

Involvement of Minors in Terrorist Plots and Attacks Likely To Endure

Minors will continue to feature in some terrorist plots and attacks that are directed, enabled, or inspired by terrorist groups because the factors that have contributed to their involvement since at least 2015—such as a large body of ISIS messaging, violent extremist narratives that provide justification for violence, and the opportunity to gain notoriety—are likely to endure. The following chart highlights plots and attacks outside of conflict zones involving individuals younger than age 18 in the US and abroad since 2015. Most of these incidents were conducted by minors who were inspired or enabled by a terrorist organization with only a few instances of a terrorist group directly using minors for targeted operational activity.

SCOPE: This product is intended to provide awareness of the potential involvement of minors in terrorist attacks, and to encourage discussion and collaboration among public and private stakeholders to aid in prevention efforts.

- Some teens are particularly vulnerable to violent extremist messaging that appeals to a range of developmental and psychological needs, such as a desire for a sense of belonging and identity or attention seeking through rebellion. ISIS and al-Qa'ida continue to influence minors through online messaging to plan and conduct attacks. For example, in October 2018, the al-Abd al-Faqir Media Foundation—a pro-ISIS media outfit—launched its first Arabic-language magazine titled *Youth Of The Caliphate*, aimed at young supporters. The 12-page product was published on the news outlet's website with a well-designed logo and multi-colored shape of a man holding the trademark ISIS flag, likely focused to appeal to young readers who share ISIS views.
- Many of the following minors engaged in violence with few identifiable behaviors that raised suspicion or concern among others and most likely were radicalized^a shortly before mobilizing, judging from a review of plots and attacks, underscoring the detection challenges that law enforcement agencies face in identifying threats from juvenile extremists. Violent extremists' use or encouragement of minors to conduct attacks probably stems in part from their desire to influence impressionable supporters and circumvent CT security measures that monitor for suspicious activities conducted by adults.

^a Violent radicalization is the process by which an individual changes to a belief system that includes the willingness to actively advocate, facilitate, or use violence as a method to effect societal or political change.



FIRSTRESPONDERS' TOOLBOX



DATE	COUNTRY	GROUP AFFILIATION	WEAPON	ATTACK OR PLOT INFORMATION	OUTCOME
2018					
SEPTEMBER	Australia	ISIS-inspired 		A 16-year-old in Sydney planned to conduct an unspecified attack. He was arrested after purchasing bayonets and authorities found a half-written note pledging allegiance to ISIS.	
AUGUST	Russia/ Chechnya	ISIS-Caucasus 		Five 11-to-17-year-old attackers conducted attacks using knives and IEDs in three cities in the Chechen Republic in Russia's North Caucasus region that killed one police officer and injured at least four others. ISIS issued a video of four of the attackers through its A'maq News Agency in which the minors claimed affiliation to ISIS-Caucasus and pledged allegiance to ISIS's overall amir, Abu Du'a.	
MAY	US	ISIS-inspired 		A 17-year-old planned to conduct a mass shooting at a shopping mall in Frisco, Texas. He recruited an FBI undercover employee and an FBI source to assist him in conducting the attack and sent them money to purchase guns, ammunition, and tactical gear. Local police and FBI arrested him and charged him with two counts of solicitation to commit capital murder and one count of making a terroristic threat.	
MAY	Indonesia	Jemaah Anshorut Daulah (JAD) 		Three families—including male and female children aged 9, 12, 14, and 16—in Surabaya conducted unprecedented suicide attacks targeting churches and the police. All of the children were homeschooled and radicalized by their parents.	
MARCH	US	ISIS-inspired 		A 17-year-old stabbed and killed a 13-year-old boy and stabbed another 13-year-old boy and the boy's mother in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, and said he attacked them because they made fun of the way he prayed and treated celebrities as if they were gods. He had watched ISIS videos online, made ISIS social media posts, and claimed he was supportive of Anwar al-Aulaqi.	



