

Written Statement for

U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs
Subcommittee on Border Management, Federal Workforce and Regulatory Affairs

Terrorist Threats to International Sporting Events: A look at Tactics, Threat Actors, and Targets

By Gina Ligon,
Director of NCITE, the National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center

10 June 2025

Written testimony to be presented before the Senate Subcommittee on Border Management, Federal Workforce and Regulatory Affairs for a hearing entitled “Match Ready: Oversight of the Federal Government’s Border Management and Personnel Readiness Efforts for the Decade of Sports” on Tuesday, June 10, 2025.

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Lankford, Ranking Member Fetterman, distinguished members. It is a privilege to be invited to speak about protecting major international events in the United States.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.

In my 20 years of researching terrorist organizations and the last five years of leading NCITE, the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Academic Center of Excellence for Counterterrorism Research at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, I draw three conclusions about the nature of national security threats during the upcoming global sporting events hosted in the United States.

1. **These high-profile events will afford new patterns of malevolent innovation in terrorists' tactics**, including but not limited to the use of new commercial off the shelf technology to enhance IED tactics and the intersection of frontier technologies to enhance the capabilities of unmanned aerial systems.
2. **The terrorist actors themselves are both familiar and new**, and our expertise lies in understanding which ones will see the upcoming 2026 FIFA World Cup and 2028 L.A. Olympics as attractive attack targets, including jihadist terrorist organizations (e.g., ISIS), state-sponsored extremists, newly designated cartel terrorist organizations, lone actors with grievances, and novel nihilistic violent extremist networks.
3. When it comes to preventing these threats from materializing on U.S. soil, **DHS is poised to lead in security due to its functional structure, partnerships, and research arm**, but there are important decisions for this committee to consider to ensure that DHS maintains this competitive advantage against a determined, innovative, and complex set of adversaries.

Global Sporting Events and Terrorism

Large-scale sporting events have historically been targets of terrorism. Here in the United States, a lone actor detonated a pipe bomb in Centennial Olympic Park at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. Then there was the thwarted attack on the 1998 FIFA World Cup in Paris, where joint security operations across five countries led to the detainment or arrest of over 100 members of the terrorist organization, Algerian Armed Islamic Group. The planned attack, backed by Osama bin Laden, included bombing a stadium, hotels housing western teams, and hijacking an aircraft with the intent to crash it into a nuclear power station. And harkening back to perhaps the most notorious of attacks at global sporting events, a planner of the 1972 Munich Olympics attack described recognizing "that sport is the modern religion of the Western world... so we decided to use their Olympics, the most sacred ceremony of this religion, to make the world pay attention to us."¹

Terrorists' intent to attack global sporting events underscores the importance of why we are here today: to discuss the terrorist threat landscape and DHS's role in securing the 2026 FIFA World Cup and 2028 L.A. Olympics.

These events offer attractive, high visibility, soft targets for terrorists to increase the impact of their attacks. While the venues themselves can be at risk, past attacks show that the surrounding areas are also vulnerable. For example, the 1992 Barcelona Olympics attracted an arson attack on a hotel near the Olympic Village believed to have been perpetrated by the Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), a Basque separatist group.² Suicide bombers affiliated with the Islamic State were drawn to a 2015 football match in France, simultaneously attacking multiple venue-adjacent targets such as a theater and restaurants.³

While global sporting events entice a wide variety of threat actors, other mass gatherings with global audiences are also enduring targets. Earlier this year, an attack inspired by the nihilistic violent extremist online network 764 was thwarted hours before an attack on a Lady Gaga concert in Brazil.⁴ NCITE has compiled two tables in the appendices to illustrate the diversity of threat actors, tactics, and targets associated with harming culturally significant events with global audiences.⁵

Terrorist Tactics to Attack Global Sporting Events

America woke up on New Year's Day this year to news of a terrible act of violence in an iconic city – 14 people killed and dozens more injured in a brazen attack on Bourbon Street in New Orleans. It's a place known for crowds, revelry, and major sporting events. The Super Bowl was to occur a month later in the same place, about a mile from the attack scene.

Beyond what the news reported about the threat actor – a Texas-based, U.S. Army veteran-turned-Islamic State sympathizer⁶ – what stood out about the event were the tactics he used. The attacker wore surreptitiously designed glasses with livestream and AI capabilities to film the attack scene beforehand.⁷ Further, using a ride-sharing app with little in the way to render accountability, he weaponized an electric F-150 truck – which, by design, is a heavier vehicle and accelerates faster than its fossil fuel counterpart.⁸ Then, the attacker used a firearm and staged improvised explosive devices at the scene showing intent of a multi-pronged attack.

This Islamic State-inspired attack had key elements that should be taken into consideration when anticipating terrorist threats to other crowded American spaces. First, mirroring past terrorist attacks, the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and vehicle ramming are at the same time both old and new tactics. Second, traditional suspicious activity indicators of tactics (e.g., surveillance of attack location) were obscured via the use of new technology that afforded clandestine operational planning and practice. Finally, the accessibility of the technology used to plan and carry out this attack allowed for efficient execution. Similarly to the recent vehicle ramming in Liverpool⁹, the threats we observed in the New Orleans attack remain a very real concern that needs significant planning and resourcing given the spread of crowds before, during, and after these events. Before turning to anticipated tactics that may be employed in upcoming U.S. global sporting events, I will review the variety of methods terrorists have used to attack such events historically.

Traditional Terrorist Tactics Used in Past Attacks. As seen in Boulder on June 1, the most likely terrorist attack tools are not sophisticated, such as homemade explosive devices, edged weapons attacks, armed assaults, assassinations, hostage taking, and vehicle ramming. While rudimentary in weapon choice, coordinated attacks like the 2015 attack in Paris on a football stadium and two other venues by members of the Islamic State still warrant attention as they are lethal threats to public safety and national security.¹⁰ The group also launched broad propaganda campaigns to encourage using these methods in attacking sporting events, such as the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia,¹¹ the 2024 Cricket World Cup in New York,¹² and the 2024 Olympic games in Paris.¹³ A thwarted plot on a soccer event at the 2024 Paris Olympics inspired by the Islamic State¹⁴ showcases the spread of these types of tactics to attack large events. A 2024 Election Day plot – two Oklahoma-based Afghan nationals had planned to use AK-47-style rifles in an Islamic State-inspired terrorist attack¹⁵ – underscores that these basic, rudimentary tactics are still central elements of terrorist incidents in the U.S. They remain lethal, available, and reliable instruments for individuals and groups intent on committing violent acts of terrorism.

Terrorist Novel Tactics that May Be Used in Upcoming Attacks. It is important to acknowledge that even enduring terrorist tactics evolve and become *novel* tactics. For instance, while terrorists have relied on explosives for over a century, NCITE research indicates that terrorists' IED attacks are changing in

notable ways. Between 2009 and 2024, NCITE counted more than 100 ideologically motivated incidents involving IEDs.¹⁶ NCITE research identified 10 priority areas around which concentrated research and development can best support the homeland counter-IED community in staying ahead of this dynamic threat space. These include soft target protection, standoff and checkpoint detection, and information management and sharing.¹⁷ Emerging novel threats in terrorist use of IEDs include leveraging unmanned systems, additive manufacturing, and other commercial off the shelf (COTS) technology to develop or employ destructive devices.

