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OVER-THE-ROAD-BUS INTELLIGENCE AWARENESS DAILY (OTRBIAD) REPORT

February 3, 2025

SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY & INCIDENT REPORTS

Protest In Downtown Los Angeles Over ICE Raids Blocks 101 Freeway

CBS, 2/3/2025

[Los Angeles, California] A large crowd gathered in downtown Los Angeles on Sunday to protest the recent ICE raids and deportations. The gathering closed the 101 Freeway for hours. Police declared an unlawful assembly and forced demonstrators to disperse during the daylong event. The protest began on Olvera Street and grew to a few thousand people, who marched to City Hall before walking onto the freeway. Some protesters sat down in lanes, while many others held Mexican flags and signs with phrases such as, "Nobody is illegal," and "Viva Mexico," as they marched along the busy thoroughfare while being closely watched by law enforcement. Flags of several other nations were also seen. <https://www.cbsnews.com/losangeles/news/protest-erupts-in-downtown-los-angeles-over-surge-in-ice-raids-some-demonstrators-block-101-freeway/>

ANALYST COMMENTARY: Since 25 January 2025, large scale protests have broken out in eight U.S. states regarding U.S. President Donald Trump's policies promoting mass deportations of illegal immigrants. The deportation policies have been further enabled by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) which has moved to authorize certain federal law enforcement officers to carry out immigration related duties and functions. Large scale protests with participants numbering between a few hundred and several thousand have been held in Alabama, California, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, South Carolina, and Texas thus far, and numerous other protests and demonstrations have been planned for dozens of other states. The most recent large-scale protests took place in Los Angeles, California on 2 February 2025, during which several thousand individuals marched through and occupied portions of the 101 Freeway near downtown Los Angeles, disrupting traffic in the area for several hours. Local law enforcement declared the assembly unlawful and by 8 p.m., the protest had largely been dispersed. Following the freeway blockage, approximately 250 demonstrators attended a second "rally" in the Los Angeles area "where police claimed drivers were performing stunts and blocking traffic with their cars." One Metrobus was also reportedly vandalized with anti-Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) rhetoric during the protests. One person was detained in connection with the protests, though it is unclear what they are being charged with. The Los Angeles protests, particularly the blocking of major transit arteries, have received significant praise on social media from supporters of the movement. It is likely that this online praise, combined with the

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perceived “success” of the protest in impeding traffic and transit operations, will embolden further, similar demonstrations also targeting highways and roadways.

New York Kids Take Over, Drive Subway and Post It on Instagram: Police

Newsweek, 1/28/2025

[New York] A group of children boarded an unoccupied subway train on Saturday and took it for a drive, according to the New York City Police Department (NYPD). The joyride marks the second subway train theft carried out by youths in recent months, the NYPD said. In September, a pair of 17-year-olds were accused of operating and crashing an unoccupied subway at the Briarwood station, charged with criminal mischief and reckless endangerment. An NYPD spokesperson told Newsweek that officials responded to a report of train vandalism near the Forest Hills-71st Avenue subway station around 10:20 p.m. Saturday. MTA employees told police that a group of unidentified people entered an unoccupied “R” train and operated it “a short distance,” adding that they also broke several of the train’s windows. No injuries were reported. ... A transit supervisor told officials that the train had been parked on a layup track. When transit workers returned, the train was nearby, but not in the spot where it had been parked. <https://www.newsweek.com/new-york-city-teens-drive-subway-instagram-police-2022419>

'Voices In Head' Told Homeless Man To Shove Woman, 23, In Front Of New York Subway Train

The Mirror, 1/29/2025

[New York] A young woman was shoved in front of a subway train in New York City by a homeless man when he claims he was told to do it by the “voices in his head”. Markeese Brazelis, 26, is accused of pushing the 23-year-old victim in front of the train at the 175th Street station on Monday in front of shocked commuters. Incredibly, she survived the encounter as she was hit by the train and it pushed her back on the platform. Brazelis was taken into custody when he was recognised by passers by who alerted police. As he was being led out by officers, he told PIX11 the “voices” had told him to do it. He added: “I didn't need to do that, it wasn't right.” The victim was taken to St Luke’s Hospital with bruises to her face, hands, knees, and shoulder, according to sources. She told the publication she was “pushed out of nowhere” and added it was one of the worst days of her life. Brazelis faces two felony charges, including assault with the intent to cause serious injury with a weapon which carries a prison term of seven years. <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/us-news/voices-head-told-homeless-man-34575070>

