



U.S. Department of Justice
Federal Bureau of Investigation

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION COUNTERTERRORISM ANALYTICAL LEXICON



(U//FOUO) FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE- COUNTERTERRORISM DIVISION
COUNTERTERRORISM ANALYTICAL LEXICON

**(U//FOUO) FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
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INTRODUCTION

(U//FOUO) INTRODUCTION

(U//FOUO) This lexicon is intended to help standardize the terms used in FBI analytical products dealing with counterterrorism. The definitions it contains do not supercede those in the Department of Justice National Foreign Intelligence Program Manual (NFIPM), the Attorney General Guidelines, the National Implementation Plan for the War on Terror, or any US Government statute. Analysis that labels an individual with any of these terms is not sufficient predication for any investigative action or technique. Nor can any investigation be conducted solely upon the basis of activities protected by the First Amendment or the lawful exercise of other rights secured by the Constitution or laws of the United States. Before applying a label to an individual or his or her activity, reasonable efforts should have been made to ensure the application of that label to be accurate, complete, timely, and relevant.

(U//FOUO) The definitions in this lexicon fall into four broad categories:

- (U//FOUO) **Basic Definitions:** Terms describing basic concepts and broad categories of operatives.
- (U//FOUO) **Origins:** Terms describing where an individual is from, how he or she was recruited into violent extremist activity, and his or her relationship to an organization.
- (U//FOUO) **Activity or Terrorist Role:** Terms describing an individual's role in terrorist activity. Small decentralized terrorist networks are more likely than large centralized organizations to include individuals who are less specialized and who perform multiple activities or roles. Individuals may change roles over time; for example, a terrorist sympathizer may become further radicalized and go on to play more active roles.
- (U//FOUO) **Behavior:** Terms describing the individual's tradecraft or a group's organizational structure.

(U//FOUO) One or more terms from each of these categories can be used to characterize an individual and his or her background and activity. The applicability of these terms to an individual is generally a matter of degree and involves subjective judgments. While some of the descriptive terms are mutually exclusive, others may overlap. Some individuals may elude description by any of these terms, while describing others may require the use of multiple terms from each category. The use of terms not listed in this lexicon might be necessary to describe an individual. If, however, the terms included in this lexicon are used, the intended meaning should match the given definition.

BASIC DEFINITIONS

(U//FOUO) BASIC DEFINITIONS

(U//FOUO) **Operative:** An “operative” *knowingly* participates in terrorism, regardless of his or her affiliation with a terrorist organization. Some of the types of activity defined in this lexicon do not require knowledge on the part of the individual that he or she is participating in terrorism, so not all individuals fitting the definitions in this lexicon are “operatives.” Individuals performing the following activities and terrorist roles (see below for definitions) are usually considered “operatives”:

- (U//FOUO) Courier
- (U//FOUO) Facilitator
- (U//FOUO) Fundraiser
- (U//FOUO) Intelligence operative
- (U//FOUO) Movement leader
- (U//FOUO) Muscle operative
- (U//FOUO) Operational leader
- (U//FOUO) Operational planner
- (U//FOUO) Recruiter

(U//FOUO) **Attack Operative:** “Attack operative” is a subcategory of “operative.” An individual performing one of the following activities or terrorist roles (see below for definitions) is usually considered an “attack operative”:

- (U//FOUO) Intelligence operative
- (U//FOUO) Muscle operative
- (U//FOUO) Operational leader
- (U//FOUO) Operational planner

(U//FOUO) **Support Operative:** “Support operative” is another subcategory of “operative.” An individual performing one of the following activities or terrorist roles (see below for definitions) is usually considered a “support operative”:

- (U//FOUO) Courier
- (U//FOUO) Facilitator
- (U//FOUO) Fundraiser
- (U//FOUO) Movement leader
- (U//FOUO) Recruiter

(U//FOUO) **Foot Soldiers:** The National Implementation Plan (NIP) for the War on Terror defines “foot soldiers” as “those persons—including operatives and facilitators, but not terrorist leaders—who carry out terrorist acts or those who support them.”¹ Under the framework of this lexicon, an individual performing one of the following activities or terrorist roles (see below for definitions) is usually considered a “foot soldier” according to the definition included in the NIP:

- (U//FOUO) Courier
- (U//FOUO) Facilitator
- (U//FOUO) Fundraiser
- (U//FOUO) Intelligence operative
- (U//FOUO) Muscle operative
- (U//FOUO) Operational leader
- (U//FOUO) Operational planner
- (U//FOUO) Recruiter

