



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Strategic Framework for Countering Terrorism and Targeted Violence

PUBLIC ACTION PLAN

September 2020

INTRODUCTION

The United States faces increasingly complex threats from terrorism and targeted violence. Both continue to pose a grave threat in ways that have evolved dramatically in the nearly two decades since the 9/11 attacks. Although foreign terrorist organizations remain intent on striking our Homeland, we also face a growing threat from domestic actors. Our enemies seek to spur violence in our communities and divide our society. Combating terrorism and targeted violence requires the combined efforts of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS or Department), our Federal and state, local, tribal and territorial (SLTT) government partners and civil society.

To address these threats, in September 2019, the Department adopted the [*Strategic Framework for Countering Terrorism and Targeted Violence*](#) (CTTV Framework) and has now finalized this corresponding Public Action Plan and an extensive internal Implementation Plan. Collectively, these three documents describe specific actions and milestones to achieve the CTTV Framework's goals. These documents will help guide our activities as we adapt to and confront the complex and ever-evolving challenges our Nation faces. We seek to meet the CTTV Framework goals through a whole-of-society approach that draws upon the Department's intelligence, prevention, and preparedness capabilities. This Public Action Plan – the public version of the Department's internal Implementation Plan – does not describe the full complement of actions the Department is taking to combat terrorism and targeted violence. Rather, it provides an overview and examples of our work in order to be transparent with the American people and to underscore the Department's commitment to fulfilling the goals and objectives outlined in the CTTV Framework.

The three documents describe a concept of *targeted violence*. The Department generally uses the term to refer to any incident of violence that implicates homeland security and/or DHS activities in which a known or knowable attacker selects a particular target prior to the violent attack. Unlike terrorism, targeted violence includes attacks that lack a clearly discernible political, ideological, or religious motivation.

Targeted violence significantly impacts the safety and security of our communities, schools, places of worship, and public gatherings. The threats of terrorism and targeted violence increasingly intersect with one another, and there is likewise alignment in many tools to counter them. For this reason, the CTTV Framework and its accompanying documents address terrorism and targeted violence—and the tools employed to confront them—together.

These documents also emphasize the Department's role in combating violent extremist groups' use of the Internet and other advanced technologies. These groups have proven adept at exploiting the Internet's potential to disseminate their message and foster online communities that lure vulnerable individuals. Changes in digital communications also magnify our Nation's vulnerability to disinformation campaigns, in which hostile foreign countries and non-state actors exploit the online space to spread inflammatory and divisive propaganda. Technological advancement further contributes to a new array of weaponry that attackers can employ – militant groups around the world increasingly use and weaponize technologies that were crude or unavailable at the time of the 9/11 attacks.

The successful implementation of the CTTV Framework will achieve a strategic end-state characterized by an adept and continually adapting Homeland Security Enterprise (HSE)—empowered by private sector and civil society partnerships—that successfully prevents, detects, deters, dissuades, disrupts, and responds to evolving terrorist and targeted violence threats.

Principles

The CTTV Framework and its corresponding documents are organized in accordance with four overarching goals that collectively address the current, emerging, and future terrorist and targeted violence threats our Nation faces.

Goal One, *Understand the Evolving Terrorism and Targeted Violence Threat Environment, and Support Partners in the Homeland Security Enterprise Through Specialized Knowledge*, focuses on employing the Department’s research, analysis, and intelligence capabilities to understand terrorism and targeted violence threat streams at local, national, and international levels. The desired end state is an HSE that understands current terrorism and targeted violence threats against the Homeland; is able to accurately forecast emerging and evolving threats, and nefarious uses of existing, new and emerging technologies; and can share this information with key partners.

Goal Two, *Prevent Terrorists and Other Hostile Actors from Entering the United States, and Deny Them the Opportunity to Exploit the Nation’s Trade, Immigration, and Domestic and International Travel Systems*, emphasizes the Department’s capabilities to expand our virtual borders and secure our trade, travel, immigration, and transportation systems. The desired end state is an HSE that works in close coordination with international partners to detect and respond to threats before they reach our Nation, and is capable of denying, deterring, dissuading, detecting, and disrupting terrorists’ attempts to enter the United States or exploit weaknesses in our systems.