CTA Red Line Robbery: 10 Suspects Arrested After Attacking, Robbing 3 On Train

FOX 32, 1/30/2025

[Chicago, Illinois] Ten suspects were taken into custody after a robbery on a CTA Red Line train, where the group attacked passengers and stole their belongings. All suspects and the victims' property were located within 15 minutes of the robbery being reported, police said. The incident happened at 9:30 p.m., Jan. 26, in the 1100 block of S. State Street, in the South Loop neighborhood. The group of suspects approached three men riding the Red Line train. One suspect implied he had a gun and demanded the

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victims' property, according to Chicago police. The suspects then attacked the victims and took their belongings. They remained on the northbound train, while the victims were forced to leave the train car, authorities said. <https://www.fox32chicago.com/news/cta-red-line-robbery-10-suspects-arrested>

Straphanger Slashed Repeatedly On NYC Subway In Unprovoked Attack As Spate Of Train Violence Grips City

New York Post, 1/28/2025

[New York] A violent menace repeatedly slashed a 46-year-old straphanger in an unprovoked early-morning attack on a Manhattan subway train Tuesday, cops said. The victim was riding a southbound No. 2 at West 96th Street and Broadway around 4:30 a.m. when 54-year-old Angel Alvarado allegedly approached him, pulled out a knife and repeatedly slashed him, police said. NYPD officers busted Alvarado at the scene and charged him with first- and second-degree assault, as well as criminal possession of a weapon, authorities said. A knife was recovered at the scene.

<https://nypost.com/2025/01/28/us-news/man-slashed-repeatedly-on-nyc-subway-in-unprovoked-attack-after-spate-of-train-violence/>

TERRORISM & EXTREMISM

2025 Homeland Security Threat Forecast: Part I, Terrorism

Homeland Security Today, 1/28/2025

We at Homeland Security Today have once again reached out to our Editorial Board, columnists, and community of subject-matter experts to ask for their assessment of the threats facing the nation in 2025. As our readers know, our experts come from a unique cadre with practical experience who have devoted their careers to defending and protecting America. In this three-part series, we share their assessments of the risks and vulnerabilities that should be at the forefront of our community. "As much as some things change, some things remain the same." These forecasts converge on broad themes that are no surprise to the homeland security community – terrorism, unmanned aircraft systems, cyber risks, threats from China, insider threats – and they also present broader topics, such as the national debt and our healthcare infrastructure, as areas of vulnerability that require immediate attention and focus. The homeland security community is faced with potential risks from numerous political, social, domestic and international threats and must adapt to the evolving technological landscape like artificial intelligence and quantum computing, while maintaining vigilance toward the ongoing threat from the Taliban, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), China, and Russia. <https://www.hstoday.us/featured/2025-homeland-security-threat-forecast-part-i-terrorism/>

ANALYST COMMENTARY: Despite a slight increase in jihadist-related terrorist attacks in the U.S. in 2024 from 2023, terrorist attacks in the U.S. motivated by violent jihadist ideology have been on the decline since the Islamic State Group was destabilized overseas by coalition efforts in 2019. According

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to the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), "Between 2013 and 2019, jihadists conducted 27 attacks, and 46 jihadist plots were disrupted—an average of about 10 attacks or plots per year. ... between the beginning of 2020 and New Year's Day 2025, CSIS counted 8 jihadist attacks and 10 disrupted plots—an average of about 3 attacks or plots per year." CSIS also found that the lethality of jihadist attacks in the U.S. has declined dramatically since 2019, with an average number of fatalities per attack going from 3 before 2019 down to 0.4 in the years following. Regarding far-left and far-right extremist attacks, the Anti-Defamation League's (ADL) Center on Extremism (COE) recently reported that "In 2024, COE tracked seven different terror incidents connected to Islamist extremism, compared to six incidents tied to far-right extremism and four incidents related to far-left or other extremism." According to a September 2024 report by Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED), instances of political violence in the U.S. involving far-right extremists were down from 90 reported incidents in 2020 to under 10 incidents as of September 2024. ACLED attributes this to a decline in far-right extremist organized events. ACLED reports that one of the largest far-right extremist organizations in the U.S., the Proud Boys, has seen a strong decline in organized events and activities over the past few years, many of which have historically resulted in violence. In 2021, the Proud Boys held over 160 events, but that number has shrunk each year, and in 2024, less than 20 were reported.