FIRST RESPONDERS' TOOLBOX

 Edged weapon
  Explosive
  Firearm
  Vehicle

 Boy
  Girl
  Family
  Disrupted
  Successful
  Attempted

DATE	COUNTRY	GROUP AFFILIATION	WEAPON	ATTACK OR PLOT INFORMATION	OUTCOME
2018 (continued)					
MARCH	US	ISIS supporter 		A 16-year-old in Saint George, Utah, tried to detonate a homemade IED with shrapnel in a backpack during lunchtime at his high school cafeteria. No one was injured, but the boy told authorities that he intended to kill students. He also said that a month earlier he had replaced the US flag with an ISIS flag at another high school and painted "ISIS is Comi"—most likely meaning "ISIS is Coming"—on the building's exterior.	
2017					
MAY	UK	ISIS-enabled 		A 17-year-old planned to use guns and grenades to attack the British Museum in London after her fiancé, an ISIS recruiter, was killed in Syria. She had developed an online network of nearly 400 ISIS contacts through which she met her fiancé and discussed with him terroristic acts that she could pursue in the UK after British authorities prevented her from traveling to Syria in August 2016.	
APRIL	Australia	ISIS-inspired 		Fifteen- and 16-year-olds fatally stabbed a service-station attendant and wrote "ISIS" on the wall in Queanbeyan. One of the boys posted ISIS-related material to Facebook, and his mother told police that she thought her son had been radicalized during the weeks leading up to the attack.	
2016					
NOVEMBER, DECEMBER	Germany	ISIS-inspired 		A 12-year-old tried to conduct two attacks on Christmas markets and shopping areas in Ludwigshafen with explosive devices. The boy had reportedly been radicalized by and in contact with an ISIS member and wanted to join the group in Syria during the summer.	



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  Explosive
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  Vehicle

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  Girl
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DATE	COUNTRY	GROUP AFFILIATION	WEAPON	ATTACK OR PLOT INFORMATION	OUTCOME
2016 (continued)					
JULY	Germany	ISIS-enabled 		A 17-year-old with an ax wounded four people on a train in Würzburg. The boy had contact with ISIS members in Saudi Arabia who helped him plan the attack and released his video on A'maq.	
APRIL	Germany	ISIS-inspired 		Four 16- and 17-year-olds wounded several people in a bombing at a Sikh temple in Essen. The boys were friends who reportedly admired ISIS, collected beheading videos on their phones, and praised the militants at school.	
FEBRUARY	Germany	ISIS-enabled 		A 15-year-old wounded a police officer in a knife attack in a Hanover train station. The girl reportedly had been radicalized in Germany and traveled to Turkey in late 2015 with the intent to go on to Syria and met with ISIS members in Istanbul who encouraged her to return to Germany to conduct an attack.	
JANUARY	France	ISIS-inspired 		French authorities arrested a 16-year-old for a machete attack on a Jewish teacher in Marseille; the boy told police that he was acting in the name of God and the "Islamic State."	
2015					
OCTOBER	Australia	ISIS-inspired 		A 15-year-old shot a police accountant in Parramatta, according to open-source reporting. He was radicalized by a small group of students at his high school who were spreading ISIS ideology.	
JUNE	US	ISIS-inspired 		A 17-year-old in New York City under FBI surveillance for conspiring to provide support to ISIS ran toward a law enforcement agent's vehicle with the intent to cause harm.	



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2015 (continued)					
MAY	Australia	ISIS-enabled 		A 17-year-old in Melbourne was preparing a pressure-cooker bomb to attack an unspecified target possibly on Mother's Day when he was arrested. He had received encouragement and instruction on how to make a bomb from an ISIS member.	
EARLY 2015	Australia	ISIS-enabled 	 	A 14-year-old was arrested in the UK after encouraging a 17-year-old Australian national to conduct hit-and-run or small-arms attacks on Australia and New Zealand Army Corps Day commemorations and having contact with a Syria-based Australian national ISIS fighter.	

INDICATORS OF MOBILIZATION TO VIOLENCE: First responders, classmates, school staff, family members, friends, neighbors, and religious mentors should be aware that indicators of mobilization toward violence for minors may be different than those of adults, as juveniles may have diverse obstacles to overcome due to their age. For example, juveniles may have difficulty obtaining travel documents such as passports, so they may attempt to use fake documentation or steal legitimate documents. They may also have difficulty funding an attack due to limited financial resources or lack of jobs, possibly influencing the theft of goods to sell for cash, theft of money from others such as family members, or sell personal possessions. Suspicious behaviors and activities, however, do not vary between minor and adult age groups. First responders and the community are encouraged to document and report observed behavior that is reasonably indicative of preoperational planning related to terrorism or other criminal activity and know the mechanisms by which to report such activities; this suspicious activity reporting (SAR) includes a community's local law enforcement, FBI Field Office, Joint Terrorism Task Force, and State or Major Urban Area Fusion Center. Additionally, training and education on terrorist-related activities and mobilization indicators can aid in terrorism prevention. Finally, effective communication using multiple platforms—such as email, text, social media, and website—to alert, advise, and/or instruct school staff, students, and family, can promote SAR and terrorism awareness.



