

# Report: Lone Wolf Terrorism

Prepared by  
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National Security Critical Issue Task Force

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**typology**  
**bomb**  
**lone wolf**  
**violence**

**leaderless resistance**  
**right-wing extremism**  
**caliphate**  
**radicalization**  
**homegrown violent extremism**  
**ideology**  
**threat of violence**  
**leaderless jihad**  
**receptive point**

**terrorism**  
**fear**

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All statements of fact, opinion, or analysis expressed are those of the authors and do not reflect the opinion of any individual author's employer and/or the US Government.

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## Abbreviations

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AQ	Al-Qa'ida
AQAP	Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula
CT	Counterterrorism
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DOJ	Department of Justice
DOS	Department of State
ELF	Earth Liberation Front
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
IC	Intelligence Community
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
NCTC	National Counter Terrorism Center
NSCITF	National Security Critical Issue Task Force
LE	Law Enforcement
LEO	Law Enforcement Officer
LWT	Lone Wolf Terrorist
OPSEC	Operational Security
US	United States
USG	United States Government

## Executive Summary

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The United States (US) is the primary target among western states for lone wolf terrorist (LWT) attacks, and the frequency of attacks continues to increase. Even though LWT attacks remain less common and precipitate fewer casualties than terrorist attacks conducted by organizations, the US must continue to focus counterterrorism resources and encourage further research to combat this threat to national security. In this assessment, the Georgetown National Security Critical Issue Task Force (NSCITF) hopes to inform key stakeholders about the most critical lone wolf terrorism issues and spark new policy discussions on how to address the problem.

The NSCITF articulates eight findings that inform the collective understanding of lone wolf terrorism and offers three actionable recommendations to address those findings. First, the NSCITF finds that no single USG definition on lone wolf terrorism exists. Second, the NSCITF identifies the following four current trends in domestic LWT attacks, each of which highlight multiple issues that US policymakers must consider when drafting counterterrorism policies directed at LWTs:

- 1) Increased targeting of law enforcement (LE) and military personnel;
- 2) Overwhelming use firearms to conduct attacks, compared to LWTs in other western countries who rely on hijackings or bombs;
- 3) Increased radicalization via the Internet, extremist media, and the civilian workplace; and,
- 4) Proclamation of an individual ideology instead of claiming affinity to specific, organized extremist groups.

Third, despite the presence of overarching trends among domestic LWTs, the NSCITF determines that profiling fails to target potential LWTs effectively. Consequently, in the fourth finding, the NSCITF provides a framework to understand how an individual becomes a LWT and to identify possible intervention points. Fifth, the NSCITF develops a typology that organizes lone wolves in terms of their ideological autonomy and social competence to explicate why lone wolves operate alone, a key gap in the extant literature on terrorism.

The final three findings address US federal and local law enforcement policies to prevent LWT attacks. In the sixth finding, the NSCITF identifies the challenges of using traditional law

enforcement tactics to identify and stop LWTs. Specifically, the NSCITF highlights how the expansion of the Internet and social media offers individuals an ability to become radicalized without physically interacting with others and research various attack methodologies undetected. The seventh finding demonstrates that aggressive law enforcement tactics—namely, surveillance and monitoring of targeted individuals—risk community mistrust because of perceived infringements on civil liberties and privacy rights. In the final finding, the NSCITF notes that the US lacks a comprehensive, “whole of government” approach that coherently and systematically organizes the federal, local, and state efforts to combat lone wolf terrorism.

Based on the above findings, the NSCITF offers three recommendations. First, the USG should adopt a standard definition of lone wolf terrorism. Second, the USG should appoint clear leadership over the problem of lone wolf terrorism to streamline future policy responses and improve governmental coordination at the federal, state, and local levels. Finally, the USG should emphasize the prevention and short-circuiting of the radicalization process. Each recommendation will help the USG streamline future policy responses and improve governmental coordination at the federal, state, and local levels to prevent future LWT attacks.

## Methodology and Scope

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The NSCITF developed the findings and recommendations outlined in this report through substantial research into the existing open source literature on LWTs. The NSCITF supplemented this research by conducting interviews with subject matter experts, USG policymakers, attorneys, and academics.

This assessment relies extensively on two datasets (Spaij 2012 and Hamm & Spaij 2015) to analyze the scope of the problem and the trends in domestic attacks. The authors in both datasets require that an individual threaten or commit violence alone to constitute “lone wolf terrorism,” as opposed to violence committed by pairs or trios. Thus, the datasets remain consistent with the NSCITF’s definition of lone wolf terrorism.

In addition, although recent academic literature and open source reports have addressed the possible threat of lone wolf cyber terrorists, this assessment will not address the use of computer network attacks as a methodology for terrorist attacks.<sup>1</sup> The NSCITF believes that the most immediate and concerning method used by LWTs as it relates to US national security is the use of violence targeting human lives and property; currently, there are no examples of domestic lone wolf terrorists launching cyber terrorist attacks that precipitate casualties or property destruction. However, the definition does *not* exclude the possibility that lone wolf cyber attacks could constitute terrorism, and the potential of lone wolf cyber terrorism warrants future study.

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<sup>1</sup> Computer network attacks include actions taken through computer networks to disrupt, deny, degrade, or destroy the information within computers and computer networks and/or the computer/networks themselves.

## Finding 1: There Is No Single USG Definition of LWT

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A review of existing definitions from government, private organizations, media reporting, and academic literature reveals little uniformity in the definition of the expression “lone wolf terrorism.” For this report, the NSCITF defines it as: *The deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or threat of violence committed by a single actor who pursues political change linked to a formulated ideology, whether his own or that of a larger organization, and who does not receive orders, direction, or material support from outside sources.* Absent violence or the threat of violence, the individual may hold extremist or radicalized views, but he or she is not a terrorist. Absent political motivation, an attack would more closely resemble traditional forms of crime, organized violence, or hate crimes. Absent the individual acting alone, the attack would fall under the traditional definition of terrorism that encompasses violence conducted by organized terrorist groups.

Clearly defining lone wolf terrorism is critical for research and policy purposes. Precision enables methodical analysis of the problem and potential solutions, revealing components of a problem that can be addressed separately or together. It also provides a clear definition of the problem to assist in forming solutions, some of which will ultimately require very specific analyses of targets. Finally, the division of the definition into precise elements is useful for data collection and organization, as well as the analyses and study of trends.

## Finding 2: Four Measurable Trends in Lone Wolf Terrorism

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### *Frequency of Lone Wolf Terrorist Attacks Increasing*

LWT attacks remain relatively rare; however, their frequency has increased between 1968 and 2010 in the US and other western countries. In that time, lone wolf attacks constituted 1.8 percent of all terrorist attacks, increasing from thirty attacks in the 1970s to seventy-three in the 2000s, a growth of 143 percent.<sup>2,3</sup> As Figure 1 shows, the US has experienced a sixteen-fold increase in the number of attacks since the mid-twentieth century, from two attacks during the 1950s to thirty-two attacks during the 2000s.<sup>4</sup> It is important to note, however, that while the frequency of attacks is increasing, the rate of casualties has remained constant.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, the US remains the primary target among western states for LWT attacks. Of the 198 LWT attacks carried out between 1968 and 2010 across the US and fourteen other predominantly western countries, 113 occurred in the United States, representing fifty-seven percent of all attacks.<sup>6</sup> Terrorism in the United States “differs from terrorism in other countries in that a significant portion of terrorist attacks have been carried out by unaffiliated individuals rather than by members of terrorist organizations.”<sup>7,8</sup> This recent increase in domestic LWT attacks suggests that these attacks may be poised to increasingly replace group-actor terrorist attacks for the foreseeable future.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ramon Spaaij, “The Enigma of Lone Wolf Terrorism An Assessment,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 33, no. 9 (2010), 858.

<sup>3</sup> Ramon Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism: Global Patterns, Motivations, and Prevention*, (New York: Springer, 2012), 27.

