



Assessment

(U) Homeland Security Threat Assessment: Evaluating Threats 2009-2014



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A S S E S S M E N T

~~(U)~~ Homeland Security Threat Assessment: Evaluating Threats 2009-2014

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~~(U)~~ DHS coordinating organizations are Immigration and Customs Enforcement, United States Secret Service, United States Coast Guard, Customs and Border Protection, Transportation Security Administration, and United States Citizenship and Immigration Services.

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— ~~(U//FOUO)~~ DHS cannot predict from which country influenza is most likely to translocate into the United States.

~~(U)~~ **Indicators of the Emergence of an Influenza Pandemic**

- ~~(U)~~ Appearance of a virulent influenza strain that spreads efficiently from human to human.
- ~~(U)~~ Regional medical crises related to disease outbreaks.
- ~~(U)~~ Nation-state actions in response to disease outbreaks.
- ~~(U)~~ Commitment of military forces to contain an outbreak.
- ~~(U)~~ Extensive social disorder and unrest in response to an outbreak or collapse of the health infrastructure.

~~(U)~~ **Cyber and Explosive Threats to Critical Infrastructure**

~~(U//FOUO)~~ **Cyber Attack on the Nation's Electric Grid System**

~~(S)~~ [Redacted]

~~(S)~~ [Redacted]

~~(S)~~ [Redacted]

~~(U)~~ SCADA systems are a computer based mechanism primarily used for control of industrial processes.

~~(U//FOUO)~~ Because electricity cannot be stored within the electric grid, power grid systems require constant monitoring and allocation of electric resources to ensure continuous operation. Improved interconnectivity, due to the ongoing industry transition to a “Smart Grid” control system infrastructure over the next five years, promises to greatly improve day-to-day system allocations and reduce overall operational costs.⁴ *Dedicated hackers with sufficient resources and access to disrupt system operations could possibly cause widespread, cascading disruptions because of the reliance of many other key infrastructure networks on the power grid.* Loss of electric power could temporarily degrade at least nine, and possibly all, of the 18 critical infrastructure and key resource (CIKR) sectors identified by DHS as vital to the nation’s security.⁵

~~(U)~~ International and Domestic Terrorism

~~(U//LES)~~ *Lone actors and small cells of violent extremists associated with the antigovernment or white supremacist movements pose the greatest domestically generated, high-impact threat to the United States.* As demonstrated by the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing and several disrupted plots, individuals in these movements have planned and conducted attacks of national significance within the United States.^{6,7,8}

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]⁴ A single, large-scale attack against targets such as federal facilities is within the capabilities of small-cell and lone-actor violent extremists associated with these movements. Similarly, coordinated small-arms attacks on soft targets, such as sports or commercial venues—although more limited in scale—could have severe social or psychological consequences nationwide.

~~(U//LES)~~ *The most likely triggers for a high-impact attack are particular government actions or legislation that violent domestic extremists perceive are in conflict with their goals.* [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] For example, Timothy McVeigh said he was motivated to conduct the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing in response to the 1993 U.S. Government raid on the Branch Davidian compound near Waco, Texas.

~~(U//LES)~~ Furthermore, the perception that previous ideologically motivated attacks were successful could inspire lone actors or small cells to plan or conduct future attacks. For example, on 31 May 2009, a violent antiabortion extremist, [REDACTED] was charged with murdering a well-known reproductive health care provider in Kansas.^{13,14} Less than two weeks later, a white

⁵ ~~(U//FOUO)~~ DHS’ 18 identified CIKR areas are: Energy; Public Health and Healthcare; National Monuments and Icons; Banking and Finance; Drinking Water and Water Treatment Systems; Chemical Facilities; Commercial Facilities; Dams; Emergency Services; Nuclear Reactors, Materials and Waste; Information Technology; Communications; Postal and Shipping; Transportation Systems; Critical Manufacturing; Defense Industrial Base; Agriculture and Food; and Government Facilities.

