

Characteristics of U.S. Government Attackers: Strategies for Mitigating the Threat

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Agenda

- National Security
- Catalogue of attacks against U.S. Government targets
- Characteristics of a sample of attackers
- Implications for mitigating the threat of targeted violence



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Evolving Nature of National Security

- National security threats evolve
- Threats from actors inspired by violent extremist groups
 - Right and left wing extremists groups
 - Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) Initiative (NSI)
 - Fusion Centers and Joint Terrorism Task Forces



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Project Overview

- Goal: Identify and analyze incidents of violence against public interests in the U.S. from 1787-present
- Active plots through attacks, regardless of motive
- Targets selected due to position, function, or public status include:
 - U.S. or Foreign Public Officials
 - Government Facilities
 - Prominent Facilities
 - Hard Infrastructure
 - Monuments, Landmarks, or Attractions
 - Prominent Events



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Who Were the Offenders?

- Male and Female
- Wide age range
- History of problem behaviors



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Why Did They Do It?

- Retaliation
- Ideological beliefs
- Seeking fame or attention
- Personal gain
- Mental health



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INFLUENCES ON SUBJECTS' DECISIONS TO ACT



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Presence of Stressors/Triggers

- In different areas of life
- One year prior
- Six months prior



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Presence of Mental Illness

- Some experienced symptoms of mental illness
 - Influence on motives?
- Most common symptoms: delusions, paranoia, and depression



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OBSERVABLE INDICATORS OF SUBJECTS' PATHWAY TO VIOLENCE



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Evidence of Concerning Behavior

- Engaged in potentially concerning behavior
 - Behavior changes
 - Interpersonal difficulties
 - Criminal behavior
 - Concerning communications



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Evidence of Communications to or about the Target

- Communicated about the targets prior to the attack
- Directly with targets
- Threats or veiled references of harm to the target
- Accusations of injustice or regarding grievances



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Concerned Others

- Offenders elicited concern from others
- Offenders elicited safety concerns from others



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IMPLICATIONS FOR MITIGATING THE RISK OF VIOLENCE



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Principles of Threat Assessment

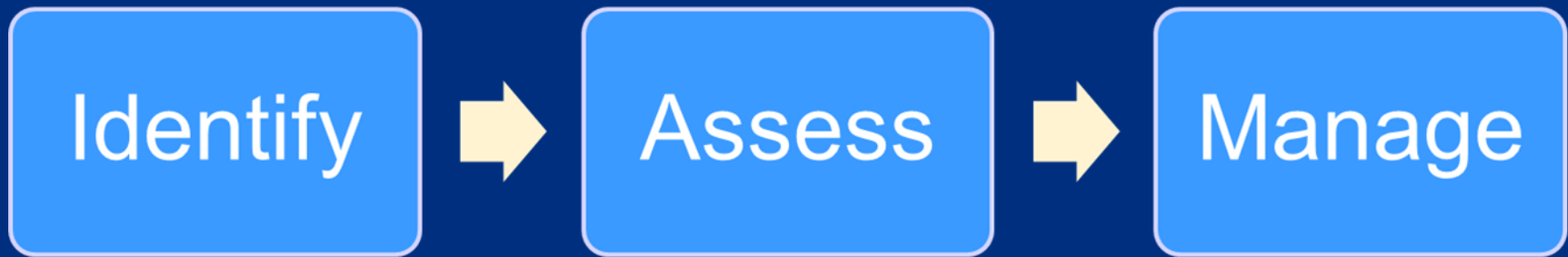
- Person
- Event
- Situation
- Target



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U.S. Secret Service Threat Assessment Model



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U.S. Secret Service Model: Systems Approach



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U.S. Secret Service Model: Intervention Points

- Person
 - Mental illness
 - Communications
 - Concerning behaviors



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U.S. Secret Service Model: Intervention Points

- Event and Situation
 - Stressors
 - Concerned Others



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Evolving Nature of National Security

- National security threats evolve
 - Non-state actors, ideologically motivated violent extremists
 - Non-state actors, not motivated by violent extremists ideology
- Infrastructure to manage threats has to evolve
 - NSIs, Fusion Centers, JTTFs
 - Threat assessment model?



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Evolving Nature of National Security

- Barriers to evolving infrastructure
 - Preliminary investigations
 - Undefined behaviors
 - Unsure where or whom to report
 - Unsure of repercussions from reporting
- But, steps in the right direction
 - Educational threat assessment teams
 - Workplace violence prevention programs
 - U.S. Military and Government entities insider threat prevention



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Questions?



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