



## FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION Domestic Terrorism Reference Guide

# Anarchist Violent Extremism

### (U) THREAT OVERVIEW

(U//FOUO) Anarchist violent extremists are anti-government/anti-authority violent extremists who consider capitalism and centralized government to be unnecessary and oppressive, and who further their political or social goals wholly or in part through illegal activities involving threat or use of force or violence in violation of criminal law. In support of their goals of eliminating capitalism and the current form of the US Government, anarchist violent extremists oppose economic globalization; political, economic, and social hierarchies based on class, religion, race, gender, or private ownership of capital; and external forms of authority represented by centralized government, the military, and law enforcement. Anarchist violent extremists believe the abolition of capitalism and the state would restore equality and encourage the need for mutual cooperation.

(U//FOUO) Historically, the prevailing drivers for most anarchist violent extremist-related criminal activity had been motivated by anti-capitalist and anti-law enforcement sentiment, with a small percentage of incidents motivated by anti-racism or anti-fascism. More recently, the latter has been a driver for some anarchist violent extremist-related criminal activity.



### (U) TARGETS and TACTICS

(U//FOUO) **Targets:** Anarchist violent extremists generally target perceived symbols of capitalism, globalization, authoritarianism, and environmental exploitation. Examples include multinational corporations; financial institutions; political, economic, or social issue events; and government, military, and law enforcement property. Anarchist violent extremists also have targeted individuals with ideologies contrary to their own, to include perceived racists/fascists and law enforcement.

(U//FOUO) **Tactics:** Typical criminal tactics used by anarchist violent extremists include arson, physical assault, vandalism, graffiti, improvised incendiary devices (IIDs) or improvised explosive devices (IEDs), including fireworks and flares, and weapons of opportunity or those easily accessible such as bricks, rocks, bike racks, baseball bats, wooden sticks, lead pipes, brass knuckles, hammers, axe handles, bear/pepper spray, metal chains, batteries, quick-drying cement in containers, frozen water bottles, and construction materials. To hide their identities during criminal activity, anarchist violent extremists sometimes use "black bloc" tactics in which they dress in black or dark clothing and cover their faces with bandanas, balaclavas, costume masks, or gas masks. By employing black bloc tactics, anarchist violent extremists express solidarity with one another, impart a daunting physical group presence, and provide possible anonymity from identification.

(U//FOUO) Anarchist violent extremists are likely to continue operating independently; however, a local or national issue may motivate some extremists to act collectively, locally or regionally. Although they are loosely affiliated nationally, anarchist violent extremists have shown the ability to mobilize in an organized manner quickly, sometimes forming non-hierarchical local groups, in response to issues or events in conflict with their ideology. The degree of hierarchy, autonomy, locality, and affiliation among anarchist violent extremist actors varies.

### (U) INDICATORS

(U//FOUO) Indicators of anarchist violent extremist ideology may comprise constitutionally protected conduct, and no single indicator should be the sole basis for a determination of anarchist violent extremism or criminal activity. The following indicators of anarchist violent extremist ideology may constitute a basis for reporting or law enforcement action when observed in combination with suspicious criminal or potentially violent activity:

- ◆ (U//FOUO) Creating anti-capitalist or anti-law enforcement graffiti
- ◆ (U//FOUO) Conducting pre-operational surveillance of government buildings or symbols of capitalism, such as multinational corporations, commercial businesses, or financial institutions
- ◆ (U//FOUO) Making claims of or calling for criminal action against business, government, or law enforcement entities on extremist websites
- ◆ (U//FOUO) Seeking or acquiring materials to construct IIDs or IEDs

**(U) For additional information, please contact the Counterterrorism Analysis Section of the FBI Counterterrorism Division via email at [FBI\\_CTD\\_CTAS@fbi.gov](mailto:FBI_CTD_CTAS@fbi.gov).**

(U) Disclaimer: Domestic Violent Extremists (DVEs) employ several indicators, some of which may be criminal and others which may constitute the exercise of rights guaranteed by the US Constitution. Under FBI policy and federal law, no investigative activity may be based solely on First Amendment activity. The FBI does not investigate, collect, or maintain information on US persons solely for the purpose of monitoring activities protected by the First Amendment. All personnel should exercise sound judgment and discretion in evaluating the totality of circumstances surrounding any of these indicators in order to determine whether a law enforcement or intelligence response or activity is warranted.

