin down and possibly confuse law enforcement and public safety officials once the real attack on the school commenced.)

<sup>64</sup> [National Counterterrorism Center](#): *Report on Terrorist Incidents- 2007*, April 30, 2008

<sup>65</sup> Documentation regarding the Virginia Tech incident, to include law enforcement response times, the shooters, tactics, and other state and local policies and procedures are readily available on the Internet.

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## School Buses and Vehicle Borne IEDs

A major component of primary and secondary school systems is their transportation infrastructure. While school buses in the U.S. have not typically been targeted, attacks have been executed against bus systems in large cities throughout the world.<sup>66</sup> Recent analysis regarding attacks against school bus transportation has identified 165 bus-related terrorist attacks worldwide since 2000.<sup>67</sup> Recent reports indicating potential terrorist interest in school buses coupled with a history of attacks against bus transportation, particularly in Israel, necessitates some discussion regarding this vulnerability.

In addition to targeting buses, terrorists have a history of using larger, less-conspicuous means to transport or deliver large vehicle borne improvised explosive devices (VBIED) to their intended target. The advantage gained in utilizing an official vehicle like a school bus is the ability to approach and position VBIEDs without arousing suspicion or to enter limited and controlled access areas unnoticed.<sup>68</sup> School buses could be used as both a mechanism for attack as well as a platform for pre-operational surveillance.<sup>69</sup>

While the VFC has received limited reporting regarding incidents involving school buses, there have been numerous open source reports in the U.S. and Virginia involving school bus break-ins,<sup>70</sup> unauthorized passengers,<sup>71</sup> and the theft of school buses.<sup>72</sup> Although there is no intelligence indicating criminal or terrorist intent to use school buses to facilitate an attack in the U.S., school buses have many characteristics desired by terrorists. Key judgments regarding the security threat posed by school buses include the following:<sup>73</sup>

- School buses are generally subject to less scrutiny in public places and offer the ability to bypass standard security screening procedures as a result of their presumed legitimacy.

<sup>66</sup> [STN News](#): *Bus Security: Security Onboard*

<sup>67</sup> [National Counterterrorism Center](#): *Report on Terrorist Incidents- 2007*, April 30, 2008

<sup>68</sup> DHS/FBI Joint Special Assessment: *Potential Terrorist Attack Methods*, April 23, 2008

<sup>69</sup> A terrorist operative could park a bus in a downtown area and observe a potential target. Since they are driving or are sitting in a school bus, their presence in certain areas of a city may not be remarkable and therefore allow unfettered information collection on their desired target. They could also pose as a legitimate bus for schoolchildren and use it to test security by parking in no parking zones or attempting to enter in restricted areas.

<sup>70</sup> These school buses were parked in a field next to a middle school. ([Chesterfield Observer](#): *Crime Watch*, August 13, 2008; [Chesterfield Observer](#): *Crime Watch*, January 23, 2008)

<sup>71</sup> A Florida school bus driver allowed a 21-year-old male on a bus carrying middle school aged children. The man claimed he had a switchblade knife and later threatened to blow the bus up if the bus driver told him to get off. ([First Coast News](#): *Man Claiming to Have Acid Bomb Boards School Bus*, April 15, 2008)

<sup>72</sup> [Delaware Online](#): *Big Yellow School Bus Stolen*, September 30, 2008

<sup>73</sup> MCAC Strategic Analysis Section, Intelligence Assessment Number 755: *Possible Use of School Buses as Ideal Platform for VBIEDs*, November 2006; DHS/FBI Joint Homeland Security Assessment: *Suspicious Activities Involving School Buses*, March 2007

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- Security surrounding school buses is generally relaxed; school bus parking lots often are unlocked or are not monitored on a full-time basis.
- School buses have the capacity to carry large amounts of explosive materials and could be used to position a VBIED close to an intended target.
- A number of foreign nationals of investigative interest, including some with ties to extremist organizations, have been able to purchase school buses and acquire licenses to drive them.<sup>74</sup>
- Some school districts have reported an unusual increase in the number of foreign nationals seeking school bus driver positions. Subsequent FBI investigations have revealed that a number of applicants had connections to or sympathized with known terrorist groups. Some of these individuals had expressed interest in terrorist applications of explosives.

