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Public Transportation ISAC Transit & Rail Intelligence Awareness Daily Report (TRIAD)

December 20, 2024

SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY & INCIDENT REPORTS

Shouting Madman Randomly Stabs NYC Subway Rider Just Hours After Teen Slashed In Separate Transit Attack: Cops

New York Post, 12/18/2024

[New York] A shouting maniac stabbed a straphanger watching Netflix in an unprovoked attack on board a Brooklyn train Tuesday night – and now the victim says he'll think twice before taking the subway again. The 32-year-old victim was watching a show on board a northbound Q train at Park Place and Seventh Avenue in Park Slope just after 11 p.m. when the stranger suddenly lashed out, according to the victim and sources. "I was coming home from work, to Astoria," the victim, who did not want his name used, told The Post in Spanish. "I was watching a show on Netflix. Then a guy came into the train and started to yell things at me. "I didn't pay any attention to him because I thought he was crazy," the rider added. "But then he hit me, he stabbed me with something in the chest and my arm." The injured man was taken to Brooklyn Methodist Hospital, where he received two stitches in his arm and two in his chest. <https://nypost.com/2024/12/18/us-news/shouting-madman-stabs-nyc-subway-rider-who-was-watching-netflix-hours-after-teen-slashed-in-separate-transit-attack-cops/>

Woman Charged After Punching 63-Year-Old Woman At Bus Stop In Center City

FOX 29, 12/18/2024

[Philadelphia, Pennsylvania] A 32-year-old woman has been arrested and charged after police say she attacked a woman while waiting for a bus in Center City last week. During the brazen attack in broad daylight last Wednesday, a 63-year-old woman was waiting to board the bus at 1100 Market Street when she was approached by another woman. Police said the female suspect started screaming, before eventually punching the victim in the face for an "unknown reason." Philadelphia police are asking for the public's help to identify the suspect of a brazen attack in broad daylight last week. Mariah Speller, 32, was arrested Tuesday evening and charged with Simple Assault and REAP. The punch knocked the woman to the ground. It is unknown if she sustained any injuries. <https://www.fox29.com/news/woman-charged-after-punching-63-year-old-woman-bus-stop-center-city>

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Teenager Charged For Allegedly Threatening To Shoot, Stab Passenger On MTA Bus

WSMV, 12/18/2024

[Nashville, Tennessee] A young woman was arrested after an MTA bus driver witnessed her threaten to shoot another passenger on the bus on Tuesday. Officers with the Metro Nashville Police Department were flagged down by a bus driver at the MTA station who reported witnessing a woman threaten to shoot another woman on her bus. The arrest affidavit states the officers located 18-year-old Brookelin Jackson, who the driver identified as the suspect in the incident. According to the affidavit, the female victim told officers that Jackson had stolen her child's cell phone and she was attempting to get it back when Jackson reached into her backpack and threatened to shoot and stab the woman. The officers searched Jackson's bag and found a large silver and black blade, along with the cell phone she allegedly stole from the child. Jackson was arrested and given a medical evaluation before she was booked on an aggravated assault with a deadly weapon charge. <https://www.wsmv.com/2024/12/18/teenager-charged-allegedly-threatening-shoot-stab-passenger-mta-bus/>

TERRORISM & EXTREMISM

Record-Breaking Number Of Hate Crimes In LA County Reported In 2023

East Bay Times, 12/12/2024

A record number of hate crimes in LA County were reported in 2023, according to a report released Wednesday by the county's Human Relations Commission, the highest count since the commission began recording such incidents. The 1,350 hate crimes reported were up from 930 in 2022, a 45% increase. "I will tell you that I was shocked to learn that and taken aback ...," said Robin Toma, Executive Director of the HRC. "However, when I thought about it, I realized that one of the things that is happening is that we are succeeding in a certain way in getting people to report hate." One reason for the spike is that more people are reporting hate crimes without the need to involve law enforcement. ... The largest number of reported hate crimes in 2023 were motivated by race, ethnicity or national origin, which accounted for almost half of all reported hate crimes. Religiously motivated hate crimes, which made up the second largest group, increased by 90%, from 153 in 2022 to 290 in 2023. Crimes targeting Jewish people were the largest number ever reported and sharply increased by 91%, from 127 in 2022 and to 242 in 2023. The number of reported anti-Muslim crimes more than doubled from seven to 19. <https://www.eastbaytimes.com/2024/12/12/record-breaking-number-of-hate-crimes-in-la-county-reported-in-2023/>

