



## Strategic Perspective: Executive Analytical Report

21 August 2020

**(U//LES) Domestic Violent Extremists with Partisan Political Grievances Likely to Increase Election-Related Threats**

(U//LES) The FBI assesses domestic violent extremist (DVE) threats related to the 2020 elections<sup>a</sup> likely will increase as the election approaches, despite the current focus of many DVEs on the COVID-19 pandemic and civil unrest. The FBI makes this assessment with medium confidence, based on source reporting, in addition to an incident which occurred and threats made prior to the pandemic and civil unrest. In 2020, DVEs across the ideological spectrum have engaged in threats towards political figures in the context of the upcoming elections, with some DVEs intending to alter or escalate their attack plans depending on the outcome of the elections, based on a review of FBI information. Based on prior incidents, DVE tactics or plots against government entities and elections range from potentially high-casualty attacks involving firearms or the mailing or intended use of explosives to acts of economic sabotage, including vandalism or destruction of federal properties. When DVEs, acting on the basis of race, color, religion or national origin, present a true threat to a federally protected act—like voting—or when they conspire to injure, oppress, threaten or intimidate any person from exercising their Constitutional rights—like voting or voter registration—they could be charged with federal crimes. Between 2017 and 2018, DVEs citing partisan political grievances conducted or plotted two attacks that lead to multiple injuries, and in one case, a nationwide manhunt.

- (U//LES) As of 1 August 2020, the FBI had observed DVE subjects threatening 2020 political candidates or events, including threats against current candidates for President,<sup>1</sup> presidential conventions,<sup>2</sup> and counter protestors at campaign rallies,<sup>3</sup> as well as individuals committing arson or sending threatening packages targeting political party offices, according to FBI and open source reporting.<sup>4, 5, 6</sup>
- (U//LES) As of June 2020, members of a self-described violent extremist militia were discussing plans to attack elected officials in an identified state through targeted kidnappings or the storming of the state capitol building while the legislature was in session, with the intent to kill all inside. Members stated the need to act prior to a possible democratic presidential administration, due to the belief that stricter firearms regulations would be enacted quickly thereafter, according to a FBI reporting.<sup>7</sup>
- (U//LES) On 8 February 2020, a Florida-based DVE USPER allegedly drove a vehicle into an occupied Republican voter registration tent in Jacksonville, Florida, according to a state charging document.<sup>8</sup> During a post-arrest interview, the DVE stated he committed the act because someone had to “take a stand,” and stated his dislike for the President, according to FBI reporting. His efforts may have been in violation of the aforementioned federal statute protecting Constitutional rights, according to additional FBI reporting.<sup>9</sup>
- (U//LES) In late 2019, an Ohio-based racially or ethnically motivated violent extremist (RMVE) USPER allegedly discussed with associates, via messaging applications, the creation of a large-scale power outage with the intent to cause millions of dollars in damage and possibly start a race war. The RMVE also shared instructions on crafting improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and other improvised weapons from

<sup>a</sup> (U//LES) For purposes of this SPEAR, “election-related threats” include but are not limited to those against candidates, campaign events, presidential conventions, party offices, elected officials, voter registration events, and threats or plots related to electoral outcomes. As of July 2020, the FBI had not seen specific threats to polling places from DVE actors.





household or easily obtainable objects. The RMVE stated an intent for his group of followers to be operationally ready for the 2024 election, based on a belief that the President would win re-election in 2020; if the President did not win in 2020, however, the plan would be accelerated, according to FBI reporting.<sup>10</sup>

**(U//FOUO) Partisan Political Grievances Contributed to Attacks in 2018**

(U//LES) Partisan political grievances contributed, in 2018, to the motivation or self-justification of two subjects who committed or plotted to commit attacks, based on a review of FBI information. The two cited examples provide recent historical incidents of DVEs motivated due to partisan political grievances outside the context of presidential elections.

- (U//LES) In October 2018, the FBI arrested a Florida-based DVE USPER after he mailed possible IEDs to the offices of US Government representatives, former government officials, high-profile private citizens, and national media offices, while an ensuing FBI investigation revealed further targets, including members of the US Congress, political candidates, and other high-profile individuals. The DVE's intended victims were chosen on the basis of real or perceived political affiliation or activities, according to FBI reporting.<sup>11</sup> In August 2019, the DVE was sentenced to 20 years in prison, according to FBI reporting.<sup>12</sup>
- (U//LES) In October 2018, the FBI arrested a New York-based DVE USPER on federal charges related to the manufacture and interstate movement of explosive materials, following his plans to detonate an incendiary device on the National Mall in Washington, DC, on Election Day, in a self-proclaimed symbolic act of martyrdom, according to FBI reporting.<sup>13</sup> The DVE stated he planned to construct a device capable of producing a 10-foot-diameter fireball to engulf himself, while a rigged firearm would simultaneously shoot him in the head, according to FBI reporting.<sup>14</sup>