FIRST RESPONDERS' TOOLBOX

CONSIDERATIONS: Juveniles may be susceptible to terrorist messaging. To counter the lure of terrorist messaging among susceptible juveniles and aid prevention, general considerations for all stakeholders include:

- Conducting interagency and community training and education to reinforce awareness and aid in terrorism prevention.
- Leveraging the entire community to identify behaviors or activities related to radicalization toward violence.
- Building and maintaining relationships with State and Major Urban Area Fusion Centers to enhance information sharing.
- Employing School Resource Officers who may be able to identify current, popular trends among minors, and who have more flexibility to interview, question, or search.
- Assessing the school and surrounding areas for people, groups and settings that promote violent radicalization and mobilization toward violence.
- Promoting cultural awareness and inclusiveness in schools which can discourage minors from seeking contact with people, groups, and settings that promote violent radicalization and mobilization toward violence.
- Understanding the organizational and departmental rules and policies with respect to cases involving minors.
- Educating minors on safe Internet and social media use to protect against violent extremist propaganda and terrorist recruitment.
- Performing outreach and education to school staff to help identify and address psychological and social vulnerabilities—such as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and other stress-related issues.
- Assessing common radicalization factors in youth such as searching for an identity, being a victim of bullying, anger issues, propensity to violence, a sense of rebellion, a desire for extreme adventure, or an appeal to violent extremist narratives.
- Encouraging healthy social outlets through family members, peers, and governmental social and mental health services to support disengagement from violent extremism and improve integration.

RESOURCES:

- **FBI'S DON'T BE A PUPPET: PULL BACK THE CURTAIN ON VIOLENT EXTREMISM:** Built by the FBI in consultation with community leaders and other partners, this website uses interactive materials to educate teens on the destructive nature of violent extremism and to encourage them to think critically about its messages and goals. The site emphasizes that by blindly accepting radical ideologies, teens are essentially becoming the “puppets” of violent extremists who simply want them to carry out their destructive mission—which often includes targeting or killing innocent people. (<https://cve.fbi.gov/home.html>)



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- **ENHANCING SCHOOL SAFETY USING A THREAT ASSESSMENT MODEL: AN OPERATIONAL GUIDE FOR PREVENTING TARGETED SCHOOL VIOLENCE:** The tragic shootings at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, on 14 February 2018 and at Santa Fe High School in Santa Fe, Texas, on 18 May 2018 demonstrate the ongoing need to provide leadership in preventing future school attacks. As such, the US Secret Service, along with many partners, have redoubled efforts and are poised to continue enhancing school safety. As part of these efforts, the US Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC) created an operational guide that provides actionable steps that schools can take to develop comprehensive targeted violence prevention plans for conducting threat assessments in schools. (https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/18_0711_USSS_NTAC-Enhancing-School-Safety-Guide.pdf)
- **THE FINAL REPORT AND FINDINGS OF THE SAFE SCHOOL INITIATIVE: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PREVENTION OF SCHOOL ATTACKS IN THE UNITED STATES:** This report provides details on a study conducted by the US Secret Service and Department of Education, which reviewed school-based attacks. It is the culmination of an extensive examination of targeted school-violence incidents that occurred in the US. (<https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/preventingattacksreport.pdf>)
- **JUVENILE JUSTICE:** Youth under the age of 18 who are accused of committing a delinquent or criminal act are typically processed through the juvenile justice system. While similar to that of the adult criminal justice system in many ways—processes include arrest, detainment, petitions, hearings, adjudications, dispositions, placement, probation, and reentry—the juvenile justice process operates according to the premise that youth are fundamentally different from adults, both in terms of level of responsibility and potential for rehabilitation. The primary goals of the juvenile justice system, in addition to maintaining public safety, are skill development, habilitation, rehabilitation, addressing treatment needs, and successful reintegration of youth into the community. (<https://youth.gov/youth-topics/juvenile-justice>)
- **JUVENILE JUSTICE REENTRY EDUCATION PROGRAM:** On any given day, more than 60,000 young people under age 21 are confined in juvenile justice facilities throughout the US. Youths involved in the juvenile justice system typically have a history of poor school attendance, grade level retention, or disengagement from school due to academic failure and school disciplinary issues. Many youths in the juvenile justice system have had little employment experience before confinement, and their employment challenges often intensify post release, with many struggling to find and keep jobs. (<https://cte.ed.gov/initiatives/juvenile-justice-reentry-education-program>)
- **MAKING PREVENTION A REALITY: IDENTIFYING, ASSESSING, AND MANAGING THE THREAT OF TARGETED ATTACKS:** This report, a practical guide on assessing and managing the threat of targeted violence, contains concrete strategies to help communities prevent these types of incidents. (<https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/making-prevention-a-reality.pdf/view>)
- **NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE'S JUVENILES DELINQUENCY PREVENTION:** When a juvenile commits an act that would be criminal if committed by an adult, the juvenile is determined to be delinquent. Delinquent acts may include crimes against persons, crimes against property, drug offenses, and crimes against public order. Delinquency prevention efforts seek to redirect youth who are considered at-risk for delinquency or who have committed a delinquent offense from deeper involvement in the juvenile justice system. (<https://www.crimesolutions.gov/TopicDetails.aspx?ID=62>)



