

## **THREAT ASSESSMENT – PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION AND INAUGURATION**

The January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021 incident in which a demonstration against the certification of Electoral College votes for President-elect Joseph Biden devolved into a violent attack against the Capitol raises significant threat and security issues for the U.S. This incident has exposed a new facet of the deep political divide within the nation.

T&M assesses that an elevated threat level now exists for many public and private sector entities including the federal government, state, and local governments (particularly for officials involved in processing and certifying election results), news media organizations, big tech and social media companies, and other companies or organizations that may be perceived as taking actions to limit the rights of conservative groups and individuals.

People and companies that are publicly identified as having supported President Trump may be targeted for harassment and could see an increase in threats received by mail, email, phone, and via social media. Boycotts and other actions intended to damage their business could also be organized against such companies.

### **Short-Term Outlook**

Demonstrations are expected to continue across the U.S. in response to the certification of Joseph Biden as President-elect, which many supporters of President Trump see as the illegitimate result of election fraud. Such demonstrations would likely be directed against:

- U.S. government
- Republican party and elected officials
- Democratic party and elected officials

We assess that the January 6<sup>th</sup> insurrection is likely to cause a fissure on the right as mainstream conservatives seek to disassociate themselves from the far-right extremists who breached the Capitol. This fissure may result in a diminution of the size of future pro-Trump rallies. Even so, the fatal shooting of Ashli Babbitt inside the Capitol by a federal law enforcement officer may serve as a galvanizing incident that drives future demonstrations.

Likewise, Anti-Trump demonstrations, particularly in the form of counter protests to planned events, are likely to continue across the U.S. Although President Trump will be leaving office on January 20<sup>th</sup>, some of his opponents have called for action to be taken against him including:

- Removal from office prior to January 20<sup>th</sup> (via the 25<sup>th</sup> Amendment)
- Impeachment (The House [introduced Articles of Impeachment](#) on Monday, January 11<sup>th</sup>, and states that the body intends to vote on it this week)
- Arrest for unspecified crimes

Demonstrations may occur in cities across the country in support of or against these actions.

The potential exists for extremists to infiltrate demonstrations and use them as cover for violent and destructive acts.

Any political demonstration may generate counter demonstrations. Anytime this occurs, the potential for violent clashes exists.

Dates of concern include January 17, when far-right groups plan to hold rallies in cities across the country in support of President Trump and January 20, the day of the inauguration. T&M is tracking and researching threats associated with these dates and will issue update reports as warranted.

### **Intermediate-Term Outlook**

We assess that right-wing extremists will be driven to new communication platforms due to increased attention from law enforcement and actions by “big tech” and social media companies to limit inflammatory speech. Extremists may engage in violent attacks, cyberattacks, and/or vandalism. Targets would likely include people and facilities associated with the U.S. government and the Republican and Democratic parties, as well as news media, big tech, and social media companies. In addition, major U.S. corporations in other sectors such as banking and finance, insurance, lodging, and manufacturing have suspended political contributions to members of congress who voted against certifying the results of the Electoral College. Actions like this could cause companies and organizations to be targeted by right-wing extremists. The discovery of several viable improvised explosive and incendiary devices in Washington, DC on January 6<sup>th</sup> highlights the reality of this threat.

### **Recommended Actions**

- T&M clients are advised to exercise caution in areas where political protest activity occurs. Be aware that travel disruptions may occur without warning.
- Review crisis management, business continuity, security and emergency plans to ensure that your organization is prepared to respond to incidents.
- Companies and individuals that may face greater risk due to actions that could be perceived as anti-Trump or anti-free speech should consider raising their security posture.

**T&M stands ready to assist clients in assessing their current threat and risk levels and to develop solutions to mitigate identified risks faced.**

**THREAT ASSESSMENT – PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION AND INAUGURATION**

**Updated: January 15, 2021 1000 hours**

The FBI has reported that armed protests are being planned at all 50 state capitals and in Washington DC between January 16<sup>th</sup> and Inauguration Day on January 20<sup>th</sup>. Reporting indicates that many protests are being planned for Sunday January 17<sup>th</sup>. Federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies have begun to increase security measures across the country. There are currently more than 20,000 national guard troops at Capitol Hill in Washington, DC.