Goal Three, *Prevent Terrorism and Targeted Violence*, expands our understanding of prevention beyond responding to imminent threats and includes responding to the drivers of terrorism and targeted violence and interceding with people at risk of carrying out violent acts. The desired end state is an HSE that supports locally-based prevention, standardizes procedures for establishing relationships with appropriate law enforcement entities, and builds resilient communities capable of detecting, dissuading, disrupting, and responding to radicalized individuals—before they carry out acts of terrorism or targeted violence.

Goal Four, *Enhance U.S. Infrastructure Protections and Community Preparedness*, utilizes the Department’s emergency and threat preparedness capabilities to protect our Nation’s critical infrastructure and soft targets against terrorism, targeted violence, and other emerging threats such as new technologies that can be exploited by nefarious actors. The desired end state is an HSE that adopts new protection and preparedness goals and capabilities that reflect a focus on a whole-of-society approach to partnership and prevention.

Implementation & Oversight

In accordance with this Public Action Plan and the Implementation Plan, DHS will demonstrate measured improvements in its ability to understand current threats and accurately forecast emerging ones; detect threats before they reach the United States and deny terrorists' attempts to enter our Nation; prevent terrorism and targeted violence in our communities; and enhance our infrastructure and community preparedness. *Examples* of the milestones that will demonstrate our improved capabilities are found in the pages that follow.

Accountability in Implementation

As part of its ongoing accountability efforts, DHS will assess its progress on the execution of milestones in the Priority Actions, Objectives, and Goals of the CTTV Framework. This assessment includes annual updates to the Secretary as well as updates to the Implementation Plan every two years. The Department will also inform the public of progress made toward achieving the CTTV Framework's goals, in conjunction with its bi-annual implementation plans. Beginning in FY21, DHS will provide annual assessments to its Congressional oversight committees.

GOAL 1: UNDERSTANDING THE EVOLVING TERRORISM AND TARGETED VIOLENCE THREAT ENVIRONMENT, AND SUPPORT PARTNERS IN THE HOMELAND SECURITY ENTERPRISE THROUGH THIS SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE

Our capacity to respond to terrorism and targeted violence depends on our ability to understand these phenomena and to adapt as they evolve. The Department will work alongside its domestic and international partners to gather, produce, and share information about current and emerging threats and will use innovative technologies to better anticipate changes and prepare responses.

Conduct in-depth analysis of current and emerging threats and share with the Homeland Security Enterprise.

- **Develop an annual state of the Homeland Threat Assessment (HTA).**

Next Steps: Each year DHS will produce and publicly disseminate an assessment that evaluates the Homeland's strategic threat environment related to terrorism and targeted violence and anticipate emerging and future threats in conjunction with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), and other appropriate partners. This product will help inform the Department's Federal and SLTT partners as well as private sector partners and the broader public. A common baseline understanding of threats will support better policymaking, agency prioritizations, resource allocations, and inter-governmental partnerships.

Measuring Progress:

- By October 1, 2020, the Department will publicly disseminate the HTA.
- By October 1, 2021, DHS will assess the effectiveness of the anticipatory judgments made in the HTA.
- The process of producing an HTA and subsequently assessing its success and lessons learned will recur annually.

- **Craft a new definition of targeted violence.**

Next Steps: DHS will consult with other departments and agencies, academia, and relevant non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to finalize a definition of *targeted violence* that is more precise and actionable for the Department's mission than the one currently employed.

Measuring Progress:

- By October 1, 2020, DHS will coordinate with its partners to develop a new definition of *targeted violence* to build a common understanding of the threat.
- By October 1, 2021, DHS will assess the new definition's impact on increasing common understandings and shaping effective approaches to mitigation and resource allocation vis-à-vis targeted violence.

- **Enhance DHS methods of collecting and analyzing data and information on relevant patterns of violence.**

Next Steps: DHS will coordinate a review of the current methods and platforms for data collection of national-level statistics on terrorism and targeted violence, including hate

crimes. The Department will also explore DHS's possible roles in compiling national-level statistics on terrorism and targeted violence and collaborate with other Federal partners, such as the Department of Justice (DOJ), to consolidate relevant data and develop national-level statistics on terrorism, targeted violence, including hate crimes.

