

Threat of Terrorism and Hate Crimes Against Jewish Communities in the United States

While faith-based communities across the country face varying levels of discrimination, there is a persistent threat of violence and hate crimes¹ against Jewish communities, primarily by domestic violent extremists². State and local law enforcement can build strong and ongoing working relationships with Jewish community leaders and members to help identify, mitigate, and respond to anti-Semitic terrorist attacks and hate crimes.

THREAT ACTORS KNOWN TO TARGET JEWISH

COMMUNITIES: Domestic actors, specifically violent extremists with racial biases and motives, pose a security threat to Jewish communities. The threat may also manifest in ideologically-motivated workplace violence; anti-Semitic harassment; threatening incidents that target Jewish schools, community centers and synagogues; and a significant number of assaults and hate crimes at K-12 schools and on college campuses that continue to take place.

LETHAL ATTACKS:

- In January 2020, a New York-based man was charged with federal hate crimes after allegedly entering a rabbi's home in Monsey, New York, fatally wounding one person after attacking the rabbi and assembled congregants who had gathered for Hanukkah. The assailant was charged with five counts of willfully causing bodily injury to, and attempting to kill five victims because of their religion, and five counts of obstructing the free exercise of religion in an attempt to kill.

SCOPE: This product provides awareness of and suggestions for mitigating terrorist threats and hate crimes against Jewish communities. Law enforcement can use the following information as tools to identify terrorist threats, evidence of hate crimes, and the individuals or groups committing these crimes. Some images, speech, and activities that include anti-Semitic messages are First Amendment-protected.

INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM NEXUS:

International terrorist groups have promoted anti-Semitic messaging for decades. In January 2020, ISIS released a message declaring war on Jews. Their stated goal is to “liberate Jerusalem” and “to start a new phase, which is fighting the Jews and regaining what they have taken from Muslims.” Furthermore, international terrorist subjects have targeted Jewish Americans as part of their attack plots in recent years.



ISIS message posted in Hebrew

¹ A traditional criminal offense like murder, arson, or vandalism with an added element of bias. For the purposes of collecting statistics, the FBI has defined a hate crime as a “criminal offense against a person or property motivated in whole or in part by an offender’s bias against a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity/national origin, gender, or gender identity.” Hate itself is not a crime—and the FBI is mindful of protecting freedom of speech and other civil liberties.

² Individuals based and operating entirely within the United States or its territories without direction or inspiration from a foreign terrorist group or other foreign power who seek to further political or social goals, wholly or in part, through unlawful acts of force or violence. The mere advocacy of political or social positions, political activism, use of strong rhetoric, or generalized philosophical embrace of violent tactics may not constitute extremism, and may be constitutionally protected.



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- In December 2019, two New Jersey-based individuals committed an attack against a kosher market in Jersey City killing three persons inside. Immediately before the attack, the assailants killed a police officer. Police officers killed the assailants in a shootout.
- In March 2019, a California-based man set fire to a mosque in Escondido and in April, he attacked a synagogue in Poway killing one person and injuring three other congregants. The defendant cited the Pittsburgh Tree of Life Synagogue shooting³ as an inspiration for his actions. In May, the defendant was charged with 109 federal hate crime violations against two religious facilities.

OTHER DOMESTIC INCIDENTS:

- In April 2020, a man allegedly placed a homemade incendiary device and attempted to ignite a fire near the entrance of a Jewish assisted living facility in Boston, located within a short distance of three Jewish temples, a Jewish private school, and a Jewish community center. The man was charged with two counts of attempted arson.
- In January 2020, a man was charged for making numerous threatening telephone calls to an employee of a synagogue in Owings Mills, Maryland, threatening to kill members of the synagogue's congregation with firearms, explosives, and by burning the synagogue down.

CONSIDERATIONS: Law enforcement and Jewish community members can build a culture of safety and security by working together and developing relationships. Strong partnerships are critical to preventing terrorism and hate crimes.