Identifying vehicles that avoid suspicion or dissuade extra scrutiny by security personnel is a key attribute for consideration by al-Qa'ida operatives when planning attacks with VBIEDs.<sup>75</sup> While conducting surveillance on targets in the U.S., al-Qa'ida affiliate Dhiren Barot devised extensive plans to utilize limousines as a VBIED platform.<sup>76</sup> Barot selected limousines because they were subject to less scrutiny by security personnel and their large storage capacity provided increased space for explosive devices. While school buses may not always receive deferential treatment, the presence of a school bus at historical sites, some government facilities, and private facilities would not be unusual.

## School Bus Characteristics

School bus size, hauling capacity, recognizability, and large entryways which facilitate loading large objects into the passenger area make an ideal delivery system for a VBIED. The following information outlines characteristics of some U.S. school buses:



### Blue Bird Vision<sup>77</sup>

- Passenger seating up to 77
- Interior width 90 ¾"
- Interior headroom 74" standard, 77" optional
- Entrance door 27" wide x 78" high

<sup>74</sup> Most attempts by foreign nationals in the U.S. to acquire school buses and licenses to drive them are legitimate and unrelated to terrorism

<sup>75</sup> DHS/FBI Joint Homeland Security Assessment: *Terrorist Tactics: Analysis of the Surveillance Notes Concerning Certain U.S. Financial Buildings*, January, 2005

<sup>76</sup> DHS/FBI Joint Homeland Security Assessment: *Potential Terrorist Attack Methods*, April 23, 2008

<sup>77</sup> [Blue Bird Corporation](#) (It is estimated that other similar models of buses will have comparable specifications. Other models not depicted, but are frequently used include Thomas brand school buses—specifically the Thomas Saf-T-Liner C2 which is similar to the Blue Bird Vision—and the Thomas Saf-T-Liner EF which is similar to the Blue Bird All American.)



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- Rear Door 37.7" wide x 52.5" high
- GVWR<sup>78</sup> up to 31,000 lbs

### Blue Bird All American<sup>79</sup>



- Passenger seating up to 90
- Interior width 90 ¾"
- Interior headroom 74" standard, 77" optional
- Entrance door 30" wide x 78" high
- Rear door 37.7" wide x 52.5" high
- GVWR Up to 36,200 lbs

Buses continue to be improved from a safety and design aspect. A recent development regarding school buses is the use of tinting in the windows. The increased use of tinting would be beneficial to terrorists for several reasons, including:

- Enhanced concealment if a bus is used for pre-operational surveillance.
- Enhanced concealment of passengers if a terrorist cell uses a school bus to deploy operatives to a target.
- Enhanced concealment of bombs or bomb components which decreases the possibility of detection.
- Decreased visibility into the passenger compartment thereby eliminating visibility and identification for law enforcement tactical teams in the event of a hostage situation.

## CONCLUSION

A great deal of effort has been expended in protecting critical infrastructure; however, educational facilities and assets are not specifically identified as such, rendering them soft targets. There is a great deal of information to suggest schools and school buses should be considered a high risk target. Schools, colleges, and universities are vulnerable to attack, as an attack against them would be of high consequence, and terrorists as well as homegrown criminal elements have demonstrated both the intent and capability to carry out attacks against children and educational facilities. Trends in attacks against schools suggest that they will more likely be attacked by U.S.-based criminal elements rather than international terrorist organizations. However, due to

<sup>78</sup> Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR): The GVWR includes the net weight of the vehicle, plus the weight of passengers, fuel, cargo, and any accessories added to the vehicle after purchase. The GVWR is a safety standard used to prevent overloading.

