

Engaging the LGBTQIA+ Community To Counter Violent Extremist Threats

Foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs), lone actors inspired by them, racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists (REMVEs) with transnational ties, and others who adhere to violent extremist ideology continue to call for the targeting of the LGBTQIA+ community. This incitement to violence, coupled with public and media attention to LGBTQIA+ issues, probably increases the potential for attacks against targets associated with the LGBTQIA+ community. Engagement between public safety officials and the LGBTQIA+ community to build relationships, share information, and plan for potential incidents may help to identify and mitigate potential violent extremist threats. The potential for violent extremist attacks on LGBTQIA+ targets underscores the importance of outreach and sharing threat information with the LGBTQIA+ community. The Intelligence Community often lacks reporting that details violent extremist plans to target the LGBTQIA+ community, limiting our ability to warn of immediate or credible threats.

SCOPE: This product highlights opportunities for enhancing public safety stakeholder engagement with the LGBTQIA+ community to mitigate violent extremist threats and build a broader threat prevention culture. In this product, NCTC uses the term “violent extremists” to refer to foreign-based violent extremists and those US-based violent extremists who are directed, enabled, inspired by, or who otherwise affiliate or collaborate with foreign-based violent extremists.

VIOLENT EXTREMIST ATTACKS, PLOTTING, AND MESSAGING THREATS TOWARD THE LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY

📍 ATTACKS/PLOTTING 💬 MESSAGING

📍 JUN 2016	📍 OCT 2022	📍 JUN 2023	💬 JUL 2023	💬 OCT 2023	💬 OCT 2023
An individual inspired by ISIS killed 49 people and wounded 53 others at Pulse Nightclub, which described itself as Orlando, Florida’s premier gay nightclub. Subsequent investigation revealed that the threat actor did not specifically select Pulse to target the LGBTQIA+ community, but authorities have not ruled out personal animosity toward the LGBTQIA+ community as a contributing motivator for the attack. FTOs—including ISIS—praised the Pulse Nightclub attack and may offer inspiration to others to target the LGBTQIA+ community.	An individual killed two people and injured one outside an LGBTQIA+ bar in Bratislava, Slovakia. The attacker authored a manifesto expressing their goal of the “eradication of all Jewish people” and claiming that “Jewish people sought to weaken the white race by promoting the LGBTQIA+ and transgender communities.”	Three alleged ISIS supporters were arrested for trying to attack a Pride parade in Vienna, Austria. The three suspects reportedly planned to use knives and a vehicle as part of the attack.	An identified online group that promotes REMVE ideology and violence published extensive information on potential targets associated with the LGBTQIA+ community, including LGBTQIA+ businesses, clubs, and Pride parades.	An al-Qa’ida–aligned group called for attacks on various minority populations and identified LGBTQIA+ populations as preferred targets. This message was distributed along with previously published al-Qa’ida instructions on how to conduct various types of attacks.	A user of a popular online US video game company posted videos proclaiming allegiance to HAMAS and ISIS while calling for attacks on the LGBTQIA+ community. The videos included simulated violence from a first-person perspective and a warning to potential attackers that the US Government and police were “on the side of” the LGBTQIA+ community.

Resources^a

- **US Violent Extremist Mobilization Indicators Booklet (2021 Edition)** | An NCTC, DHS, and FBI tri-seal product that provides a list of observable behaviors that could help determine whether individuals are preparing to engage in violent extremist activities. https://www.dni.gov/files/NCTC/documents/news_documents/Mobilization_Indicators_Booklet_2021.pdf
- **Community Relations Service (CRS)** | DOJ’s “peacemaker” agency, whose mission is to help resolve tensions in communities across the nation arising from differences of race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, and disability. CRS may be called to help a city or town resolve tensions that stem from community perceptions of bias or a lack of cultural competency among police officers.
 - **CRS Toolkit for Policing** | Police Critical Incident Checklist is a planning resource for police executives to prepare them for responding to a potential controversial incident. <https://www.justice.gov/file/1437326/download>
- **Engaging and Building Relationships with Transgender Communities** | A training program that helps law enforcement officers to develop relationships and improve their interactions with transgender communities and individuals. <https://www.justice.gov/crs/our-work/training/engaging-building-relationships-with-transgender-community>
- **Respecting Identity: Law Enforcement Training and Transgender Community** | Training developed with the Jackson Police Department in Mississippi and members of the transgender community to deliver cultural competency training for law enforcement officers. <https://www.justice.gov/crs/video/respecting-identity-law-enforcement-training-and-transgender-community>
- **Understanding Bias: A Resource Guide** | A resource to assist in understanding and addressing bias and building cultural competency. <https://www.justice.gov/file/1437326/download>
- **Alexandria LGBTQ+ Task Force** | Partnership with several city agencies and community organizations to train thousands of service providers on how to create a safe and welcoming environment for LGBTQIA+ community members. Service providers include law enforcement, social workers, counselors, advocates, attorneys, teachers, administrators, supervisors, clergy, healthcare professionals, firefighters, and other public-sector employees. <https://www.alexandriava.gov/LGBTQ>
- **State and Major Urban Fusion Centers** | Sites for 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>

^a LGBTQIA+ is the acronym referring to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning, intersex, and asexual. The “+” stands for all other related identities not encompassed in the short acronym.