<sup>4</sup> Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism*, 32.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

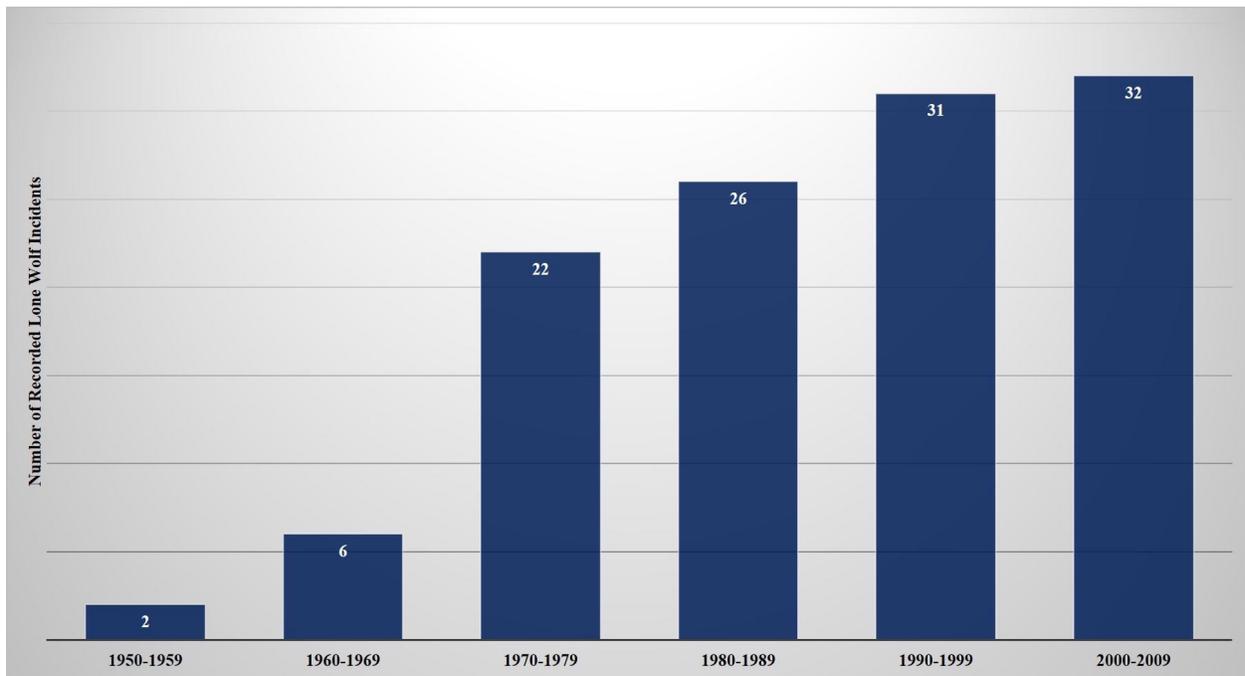
<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> The countries chosen for this study other than the United States include the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Poland, The Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Czech Republic, Portugal, Russia, Australia, and Canada; Ramon Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism*, 27.

<sup>8</sup> Christopher Hewitt, *Understanding Terrorism in America: From the Klan to al Qaeda*, (New York: Routledge, 2003), 78.

<sup>9</sup> Lars Erik Berntzen and Sveinung Sandberg, “The Collective Nature of Lone Wolf Terrorism: Anders Behring Breivik and the Anti-Islamic Social Movement,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26, no. 5 (2014): 759-779, doi:10.1080/09546553.2013.767245.

**Figure 1: Number of Domestic Lone Wolf Terrorist Attacks from 1950-2009<sup>10</sup>**



#### *Four Main Trends in US LWT Attacks*

This assessment identifies four prominent trends in domestic LWT attacks since 2001. Domestic LWTs:

- 1) Increasingly target law enforcement (LE) and military personnel;
- 2) Overwhelmingly use firearms to conduct attacks, compared to LWTs in other western countries who rely on hijackings or bombs;
- 3) Increasingly become radicalized via the Internet, extremist media, and the civilian workplace; and,
- 4) Proclaim an individual ideology instead of claiming affinity to specific, organized extremist groups.

These overall trends highlight multiple issues that US policymakers must consider when drafting counterterrorism policies directed at LWTs.

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<sup>10</sup> Mark Hamm and Ramon Spaaij, “Lone Wolf Terrorism in America: Using Knowledge of Radicalization Pathways to Forge Prevention Strategies,” *National Criminal Justice Reference Service*, February 2015, accessed June 8, 2015, <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/248691.pdf>.

## 1) Increased Targeting of Law Enforcement and Military Personnel

Since 2009, domestic LWTs have increasingly targeted law enforcement officers (LEOs) and military personnel, either to protest US involvement in the Middle East or support white supremacist or anti-government movements. Domestic LWTs killed or injured twelve LEOs between the 1940s and mid-2000s, the attacks primarily “motivated by black power, the Palestinian question, and abortion.”<sup>11</sup> Between 2009 and 2013 alone, domestic LWTs killed or injured twenty-four law LEOs, primarily in retaliation for perceived government overreach and in support of white supremacy movements.<sup>12</sup> Previously, military personnel and bases were not the targets of domestic LWT attacks, but since 2009, LWTs have killed or injured more than fifty military members.<sup>13</sup> With few exceptions, “al-Qaeda sympathizers angry over the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan” conducted those attacks on military personnel.<sup>14</sup> Most recently, in March 2015, a group claiming affiliation to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) released the names, addresses, and photos of one hundred military members and called on LWTs in the US to attack them.<sup>15</sup>

## 2) Increased Incidents of Shootings Instead of Hijackings or Bombs

Since the late 1990s, LWTs in the US have typically used firearms as their method of attack, unlike in other western countries where the primary methods are hijackings or bombings. Before 2001, LWT bombings killed or injured over 230 individuals in the US, “a phenomenon undoubtedly related to the bombing campaigns of terrorist groups during much of the period.”<sup>16</sup> Between 2001 and 2010, these bombings in the United States only killed or injured eight people.<sup>17,18</sup> Conversely, during this same period, 80 percent of LWTs in the US used firearms to attack, compared to only 23.8 percent in other western countries, and no LWTs in the US have

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<sup>11</sup> Hamm and Spaaij, “Lone Wolf Terrorism in America,” 5.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>15</sup> Will Dunham and Eric Beech, “Islamic State Calls on Backers to Kill 100 US Military Personnel,” *Reuters*, March 21, 2015, accessed June 8, 2015, <http://reut.rs/1EE5fZW>.

<sup>16</sup> Hamm and Spaaij, “Lone Wolf Terrorism in America,” 6.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Spaaij, *Understanding Lone wolf Terrorism*, 115.

attempted armed hijackings.<sup>19,20</sup> Terrorism scholars conclude that the difficulties of acquiring bomb-making materials following the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing coupled with the relative simplicity of acquiring firearms in the US have made shootings the most popular method for conducting domestic LWT attacks.<sup>21</sup>

### 3) The Internet and Civilian Workplaces Becoming the Loci of Radicalization

A growing number of domestic LWTs after the September 11, 2001, attacks have radicalized via the Internet or at their civilian workplaces. Prior to 2001, the primary locus of radicalization “was an extremist group that the lone wolves may have belonged to but had since abandoned.”<sup>22</sup> As Figure 2 illustrates, interacting with fellow extremists online or watching extremist media previously radicalized only three percent of domestic LWTs. Today, interactions facilitated by the Internet have become one of the most powerful radicalization tools for domestic lone wolves. Interactive terrorist “chat rooms,” in particular, have helped reinforce individuals’ extremist views and “are among the most influential aspects of the Internet for inspiring terrorist attacks by those who might otherwise never consider going to such extremes.”<sup>23</sup> Civilian workplaces have also become a prominent place for individuals to radicalize, especially if they work with individuals who share a similar ideology.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 859.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 864.

