

Planning and Preparedness Can Promote an Effective Response to a Terrorist Attack at Open-Access Events

Terrorist attacks continue to take place at open-access events, mass gatherings, and outside the perimeter of secured events, possibly because of a perceived lack of security, the availability of publicized schedules, and largely unrestricted admittance. Examples of open-access events include marathons, parades, protests, rallies, festivals, fireworks displays, farmers markets, and high-profile funerals and vigils or memorials. Terrorists could also target gatherings located close to ticketed events, such as tailgating adjacent to major sporting events or concerts. Through advanced planning and an understanding of common plots and attack tactics against public events, public safety personnel and event planners will be better prepared to prevent, respond to, and mitigate the effects of terrorist attacks.

SCOPE: This product is intended to assist public safety personnel, security personnel, and other event stakeholders in understanding and implementing protective measures to protect crowds at open-access events, especially those that may have limited security support. This information is a starting point to encourage stakeholders to collaborate and seek further advice, resources, and authorities. This product is meant to be scalable to accommodate a variety of locations and venue sizes.

ATTACK TACTICS: Judging from previous terrorist plots and attacks, terrorists will likely remain interested in conducting opportunistic attacks in Western countries against civilian targets, including mass gatherings. Techniques used in recent terror attacks have included the use of vehicles as weapons, edged weapons, small arms, and IEDs.

- In May 2017, a suicide bomber detonated an IED in the Manchester Arena foyer just after the conclusion of a concert in Manchester, England, killing 23 people, including the attacker, and wounding at least 116 others. The device detonated between the main arena and the neighboring Victoria (Rail) Station.
- In July 2016, a 31-year-old male drove a commercial truck into a crowd celebrating Bastille Day in Nice, France, killing 84 and injuring an additional 300. Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula's second edition of *Inspire* magazine provided a post-attack analysis of the attack, praising the attacker for targeting an area with large crowds and limited egress points.
- In September 2016, an individual was arrested for placing multiple IEDs in residential locations in New York City and New Jersey. Several of the IEDs detonated, including one placed along the route of a charity 5K race in Seaside Park, New Jersey. In October 2017, the suspect was convicted of all eight counts against him, including one count of using a weapon of mass destruction, and was sentenced to life in prison in February 2018.



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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 is intended to promote coordination among intergovernmental authorities and the private sector in identifying, preventing, and responding to terrorist activities. The product should be considered within the context of existing laws, authorities, agreements, policies or procedures. For additional information contact us at JCAT@NCTC.GOV.

English-language terrorist media continues to identify similar gatherings as “soft targets” and promote them as potential attack sites. For example, the third issue of ISIS’s *Rumiyah* magazine suggested attacking “large outdoor conventions and celebrations, pedestrian-congested streets, outdoor markets, festivals, parades, and political rallies.” Additionally, *Inspire* #12 suggested targeting locations “flooded with individuals, e.g., sports events . . . election campaigns, festivals, and other gathering [sic]. The important thing is that you target people and not buildings.” Attacks targeting these types of events will continue to present security challenges to public safety personnel, because attendees are anonymous and generally unscreened for prohibited items.

MITIGATING AGAINST COMMON ATTACK TACTICS: Regardless of the event size, venue, or location, continuous and ongoing efforts to improve interagency coordination and information sharing with event stakeholders will enhance security and improve emergency response. By taking into consideration the most common tactics used to target open-access events and then planning, coordinating, and exercising against them, stakeholders will be better prepared to prevent, respond to, and mitigate the effects of terrorist attacks. To prepare for any potential terrorist attack against open-access events and mass gatherings, organizers and security officials are encouraged to establish partnerships with first responders and private sector stakeholders in advance. This will enhance information sharing, coordination, and potential emergency response concerns. Conducting a risk and vulnerability assessment of the venue in advance will enable stakeholders to identify risks and develop and prioritize associated mitigation efforts. Finally, maintaining vigilance and an appropriate security posture throughout the entire event, from planning and preparation through its conclusion, is an important aspect of site security.