<sup>79</sup> [Blue Bird Corporation](#) (Rear engine model is depicted. The All American model does have a front engine variation which allows for a rear door as outlined in the specifications the front engine version of this model is not depicted.)

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sophisticated tactics and other knowledge, skills, and abilities possessed by terrorist organizations, the more lethal threat to students remains the international terrorist organization.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

While it may be desirable to harden all schools against attack by introducing multiple levels of additional security, intelligence suggests terrorists will devise ways to overcome the security measures of highly desirable targets. Furthermore, the threat posed by the students may not be detected or prevented through physical security measures alone. Officials should consider the following measures to improve the overall security of educational facilities in the Commonwealth.<sup>80</sup>

- Review and validate all school emergency and crisis management plans for completeness and currency.<sup>81</sup>
- Raise awareness among law enforcement officers and school administrators by conducting tabletop exercises of school emergency and crisis management plans.
- Raise awareness among school workers and students by conducting “all hazards” awareness training for the school environment.
- Raise community awareness of any potential threat and vulnerability.
- Prepare the school staff to act in a crisis and exercise this ability.
- Consider a closed-campus approach to population control that would strictly limit visitors.
- Consider a single entry point for all attendees, staff, and visitors to primary and secondary education facilities.
- Focus patrols by law enforcement officers around and on school grounds.
- Implement a plan to maintain contact with school buses.
- Ensure that emergency communications from and to schools are present, operable, and exercised.

Since the Virginia Tech incident, the VFC has undertaken an outreach program to colleges and universities in the Commonwealth to identify law enforcement and security points of contact. This is an essential step towards facilitating information sharing both prior to and during an event. Reporting and collecting information regarding suspicious activities and/or threatening situations across educational levels will allow law

<sup>80</sup> DHS/FBI Joint Homeland Security Assessment: *Recent School Shootings Not Related to Terrorism*, May 1, 2008

<sup>81</sup> See [www.ed.gov/emergencyplan](http://www.ed.gov/emergencyplan): Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools: *Emergency Planning*; <http://www.redcross.org/pubs/dspubs/terrormat.html>: American Red Cross: *Materials Dealing with Terrorism and Unexpected Events*; [National School Safety and Security Services](#)



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enforcement and homeland security partners the ability to prevent future attacks against educational facilities in the Commonwealth. Information of this nature should be reported to local law enforcement. It is also recommended that this information be reported to the Virginia Fusion Center to facilitate the tracking of suspicious persons across jurisdictional boundaries. This information can be forwarded to the VFC on the Terrorism Hotline at (877) 4VA-TIPS or via e-mail at [VFC@vsp.virginia.gov](mailto:VFC@vsp.virginia.gov).

There are numerous documents that have been published by federal agencies geared towards the terrorist and insider threat to schools in the U.S. The Virginia Fusion Center is utilizing the Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN) portal as a platform for further disseminating this type of information. HSIN is a nationally secure and trusted web-based platform able to facilitate Sensitive But Unclassified (SBU) information sharing and collaboration managed by federal, state, and local partners. HSIN facilitates collaboration between mission areas such as Law Enforcement, Emergency Management, and Public Safety. **HSIN-Virginia** is a sub-element of the overall HSIN system and consists of three specific communities of interest (HSIN-Virginia, HSIN-Virginia Emergency Management, and HSIN-Virginia Law Enforcement). Persons that do not have access to this portal interested in doing so may contact the HSIN-Virginia administrator at [hsin.va@vsp.virginia.gov](mailto:hsin.va@vsp.virginia.gov).

