HOMEGROWN VIOLENT EXTREMIST

MOBILIZATION INDICATORS

2019 EDITION

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HOMEGROWN VIOLENT EXTREMIST MOBILIZATION INDICATORS

The indicators of violent extremist mobilization described herein are observable behaviors that could help determine whether individuals or groups are preparing to engage in violent extremist activities, such as conducting an attack or traveling overseas to join a foreign terrorist organization. Indicators are grouped by diagnosticity—meaning how clearly we assess the behavior demonstrates an individual's likelihood of engaging in terrorist activity.

The National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) emphasize that many of the indicators described herein may involve constitutionally protected activities and might be insignificant on their own. However, when observed in combination with other suspicious behaviors, these indicators may raise suspicion in a reasonable person and constitute a basis for reporting. Law enforcement action should not be taken solely based on the exercise of constitutionally protected rights, or on the apparent or actual race, ethnicity, national origin or religion of the subject, or on any combination of these factors. Individuals are encouraged to contact law enforcement if, based on these indicators and the situational context, they suspect an individual is mobilizing to violence.

WHY WAS THIS BOOKLET CREATED?

The United States and other Western nations face a heightened threat from homegrown violent extremists (HVEs) heeding the call to violence from foreign terrorist organizations, including the Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham (ISIS), al-Qa'ida, and other groups. In an effort to mitigate future attacks, the initial list of indicators was developed based on a review of information derived from dozens of FBI terrorism investigations, peer-reviewed academic studies, and brainstorming sessions by experts from the Intelligence Community and law enforcement. The indicators are continuously updated based on input from subject matter experts.

The booklet was initially published in 2015, with an updated version published in January 2017. An unclassified version was released in December 2017.

MOBILIZATION INDICATOR CRITERIA

The booklet describes each indicator in terms of four criteria: diagnosticity, category of behavior, observable (by), and time sensitivity.

DIAGNOSTICITY - The extent to which the behavior demonstrates mobilization to violence

GROUP A: **Highly** diagnostic on their own

GROUP B: **Moderately** diagnostic on their own; require one or more other indicators to gain diagnosticity

GROUP C: **Minimally** diagnostic on their own; require several other indicators to gain diagnosticity

CATEGORY OF BEHAVIOR - The type of behavior the indicator typically represents

Preparation: Developing and displaying a readiness to commit a violent act

Motivation: Developing and displaying a mindset oriented toward committing a violent act

Concealment: Hiding violent act-related activities from scrutiny

OBSERVABLE - The people who are most likely to see these activities

TIME SENSITIVITY - The typical amount of time between the occurrence of the behavior and the violent act; these timelines are generalized guidelines and individual cases vary as other factors accelerate and decelerate mobilization

Imminent Concern: Days/hours before violent act

Near-Term Concern: Weeks before violent act

Long-Term Concern: Months or years before violent act

INDICATORS ARE HIGHLY DIAGNOSTIC ON THEIR OWN

1 PREPARING AND DISSEMINATING A MARTYRDOM VIDEO/STATEMENT, LAST WILL

(I.E., FINAL STATEMENT)