(U//FOUO) **Violent Extremism:** “Violent extremism” is any ideology that encourages, endorses, condones, justifies, or supports the commission of a violent act or crime against the United States, its government, citizens, or allies in order to achieve political, social, or economic changes, or against individuals or groups who hold contrary opinions. Violent extremism differs from “radicalism” in that violent extremists explicitly endorse, encourage, or commit acts of violence or provide material support to those who do. “Radicalism” is a much looser term that does not necessarily indicate acceptance or endorsement of violent methods, and is therefore not preferred. “Extremist” should be coupled with “violent” for purposes of clarity. It should be noted that some “extreme” or “radical” activity—such as spreading propaganda—might be constitutionally protected. An analytical judgement that an individual is a “violent extremist,” “extremist,” or “radical” is not predication for any investigative action or technique.

(U//FOUO) **Terrorism:** “Terrorism” is the unlawful use or threat of violence in furtherance of political, religious, ideological or social goals that is intended to (a) evoke fear, intimidate or coerce a civilian population or any segment thereof; (b) influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion.²

¹ (U//FOUO) National Counterterrorism Center, “National Implementation Plan for the War on Terror,” 26 June 2006 (UNCLASSIFIED).

² (U//FOUO) FBI, “National Foreign Intelligence Program Manual” (NFIPM) Glossary (UNCLASSIFIED).

A blue banner with the word "ORIGINS" in a white, serif font. The background of the banner features abstract, glowing blue lines and a gradient from dark blue to light blue.

ORIGINS

(U//FOUO) ORIGINS

(U//FOUO) **Family-influenced violent extremist:** A “family-influenced violent extremist” is born into a family with parents or other close relatives who hold violent extremist views. He or she is raised to believe in these violent extremist views, adopts his or her relatives’ violent extremist ideology, and may grow up as part of a violent extremist social network.

(U//FOUO) **Self-starter:** A “self starter” is an individual or group that makes significant steps in the radicalization process without being recruited and has no direct, personal influence from other violent extremists in the early stages of radicalization. He or she might later seek out contact with other violent extremists or be pulled into their orbit. There should be an element of autonomy in a self starter's radicalization.

(U//FOUO) **Socially reinforced violent extremist:** A “socially reinforced violent extremist” may have underlying tendencies for participating in violent extremist activity (for example, persecution syndrome, violent personality, etc.) but would not proceed without reinforcement from social interactions with like-minded others.

(U//FOUO) **Targeted recruit:** A “targeted recruit” is selected by a recruiter for advantageous characteristics such as US citizenship, access to a trusted position, or skills and abilities. An individual who is recruited on the basis of his or her access or nationality to gather intelligence can be considered a targeted recruit.

(U//FOUO) **Unwitting co-optee:** An “unwitting co-optee” provides support to terrorism without knowing that his or her actions are contributing to terrorism. Such an individual may suspect that he or she is being taken advantage of. Not all unwitting co-optees are engaging in criminal behavior.

(U//FOUO) **US-Radicalized:** A “US-radicalized” individual’s primary social influence has been the cultural values and beliefs of the United States and whose radicalization and indoctrination process began or occurred primarily in the United States.

ACTIVITY / TERRORIST ROLE

(U//FOUO) ACTIVITY / TERRORIST ROLE

(U//FOUO) **Courier:** A “courier” enables terrorism by physically carrying items such as messages, information, or money. He or she might have no knowledge of the content of the communications, but if he or she is unaware that he or she is enabling communications, he or she should also be considered an unwitting co-optee (see above).

(U//FOUO) **Facilitator:** A “facilitator” knowingly provides one or more of a wide array of services to other operatives that enable the execution of terrorist plots, training, travel, or financing. Such activity might include setting up bank accounts, acquiring or producing false identification or travel documentation, aiding travel, disbursing funds, simple procurement of materials, or enabling communications via electronic means or by coordinating couriers. A facilitator who participates in a conspiracy without knowing the final object of the conspiracy or even knowing that a conspiracy exists should be referred to as an unwitting co-optee (see above).³

(U//FOUO) **Fundraiser:** A “fundraiser” solicits and collects funds that are destined for use to support terrorism. This can be done through legitimate non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are infiltrated or exploited by terrorists to provide cover for terrorism fundraising. A fundraiser might also use other criminal activity such as fraud or diversion of funds from legitimate businesses to support terrorism. If a fundraiser is unaware that the funds will be diverted to terrorism, he or she is also considered an unwitting co-optee (see above).

