A Study of Lone Offender Terrorism in the United States (1972 – 2015)

### QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

#### LONE OFFENDER TERRORIST DEMOGRAPHICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>52%</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90%</td>
<td>Born in U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65%</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13%</td>
<td>Middle Eastern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8%</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8%</td>
<td>Bi-racial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4%</td>
<td>Asian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2%</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48%</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23%</td>
<td>Divorced or separated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21%</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Identified as religious</td>
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<tr>
<td>37%</td>
<td>Had military service</td>
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#### MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE

The following were present before the event:

- 62% Paranoid
- 40% Suicidal ideation
- 10% Hallucinations
- 25% (n=13) had at least 1 formal psychiatric diagnosis, of which 9 had a mood disorder, 4 had a psychotic disorder, 3 had a substance use disorder, and 3 had an “other” disorder.

#### RADICALIZATION

- 69% had an identifiable primary personal grievance in addition to their violent ideology.
- 96% produced writing or videos to be viewed by others, of which 48% produced content only before the attack and 44% produced content both before and after the attack.
- 79% had previously expressed the belief that violence was justifiable in service or a cause or objective.
- 77% consumed radical ideological materials or propaganda.
- 56% engaged in ideologically-driven speeches or tirades that reportedly intruded into regular conversations.
- 52% used a public platform to promote their grievances or violent extremist beliefs.

#### IDEOLOGIES

- **Primary Ideologies:**
  - 25% Anti-Government Violent Extremism
  - 23% Racially-Motivated Violent Extremism
  - 19% Radical Islamist Violent Extremism
  - 10% Pro-Life Violent Extremism
  - 4% Environmental Violent Extremism
  - 19% Other Violent Extremism

#### TARGETS

- **Primary targets included:**
  - 17% Federal government facilities/personnel
  - 15% Law enforcement personnel. An additional 19% attacked law enforcement or security in response to first responders.
  - 12% Religious centers/personnel
  - 10% Medical facilities/personnel
  - 8% Private individuals
  - 8% Educational facilities/students/faculty
  - 6% Other businesses
  - 6% Specific organizations or groups
  - 19% Other targets

- **14 (27%) offenders committed at least 1 act of terrorism in addition to the index attack (the first act of terrorism that met the project’s inclusion criteria).**

#### TARGET SELECTION

- 79% attacked targets that had no or minimal security.
- 73% selected their target because it was instrumental to their goal or ideology.
- 42% selected their target or chose to carry out an attack at least partially on the basis that they wanted to attract media attention.
- 40% considered other targets before selecting their primary target.
- 31% (n=16) had multiple targets planned for their index attack, of which 63% (n=10) attacked multiple targets.
- 25% targeted at least 1 specific individual. In 62% of these cases, other individuals besides the target(s) were killed and/or injured.

*For this study, the FBI used data almost exclusively from information contained in official law enforcement files. Subjects must have been the primary architect and actor in the ideologically-based lethal attack. The final sample included 52 lone offenders.*
**ATTACK METHOD**

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<th>67% used firearms, of which 77% used a handgun, 40% used a rifle, and 20% used a shotgun.</th>
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In the 50% (n=26) of cases in which information on firearm acquisition was known, 69% (n=18) legally purchased their weapons, 19% (n=5) illegally purchased, 15% (n=4) borrowed, and 12% (n=3) stole their weapons.

27% used explosives, yet 60% tried to learn how to assemble explosives and/or tried to obtain explosive materials.

6% used an airplane or vehicle.

4% used a bladed instrument.

10% of offenders engaged in an attack that was reactive, spontaneous, or opportunistic in nature.

**OFFENDER OUTCOME**

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<th>62% were arrested after the attack.</th>
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Of those arrested, 38% were detained at the site.

Of the 20 offenders who left the attack site, 5 (25%) were arrested the same day, 5 (25%) were arrested days later, 5 (25%) weeks or months later, and 5 (25%) years later.

38% (n=20) died during or in the immediate aftermath of their attack, of which 12 were killed by law enforcement and 8 committed suicide.

**CONCERNING BEHAVIORS**

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<th>70% were arrested at least once as adults prior to the attack.</th>
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58% of offenders had previously carried out battery or physical violence (whether or not they were arrested for it).

29% were previously arrested for 1 or more violent offenses.

Over the course of the offenders’ lifetime, bystanders expressed concerned with:

- 85% Interpersonal interactions
- 83% Anger/aggression
- 75% Mood
- 71% Thinking/communication
- 42% Alcohol/drug use
- 40% Work/academic performance
- 33% Impulsivity/recklessness

In 73% of cases, concerning behavioral changes were observed in the year before their attack.

**STRESSORS**

In 90% of cases, bystanders were aware of at least 1 stressor experienced by the offender prior to the attack. The most common stressors were:

- 48% Financial
- 44% Family
- 44% Mental health
- 35% Employment
- 29% Criminal/legal
- 27% Partner/marital
- 19% Physical injury/illness

**Bystanders**

Despite committing the attacks on their own, offenders were not completely socially isolated, giving bystanders opportunities to observe possible concerning behavior.

50% had at least 1 family member or associate who appeared to be sympathetic to a non-violent extremist ideology.

44% had previously claimed group membership or affiliation with an ideological movement or associated with members.

35% had at least 1 family member or associate who adhered to a violent ideology.

39% lived alone at the time of the attack.

During the planning/preparation process, 9 (17%) offenders were stopped, detained, and/or examined by law enforcement. 3 offenders had contact with law enforcement the morning of their offense.

**Bystander Awareness of Ideologies and Plans**

92% of cases, at least 1 person knew of the offender’s non-violent ideology or grievance.

62% of cases, at least 1 person knew the offender was supportive of violence to further an ideology.

25% of cases, at least 1 person knew of the offenders’ research, planning, or preparation for the attack.

18% of cases, at least 1 person knew of the offenders’ specific attack plans.

**Actions Taken by Others**

69% of cases, 1 or more individuals took some action to address 1 or more concerning behaviors.

How bystanders addressed concerns:

(Percentages sum to more than 100% as bystanders may have addressed concerns to multiple people or multiple bystanders may have expressed concerns about 1 offender.)

54% of cases, to offender directly.

40% of cases, to family.

33% of cases, to an authority figure.

19% of cases, to friends.

2% of cases, anonymous tip.

23% of cases, at least 1 bystander took no action or no one was concerned.

**Resources**

Persons suspected of planning an attack should be immediately reported to local law enforcement or the FBI at 1-800-CALL-FBI.

The BAU’s Behavioral Threat Assessment Center (BTAC) is the only multi-agency behavioral threat assessment and threat management team in the U.S. Government. Requests for BTAC assistance can be made via the BAU Coordinator in your local FBI Field Office.