FIRST RESPONDERS' TOOLBOX

- **THE NATIONWIDE SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY REPORTING (SAR) INITIATIVE (NSI):** A collaborative effort led by the US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, in partnership with DHS, the FBI, and state, local, tribal, and territorial law enforcement partners that provide first responders with a tool to help prevent terrorism by establishing a national capacity for gathering, documenting, processing, analyzing, and sharing SAR information. (<https://nsi.ncirc.gov/>)
- **OFFICE OF JUVENILE JUSTICE AND DELINQUENCY PREVENTION (OJJDP):** Through comprehensive and coordinated efforts at the federal, state, and local levels, the Office of Justice Programs' OJJDP aims to reduce youth crime and violence. OJJDP supports prevention and early intervention programs that are making a difference for young people and their communities, and through research and programming works to strengthen the nation's juvenile justice system. Other Office of Justice Programs components, including the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the National Institute of Justice, and the Office for Victims of Crime, also provide programming and research support for outreach to juveniles and their families. (<https://ojp.gov/programs/juvjustice.htm>)
- **PREPAREDNESS IN AMERICA'S SCHOOLS: A COMPREHENSIVE LOOK AT TERRORISM PREPAREDNESS IN AMERICA'S TWENTY LARGEST SCHOOL DISTRICTS:** Terrorism preparedness and the safety of children in schools are the responsibility of local governments and school systems. This report helps parents to determine whether their own schools are prepared. (<http://www.workplaceviolence911.com/docs/20040916.pdf>)
- **PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OF POTENTIAL SCHOOL-BASED VIOLENCE: INFORMATION STUDENTS LEARN MAY PREVENT A TARGETED ATTACK:** This study highlights the importance of a school climate where adults encourage students to come forward with information about threats and other concerning behavior, without fear of punishment, ridicule, or not being taken seriously. All communities should develop school policies and practices to ensure students come forward when they have information about a threat or possible attack. (https://rems.ed.gov/docs/DOE_BystanderStudy.pdf)
- **STOPBULLYING.GOV:** When adults respond quickly and consistently to bullying behavior they send the message that it is not acceptable. Research shows this can stop bullying behavior over time. Parents, school staff, and other adults in the community can help kids prevent bullying by talking about it, building a safe school environment, and creating a community-wide bullying prevention strategy. (<https://www.stopbullying.gov/>)
- **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:** For additional information, please see the following products which can be found on the Homeland Security Information Network (<https://hsin.dhs.gov/>), the Law Enforcement Enterprise Portal (<https://www.cjis.gov/>) and Regional Information Sharing System (<https://riss.net>).
 - Case Studies Highlight Radicalization and Mobilization Dynamics (9 November 2016)
 - Homegrown Violent Extremist Mobilization Indicators for Public Safety Personnel - 2017 Edition (4 January 2017)
 - Radicalization Dynamics, A Primer (June 2012)





PRODUCT FEEDBACK FORM

(U) JCAT MISSION: To improve information sharing and enhance public safety. In coordination with the FBI and DHS, collaborate with other members of the IC to research, produce, and disseminate counterterrorism (CT) intelligence products for federal, state, local, tribal and territorial government agencies and the private sector. Advocate for the CT intelligence requirements and needs of these partners throughout the IC.

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