ANALYST COMMENTARY: In September 2024, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) released the 2023 Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program data detailing U.S. crime statistics as reported to them for 2023. The 2023 UCR received reports from law enforcement agencies serving approximately 95 percent of the U.S. population. According to the 2023 UCR hate crime data, law enforcement agencies in the U.S. reported 11,862 hate crime incidents, up from the 11,634 reported in 2022. Of those 11,862

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reported hate crimes, 52.5 percent were motivated by racial or ethnic bias, 22.5 percent by religious bias, and 18.4 percent by sexual orientation bias. The recent findings of the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations (LACCHR) 2023 hate crime report for Los Angeles County mirror the UCR's national findings in regard to motivation, with approximately 45 percent of the 1,350 reported hate crimes in the Los Angeles area being motivated by racial bias, 20 percent being motivated by religious bias, and 18 percent being motivated by sexual orientation bias. Despite the 2023 increases in reported hate crimes over 2022, the U.S. as a whole also saw a 3 percent decrease in overall violent crimes during the same period. The 2023 UCR can be found at: <https://www.fbi.gov/news/press-releases/fbi-releases-2023-crime-in-the-nation-statistics>

Virginia College Student Arrested By FBI For Plotting Terrorist Attack On Israeli Consulate *Washington Examiner, 12/20/2024*

A Virginia college student was arrested by the FBI this week for allegedly plotting a terrorist attack on the Israeli Consulate in New York City. Abdullah Ezzeldin Taha Mohamed Hassan, an Egyptian national and 18-year-old student at George Mason University in Virginia, was taken into custody on Tuesday by the FBI Washington Field Office's Joint Terrorism Task Force. He was busted for telling his plans for the attack to an undercover FBI informant. He faces federal charges on one count of "demonstrating how to manufacture an explosive with intent to murder internationally protected persons," according to reports. He reportedly referred to the consulate as a "goldmine of targets" for such violent terrorist attacks. Additionally, Hassan shared radical Islamic jihadist propaganda, including a video on how to kill Jewish people, and explained to the undercover FBI informant detailed instructions on how to join the Islamic State, the Times of Israel reported. He also sent the informant bomb-making instructions and recommended including 30 mm aluminum ball bearings for shrapnel to cause extra harm. Hassan also told the informant to "livestream the attack" so that he could "share with ISIS."

<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/3266537/college-student-fbi-plotting-terrorist-attack/>

SECURITY & SAFETY AWARENESS

Fatal Stabbing Of King County Metro Bus Driver Highlights Seattle Transit Safety Concerns *KUOW, 12/18/2024*

[Seattle, Washington] A King County Metro bus driver was fatally stabbed in Seattle's University District neighborhood early Wednesday morning. Shawn Yim, 59, was stabbed in the chest amid an altercation with a passenger, officials say. The Seattle Police Department has identified 53-year-old Richard Sitzlack as a suspect in the stabbing, connecting clothing seen in video surveillance footage with descriptions provided to police. An initial K9 search for the suspect unsuccessful, and police are asking anyone with information about Sitzlack's whereabouts to call 911 immediately. Leaders of the union representing

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Metro transit operators say the stabbing is part of a larger pattern of violence aimed at bus drivers and passengers. <https://www.kuow.org/stories/king-county-metro-bus-driver-killed-in-fatal-u-district-stabbing>

Chicago Crime: 14-Year-Old Boy Arrested In Connection With Series Of CTA Robberies, Assaults *FOX 32, 12/19/2024*

[Chicago, Illinois] A 14-year-old boy was arrested this week in connection with a series of robberies and assaults on CTA platforms over the past five weeks. The juvenile faces multiple felony charges, including four counts of aggravated battery to a transit employee or passenger, four counts of robbery, two counts of attempted robbery, one count of armed robbery with a firearm and one count of aggravated robbery involving a firearm. ... Police identified the teen as one of the offenders involved in these incidents, which primarily took place on train platforms. The juvenile was arrested Thursday and charged with the crimes. No further details have been released by authorities.