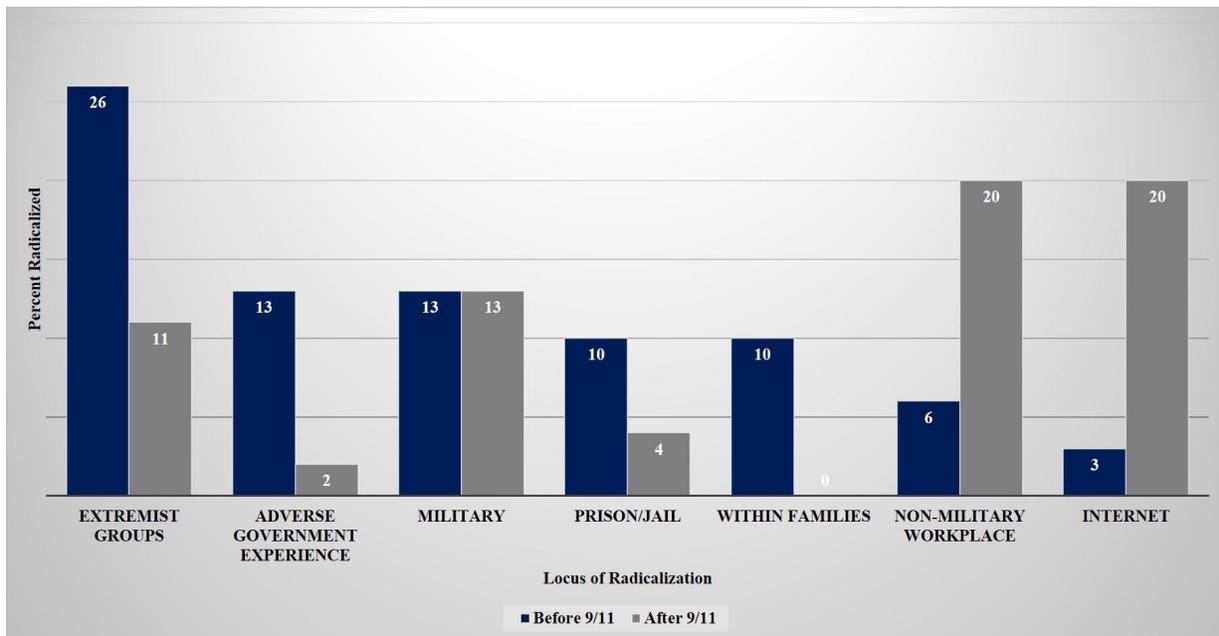
<sup>21</sup> Hamm and Spaaij, “Lone Wolf Terrorism in America,” 6.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>23</sup> Jeffrey Simon, *Lone Wolf Terrorism: Understanding the Growing Threat*, (New York: Prometheus Books, 2013), 203-204.

<sup>24</sup> Hamm and Spaaij, “Lone Wolf Terrorism in America,” 7.

**Figure 2: Loci of Domestic Lone Wolf Terrorist Radicalization Before and After 9/11<sup>25</sup>**



#### 4) Declining Affinity toward Specific, Organized Extremist Groups

Since the early 2000s, fewer domestic LWTs publicly support or express sympathy for specific extremist organizations; instead, they self-proclaim and publicize a personal ideology or grievance. Between the 1960s and late 1990s, sixty-three percent of domestic LWTs affiliated with the ideological causes of specific groups, namely the neo-Nazi and anti-abortion organizations.<sup>26</sup> Since then, only forty-two percent of domestic lone wolves sympathize with a specific group, such as al-Qa’ida (AQ) or the neo-Nazi National Alliance.<sup>27</sup> The twenty-one percent decline in affinity correlates with the Internet becoming the primary locus of radicalization. Now, “lone wolves may be seeking direction through venues other than organizations: namely, via networks of like-minded activists found online or on cable television.”<sup>28</sup> In addition, the expansion of mass media and social networking has enabled LWTs to proclaim their individual extremist views without attaching themselves to preexisting groups. For example, Joseph Stack, who did not express affinity toward a specific organization, posted

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 25. Figure 3 is a combination of two figures within Hamm and Spaaij’s article.

<sup>26</sup> Hamm and Spaaij, “Lone Wolf Terrorism in America,” 8.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

his personal three-thousand-word, anti-government manifesto online before crashing a plane into the Internal Revenue Service building in Austin, Texas in February 2010.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Simon, *Lone Wolf Terrorism*, 202.

## Finding 3: Profiling Lone Wolf Terrorists is Ineffective

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Despite some frequent demographic commonalities, there is no clear or set profile of a likely LWT, and attempting to develop one may lead to resentment of LEOs among profiled communities. While the majority of LWTs are single, white men with criminal records, these patterns are too broad to develop a clear profile for LEOs. For example, over half of the domestic LWTs have acted in support of white supremacist or extremist far-right ideologies, contributing to the frequency of white perpetrators.<sup>30</sup> This pattern is likely to shift in concurrence with the rise of lone wolf terrorism based in other extremist ideologies, such as the form of radical Islam inspired by groups such as ISIL and AQ.

Examining lone wolves' socioeconomic backgrounds further demonstrates the difficulty in building a profile of a potential terrorist, though it highlights the importance of personal grievances on the radicalization process. A recent study of 119 LWTs demonstrates a diversity of educational backgrounds: twenty-five percent of lone wolves' highest education completed was high school, fifty-four percent attended some university, thirteen percent attended graduate school, and eight percent completed a doctorate.<sup>31</sup> LWTs also have varying socioeconomic backgrounds; however, the aforementioned study found that forty percent of lone wolves were unemployed when they attacked.<sup>32</sup> The inability to gain employment, coupled with relatively high education levels, suggests that a perception of having been slighted by society contributes to a feeling of relative deprivation.<sup>33</sup> These personal grievances and distorted perceptions of fairness influence an individual's susceptibility for extremist ideology.

While developing a suspect profile is part of standard LE work, the government must be wary of unfairly targeting certain populations. International media and US government officials continue to depict homegrown radical Islamic terrorism as one of the most significant threats to public safety. However, an examination of terrorism cases and LE reports over the last five years

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<sup>30</sup> Hamm and Spaaij, "Lone Wolf Terrorism in America," 7.

<sup>31</sup> Paul Gill, John Horgan, and Paige Deckert, "Bombing Alone: Tracing the Motivations and Antecedent Behaviors of Lone-Lone Actor Terrorists," *Journal of Forensic Science* 59, no. 2, (2014): 428.

<sup>32</sup> Gill, Horgan, and Deckert, "Bombing Alone," 429.

<sup>33</sup> Fathali M. Moghaddam, "The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration," *American Psychologist* 60, no. 2 (2005): 163.

suggests this is not the case.<sup>34,35</sup> From 2009 to 2012, the number of Muslim-American terrorism cases and perpetrators declined each year, reaching fourteen cases in 2012. While this same number increased each year from 2012 to 2014, that trend included the spike in individuals joining Islamic terrorist organizations abroad.<sup>36</sup> Joining a foreign terrorist organization does not necessarily lead to homegrown terrorist acts, lone wolf or otherwise: since 2011, there has been a decline in the number of cases where Muslim-Americans plotted or engaged in violence inside the United States. Furthermore, a University of Maryland study found that, while radical Islamic terrorism in the United States has increased since the attacks on September 11, 2001, there has also been a continued, if not greater, increase in individual radicalization from the far right.<sup>37</sup> Overall, homegrown radical Islamic terrorism poses no greater threat to the public than other forms of domestic radicalization, but by unfairly focusing on the Muslim community, the USG risks inciting further divisions.<sup>38</sup> “American Muslims’ view of their treatment also has led to a growing guardedness in their relationship with [law enforcement agencies] (LEAs),”<sup>39</sup> which in turn yields mistrust and reluctance to cooperate with LEAs.

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<sup>34</sup> Martin Pengelly, “Eric Holder Says US ‘At War’ With ‘Lone Wolf’ Terrorists After Paris Attacks,” *The Guardian*, January 11, 2015, accessed June 25, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/11/eric-holder-paris-unity-rally-war-against-terrorists>.