COTS technology is used in launching IEDs, but also in other aspects of terrorist organizational behavior.¹⁸ Lower barriers to entry for both skilled and unskilled users widen the number and types of individuals who could use them to deploy an attack. Because a goal inherent in terrorism is tactical surprise, the creative use of technology affords a greater variety of strategies at a terrorist's disposal. From gaming-adjacent platforms used to radicalize and mobilize new nihilistic violent extremism (NVE) adherents,¹⁹ to artificially intelligent tools that allow novices to identify materials needed for an IED,²⁰ to the use of a digital twin to coordinate planning on a target a terrorist has never visited,²¹ central to NCITE research is the examination of how terrorists will use a variety of technologies to accomplish their organizational goals.²² Large scale studies are providing new insights into which underlying mechanisms associated with malevolent innovation are afforded by a variety of new technologies.²³

One specific terrorist tactic poses notable risk to the upcoming global sporting events: the use of unmanned aerial systems (UAS).²⁴ In a multi-year examination of how terrorists employ drones and geospatial technology, NCITE research has identified at least three underlying concerns associated with terrorist use of UAS. First, there are multiple and different ways UAS could be used to disrupt or cause violence at these events. For instance, terrorists may integrate multiple drone systems acting in concert to overwhelm defenses and/or mask a primary attack or modify commercial UAS payload capabilities to deliver harmful materials to crowds.²⁵ Terrorists also use UAS for reconnaissance and pre-attack planning. Last month, a former member of the Michigan Army National Guard was arrested after he allegedly attempted to carry out a plan to conduct a mass shooting at a U.S. military base in Michigan on behalf of the Islamic State, using a commercial drone to identify entrances and target buildings on the base.²⁶

Second, the integration of frontier technologies with UAS introduces new capabilities that can be exploited by malicious actors. Malign actors can now more easily acquire, build, or customize drones at lower costs, with extended ranges, higher speeds, and greater payload capacities.²⁷ Recent advancements also enable semi-autonomous attacks with minimal human involvement, reducing the risk of detection, apprehension, and subsequent prosecution.²⁸ More advanced open-source tools have also emerged, allowing users to launch UAS missions to GPS-designated locations. Supported by new technologies, remote drone stations can be accessed via the internet, enabling global remote reach. Simultaneously, AI capabilities empower drones to autonomously navigate, avoid obstacles, and execute tasks independently – significantly reducing the level of human expertise required to operate them effectively, even in GPS-denied environments.

Third, and finally, the counter-UAS community faces increasing pressure to rapidly identify and mitigate associated risks to high impact targets in the U.S. homeland.²⁹ Terrorist use of UAS poses unique intervention challenges, as COTS UAS capabilities are progressing faster than the ability to assess and develop policies to mitigate the threat posed by their nefarious use. Moreover, some of the tools developed for counter-UAS purposes in hostile and conflict environments abroad are less suitable in a homeland context, resulting in the need for affordable, scalable, and actionable counter-UAS capabilities tailored to those relevant authorities and demands. We've seen encouraging progress in this area – for example, a recent exercise led by the DHS Science & Technology Directorate in the National Capital

Region exemplifies important counter-UAS research, development, and training.³⁰ More work remains to address this growing threat and manage related risks at federal, state, and local levels surrounding the upcoming global sporting events.

Terrorists with Intent to Attack Global Sporting Events

Threat actors are drawn to global sporting events for a variety of reasons: terrorists with asymmetric capabilities see them as a chance to bring attention to their cause on the world's largest stage, while transnational criminal organizations, or TCOs, may see the access to high value targets such as state and police officials as sufficient reason to mobilize to violence. Other illicit actors often intend to use these visible events as a show of force – portending to potential larger attacks on critical infrastructure associated with national security. The following section outlines our assessment of the most probable set of terrorists with intent to attack upcoming global sporting events in the United States based on their demonstrated intent and likely capability.

NCITE has identified jihadist violent extremists, state-affiliated terrorists, newly designated cartel and TCO foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs), lone actors with issue-specific grievances, and nihilistic violent extremist networks as the most likely threats to global sporting events in the U.S. While there are other credible threats to U.S. public safety (e.g., anti-institutional extremists), critical infrastructure (e.g., climate terrorists), and specific soft targets (e.g., animal rights extremists), there are at least two reasons why we identified the categories of violent extremists for you to consider as the greatest risk to the FIFA World Cup in 2026 and the 2028 L.A. Olympics.³¹ First, when examining the propaganda from these groups, they have signaled intent to harm symbolic targets at these or similar events. Second, when reviewing plots and attacks on global sporting events and similar soft targets (e.g., the 2017 Ariana Grande concert in Manchester, England, was targeted by a suicide bomber³²), past behavior of individuals associated with or inspired by these violent movements suggests they are willing and motivated to continue this trajectory at global events.

Jihadist violent extremists. This includes both U.S.-based homegrown violent extremists inspired by a designated foreign terrorist organization (FTO) as well as individuals or collectives who aim to conduct acts of terrorism on U.S. soil under the direction of the Islamic State, al-Qaida, and others.

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is a transnational Salafi-jihadist terrorist group designated as an FTO by the U.S. Department of State. An NCITE review found that 261 individuals with significant ties to the U.S. have been federally charged with ISIS-related activities since 2014.³³ For the last decade, the FBI has consistently said in public remarks that it has more than 1,000 active ISIS investigations in all 50 states.

The October 7, 2023, Hamas terrorist attack on Israel and the subsequent conflict has reinvigorated a subset of extremist threats and hate crimes toward Jewish/Israeli targets, civilian/tourist targets, and U.S. interests in general.³⁴ For example, two staffers of the Israeli embassy were shot and killed outside a Jewish museum in Washington, D.C., in late May by a man shouting “Free Palestine” after his arrest. Recent U.S. antisemitic violence includes, but is not limited to, criminal cases such as a California rideshare driver who allegedly attacked his passenger because he believed he was Jewish,³⁵ a New York Ivy League student who posted a series of increasingly violent messages online threatening to “shoot all you pig jews,”³⁶ and an Oregon man who allegedly defaced a synagogue.³⁷ Last year, a 20-year-old Pakistani national residing in Canada was arrested for plans to carry out an attack at Jewish religious centers in New York City. Intelligence reporting resulted in disrupting his plot—which involved attacking a large Jewish population to increase potential targets and the date of Oct. 7 because he suspected there would be pro-Israel supporters present for the anniversary of the attack—prior to him even traveling to the United States.³⁸

Historically, jihadi violent extremists have communicated their intent to attack global sporting events via their online propaganda campaigns. For example, ahead of the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia, ISIS launched an online campaign predominantly on social media calling on adherents to directly target Russian President Vladimir Putin, high profile soccer players, and soft targets surrounding the stadiums.³⁹ As recently as 2024, pro-ISIS propaganda encouraged attacks at the New York Cricket World Cup.⁴⁰ Similar to the 1972 attack at the Munich Olympics, these groups seek maximum attention and perceive attacking symbolic targets of the West as an acceptable “act of war.”⁴¹ Their stated justifications for violence at global sporting events echo violent jihadi extremists’ justification for attacking a variety of soft targets: Western intervention in Syria and other regional conflicts, perceived global marginalization of Muslims, and the use of jihad as a defensive tactic.⁴² In addition to the threat of large, coordinated attacks executed by these groups (e.g., the 2015 Paris attacks), their long-standing efforts to encourage homegrown attacks that can be planned independently from central leadership (e.g., the 2025 New Orleans attack), suggests their effectiveness at influencing violence transnationally.