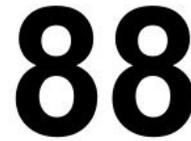
- Faith-based communities want to feel acknowledged, understood, and safe.
- Some images, speech, and activities that include anti-Semitic messages are First Amendment-protected speech; in general, to qualify as a hate crime, there must be an underlying criminal activity or credible threat of violence. Officers should be familiar with the particular elements of hate crimes in their jurisdiction.
- Become familiar with the Jewish communities in your area of responsibility, including their leaders, facilities, and practices.
- Build ongoing and active working relationships with Jewish communities, their leaders, and the security personnel they employ.
- As permitted, meet Jewish community members at social hours, receptions, meals, and other functions, typically held on Fridays and Saturdays, to establish rapport.
- Establish points of contact for the Jewish communities within your area of responsibility and share information on the current threat environment, and security preparedness techniques and best practices.

³ In October 2018, a man killed 11 worshippers and wounded six persons, among them four responding law enforcement officers, at a synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.



ANTI-SEMITIC MESSAGING OR IMAGES may be indicators of a potential crime or that an individual is on the pathway to violence.

SYMBOLS



Numerical code for "Heil Hitler"

GRAFFITI



Credit: Times of Israel, 8 April 2020



Credit: The Monitor; 26 May 2020

CARTOONS



"Pepe the Frog"



"Happy Merchant"

JEWISH MOVEMENTS: Judaism today consists of various movements in the United States with a range of cultural practices and observances. All movements and segments within Judaism face challenges of balancing religious and cultural traditions of openness, inclusiveness, and welcoming strangers with the need to provide a safe and secure space for worship, life-cycle activities, and cultural and community services. Each movement, segment, and even individual congregation has its own perspective on how to achieve that balance. Police should consult with Jewish congregations and communities to understand their specific concerns and particular threats. A tailored approach will also help police understand a community's communication preferences, and restrictions or requirements of observance, which may inform how to best work with that community.

Damage to Religious Property, Church Arson Prevention Act, 18 U.S.C. § 247 prohibits the intentional defacement, damage, or destruction of religious real property because of the religious nature of the property, where the crime affects interstate or foreign commerce, or because of the race, color, or ethnic characteristics of the people associated with the property. The statute also criminalizes the intentional obstruction by force, or threat of force, of any person in the enjoyment of that person's free exercise of religious beliefs.



JEWISH COMMUNITY FACILITIES consist of different buildings and institutions, from single-use to large multi-functional facilities, to numerous facilities across several city blocks with fences, gates, and security. Some Jewish communities are sole occupants, some rent space from non-Jewish organizations, and some rent out space to non-Jewish community members. These facilities often have gyms, community halls, day care services, pre-schools, grade schools, and may include houses of worship or synagogues.

JEWISH COMMUNITY EVENTS: In addition to daily activities, such as prayer services, community centers and synagogues also hold special events, to include a variety of holidays and other observances (High Holy Days, Purim, Bat/Bar Mitzvahs, weddings). Some of these activities may be open to the public and held in the street. Public safety personnel are encouraged to obtain a schedule of events from their local Jewish communities.

RESOURCES:

- **DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE: HATE CRIMES** www.justice.gov/hatecrimes
- **FBI: CONFRONT THE RISE IN ANTI-SEMITIC DOMESTIC TERRORISM**
www.fbi.gov/news/testimony/confronting-the-rise-in-anti-semitic-domestic-terrorism
- **INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM (ICS)** is a management system designed to enable effective and efficient domestic incident management by integrating personnel policies, procedures, facilities, and equipment into a common organizational structure.
www.fema.gov/incident-command-system-resources
- **JOINT TERRORISM TASK FORCE (JTTF)** are cells of highly trained and locally based investigators, analysts, linguists, SWAT experts, and other specialists from dozens of US law enforcement and intelligence agencies. www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field
- **STATE OF NEW JERSEY OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND PREPAREDNESS: WHITE SUPREMACIST EXTREMIST IMAGERY**
<https://www.njhomelandsecurity.gov/analysis/white-supremacist-extremist-imagery>
- **STATE AND MAJOR URBAN FUSION CENTERS** empower frontline law enforcement, public safety, fire service, emergency response, public health, and private-sector security personnel to lawfully gather and share threat-related information.
<https://www.dhs.gov/fusion-center-locations-and-contact-information>





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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ADDITIONAL COMMENTS, SUGGESTIONS, OR QUESTIONS.

WHAT TOPICS DO YOU RECOMMEND?