No Plans To Expand Definition Of Extremism - Minister *BBC, 1/28/2025*

There are no plans to expand the definition of extremism, Home Office minister Dan Jarvis has said, following reports it could be broadened to cover potentially violent environmentalists and misogynists. He said Islamist extremism followed by far right extremism were the biggest threats but added that the Southport attack did show a need for "action on those drawn towards mixed ideologies and violence-obsessed young people". It comes after parts of a Home Office-ordered report were leaked to the right-leaning Policy Exchange think tank, which criticised proposals to look at behaviour over ideology. Jarvis said the report was "not current or new policy". Asked about the report earlier, Sir Keir Starmer said the government was "looking carefully" at how to approach the issue. "It's very important that we are focused on the threats so we can deploy our resources properly and therefore we're looking carefully where the key challenges are." <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c3rwwjlln9wo>

ANALYST COMMENTARY: On 29 July 2024, Axel Rudakubana, then age 17, carried out a mass stabbing attack at a children's dance studio in Southport, England, while 26 children ages six through ten were attending a yoga and dance workshop. Rudakubana killed three children and injured eight other children and two adults who attempted to stop him before he was arrested. The investigation into the incident revealed that Rudakubana had expressed violent and concerning behavior in the past, including multiple instances of taking weapons to school and making claims that he wanted to kill schoolyard bullies. Prior to the attack, Rudakubana accessed Al Qaeda training materials, extensively researched videos of violent acts, including murders and torture, and manufactured ricin. Rudakubana had been referred to law enforcement through the UK's Prevent Program at least three times, once for

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violent statements made at his school, and twice for accessing terrorist content online, though he was never accepted into the program because his “concerning” behavior did not meet the UK’s threshold for terrorist or extremist ideology. On 23 January 2025, Rudakubana was sentenced to life in prison after he pled guilty to 16 charges, including one charge for accessing terrorist material, but prosecutors ruled his attack was not motivated by terrorism. Instead, they claimed he was motivated by a desire to commit mass violence. The case has sparked intense debate in the UK regarding what behaviors ought to be considered extremist in nature. The UK Prime Minister has said that Rudakubana “represented a new kind of threat, distinct from politically or ideologically motivated terrorism, with ‘acts of extreme violence perpetrated by loners, misfits, young men in their bedroom, accessing all manner of material online, desperate for notoriety’.” As of October 2024, the UK’s MI5 Director Ken McCallum said that approximately 75 percent of counter terror efforts in the UK are aimed at threats related to radical Islam, and the remaining 25 percent are aimed at far-right extremism. However, other instances of “concerning behavior” that can lead to violent acts but are not generally considered extremism in the UK include: extreme misogyny, pro-Khalistan ideology; Hindu nationalist ideology; radical environmentalism; left-wing, anarchist and single-issue extremism (LASI), violence fascination, and conspiracy theorists. The UK government has said they are looking to improve upon their system to ensure that individuals like Rudakubana who are referred to the Prevent Program but do not meet the terrorism or extremism threshold are actioned upon in the future.

SECURITY & SAFETY AWARENESS

Los Angeles Fire Cleanup Complicated By 'Unprecedented' Number Of EVs With Combustible Lithium-Ion Batteries

FOX News, 1/30/2025

Highly combustible lithium-ion batteries used in electric and hybrid vehicles are complicating cleanup efforts in the Los Angeles neighborhoods ravaged by wildfire damage. Phase 1 of the federal cleanup is underway, as surveyors with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) work to remove and dispose of hazardous materials, including lithium-ion batteries found in charred vehicles and decimated homes. The EPA warned that batteries should be considered “extremely dangerous,” even if they are believed to be intact, and “can spontaneously re-ignite, explode, and emit toxic gases and particulates even after the fire is out.” The Palisades and Eaton fires aftermath is estimated to require the “largest lithium-ion battery pickup, cleanup, that’s ever happened in the history of the world,” EPA incident commander Steve Calanog reportedly told local KNBC. He explained that removing lithium-ion batteries — even those that do not appear damaged — from fire wreckage requires “technical sophistication and care,” as hazardous material crews find and deionize the batteries so they can be crushed or safely shipped for disposal. <https://www.foxnews.com/us/los-angeles-fire-cleanup-complicated-unprecedented-number-evs-combustible-lithium-ion-batteries>