State-affiliated actors and related threats. As Great Power Competition intensifies, so too do nation states’ incentives to coerce influence through a variety of means, such as encouraging terrorist and criminal groups to act on their behalf. This approach is cost-effective, offers plausible deniability, and has a long-standing historical precedent. The recent escalation in operations by Iran-backed militias such as Hezbollah, the Houthis, and other Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)-linked terrorist groups against U.S. forces, assets, and allies marks a new level of sophistication and strategic threat. One NCITE research team maps the network affiliations and branches of the IRGC “Axis of Resistance.”⁴³

Members of these malicious networks have not only targeted U.S. military personnel and assets in the Middle East but also Western commercial ships operating near Yemen. While we have not seen specific calls for violence at the upcoming sporting events from state-affiliated actors, IRGC networks have encouraged terrorist plots and criminal activities in the U.S. This includes propaganda related to the 2023 Hamas attack on Israel and the subsequent escalation of hostilities in Gaza and Lebanon. In addition, following the assassination of IRGC leader Qasem Soleimani, the Houthis and broader IRGC networks have worked to wage violence on comparable high value targets in the West.⁴⁴ Another overall trend is the Houthi anti-shipping campaign against Israeli, U.S., and U.K. linked vessels.⁴⁵ In the past year, the Yemen-based Houthis’ top priority has been to transition to a near-state power through its alliances with al-Shabaab, development of unmanned vehicle and missile programs, and ability to impact the global economy.⁴⁶ Striking a global sporting event held in the United States may offer IRGC-affiliated networks just the path for Iran to be seen as a player on the world stage, providing a suitable alternative to U.S. interests in the Middle East.⁴⁷

In addition to the use of proxies from IRGC networks, the 2025 DHS Homeland Threat Assessment identifies other asymmetric threats originating from or within other nation states: malign cyber operations not attributable to a specific adversary country. The report assesses that actors associated with or based in China, Iran, and Russia will “use a blend of subversive, undeclared, criminal, and coercive tactics to seek new opportunities to undermine confidence in U.S. democratic institutions and domestic social cohesion.” This includes growing evidence of foreign cyber actors and cyber criminals conducting various operations against our nation’s critical infrastructure. In other words, a wide range of adversarial foreign cyber actors are honing their techniques to disrupt U.S. essential activities and services or to conduct espionage focused on gaining access to U.S. networks and stealing sensitive information. For instance, the assessment reports that, following Hamas’s 2023 attack on Israel, “dozens of pro-Iran criminal hacktivist groups conducted primarily low-level cyberattacks – such as distributed denial-of-service attacks – against Israeli, Palestinian, and U.S. networks and websites.” Later that year, IRGC-affiliated cyber actors – potentially disguised as a criminal hacktivist group, the assessment

notes – used “default credentials to successfully compromise and deface Israeli-manufactured OT [operational technology] devices used by U.S. critical infrastructure sector entities.”⁴⁸

Sporting organizations and major international sporting events – such as the World Cup and Olympics – have been targeted by state-affiliated cyber actors and cyber-criminals in the recent past, suggesting the potential threat of these actors to the upcoming events in the U.S. Surrounding the recent 2024 Paris Olympics, France reported 119 low impact “security events,” or cybersecurity attacks targeted mainly at government entities as well as transport and telecom infrastructure.⁴⁹ During the 2021 Tokyo Olympics, Japan reportedly experienced 450 million attempted unauthorized communications to the official website; and found malware usage, email spoofing and phishing, and the creation of fake websites to mimic the Olympics websites.⁵⁰

Newly designated foreign terrorist organizations: Cartels and transnational criminal organizations (TCOs). According to the Intelligence Community’s 2025 annual threat assessment, some cartels and TCOs are considered among the most *lethal* threats to the U.S. currently. The 2025 U.S. State Department designations of 10 cartels and TCOs as foreign terrorist organizations have also led NCITE to assess the non-trivial similarities between these new-designated and more traditional FTOs (e.g., violent jihadi extremists). Both traditional FTOs and the newly designated cartel FTOs engage in illicit activity and symbolic violence. Criminal activities from these newly designated FTOs range from drug trafficking, human trafficking, money laundering, extortion, to kidnapping. What alerts me most about the potential for malign activities at the upcoming global sporting events, however, is the use of violence by cartels that is on par – if not exceeding – levels used by traditional FTOs.⁵¹ For instance, while FTOs are credited with the creation of execution videos to invoke widespread fear beyond the immediate victim, cartels have far exceeded traditional FTOs in the volume, quality, and impact of such videos.⁵² These execution videos are shared broadly across the internet,⁵³ and the groups use high-profile public displays of bloodshed, such as discarding human heads in the middle of crowds,⁵⁴ to instill fear and embarrass their adversaries. Given that TCO FTOs have shown themselves to be prolific in their acts of symbolic violence – acts that are novel, public, and meant to generate fear to a broader class of individuals beyond the immediate victim – it may follow that these newly designated FTOs may also pose threats to the upcoming FIFA World Cup and Olympic sporting events.

Newly designated cartel and TCO FTOs possess capabilities for violence (e.g., geographic familiarity, access to resources, and established networks), but they are presently less likely to aspire to the mass casualty violence that may be planned by traditional FTOs.⁵⁵ Instead, cartel and TCO FTO threats to these upcoming large-scale public gatherings may result from opportunistic planning for media attention and access to targets. The Cartel del Jalisco Nueva Generación (CJNG) and Juarez Cartel in Mexico have ties to football clubs, players, administrators, and fan groups, many of whom are linked to violence and riots in stadiums;⁵⁶ Tren de Aragua in Venezuela has ties to major league baseball and has carried out assassinations on individuals associated with football clubs.⁵⁷

Unlike traditional foreign terrorist threats (e.g., ISIS), the newly designated cartel and TCOs are geographically situated to transport illegal goods or smuggle humans into the country, which is a service they may provide to malign actors who are able to afford their fees.⁵⁸ As of 2025, over one third of terrorist groups are involved in financial collaboration with cartel and transnational criminal organizations, indicating a shift in the crime-terror nexus.⁵⁹ This number doesn’t include the number of cartels and TCOs who will collaborate for financial or operational means to achieve their goals.⁶⁰ While larger cartel terrorists like the Sinaloa Cartel and CJNG have posed a long-standing threat to the U.S., even relatively smaller cartels like the Juarez Cartel and La Linea have established territory at the U.S.-Mexico border, allowing for operations within and across the U.S. leading up to both upcoming global sporting events.⁶¹ One important consideration regarding the threat posed by cartel and TCO terrorists

is the opportunistic nature of these organizations, in addition to their use of symbolic violence. The increased traffic across borders as people arrive globally for these major sporting events will make it easier for their cross-border business, including human smuggling.