~~(U//FOUO)~~ *Product contamination is a continuing threat.* Food products and pharmaceuticals are vulnerable to contamination at many points, especially during production, storage, and transport. Because monitoring processes in some countries are less rigorous than in the United States, some imported products potentially are more vulnerable to contamination. Large-scale product contamination of U.S. consumer products could have severe economic and health effects.

- ~~(U)~~ In early 2008, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration supervised the recall of a contaminated Chinese-made blood thinner connected to serious reactions and deaths in the United States.⁶⁷
- ~~(U//FOUO)~~ The March 2007 discovery that Chinese manufacturers were adulterating wheat flour, wheat gluten, and rice protein concentrate used as ingredients in animal feed and pet food with melamine prompted extensive disruptions in domestic commerce, product recalls, and at least short-term loss of consumer confidence.⁶⁸

~~(U)~~ **Cyber and Explosive Threats to Critical Infrastructure**

~~(U)~~ **Cyber Threats: Nation-States, Criminals, Foreign Terrorists**

~~(S)~~



~~(U)~~ Cyber Threat Glossary

~~(U)~~ **Computer Network Operations (CNO):** an umbrella term that encompasses actions taken to affect an adversary's information systems while defending one's own.

~~(U)~~ **Computer Network Exploitation (CNE):** offensive actions taken to gain access to and gather information from targeted networks.

~~(U)~~ **Computer Network Attack (CNA):** offensive actions taken to disrupt, degrade, or destroy data on information systems, or the processes that depend on them.

~~(U)~~ **Computer Network Defense (CND):** actions to eliminate, mitigate, or recover from the threat or activities of CNE or CNA.

~~(U)~~ Nations as Cyber Threat Actors

~~(U//FOUO)~~ *Consistent with the 2008 HSTA, DHS/IE assesses that foreign nations are the most capable and resource-rich cyber threat actors.* The most advanced cyber-threat actor nations have established active and robust CNO organizations. Some nations' military and intelligence agencies have created distinct, dedicated directorates to carry out CNO against adversaries for military, economic, and diplomatic gain. Only a handful of nations have demonstrated the full range of CNO capabilities; the information operations capabilities of other, less capable nations will continue to mature over the next five years.

~~(S)~~ [REDACTED]

~~(S)~~ [REDACTED]

~~(U)~~ Overview of Nation-State Cyber Capabilities

~~(U//FOUO)~~ Most Advanced Cyber-Capable Nations

~~(S//NF)~~ [Redacted]

~~(U//FOUO)~~ Other Nations

~~(S//NF)~~ [Redacted]

~~(S//NF)~~ Sources: [Redacted]

~~(U)~~ Cyber Criminals

~~—//FOUO)~~ Consistent with the 2008 HSTA, DHS/IE assesses that the growing community of cyber criminals, who have demonstrated the capability to develop advanced cyber tools, are the greatest nonstate cyber threat actors to the U.S. economy, to include CIKR. The capability of cyber criminals to conduct CNO now eclipses all but the most capable nation-state cyber programs. The scale and costs of cyber crime,

as well as the complexity of both the criminal activity itself and the challenges in protecting sensitive networks and information, will grow over the next five years as Internet penetration into new markets continues to rise around the world.

~~(U//FOUO)~~ Criminals use CNE primarily for economic gain, seeking to steal financial information and extort money from public and private entities. Targeting financial institutions and other businesses and their customers, cyber criminals have caused estimated losses in the United States of as much as \$67 billion annually according to the Government Accountability Office.⁶⁹ The number of fraudulent or suspicious online financial transactions is rising, as tradecraft and expertise in the conduct of computer hacking and malicious software attacks proliferates.⁷⁰

~~(U//FOUO)~~ Cyber extortion scams demanding payment in return for protection against network intrusions and distributed denial-of-service attacks are becoming more common and sophisticated, according to press reporting.