Measuring Progress:

- By December 31, 2020, DHS will coordinate a review of the current methods and platforms for data collection of national-level statistics on terrorism and targeted violence, including hate crimes where appropriate.
- By October 1, 2021, the Department will coordinate with Federal partners to seek legislation that requires SLTT partners to collect and report statistics on terrorism and targeted violence, including hate crimes.

GOAL 2: PREVENT TERRORISTS AND OTHER HOSTILE ACTORS FROM ENTERING THE UNITED STATES AND DENY THEM THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLOIT THE NATION’S TRADE, IMMIGRATION, AND DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL SYSTEMS.

Terrorists and other hostile foreign actors frequently attempt to exploit our trade, travel, transportation, and immigration systems. The Department will continue to enhance its robust screening, vetting, detection, and deterrence capabilities and secure these systems.

Detect terrorists attempting to travel to, or gain or maintain access to, the United States. Stop them from exploiting the trade, immigration, and travel systems.

- **Reach beyond America’s borders and prioritize interoperability of information sharing.**

Next Steps: The Department will strengthen critical international partnerships to address identified information sharing gaps, prioritizing them based on analysis of threats to the United States, coupled with partners’ willingness and capabilities to reduce risks. DHS will also deploy additional personnel abroad in coordination with the U.S. Department of State to build partnerships and collaborate with foreign counterparts.

Measuring Progress:

- By October 1, 2020, DHS will identify and prioritize critical international partnerships to address gaps in the international travel system.
- By October 1, 2021, DHS will develop infrastructure to expand the Department’s international biometric interoperability programs with priority countries, such as those in the Visa Waiver Program and Western Hemisphere.
- By October 1, 2021, DHS will develop an international information-sharing framework to align appropriate DHS programs with foreign partners.

- **Improve vetting and screening capabilities.**

Next Steps: The Department will expand the National Vetting Center and leverage new programs to enhance the vetting of individuals seeking to enter the United States. DHS will deploy the Homeland Advanced Recognition Technology (HART) system, a state-of-the-art repository of biometric and biographic data that serves all DHS Offices and Components and supports dynamic information sharing with external partners. The HART system will eliminate redundancy, enhance interoperability, and facilitate the sharing of large volumes of privacy-protected data with high speed and accuracy. DHS will also develop a Global case management system to track asylum cases from initial filing through either a final determination or a referral to the U.S. Immigration Courts. The Department will refine screening procedures for cargo, travelers, and transportation sector workers and proactively identify and address vulnerabilities that can be exploited by terrorists.

Measuring Progress:

- By October 1, 2021, DHS will complete the full development of the HART and Global systems and integrate them into its vetting efforts. The Department will measure the effectiveness of these systems, as well as the broadening of other

vetting programs, by tracking growth in the number and types of travelers and visa applicants vetted annually.

- By October 1, 2021, the Department will develop solutions to increase security effectiveness and efficiency while improving the passenger experience, enhancing the flow of commerce, and securing freedom of movement throughout our Nation's transportation systems.
- By October 1, 2021, DHS, in support of National Security Presidential Memoranda-7, will enhance vetting processes for other threat actors who may commit or facilitate acts of terrorism or targeted violence, such as transnational criminals and weapons proliferators, and will incorporate new analytic tools, including biometrics, into vetting processes.

Improve DHS's security posture governing aviation, surface, and maritime transportation.

- **Prevent insider threats.**

Next Steps: DHS will improve protections against insider threats to all forms of transportation. The Department will produce additional intelligence products detailing the tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) insiders have used in the past. DHS will enhance the vetting of transportation sector employees and implement programs to help educate members of the workforce about identifying, reporting, and mitigating insider threats. The Department's efforts to prevent insider threats will consider the rise of rapid radicalization, anti-government activities, and RMVE.

Measuring Progress:

- By December 31, 2020, DHS will develop products that discuss the TTPs insiders have used to attack or subvert the transportation sector.
- By October 1, 2021, the Department will sponsor an insider threat security seminar with industry and government stakeholders to provide the most current insider threat information.