(U//LES) **Outlook:** DVEs across the ideological spectrum likely will continue to plot against government and election-related targets to express their diverse grievances involving government policies and actions. DVE responses may not occur until after the election, however, in response to electoral outcomes and may be based on potential or anticipated policy changes. Furthermore, the ability to craft personalized ideologies—specifically, those motivated by partisanship—poses challenges for the FBI in proactively identifying DVEs through traditional investigative techniques focused on structured DVE movements, given the independent, non-affiliated nature maintained by these DVE actors. The FBI continues to monitor DVE threats, and has a cross-divisional Election Working Group that monitors election-related threats.

**(U) Prepared by Counterterrorism Division, Criminal Investigative Division, and FBI Cincinnati Field Office**

**(U) Endnotes**

- <sup>1</sup> (U//FOUO) FBI | Case Information | 8 January 2020 | 13 December 2019 | "[Title Redacted]" | UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY | UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY.
- <sup>2</sup> (U//FOUO) FBI | Case Information | 3 April 2020 | 3 April 2020 | "(U) Conversion to Full Investigation" | UNCLASSIFIED | UNCLASSIFIED.
- <sup>3</sup> (U//FOUO) FBI | Case Information | 27 February 2020 | 11 February 2020 | "(U//FOUO) Conversion to Full Investigation" | UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY | UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY.
- <sup>4</sup> (U//FOUO) FBI | Case Information | 28 July 2020 | 28 July 2020 | "[Title Redacted]" | UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY | UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY.
- <sup>5</sup> (U//FOUO) FBI | Case Information | 7 June 2020 | 2 July 2020 | "(U) Opening EC - Conversion to Full Investigation" | UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY | UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY.
- <sup>6</sup> (U) Online news article | Fox10phoenix.com | "Phoenix Fire officials label fire that damaged Arizona Democratic Party building in Phoenix as arson" | 24 July 2020 | <https://www.fox10phoenix.com/news/phoenix-fire-officials-label-fire-that-damaged-arizona-democratic-party-building-in-phoenix-as-arson> | accessed on 29 July 2020.
- <sup>7</sup> (U//FOUO) FBI | Case Information | 7 July 2020 | 2 July 2020 | "[Title Redacted]" | UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY | UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY.
- <sup>8</sup> (U) Court Records | Duval County, Florida Fourth Judicial Circuit Court | 19 February 2020 | *State of Florida vs. Gregory William Loel Timm Criminal Information* | accessed on 28 February 2020.
- <sup>9</sup> (U//FOUO) FBI | Case Information | 24 February 2020 | 24 February 2020 | "(U) To convert captioned Assessment to a Full Investigation" | UNCLASSIFIED//FOUO | UNCLASSIFIED//FOUO.
- <sup>10</sup> (U//FOUO) FBI | Case Information | 21 November 2019 | 21 November 2019 | "(U) Conversion to Full Investigation" | UNCLASSIFIED | UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY.
- <sup>11</sup> (U//LES) FBI | Case Information | 8 August 2019 | 22 July 2019 | "(U//FOUO) SDNY Government Sentencing Memorandum" | UNCLASSIFIED//LAW ENFORCEMENT SENSITIVE | UNCLASSIFIED//LAW ENFORCEMENT SENSITIVE.
- <sup>12</sup> (U//FOUO) FBI | Case Information | 15 August 2019 | 15 August 2019 | "[Title Redacted]" | UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY | UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY.
- <sup>13</sup> (U//FOUO) FBI | Case Information | 17 September 2018 | 17 September 2018 | "[Title Redacted]" | UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY | UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY.
- <sup>14</sup> (U//FOUO) FBI | Case Information | 15 February 201 | 14 February 2019 | "[Title Reacted]" | UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY | UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY.



FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION ALTERNATIVE ANALYSIS INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENT

(U) FBI Boston-Based Domestic  
Violent Extremists' Capabilities and  
Willingness for Action Likely Drive  
Reaction to a Disputed Outcome of the  
2020 US Presidential Election



*Alternative Analysis*

(U) PREPARED BY FBI BOSTON FIELD  
OFFICE

25 SEPTEMBER 2020  
FBI AAI339 20200925

(U) This document is classified: Unclassified//Law Enforcement Sensitive.