- ~~(U//FOUO)~~ In April 2009, hackers reportedly infiltrated the health care records system of the Commonwealth of Virginia, deleting records and demanding \$10 million for return of the information.⁷¹ Similarly, in November 2008, a named U.S. pharmacy benefit management company was reportedly threatened with the disclosure of the personal information of millions of customers if it refused to pay a ransom to the perpetrators.⁷²

- ~~(U//FOUO)~~ 

~~(U//FOUO)~~ *Consistent with the 2008 HSTA, DHS/IE assesses it is unlikely that cyber criminals would attempt national- or regional-level attacks in the United States because of the technical difficulty of mounting attacks across a variety of architectural network infrastructures, the driving motivation of monetary gain over technical superiority, and the probability that large-scale attacks or disruptions could spur stricter government investigation and prosecution as well as expose the criminals' own networks and identities.* Even small-scale targeted criminal attacks could affect a service provider and create cascading effects.

~~(U//FOUO)~~ *As cyber crime continues to grow more profitable, more individuals and groups are likely to participate, including cooperating with each other to boost their technical capabilities.* Cyber criminals have demonstrated cooperation and coordination, leading, for example, to increased specialization in the building, testing, and application of malicious software for monitoring bank accounts.^{74,75} *The danger for homeland security is that the development of advanced tools by cyber criminal actors and their willingness to share tradecraft could possibly allow other entities, to include nation-states or terrorist groups, access to cyber capabilities that they may not otherwise have developed.*

~~(U)~~ Foreign Cyber Terrorist Threats

~~(S)~~

[REDACTED]

~~(S)~~

[REDACTED]

~~(S//REL TO USA, ACGU)~~

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

~~(S)~~

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

~~(S//NF)~~

[REDACTED]

~~(U//FOUO)~~ *The rapid growth in popularity of social networking websites suggests that online venues could, to some extent, supplant traditional group-centric terrorist radicalization.* Younger audiences can use online forums to find individuals or groups that support ideals that validate their unique violent extremist goals and perspectives. Forum groups could generate an environment where new extremists feel empowered to act outside the guidance and control of a centralized organization.⁸³ Such an environment, for example, might convince some of the newer extremists that the online instruction they receive is an acceptable alternative to traditional, brick-and-mortar meeting places.

~~(U//FOUO)~~ *Online information outlets and propaganda are broadening outreach to extremist recruits and could give terrorist recruiters added leverage in exploiting persons they perceive as vulnerable or sympathetic to their message.* As more and more young individuals continue to establish and maintain social connections through these sites, terrorist recruiters likely will use the sites for cover to mask their communications and activities and to seek out potential recruits. Although without a terrorist nexus, open-source reporting indicates that some criminal gangs target and groom middle school children for membership using social networking sites.⁸⁴ Domestic extremists of all types use social networking sites, including the creation of customized sites for specific extremist communities.⁸⁵ Security groups have tracked the increasing use of online Web forums by “jihadists” in Southeast Asia to circulate their message to mainstream audiences.^{86,87}

~~(U//FOUO)~~ *An increasingly technologically savvy generation, inspired by violent extremist ideologies, is emerging and filling more prominent roles in extremist movements; continued developments within the technology sector allow these individuals to communicate and possibly recruit or plan activities virtually.* These next generation extremists, including young women, could complement and support extremist goals by applying their online acumen rather than offering themselves up as operatives for kinetic attacks. A segment of the next generation also may represent a movement away from group oriented radicalization in favor of individual action in support of extremist ideologies.

~~(U)~~ Explosive Threats

~~(U//FOUO)~~ *Consistent with the 2008 HSTA, DHS/IE assesses that a lethal explosive attack planned and implemented by a transnational terrorist group, such as al-Qa'ida, poses the most serious large-scale explosive threat to homeland security.* Al-Qa'ida's stated goals remain consistent and focused on targets that maximize economic damage and loss of life and create social turmoil. The U.S. transportation, financial, and energy sectors, along with iconic American landmarks, are the most likely al-Qa'ida Homeland targets during the period of this assessment.