GOAL 3: PREVENT TERRORISM AND TARGETED VIOLENCE

A comprehensive response by DHS is required to support local stakeholders in addressing terrorism and targeted violence. Local stakeholders are well positioned to address the drivers of terrorism and targeted violence and to intercede with people at risk of carrying out violent acts. Prevention efforts require a whole-of-society approach with activities occurring across the Government, the Department and across our Components and field offices.

- **Strengthen societal resistance to the drivers of violent extremism and ensure broad awareness of the threat of terrorism and targeted violence. Form partnerships that support locally-based prevention efforts.**

Next Steps: DHS will identify and align targeted violence and terrorism prevention equities with key government stakeholders across the HSE, and leverage DHS representatives nationwide to share resources that support locally-based prevention activities and community-based prevention frameworks.

Measuring Progress:

- By December 31, 2020, DHS will enhance support of locally-based prevention frameworks by identifying other Federal partners that can assist in this effort and harmonizing the delivery of trainings, briefings, and information to local stakeholders.
- By October 1, 2021, the Department will deploy additional personnel across the country to create or facilitate partnerships to develop prevention frameworks in areas with the greatest need.

- **Increase societal awareness of violent extremism and mobilization to violence.**

Next Steps: DHS will standardize its approach to awareness briefings and trainings and ensure they are updated frequently to reflect the latest threat trends and research. The Department will enhance society's awareness about radicalization to all forms of violent extremism and mobilization to violence by imparting knowledge of the threat environment, highlighting relevant risk factors and behavioral indicators, and increasing bystander knowledge of available referral networks (*i.e.*, what to do upon recognizing concerning behavior).

Measuring Progress:

- By October 1, 2020, DHS will update the Homeland Security Information Network's (HSIN) Prevention Community of Interest to facilitate improved information sharing between participants.
- By October 1, 2021, DHS will identify and update relevant websites to highlight risks and solutions associated with terrorism and targeted violence, including domestic terrorism; add domestic terrorism tags to current web pages; and create a hashtag for a comprehensive, multi-platform social media campaign addressing the prevention of terrorism and targeted violence.
- By October 1, 2021, DHS will standardize its prevention-related trainings by developing a Prevention Training Curriculum. The Curriculum will harmonize existing trainings and propose new trainings, specifically those that address

behavioral indicators of terrorism and targeted violence, prevention, threat assessment and management, and/or behavioral threat analysis.

Counter terrorists and violent extremists' influence online.

- **Support counter-messaging efforts by technology companies, NGOs, and civic partners.**

Next Steps: The Department will support counter-messaging efforts by sharing threat information with key stakeholders in order to assist technology companies, NGOs, and civic partners in leveraging credible voices and countering terrorist and violent extremist messaging online. DHS will promote standards and tools that empower platform developers and users to prevent terrorist misuse of the Internet and help technology companies build the capacity of credible voices seeking to detect, prevent, and counter terrorist and violent extremist content online.

Measuring Progress:

- By October 1, 2020, DHS will develop a plan to assist technology companies, NGOs, and civic stakeholders in leveraging credible voices to counter threat messaging online.
- By October 1, 2021, DHS will offer training and other technical support for technology companies that proactively enforce terms of service addressing terrorist and violent extremist content within a responsive and adaptive timeframe, and for major technology companies that support small platforms in identifying and removing online terrorist content.

Develop prevention frameworks with SLTT partners to enhance their ability to identify and respond to individuals at risk of mobilizing to violence.

- **Enhance grant program support with SLTT, law enforcement, and emergency management partners.**

Next Steps: DHS will support SLTT partners' prevention programming through the Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention Grant Program, which provides funding for SLTT governments, non-profits, and academic institutions to establish or enhance capabilities to prevent terrorism and targeted violence. DHS will also provide guidance on the State Homeland Security Program (SHSP) and the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI), which assist SLTT and high-risk Urban Areas efforts, respectively, to build, sustain, and deliver the capabilities necessary to prevent, prepare for, protect against, and respond to acts of terrorism.