OBSERVABLE

BY FAMILY, PEERS, ONLINE CONTACTS, SOCIAL MEDIA USERS

TIME SENSITIVITY

IMMINENT CONCERN

2 SEEKING RELIGIOUS OR POLITICAL JUSTIFICATION FOR A PLANNED VIOLENT ACT

OBSERVABLE

BY FAMILY, PEERS, RELIGIOUS LEADERS, ONLINE CONTACTS, SOCIAL MEDIA USERS

TIME SENSITIVITY

NEAR-TERM CONCERN

3 ATTEMPTING TO MOBILIZE OTHERS TO VIOLENCE, ESPECIALLY FAMILY MEMBERS AND PEERS

OBSERVABLE

BY FAMILY, PEERS, ONLINE CONTACTS

TIME SENSITIVITY

NEAR-TERM CONCERN

4 SEEKING HELP FROM FAMILY, PEERS, OR AUTHORITY FIGURES TO ENABLE TRAVEL TO JOIN TERRORIST GROUPS OVERSEAS

OBSERVABLE

BY FAMILY, PEERS, AUTHORITY FIGURES

TIME SENSITIVITY

NEAR-TERM CONCERN

5 PREPARING TO TRAVEL TO FIGHT WITH OR SUPPORT TERRORIST GROUPS

OBSERVABLE

BY FAMILY, PEERS, TRAVEL AGENTS, LAW ENFORCEMENT, ONLINE CONTACTS

TIME SENSITIVITY

IMMINENT CONCERN

6 COMMUNICATING INTENT TO ENGAGE IN VIOLENT EXTREMIST ACTIVITY; A THREAT WITH JUSTIFICATION FOR ACTION

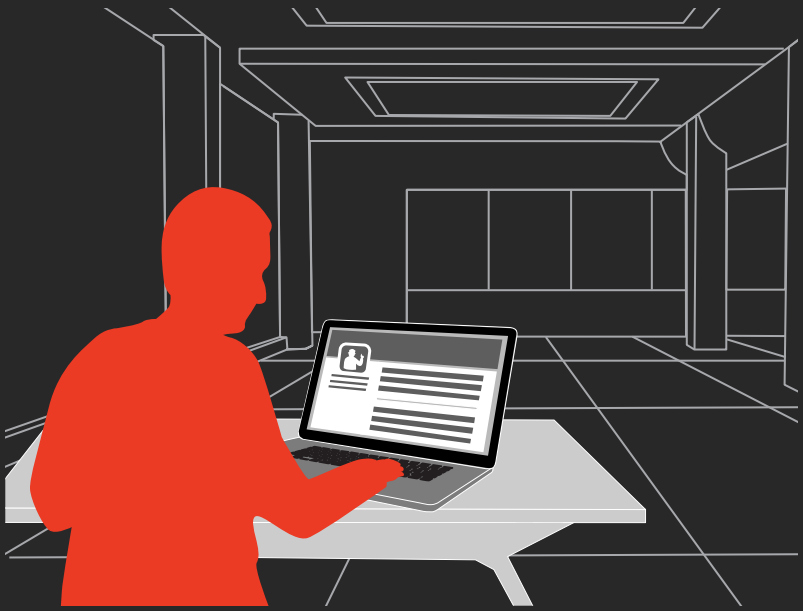
(E.G., SOCIAL MEDIA POST, TWEET, HASHTAG, MANIFESTO)

OBSERVABLE

BY FAMILY, PEERS, EDUCATORS, ONLINE CONTACTS, SOCIAL MEDIA USERS

TIME SENSITIVITY

NEAR-TERM CONCERN



INDICATORS ARE MODERATELY DIAGNOSTIC ON THEIR OWN

7 **Suspiciously obtaining or attempting (illegally or otherwise) to obtain explosive precursors**

Observable by family, peers, sellers, law enforcement

Near-Term Concern

8 **Simulating an attack/assault, or dry run, with focus on local or other real-world targets**

Observable by family, peers, community members, security officers

Near-Term Concern

9 **Surveilling potential targets**

Observable by community members, law enforcement, security officers

Near-Term Concern

10 **Inquiring about jobs that provide sensitive access** (e.g., critical infrastructure, transportation, law enforcement, military, Intelligence Community) **in a suspicious manner**

Observable by family, peers, employers, job recruiters, online contacts

Long-Term Concern

11 **Conducting research for target or tactic selection** (e.g., acquiring maps, blueprints, schematics, technical capabilities, planning and logistics information)

Observable by family, peers, community members, law enforcement

Long-Term Concern

12 **Suspicious sending of financial resources, electronic equipment, or survivalist gear to people or groups overseas**

Observable by family, peers, financial institution employees, material providers/shippers

Long-Term Concern

13 **Receiving unexplained monies from third parties overseas**

Observable by family, peers, travel agents, financial institution employees, sellers, law enforcement

Near-Term Concern

14 **Expressing acceptance of violence as a necessary means to achieve ideological goals** (e.g., communicating desire for revenge, promoting violent extremist narratives, sharing and praising violent extremist videos)

Observable by family, peers, educators, online contacts, social media users

Long-Term Concern

15 **Attempting to radicalize others, especially family members and peers**

Observable by family, peers, law enforcement

Long-Term Concern

16 **Creating or joining a group that promotes violence to address perceived social, political, or ideological grievances**

Observable by family, peers, community members, social media users

Long-Term Concern

17 **Having an acknowledged or implied membership in, or association with violent extremist groups** (e.g., individuals declare they are ISIS on social media, post terrorist symbols—green birds, flags, lions)

Observable by family, peers, law enforcement, online contacts, social media users