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## Open Source Documents

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# EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES THREAT ASSESSMENT



## APPENDIX A: VIRGINIA LOCAL AND REGIONAL SCHOOLS AND CENTERS<sup>82</sup>

<i>LOCAL</i>	<i>School Count</i>
Alternative School	10
Charter School	3
Combined School	35
Elementary School	1176
Governor's School	18
High School	302
Middle School	313
Preschool	20
Special Education School	3
Alternative Center	51
Special Education Center	15
Career and Technical Center	38
Total Local Schools	1863
Total Local Centers	104
<i>REGIONAL</i>	
Alternative Education Centers	51
Career and Technical Centers	10
Special Education Centers	20
Total Regional Schools/Centers	98
<i>Last Updated on 4/1/2008</i>	

<sup>82</sup> [Virginia Department of Education](#): *Local and Regional Schools and Centers 2007-2008*, April 1, 2008

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# EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES THREAT ASSESSMENT



## APPENDIX B: VIRGINIA HIGHER EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES<sup>83</sup>

### Four-Year Public Institutions (15)

- Christopher Newport University
- College of William and Mary
- George Mason University
- James Madison University
- Longwood University
- Norfolk State University
- Old Dominion University
- Radford University
- University of Mary Washington
- University of Virginia
- University of Virginia's College at Wise
- Virginia Commonwealth University
- Virginia Military Institute
- Virginia State University
- Virginia Tech

### Two-Year Public Institution

- Richard Bland College

### Other Virginia Institutions

- 23 Community Colleges on 40 campuses
- 1 Junior/transfer-oriented College
- 67 Out-of-state institutions operate in Virginia
- 70 Private, non-profit institutions operate in Virginia (this number includes [exempt schools](#))
- 49 Private, for-profit institutions operate in Virginia
- 153 Vocational institutions operate in Virginia

### Virginia Higher Education Budget

- Over \$3 billion is spent on higher education in Virginia each year.
  - About \$1.3 billion is provided through the state's General Fund;
  - Approximately \$1.4 billion is provided through tuition and fees collected by the institutions; and
  - Close to \$900 million is provided through federal and private sources.

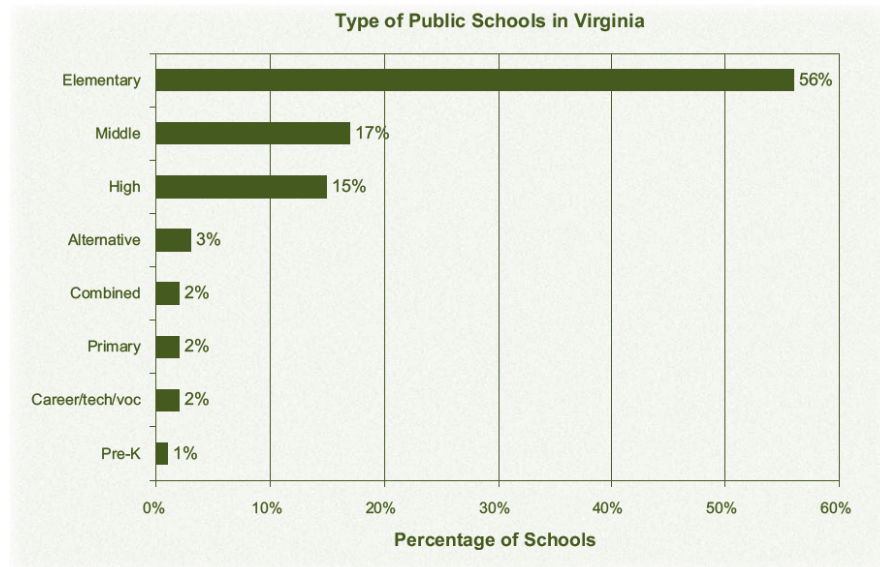
<sup>83</sup> [State Council of Higher Education for Virginia: Overview of Education System in Virginia](#)



# EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES THREAT ASSESSMENT



## APPENDIX C: THE 2007 VIRGINIA SCHOOL SAFETY SURVEY<sup>84</sup>



Range of Enrollment, by Number of Schools			
Enrollment Range	Number of Schools	Percent of Schools	Cumulative Percent
0 - 50	25	1%	1%
51 - 250	230	12%	13%
251 - 500	617	32%	45%
501 - 1,000	794	41%	86%
1,001 - 1,500	149	8%	94%
1,501 - 2,000	74	4%	98%
2,001 - 2,500	31	2%	100%
2,501 - 3,000	6	<1%	100%
3,001 +	4	<1%	100%