In addition to the threat on U.S. soil, these newly designated cartels and TCOs have a history of attacking targets in Mexico that are symbolic of America. For instance, a 2018 grenade attack on the U.S. Consulate in Guadalajara is thought to have been likely perpetrated by CJNG.⁶² With Mexico co-hosting the 2026 FIFA World Cup with the U.S. and Canada, cartels may pose a greater risk to Americans and other global spectators at the events held within their own borders due to their territorial influence in cities hosting events. Such attacks would align with the tendency of these newly designated FTOs to send symbolic messages to those seeking to disrupt their operations.

Lone actors with grievances. Grievance-motivated terrorists, driven by emotional and social causes, often plan their actions in advance to use symbolic violence for communicating a message to a wider audience.⁶³ For example, in my home state of Oklahoma, Tim McVeigh expressed his anger toward symbols of the federal government by bombing the Alfred P. Murrah building in 1995. After a lifetime of difficult interactions with authority and anger about federal activity at Waco and Ruby Ridge, McVeigh identified the OKC target as one that would gain national attention by “embarrassing members of the federal government.” Other grievance-based attackers such as Brandon Tarrant at Christchurch (2019), Anderson Lee Aldrich in Colorado Springs (2022), Payton Gendron at the Topps grocery store (2022), and Eric Rudolph at the Atlanta Olympics (1996) also chose opportunistic targets that would garner attention as symbols to which they attached their grievances.

One lone actor of note for today illustrates how the upcoming sporting events could be attractive targets for grievance-based violence. In the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, Eric Rudolph acted alone to detonate several pipe bombs at Centennial Olympic Park. In what could be considered a precursor to more recent accelerationist extremists, Rudolph’s attack on the Olympic Games was motivated by his extreme anti-abortion and anti-globalism views and his desire to disrupt the social order.⁶⁴

Global sporting events also offer symbolic targets related to furthering antisemitism,⁶⁵ which may result in increased tensions in an already rising climate of antisemitism in the U.S. and the West in general.⁶⁶ The shooter of two Israeli Embassy staffers in Washington, D.C., on May 21, 2025 cited the war in Gaza as a central grievance and framed the killings as an act of political protest in a manifesto.⁶⁷ The 2018 attack on the Tree of Life Synagogue was the deadliest attack on a Jewish house of worship in the U.S., resulting in the shooter killing 11 people and wounding six.⁶⁸ During the commission of the shooting, the attacker made statements inside the synagogue that he conducted the attack “to kill Jews” and announced that “all Jews must die.”⁶⁹

Nihilistic violent extremism. Nihilistic Violent Extremism (NVE) ideology is derived “primarily from a hatred of society at large and a desire to bring about its collapse by sowing indiscriminate chaos, destruction, and social instability.”⁷⁰ NVE threat actors operate in networks to promote increasing levels of violence to foment societal collapse through the corruption and exploitation of vulnerable populations.⁷¹

The FBI opened 250 investigations in all 50 states regarding NVE suspects.⁷² In recent months, there has been an increase in the number of arrests – a preliminary review by NCITE identified dozens of federal cases in the United States, and at least 75 globally.⁷³

Due to their extensive online networks, NVE threat actors are transnational in nature, adding complexity to efforts to disrupt their activity and violence.⁷⁴ These extremists often require prospective members to commit an act of violence on behalf of the group and publicize it before they consider letting them join.

One NVE subculture is particularly known for coercion and exploitation of youth. These groups – such as 764 and Order of Nine Angles (ONA) – specifically focus on coercing minor victims to self-harm or engage in gore violence particularly sharing Child Sexual Abuse Materials (CSAM) and other graphic depictions of harm. The transnational, online nature of these groups (e.g., ONA was a U.K.-based group that spread to the U.S.) makes NVE a global threat with adherents represented in several countries and capable of collaborating in online spaces. An NCITE research project is specifically looking at youth mobilization, and preliminary findings suggest a shift toward not only younger victims, but younger perpetrators within the NVE network compared to most FTOs.⁷⁵

Large events that offer the potential for an online viral platform, like the FIFA World Cup and the Olympics, are attractive targets to these extremists. Central to NVE ideology is a competitive culture where adherents emphasize an expectation to prove oneself through violence. Tactically, this often leads to attacks intended to garner as much media attention as possible, such as the 764-inspired thwarted attack on the Lady Gaga concert in Brazil in May 2025.⁷⁶

RECOMMENDATIONS

The novel tactics that a variety of terrorist threat actors have at their disposal are exacerbated by the complexity of the target space that the FIFA World Cup and Olympic events provide. Both FIFA World Cup activities throughout North America in 2026 and the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles, CA and Oklahoma City, OK, present unique crowd management, security, and transit considerations. Challenges around the World Cup are not limited to the venues in which the matches will be held; they are very much regionwide challenges. For example, World Cup “FanFest” events take place in many locations outside of games themselves over a 40-day period, at locations that are particularly vulnerable targets for terrorist attacks given that their security is not well established or easy to implement. There are challenges for the transit systems that take patrons to games and are impacted by an influx of spectators from outside the region. There are also security issues at practice facilities that will be spread around numerous locations and at the hotels where athletes are housed.⁷⁷

The Olympics pose many issues similar to those of the World Cup, but also unique challenges. For example, crowds viewing the arrival of the Olympic flame will create similar conditions to those in the 2013 Boston Marathon.⁷⁸ The Olympic flame relays in Marseilles for the 2024 games attracted some 150,000 people, while in Cornwall and Devon in 2012 they attracted approximately 100,000. The Olympic Village persists as a major security target attractive to terrorists. Because of how dispersed the upcoming L.A. Olympics venues will be, there are plans to have satellite Olympics Villages in addition to a main site at the University of California Los Angeles. The satellite locations will add new complexity to the issues facing Olympics security officials.⁷⁹

Given terrorists’ intent, evolving capability, and opportunity to attack the upcoming FIFA World Cup and Olympic events in the U.S., there are at least two decisions this subcommittee should consider. First, the DHS Science and Technology Directorate has an established network of university partners who are uniquely positioned to contribute to DHS capability.⁸⁰ Continuing the authorized funding of the established cooperative agreements with the designated Centers of Excellence would be a force multiplier for the existing federal workforce. For example, the Northeastern University-based COE, Soft Target Engineering to Neutralize the Threat Reality (SENTRY) is uniquely charged with developing solutions to protect soft targets. SENTRY was actively working to provide crowd management, mass transit infrastructure, and stadium security technology tools and knowledge products for the FIFA World Cup. An example of SENTRY technologies focused on supporting crowd management security and response, dynamic digital twins, are capable of monitoring crowd movements in real time. The system

allows for the monitoring and analysis of crowd behavior, including predicting hot spots based on crowd size and train schedules. This S&T-funded tool also enables users to prepare and plan for events like the FIFA World Cup and Olympics by supporting the simulation of various threats, including malicious attacks. Addressing the prevalence of bombs used in prior attacks on the homeland, SENTRY developed the Digital Dog Nose™, a portable vapor sensor system capable of detecting and tracking threats, such as explosives, with continuous operation and unmatched sensitivity, in densely populated areas.⁸¹