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(U) Alternative Analysis Intelligence Assessment template approved for fiscal year 2020, as of 1 October 2019.



## (U) Executive Summary

(U//LES) The FBI has assessed domestic violent extremist (DVE) threats related to the 2020 elections likely will increase as the election approaches. DVEs across the ideological spectrum have engaged in threats toward political figures in the context of the upcoming elections, with some DVEs intending to alter or escalate their attack plans depending on the outcome of the elections.<sup>a</sup> Given the high level of uncertainty and lack of reliable reporting on this issue, FBI Boston conducted an Alternative Futures exercise to provide strategic warning, identify potential risks and opportunities, and improve collection related to possible DVE threats following a disputed outcome of the 2020 US Presidential election. This Alternative Futures exercise found that within FBI Boston's area of responsibility (AOR), the most likely scenario would be consistent with Scenario 1: DVEs have high willingness to take action, but their capabilities to do so remain low. The exercise determined DVEs' capabilities and willingness to take action likely<sup>b</sup> will drive the extent of their reaction to a disputed outcome. DVEs/DVE groups' willingness for action may be shaped by a variety of factors, including the level of confidence in the electoral system, effectiveness of foreign influence, and other underlying grievances. DVEs/DVE groups' willingness for action also would likely be affected by how opposing DVEs/DVE groups react and, pertaining to organization, would potentially affect their capabilities as well. As a result, the larger the initial response from a DVE/DVE group, the more significant the counter-response may be from other extremists. The fractured nature of DVEs' capabilities provides opportunities for increased law enforcement detection and disruption, while increasing awareness and collection opportunities to mitigate the threat they pose. FBI Boston judges that a disputed 2020 Presidential election outcome, in addition to other ongoing contentious issues nationwide, including social justice activism and reactions to the government's response to COVID-19, would likely affect DVEs' activity for the long term to the extent that they are willing and able to incite or take violent action in FBI Boston's AOR in support of their ideological agenda(s).

## (U) Analytic Methodology

(U//FOUO) In June 2020, FBI Boston held a virtual Alternative Futures exercise, composed of FBI Boston intelligence analysts assigned to both to the Field Office headquarters and the FBI Boston Resident Agencies, identifying a range of potential scenarios of DVE activity responsive to a disputed 2020 US Presidential election. This technique was chosen because it presents several plausible futures and identifies indicators that provide strategic warning regarding which future is becoming more likely. This exercise began with a brainstorming session to identify several drivers that would likely shape this situation. An additional brainstorming exercise was held to identify the two key drivers determined to be the most powerful for shaping the situation. These two key drivers were incorporated on a quadrant chart; based on how these two drivers would likely interact with one another, plausible "futures" were generated. After reviewing each potential future scenario, indicators that FBI Boston might expect to see, if moving toward a particular scenario,

<sup>a</sup> (U//LES) FBI | Strategic Perspective: Executive Analytical Report | 21 August 2020 | "(U//LES) Domestic Violent Extremists with Partisan Political Grievances Likely to Increase Election-Related Threats" | p. 1 | UNCLASSIFIED//LAW ENFORCEMENT SENSITIVE | UNCLASSIFIED//LAW ENFORCEMENT SENSITIVE.

<sup>b</sup> (U) See Appendix A: Expressions of Likelihood.

were documented and implications of each future were addressed, identifying future challenges and opportunities throughout FBI Boston's AOR.

(U//FOUO) Alternative analysis challenges official assessments, established mental models, or consensus and expands the range of possibilities considered to enhance understanding and minimize the risk of surprise or intelligence failure.

#### (U) Scope Note

(U//FOUO) This alternative analysis intelligence assessment focuses on the potential impact to FBI Boston's AOR by DVEs in response to a disputed outcome of the 2020 US Presidential election. This analysis was based on two key drivers: DVEs' capabilities and their willingness to take action. Key assumptions underlying analysis in this product are that there will be a degree of unrest within the AOR following this election; multiple factors could contribute to a disputed election outcome; and, based on the fragmented nature of DVE groups, the unity of DVE groups and higher levels of organization would likely lead to increased capability.<sup>c</sup> Increased reporting of FBI Boston AOR DVEs' overall lack of interest in this election would change the plausibility of the alternatives presented. This is the first FBI product addressing post-election DVE activity.<sup>d</sup>

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#### (U) Source Summary Statement

(U//FOUO) Reporting in this alternative analysis intelligence assessment was derived primarily from information presented and discussed during a June 2020 Alternative Analysis/Alternative Futures exercise involving intelligence analysts throughout the FBI Boston Field Office. Reporting herein was also derived from corroborated human source reporting with direct access to various individuals within the FBI Boston AOR and open source reporting. The exercise focused on four plausible futures of post-election DVE activity following a disputed outcome of the 2020 US Presidential election. This collection occurred between June 2020 and July 2020. The reporting was current as of 15 July 2020.