<sup>84</sup> [Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services](#): The 2007 School Safety Survey Results, January 2008

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# EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES THREAT ASSESSMENT



Range of Enrollment, by School Type					
Enrollment Range	Elementary	Middle	High	Other	Total
0 – 50	0	0	<1%	17%	1%
51 – 250	12%	3%	6%	49%	12%
251 – 500	42%	17%	18%	18%	32%
501 – 1000	45%	56%	26%	13%	41%
1001 – 1500	1%	21%	20%	0	8%
1501 – 2000	0	2%	20%	0	4%
2001 – 2500	0	0	9%	1%	2%
2501 – 3000	0	0	2%	1%	<1%
3001 – 5000	0	0	<1%	2%	<1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

In this table, combined, charter, magnet, governor's, primary, and career/technical schools were categorized as elementary, middle, high or other, based on the grade levels included among their enrollment. The other school types include: combined, primary, pre-k, alternative, career/technical, charter, magnet, academic-year Governor's schools, special education, Virginia Department of Correctional Education, adult education, and Deaf and Blind.

## Crisis Management and Emergency Management Plan (CMP/EMP)

Methods of Practicing CMP/EMP	
Type of CMP/EMP Practice	Percent of Schools
Administration/faculty/staff training	97%
Student training/awareness sessions	75%
Table-top exercises with crisis team members	34%
At least one full scale drill with crisis team and public safety partners	29%
First responder coordination (EMS, fire, police, hazmat)	27%
Parental training/awareness sessions	22%
Did not practice our CMP/EMP	2%

Reasons for Activating CMP/EMP	
Cause of Activation	Percent of Schools
Community incident that impacted school	27%
Weather-related event	22%
Violence/crime occurring off school property	21%
Student/staff accident or death (on or off campus)	15%
Incident at another school which impacted your school	12%
Violence/crime occurring on school property	10%

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# EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES THREAT ASSESSMENT



Reasons for Activating CMP/EMP	
Cause of Activation	Percent of Schools
Community incident that impacted school	27%
Weather-related event	22%
Violence/crime occurring off school property	21%
Student/staff accident or death (on or off campus)	15%
Incident at another school which impacted your school	12%
Violence/crime occurring on school property	10%

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# EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES THREAT ASSESSMENT



## APPENDIX D: FATAL SCHOOL SHOOTINGS IN THE U.S. 1966-2007<sup>85</sup>

TAB	DATE	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION
1.	N/A	N/A	Statistics computed solely by analyzing the information located in this compilation.
2.	N/A	N/A	General articles/information
3.	Aug. 1, 1966	Austin, TX	Charles Whitman, 25, points a rifle from the observation deck of the University of Texas at Austin's Tower and begins shooting in a homicidal rampage that goes on for 96 minutes. Sixteen people are killed, 31 wounded.
N/A	Feb. 8, 1968 May 4, 1970 May 14-15, 1970	Orangeburg, SC Kent, OH Jackson, MS	This index does not include the incidents involving protests.
4.	July 12, 1976	Fullerton, CA	Edward Charles Allaway, 37, a custodian at the Cal State Fullerton library, shoots nine people in the basement and first floor of the library with a .22-caliber rifle. The shootings occur shortly before 9:00 am, when the library was scheduled to open. Seven of the nine wounded victims die. The victims were his fellow university employees. Incident coined "Fullerton Library Massacre."