Long-Term Concern

18 **Participating in online sites or groups that promote violent extremism**

Observable by family, peers, online contacts, social media users

Long-Term Concern

19 **Communicating directly with violent extremists online**

Observable by family, peers, law enforcement, online contacts

Long-Term Concern

20 **Seeking or claiming relationships with incarcerated or infamous violent extremists**

Observable by family, peers, law enforcement, corrections officials, online contacts

Long-Term Concern

21 **Encouraging or advocating violence toward individuals, military or government officials, law enforcement, or civilian targets**

Observable by family, peers, educators, religious leaders, online contacts

Long-Term Concern

22 **Outbursts or behavior, including violent behavior, or advocacy that results in exclusion or rejection by family or community**

Observable by family, peers, religious community, community members

Long-Term Concern

23 **Producing violent extremist videos, media, and/or messaging**

Observable by family, peers, law enforcement, online contacts, social media users

Near-Term Concern

24 **Expressing desire to travel to conflict zone to fight with or support a terrorist group or idealizing living among other violent extremist groups overseas**

Observable by family, peers, travel agents, law enforcement, online contacts

Long-Term Concern

25 **Engaging in suspicious travel activity** (e.g., unusual purchase of one-way tickets, false excuses for intended travel, use of pass-through hubs, fraudulent application for a new passport)

Observable by family, peers, travel agents, law enforcement, government officials

Near-Term Concern

26 **Employing new or increased use of concealment behavior** (e.g., counter-surveillance techniques, encrypted media apps/software platforms, disposable "burner" phones)

Observable by family, peers, educators, law enforcement

Near-Term Concern

27 **Deleting or manipulating social media or other online accounts to misrepresent location or hide group membership, contacts, or activities in support of violent extremism**

Observable by family, peers, law enforcement, online contacts

Near-Term Concern

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INDICATORS ARE MINIMALLY DIAGNOSTIC ON THEIR OWN

28 **Suspicious building and/or testing of explosives**

Observable by family, peers, neighbors

Imminent Concern

29 **Suspicious or illegal acquisition of weapons and/or ammunition** (e.g., using borrowed or stolen ID to purchase firearm)

Observable by family, peers, financial institution employees, sellers, law enforcement, online contacts

Near-Term Concern

30 **Unusual purchase of military-style tactical equipment other than weapons** (e.g., personal protective equipment, body armor)

Observable by family, peers, financial institution employees, sellers, law enforcement, online contacts

Near-Term Concern

31 **Suspicious, unexplained, or unusual physical or weapons training** (e.g., multiple non-recreational gun range visits) **or attempts to seek technical expertise** (e.g., flight training, electronics, chemical)

Observable by family, peers, financial institution employees, sellers, law enforcement, online contacts

Near-Term Concern

32 **Conducting suspicious financial transactions** (e.g., unusual applications for increase of credit or multiple lines of credit)

Observable by family, peers, travel agents, financial institution employees, sellers, law enforcement

Long-Term Concern

33 **Disposing of personal assets/belongings in an unusual manner** (e.g., selling, trading, pawning, gifting)

Observable by family, peers, law enforcement, online contacts

Imminent Concern

34 **Unusual goodbyes or post-death instructions to family and peers**

Observable by family, peers, online contacts

Imminent Concern

35 **Promoting violent extremist narratives** (e.g., the West is waging war with Islam, it's "us" versus "them," violence is required to defend the identity group)

Observable by family, peers, online contacts, social media users

Long-Term Concern

36 **Engaging in outbursts/fights with family, peers, or authority figures, while advocating violent extremist ideology**

Observable by family, peers, authority figures, law enforcement

Long-Term Concern

37 **Isolating oneself from family and peers, particularly if believed to be associated with violent extremist doctrine or ideology**

Observable by family, peers

Long-Term Concern

38 **Adopting more than one violent extremist ideology**

Observable by family, peers, religious community, online contacts

Long-Term Concern

39 **Rejecting non-violent voices in favor of violent extremist ideologues** (e.g., Anwar Awlaki)

Observable by family, peers, religious community, online contacts, social media users

Long-Term Concern

40 **Dehumanizing people who are not in the identity group** (e.g., non-believers, followers of other religions or ideologies, including other variants of Islam)

Observable by family, peers, educators, religious community, online contacts

Long-Term Concern

41 **Praising past successful or attempted attacks**

Observable by family, peers, law enforcement, online contacts, social media users