<sup>c</sup> (U) Although the analysis in this report assumes that additional organization can lead to increased capability, the participants in this exercise acknowledge that DVEs acting independently or without high levels of organization have conducted attacks in the past that had a high-level impact and could do so again in the future.

<sup>d</sup> (U) Potential criminality exhibited by certain members of a group or groups referenced herein does not negate, nor is it a comment on, the constitutional rights of the group itself or its members to exercise their rights under the First Amendment to the US Constitution. The FBI does not investigate, collect, or maintain information on USPERs solely for the purpose of monitoring activities protected by the First Amendment.



## (U//FOUO) DVEs' Capabilities and Willingness To Take Action Likely Drive Post-Election Response to a Disputed 2020 US Presidential Election Outcome

(U//FOUO) FBI Boston AOR DVEs' capabilities, in conjunction with a willingness to take action, would likely drive the extent of response to a disputed outcome of the 2020 US Presidential election. As unrest continues in response to ongoing societal issues and current events, if DVEs continue to develop their capabilities while building motivation for action, the potential for violence would likely increase within the AOR following a disputed outcome of the election.

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### (U//FOUO) Scenario 1

(U//FOUO) In response to a disputed election, DVEs have generated a high willingness to take action, but their capabilities to do so remain low, largely due to disorganization and law enforcement disruption of DVE-developed plotting. DVE activity would be primarily limited to online calls for violence and propaganda; however, attacks requiring little planning and organization, such as vehicle ramming or small-arms attacks, would still be possible. FBI Boston would likely see an increase in Guardian incidents, potentially taxing local, state, and federal resources responding to these numerous incidents.

### (U//FOUO) Scenario 1 Opportunities and Indicators

(U//FOUO) An increased law enforcement response to online threats resulting in charges and successful convictions may help diminish the trend over time. The lack of a unified propaganda message among DVEs leaves open the chance for additional community relations improvements through effectively countering violent messaging. The continued liaison activity conducted by the FBI with public and private sectors and individuals who could be considered potential targets of DVE activity would continue to further strengthen community relationships, while increasing awareness and collection opportunities.

(U//FOUO) The following indicators, if detected, would suggest the emergence of a threat environment similar to Scenario 1:

- (U//FOUO) An increase in online activity; however, DVE messaging remains at an unsophisticated, amateur level. DVE propaganda encouraging acts of violence is well received; however, it does not have an organizing effect among DVEs;
- (U//FOUO) An increase of low-level propaganda (stickers, flyers, posters) is observed that articulates a need for violence and DVE support; however, no further action is identified<sup>6</sup>;

<sup>6</sup> (U//FOUO) DVEs/DVE groups have historically used stickers, flyers, and posters as a means to spread propaganda, with the intention of both recruiting prospective members and intimidating their targets. The accelerationist DVE group Atomwaffen Division was responsible for flyers on college campuses in 2015 and 2016 with both anti-Semitic slogans and a call to "Join your local Nazis!" Source: Website | Southern Poverty Law Center | "Atomwaffen Division" | 2020 |

- (U//FOUO) Unorganized doxing attempts using a collection of publically available information targeting individuals, businesses, and local government entities;
- (U//FOUO) Unorganized, individual acts of violence at election-related protests would be limited to petty crimes against targets of opportunity—trespassing, theft, simple assault, and vandalism—and an increase in arrests and interaction with law enforcement at otherwise lawful protests due to DVEs' inadequate planning or leaked information; and
- (U//FOUO) Local law enforcement enhances or develops robust collection on DVE actors or groups, remaining aware of potential or planned activity.

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## (U//FOUO) Scenario 2

(U//FOUO) DVEs are highly organized and capable of carrying out a wide array of violent activity. DVEs' increased production of high-quality extremist material continues to incite and sustain violence. FBI Boston would likely see widespread, organized violence targeting individuals, groups, and communities whose origins, background, views, and ideologies differ from particular DVEs/DVE groups, in addition to destructive, violent acts against property and infrastructure throughout the AOR. Due to the elevated sophistication and capabilities of these DVEs/DVE groups, mitigating this threat becomes more challenging.