<sup>85</sup> [Virginia Tech Review Panel](#): *Mass Shootings at Virginia Tech April 16, 2007 Report of the Review Panel*, August 2007

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## EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES THREAT ASSESSMENT



TAB	DATE	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION
5.	Jan. 29, 1979	San Diego, CA	Brenda Ann Spencer, 16, wounds eight children and one police officer and kills the principal and custodian when she opens fire with a .22-caliber rifle at an elementary school across the street from her San Diego home. Spencer tells police that she killed two people and wounded nine because she "didn't like Mondays." She is in prison.
6.	Jan. 20, 1983	Saint Louis, MO	Eighth-grader, at Parkway South Junior High School, David Lawler, 14, shoots two of his classmates then turns the gun on himself and commits suicide. David brought two guns to school and used one of them on himself to end the violence.
7.	Jan. 21, 1985	Goddard, KS	James Alan Kearbey, 14, armed with a M1-A semi-automatic rifle and a .357-caliber handgun, kills the principal and wounds two teachers and a student at his Goddard Junior High School. Kearbey pleaded no contest and served seven years in a state youth facility.
8.	May 20, 1988	Winnetka, IL	Laurie Dann, 30, shoots six students at an elementary school, killing one second-grader. She then shoots a man in a nearby house before committing suicide.
9.	Sept. 26, 1988	Greenwood, SC	James Wilson, 19, opens fire in an elementary school. He shoots seven students and two teachers. Two 8-year-old girls die.
10.	Jan. 17, 1989	Stockton, CA	Patrick Edward Purdy, a disturbed drifter and former Stockton resident, opens fire on the Cleveland Elementary School playground with a semi-automatic, Type 56, assault rifle, killing five children and wounding 29 others and a teacher. The fatalities, (ranging from 6-years-old to 9-years-old) were all Cambodian immigrants, except for one child who was born in Vietnam. Incident is coined the "Stockton Massacre."

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## EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES THREAT ASSESSMENT



TAB	DATE	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION
11.	Nov. 1, 1991	Iowa City, IA	Gang Lu, 28, a graduate student in physics from China, reportedly upset because he was passed over for an academic honor, opens fire in two buildings on the University of Iowa campus. Five University of Iowa employees are killed, including four members of the physics department, two other people are wounded. Lu fatally shoots himself.
12.	Dec. 14, 1992	Great Barrington, MA	Wayne Lo, 18, student at Simon's Rock College of Bard, approaches a security-guard shack on the campus and begins shooting, as he says now, "at anything that moved." Lo fires at least nine rounds during the following 20 minutes, killing another student and a Spanish professor and wounding four others. Lo had not adjusted well to the liberal college environment. He held conservative views which were deemed racist, homophobic and anti-semitic by fellow students at the college. Steadily he had become more and more excluded by his fellow students.
13.	Nov. 15, 1995	Lynnville, TN	Jamie Rouse, 17, a student at Richland High School, kills one student and one teacher. Another teacher is seriously wounded. Rouse was convicted as an adult of two counts of first degree murder and one count of attempted murder. He was sentenced to life in prison without a parole.

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TAB	DATE	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION
14.	Feb. 2, 1996	Moses Lake, WA	Barry Loukaitis, 14, walks into algebra class with a hunting rifle in his trenchcoat and opens fire, killing the teacher and two students. Years before the shooting, his father began an affair and his mother became increasingly distant and often spoke of suicide. She frequently implied that Barry would also have to kill himself. In January of 1996, she informed Barry the date of the double-suicide would be Valentine's Day. However, it is widely believed, and he himself claimed, that relentless bullying at the school impelled him to this murderous rampage. Incident coined "Frontier Junior High Shooting."
15.	Aug. 15, 1996	San Diego, CA	Frederick Martin Davidson, 36, a graduate engineering student at San Diego State, is defending his thesis before a faculty committee when he pulls out a handgun and kills three professors.
16.	Feb. 19, 1997	Bethel, AK	Evan Ramsey, 16, opens fire with a shotgun in a common area of his high school, killing the principal and a student and wounding two others. Ramsey was sentenced to two 99-year prison terms.
17.	Oct. 1, 1997	Pearl, MS	Luke Woodham, 16, brutally beats and stabs his mother, Mary Woodham to death. He then drives his mother's car to his high school. Wearing a blue denim jacket, he makes no attempt to hide his rifle. He enters Pearl High School and shoots nine students. Two students died, including the suspect's ex-girlfriend. He goes on to wound seven others before the assistant principal retrieves a .45 pistol from the glove compartment of his truck and subdues Woodham while he is trying to drive off campus. Woodham confessed to shooting his classmates, but he claimed to not remember killing his mother. He pleaded insanity, but the jury rejected the insanity defense, and instead found him guilty.