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**(U) NOTABLE ATTACKS or CRIMINAL ACTS**

(U//FOUO) In late August 2020, a now-deceased anarchist violent extremist allegedly fatally shot a man in Portland, Oregon, during an event that included individuals with opposing ideologies.

(U//FOUO) In July 2019, an anarchist violent extremist set fire to a detention center and a vehicle using IEDs in Tacoma, Washington. He engaged responding police officers with an AR style rifle and was killed during the encounter.

(U//FOUO) In June 2019, violence between individuals with opposing ideologies occurred in Portland, Oregon. Multiple assaults occurred and items were reportedly thrown at demonstrators and law enforcement, to include items that looked like milkshakes but contained quick-dry concrete. As a result of the violence, eight law enforcement officers were injured and local police arrested three individuals.

(U//FOUO) In April 2019, an anarchist violent extremist rammed a vehicle with stolen plates into a building occupied by a cleared defense contractor in San Diego, California. After the vehicle hit the building, the perpetrator was observed opening the back hatch of the vehicle and shortly thereafter a fireball shot out from the vehicle. Law enforcement investigation identified the subject and he was taken into federal custody.

(U//FOUO) In December 2018, federal authorities arrested two anarchist violent extremists plotting a terrorist attack targeting a bar in Toledo, Ohio, after the two individuals purchased materials to carry out the attack. Searches recovered multiple weapons including an AK-47, a tactical vest with two loaded magazines for an AK-47, two loaded magazines for a pistol, a gas mask, and printed instructions on how to construct bombs.

(U//FOUO) In June 2018, an anarchist violent extremist in Missouri received a federal prison sentence of 30 months incarceration for unlawful possession of firearms. The previously convicted felon was arrested in September 2017 following law enforcement reporting he was in possession of a firearm and was planning to obtain additional firearms.

**(U) KEY TERMS**

<b>Term</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>ACAB</b>	An acronym for "All Cops Are B*stards." It is sometimes used by anarchist violent extremists and others as a slogan or graffiti to express anti-law enforcement sentiment. Instead of the letters, the numbers "1312" may also be used. It can also be an abbreviation for "All Capitalists are B*stards."
<b>Black Bloc</b>	A tactic often used by anarchist violent extremists during mass mobilizations. Those who are part of a "Black Bloc" generally dress in dark clothing covering their heads to their feet and cover their faces with bandanas, balaclavas, costume masks, or gas masks. It is believed anarchist violent extremists use this tactic to express solidarity with one another, impart a daunting physical presence as a group, and provide for anonymity against identification. The dark clothing may be hidden under street clothing and quickly discarded prior to engaging in criminal actions or extremists may remove and discard black clothing and reveal street clothing in order to blend in with lawful protesters.
<b>Circled-letter A</b>	A well-known symbol or representation associated with anarchism, world-wide, and often seen spray-painted or as graffiti. It is said to represent French anarchist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's maxim "Anarchy is Order," with the letter "A" for anarchy, or without rulers, and the circle as a symbol of order. The symbol was reportedly used by anarchists during the Spanish Civil War and is said to symbolize what anarchists desire: an organized society free of external authority.
<b>Green Anarchy</b>	An anarchist school of thought focused on environmental issues. Green anarchist violent extremists contend capitalists' pursuit of profit and expansion is detrimental and contributes to the destruction of the environment. The target for a green anarchist violent extremist can be viewed as a symbol of capitalism and an agent of environmental harm.
<b>May Day</b>	On May 1, anarchists around the world often gather to commemorate International Workers' Day. This date also coincides with the 1886 McCormick Harvester Works strike in Chicago, Illinois, which turned violent and became known as the Haymarket Square riot. While most gatherings are peaceful, some incidents of property damage by anarchist violent extremists and confrontations with law enforcement have occurred.
<b>No Gods, No Masters</b>	An anarchist and labor slogan which originated in Europe and has been used by anarchists since the late 19th century. The phrase appears in anarchist literature as well as graffiti.
<b>No War But The Class War</b>	A phrase used by anarchists to express opposition to capitalism and anarchist class struggle against authority and oppression.
<b>Three Arrows/ Three Arrows in a Circle</b>	A symbol believed to have originated as a social-democratic political symbol in Germany against Nazism and designed to easily cover over swastikas. More recently it may be seen displayed on flags or as graffiti associated with anti-fascist anarchists with the arrows representing unity, activity, and discipline.