In addition, given the Paris 2024 rail network attacks, protecting our internal transportation infrastructure is paramount. SENTRY has developed an AI-driven network risk modeling and simulation tool that was being piloted to make resource allocations for rail infrastructure.⁸² The Arizona State University-based COE, the Center for Accelerating Operational Efficiency (CAOE) had a project inspired by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) goal to increase passenger throughput while maintaining high quality screening. This plan-of-day system is just months away from a transition to IBM via TSA HQ. Given the legislative priority of protecting public safety associated with the upcoming global sporting events, *restoring and protecting funding for the nine DHS Centers of Academic Excellence is paramount for the all hands-on deck approach the risk to U.S. global sporting events warrants.*

Second, the intelligence and analysis capabilities of DHS are essential in assisting federal, state, and local officials to prepare for and disrupt any potential terrorist attack targeting FIFA World Cup and 2028 L.A. Olympic events. DHS I&A is the lead drafter of Joint Threat Assessments for all National Security Special Events (NSSE) with a Special Event Assessment rating of Level 1 or 2. Over the past two decades, I&A has also developed unique federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial partnerships that allow for dissemination of intelligence products to those best in a position to observe suspicious activity and disrupt threat streams before they transition into lethal attacks. For example, the National Threat Evaluation and Reporting (NTER) Master Trainer network has available and credible state and local partners in each of the regions where the upcoming FIFA World Cup games will be held, and they are able to deliver specific training to law enforcement, emergency managers, and even event staff. Through I&A information sharing with state fusion centers about suspicious activity report (SAR) processing, CBP's National Targeting Center Operational Watch capabilities, and the international partnerships with FVEY public safety organizations, DHS has a networked organizational structure to transition the intelligence it and its partners synthesize to protect the homeland from a variety of terrorist threats. However, that capability may be degraded by third-order effects of workforce planning decisions. With an aging workforce and the current hiring freeze, I am concerned that DHS could have less capacity to write and share the complex assessments these events require. Given the emphasis that DHS has in assisting primarily state and local officials in securing National Security Special Events, departures of career analysts may be compounded by the inability to replace them before it is too late. Thus, *I recommend that the capacity of the unique intelligence and analysis function that DHS leads in protecting the upcoming United States global sporting events be prioritized in workforce planning decisions.*

ABOUT NCITE

The National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center, or NCITE, is the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Center of Excellence for Counterterrorism Research. Funded by the DHS Science and Technology Directorate and headquartered at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, NCITE aims to identify terrorist threat actors, the tools they could use to cause harm, and what U.S. targets they could strike.

ABOUT GINA LIGON

Gina Ligon, Ph.D., is the founder and director of the National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center (NCITE), which is the DHS Center of Excellence for Counterterrorism Research from 2020-2030. She is the Jack and Stephanie Koraleski Professor for Collaboration Science in the College of Business at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Ligon has served on the Office of the Director of National Intelligence panels for the National Academy of Science, Engineering, and Medicine. She briefs the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), Department of Defense, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Justice, and other federal organizations on terrorist leadership, organizational structure, and capacity for malevolent innovation.

She serves on advisory boards for the Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats (CREST – United Kingdom), the Center for Secure Printing and Anti-Counterfeiting Technology (SPACT – South Dakota), the Center for Collaboration Science (CCS - Nebraska), and the Center for Research in Human Movement Variability (Nebraska). Ligon has authored more than 80 peer-reviewed publications related to terrorist organizations, and she has had federal funding for her research since 2008. She is the co-editor of the forthcoming Handbook of the Psychology of Terrorism, and she was the former editor of the scholarly journal Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict: Pathways toward Terrorism and Genocide.

Prior to joining the University of Nebraska at Omaha, she was a full-time psychology faculty member at Villanova University. She also worked as a director of leadership consulting at St. Louis-based Psychological Associates.

As a native Oklahoman and military wife, she is determined to use her training to disrupt international and domestic threat actors from harming Americans.

Education:

Ph.D. Industrial and Organizational Psychology and Statistics: University of Oklahoma

M.S. Industrial and Organizational Psychology: University of Oklahoma

B.S. Psychology, Spanish (minor): Southwestern Oklahoma State University

Acknowledgement. This material is based upon work supported by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security under Grant Award Number 20STTPC00001-05 and Grant Number 22STESE00001-04-00.

Disclaimer. The views and conclusions contained in this document are those of the authors and should not be interpreted as necessarily representing the official policies, either expressed or implied, of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Appendix A: Exemplars of Terrorist Attacks on Major Sporting Events

The following table illustrates a selection of terrorist attacks associated with major sports events. These were selected to represent global threats as well as a range of actors and targets.

Year	Sporting Event	Threat Actors	Tactics	Target
1972	Summer Olympics, Munich	Black September	11 Israeli athletes were taken hostage; all were killed; assault rifles	Olympic Village (apartments); Munich, Germany
1994	FIFA World Cup, Los Angeles	Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF)	Assault at a World Cup watch party in Northern Ireland; assault rifles	Pub (hospitality); Loughinisland, Northern Ireland
1996	Summer Olympics, Atlanta	Lone actor; accelerationist ideology	Pipe bomb detonated at a park built for the Olympics; bomb threat (phoned in advance)	Centennial Olympic Park (open air); Atlanta, United States
1998	FIFA World Cup, Paris	Armed Islamic Group (backed by Al-Qaida)	Plot to target the stadium (England-Tunisia), a hotel (U.S. team), and hijack an aircraft (thwarted)	Stadium (open air); hotel (hospitality); Marseille and Paris, France
2000	Summer Olympics, Sydney	Al-Qaida	Plot to blow up a nuclear reactor during the Olympic games (thwarted)	Nuclear reactor (hard target); Auckland, New Zealand
2010	FIFA World Cup, Johannesburg	Al-Shabaab	Two coordinated bombings at World Cup watch parties in Uganda; suicide bombers	Restaurant, rugby club (hospitality); Kampala, Uganda
2013	Boston Marathon, Massachusetts	Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) inspired	Two bombs exploded at the finish line of the marathon; pressure cooker bombs	Finish line, one block apart (open air); Boston, United States
2013-2014	Winter Olympics, Sochi	Caucasus Emirate	Two bombs targeted a bus and the central train station; suicide bombers	Bus, train station (public transportation); Volgograd, Russia
2015	International Football Match, Paris	Islamic State	Coordinated attack targeted the stadium, President of France in attendance; suicide bombers	Stadium (indoor), restaurants, concerts (hospitality); Paris, France
2016	UEFA Champion League Final, Milan	Islamic State	Mass shooting targeting Real Madrid fans at a football club; AK-47s	Café (hospitality); Balad, Iraq
2024	Summer Olympics, Paris	Unknown	Coordinated arson attacks targeted the railway system just before opening ceremony	Railways (public transportation); Paris, France

Appendix B: Exemplars of Terrorist Attacks on Large Events

The following table illustrates a selection of terrorist attacks associated with large crowds that attract a similar level of public attention as sporting events. These were selected to illustrate a global view of the threat to these events focusing on the last decade, as well as a range of threat actors and targets.