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TAB	DATE	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION
18.	Dec. 1, 1997	West Paducah, KY	Michael Carneal, 14, opens fire on a group of praying students killing three girls and wounding five others. He pleaded guilty but mentally ill to murder and is serving life in prison.
19.	Mar. 24, 1998	Jonesboro, AR	Two boys, Mitchell Johnson, 13, and Andrew Golden, 11, both dressed in army-style camouflaged clothes, steal a van from Johnson's home and load it with camping supplies, food, and seven weapons which they stole from Golden's grandfather's house. The boys arrive and open fire on their middle school from nearby woods, killing four girls and a teacher and wounding ten others. Both boys were convicted of murder and can be held until the age of 21. Incident coined "Jonesboro School Massacre."
20.	May 19, 1998	Fayetteville, TN	Three days before his graduation, Jacob Davis, 18, an honor student opens fire at his high school, killing a classmate who was dating his ex-girlfriend. He was sentenced to life in prison.
21.	May 21, 1998	Springfield, OR	Student Kipland "Kip" Kinkel, 17, kills his parents, William and Faith, both Spanish teachers at local high schools. He then arrives at class at Thurston High School and murders two of his classmates, and injures 25. His case has become one of the standard case studies in profiling students who bring guns to school for the purpose of murder. He was sentenced to nearly 112 years in prison.
22.	April 20, 1999	Littleton, CO	Students Eric Harris, 18, and Dylan Klebold, 17, kill 12 students and a teacher and wound 23 others at Columbine High School. They had plotted for a year to kill at least 500 and blow up their school. At the end of their hour-long rampage, they turned the guns on themselves.

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TAB	DATE	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION
23.	Nov. 19, 1999	Deming, NM	Victor Cordova, 12-year-old boy, arrives at school dressed in camouflage and shoots Araceli Tena, a 13-year-old girl, with a .22 caliber as students return from lunch.
24.	Feb. 29, 2000	Mount Morris Township, MI	A first-grade boy at Buell Elementary School fatally shoots classmate Kayla Rolland, 6, after the two children had a verbal spat. He took the .32-caliber handgun from his uncle's home where he was living.
25.	Mar. 10, 2000	Savannah, GA	Darrell Ingram, 19, shoots and kills two students while they are leaving a school sponsored dance honoring the Beach High School girls basketball state championship team.
26.	May 26, 2000	Lake Worth, FL	Nathaniel Brazill, 13, an honor student, shoots and kills his English teacher on the last day of classes after the teacher refused to let him talk to two girls in his classroom. Police said the seventh-grader had been sent home for throwing water balloons and returned to the school with a handgun he found in his grandfather's dresser.
27.	Mar. 5, 2001	Santee, CA	Santana High student Charles Andrew Williams, 15, opens fire with a pistol, killing two fellow students and wounding 13 others.
28.	Mar. 30, 2001	Gary, IN	Donald R. Burt Jr., 17, shoots and kills fellow student outside Lew Wallace High School.
29.	May 15, 2001	Ennis, TX	A 16-year-old sophomore upset over his relationship with a girl, takes 17 hostages in his English class. He shoots and kills himself and the girl.
30.	Jan. 16, 2002	Grundy, VA	Graduate student Peter Odighizuwa, 42, recently dismissed from Virginia's Appalachian School of Law, returns to campus and kills the dean, a professor and a student before being tackled by students. The attack also wounds three female students.