## (U//FOUO) Scenario 2 Opportunities and Indicators

(U//FOUO) Developing well-placed authorized sources (both online and in-person) against predicated DVEs/DVE groups that are capable of identifying calls for violence would likely help prevent additional violent acts. The following indicators, if detected, would suggest the emergence of a threat environment similar to Scenario 2:

- (U//FOUO) Escalation of sophisticated social media and propaganda calls for violence are resonating among extremists;
- (U//FOUO) Sophisticated, deliberate cyber intrusions targeting potential victims of DVE violence, such as law enforcement, government entities, religious or ethnic institutions, and so forth (that is, infiltrating payroll); collecting personally identifiable information, developing pattern of life, and getting active response from extremists;

splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/atomwaffen-division | accessed on 24 July 2020. In early 2019, Atomwaffen Division members targeted journalists and members of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) with threatening posters. *Source:* FBI-DHS-NCTC | Joint Intelligence Bulletin | 28 February 2020 | 2019 to 2020 | "(U//FOUO) Five Members of Neo-Nazi Group Atomwaffen Division Arrested for Federal Violations Targeting Journalists, Activists" | p.2 | UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY | UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY. More recently, DVE group The Base has used flyers and a nationwide leafleting campaign to spread propaganda and recruit new members. *Source:* Website | Anti-Defamation League | "The Base" | 2020 | adl.org/resources/backgrounders/the-base | accessed on 24 July 2020.



- (U//FOUO) Increased pre-planned or organized violence at election-related protests and rallies; overt voter intimidation at polls or campaign events;
- (U//FOUO) Effective training tailored to election-related targets enhancing capability for violent activity (stockpiling weapons, controlled items, and so forth) and conducting organized training sessions; and
- (U//FOUO) Escalation from threats to an increase in violent attacks against individuals based on race, ethnicity, religion, or political affiliation and an increased willingness to attack "harder targets" (government entities or individuals, businesses, and institutions) perceived as in opposition to particular DVEs/DVE groups' ideologies and agenda.

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(U//FOUO) Scenario 3

(U//FOUO) DVEs are not highly motivated to take action in response to an election dispute and those who are interested lack the capability to carry out anything beyond a simple attack. Discord within DVEs/DVE groups is evident throughout the AOR. FBI Boston would likely see the fracturing of DVE groups while overall DVEs lack cohesiveness; however, they continue providing aspirational chatter and limited propaganda.

*(U//FOUO) Scenario 3 Opportunities and Indicators*

(U//FOUO) The various local, state, and federal government entities, along with community groups and activists, could use the lack of a unified message among DVEs/DVE groups as an opportunity for effectively countering violent messaging while furthering community collaboration. The following indicators, if detected, would suggest the emergence of a threat environment similar to Scenario 3:

- (U//FOUO) Online rhetoric has decreased and is generalized in nature and physical propaganda is selective and non-threatening;
- (U//FOUO) Fractured social media among DVEs/DVE groups that share the same ideology suggesting a lack of unity;
- (U//FOUO) Online messaging from DVE groups outside of the AOR, insinuating weakness of local DVEs due to a lack of DVE activity in FBI Boston's AOR;
- (U//FOUO) Lack of presence at protests; protests remain peaceful and there is a limited presence of counter-protesters; and
- (U//FOUO) DVE groups becoming increasingly fragmented and public examples of infighting among DVEs/DVE groups.

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*(U//FOUO) Scenario 4*

(U//FOUO) In the lead-up to the election, DVE groups improve capabilities, but they are not highly motivated to carry out near-term attacks in response to an election dispute. FBI Boston would likely see organized DVEs/DVE groups prepare for future violence. Tensions would likely remain high and the next major social upheaval or event may be the impetus for violence. A robust source base focused against predicated DVEs/DVE groups embedded among DVEs/DVE groups would likely provide early detection and disruption of planning for future violent acts.

*(U//FOUO) Scenario 4 Opportunities and Indicators*

(U//FOUO) A strong and effective law enforcement response to even minimal criminal activity, along with community messaging that violence will not be tolerated, may dissuade those looking to take the next step to violent action. The following indicators, if detected, would suggest the emergence of a threat environment similar to Scenario 4:

- (U//FOUO) DVE-generated social media improving and producing high-quality propaganda, but not motivated by the disputed election; focus tends to be on future events;
- (U//FOUO) An increase in online recruitment versus offline and expansion of DVE groups;
- (U//FOUO) Overt foreign influence activity suggesting ties to capable state actors, but minimal positive response from DVEs;
- (U//FOUO) An increase in planning, training, and posting online about these preparations; however, DVEs/DVE groups lack the near-term motivation for conducting an attack on an election-related target; and
- (U//FOUO) DVEs exhibit extremist prepper mentality in anticipation of a future event and increasing outreach to outside groups (that is, criminal networks) and acquisition of weapons and explosives.

