

Recognizing Possible Terrorist 911 Calls: Indicators and Considerations for an Effective Response

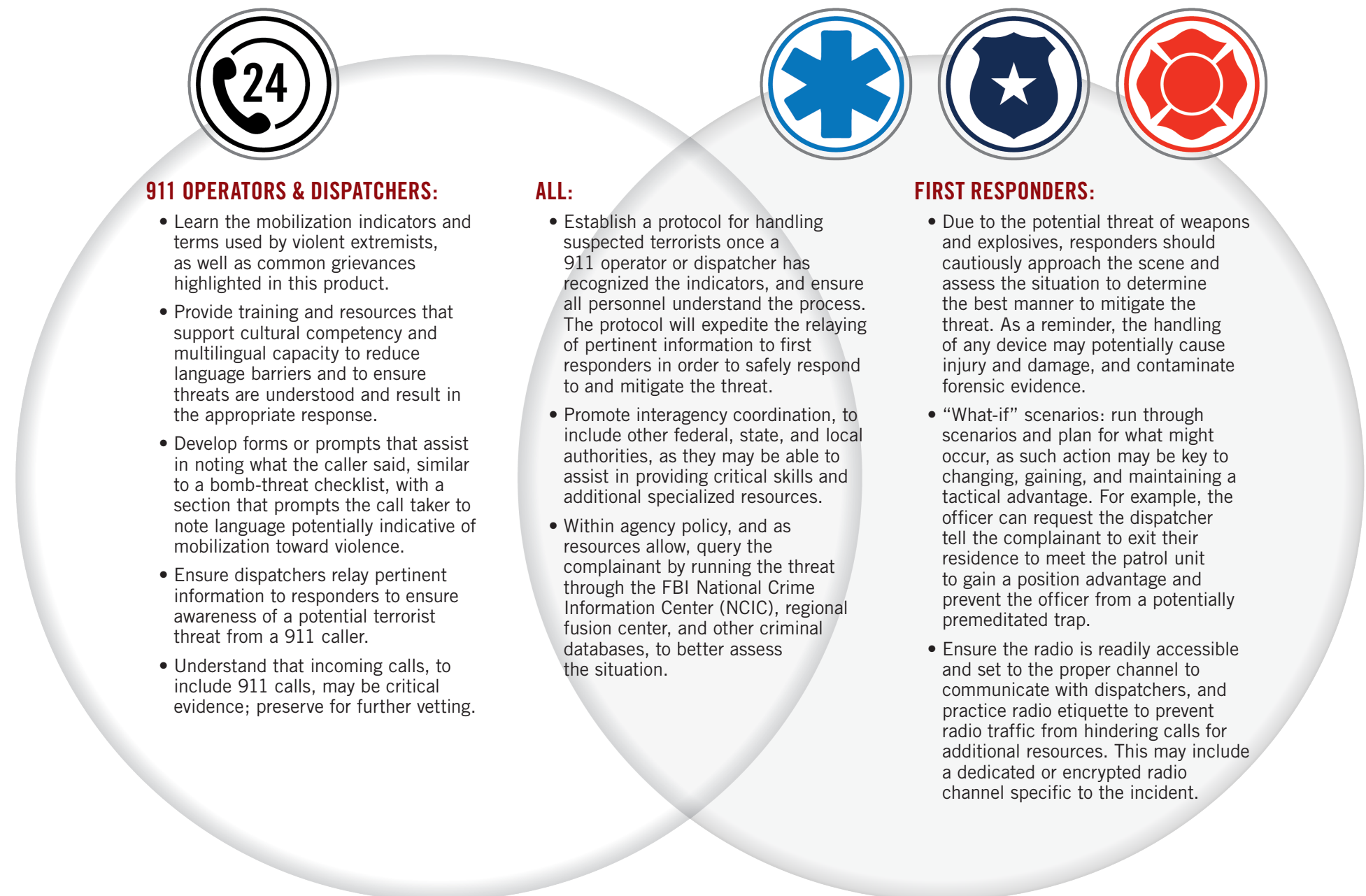
In addition to martyrdom videos, manifestos, and social media posts, terrorists have used 911 calls to announce their allegiance to terrorist groups, highlighting grievances, and using their perceived ideology to justify their violent acts. Moreover, terrorists have targeted first responders, and may even call 911 to lure a target to a specific location for an attack, exploiting the requirement for first responders to respond quickly to a call for service whenever and wherever required. 911 operators and dispatchers familiarizing themselves with mobilization indicators and terms that terrorists have historically used may better position them to identify luring tactics, recognize a potential terrorist, and provide intelligence and warning to first responders.