~~(U)~~ Cyber and Explosive Threats to Critical Infrastructure

~~(U)~~ Emerging Trends

~~(U//FOUO)~~ *Growing interconnectivity of U.S. critical infrastructure to the Internet, coupled with increased outsourcing of IT services, will provide malicious actors with increased opportunities to target critical infrastructure.*

~~(S)~~



~~(U//FOUO)~~ *The increasing push of foreign commercial entities into the U.S. telecommunications market will provide greater opportunities for foreign actors to access and potentially disrupt U.S. data. Already, maintenance and services for U.S. networks are outsourced to overseas entities because of lower costs, and foreign corporations compete in the global information technology market by offering low-cost alternatives to U.S. products.*

~~(S//NF)~~



~~(U)~~ International and Domestic Terrorism

~~(U//FOUO)~~ Increasing Cyber Attack Capabilities

~~(U//FOUO)~~ *Domestic extremists conducting illegal acts to further their ideology—particularly within the animal rights, environmental, and anarchist extremist movements—likely will mature and expand their cyber attack capabilities with the aim of attacking targets in the United States. Many extremists within these movements*

adhere to a nonviolent, “no harm” doctrine and prefer to illegally attack the financial stability of businesses and associated operations in order to force the targeted organization to abandon activities that the extremists deem objectionable.²⁴⁸ Cyber attacks offer the potential for economic damage; typically they are individually initiated, anonymous in nature, and perceived to be nonviolent, aligning well with the ideological beliefs, strategic objectives, and nonviolent tactics of many members. Furthermore, lone actors and small cells can conduct highly effective cyber attacks, which is consistent with the strategy of leaderless resistance that many domestic extremists embrace.²⁴⁹

~~(U//FOUO)~~ The Rise of Violent Western “Jihadist” Internet Propagandists and Ideologues

~~(U//FOUO)~~ *As technologically savvy terrorist affiliates mature their capabilities, control over dissemination, distribution, and ideology could potentially become increasingly decentralized, with violent Western extremists gaining greater influence over violent “jihadist” messaging.* U.S.-based propagandists and ideologues will likely begin to emerge at a greater level of sophistication during the next five years, possibly shifting from propaganda distribution and translation to becoming ideological figureheads inspired by foreign terrorist organizations and influential figures abroad.

— ~~(S//NF)~~ [REDACTED]

~~(U//FOUO)~~ *The impending release or repatriation of Guantanamo Bay detainees to Western countries could create opportunities for terrorist affiliates to use their imprisonment as a propaganda and recruitment tool aimed at Western audiences.* Some detainees may still adhere to violent “jihadist” ideologies or have adopted them during imprisonment. Fear of re-imprisonment could dissuade some from engaging directly in violence, but participating in online propaganda would provide them the opportunity to support terrorist movements without great risk of re-imprisonment. Those released, repatriated, or imprisoned in Western or English-speaking countries could be bolstered by the “street cred” gained from imprisonment at Guantanamo, possibly permitting their propaganda to have greater influence.

- ~~(U//FOUO)~~ “Mahdi Ghazali” a.k.a. Abu-Suhaib al-Jaza’iri, a Sweden-based former Guantanamo detainee, was interviewed in a video posted on a Salafi-jihadist Web site in September 2008. Ghazali described his imprisonment and how others claimed they were tortured and subjected to abuse.²⁵³
- ~~(U//FOUO)~~ Former detainees Abu Sufyan al-Azdi al-Shahri and Abu al-Hareth Muhammad al-Oufi resumed terrorist activities with al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula upon their release from Guantanamo. A video released in January 2009 featured both men detailing how imprisonment strengthened their desire to

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