The FBI warning comes as federal law enforcement agents continue to track down suspects from the violent attack on the U.S. Capitol last week. The suspects who have been detained or arrested so far reveal a high-risk threat profile regarding the potential upcoming armed protests. For example:

- On January 7<sup>th</sup>, Lonnie Leroy Coffman, 70, of Falkville, Alabama, was **arrested** and **charged** in a criminal complaint filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia for bringing 11 Molotov cocktails to the incident at the Capitol on January 6<sup>th</sup>. In a bail letter, prosecutors said Mr. Coffman, 70, was discovered after the incident with an arsenal, including an assault rifle, a shotgun, two pistols, a crossbow, a stun gun, and a bag of “camo smoke” canisters. He also had handwritten notes mentioning Representative André Carson, an Indiana Democrat, whom he described as “one of two Muslims in the House of Reps.”
- On January 11<sup>th</sup>, Cleveland G. Meredith Jr. of Hiawassee, Georgia was **charged** with threatening House Speaker Nancy Pelosi in text messages he sent after the riot at the Capitol. Mr. Meredith wrote in a text message that he wanted to put a bullet in the “noggin” of Speaker Nancy Pelosi on “live TV,” prosecutors said. According to the papers, Mr. Meredith drove across the country with a Tavor X95 assault rifle, a 9 mm pistol painted to resemble an American flag, and about 2,500 rounds of ammunition, including at least 320 armor-piercing 5.56 caliber rounds. Prosecutors say Mr. Meredith, who has a history of drug abuse and mental illness, also threatened to kill Mayor Muriel E. Bowser of Washington.
- On January 13<sup>th</sup>, the FBI **arrested** Eduard Florea in Queens, New York. Florea is a self-described Proud Boy who had been posting online about mobilizing an armed caravan to the Capitol. A search of Mr. Florea’s home turned up an arsenal of over 1,000 rounds of rifle ammunition, two dozen shotgun rounds, 75 military-style combat knives, two hatchets, and two swords. Mr. Florea’s posts on Parler also included language such as “dead men can’t pass laws”, in reference to Democrat Reverend Raphael Warnock’s win of a U.S. Senate seat.

The arrests noted above demonstrate that some who participated in the incident at the Capitol and some who may be planning to participate in upcoming protests have access to weapons and have made threatening statements that may indicate their intent to commit violent attacks.

T&M assesses that an elevated threat level continues to exist for many public and private sector entities including the federal government, state, and local governments (particularly for officials involved in processing and certifying election results), news media organizations, big tech and social media companies, and other companies or organizations that may be perceived as having taken actions to limit the rights of conservative groups and individuals. The vote by the House of Representatives to impeach President Trump for allegedly inciting the riot at the Capitol will likely increase the level of anger among the President’s supporters and may serve to increase the size and vitriol of upcoming protests.

This elevated threat level exists for the entire nation through January 20<sup>th</sup>. We are most concerned about Washington, DC and the capitals in states where violent protests occurred this past summer including, Arizona, California, Georgia, Michigan, Minnesota, Oregon, Washington, and Wisconsin. Large protests are likely at government buildings across the country. However, due to the highly visible security presence that will be deployed at government buildings in state capitals and Washington, DC, any covert violent attacks that occur may be directed at other, less well protected symbolic targets in those cities.

The potential also exists for individuals or groups opposed to President Trump to hold counter protests or carry out attacks against pro-Trump rallies or Trump branded properties. On Tuesday January 12, a motorist intentionally drove around police officers stationed at Trump Tower in Chicago and rammed her vehicle into a protective barrier outside the building.

### **Recommended Actions**

- T&M clients are advised to exercise caution in areas where political protest activity occurs. Situations can change quickly and the potential for violence is real.
- Defer travel to areas near government buildings if possible. Expect street closures, heavy security presence, and possible travel restrictions near government buildings. Be aware that travel disruptions may occur without warning. Mass transit facilities will also likely have an increased security presence.
- Review crisis management, business continuity, security, and emergency plans to ensure that your organization is prepared to respond to incidents.
- Companies that may face greater risk due to company actions that could be perceived as anti-Trump or as limiting free speech should consider raising their security posture.
- Individuals are advised to refrain from publically wearing clothing or carrying items branded with the logos of companies or organizations that may be perceived as having acted against President Trump or as limiting free speech.
- With many people working from home due to the pandemic, any threats against companies that may be perceived as having acted against President Trump or as limiting free speech may extend to employees' homes. High-profile employees who can be identified online as working for such companies should consider evaluating security measures at their residences. Evaluate personal routines and travel patterns and adjust to avoid repetitive patterns.
- Government entities, businesses and high-profile employees of companies or organizations that may be perceived as having acted against President Trump or as limiting free speech should screen mail and packages for suspicious items.