(U//FOUO) **Ideologue** or **propagandist:** An “ideologue” or “propagandist” establishes, promotes, or disseminates justifications for violent extremism, often through manipulation of primary text materials such as religious texts or historical accounts that establish grievances. He or she might not have strong links to any terrorist organization or be integrated into an organization’s command structure. Unless he or she directly advocates specific acts of violence, much of such an individual’s activity might be constitutionally protected.

(U//FOUO) **Intelligence operative:** An “intelligence operative” carries out various intelligence-gathering activities such as casing targets, testing security, or denial and

³ (U//FOUO) The National Implementation Plan for the War on Terror defines “terrorist facilitator” as “A person who knowingly provides assistance to terrorists or terrorist groups. This assistance may include, but is not limited to, information, coordination support, psychological aid, safehaven, or financial resources.” (National Counterterrorism Center, “National Implementation Plan for the War on Terror,” 26 June 2006 (UNCLASSIFIED)).

deception. Some intelligence operatives might attempt to gain employment in sensitive positions in the US Government or US infrastructure.

(U//FOUO) **Major donor:** A “major donor” knowingly provides significant funding to support terrorism. His or her contributions are the result of ideological or religious affinity with a terrorist organization. If an individual provides significant funding to terrorists, but is not aware that his or her contributions are being used to support terrorism, he or she may be considered an unwitting co-optee (see above).

(U//FOUO) **Movement leader:** A “movement leader” sets the agenda for a movement or organization. Such an individual is usually a charismatic leader with the ability to attract followers, dictate the terms of a movement, and resolve grievances within an organization.

(U//FOUO) **Muscle operative:** A “muscle operative” is a low-skilled operative who executes attacks. He or she has typically undergone some degree of paramilitary training, or has some familiarity with weapons and tactics, but does not have the skills or sophistication of an “operational leader” or “operational planner” (see below).

(U//FOUO) **Operational leader:** An “operational leader” puts into effect the component parts of an operational planner’s complex plan. He or she might coordinate one or more components and be given wide latitude for modifying the operational plan, but is not the genesis of the plan.

(U//FOUO) **Operational planner:** An “operational planner” coordinates complex operations that may involve separate attack operative, facilitation, and reconnaissance cells. Such an individual usually has a sophisticated understanding of tactics, weapons and methods.

(U//FOUO) **Recruiter:** A “recruiter” attempts to identify and assess individuals who can be enlisted to support terrorist activity either by pitching them to join an organization, or by getting their unwitting support.

(U//FOUO) **Terrorist Sympathizer:** A “terrorist sympathizer” is primarily a spectator of terrorism. He or she might make small financial contributions to terrorist organizations, have tangential contact with terrorist operatives, or make himself or herself available to perform minor services. Some might even proclaim their willingness and courage to engage in violent activity on behalf of a violent extremist cause, but have no real intention of doing so. In many cases, the anonymity of the internet may actually encourage such behavior. However, in reality, a terrorist sympathizer plays virtually no active role in an attack or preparations for an attack, and has no detailed insider knowledge of terrorist plans. Some of his or her activity might be overt, with no attempt made to disguise his or her expression of radicalized views, and much of his or her activity—such as spreading propaganda—might be constitutionally protected. Activity that is part of a planned denial and deception campaign, such as misleading authorities, masking other terrorist activity, or spreading panic, should not be considered the acts of “terrorist sympathizers.”



(U//FOUO) BEHAVIOR

(U//FOUO) **Cell:** A “cell” is a small, close-knit group of two or more individuals who are engaged in activity toward a common terrorist objective. Cell members are often bound together by strong emotional or ideological ties, and might even engage in rapport-building activities that have no operational purpose other than to foster group loyalty. A cell is distinguished from a “network” (see below) in that all the members of a “cell” are knowingly participating in terrorism. However, in some cases, a cell may compartmentalize information so that every individual member does not know the ultimate operational objective, and in some cases, may not know all the other cell members. Within the cell, there is usually some kind of leadership structure, although the cell itself might be part of a “decentralized terrorist movement” (see below), and have no relationship to other cells or operatives outside itself. Individuals who are purely “unwitting co-optees” (see above) are not members of a “cell,” even if they are unknowingly supporting its activities.

(U//FOUO) **Clean operative:** A “clean operative” is an individual who has not previously come to the attention of the law enforcement or intelligence communities. Terrorist groups may seek out such operatives because of the increased difficulty of detecting them.