VEHICLES AS WEAPONS: Terrorists may use vehicles to attack pedestrians, deliver explosive devices, or breach physical security barriers. To minimize the lethality and damage caused by vehicle-borne threats, security specialists, architects, engineers, and first responders are reminded to integrate a layered security approach. The security considerations will likely need to incorporate a pedestrian-friendly streetscape, physical security measures, and conventional traffic principles to prevent hostile vehicle access or limit proximity to a site. Public safety personnel and event staff planners may wish to employ the following mitigation options:

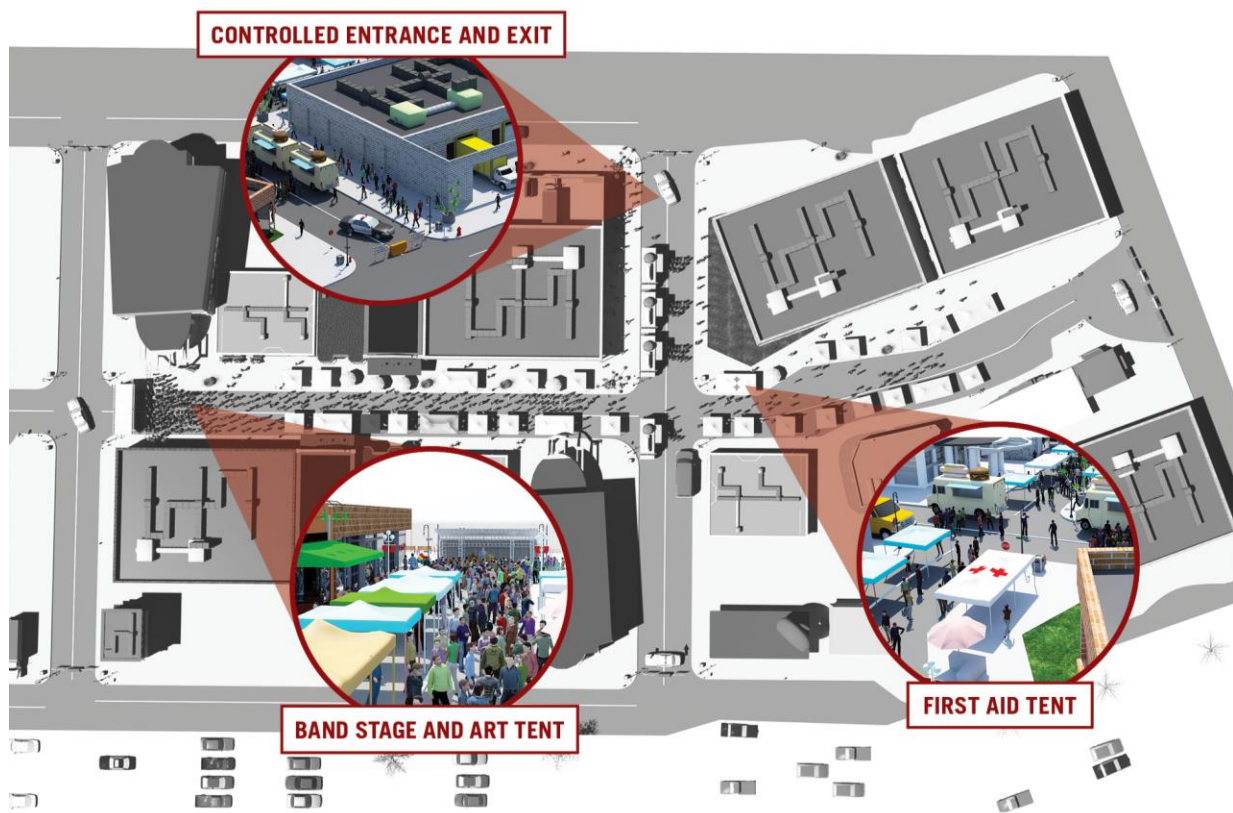
- Consider balancing safety and convenience through the use of physical protection and pedestrian movement limitations, which may be appropriate during events with unrestricted public access. Security personnel may need to consider temporary and re-deployable vehicle barriers to protect and guide pedestrian movement.
- Close adjacent streets, travel lanes, and parking areas to restrict the potential for unscreened vehicles near any intended target(s) and protect pedestrian movement while increasing standoff distances.