<sup>35</sup> Scott Shane, “Homegrown Radicals More Deadly than Jihadists in US,” *The New York Times*, June 24, 2015, accessed June 24, 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/25/us/tally-of-attacks-in-us-challenges-perceptions-of-top-terror-threat.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/25/us/tally-of-attacks-in-us-challenges-perceptions-of-top-terror-threat.html?_r=0).

<sup>36</sup> Charles Kurzman, “Terrorism Cases Involving Muslim-Americans, 2014,” *Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security at Duke University*, February 9, 2015, accessed June 10, 2015, [http://sites.duke.edu/tchth/files/2013/06/Kurzman\\_Terrorism\\_Cases\\_Involving\\_Muslim-Americans\\_2014.pdf](http://sites.duke.edu/tchth/files/2013/06/Kurzman_Terrorism_Cases_Involving_Muslim-Americans_2014.pdf).

<sup>37</sup> Michael Jensen, Patrick James, and Herbert Tinsley. “Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States: Preliminary Findings,” *Study of Terrorism and Response to Terrorism*, January 2015, accessed June 10, 2015, [https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/PIRUS%20Research%20Brief\\_Jan%202015.pdf](https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/PIRUS%20Research%20Brief_Jan%202015.pdf).

<sup>38</sup> Amy Julia Harris, “Islam Judged More Harshly Than Other Religions in Terrorist Attacks,” *Reveal News*, January 16, 2015, accessed June 24, 2015, <https://www.revealnews.org/article/islam-judged-more-harshly-than-other-religions-in-terrorist-attacks/>

<sup>39</sup> Faiza Patel, *Rethinking Radicalization* (New York: Brennan Center for Justice, 2011), 23.

## Finding 4: Lone Wolves Follow a Similar Radicalization and Mobilization Path

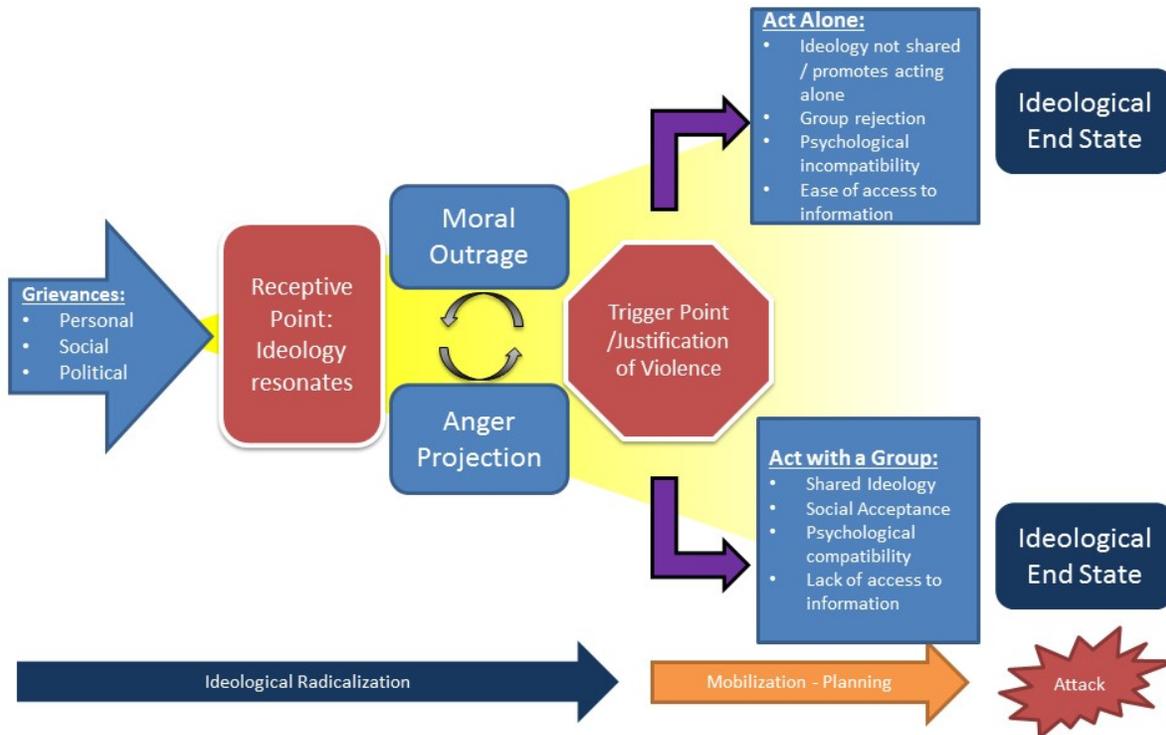
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The radicalization process described below applies to both LWTs and group actors. Terrorists generally share a similar radicalization process: each starts with a personal, social, or political grievance that creates a receptive point. However, terrorists often experience a crisis event that exacerbates these grievances and leads them to adopt a radical ideology. After the radical ideology resonates, they go through anger projection and moral outrage simultaneously with escalating irritation by the initial grievance. As this cycle of anger continues, the terrorist eventually reaches a trigger point where they determine it is time to act. This point is when they decide to act alone or with a group, and this decision is significantly influenced by social competence and ideological autonomy, which is discussed in the following finding on lone wolf typologies. The LWT will then continue to mobilize and take action.

### *A Framework for Radicalization*

The NSCITF develops a framework for LWT radicalization and mobilization to assist LEOs, members of the intelligence community (IC), and policymakers in developing effective and targeted counterterrorism strategies. Understanding an individual's progression from believing in an extremist ideology to committing violence provides actionable opportunities for intervention and prevention.

**Figure 3: Framework for Lone Wolf Radicalization and Mobilization**



The framework in Figure 3 illustrates this process, demonstrating how personal, social, and political grievances increase susceptibility to extremist ideology, influence an individual’s worldview, and ultimately justify violence as a tool for political change. While personal grievances are acute at the beginning of the LWT’s radicalization, their influence diminishes over time as the LWT focuses anger on a societal, rather than individual, level. Furthermore, this framework distinguishes the crucial decision point where an individual determines whether they can best achieve their ideological end state by working with a group or acting alone.

*Receptive Point to Extremist Ideology*

The receptive point, otherwise known as a “cognitive opening,” occurs when internal or external factors shake certainty in the individual’s previously accepted beliefs, rendering him or

her receptive to alternative views and perspectives.”<sup>40</sup> These factors include personal grievances, frustration at political or social circumstances, and psychological tendencies. In addition, the Internet’s discussion forums, chat rooms, and messaging applications can facilitate radicalization by enabling individuals at the receptive point to explore extremist ideologies.

Critical events in the LWT’s life, especially those leaving the LWT feeling personally wronged, are fundamental to radicalization. Thus, many LWTs adopt extremist ideologies as a means “to channel their own personal frustrations and assign blame to others.”<sup>41</sup> For example, Olympic Park bomber Eric Rudolph’s troubled childhood, father’s death, and mother’s transient lifestyle made him disgruntled and frustrated, increasing his susceptibility to extremism.

Frustration at social or political circumstances can further augment an extremist ideology’s resonance with an individual. Often these grievances are linked to either personal or vicarious connections to perceived victims. Nidal Malik Hassan, for example, became increasingly angry at what he saw as American foreign policy targeting and killing fellow Muslims in the Middle East, enabling a radical jihadist ideology to take root.

While psychological dynamics underlie the entire radicalization process, certain mental issues are especially pronounced at the receptive point. Most LWTs are likely to suffer from some psychological disturbance, increasing the likelihood of extremist ideologies resonating.<sup>42</sup> An individual who has suffered trauma may disassociate himself or herself from his identity and seek alternative worldviews to replace this loss.<sup>43</sup> These new extreme ideologies are frequently grounded in a religion that gives meaning to pain, provides a community and sense of self, and offers a system of behavior and identity, particularly appealing to psychologically traumatized individuals.<sup>44</sup>

### *Moral Outrage and Anger Projection*

Terrorists frequently express outrage that the world is morally or physically in decline

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<sup>40</sup> Quintan Wiktorowicz, “Joining The Cause: Al-Muhajiroun and Radical Islam,” accessed June 7, 2015, <http://insct.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Wiktorowicz.Joining-the-Cause.pdf>.