Year	Event	Threat Actors	Tactics	Target Location
2016	Bastille Day Celebration	Islamic State	Vehicle ramming attack targeting crowds watching fireworks; vehicle	Public space (open air); Nice, France
2017	Route 91 Harvest Music Festival	Lone actor; undetermined ideology	Mass shooting at open air music festival; multiple firearms	Music festival (open air); Las Vegas, Nevada
2017	Ariana Grande concert	Islamic State (credited)	Bombing at Manchester Arena during Ariana Grande concert; suicide bomber	Manchester Arena (indoor); Manchester, England
2019	Easter Sunday	National Thowheeth Jama'ath (ISIS inspired)	Bombings at three churches, three luxury hotels on Easter; suicide bombers	Churches (indoor), hotels (hospitality); Colombo, Sri Lanka
2022	July 4 th Parade	Lone actor; some NVE indicators	Mass shooting at an Independence Day parade; semi-automatic rifle	Parade (open air); Highland Park, Illinois
2023	Nova Music festival	Hamas	Mass shooting and hostage taking at music festival; rockets, firearms	Music festival (open air); Eshkol Regional Council, Israel
2024	Taylor Swift concert	Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K)	Planned vehicular attack and bombing on crowd outside the stadium (thwarted); vehicle, IED	Ernst-Happel Stadion (open air); Vienna, Austria
2024	Concert at the Crocus City Hall	Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K)	Mass shooting at concert hall; firearms, bladed weapon, incendiary device	Concert Hall (indoor); Moscow, Russia
2025	New Years Eve celebration	Islamic State (inspired)	Vehicular ramming followed by open fire on Bourbon Street; vehicle, AR-10	Bourbon Street (open air); New Orleans, Louisiana

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Quoted in Gabriel Weimann, "The Psychology of Mass-Mediated Terrorism." *American Behavioral Scientist* 52, no. 1 (2008): 69-86.
- ² Ramón Spaaij, "Terrorism and security at the Olympics: Empirical trends and evolving research agendas." *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 33, no. 4 (2016): 451-468.
- ³ Spaaij, *Terrorism and security at the Olympics*.
- ⁴ Miles Klee, "Alleged threat to Lady Gaga Brazil concert came from rising type of 'nihilistic' hate group." *Rolling Stone* (May 8, 2025). <https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-features/lady-gaga-brazil-nihilistic-hate-network-1235331701/>
- ⁵ Ramón Spaaij and Mark S. Hamm, "Endgame? Sports events as symbolic targets." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 38, no. 12 (2015): 1022-1037.
- ⁶ Kristie Rieken, "An Army Veteran's Path to Radicalization Followed Divorces and Struggling Businesses in Texas." *AP News* (January 2, 2025). <https://apnews.com/article/new-orleans-terror-attack-driver-family-divorce-45a58097acfd821d44535fb5447f140d>
- ⁷ Samuel Hunter, Joel Elson, and Austin C. Doctor, "Meta's glasses, ChatGPT, and the rise of high-tech extremist violence." *NCITE* (January 1, 2025). <https://www.unomaha.edu/ncite/news/2025/01/hunter-meta-glasses.php>
- ⁸ Yannick Veilleux-Lepage and Marc-André Argentino, "2025 New Orleans truck attack: The role of electric vehicles and peer-to-peer platforms." *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism* (January 20, 2025). <https://icct.nl/publication/2025-new-orleans-truck-attack-role-electric-vehicles-and-peer-peer-platforms>
- ⁹ Ian Shoesmith and Lauren Hirst, "Attempted murder arrest after football parade crash." *BBC News* (May 27, 2025). <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c62n0nkj4m2o>
- ¹⁰ Ramón Spaaij and Andrew Zammit, "The terrorism threat to the 2024 Paris Olympics: Learning from the past to understand the present." *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism* (June 27, 2024). <https://icct.nl/publication/terrorism-threat-2024-paris-olympics-learning-past-understand-present>
- ¹¹ Brian Glyn Williams and Robert Troy Souz, "The Islamic State threat to the 2018 FIFA World Cup." *CTC Sentinel* 11, no. 5 (2018): 1-11.
- ¹² Kanishka Singh, "New York boosts T20 Cricket World Cup security after reported threats." *Reuters* (May 29, 2024). <https://www.reuters.com/sports/cricket/new-york-boosts-t20-cricket-world-cup-security-after-reported-threats-2024-05-30/>
- ¹³ Spaaij and Zammit, *The terrorism threat to the 2024 Paris Olympics*.
- ¹⁴ Spaaij and Zammit, *The terrorism threat to the 2024 Paris Olympics*.
- ¹⁵ United States v. Tawhedi, 5:24-cr-00467, (W.D. Okla., 2024, October 8); United States v. Zada, 5:25-cr-00151, (W.D. Okla., 2025, April 17).
- ¹⁶ Austin C. Doctor and Samuel Hunter, "The future of terrorist use of improvised explosive devices: Getting in front of an evolving threat." *CTC Sentinel* 16, no. 11 (2023): 41-51.
- ¹⁷ Austin C. Doctor, Samuel Hunter, Gina Scott Ligon, Gary Wes Carter, Dan Polanski, and Jimmie Oxley, "Research challenges in combating terrorist use of explosives in the United States." A report from the National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center (July 2024). <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/ncitereportsresearch/79/>
- ¹⁸ Alexis d'Amato and Samuel Hunter, "Malevolent creativity in terrorist organizations." In *Handbook of the Psychology of Terrorism*, ed. Clark McCauley, Sophia Moskalenko, and Gina S. Ligon (DeGruyter Press, in press).
- ¹⁹ Madison Scott, Emma Theobald, Alexis d'Amato, Joel Elson, and Samuel Hunter, "Pixels and propaganda: A primer on gaming, gaming-adjacent platforms, and extremism." A report prepared for the National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center (March 2024). <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/ncitereportsresearch/63/>