^b These materials are listed to illustrate a variety of offerings and are not to be considered endorsements of the content of the material these organizations offer.



NOTICE: This is a Joint Counterterrorism Assessment Team (JCAT) product. JCAT is a collaboration between NCTC, DHS, and FBI to improve information sharing among federal, state, tribal, territorial governments and private sector partners. JCAT’s products are intended to enhance public safety awareness in light of violent extremist and terrorist threats. Consider the enclosed information within the context of existing laws, regulations, authorities, agreements, policies or procedures. For additional information contact JCAT at JCAT@ODNI.GOV.

Engagement Provides Opportunities To Build Relationships and Mitigate Threats

Tailored engagement between the LGBTQIA+ community and public safety officials could help rapport-building efforts that foster safety and security, address anti-LGBTQIA+ threat concerns, and drive community-based relationships through collaborative and inclusive engagements that contribute to a broader threat prevention culture.

The following are considerations to enhance public safety stakeholder engagement with the LGBTQIA+ community and opportunities to mitigate potential violent extremist threats.

Special Considerations for the Community

- Foster cooperation and garner respect within the community. Ways of being respectful to the LGBTQIA+ community could include: using the pronouns and names provided by the individual whenever possible and understanding the customs and traditions associated with the LGBTQIA+ community. Trust and cooperation may also be enhanced by establishing an easily reachable and searchable online presence geared toward relationships between first responder agencies and the LGBTQIA+ community and by developing specific response protocols for transgender and intersex members of the community who require specialized medical care.
- Build an understanding of vernacular, acronyms, and terminology within the community, such as LGBT, LGBTQIA+, gay, queer, SOGI (sexual orientation and gender identity), and gender expansive. Try to understand the differences between each term and when each is appropriate to use.
- Understand and be able to identify anti-LGBTQIA+ threat language or visuals used by violent extremists that may provide indicators of mobilizing to violence. Some images, speech, and activities that include anti-LGBTQIA+ messages are First Amendment-protected speech. Familiarity with jurisdictional hate crime laws and policies, as well as trends in recent arrests and prosecutions for hate crime-related offenses, could enhance first responder understanding of the threat landscape and assist in determining whether an action is a potential hate crime or is associated with hate ideology. Some violent extremist ideologies that target the LGBTQIA+ community are similar to foreign terrorist and REMVE ideologies that advocate violence against specific religious or ethnic groups.
- Consider limiting gendered data use in reporting and communications. When interacting with the LGBTQIA+ community, recognize that complex social and legal factors may require a person to have identification that does not match gender stereotypes, such as voice or appearance, and that law or safety concerns may require their access to facilities and services that also do match gender stereotypes.

Securing Community Events Through Partnerships

- Consider LGBTQIA+ community celebrations and holidays that create larger than usual concentrations of people in LGBTQIA+ spaces. For example, although Pride Month (June) is relatively well known, it is also important to consider observances such as National Coming Out Day (11 October) or Transgender Day of Remembrance (20 November).
- Remain aware of LGBTQIA+ events and venues in your jurisdiction, especially those that violent extremists cite as contributing to their grievances and that could become targets for violence. Share threat information, as appropriate.
- Collaborate with LGBTQIA+ business owners, community security personnel, and local leaders in creating emergency action plans, business continuity plans, threat assessments, vulnerability assessments, and risk assessments. Create incident response plans that are communicated among stakeholders, aligned with first responder plans, and exercised with the community.
- When engaging with the community, remain aware of the indicators of violent extremist mobilization and report behaviors to the appropriate authorities, such as the FBI or state and local fusion centers.
- Consider partnering with professionals, such as social workers or counselors, when law enforcement must conduct next of kin notifications to individuals who did not previously know that a victim was a member of the LGBTQIA+ community.



Consider establishing an LGBTQIA+ liaison program

Programs should aim to enhance engagements and relationships with the LGBTQIA+ community. These programs might provide information on police services and other community-based resources, such as victim or court advocacy programs, and establish partnerships to encourage dialogues that identify community concerns. For smaller jurisdictions, even one liaison officer can have an impact. Building trust with the community is vital to identifying and averting potential threats. Some members of the LGBTQIA+ community may be hesitant to trust public safety officials and emergency responders, particularly law enforcement, but sustained and genuine partnerships can lead to positive outcomes.

Broaden Outreach To Enhance Collaborative Efforts

Encourage public safety personnel awareness through familiarity with LGBTQIA+ communities, including leaders and facilities, associations, and subgroups. In addition, training can help provide understanding of the potential violent threats against the LGBTQIA+ community.

Establish LGBTQIA+ community relationships in your jurisdiction to share threat information and security preparedness best practices. Establish a way to report suspicious activity or potential threats to law enforcement.





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<https://www.JCAT-url.com>

For further information, please email JCAT
jcat@odni.gov



(U) The Joint Counterterrorism Assessment Team (JCAT) is a collaboration by NCTC, DHS, FBI, state, local, tribal, and territorial government personnel to improve information sharing and enhance public safety. The First Responder's Toolbox is an ad hoc, unclassified reference aid intended to promote counterterrorism coordination among federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial government authorities and partnerships with private sector officials in deterring, preventing, disrupting, and responding to terrorist attacks.