<sup>41</sup> Joel A. Capellan, “Lone Wolf Terrorist or Deranged Shooter? A Study of Ideological Active Shooter Events in the US, 1970-2014,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 38, no.6 (2015): 398.

<sup>42</sup> Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism*, 50.

<sup>43</sup> Anne Speckhard, “Lone Wolf Terrorism,” (presentation, Georgetown Security Studies Program, Washington, D.C., May 30, 2015).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

and project their anger on a particular group, blaming them for society's perilous state. As motivations and ideological narratives differ, the reason and cause for the world's decay will vary among LWTs. In addition, a LWT's personal and sociopolitical grievances influence the selection of his or her enemy. For example, LWTs who ascribe to hate-based ideologies rooted in the white supremacy and neo-Nazi movements blame minorities for the world's decline. David Copeland, the London nail bomber, blamed his inability to obtain employment on immigrants, leading him to believe that it was necessary to "trigger a race war."<sup>45</sup>

In addition, most religiously motivated LWTs are involved with a formal religious institution early on in the radicalization process that helps them target their moral outrage toward non-believers or other groups of wrongdoers and sinners. Extreme interpretations of religions that hold bifurcated views of the world consider non-believers to be the enemy, providing what they see as canonized rationale for projecting anger to a certain population.<sup>46</sup>

### *Trigger Point and Justification of Violence*

Once an individual has adopted an extremist ideology and identified the cause of their anger, there can be trigger point when an individual believes that mobilization and immediate action is required to halt the perceived decline of society. It is important to note that the vast majority of radicalized individuals do not experience a trigger point but will remain radicalized. Personal trauma or the suffering of others often drives LWTs to action.<sup>47</sup> Just as specific trigger points will vary among individuals, personal differences can cause those with shared extremist ideologies to react differently to the same event. Once an individual reaches this critical juncture and determines that violence is the only means to achieve their ultimate ends, they become a potential LWT. For example, Ted Kaczynski, the "Unabomber," was enraged when foresters destroyed the woods surrounding the cabin where he lived in self-imposed exile. Following this crucial trigger point, Kaczynski saw reform as impossible and believed that violence was the

*Religiously motivated terrorism accounts for 43 percent of lone wolf attacks in the United States, and continues to rise post-9/11.<sup>13</sup>*

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<sup>45</sup> "Operation Marathon: Interviews with David Copeland," *Metropolitan Police Department*.

<sup>46</sup> US government subject matter expert, "Lone Wolf Terrorism," (presentation, Georgetown Security Studies Program, Washington, D.C., June 06, 2015).

<sup>47</sup> J. Ried Meloy and Jessica Yakeley, "The Violent True Believer as a 'Lone Wolf' – Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Terrorism," *Behavioral Sciences & the Law* 23, no. 3 (2014): 359.

only way to destroy the industrial system, stating: “The only way we will get rid of it is if it breaks down and collapses.”<sup>48</sup>

After determining that violence is necessary to restore world order, the terrorist dehumanizes the enemy, weakening his or her psychological barriers to committing violent acts.<sup>49</sup> This step is evident in many terrorist manifestos, as the LWTs justify violence as necessary to protect an oppressed or abused population, achieve ideological end goals, or cleanse society. Eric Rudolph’s manifesto decried those who failed to stop the “wholesale slaughter of children” and described his attacks against abortion clinics as the “fundamental duty for a moral citizen.”<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, religiously motivated terrorists might point to scripture that they believe sanctifies violence against the non-believer or enemy. In white supremacist and other racist ideologies, the “us” vs. “them” narrative allows the LWT to separate himself or herself from the enemy target population, allowing the LWT to then dehumanize others.<sup>51</sup> For example, Wade Page justified his fatal shooting of six people at a Sikh temple in Wisconsin by reducing minorities to what he considered “dirt people.”<sup>52</sup> This psychological step is essential to enabling an individual to conduct an attack without hesitation or moral quandary.

### *Choosing the Lone Wolf Path*

The decision whether to join a terrorist group or become a LWT is influenced by social, psychological, and ideological characteristics. Social isolation and frequent psychological disturbances in LWTs lead to either failed and rejected attempts to join a group, or a tendency to avoid social interaction all together. Moreover, ideological differences also may influence an individual’s decision to become a LWT rather than act with a group, as was the case for Anders Breivik.

Social alienation and interpersonal ineffectiveness can lead to an individual’s decision to

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<sup>48</sup> "Interview with Ted Kaczynski, Administrative Maximum Facility Prison, Florence, Colorado, USA," *Earth First Journal*, June 1999.

<sup>49</sup> Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism*, 54.

<sup>50</sup> “Full Text of Eric Rudolph’s Statement,” *National Public Radio*, April 12, 2005, accessed June 10, 2015, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4600480>.

<sup>51</sup> Nick Haslam, "Dehumanization: An integrative review," *Personality And Social Psychology Review* 10, no. 3 (2006): 252-264.

<sup>52</sup> Marilyn Elias, “Sikh Temple Killer Wade Michael Page Radicalized in Army,” *Intelligence Report* 148 (2012), accessed June 7, 2015, <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2012/winter/massacre-in-wisconsin>. Report is a product of the Southern Poverty Law Center.

become a LWT and act alone possibly to avoid rejection.<sup>53</sup> Most LWTs tend to be socially isolated and unmarried, and one study notes that thirty-seven percent of far-right lone wolves lived alone at the time of attack.<sup>54</sup> The lack of a reliable social structure can create an environment lacking in rational feedback, allowing a continued downward spiral into radicalization. For example, Kaczynski recalled not fitting in with his classmates and being the subject of verbal abuse and bullying, and Rudolph was described as “different, a loner who didn't make a whole lot of friends.”<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, some LWTs can attempt to join organized groups and later chose to operate alone after determining that their fellow members were not sufficiently violent or extreme.<sup>56</sup> David Copeland, for example, joined and later abandoned the British National Party because it did not advocate violence.

Individuals with mental illness are significantly more likely to embrace lone wolf terrorism rather than join terrorist groups because those groups may reject psychologically unstable recruits who present logistical and security threats.<sup>57</sup> While LWTs frequently exhibit symptoms of psychological disorders, their psychopathologies are generally insufficient to cause psychotic behavior or cognitive disorganization.<sup>58</sup> As a result, many LWTs remain mentally and physically capable of functioning in society and carrying out attacks.

While some individuals align their extremist views with an existing group's narrative, others build a self-constructed and unique ideology. For example, Breivik believed in a unique ideology combining elements of “Islamophobia, cultural conservative nationalism, anti-feminism...white supremacy...right-wing Christian-fundamentalist, and national-romantic temple-order traditions.”<sup>59</sup> Breivik was unable to find a group that shared all of his various

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<sup>53</sup> Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism*, 50.

<sup>54</sup> Jeff Gruenewald, Steven Chermak, and Joshua D. Freilich, "Distinguishing “Loner” Attacks From Other Domestic Extremist Violence," *Criminology & Public Policy* 12, no. 1, (2013): 65-91, 70.

<sup>55</sup> Southern Poverty Law Center, “Tim and Sarah Gayman Discuss Growing Up in the Anti-Semitic Christian Identity Movement,” *Intelligence Report* 102 (2001), accessed June 10, 2015, <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2001/summer/coming-out>.

<sup>56</sup> Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism*, 52.

<sup>57</sup> Speckhard, “Lone Wolf Terrorism,” 2015.

<sup>58</sup> Liah Greenfeld, “The Making of a Lone Wolf Terrorist,” *Psychology Today*, October 26, 2014, accessed June 6, 2015, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-modern-mind/201410/the-making-lone-wolf-terrorist>.

