

Homeland
Security

INTELLIGENCE NOTE

1 June 2020

(U//FOUO) Some Violent Opportunists Probably Engaging in Organized Activities

(U//FOUO) Scope. This *Intelligence Note (IN)* provides information on how violent opportunist activity may be organized amidst otherwise lawful protests related to recent officer-involved deaths. The information in this *IN* is current as of 31 May 2020.

(U//FOUO) During the next 24 hours, DHS does not anticipate a major change in violence occurring during lawful protests across the country, in part because nationwide curfews, National Guard deployments, and bolstered state and local law enforcement efforts have helped to mitigate at least some of the anticipated violence. Short-term disruptive cyber activities related to protests probably will continue—various actors could be carrying out these operations—with the potential to use more impactful capabilities, like ransomware, or target higher profile networks.

(U//FOUO) As the protests persist, we assess that organized violent opportunists—including suspected anarchist extremists—could increasingly perpetrate nationwide targeting of law enforcement and critical infrastructure. These efforts are also likely to increase in complexity as violent opportunists adjust tactics in response to law enforcement operations. We lack detailed reporting indicating the level of organization and planning by some violent opportunists and assess that most of the violence to date has been loosely organized on a level seen with previous widespread outbreaks of violence at lawful protests.

- » (U) On 30 May, a senior New York Police Department official publicly stated that the department had strong evidence that suspected anarchist groups had planned to incite violence at protests, including by using encrypted communications. The unnamed groups had organized scouts, medics, and caches of rocks, bottles, and accelerants for breakaway groups to commit violence.¹
- » (U//FOUO) On 29 May, suspected anarchist extremists deployed Black Bloc tactics to counter law enforcement efforts to quell a violent incident in Louisville, Kentucky, according to a DHS Field Intelligence Report. Black Bloc tactics refer to groups wearing black clothing, face coverings, and other protection to conceal their identities. During the incident, the suspected anarchist extremists also used large banners to conceal their movement, and at one point, the largest group divided itself into multiple groups, likely to complicate law enforcement's response. Prior to engaging in violence, the suspected anarchist extremists cached weapons and supplies throughout the city, according to the same source.²
- » (U) On 29 May, a senior Minnesota Department of Public Safety official said that officers had found caches of flammable materials, weapons, and stolen vehicles while responding to violence in the Twin Cities, according to local press. Flammables were also found in vehicles that were believed to be stolen because their license plates had been removed, and weapons and other projectiles have been found during enforcement.³
- » (U//FOUO) Violent opportunists probably have compromised police communications in several cities across the country to adversely impact law enforcement's response. On 31 May, unknown actors compromised the Dallas Police Department's unencrypted radio communications, gaining access to radio frequencies and playing music that disrupted police communications, according to a preliminary suspicious activity report.⁴

IA-06012020-T-2

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On 30 May, unknown actors disrupted police communications in Chicago, putting police radio frequencies on the internet and playing music whenever officers attempted to talk, according to local press.⁵

- » (U//FOUO) Cyber Capabilities Still Flexible Tactic Against States: Although we have collection gaps, as of the publication of this *IN* we have not observed a disruptive cyber attack against Minnesota state and local systems during 1 June. The nearly daily disruptive cyber operations targeting public-facing and internet-connected devices of Minnesota since 28 May—mainly in the form of distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks and some claimed by Anonymous criminal hackers—remain within the capability of numerous actors and could be deployed against similar government networks across the country. Further, potentially more impactful cyber capabilities could come in the form of ransomware and telephony denial-of-service (TDoS)—a tactic we suspected was deployed on the West Coast this weekend but was later determined to be a technical provider issue.
- » (U//FOUO) Foreign Influence Activity: Russian, Chinese, and Iranian state media outlets over the weekend published articles concerning protest activities across the United States, selectively amplifying content surrounding riots and portraying the country as divided, hypocritical, and racist. Russian state media outlets particularly emphasized themes alleging excessive police brutality, police attacks against journalists, and claims of systematic racism.⁶⁻¹²

(U//FOUO) Indicators Associated with Potential Escalation to More Widespread Organized Violence

(U//FOUO) The following list of indicators may be indicative of violent opportunist efforts to plan and coordinate activities in support of attacks targeting law enforcement or the destruction of critical infrastructure. Some of the observed suspicious behaviors include constitutionally protected activities and should not be reported absent articulable facts and circumstances that supports a reasonable belief the observed behavior is itself, or when taken in context of other activities, is indicative of violent activities.