Long-Term Concern

42 **Condemning behavior of family and peers based on violent extremist doctrine** (e.g., denouncing lifestyle choices such as clothing, music, religious practices)

Observable by family, peers, law enforcement, online contacts, social media users

Long-Term Concern

43 **Changing vocabulary, style of speech, or behavior to reflect hardened point of view or new sense of purpose associated with violent extremist causes**

Observable by family, peers, religious community, online contacts

Long-Term Concern

44 **Consuming or sharing violent extremist videos, media, and/or messaging, retweeting or linking to violent extremists**

Observable by family, peers, community members, law enforcement, online contacts, social media users

Long-Term Concern

45 **Researching or discussing ways to evade law enforcement**

Observable by family, peers, online contacts

Long-Term Concern

46 **Lying to law enforcement officers/obstructing investigations**

Observable by family, peers, law enforcement

Long-Term Concern

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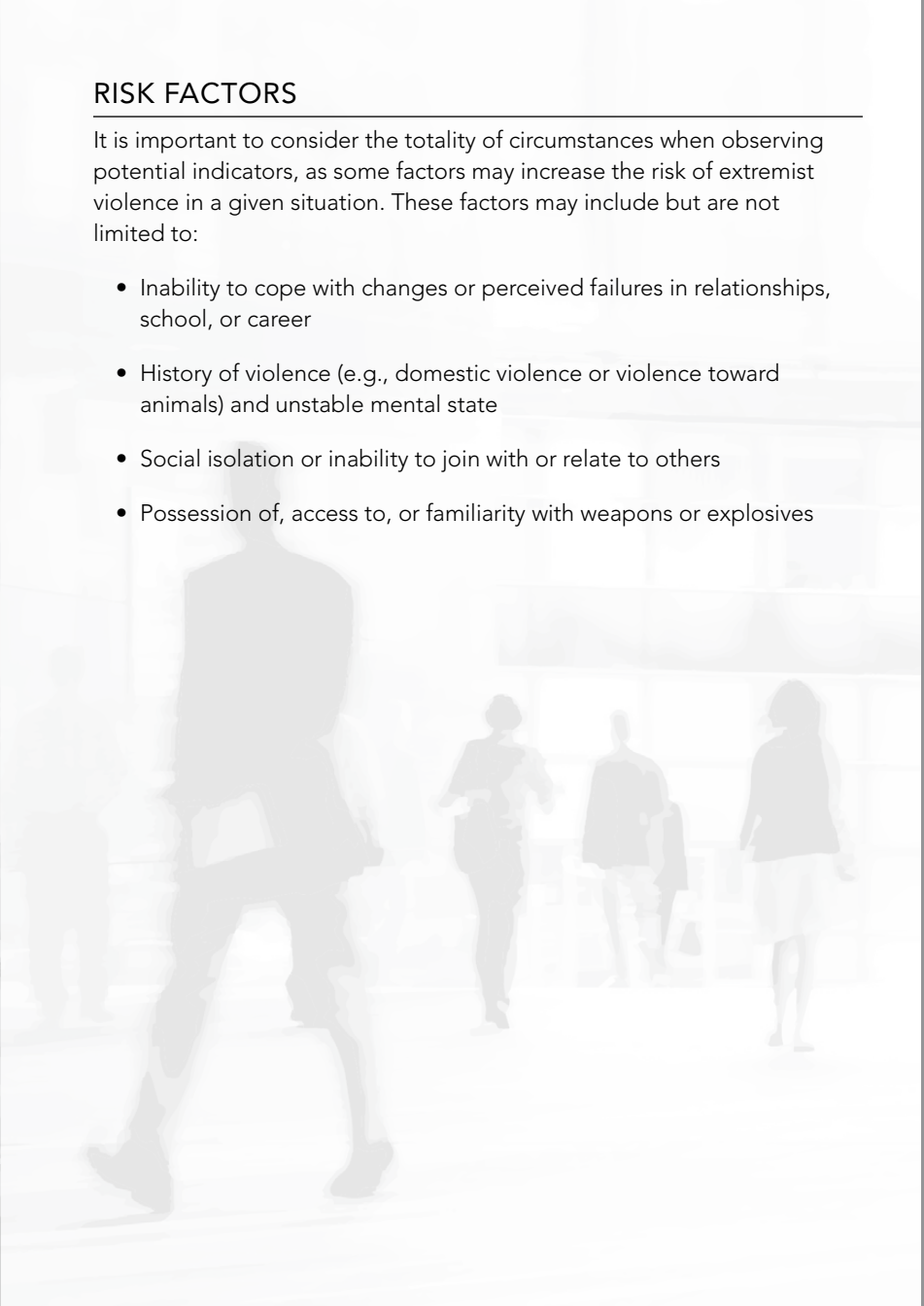
RISK FACTORS