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TAB	DATE	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION
31.	Oct. 28, 2002	Tucson, AZ	Failing University of Arizona Nursing College student and Gulf War veteran Robert Flores, 40, walks into an instructor's office and fatally shoots her. A few minutes later, armed with five guns, he enters one of his nursing classrooms and kills two more of his instructors before fatally shooting himself.
32.	April 24, 2003	Red Lion, PA	Principal of Red Lion Area Junior High is fatally shot in the chest by a 14-year-old male student, who then commits suicide, as students gather in the cafeteria for breakfast.
33.	Sept. 24, 2003	Cold Spring, MN	John Jason McLaughlin, 15, shoots and kills two students at Rocori High School.
34.	Mar. 21, 2005	Red Lake Indian Reservation, MN	Jeff Weise, 16, shoots to death his grandfather and his grandfather's girlfriend. He then proceeds to his high school where he kills a security guard, a teacher, and five students, and wounded seven others, before killing himself (10 total deaths, including shooter).
35.	Nov. 8, 2005	Jacksboro, TN	Kenneth Bartley Jr., 15, shoots three administrators and kills one using a .22-caliber handgun at Campbell County High School. He plead guilty to a single count of second degree murder and two counts of attempted second-degree murder, and was sentenced to 45 years in prison.
36.	Aug. 24, 2006	Essex, VT	Christopher Williams, 27, went to Essex Elementary School in Vermont and, when he could not find his ex-girlfriend - a teacher, he shot and killed one teacher and wounded another. Earlier, he had killed the ex-girlfriend's mother. He attempted suicide but survived and was arrested.

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TAB	DATE	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION
37.	Aug. 30, 2006	Hillsborough, NC	After shooting his father to death, a student opens fire at his high school, injuring two students. Deputies found guns, ammunition, and homemade pipe bombs in the student's car. The student had emailed Columbine High's principal, telling him that it was "time the world remembered" the shootings at Columbine.
38.	Sept. 2, 2006	Shepherdstown, WV	Douglas W. Pennington, 49, kills himself and his two sons, Logan P. Pennington, 26, and Benjamin M. Pennington, 24, during a visit to the campus of Shepherd University.
39.	Sept. 17, 2006	Pittsburgh, PA	Five Duquesne University basketball players are wounded after a shooting on campus after a dance. One of the two shooters was allegedly upset that his date had talked to one of the athletes.
40.	Sept. 27, 2006	Bailey, CO	Duane Roger Morrison, 53, enters Platte Canyon High School, claiming to be carrying a bomb. Morrison takes six female students hostage and sexually assaults them, then releases four. When police enter the classroom, Morrison opens fire before killing one hostage. The remaining hostage escapes unharmed. Paramedics confirm that Morrison had committed suicide.
41.	Sept. 29, 2006	Cazenovia, WI	Eric Hainstock, 15, takes two guns into his rural school and fatally shoots the principal before being captured and arrested.
42.	Oct. 2, 2006	Nickel Mines, PA	Charles Carl Roberts IV, 32, a milk-tank truck driver, walks into a one-room Amish schoolhouse with two rifles, a semi-automatic handgun, and 600 rounds of ammunition. He selects all the female students, and shoots them execution-style, killing five (ages 7-13) and seriously wounding six. He then shoots himself, having left his wife suicide notes beforehand.

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## EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES THREAT ASSESSMENT



TAB	DATE	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION
43.	Jan. 3, 2007	Tacoma, WA	Douglas Chantabouly, 18, enters Henry Foss High School and shoots and kills a fellow male student. The school proceeds to enter lockdown. Students are moved to the school's gymnasium until police secure the building. Shortly after, Chanthabouly is arrested walking through a suburban neighborhood nearby. Tacoma Police believe that the shooting was due to a disagreement.
44.	April 16, 2007	Blacksburg, VA	Gunman, Seung-Hui Cho, 23, kills 32 people and wounds 25 before committing suicide. The incident is comprised of two separate attacks, about two hours apart, one in a dorm the other in a classroom building.

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