<https://www.fox32chicago.com/news/chicago-crime-14-year-old-boy-arrested-connection-series-cta-robberies-assaults>

Edinburgh Buses: Call To Remove Bus Passes From Young People Responsible For Anti-Social Behaviour *Edinburgh News, 12/19/2024*

[Edinburgh, Scotland] Edinburgh council is calling for concessionary bus passes to be removed from young people who repeatedly carry out antisocial behaviour on buses or trams. Transport convener Stephen Jenkinson said a rise in violence and anti-social behaviour towards bus drivers was causing growing concern in many communities. And the council agreed to write to the Scottish Government, urging swift action to address antisocial behaviour and violence. Cllr Jenkinson said: "This issue has been particularly prominent on Lothian Buses in Edinburgh, where a string of incidents over recent months has raised alarms for both public safety and the welfare of staff. "The under-22 free travel pass scheme introduced in 2022 was designed to provide young people with accessible transportation, reduce costs and encourage sustainable travel. "And whilst its benefits cannot be overstated, with over 100 million journeys across Scotland so far, it has undoubtedly brought some unintended consequences. In recent month, particularly October and November this year, we have seen heightened reports of vandalism, verbal and physical threats targeted specifically at bus drivers. Lothian Buses alone have reported damage totaling £1,700 in broken windows in just three days.

<https://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/news/edinburgh-buses-call-to-remove-bus-passes-from-young-people-responsible-for-anti-social-behaviour-4917442>

ANALYST COMMENTARY: The community of Edinburgh, Scotland wanted to support their youth and increase ridership on public transportation, so they issued free travel passes to everyone under 22 years old. The effort to increase ridership worked, but with the unintended consequence of giving unruly juveniles free access to public transit who were not using it for any gainful or legitimate purpose. Vandalism and crime followed, along with an increase in violence and threats directed at bus drivers. The National Institute of Health (NIH) reported that Europe and Australia are contending with

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increasing violence and radicalization of juveniles, and in the United States, transportation agencies are struggling with increasing violence also directed at transit operators. On 6 December 2024, Five Eyes, a cooperative intelligence effort formed following WWII between the United States, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, published a joint intelligence product focusing on analyzing youth radicalization. Using data from all involved countries, they found that approximately 20 percent of their terrorism cases involved juveniles. The study determined that factors such as social media outlets may contribute to unbalanced thinking and decision making which leads to violent and anti-social behavior. To address the rapidly escalating epidemic of youth violence, on 27 March 2024, Belgium published their own study titled "Youth Radicalization and Social Media" which examined the Millennial, Gen-Z, and Gen Alpha demographics and the social media that is linking them to increased violence and terrorism. The study found that social media platforms are an effective recruiting tool and vehicle for the jihadist movement and the incitement toward violence, claiming that "Before the police operation coordinated by Europol which disrupted jihadist networks on Telegram in November 2019, Telegram was the Islamic State's main propaganda channel." Taking a proactive approach to counter this trend, the European Union (EU) established an EU Youth Strategy which seeks to encourage young people to engage and become active citizens involved in democracy and society which can be found at: https://youth.europa.eu/strategy_en

Experts Warn Next Two Weeks Busiest For Holiday Travel, Offer Important Safety Tips

CBS Iowa, 12/18/2024

More people in the Midwest will be traveling in the next two weeks compared to this time last year, AAA anticipates. Before you hit the road for the holidays, experts warn you need to be patient, prepared and leave plenty of time in your schedule in case of any delays. Iowa State Patrol Trooper Bob Conrad said it's important to be ready to share the road. He said to make sure you're changing lanes safely and keep a good distance from the person in front of you. "Something happens in front of you, it can happen quite quickly," Conrad said. "We see a lot of crashes on 380 where people slam on their brakes and someone's not paying attention, or there's not enough following distance, and they're involved in a crash." <https://cbs2iowa.com/news/local/experts-warn-next-two-weeks-busiest-for-holiday-travel-offer-important-safety-tips>

ANALYST COMMENTARY: The surge of travel around the Christmas and New Year's holidays can lead to complications with transportation infrastructure, particularly when overwhelming numbers of holiday travelers hit the roads at the same time as winter weather. USA Today is advising that the worst time to travel this holiday season are the weekends preceding Christmas Day and New Years Day, with the single worst day for travel predicted to be 22 December 2024, according to Bob Pishue, transportation analyst at INRIX. There is far less traffic on the day's themselves if logistically possible for the traveler. In addition to the "regular" holiday undertaken by people visiting friends and family, the American Automobile Association (AAA) reports that many people also flock to warmer locales during the winter. According to AAA, the top three travel destinations are in Florida with most of the