<sup>59</sup> Siri Merethe Neset, Daniel Heradstveit, and G. Matthew Bonham. “The Lone Wolf behind the Norwegian Tragedy: The Ideological Foundations of Anders Behring Breivik,” Paper presented at International Society of Political Psychology, Annual Convention, July 2012, accessed June 06, 2015, [http://faculty.maxwell.syr.edu/gmbonham/The\\_Lone\\_Wolf.pdf](http://faculty.maxwell.syr.edu/gmbonham/The_Lone_Wolf.pdf).

beliefs and decided to act alone.

Religiously motivated LWTs choose to act alone rather than with a group usually following a break from their congregation, often because of the terrorist's increasing radicalization and support for violence. Furthermore, organized terrorist groups such as ISIL and the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) have encouraged individuals to conduct lone wolf attacks throughout the world.<sup>60</sup> This tactic resembles the call for "leaderless resistance," a decentralized violence strategy executed by individual actors in the Christian Identity movement.<sup>61</sup> To encourage individual attacks, organizations like ELF and ISIL are increasingly using online magazines and videos to publicly venerate successful attackers, demonstrating the rewards and sense of belonging achievable and inspiring other vulnerable, radicalized individuals to follow in their footsteps.

### *Ideological End State*

Similar to members of organized terrorist groups, LWTs believe that violence will lead to their desired ideological and sociopolitical end states and oftentimes their personal goals. As extremist ideologies consider the world to be in a state of moral decline, the various end states feature the restoration of world order. Though terrorist organizations aim to bring about their political and ideological end states, LWTs frequently envision themselves singularly capable of healing society. For example, Wade Page believed that it was his duty to "stand up for [his] race...and land."<sup>62</sup> Particularly in societies that value individual contributions and widely accept that "one person can change the world," LWTs may feel especially encouraged that their lone act will be successful in bringing about their desired end state.

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<sup>60</sup> Michael Steinbach, "Statement Before the House Judiciary Committee, Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security, and Investigations," *ISIL in America: Domestic Terror and Radicalization*, Hearing, February 26, 2015, (Serial No. 114-6), Washington: Government Printing Office, 2015, accessed June 09, 2015, <http://judiciary.house.gov/cache/files/121d6120-6f86-4b4e-a39b-7076fa8c7825/114-6-93527.pdf>

<sup>61</sup> "Press Release: Operation Lone Wolf," *Federal Bureau of Investigation, San Diego Division*, n.d., accessed June 25, 2015, <https://www.fbi.gov/sandiego/about-us/history/operation-lone-wolf>.

<sup>62</sup> Chris McGreal, "Wade Michael Page's Acquaintances Recall A Troubled Man Guided By Hate," *The Guardian*, August 7, 2012, accessed June 29, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/aug/07/wade-michael-page-wisconsin-shooting>.

## Finding 5: Existing Typologies Fail to Explain Why Lone Wolves Act Alone

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Scholars have developed a number of typologies for LWTs that employ unique methodologies and offer distinct insights, but the extant literature fails to provide a simple and accessible method for evaluating why LWTs act alone. Therefore, this report proposes a typology that helps to describe the decision to act as a LWT, and the typology organizes LWTs in terms of their ideological autonomy—the extent to which they espouse their own ideology or the ideology of an existing organization, and social competence—a psychological construct that describes an individual’s ability to create and maintain relationships.

Phillips and Pohl (2012) apply economic theories of rational choice to profile LWTs, the results of which yield two main categories for LWTs: risk-averse and risk-seeking.<sup>63</sup> Phillips and Pohl describe members of the risk-averse group as part-time terrorists who alternately engage in a series of terrorist acts along with legitimate activities, while risk-seeking LWTs place a higher value on the expected returns from their attack than the potential threat of capture.<sup>64</sup> This model remains a useful tool for explaining what types of activities a LWT may undertake (i.e. why LWTs choose serial, low impact attacks versus single incident, spectacular attacks), but it does not explain why the individual would choose to act alone rather than join with or recruit a group.

Conversely, Pantucci creates four discrete categories of lone Islamist terrorists, which he derives from a review of case studies.<sup>65</sup> Pantucci differentiates LWTs based on such factors as means and nature of radicalization, motive, and tactical circumstances. The first category is the loner, an “isolated individual who seek[s] to carry out an act of terrorism using some form of extremist ideology as their justification” but lacks clear connections to a greater network.<sup>66</sup> The

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<sup>63</sup> Rodger A. Bates, “Dancing With Wolves: Today’s Lone Wolf Terrorists,” *The Journal of Public and Professional Sociology* 4, no. 1 (2012): 7, accessed June 9, 2015,

<http://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1023&context=jpps>.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Raffaello Pantucci, “A Typology of Lone Wolves: Preliminary Analysis of Lone Islamist Terrorists,” *The International Centre for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence*, March 2011, 4, accessed June 9, 2015, [http://www.trackingterrorism.org/sites/default/files/chatter/1302002992ICSRPaper\\_ATypologyofLoneWolves\\_Pantucci.pdf](http://www.trackingterrorism.org/sites/default/files/chatter/1302002992ICSRPaper_ATypologyofLoneWolves_Pantucci.pdf).

<sup>66</sup> Pantucci, “A Typology of Lone Wolves,” 19.

second category is the lone wolf, an individual motivated by an extremist ideology who possesses connections to broader extremist networks but does not exist within an organization's command and control structure.<sup>67</sup> The third category is the lone wolf pack, a group of lone wolves who operate together but remain independent of formal command and control structures.<sup>68</sup> The fourth and final category is the lone attacker, an individual who operates alone but possesses clear command and control ties to existing organizations.<sup>69</sup> Pantucci's typology is descriptive in nature and successfully achieves its goal of describing the strategic scope of lone wolf terrorism. However, the inclusion of lone wolf packs and lone wolf attackers blurs the lines between traditional LWTs and other manifestations of the terrorist phenomenon and still does not address why an individual chooses to act alone.

Building on Pantucci's typology, Rodger Bates evaluates LWTs along continuums on four dimensions. As Figure 4 shows, Bates' first dimension evaluates the extent to which a LWT is self-radicalized or radicalized by a group.<sup>70</sup> Second, Bates offers a method to determine whether a lone wolf's motivation for violence is political and ideological (altruistic) or derived from personal grievances (egoistic).<sup>71</sup> Bates' final two dimensions mimic Phillips and Pohl's evaluation on whether LWTs are risk-seeking or risk-averse and serial offenders (form-career) or one time offenders (form-chaos).<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 20.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 24.

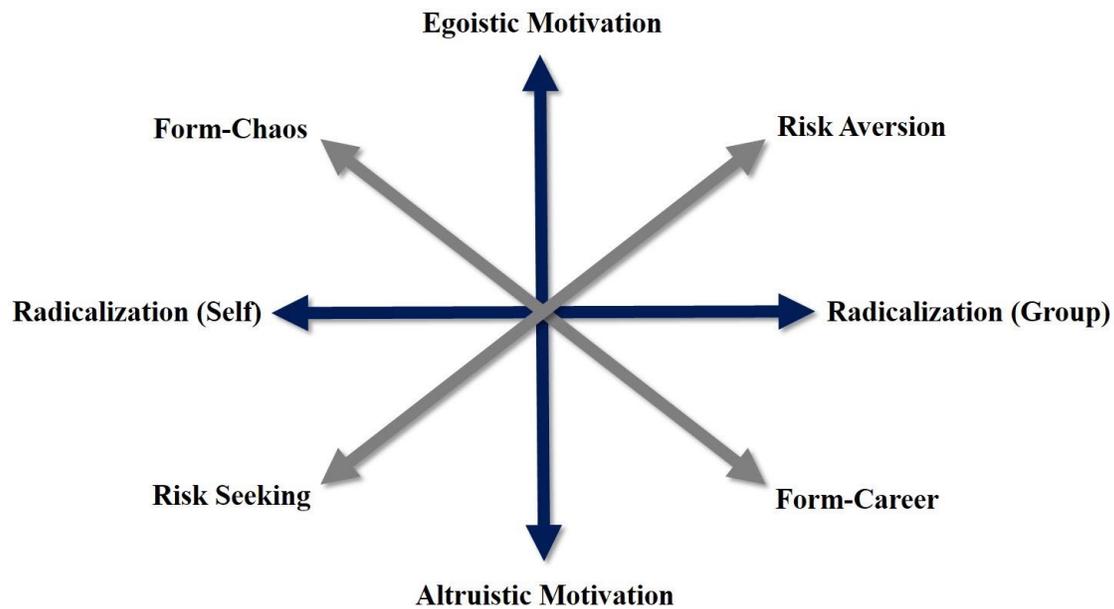
<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 29.

