



Homeland
Security



Federal Bureau
of Investigation

JOINT INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

(U//FOUO) Potential for Unaffiliated Individuals to Conduct Retaliatory Attacks in the Homeland Following the Death of Usama Bin Ladin

9 May 2011

(U) Scope

(U//FOUO) This Joint Intelligence Bulletin provides law enforcement and public and private sector officials with information for consideration in the wake of the death of Usama bin Ladin. This information is provided to support the activities of DHS and FBI and to help federal, state, and local government counterterrorism and law enforcement officials deter, prevent, preempt, or respond to terrorist attacks directed against the United States.

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(U) Key Findings

(U//FOUO) The death of Usama bin Ladin could inspire violent extremist followers to conduct retaliatory attacks in the Homeland. We are particularly concerned that lone offenders—who are unburdened by organizational constraints that can slow operational decisions by established terrorist groups—could attempt a near-term attack using simple improvised explosive devices (IEDs) or small arms tactics against easily accessible, low security targets.*

(U//FOUO) At this time there are no credible threats or reporting to indicate the active planning of such an attack. Due to the high operational security and unsophisticated tactics, lone-offender attacks are difficult for law enforcement to detect through existing tripwires and deter.

(U//FOUO) Potential for Retaliatory Attacks by Lone Offenders

(U//FOUO) We assess the death of al-Qa'ida leader Usama bin Ladin is likely to provide motivation for Homeland attacks—particularly from likeminded, ideologically focused lone offenders using available small arms or simply constructed IEDs against familiar, low security targets, requiring only minimal preparation. We assess that the threat from lone offenders is the most likely near-term threat in the wake of Bin Ladin's death since they are unburdened by organizational constraints that can slow operational decisions by established terrorist groups. In a 6 May statement, al-Qa'ida said the "soldiers of Islam" in groups and as individuals will continue to plot and plan attacks until they succeed. However, we have no credible information to suggest that a specifically targeted plot is underway.

(U//FOUO) Over the last year al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula's English-language magazine, *Inspire*, and various al-Qa'ida-affiliated spokesmen have indicated that attacks launched by individual followers of al-Qa'ida's ideology can have a significant impact. Those lone offenders unaffiliated with al-Qa'ida, but inspired to retaliate, could be motivated to heed the repeated calls for followers to conduct relatively simple, individualized attacks like the attack allegedly conducted by Major Nidal Hasan^{USPER} at Fort Hood on 5 November 2009.

(U//FOUO) Previous Attacks Demonstrate the Threat from Lone Offenders

(U//FOUO) Previous attacks in the United States and on U.S. interests overseas demonstrate the potential danger, lethality, and effectiveness of lone offenders with little or no training.

- (U) On 1 June 2009 Carlos Bledsoe^{USPER}, a Muslim convert, drove onto the parking lot of a U.S. Army/Navy recruiting center in Little Rock, Arkansas, and allegedly opened fire on two soldiers, killing one and wounding the other.

* (U//FOUO) For the purpose of this Joint Intelligence Bulletin, we define a "lone offender" as an individual who commits terrorist acts alone and without direction from a group or another individual. The perpetrator may have contact with others, but those other individuals are not aware of the perpetrator's plans or intentions.

- (U) On 5 November 2009, Major Nidal Hasan^{USPER} allegedly opened fire at the Fort Hood military installation's Readiness Center in Killeen, Texas, killing 13 and wounding 32.
- (U) On 2 March 2011, a lone gunman boarded a U.S. Air Force bus at the airport in Frankfurt, Germany and opened fire, killing the bus driver and one of the 15 airmen who were on their way to Ramstein Air Base before they deployed to Afghanistan. The alleged shooter, apprehended by the German police shortly after the assault, has online ties to other individuals with known violent extremist views.

(U//FOUO) An extended planning cycle is not required to conduct these types of attacks. The perpetrators rarely reveal their specific intentions in advance, providing fewer opportunities for law enforcement to identify them and disrupt attacks before they occur.

(U) Lone Offenders

(U//FOUO) Lone offenders have a lower security signature due to the fact that they are not formally affiliated with a known violent extremist group, organization, or movement, and thus enjoy relative anonymity and are able to evade law enforcement scrutiny during the preoperational phase.

(U//FOUO) In many cases, lone offenders may have been formally or loosely affiliated with a recognized violent extremist organization or movement at one time, but separated from the group due to ideological or operational differences (e.g., because the lone offender's views became notably more extreme than those of the group, or because the group was unwilling to support the level of violent tactics the individual deemed necessary to achieve objectives).

(U//FOUO) Importance of Suspicious Activity Reporting

(U//FOUO) We face an increased challenge in detecting terrorist plots underway by individuals or small groups acting quickly and independently or with only tenuous ties to foreign handlers. Given that pre-operational indicators are likely to be difficult to detect, state, local, tribal, territorial, and private sector partners play a critical role in identifying and reporting suspicious activities and raising the awareness of federal counterterrorism officials.

(U//FOUO) Understanding the terrorist attack planning cycle can help law enforcement and others responsible for securing infrastructure assets recognize pre-operational activities. Although lone offenders and small teams preparing attacks in the United States do not necessarily follow the typical attack planning steps, law enforcement and security personnel should remain vigilant for indicators of attack preparations.

(U//FOUO) We encourage reporting of suspicious activity to appropriate authorities and encourage our homeland security, military, and law enforcement partners to remain vigilant.

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