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- Install barriers and designate marshaling locations to ensure adequate standoff distances from VBIEDs. Strategically place objects, such as large planter boxes or bollards that can provide extra protection from unauthorized vehicle intrusion and increase standoff distances.
- Ensure external barriers or a strengthened perimeter is complete and appropriately spaced. Incorporate adjacent sidewalks to protect pedestrians as necessary. Space vehicles appropriately to prevent vehicle tailgating or piggybacking.
- Provide an indirect approach to divert vehicle traffic away from security entrances, and reduce the vehicles' approach speed with traffic calming measures to minimize impact and penetration and provide security personnel with additional time to assess vehicles and occupants, so that they can react appropriately.
- Screen for any suspicious behavior of vehicle occupants, and conduct spot checks of vehicle contents. Conduct additional external vehicle screening for suspicious indicators, such as removed, altered, or obstructed license plates and license plates that do not match the VIN (vehicle identification number).



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IEDS; SMALL ARMS; EDGED WEAPONS; AND OTHER ILLEGAL, PROHIBITED, OR SUSPICIOUS ITEMS:

Open-access event planners should consider distributing a specific list of prohibited items to employees, event staff, volunteers, and attendees before the event and posting appropriate signage in conspicuous areas at the event. The list can include items that raise suspicion because of their quantity or characteristics as well as anything illegal. If law enforcement is not on-site, event planners should consider ways to handle prohibited items, such as confiscating the items, having patrons return the items to their vehicle, or placing the items in a temporary storage area away from the event. Additional mitigation efforts may include:

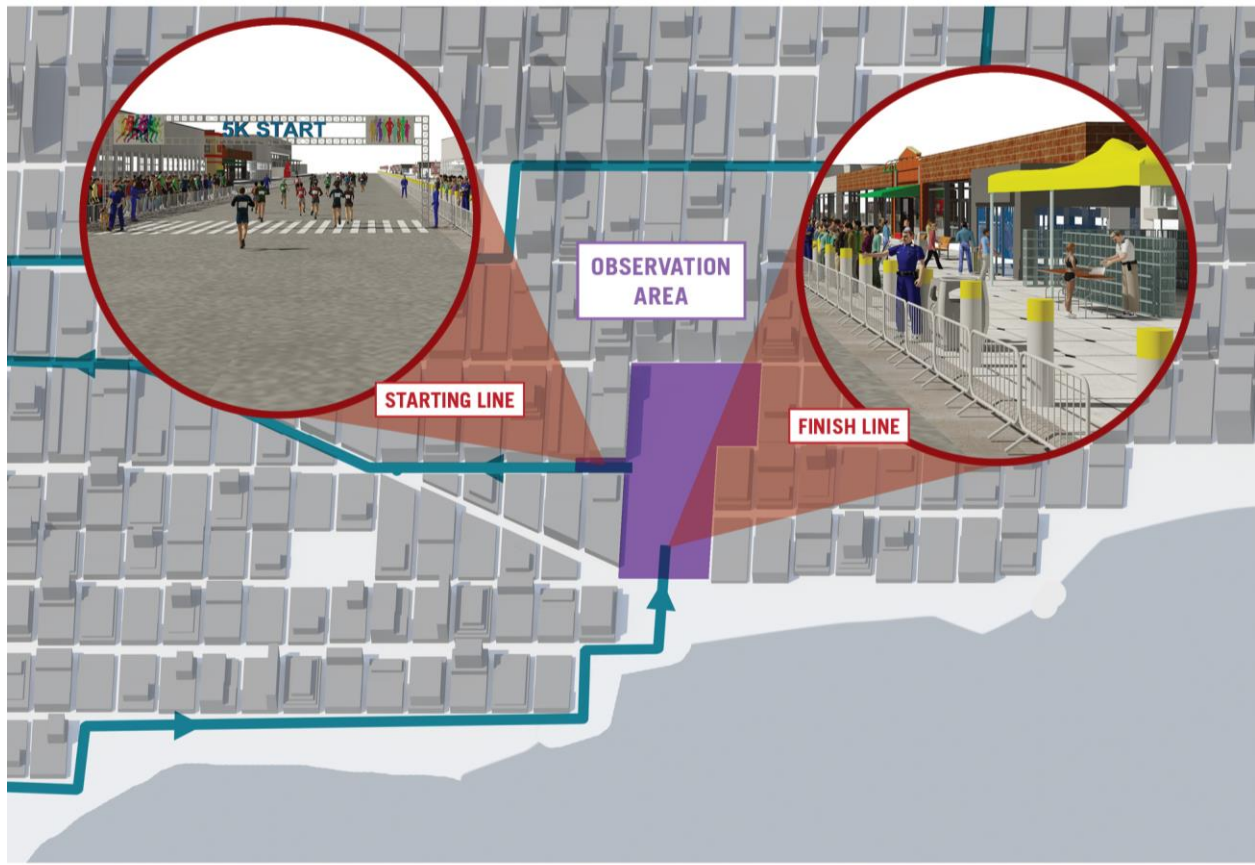
- Providing staff and personnel with information about IED indicators, suspicious behavior indicators, and reporting procedures before the event.
- Removing or relocating hollow items or other objects that can conceal IEDs (trash containers) away from the event “footprint.”
- Conducting roving patrols with explosive detection K9s before and during the event, including screening vehicles and bags as they move into any secure zones.
- Staggering search times and patterns, making them less predictable as countersurveillance measures.
- Remaining cognizant of the potential for secondary attacks, particularly along evacuation routes.
- Setting up an initial screening zone to eliminate prohibited items before attendees enter the primary screening area may allow the overall security process to move faster, reducing the size of crowds and lines at entrances.