- » (U//FOUO) Pre-staging of potential weapons-of-opportunity or stolen vehicles at planned protest venues.
- » (U//FOUO) Increased reports of more lethal weapons—such as firearms—being used to target law enforcement officials at lawful protest activities.
- » (U//FOUO) Monitoring and reporting on law enforcement personnel, communications, and movements during planned protests without a reasonable explanation.
- » (U//FOUO) Transition from generic calls for violence to providing specific targeting or operational guidance.
- » (U//FOUO) Online planning of criminal activity or violence related to planned protests by individuals who lack ties to local communities.
- » (U//FOUO) Encouraging or redirecting planned protest activities away from major metropolitan areas to cities and municipalities with fewer law enforcement personnel.
- » (U//FOUO) Discovery of banners or other materials used to employ “Black Bloc” tactics for concealing identity or shielding activities from law enforcement scrutiny.
- » (U//FOUO) Reports of coordinated reconnaissance of planned protests venues prior to the event without a reasonable explanation.

(U//FOUO) Definitions

(U//FOUO) DHS I&A defines **violent opportunists** as Illicit actors who may or may not hold violent extremist ideological beliefs, but seek to exploit opportunities in non-violent protests to engage in unlawful violence against federal, state, or local government and law enforcement personnel or facilities, as well as other critical infrastructure, that either poses a danger to human life, threat of potential destruction of the critical infrastructure, or would be so disruptive as to endanger the minimal operations of state and local governments to respond. These actors may capitalize on violent extremist narratives often espoused by organized DVE movements, such as anarchist extremists or racially motivated violent extremists, to justify violent activities that may potentially destroy government critical infrastructure at the state, local and federal levels, and may attempt to incite others to violence to provide cover for their own illicit activities. Their primary motivations may be influenced by a variety of criminal objectives and goals.

(U//FOUO) DHS defines **anarchist extremists** as groups or individuals who facilitate or engage in acts of unlawful violence as a means of changing the government and society in support of the belief that all forms of capitalism and corporate globalization should be opposed and that governing institutions are unnecessary and harmful to society.

(U) Report Suspicious Activity

(U) To report suspicious activity, law enforcement, Fire-EMS, private security personnel, and emergency managers should follow established protocols; all other personnel should call 911 or contact local law enforcement. Suspicious activity reports (SARs) will be forwarded to the appropriate fusion center and FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force for further action. For more information on the Nationwide SAR Initiative, visit <http://nsi.ncirc.gov/resources.aspx>.

(U) Tracked by: HSEC-8.1, HSEC-8.5, HSEC-8.6, HSEC-8.8, HSEC-8.10

(U) Source Summary Statement

(U//FOUO) This *IN* is based on media reporting and DHS field reporting. We have **medium confidence** in the underlying information obtained from DHS due to evolving situations on the ground and the press reporting given the evolving nature of these events. We have **high confidence** that material received from our state and local partners represents their best information at time of dissemination.

(U//FOUO) We have **medium confidence** in our assessment, based on the uncorroborated and sporadic nature of some of the underlying reporting. Additional report regarding organized activities could strengthen this assessment.

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- ¹ (U); Online News Source; <https://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/nypds-terrorism-chief-says-unnamed-groups-planned-protest-violence-in-advance/2440722/>
 - ² (U); DHS; FIR-0081-20: (U//FOUO) Tactics Used by Suspected Anarchist Extremists to Attack Law Enforcement and Incite Violence
 - ³ (U); Online News Source <https://kstp.com/news/live-video-gov-tim-walz-state-leaders-address-the-state-response-to-protests-in-metro-/5747290/>
 - ⁴ (U); DHS; UPDATE #1– Dallas, Texas - Comms Compromised, DDOS Attacks Against SAR Reporting Web Site
 - ⁵ (U); Online News Source <https://chicago.cbslocal.com/2020/05/30/downtown-protesters-disrupted-police-radio-communications-source-says/>
 - ⁶ (U); Online News Source Global Times Online, 31 May 2020, “‘Beautiful sight’ extends from HK to US: Global Times editorial”
 - ⁷ (U); Online News Source Global Times Online, 1 June 2020, “Can international force fuel chaos and destabilize the US?”
 - ⁸ (U); Online News Source Global Times Online, 1 June 2020, “US double standards on domestic riots and Hong Kong turmoil mocked on Chinese internet”
 - ⁹ (U); Online News Source; Global Times Online, 1 June 2020, “Poor, vulnerable hopelessly suffer in US: Global Times editorial”
 - ¹⁰ (U); Online News Source RT Online, 31 May 2020, “Democracy doesn't work for black, working-class Americans, and these riots prove it”
 - ¹¹ (U); Online News Source Sputnik, 31 May 2020, “Moscow Strongly Condemns Use of Riot Control Weapons Against Reporters by US Police”
 - ¹² (U); Online News Source Islamic Republic News Agency; June 1, “‘Iran: US always resorts to violence in response to decry for justice”