It is important to consider the totality of circumstances when observing potential indicators, as some factors may increase the risk of extremist violence in a given situation. These factors may include but are not limited to:

- Inability to cope with changes or perceived failures in relationships, school, or career
- History of violence (e.g., domestic violence or violence toward animals) and unstable mental state
- Social isolation or inability to join with or relate to others
- Possession of, access to, or familiarity with weapons or explosives



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS A HOMEGROWN VIOLENT EXTREMIST?

A homegrown violent extremist (HVE) is a person of any citizenship who lives or operates primarily in the United States or its territories, and who advocates, engages in, or is preparing to engage in or support terrorist activities in furtherance of a foreign terrorist organization's objectives, but who is acting independently of foreign terrorist direction. Because HVEs are acting to further the goals of a foreign terrorist organization, they are considered foreign intelligence threats under the authorities of the Intelligence Community and domestic public safety entities.

CAN THESE INDICATORS BE APPLIED TO INDIVIDUALS OTHER THAN HOMEGROWN VIOLENT EXTREMISTS?

Certainly, behaviors exist and are noted in this booklet that would be troubling regardless of ideological motivation and may warrant contacting law enforcement. However, this booklet is focused on individuals or groups that are inspired or enabled by foreign terrorist organizations, including but not limited to ISIS, al-Qa'ida, and their affiliates and allies.

WHY CAN'T LAW ENFORCEMENT DO ALL OF THIS ITSELF; WHY INVOLVE THE GENERAL PUBLIC?

We are all in this together. We continue to see that members of the community—such as family members and peers—are often best positioned to witness signs of mobilization to violence. Such community members almost always are the first to detect hints that an individual may be considering violent action in the Homeland or overseas.

INDICATOR PAGE

1. Preparing and disseminating a martyrdom video/statement, last will (i.e., final statement) 4

2. Seeking religious or political justification for a planned violent act 5

3. Attempting to mobilize others to violence, especially family members and peers 6

4. Seeking help from family, peers, or authority figures to enable travel to join terrorist groups overseas..... 7

5. Preparing to travel to fight with or support terrorist groups 8

6. Communicating intent to engage in violent extremist activity; a threat with justification for action (e.g., social media post, tweet, hashtag, manifesto)..... 9

7. Suspiciously obtaining or attempting (illegally or otherwise) to obtain explosive precursors..... 10

8. Simulating an attack/assault, or dry run, with focus on local or other real-world targets..... 10

9. Surveilling potential targets..... 10

10. Inquiring about jobs that provide sensitive access (e.g., critical infrastructure, transportation, law enforcement, military, Intelligence Community) in a suspicious manner..... 10

11. Conducting research for target or tactic selection (e.g., acquiring maps, blueprints, schematics, technical capabilities, planning and logistics information)..... 11

12. Suspicious sending of financial resources, electronic equipment, or survivalist gear to people or groups overseas..... 11

13. Receiving unexplained monies from third parties overseas..... 11

INDICATOR PAGE

14. Expressing acceptance of violence as a necessary means to achieve ideological goals (e.g., communicating desire for revenge, promoting violent extremist narratives, sharing and praising violent extremist videos) 12

15. Attempting to radicalize others, especially family members and peers 12

16. Creating or joining a group that promotes violence to address perceived social, political, or ideological grievances 12

17. Having an acknowledged or implied membership in, or association with violent extremist groups (e.g., individuals declare they are ISIS on social media, post terrorist symbols—green birds, flags, lions) 12

18. Participating in online sites or groups that promote violent extremism 13

19. Communicating directly with violent extremists online 13

20. Seeking or claiming relationships with incarcerated or infamous violent extremists 13

21. Encouraging or advocating violence toward individuals, military or government officials, law enforcement, or civilian targets 13

22. Outbursts or behavior, including violent behavior, or advocacy that results in exclusion or rejection by family or community 14

23. Producing violent extremist videos, media, and/or messaging 14

24. Expressing desire to travel to conflict zone to fight with or support a terrorist group or idealizing living among other violent extremist groups overseas 14