Bag searches may be required to identify illegal, prohibited, and suspicious items. During special events, flows of people typically bottleneck at predictable locations, such as security check points. Event planners and public safety personnel may incorporate the following into their planning:

- Limit the amount or size of containers and bags allowed into the area.
- Set up searches in locations that will not impede foot traffic or those without bags.
- Redirect those without bags outside the search area to streamline the inspection process.
- Ensure sufficient room for crowd movement, particularly at the entrances and exits.
- Have an appropriate number of search lines, tables, and bag search staff commensurate with the anticipated flow of persons through each of the venue’s entrances.
- Consider perimeter railing or portable fencing to separate areas where bags have been searched from those where they have not.
- Rotate personnel to preclude complacency during the searches.
- Follow an established response plan when illegal or restricted items are discovered.
- Station plain clothes law enforcement personnel at entry points to perform countersurveillance and identify and report suspicious behaviors.



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OTHER PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

SECURITY: Additional security measures may vary widely on the basis of the characteristics of the event and the availability of resources. Events of varying size and complexity will require tailored planning that incorporate known threat levels, as appropriate. Public safety personnel and event planners are encouraged to develop, assess, and implement a plan, incorporating security best practices and recommendations, some of which are listed below. While not inclusive, this section can serve as an initial checklist.

- Ensure that event staffing levels are consistent with the anticipated attendance, type of event, threat environment, and recognized risk for all hazards.
- Event organizers, private security, and law enforcement are encouraged to perform a robust threat assessment before each event. In addition to terrorism risks, threat assessments may highlight significant or prolific crime trends and provide physical and cyber security assessments.
- Mitigate the threat of food service contamination by increasing awareness among vendors and event officials of the possibility and indicators.