<sup>70</sup> Bates, "Dancing With Wolves: Today's Lone Wolf Terrorists," 8.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

**Figure 4: Bates' General Model of Lone Wolf Terrorism**



Bates' detailed typology sacrifices simplicity for accuracy, and Bates himself admits that “a model with this many possibilities is too complex for normal use, but the four dimensions contribute to a more complete understanding.”<sup>73</sup> However, Bates' model is more comprehensive than either Phillips and Pohl or Pantucci and begins to explain why an individual might choose to act alone.

#### *A New Lone Wolf Typology: Social Competence and Ideological Autonomy*

The NSCITF offers a new typology on LWTs. To develop a simple, practical typology to elucidate why LWTs act alone, a logical starting point is to examine two common themes distinguishing lone wolves from other group-oriented terrorists: social competence and ideological autonomy. First, LWTs have higher rates of psychopathology and social alienation than both the general population and group actor terrorists.<sup>74</sup> Even in the absence of diagnosable mental illness, Ramon Spaaij finds a “degree of social ineffectiveness and social alienation” that often limits LWTs' ability to participate in larger groups.<sup>75</sup> While social inadequacy is not sufficient to explain why individuals become LWTs, its prevalence suggests it is necessary to

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid. 10.

<sup>74</sup> Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism*, 50.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

explain LWTs.

Considerable psychological research on interpersonal relationships and social ability has focused on the construct of social competence, which can provide a broad measure for LWTs' social ability. Social competence is defined as "all the factors within an individual that influence relationship quality and are necessary for recruiting and maintaining supportive close personal relationships."<sup>76</sup> A wide variety of interrelated factors, including social skills, disposition, early family experiences, social support, and psychopathology contribute to one's social competence.<sup>77</sup> Notably, many of the deficits that LWTs display in their ability to interact with society may be measurable as deficits in social competence. For example, Kaczynski argued that skipping a grade in elementary school marked a critical point on his journey towards terrorism because it led to an underdevelopment of his social skills, later compounded by his self-exile from society.<sup>78</sup> Relationships are a necessary part of group participation, regardless of the purpose of the organization. LWTs may choose to operate alone to improve their operational security (OPSEC) and avoid detection; however, they may also feel *obligated* to operate alone because they lack the necessary social competence to gain acceptance or mobilize others to their cause.

In addition to social competence concerns, a second distinctive characteristic of LWTs is the confusing myriad motivations behind their violence. Ultimately, "assigning clear-cut motive or ideology to solo actor terrorists is often a problematic exercise."<sup>79</sup> The problems here are twofold: LWTs tend to mix personal grievances with ideological causes,<sup>80</sup> and it is often difficult to discern the degree to which a LWT acts on behalf of his own idiosyncratic ideology or if he assumes the ideology of an existing organization. Evaluating LWTs' ideological autonomy can provide rich insights into why they choose to operate alone and how they interact with elements of a broader terrorist movement.

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<sup>76</sup> B. Mallinckrodt, "Attachment, Social Competencies, Social Support, and Interpersonal Process in Psychotherapy," *Psychotherapy Research* 10, no.3 (2010): 243, accessed June 9, 2015, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/ptr/10.3.239>.

<sup>77</sup> B. Mallinckrodt, "Attachment, Social Competencies, Social Support, and Interpersonal Process in Psychotherapy," 241.

<sup>78</sup> Ramon Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism*, 53.

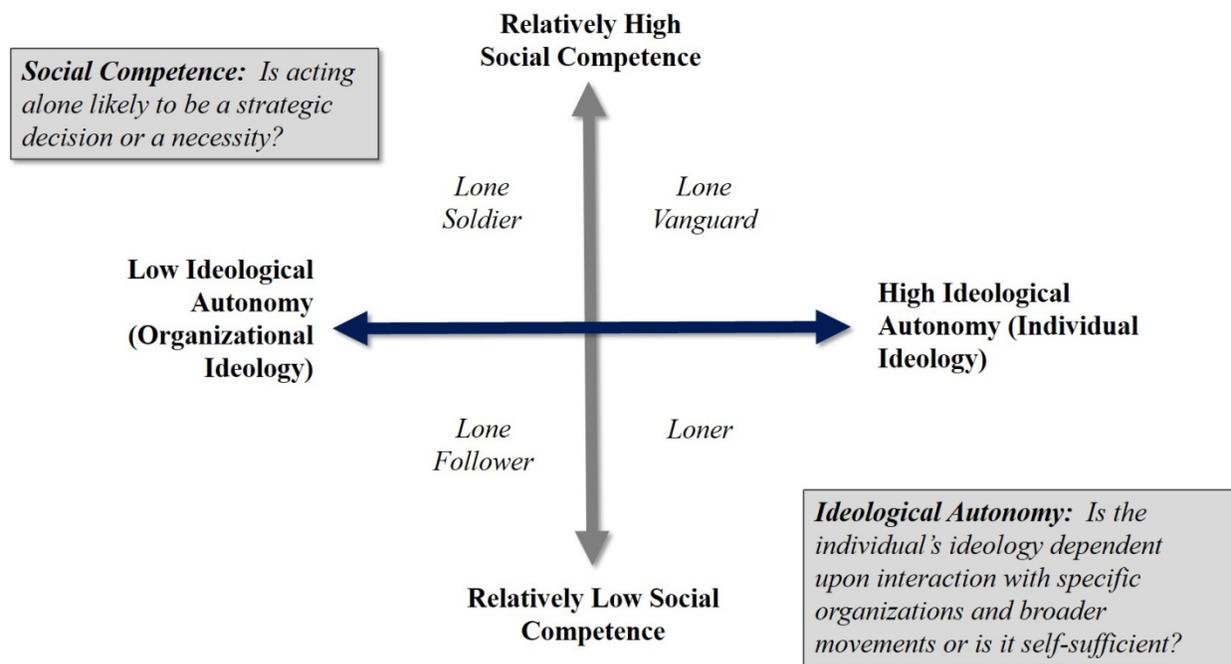
<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, 39.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, 38.

### *Evaluating by Social Competence and Ideological Autonomy*

The importance of social competence and ideological autonomy as key characteristics of LWTs suggests the possibility of creating a typology using these dimensions. As Figure 5 illustrates, the permutations of this typology generate four possible subcategories of LWTs. These categories should be understood as simplified classifications: not all LWTs will fall neatly into a single category. This assessment uses four case studies to demonstrate the utility of this typology in evaluating why the LWT operates alone.

**Figure 5: Typology of Lone Wolf Terrorists by Social Competence and Ideological Autonomy**



#### Case Study 1: Lone Soldiers

The first category is *lone soldiers*, or individuals who demonstrate high levels of social competence and low levels of ideological autonomy. Individuals in this category will act alone for strategic purposes to advance the ideological and political objectives of a larger terrorist organization. Their adherence to a specific organization's ideology suggests they are more likely to attempt contact with terrorist networks. The lone soldier possesses comparatively higher social competence in relation to other LWTs and can function as a member of society. The Fort Hood shooter Nidal Hasan displays several of the characteristics of the lone soldier, for example.