SCOPE: This product assists 911 operators and dispatchers, as well as first responders, who may have limited terrorism training, in understanding indicators and implementing proactive measures if a potential terrorist places a call to 911 before or during an attack. This information is a starting point to encourage stakeholders to collaborate and seek further guidance, resources, and authorities.

- In January 2019, an Arizona-based man called 911 twice and stated that he wanted to speak with a law enforcement officer in person. During a second 911 call, the man declared his allegiance to ISIS and said he would "...like to do something in protest for, uhh, the people suffering in Palestine and in the Middle East." After beginning a conversation with the responding officer, the man began throwing rocks, then brandished a knife, and advanced toward the officer. The officer ordered him to cease and repeated commands for him to drop his weapon. After he ignored the commands, the officer discharged his firearm, incapacitating him. Subsequently, the man was taken into custody by the officer and is now facing aggravated assault and terrorism charges.
- In June 2016, a Florida-based man called 911 during his attack at a nightclub, during which he killed 49 and injured at least 50 others. When asked his name by the 911 operator, the man replied, "My name is, I pledge of allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi of the Islamic State." While speaking with a police negotiator a short time later, he said, "Tell America to stop bombing Syria and Iraq; they're killing a lot of innocent people." Authorities shot and killed the subject during the attack.

PUBLIC SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: A suspected terrorist who calls 911 may pose an unknown threat to the public as well as to first responders, for example an active shooter, IED, hostage situation, knife attack, or a vehicle-ramming attack. To mitigate the threat, 911 call centers and first responders are encouraged to integrate the considerations located in the following graphic into their security measures and incident-response plans:

NOTE: Terrorist tactics are constantly evolving, asymmetrical, and often do not fit traditional 911 operators' or dispatchers' response protocols and scripts. 911 centers are encouraged to provide employees with CT training and scenarios that enrich critical thinking skills. The employees should also participate with first responders during CT training events and exercises to better understand the roles, missions, and capabilities.



NOTICE: This product was developed by the Joint Counterterrorism Assessment Team (JCAT), which is a collaboration by NCTC, DHS, the FBI, and state, local, tribal, and territorial government personnel to improve information sharing and enhance public safety. The product promotes coordination among intergovernmental authorities and the private sector in identifying, preventing, and responding to terrorist activities. Consider the enclosed information within the context of existing laws, authorities, agreements, policies or procedures. For additional information contact us at JCAT@NCTC.GOV.

Recognizing Possible Terrorist 911 Calls: Indicators and Considerations for an Effective Response *(continued)*

AWARENESS OF THE INFORMATION YOU MAY POSSESS: In addition to receiving, prioritizing, providing instructions on life-saving emergency medical interventions, and dispatching emergency personnel, 911 operators and dispatchers are responsible for helping callers remain calm enough to provide the pertinent information that first responders need to understand the full scope of the situation. When 911 operators and dispatchers gather, process, and relay a caller's allegiance, grievance, motivation, and warning behaviors, first responders will have greater situational awareness when they arrive on scene. To assist in this process, the following is a generalized, nonexhaustive list of allegiances, grievances, and terms that terrorists have used before and during an attack. The list facilitates the evaluation of a potential threat given the totality of circumstances.

IMPORTANT: Some terms are religious in nature, have multiple meanings, are widely used around the world, and may not indicate that someone is a terrorist. Call takers should evaluate the use of this language in the context of what the caller is communicating, as no single behavior is predictive of targeted violence.

ALLEGIANCE: Callers may pledge allegiance to terrorist groups, including ISIS, al-Qa'ida, al-Shabaab, HAMAS, or Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, so the group may claim credit. They may also mention ideologues who advocate violence, for example Osama bin Laden, Anwar al-Aulaqi, Abdullah Azzam, Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman, Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, and Shaikh Abdullah al-Faisal. Terrorists who have pledged their allegiance to foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs) have also used the following phrases before or during a terrorist attack:

- I give bay'ah (allegiance) to amir ul Mu'mineen (the leader of the believers).
- I pledge allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi of the Islamic State.
- I owe my allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.

GRIEVANCES: In addition to pledging allegiance to a terrorist group before an attack, terrorists also desire to express their grievances. There are generally a limited number of motives for targeted violence:

- Quest for justice (as defined by the offender).
- Revenge for a perceived injury or grievance.
- Desire for notoriety or recognition.
- Desire to solve a problem that is perceived to be unbearable.
- Desire to kill or be killed.

In both martyrdom videos and 911 calls, terrorists have claimed their attacks were justified because of one or more grievances. Terrorists have expressed perceptions that:

- America is at war with Islam.
- America supports Israel, and helps to starve and oppress Palestinians.
- America bombs Muslim countries like Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Syria (Sham).
- America kills Muslim women and children.
- America invaded or forced democracy on Iraq and Afghanistan.