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- The start and finish areas of races, parades, and marathons may be the most populated. Consider providing additional security for those areas on the basis of the threat assessment.
- Before an event, public safety officials are encouraged to consult their fusion center and FBI field office and to review intelligence and open-source reporting to identify potential criminal or terrorism threats or related activities.
- Identify sensitive areas within and around the event that may have the greatest exposure to person- or vehicle-borne threats, encroachment by unauthorized persons, or other potential disruptions, and consider additional security measures for them. Sensitive areas may include stages, medical staging, unified command posts, concession stands, IT systems, and power generators.
- Consider creating safety zones between pedestrians and general vehicular traffic using barriers, fencing, bollards, staged vehicles, or large planters, while maintaining accessible ingress and egress routes for emergency response vehicles.
- If the event takes place in or around ports or marinas or adjacent to waterways and coastal areas, maintain awareness of waterway access points and obscure pedestrian access points via open beaches, boardwalks, and docks. Consider coordinating with the local US Coast Guard Station or Sector.
- Venue staff may use unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) for logistical or media purposes throughout the event. It is critical that security and first responders coordinate the use of legitimate UAS and be alert for potentially suspicious or unrelated UAS activity, as this could be an indicator of preoperational surveillance or a weaponized system.
- If possible and where consistent with law and agency policy, consider preinstalling automated license plate readers at or near the event location to detect vehicles of interest.

PROTESTS, RALLIES, AND DEMONSTRATIONS typically involve constitutionally protected speech and association. Because of the nature of these events, they are often open access and may require unique planning considerations. Because these events can potentially draw large numbers of people in close proximity, they may make attractive targets. Additionally, violent extremists have used protests and demonstrations overseas to conduct preoperational surveillance, gain proximity to targets of interest, and attempt to incite violence. It is important for public safety personnel to recognize that domestic protests, rallies, and demonstrations are different from other events discussed in this document, because they may:

- Be driven by world events,
- Be spontaneous or unplanned or lack appropriate permits,
- Consist of mobile groups following unknown routes,
- Involve an unknown or unexpected number of participants, and
- Attract spectators, including opposition groups.

Through enhanced information sharing, public safety personnel who are prepared for known protests, rallies, and demonstrations can assist in potential threat identification and mitigation and will be more effective when responding to terrorist attacks against this category of events.





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JOINT PREPARATION: To ensure event stakeholders are prepared to respond adequately to terrorist attacks or other emergencies, event planners and public safety personnel are encouraged to engage in joint walkthroughs, exercises, or training before the event. Security and access modifications made for special events may affect accessibility, communications, and response times while significantly altering the scene, even for stakeholders familiar with a particular area or venue. These activities can be tailored to the size and location of each event, ranging from workshop discussions, tabletop exercises, up to full-scale live exercises. For example, the National Incident Management System provides a scalable guide for departments and agencies at all levels. Exercises can consider addressing issues such as:

- Establishing a unified command post to coordinate the response of law enforcement and emergency medical and fire services and ensuring that appropriate staff from fusion centers, emergency operations centers, and other responding agencies are included.
- Locating the unified command post inside a buffer zone to mitigate the impact of a secondary attack, particularly one involving IEDs.
- Activating memoranda of understanding and agreement and other mutual response arrangements within and adjacent to the area of operations or jurisdiction.
- Establishing a perimeter to protect the crime scene and divert any unnecessary pedestrian or vehicular traffic.
- Parking emergency response vehicles so they do not impede access for other emergency response or medical transport vehicles.



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- Addressing recent terrorist tactics, such as the use of secondary IEDs or multiple shooters.
- Establishing interoperable communications for all responders to ensure proper command and control.
- Notifying local medical facilities and coordinating transportation for the wounded. Law enforcement agencies are encouraged to reach out to these facilities as well, to coordinate security measures and evidence collection.
- Establishing which ingress and egress points will be open and to which type of traffic and knowing which entrances will accommodate particular emergency response vehicles.

INFORMATION SHARING: Regular information sharing through routine exchanges, briefings, and other collaborative opportunities is critical before, during, and after a planned event. Pre-event planning should incorporate input from all supporting agencies, including law enforcement, fire services, emergency medical services, emergency managers, event organizers, city planners, and others on the basis of jurisdictional needs or requirements. Event planners and staff and public safety personnel will want to be aware of their information sharing roles and responsibilities during the event and how those roles and responsibilities might change during an emergency. Lead law enforcement agencies can provide incident action plans to partner agencies for situational awareness and appropriate contact information in the event of a critical incident.