INDICATOR PAGE

25. Engaging in suspicious travel activity (e.g., unusual purchase of one-way tickets, false excuses for intended travel, use of pass-through hubs, fraudulent application for a new passport).....15

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32. Conducting suspicious financial transactions (e.g., unusual applications for increase of credit or multiple lines of credit).....17

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35. Promoting violent extremist narratives (e.g., the West is waging war with Islam, it's "us" versus "them," violence is required to defend the identity group) 18

36. Engaging in outbursts/fights with family, peers, or authority figures, while advocating violent extremist ideology 18

37. Isolating oneself from family and peers, particularly if believed to be associated with violent extremist doctrine or ideology 18

38. Adopting more than one violent extremist ideology 18

39. Rejecting non-violent voices in favor of violent extremist ideologues (e.g., Anwar Awlaki) 19

40. Dehumanizing people who are not in the identity group (e.g., non-believers, followers of other religions or ideologies, including other variants of Islam) 19

41. Praising past successful or attempted attacks 19

42. Condemning behavior of family and peers based on violent extremist doctrine (e.g., denouncing lifestyle choices such as clothing, music, religious practices) 19

43. Changing vocabulary, style of speech, or behavior to reflect hardened point of view or new sense of purpose associated with violent extremist causes 20

44. Consuming or sharing violent extremist videos, media, and/or messaging, retweeting or linking to violent extremists 20

45. Researching or discussing ways to evade law enforcement 20

46. Lying to law enforcement officers/obstructing investigations 20

NOTES

Individuals are strongly encouraged to contact their local FBI office by telephone or submit an online tip to the FBI at **https://tips.fbi.gov** if, based on these indicators and the situational context, they suspect an individual is mobilizing to violence.

In case of an emergency, please call 9-1-1.

WWW.FBI.GOV WWW.NCTC.GOV WWW.DHS.GOV

REFERENCE CARD

HOMEGROWN VIOLENT EXTREMIST MOBILIZATION INDICATORS 2019

1. Preparing and disseminating a martyrdom video/statement, last will (i.e., final statement)
2. Seeking religious or political justification for a planned violent act
3. Attempting to mobilize others to violence, especially family members and peers
4. Seeking help from family, peers, or authority figures to enable travel to join terrorist groups overseas
5. Preparing to travel to fight with or support terrorist groups
6. Communicating intent to engage in violent extremist activity; a threat with justification for action (e.g., social media post, tweet, hashtag, manifesto)
7. Suspiciously obtaining or attempting (illegally or otherwise) to obtain explosive precursors
8. Simulating an attack/assault, or dry run, with focus on local or other real-world targets
9. Surveilling potential targets
10. Inquiring about jobs that provide sensitive access (e.g., critical infrastructure, transportation, law enforcement, military, Intelligence Community) in a suspicious manner
11. Conducting research for target or tactic selection (e.g., acquiring maps, blueprints, schematics, technical capabilities, planning and logistics information)
12. Suspicious sending of financial resources, electronic equipment, or survivalist gear to people or groups overseas
13. Receiving unexplained monies from third parties overseas
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16. Creating or joining a group that promotes violence to address perceived social, political, or ideological grievances
17. Having an acknowledged or implied membership in or association with violent extremist groups (e.g., individuals declare they are ISIS on social media, post terrorist symbols—green birds, flags, lions)
18. Participating in online sites or groups that promote violent extremism
19. Communicating directly with violent extremists online
20. Seeking or claiming relationships with incarcerated or infamous violent extremists
21. Encouraging or advocating violence toward individuals, military or government officials, law enforcement, or civilian targets
22. Outbursts or behavior, including violent behavior, or advocacy that results in exclusion or rejection by family or community
23. Producing violent extremist videos, media, and/or messaging

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MOBILIZATION INDICATORS 2019

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26. Employing new or increased use of concealment behavior (e.g., counter-surveillance techniques, encrypted media apps/software platforms, disposable "burner" phones)
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32. Conducting suspicious financial transactions (e.g., unusual applications for increase of credit or multiple lines of credit)
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34. Unusual goodbyes or post-death instructions to family and peers
35. Promoting violent extremist narratives (e.g., the West is waging war with Islam, it's "us" versus "them," violence is required to defend the identity group)
36. Engaging in outbursts/fights with family, peers, or authority figures, while advocating violent extremist ideology
37. Isolating oneself from family and peers, particularly if believed to be associated with violent extremist doctrine or ideology
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