**T&M stands ready to assist clients in assessing their current threat and risk levels and to develop solutions to mitigate identified risks faced.**

**POST INAUGURATION THREAT ENVIRONMENT**

**January 22, 2021**

Despite warnings that armed protests would be held in all 50 state capitals and in Washington, DC in the days leading up to the inauguration of President Joseph Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris on January 20, the event took place without disruption. The anticipated nationwide wave of protests did not materialize and only a few small protests occurred. The security effort conducted by the U.S. government for the inauguration was massive and unprecedented, including: 25,000 National Guard troops deployed to Washington D.C., widespread street closures and checkpoints, installation of fencing and other physical barriers, the closure of commercial flights at Washington Reagan National Airport, as well as conducting background checks of National Guard members arriving in Washington to identify any potential insider threats.

However, a few other areas around the U.S. did experience demonstrations. Armed protesters did gather in several state capitals, including Lansing and Austin, but they were outnumbered by security forces and journalists. No violence was reported. In Portland, Oregon, local police arrested eight people after the Democratic Party headquarters in Portland, Oregon, was vandalized hours after the inauguration. Over 150 people participated in a demonstration, tipping trash cans and setting small fires outside of the headquarters. It was reported that some were carrying Molotov cocktails, knives, batons, chemical spray, and crowbars. In Seattle, a group of about 100 protestors marched through downtown and called for the abolition of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, decrying both former President Donald Trump and President Biden. The groups in both Portland and Seattle self-identified as anarchists. In Denver, Colorado, about 50 demonstrators burned American and Trump flags outside of the state capital building.

Though no attacks took place leading up to the inauguration, three points are worth noting:

First, the massive, highly visible security effort was a strong and effective deterrent to any potential malicious actors. This demonstrates that security works. A highly visible, multi-layered approach to security, planned with a strong and coordinated intelligence analysis component can be highly effective. However, the resources required to implement this level of security is not possible for most private organizations and, even for the federal government, is likely unsustainable for the long term.

Second, though no attacks took place on Inauguration Day, the potential for attacks related to the election and subsequent events, including the pending impeachment trial in the U.S. Senate, remains. We previously reported our assessment that the riot at the Capitol on January 6 is likely to lead to a split on the right in which many mainstream supporters of President Trump separate from the extremists. This, coupled with actions taken by big tech companies to limit internet communications perceived to incite violence may drive the extremists underground and some groups or individuals may carry out attacks. This is an intermediate term forecast; the fact that the inauguration occurred without incident does not diminish this threat. Targets could include the federal government, state, and local governments (particularly for officials involved in processing and certifying election results and involved in the impeachment of former President Trump), news media organizations, big tech and social media companies, and other companies or organizations that may be perceived by some as having taken actions

to limit the rights of conservative groups and individuals. Actions could take the form of violent attacks, cyberattacks, and/or acts of vandalism.

Third, left-wing extremists will likely continue to engage in protests which may in some cases devolve into criminal or violent actions. The incidents in Portland and Seattle the day of the inauguration make it clear that the Biden administration will not receive a pass from these groups. Protesters in Portland carried banners with anti-government messages including, *"We don't want Biden, we want revenge! For police murders, imperialist wars and fascist massacres,"* and *"We are ungovernable."*

### **Recommended Actions**

- Do not let your guard down just because the inauguration has passed. Protests and demonstrations are likely to continue as the deep political divide in the U.S. remains. Some may result in violent clashes. The potential for domestic terrorist attacks exists and may be increasing.
- Develop a tiered, scalable security paradigm so your organization can nimbly implement a level of security appropriate to the threat level.
- Develop and maintain a robust intelligence gathering and analysis and threat management program. Large-scale, highly visible security deployments are generally not desirable nor sustainable. An effective intel analysis/threat management program can help an organization plan for and make informed decisions when security levels need to be adjusted to appropriately address shifting threat levels.

**T&M stands ready to assist clients in assessing their current threat and risk levels and to develop solutions to mitigate identified risks faced.**