COMMUNICATIONS: Plans should address a variety of issues, such as information sharing across multiple levels, including among event planners, first responders, the public, and the media. Event planners are encouraged to work with first responders to develop a communication plan incorporating ways to address both emergency and nonemergency information. Consider incorporating the following into a communication plan:

- A joint information center to share information with local media and the public.
- Emergency response plans that establish primary and secondary methods of communication among venue planners, first responders, security personnel, and other partners.
- Routine audits, checks, and updates of emergency notification systems, particularly among event planners and agencies that may provide mutual aid during an event.
- Best practices in granting members of the media access to the event and providing them with a communication platform (toll-free numbers, websites, or social media accounts) with which to deliver updates, inform the public of how they can report suspicious activity, or disseminate other information related to the event.
- Drafted responses to the most likely scenarios, to ensure that a starting template is ready if an incident requiring a public response occurs.
- Identification and testing of emergency and alternate methods of communication, as the main communication lines may be overwhelmed during an attack.



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MEDICAL, HEALTH, AND FIRST AID SERVICES: First responders and event organizers will want to consider planning for medical emergencies involving a large number of people of different ages, including those with special medical needs, which would very likely strain resources during and after an attack. Emergency responders and local medical facilities are encouraged to have plans in place that coordinate rapid access to wounded individuals, including the arrival of the injured at these facilities via nontraditional means of emergency transport (taxis, good Samaritans). Public safety and local medical personnel may want to consider the following:

- Review and coordinate mutual-aid agreements and medical-staging locations in advance, taking into account attendance estimates.
- Train and prepare personnel, event staff and volunteers, who may be called upon to provide first aid and transport the wounded or injured to medical facilities, reducing the dependency on first responders during a mass casualty response. This can include training in the use of tourniquets.
- As bystanders frequently provide assistance during mass casualty incidents, public safety personnel, event planners, and community groups may want to host bystander training programs. DHS offers a variety of bystander training resources through its “Stop the Bleed” program, including the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s “Until Help Arrives.”
- Medical facilities should consider developing or updating plans to deal with possible shortages of blood, equipment, supplies, and personnel.
- Medical facilities and emergency departments will want to be aware that patients arriving on foot or via nontraditional means of transportation may crowd or block the entrances to their facilities, potentially blocking access for emergency vehicles.
- In case of an attack, clinics and medical facilities closest to the event may be called upon to begin receiving injured individuals, even if they are not considered trauma centers.

RESOURCES

- Food and Drug Administration Suspicious Activity Awareness Guide: <https://www.fda.gov/downloads/Food/FoodDefense/UCM245306.pdf>
- DHS Office for Bombing Prevention (OBP) *Counter-IED Resources Guide*, March 2017: <https://www.dhs.gov/publication/obp-counter-ied-resources-guide>
- DHS Active Shooter Preparedness Program: <https://www.dhs.gov/active-shooter-preparedness>
- DHS FEMA National Incident Management System: Intelligence/Investigations Function Guidance and Field Operations Guide: https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1382093786350-411d33add2602da9c867a4fbcc7ff20e/NIMS_Intel_Invest_Function_Guidance_FINAL.pdf
- DHS Critical Infrastructure Vulnerability Assessments: <https://www.dhs.gov/critical-infrastructure-vulnerability-assessments>
- DHS “Stop the Bleed” program: <https://www.dhs.gov/stopthebleed>
- DHS FEMA “Until Help Arrives” program: <https://community.fema.gov/until-help-arrives>
- FBI Active Shooter Resources: <https://www.fbi.gov/about/partnerships/office-of-partner-engagement/active-shooter-resources>



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- DOJ Office of Community Oriented Policing Services – Planning And Managing Security For Major Special Events: Guidelines for Law Enforcement: <https://www.hsd1.org/?view&did=482649>
- American Red Cross Tourniquets: <http://redcrosstourniquet.com/>
- Committee for Tactical Emergency Casualty Care: <http://www.c-tecc.org/>
- American College of Emergency Physicians – Bombings: Injury Pattern and Care: <https://www.acep.org/blastinjury/>



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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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