- ²⁰ Alexis d'Amato, Emma Theobald, Madison Scott, Averie Linnell, Joel Elson, and Samuel Hunter, "Harnessing harm: Artificial intelligence's role in the amplification of malevolent creativity and innovation." *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts* (in press).
- ²¹ Samuel Hunter, Alexis d'Amato, Joel Elson, Austin C. Doctor, and Averie Linnell, "The metaverse as a future threat landscape: An interdisciplinary perspective." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 18, no. 2 (2024).
- ²² Amanda Moeller and Samuel Hunter, "Organizational Structure of Terrorist Organizations." In *Handbook of the Psychology of Terrorism*, ed. Clark McCauley, Sophia Moskalkenko, and Gina S. Ligon (DeGruyter Press, in press).
- ²³ Samuel Hunter, Kayla Walters, Tin Nguyen, Caroline Manning, and Scarlett Miller, "Malevolent creativity and malevolent innovation: A critical but tenuous linkage." *Creativity Research Journal* 34, no. 2 (2022): 123-144.
- ²⁴ Austin C. Doctor, "The Logic of Terrorist Use of Unmanned Aerial Systems, Enabling Factors, and Barriers to Exploitation." A report prepared for the National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center (2025); Austin C. Doctor and James I. Walsh, "The Militant Drone Playbook." *War on the Rocks* (August 12, 2021). <https://warontherocks.com/2021/08/the-militant-drone-playbook/>
- ²⁵ Austin C. Doctor and Samuel Hunter, "The Future of Terrorist Use of Improvised Explosive Devices: Getting in Front of an Evolving Threat." *CTC Sentinel* 16, no. 11 (2023): 41-51.
- ²⁶ Department of Justice, "Michigan Man Arrested and Charged with Attempting to Attack Military Base on Behalf of ISIS." (May 14, 2025). <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/michigan-man-arrested-and-charged-attempting-attack-military-base-behalf-isis>
- ²⁷ Suat Cubukcu, "Risk Factors in Terrorist Use of Unmanned Aerial Systems." A report prepared for the National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center (2025).
- ²⁸ Abie Harder, Ryan Vilter, and Austin C. Doctor, "Advancements in the Connection Between Unmanned Systems (UxS) and Geospatial Technologies" A report prepared for the National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center (2025). <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/ncitereportsresearch/90/>; George Grispos, Joel Elson, and Tyler McCoid, "Knowledge Gaps and Future Vulnerabilities Arising from New and Emerging UAS Technology." A report prepared for the National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center (2025).
- ²⁹ Austin C. Doctor, "The Militant Drone Threat Is No Longer New. Why Does It Still Feel Novel?" *Modern War Institute at West Point* (February 24, 2022). <https://mwi.westpoint.edu/the-militant-drone-threat-is-no-longer-new-why-does-it-still-feel-novel/>
- ³⁰ DHS S&T Public Affairs. "Media Advisory: DHS S&T to Conduct C-UAS Testing in the National Capital Region." *Department of Homeland Security* (March 7, 2025). <https://www.dhs.gov/science-and-technology/news/2025/03/07/media-advisory-dhs-st-conduct-c-uas-testing-national-capital-region>
- ³¹ Erin Bass, Samuel Hunter, Kayla Lacey, Carter Welch, and Gina S. Ligon, "A managed ecosystem approach to addressing and managing extreme threats in organizational contexts." *Management Decision Journal* (in press).
- ³² Mike Corder, "Ariana Grande fans tremble as they recall Manchester attack." *AP News* (May 23, 2017). <https://apnews.com/article/9d813da59c6342b09c7ea57f62a5d9a8>
- ³³ Seamus Hughes, Camden Carmichael, Callie Vitro, Brooke Buxton, Mackenzie Harms, and Austin C. Doctor, "Homegrown: ISIS in the U.S." A report prepared for the National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center (April 2025). <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/ncitereportsresearch/122>
- ³⁴ Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community*. (2025).
- ³⁵ *United States v. CSUKS*, 3:24-cr-00152, (N.D. Calif., 2024, March 12)
- ³⁶ *United States v. Dai*, 3:23-cr-00478, (N.D. N.Y., 2023, November 27)
- ³⁷ *United States v. Braun*, 6:24-cr-00191, (D. Ore., 2024, March 4)
- ³⁸ *United States v. Khan*, 1:25-cr-00063, (S.D. N.Y., 2024, September 4)
- ³⁹ Brian Glyn Willaims and Robert Troy Souza, "The Islamic State threat to the 2018 FIFA World Cup." *CTC Sentinel* 11, no. 5 (2018): 1-9.

- ⁴⁰ NBC10 Philadelphia, "Pro-ISIS group posts ominous message showing New York cricket stadium set to host World Cup." *NBC News* (May 29, 2024). <https://www.nbcphiladelphia.com/news/national-international/cricket-world-cup-long-island-nassau-county-eisenhower-stadium-fbi-ny/3870283/>
- ⁴¹ BBC News, "Paris attacks: What happened on the night." *BBC News* (December 9, 2015). <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34818994>
- ⁴² Ian Pelletier, Leif Lundmark, Rachel Gardner, Gina S. Ligon, and Ramazan Kilinc, "Why ISIS's message resonates: Leveraging Islam, sociopolitical catalysts, and adaptive messaging." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 39, no. 10 (2016): 871-899.
- ⁴³ Mapping Militants, Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Profile. Last modified 2022. <https://mappingmilitants.org/node/2973/>
- ⁴⁴ Nakissa Jahanbani, "Beyond Soleimani: Implications for Iran's Proxy Network in Iraq and Syria." *CTC Perspectives*, 2020. <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/beyond-soleimani-implications-irans-proxy-network-iraq-syria/>
- ⁴⁵ Michael Knights, "A Draw Is a Win: The Houthis After One Year of War." *CTC Sentinel* 17, no. 9 (2024).
- ⁴⁶ Michael Knights, "Soleimani is dead: The road ahead for Iranian-backed militias in Iraq." *CTC Sentinel* 13, no. 1 (2018): 1-10.
- ⁴⁷ Arash Azizi. *The Shadow Commander: Soleimani, the US, and Iran's Global Ambitions* (Simon and Schuster, 2020).
- ⁴⁸ Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community*. (2025)
- ⁴⁹ AFP, "France reports over 140 cyberattacks linked to Olympics." *France 24* (August 14, 2024). <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20240814-france-reports-over-140-cyberattacks-linked-to-olympics>
- ⁵⁰ Jonathan Greig, "450 million cyberattacks attempted on Japan Olympics infrastructure: NTT." *ZD Net* (October 21, 2021). <https://www.zdnet.com/article/nearly-450-million-cyberattacks-attempted-on-japan-olympics-infrastructure-ntt/>
- ⁵¹ Council on Foreign Relations, "Mexico's Long War: Drugs, Crime, and the Cartels." *Council on Foreign Relations* (February 21, 2025). <https://www.cfr.org/background/mexicos-long-war-drugs-crime-and-cartels>
- ⁵² Grillo, Ioan, "Cartel Propaganda Videos—A History." *Crashout by Ioan Grillo* (April 24, 2025). <https://www.crashoutmedia.com/p/cartel-propaganda-videos-a-history>
- ⁵³ CBS News, "Cartel video shows gunmen shooting, kicking and burning bodies of enemies, Mexican police confirm." *CBS News* (February 21, 2024). <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/cartel-video-gunmen-shooting-kicking-burning-bodies-enemies-guerrero-mexico/>; AP News, "Gruesome video circulating on social media recalls darkest days of Mexico's drug cartel brutality." *AP News* (August 16, 2023). <https://apnews.com/article/mexico-decapitation-video-kidnapped-youths-f50e5606107094a5ae43d4e06208ada5>
- ⁵⁴ BBC News, "Human heads dumped in Mexico bar." *BBC News* (September 7, 2006). <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/5322160.stm>
- ⁵⁵ Scott Englund, "Mexican Drug Cartels are Violent—But They're Not Terrorists." *War on the Rocks* (February 24, 2020). <https://warontherocks.com/2020/02/mexican-drug-cartels-are-violent-but-theyre-not-terrorists/>
- ⁵⁶ Chris Dalby, "The cartel ties of football in Guadalajara, Mexico." *Seasons of Crime* (September 3, 2024). <https://www.seasonsofcrime.com/p/the-cartel-ties-of-football-in-guadalajara>; Aristegui Noticias and Connectas, "Juarez Cartel Operator a Player in International Soccer Deals." *InSight Crime* (March 28, 2016). <https://insightcrime.org/news/analysis/juarez-cartel-operator-a-player-in-international-soccer-deals/>
- ⁵⁷ Chris Dalby, *Tren de Aragua: The Guide to America's Growing Criminal Threat* (2025).
- ⁵⁸ Alex Bruens, Elle Ward, Austin C. Doctor, Seamus Hughes, and Gina S. Ligon, "NCITE Rapid-Response Report: Migration and Terrorism Nexus." A technical report from the National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center (2024).
- ⁵⁹ John T. Picarelli, "Osama bin Corleone? Vito the Jackal? Framing threat convergence through an examination of transnational organized crime and international terrorism." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24, no. 2 (2012): 180-198.