DHS will encourage grantees to make countering domestic terrorism an increased focus area of the homeland security grants. DHS will use grants to test innovative ideas for prevention programs that support local detection, referral, and intervention frameworks; promote the development and implementation of SLTT prevention frameworks; identify and distribute promising practices to stakeholders that can be scaled to enhance resilience; and support local service provisions to formulate and implement threat management plans.

Measuring Progress:

- By October 1, 2020, DHS will award \$10M in grants to state, local, tribal and territorial (SLTT) governments, nonprofits, and/or institutions of higher education to establish or enhance capabilities to prevent targeted violence and terrorism.
- By October 1, 2021, if funded, the Department will issue a Notice of Funding Opportunity for the FY22 Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention Grant Program to SLTT governments, non-profits, and academic institutions.
- By October 1, 2021, the Department will publish guidance, standards, and resources on how recipients of existing grant programs, including SHSP and UASI, can fund and prioritize domestic terrorism prevention activities to support SLTT governments' prevention missions.

Build resilience to malign information operations initiated by foreign states and foreign non-state actors.

- **Develop a media/information literacy toolkit and bolster information sharing about foreign disinformation campaigns.**

Next Steps: The Department will work with partners in both SLTT governments and the private sector to increase the effectiveness of DHS media and information literacy efforts to raise awareness of foreign disinformation campaigns targeting communities in our Nation. DHS will also explore the nexus between domestic terrorism and foreign influence, particularly adversaries' efforts to sow division by promoting violent extremist ideology or stoking racial tensions and analyzing foreign and non-state actor disinformation campaigns and influence operations. Additionally, DHS will develop protocols to expand and improve mitigation against the harmful impact of malign foreign influence operations and increase distribution of important information at the lowest possible classification levels.

Measuring Progress:

- By October 1, 2021, the Department will expand its partnerships with SLTT government and the private sector to increase the effectiveness of DHS information literacy efforts.
- By October 1, 2021, the Department will produce and disseminate products that provide stakeholders with a key understanding of foreign disinformation campaigns.
- By October 1, 2021, DHS will develop and disseminate media and information literacy toolkits aimed at raising awareness of foreign disinformation campaigns targeting communities in our Nation. These will provide citizens with the necessary tools to identify and halt both information operations and the spread of information intended to promote radicalization to violent extremism or mobilization to violence.

GOAL 4: ENHANCE U.S. INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTIONS AND COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS

Our Nation's infrastructure and public spaces are high-value targets for terrorists and perpetrators of targeted violence. Prevention, protection, and preparedness must be integrated across the HSE. DHS will enhance Federal, SLTT, and private sector partners' capabilities to protect critical infrastructure and vulnerable soft targets. DHS will adapt its approach to meet the unique needs of specific types of soft targets, such as houses of worship and schools, which require different types of assistance than critical infrastructure.

Enhance preparedness and promote readiness for potential attacks.

- **Enable preparedness.**

Next Steps: DHS will continue to enable all levels of government and the private sector to execute the National Preparedness System (NPS), which outlines an organized process for the HSE to move forward with preparedness activities and achieve the National Preparedness Goal (NPG). The NPG strives to create a secure and resilient Nation with the necessary capabilities to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from the threats and hazards that pose the greatest risk. To adapt to the evolving threat environment, the Federal Emergency Management Agency will expand the scope of its preparedness programs and grants to incorporate an expanded vision of prevention that includes, but is not limited to, responding to the drivers of terrorism and targeted violence.

Measuring Progress:

- By October 1, 2020, DHS will support the establishment of six new Securing the Cities (STC) Initiative regional program offices.
- By October 1, 2021, the Department will execute outreach and engagement to improve public understanding of agricultural and biological counterterrorism efforts.
- By October 1, 2021, DHS will initiate an update of the National Prevention and/or Protection Frameworks to incorporate the concept of responding to the drivers of terrorism and targeted violence; DHS will also establish an annual requirement to review and update the core capabilities of the NPS to ensure it is in line with the HTA.
- By October 1, 2021, DHS will update the Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment and Stakeholder Preparedness Review collection for 2020 and with additional threat categories to inform the HSE on core capabilities required to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from threats that pose the greatest risk.

Enhance defensive measures for infrastructure and soft targets, and against high-impact threats.