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remaining top ten being in warm and sunny climates. The top ten domestic travel destinations include Orlando, Fort Lauderdale, and Miami, Florida; Anaheim/Los Angeles, California; Tampa, Florida; Las Vegas, Nevada; Honolulu, Hawaii; Charleston, South Carolina; New Orleans, Louisiana; and New York. Many state and local government organizations have published holiday travel advisories for their constituents, warning people to check road conditions before embarking and to allow plenty of extra time to arrive at their destinations. In New York and other large metropolitan areas with robust public transit networks, public transportation organizations are encouraging locals to utilize public transportation to reduce the congestion on surface streets, and often add expanded services to account for increased ridership.

REEF Act Heads to President's Desk

Association of American Railroads, 12/18/2024

Railroad unemployment and sickness benefits will be fully restored for the more than 200,000 railroad workers and their families as the Railroad Employee Equity and Fairness (REEF) Act heads to President Biden's desk for signature. Included in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), this important legislation will finally remove these benefits from budget sequestration and restore nearly \$100 in monthly benefits to railroad employees. Unlike other unemployment insurance benefits, Railroad Unemployment Insurance is fully funded through payroll taxes and surcharges paid exclusively by the railroads and automatically adjusted to meet demand, ensuring the funds remain solvent. As a result, sequestration cuts to railroad unemployment benefits have never reduced the federal deficit because no taxpayer money funds the program. Railroaders and their families rely on these benefits to see them through tough times, and without the REEF Act, they would have faced additional annual cuts to unemployment insurance and supplemental sickness benefits through at least 2030.

<https://www.aar.org/news/reef-act-heads-to-presidents-desk/>

CYBERSECURITY

Chinese EagleMsgSpy Spyware Found Exploiting Mobile Devices Since 2017

Hacker News, 12/11/2024

Cybersecurity researchers have discovered a novel surveillance program that's suspected to be used by Chinese police departments as a lawful intercept tool to gather a wide range of information from mobile devices. The Android tool, codenamed EagleMsgSpy by Lookout, has been operational since at least 2017, with artifacts uploaded to the VirusTotal malware scanning platform as recently as September 25, 2024. "The surveillanceware consists of two parts: an installer APK, and a surveillance client that runs headlessly on the device when installed," Kristina Balaam, senior staff threat intelligence researcher at Lookout, said in a technical report shared with The Hacker News. "EagleMsgSpy collects extensive data from the user: third-party chat messages, screen recording and screenshot capture, audio recordings,

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call logs, device contacts, SMS messages, location data, [and] network activity."

<https://thehackernews.com/2024/12/chinese-eaglemsgspy-spyware-found.html>

ANALYST COMMENTARY: EagleMsgSpy represents a sophisticated evolution in surveillance malware, with features tailored to covertly monitor and exfiltrate sensitive data from mobile devices, ostensibly under the guise of lawful use. What stands out is its reliance on physical access for initial deployment, a tactic that, while limiting scalability, ensures stealth by sidestepping typical remote exploitation methods. This approach raises questions about the operational trade-offs between targeted surveillance and broad attack vectors. The overlap with other China-linked tools like PluginPhantom and CarbonSteal is concerning, suggesting a coordinated or shared development ecosystem for surveillance software targeting specific groups or regions, such as Tibetan and Uyghur communities. The use of WebSockets and the STOMP protocol for C2 communications highlights an effort to maintain reliable, real-time control of compromised devices, while the application of tools like ApkToolPlus to obfuscate code reflects a trend towards using off-the-shelf solutions for operational security. Organizations and individuals, particularly those at risk of being targeted by state-level actors, should be aware of this tool's capabilities and deployment methods. The physical access requirement suggests that ensuring device security through measures like USB data-blocking adapters, robust device lock policies, and awareness of potential social engineering tactics could mitigate such threats. Furthermore, the potential for an iOS version underscores the need for vigilance across platforms. Comprehensive endpoint monitoring and anomaly detection tools could also help identify unauthorized activity stemming from such malware.

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