(U) See Appendix C for a graphic of indicators and implications for scenarios 1 to 4.

*(U) Perspective*

(U//FOUO) During the 2016 Presidential election cycle, foreign governments engaged in influence operations, including the spread of propaganda online, notably through social media. Recent events within the United States, including government policies over COVID-19 and social justice issues, have motivated DVEs/DVE groups to mobilize for violence or criminal activity within the FBI Boston AOR. It is likely that the various motivations that have driven DVE activity in the recent past will continue to drive DVEs/DVE groups' willingness for future action, while their capabilities will likely be affected by their access to extremist individuals and groups, training, and weapons. In addition to organized violence against people and property, thereby inflicting fear and destruction among communities within FBI Boston's AOR, the unpredictability of a lone actor



using simple tactics to conduct a violent attack also remains a concern. As the past few months reflect, a robust law enforcement capability, along with continued collaboration among local, state, and federal partners and various community groups and businesses, would likely further mitigate the potential for violence. Cohesive community messaging that violence will not be tolerated, along with the successful arrests and convictions of DVE activity, may also help de-escalate future violence. As past peaceful events have turned violent, robust source coverage focused on predicated DVEs, both in-person and online, is critical to maintaining situational awareness of DVEs/DVE groups' violent intentions and activities, both within FBI Boston's AOR and nationwide. As similar events continue to occur throughout the country, authorized intelligence collected in anticipation of these events may be used to prevent further threats or violent attacks.

- (U) On 31 May 2020, a protest was held in Boston to protest the killing of USPER George Floyd by police in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Expected attendance ranged from 3,000 to 5,000 people, with a large contingent of anarchist extremists also attending. There was a strong potential for violent confrontations between anarchists and law enforcement, according to a human source with direct access.<sup>1</sup> The estimated turnout was more than 10,000 participants and the event turned riotous, with multiple acts of looting, arson, and assaults on law enforcement, according to Boston Police.<sup>2</sup>
- (U//FOUO) As of June 2020, anarchist extremists in FBI Boston's AOR were pre-staging improvised weapons, such as golf clubs and shovels, at event locations and along protest routes. These weapons were hidden behind fences, garbage cans, and other objects in case of a police confrontation. It is unknown if this tactic will continue to be used at future events, according to a human source with direct access.<sup>3</sup>
- (U) As of July 2020, white Racially Motivated Violent Extremist members from an identified movement were excited that they could possibly get guns, according to a human source with direct access.<sup>4</sup>
- (U) As of 15 July 2020, the Governments of the People's Republic of China, Iran, and especially Russia appear to have broadly encouraged illegal activity and violence in the hypothetical event that 2020 Presidential election results are disputed, especially via the use of opportunistic, social media-enabled influence operations, according to the Foreign Policy Research Institute. China and Iran were motivated to interfere with US elections and civil stability by an interest in undermining US democratic processes.<sup>5</sup>
- (U) Findings published in 2019 by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence revealed that the Government of Russia timed its interference activities during the 2016 Presidential elections to affect real-life election events, including pre-election events and campaign schedules. Additionally, Russia exacerbated US socio-political fissures by exploiting incendiary subjects, particularly targeting ethnic or ideological minority groups and swing states.<sup>6</sup>

## (U) Outlook

(U//FOUO) Based on the results of the Alternative Futures exercise, FBI Boston anticipates that a disputed 2020 Presidential election outcome, in addition to other ongoing nationwide contentious issues, such as social justice and the local, state, and federal government's response to COVID-19, would likely affect DVE/DVE groups' activity for the long term to the extent that they are willing and able to incite or take violent action in FBI Boston's AOR in support of their ideological agendas. DVEs/DVE groups would likely continue attempting to manipulate the public's uncertainty and fear using perceptions of law enforcement or government overreach, socio-political conditions, and reaction to legislation nationwide as motivators for a violent response. Within FBI Boston's AOR, the most likely scenario would be consistent with Scenario 1: DVEs have high willingness to take action, but their capabilities to do so remain low. The least likely scenario would be consistent with Scenario 3: DVEs have low willingness to take action and their capabilities to do so remain low. Although these two scenarios differ in the degree of willingness to take action, both scenarios lack DVEs' capabilities, negatively affecting their ability to conduct a sophisticated, organized attack. DVEs/DVE groups' willingness for action may be shaped by a variety of factors, including the level of confidence in the electoral system, effectiveness of foreign influence, unlawful policing,<sup>1</sup> and other underlying grievances. DVEs/DVE groups' willingness for action also would likely be affected by how opposing DVEs/DVE groups react and, pertaining to organization, would potentially affect their capabilities as well. As a result, the larger the initial response from a DVE/DVE group, the more significant the counter-response may be. The current fractured nature of DVEs' capabilities provides opportunities for increased law enforcement detection and disruption, community relations improvements through effectively countering violent messaging, and continued liaison activity with the public and private sectors, thus furthering community relationships, while increasing awareness and collection opportunities to mitigate the threat they pose.