- **Enhance security of soft targets.**

Next Steps: The Department will work with Federal, SLTT, and private sector partners to produce and disseminate literature, tools, and best practices to mitigate risks at places where people gather, with a particular emphasis on houses of worship. DHS will tailor its approach to enhancing soft-target security based on the nature of the location, whether a school, workplace, entertainment venue, transportation node, among others. The

Department will also continue to develop and disseminate technologies, techniques, tactics, trainings, intelligence products, and best practices to Federal, SLTT, and private sector partners in order to incentivize private sector investment in soft-target protective practices.

Measuring Progress:

- By October 1, 2020, DHS will create a National Special Events List, which will allow the Department to maintain situational awareness and determine the level of Federal support available to assist in securing large public events.
- By October 1, 2021, DHS will enhance information sharing between Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs), Homeland Security Advisors, SLTT Fusion Centers, and other relevant stakeholders by:
 - Establishing a standing interfaith advisory council to advise DHS on enhancing the security of FBOs; and,
 - Re-establishing the HSIN Faith-Based Portal and developing more publicly accessible web-based resources in a centralized location.
- By October 1, 2021, DHS will collaborate with Federal, SLTT, and private sector partners to develop security recommendations for soft targets, including venues that seek to limit visible security footprints or require less conspicuous security measures.

Enhance protections against hostile actors' use of unmanned systems and other emerging technologies.

- **Defend against threats from unmanned systems and other emerging technologies.**

Next Steps: DHS will work with Congress, Federal and SLTT law enforcement organizations, and industry partners to identify and fill potential gaps in authorities and capabilities to defend against threats from unmanned systems and other emerging technologies. Additionally, the Department will prioritize the development of plans, technological capabilities, and resources to defend against these threats.

Measuring Progress:

- By October 1, 2021, the Department will develop a Counter-Unmanned Aircraft Systems Implementation Strategy. The Strategy will implement an iterative process to develop tools and resources that focus on addressing the threat of unmanned systems and other emerging technologies.
- By October 1, 2021, DHS will establish and maintain a protected centralized database of unmanned aircraft systems incidents which leverages available, verified data sets to conduct threat and trend analyses.

CONCLUSION

The *Strategic Framework for Countering Terrorism and Targeted Violence* marked the Department of Homeland Security's recognition of the changing nature of terrorism and targeted violence in the United States, and the Department's need to adapt to these changes in order to effectively counter current and emerging threats. At the strategic level, the CTTV Framework laid the foundation for the Department's approach to countering current and emerging threats in a flexible and adaptable manner as various forms of terrorism and targeted violence emerge, evolve, and intersect.

The Public Action Plan and Implementation Plan mark the next step toward achieving the CTTV Framework's goals, translating the CTTV Framework's vision into tangible actions for the Department to execute over the coming years. These Plans enable broad transparency and will guide our collaboration with other Federal departments and agencies, Congress, SLTT partners, other public and private organizations, and ultimately the American people. Together, we will adapt to and overcome the threats we confront. Together, we will enhance our homeland security.

DHS Offices and Components will further refine the Implementation Plan for their sub-Components, develop fiscal-year budgets and multi-year programs to execute the actions, and identify any efforts or programs that might be at risk due to lack of capabilities, resources, and/or authorities. DHS will conduct annual assessments to determine implementation progress and, based on these assessments, prioritize resources and update the Implementation Plan as necessary.

As DHS works to complete the actions outlined in the Implementation Plan and this Public Action Plan, we will ensure that our initiatives are grounded in respect for individuals' privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties. We will always remember that our success comes from common purpose, critical partnerships, and locally-based solutions. We will stay ahead of terrorism and targeted violence threats by identifying risks and opportunities early, developing lasting partnerships, and allocating our resources wisely as good stewards of the resources allocated to us by the American people.

The United States Department of Homeland Security remains vigilant and forward-looking, prepared to confront and adapt to threats as they evolve. With honor and integrity, we will safeguard the American people, our Homeland, and our values. The source and nature of terrorism and targeted violence threats may evolve, but we will continue fighting to ensure that all Americans are able to live free from the fear of violence, no matter the ideology driving it.