(U//FOUO) **Covert tradecraft:** “Covert tradecraft” includes elements such as communications security (COMSEC), countersurveillance or counterintelligence activities. The purpose of such tradecraft is to avoid attention from law enforcement and intelligence services and to mask association with violent extremist activity and terrorist organizations.

(U//FOUO) **Decentralized terrorist movement:** A “decentralized terrorist movement” involves lone terrorists (see below) or small, independent terrorist cells that target adversaries defined by the broader movement’s ideology; such movements are influenced by leaderless resistance strategies. Decentralized cells lack directional, vertical command links with a larger organization—they are individuals or unconnected small groups that are not tied together by a common leadership structure, although they might have some kind of internal leadership. Although individuals or cells function independently and without leaders, they function with a common goal shared among independent groups. A lone terrorist might be part of a decentralized terrorist movement. However, other lone terrorists might be motivated primarily by personal factors.

(U//FOUO) **Dormant operative:** A “dormant operative” has historical ties to a terrorist organization but has ceased participation in terrorism. He or she may reengage in such activity either on his or her own initiative or as a result of contact with others. A dormant

operative differs from an operative practicing sleeper tradecraft in that when a dormant operative originally ceases activity, he or she does so at his or her own volition, and is not directed to establish *bona fides* as a law abiding citizen to await “activation.”

(U//FOUO) **Homegrown violent extremist:** A “homegrown violent extremist” is a US person who was once assimilated into, but who has rejected, the cultural values, beliefs, and environment of the United States in favor of a violent extremist ideology. He or she is “US-radicalized” (see above), and intends to commit terrorism inside the United States without direct support or direction from a foreign terrorist organization.

(U//FOUO) **Infiltrator tradecraft:** “Infiltrator tradecraft” involves entering the United States from overseas for a specific purpose, such as launching an attack or casing targets. An operative or group of operatives practicing infiltrator tradecraft will generally avoid contact with other violent extremists, but may use unwitting co-optees for facilitation. Like sleeper tradecraft, infiltrator tradecraft may involve attempts to “blend in” to avoid attention, but does not include the element of awaiting “activation” before taking operational action.

(U//FOUO) **Lone terrorist:** A “lone terrorist” commits terrorist acts alone, and without witting support from others. The perpetrator may have contact with others, but those other individuals are not aware of the perpetrator’s plans or intentions. The individual may be estranged or rejected from a terrorist or like-minded group, or may follow the ideology of a leaderless resistance movement. During the planning and execution stages of his or her attack, the lone terrorist avoids collaboration—and often, contact—with other known violent extremists. As a result, they might be freed from the strategic concerns and constraints on tactics and targets that affect terrorist organizations. The term “lone terrorist” should not be confused with the new provision in the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) that is known as the “lone wolf” provision. The lone wolf provision enables FISA warrants against non-US person targets who do not have a connection to a foreign power, but who are engaged in international terrorism or activities in preparation for an act of international terrorism. An analytic judgment that an individual is a “lone terrorist” has no standing on whether an individual might be subject to the “lone wolf” provision of the FISA. Therefore, “lone terrorist” is preferable to “lone wolf.”

(U//FOUO) **Network:** A “network” is any group of two or more individuals that is tied together by communication or common associations. A network is distinguished from a cell in that a network does not work together toward a discrete common objective, although all the members might ideologically support a common goal. Any individual’s associations can typically be described in terms of multiple networks.

(U//FOUO) **Overt violent extremist:** An “overt violent extremist” uses no measures to disguise his or her violent extremist views, but might use various tradecraft to disguise some connections to other violent extremists—particularly those who are actively engaged in terrorist activity. For example, many ideologues and propagandists might be overt extremists. Much activity by overt extremists might be constitutionally protected expression.

(U//FOUO) **Sleeper tradecraft:** “Sleeper tradecraft” is a sub category of covert tradecraft. An operatives practicing sleeper tradecraft does not engage in terrorism until a need arises. He or she directs his or her efforts at establishing *bona fides* as a law abiding citizen to establish cover, and intends, from the beginning of his or her deployment, to be “activated” through covert communications with handlers who are aware of the operative’s clandestine relationship with a terrorist organization.



FBI Customer Satisfaction Survey

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Product Title FBI Counterterrorism Lexicon

Product Date _____

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1	2	3	4	5	N/A	This product was delivered within established deadlines.
1	2	3	4	5	N/A	The product was timely and relevant to your mission, programs, priorities or initiatives.
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1	2	3	4	5	N/A	The product resulted in change in investigative or intelligence priorities and/or a shift from unaddressed to addressed work, or vice versa.
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Comments