- The airstrike that killed _____ triggered this.
- America supports tyrannical—or taghut (idolatry, paganism)—governments in the Middle East.

Terrorists often place the blame on the people of a country for their attack. They will claim the citizens are responsible for their elected government which is oppressing Muslims around the world. Terrorists may state that they are simply defending their own people, righteous in their actions, and are “soldiers of Allah (God).”

OTHER TERMS AND PHRASES: Terrorists have used the following terms and phrases before an attack. The list is not exhaustive. The use of the terms and phrases does not signify that a caller is threatening violence. They are presented to assist 911 operators and dispatchers in evaluating the context of a call:

- **Allahu Akbar!** – God is the Greatest!
- **al-Qa'ida** and their associated branches, for example al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).
- **Ash-Sham** – Refers to the area of the Levant, typically understood as Lebanon, Syria, and parts of Israel, Jordan, and the West Bank.
- **Bay'ah or bay'at** – An oath of allegiance or loyalty to a ruler or caliph (leader).
- **Bismallah, al-Rahman, al-Rahim** – Translates as “In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.” The phrase is sometimes used as an invocation before embarking on a significant act or undertaking. Terrorists have used the term at the beginning of end-of-life preparations.
- **Caliph** – Successor; leader; used by violent extremist groups who seek to reestablish their Islamic state.
- **Caliphate** – An Islamic state ruled by caliph. May also refer to ISIS.
- **Crusaders** – Reference to Christians, and generally America and the West, to include Europe.
- **Dabiq** – Online magazine affiliated with ISIS.
- **Dar al-harb** – House of war; often cited as the West, or non-Islamic area; “Abode of war,” non-Muslim territory. Implies an area where “Muslims are not able to practice their religion freely.”
- **Dar al-kufr** – Land of the infidel or the West.
- **Dawla** – State or dynasty. May also refer to ISIS.
- **Die in your rage!** – A popular terrorist taunt to the West, preceding and following terrorist attacks.
- **Establish the sharia** – Terrorist organizations seek to establish sharia around the world.
- **Green Birds** – Belief that a martyr's soul is kept in the heart of a green bird to fly around in paradise.
- **Haram** – Forbidden or sinful under sharia and punishable.
- **Infidel** – Nonbeliever, non-Muslim, atheist. Terrorists may use the term as justification for targeting individuals.

- **Inspire** – Online magazine affiliated with AQAP.
- **Islamic State in Iraq/Syria (ISIS)** and their associated branches, for example ISIS-Khorasan, ISIS-Sinai.
- **Jannah/Jannat al-Firdous** – Highest level of paradise. If a caller speaks about going to paradise, that may be an indicator of his or her intentions.
- **Jihad/Jihad Fi Sabillah** – Striving or exertion for a noble cause. FTOs utilize the phrase to justify violence in defense of their interpretation of Islam.
- **Kafir/kaafir (singular), kufaar/kuffar (plural)** – Nonbeliever, non-Muslim, atheist. Terrorists may use the term as justification for targeting individuals.
- **Khalif or Khalifah** – Successor or leader; used by violent extremist groups who seek to re-establish their Islamic state.
- **Lions of Tawhid** (belief in Allah and no other) – Common reference for ISIS fighters.
- **Mujahid** – Muslim martyr. If a 911 caller self-identifies with this term, the individual may be planning to carry out an attack.
- **Qisas** – The principle of equal retaliation.
- **Rumiyah** – Online magazine affiliated with ISIS.
- **Shahid** – A martyr. If a 911 caller self-identifies with this term, the individual may be planning to carry out an attack.
- **Sham** – Refers to Syria.
- **Sharia** – The law of Allah (not manmade laws); that governs all aspects of life.
- **Shirk** – Worship of anyone or anything aside from Allah; Islamic concept of the sin of polytheism and idolatry. Those guilty of this sin will not see paradise when they die, according to strict interpretations of Islam; this concept is embraced by terrorist groups. Opposite of tawhid (belief in Allah and no other).
- **Soldier of Allah** – One who is engaged in jihad or is a martyr. If a 911 caller self-identifies with one of these terms, the individual may be planning to carry out an attack.
- **Tawhid** – Belief in Allah and no other (this encompasses everything for Islamic terrorists). Terrorist groups have used this in reference that one is either with ISIS or is not.

RESOURCES: HOMEGROWN VIOLENT EXTREMIST MOBILIZATION INDICATORS (2019 EDITION) is available at https://www.dni.gov/files/NCTC/documents/news_documents/NCTC-FBI-DHS-HVE-Mobilization-Indicators-Booklet-2019.pdf



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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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WHAT TOPICS DO YOU RECOMMEND?