(U) If you would like to provide qualitative feedback on this product, please send an email to the appropriate address with the product title as the subject line:

(U) FBI Boston Field Office prepared this alternative analysis intelligence assessment. Please direct comments and queries to the FBI Boston Intelligence Branch at [REDACTED]

<sup>1</sup> (U) Unlawful policing includes unlawful use of force; unlawful stops, searches, and arrests; and bias in policing. Source: Website | Department of Justice | "An Interactive Guide to the Civil Rights Division's Police Reforms" | 18 January 2017 | [justice.gov/crt/page/file/922456/download](https://justice.gov/crt/page/file/922456/download) | accessed on 19 August 2020.



## (U) Appendix A: Expressions of Likelihood

(U) Phrases such as "the FBI judges" and "the FBI assesses," and terms such as "likely" and "probably" convey analytical judgments and assessments. The chart below approximates how expressions of likelihood and probability correlate with percentages of chance. Only terms of likelihood should appear in FBI products; the chart includes terms of probability strictly for comparison, as they sometimes appear in reporting of other government agencies. Furthermore, the FBI does not arrive at judgments through statistical analysis and will not use terms of probability to convey uncertainty in FBI external intelligence products.

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Terms of Likelihood	Almost No Chance	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Roughly Even Chance	Likely	Very Likely	Almost Certain(ly)
Terms of Probability	Remote	Highly Improbable	Improbable (Improbably)	Roughly Even Odds	Probable (Probably)	Highly Probable	Nearly Certain
Percentages of Chance	1-5%	5-20%	20-45%	45-55%	55-80%	80-95%	95-99%

(U) Table showing terms of likelihood aligned with terms of probability and percentages of chance.

(U) Appendix B: Confidence in Assessments and Judgments Based on a Body of Information

(U) Confidence levels reflect the quality and quantity of the source information supporting a judgment. Consequently, the FBI ascribes high, medium, or low levels of confidence to assessments, as follows:

(U) **High confidence** generally indicates the FBI's judgments are based on high quality information from multiple sources. High confidence in a judgment does not imply the assessment is a fact or a certainty; such judgments might be wrong. While additional reporting and information sources may change analytical judgments, such changes are most likely to be refinements and not substantial in nature.