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ANALYST COMMENTARY: The increased presence of electric vehicles (EVs) continues to present new challenges for public safety officials and emergency responders. Fire officials have to contend with chemicals and heavy metals like lithium in the batteries of EVs when the vehicles ignite, which require different strategies to extinguish and create toxins while burning. When compromised enough to ignite, EV batteries can expel gases that reach over 1,000 degrees Fahrenheit within a few tenths of a second. This rapid release of high-temperature gases often leads to cascading failures within EV battery compartments and results in incredibly hot vehicle fires. Researchers have claimed that EV fires with cascading battery failures have reportedly reached 2,300 to 5,000 degrees Fahrenheit before burning out or becoming extinguished. To protect the batteries from compromise and mitigate the risk of fires, EV batteries are contained within secure boxes located on the underside of the vehicles, though this also has the unintended consequence of making them difficult for first responders to access in the event they do ignite. Due to the difficulty of cooling and extinguishing ignited EV batteries, many fire agencies now recommend that first responders let the fires burn out (which usually takes about an hour) rather than try to extinguish them, which can take several hours and have only limited success. EV batteries are also susceptible to reignition for weeks after being extinguished, and once compromised, they continue to off-gas certain toxins, which poses additional challenges during cleanup. Following the recent wildfires in Los Angeles, first responders are contending with EVs that either burned or have potentially compromised battery packs. To mitigate the risks of ignition and reignition, fire personnel in Los Angeles have been removing battery packs when it is safe to do so, wrapping them in thermal blankets, and transporting them to areas where the batteries can be de-energized.

GRTC Adding Safety Officers, Ambassadors To Buses To Increase Security

WRIC, 1/29/2025

[Richmond, Virginia] The Greater Richmond Transit Company (GRTC) announced on Tuesday, Jan. 27, that it has launched its new Public Safety Officers (PSO) and Public Safety Ambassador (PSA) programs. This comes after there have been several violent incidents on GRTC buses and bus stops within the last year. Most recently, after a 16-year-old was shot in Aug. 2024, residents voiced their concerns about safety on public transit. The programs were created to enhance security, provide customer assistance and help bring the community together in the transit system. According to GRTC, these programs were curated to create a safer and more welcoming environment for riders. <https://www.wric.com/news/local-news/richmond/grtc-adding-safety-officers-ambassadors-to-buses-to-increase-security/>

Crombie Unveils Plan To Address Safety Concerns On Toronto Transit System

CHCH, 1/31/2025

[Toronto, Canada] Ontario Liberal Leader Bonnie Crombie has pledged to install platform barriers at all Toronto subway stations, increase crisis intervention teams and hire more constables for transit services across the province. Crombie did not release the cost of the proposed plan she would enact should she

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become premier, but said it will come during the campaign. “We want people to ride public transit and I want to make it as accessible and safe as possible,” Crombie said at a subway station in Toronto’s east end Friday morning. Should her party win the snap election called by Progressive Conservative Leader Doug Ford, Crombie would hire 300 special constables for transit operations in Ottawa and the Greater Toronto Area. Crombie said she will announce transit plans for other cities soon as part of her plan to increase ridership across the province. She would also invest in more security cameras and safety equipment. Subway platform barriers at all stations in Toronto would cost \$4.1 billion, the Toronto Transit Commission’s latest capital budget plan said. Experts say platform barriers in cities around the world have reduced the vast majority of injuries and death on the tracks. It is particularly helpful for reducing suicides. <https://www.chch.com/chch-news/crombie-unveils-plan-to-address-safety-concerns-on-toronto-transit-system/>

CYBERSECURITY

Are Attackers Already Embedded In U.S. Critical Infrastructure Networks?

Security Intelligence, 1/21/2025

The threat of cyberattacks against critical infrastructure in the United States has evolved beyond data theft and espionage. Intruders are already entrenched in the nation’s most vital systems, waiting to unleash attacks. For instance, CISA has raised alarms about Volt Typhoon, a state-sponsored hacking group that has infiltrated critical infrastructure networks. Their goal? To establish a foothold and prepare for potentially crippling attacks that could disrupt essential services across the nation. Volt Typhoon embodies a threat far beyond everyday cyber crime. It indicates the dangerous reality of cyber pre-positioning — a tactic that allows cyber actors to infiltrate systems, maintain persistence and potentially launch massively destructive operations. With lifeline sectors such as communications, energy, transportation and water and wastewater systems under threat, the question is no longer if attackers are embedded within U.S. infrastructure but how deeply they have rooted themselves. And the implications directly impact national security. <https://securityintelligence.com/articles/are-attackers-already-embedded-in-us-critical-infrastructure-networks/>

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