- ⁶⁰ Michael Kenney, *From Pablo to Osama: Trafficking and terrorist networks, government bureaucracies, and competitive adaptation* (Penn State Press, 2007).
- ⁶¹ Drug Enforcement Administration, *National Drug Threat Assessment 2024*.
- ⁶² ABC7 I-Team, "I-Team: Surveillance video may show grenade attack orchestrated by El Mencho." *ABC7* (December 22, 2018). <https://abc7chicago.com/el-mencho-iteam-i-team-chicago/4945157/>
- ⁶³ Kenyon, J., Baker-Beall, C., & Binder, J. "Lone-Actor Terrorism – A Systematic Literature Review." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 46, no. 10 (2021): 2038–2065; Toobin, J., *Homegrown: Timothy McVeigh and the rise of right-wing extremism*. Simon and Schuster (2023).
- ⁶⁴ Chris Swecker, "Eric Rudolph." *Federal Bureau of Investigations*. <https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/eric-rudolph>
- ⁶⁵ Emma Poulton, "Antisemitism in World Football: Types, Perpetrators and Targets," in *Antisemitism in Football*, ed. Emma Poulton (2025): 261-292.
- ⁶⁶ Gina Ligon and Mackenzie Harms, "One Year Later: The Impact of the Oct. 7 Attack in the United States." A reachback report prepared for the National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center (Omaha, NE, 2024); Anti-Defamation League, "Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2024." *ADL* (April 22, 2025). <https://www.adl.org/resources/report/audit-antisemitic-incidents-2024>
- ⁶⁷ Ken Klippenstein, "The Israel Embassy Shooter Manifesto." *Ken Klippenstein* (May 22, 2025).
- ⁶⁸ Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens, Bennett Clifford, and Lorenzo Vidino, "Antisemitism as an Underlying Precursor to Violent Extremism in American Far-Right and Islamist Contexts." A report prepared for the National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center (2020). <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/ncitereportsresearch/10>; NCITE, "Mobilization Indicators in the Buffalo Shooting." A report prepared for the National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center (2022). https://www.unomaha.edu/ncite/_files/documents/us-violent-extremist-mobilization-indicators.pdf
- ⁶⁹ Julie Turkewitz and Kevin Roose, "Who Is Robert Bowers, the Suspect in the Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting?" *The New York Times* (October 27, 2018). <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/27/us/robert-bowers-pittsburgh-synagogue-shooter.html>
- ⁷⁰ United States of America v. Casimiro, April 2, 2025, Criminal Complaint, pg. 9.
- ⁷¹ John Hardy and Adam Henschke, "A gathering storm: offensive and defensive accelerationism in an online far-right community." *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict* 17, no. 3 (2024): 200-220; Alex Newhouse, "The threat is the network: The multi-node structure of neo-fascist accelerationism." *CTC Sentinel* 14, no. 5 (2021): 17-25.
- ⁷² Mike Levine, Pierre Thomas, and Lucien Bruggeman, "FBI has opened 250 investigations tied to violent online network '764' that preys on teens, top official says." *ABC News* (May 6, 2025). <https://abcnews.go.com/US/fbi-opened-250-investigations-tied-violent-online-network/story?id=121480884>
- ⁷³ Center on Terrorism, Extremism, and Counterterrorism, "Dangerous organizations and bad actors: Feuerkrieg Division." *Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey* (July 2022).
- ⁷⁴ Marc-André Argentino, Barrett Gay, and Matt Bastin, "Nihilism and terror: How M.K.Y. is redefining terrorism, recruitment, and mass violence." *CTC Sentinel* 17, no. 8 (2024): 22-29.
- ⁷⁵ Bettina Rottweiler. "Youth Recruitment and Mobilization to Terrorism and Mass Casualty Events." National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center (Omaha, NE, 2025).
- ⁷⁶ Mike Ives, "Planned Attack on Lady Gaga Concert in Brazil Is Foiled, Police Say." *The New York Times* (May 5, 2025). <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/05/world/americas/lady-gaga-brazil-attack-threat.html>
- ⁷⁷ SENTRY, or the DHS Academic Center of Excellence for Securing Soft Targets and Crowded Places from Targeted Attacks, has a catalog of research examining the complexity that sporting venues and other soft targets pose. The full catalog is accessible here: <https://sentry.northeastern.edu>
- ⁷⁸ Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Boston Marathon Bombing." (n.d.) <https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/boston-marathon-bombing>
- ⁷⁹ SENTRY, Stadium Security Case Study. <https://sentry.northeastern.edu/stadium-security-case-study/>

⁸⁰ Department of Homeland Security, "Centers of Excellence." <https://www.dhs.gov/science-and-technology/centers-excellence>

⁸¹ The Digital Dog Nose technology has three patents awarded: US11340183B1, US12188914B2, and US20220244229A1. See also, Peter P. Ricci and Otto J. Gregory, "Free-standing, thin-film sensors for the trace detection of explosives," *Scientific Reports* 11, no. 6623 (2021).

⁸² Jack R. Watson, Samrat Chatterjee, Auroop Ganguly, "Resilience of Urban Rail Transit Networks under Compound Natural and Opportunistic Failures," *2022 IEEE International Symposium on Technologies for Homeland Security (HST)* (Boston, USA, 2022): pp. 1-8; see also, SDS Lab, "Threat Deterrence in Soft Urban Transport Targets with Network Science and Machine Learning," (April 28, 2025). Accessible at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ha87dDjb8E>