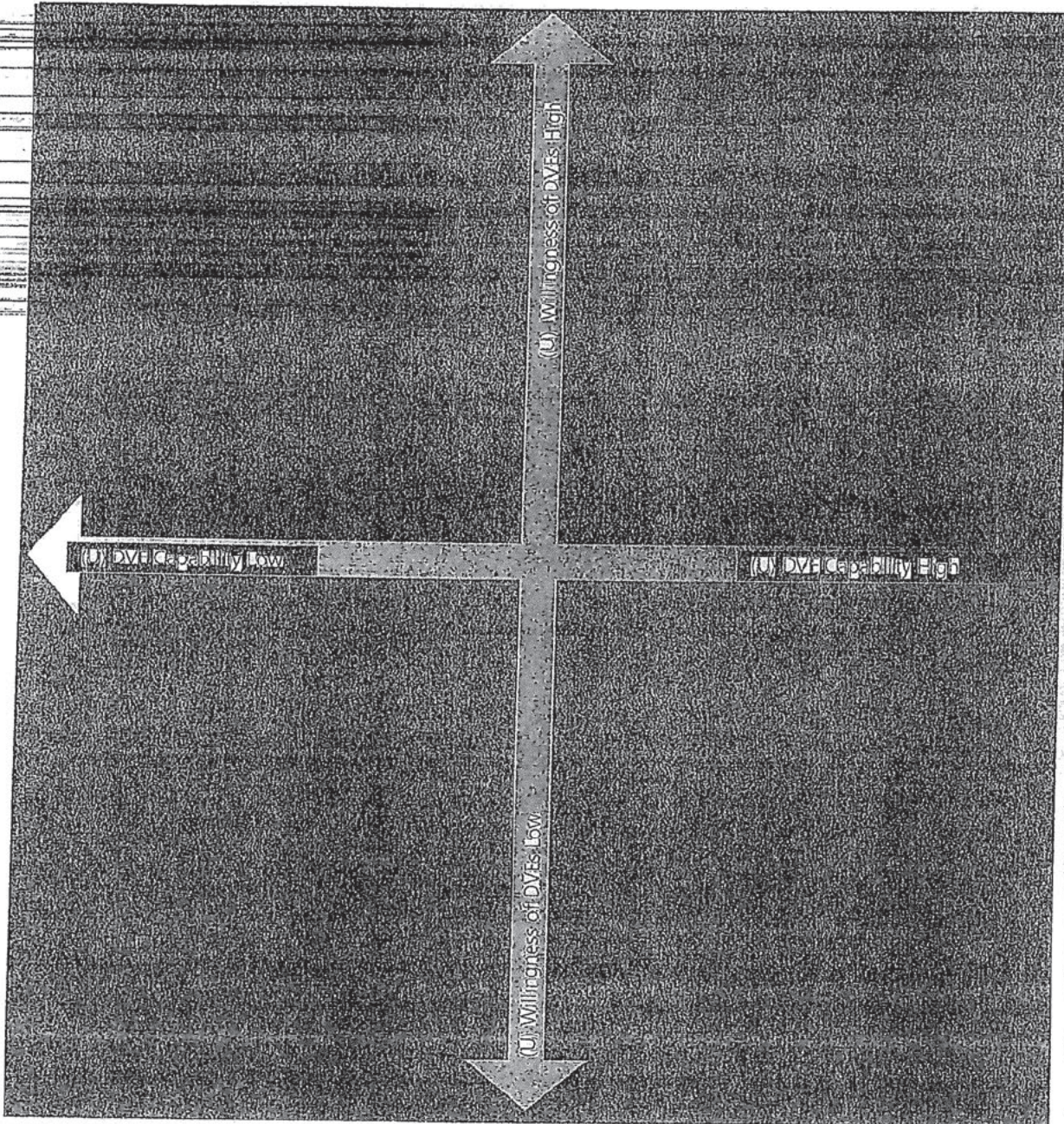
(U) **Medium confidence** generally means the information is credibly sourced and plausible but not of sufficient quality or corroborated sufficiently to warrant a higher level of confidence. Additional reporting or information sources have the potential to increase the FBI's confidence levels or substantively change analytical judgments.

(U) **Low confidence** generally means the information's credibility or plausibility is uncertain, the information is too fragmented or poorly corroborated to make solid analytic inferences, or the reliability of the sources is questionable. Absent additional reporting or information sources, analytical judgments should be considered preliminary in nature.



(U//FOUO) Appendix C: Indicators and Implications for Post-Election DVE Activity

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(U) Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> (U) FBI | Case Information | 5 June 2020 | 31 May 2020 | "[TITLE REDACTED]" | p. 1 | UNCLASSIFIED | UNCLASSIFIED//LAW ENFORCEMENT SENSITIVE.

<sup>2</sup> (U) FBI | Case Information | 5 June 2020 | 31 May 2020 | "[TITLE REDACTED]" | p. 1 | UNCLASSIFIED | UNCLASSIFIED//LAW ENFORCEMENT SENSITIVE.

<sup>3</sup> (U) FBI | Case Information | 2 June 2020 | 2 June 2020 | "[TITLE REDACTED]" | p. 3 | UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY | UNCLASSIFIED//LAW ENFORCEMENT SENSITIVE.

<sup>4</sup> (U) FBI | Case Information | 21 July 2020 | 11 July 2020 | "[TITLE REDACTED]" | p. 1 | UNCLASSIFIED | UNCLASSIFIED.

<sup>5</sup> (U) Online article | Foreign Policy Research Institute | "Election 2020: Russia Cares China Doesn't" | 15 July 2020 | [www.fpri.org/file/election-2020-russia-china/](http://www.fpri.org/file/election-2020-russia-china/) | accessed on 27 July 2020.

<sup>6</sup> (U) Report | US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence | "Report of the Select Committee on Intelligence US Senate on Russian Active Measures Campaigns and Interference in the 2016 US Election, Volume 2: Russia's Use of Social Media with Additional Views" | July 2019 | [intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Reports\\_Volume2.pdf](https://intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Reports_Volume2.pdf) | accessed on 27 July 2020.