Hasan embraced aspects of AQ ideology, objected to US policies in the Middle East, and sought contact with the Al-Qai'da in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) imam Anwar al-Awlaki.<sup>81</sup> Although he displayed questionable social skills and was noted for poor relationships with his patients, Hasan was socially adept enough to attain the rank of Major in the US Army.<sup>82</sup> The US military documented Hasan's grievances concerning US policies in the Middle East prior to the attack, lending credence to the notion that Hasan's lone wolf attack emulated 's ideology.<sup>83</sup>

### Case Study 2: Lone Vanguards

The second category is *lone vanguards*, or individuals who demonstrate high levels of social competence and ideological autonomy. This type of LWT chooses to act alone to advance his individual ideology, which makes him or her less likely to possess ties to formal terrorist organizations though he or she has the requisite social skills to form relationships. This describes Norwegian LWT Breivik: prior to his two-stage terror attack in Norway, Breivik created a 1,500-page manifesto detailing his extremist views. While he derives many of his ideas from right-wing extremist literature, his ideology represents a departure from the established ideologies of any existing organization or movement.<sup>84</sup> Breivik initially joined Norway's conservative Progress Party but left of his own accord after concluding the party did not advance its policies far enough.<sup>85</sup> Although Breivik often shunned visitors and displayed socially alienating behaviors, he functioned as a mildly successful business entrepreneur at a young age.<sup>86</sup> In his compendium, Breivik specifically identified lone wolf plots as ideally suited for the OPSEC necessary to conduct his own attack.<sup>87</sup>

### Case Study 3: Loners

The third category is *loners*, or individuals who demonstrate low levels of social

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<sup>81</sup> Taylor Schmaltz, "Killings at Fort Hood," *Terrorism Since 9/11: The American Cases*, ed. John Mueller (Columbus: Mershon Center, 2015): 3,8, accessed June 9, 2015, <http://politicalscience.osu.edu/faculty/jmueller/32HOOD7.pdf>.

<sup>82</sup> Schmaltz, "Killings at Fort Hood,"8-9.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>84</sup> Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism*,39.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>86</sup> Jacob Aasland Ravndal, "A Post-Trial Profile of Anders Behring Breivik," *CTC Sentinel* 5, no. 10 (2012):16-19, accessed June 9, 2015, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/a-post-trial-profile-of-anders-behring-breivik>.

<sup>87</sup> Raffaello Pantucci, "What Have We Learned about Lone Wolves from Anders Behring Breivik?" *Perspectives on Terrorism* 5, no. 5-6 (2011): 35.

competence and high levels of ideological autonomy. Individuals in this category act alone to advance the goals of their individualized ideology, but their low social competence suggests they may also lack the ability to build relationships with peers or mobilize others to their cause. Loners are likely to be among the most isolated LWTs because they struggle to interact with others and do not rely on others for ideological motivation. The Unabomber, Kaczynski, typifies the loner. Akin to Breivik, Kaczynski believed his unique message warranted a manifesto, a 35,000-word diatribe against modernity entitled “Industrial Society and Its Future.”<sup>88</sup> Kaczynski’s manifesto draws inspiration from anarchism, environmentalism, and Luddism, but defies classification into any individual category. Kaczynski also struggled with psychopathology throughout his life, seeking psychiatric help while studying at the University of Michigan and describing periodic battles with depression.<sup>89</sup> Kaczynski’s crippling social anxiety and resulting isolation likely left him no choice but to operate alone.

#### Case Study 4: Lone Followers

The final category is *lone followers*, or individuals who demonstrate low levels of social competence and ideological autonomy. Individuals in this category seize the ideology of an existing organization but lack the social competence needed to gain acceptance into the group. Low social competence and the adoption of a group’s ideology suggest that personal grievances may strongly motivate lone followers, prompting questions about whether the attack constitutes terrorism. Michael Zehaf-Bibeau conforms to the general typology of the lone follower. Prior to his shooting spree in Ottawa, Zehaf-Bibeau lived on the margins of society—in the decade prior to his October 2014 attack, he was homeless and unable to hold a steady job.<sup>90</sup> In the video message recorded before his attack, Zehaf-Bibeau justified his actions as a response to Canadian atrocities against Muslims in the Middle East.<sup>91</sup> Although he did not specifically reference a terrorist organization during his martyrdom video, residents at homeless shelters in the weeks

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<sup>88</sup> Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism*, 40.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, 51.

<sup>90</sup> Michael Friscolanti, "Uncovering a Killer: Addict, Drifter, Walking Contradiction," *Macleans*, October 30, 2014, accessed June 9, 2015, <http://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/michael-zehaf-bibeau-addict-drifter-walking-contradiction/>.

<sup>91</sup> "Transcript of Michael Zehaf-Bibeau's Message," *Ottawa Citizen*, March 6, 2015, accessed June 9, 2015, <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/national/transcript-of-michael-zehaf-bibeaus-final-message>.

prior to the attack reported Zehaf-Bibeau became increasingly vocal in his support for ISIL.<sup>92</sup> His inability to secure a passport for travel to the Middle East sparked his decision to attack. Despite his increasing adherence to ISIL's ideology, Zehaf-Bibeau's attack appears to have been a spontaneous response to a personal crisis rather than a strategic attack in support of deeply held extremist beliefs.

### *Importance and Scope of New Typology*

It is important to note that the lone wolf terrorism typology proposed in this assessment does not attempt to describe or explain every feature of LWTs; rather, it provides a simple way to organize insights as to why LWTs operate alone. Measuring ideological autonomy and social competence yields numerous insights. First, the construct of social competence offers a meaningful and measurable way to encompass the spectrum of social and psychological concerns seen in LWTs. Second, the possibility that LWT violence is at least partly explained by social competence raises the prospect that a mental health or social work model may be efficacious in the prevention of some LWTs. Third, the synthesis of ideological autonomy and social competence offers insights into how LWTs relate to established terrorist organizations and broader extremist movements and may help investigators anticipate the types of communications a prospective LWTs may have with larger networks, such as seeking ideological sustenance.

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<sup>92</sup> Friscolanti, "Uncovering a Killer."

## Finding 6: Challenges in Identifying Lone Wolves Using Traditional Law Enforcement Tactics

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Established LE tactics, specifically those intended for counterterrorism (CT) operations, often focus on detecting threats and thwarting attacks via suspicious activity reports and communications monitoring. While those tactics have some applicability to preventing lone wolf terrorism, they require modifications to be more effective for combating the unique threat posed by lone wolf actors.

### *Community Reporting Often Provides Crucial Information*

LE has enhanced efforts to increase community awareness of the warning signs of radicalization. Many government agencies—including the Department of State (DOS), National Counter Terrorism Center (NCTC), and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)—have created community engagement teams for this specific purpose, teaching community groups (e.g. schools, neighborhoods, and religious groups) the consequences of LWT attacks and the importance of early reporting.

Given the high probability that at least one individual with prior knowledge regarding an attack or attacker, community engagement programs are essential cornerstones of lone wolf identification. One study concludes that "in sixty-three percent of the cases, family and friends were aware of the individual's intent to engage in terrorism-related activities because the offender verbally told them."<sup>93</sup> The FBI has incorporated tip lines and websites in all fifty-six national field offices, increased community outreach programs, and developed the Guardian Threat Management system, which allows coordination of terrorism-related tips with other federal, state, and local LE partners.

In addition, the FBI's Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Office is developing a strategic messaging plan to encourage the identification of radicalized individuals with a scheduled release by September 2015. This plan will outline ways in which the FBI can provide training and education to community members, particularly in schools for grades nine through twelve. The FBI is also creating a website to educate students on the threat of violent extremist

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<sup>93</sup> Gill, Horgan, and Deckert, *Bombing Alone*.

narratives, although this project has been delayed due to funding restrictions.<sup>94</sup>

### *Human Source Reporting*

Traditional LE undercover sources in radicalized groups or criminal enterprisers can provide information about individual members at varying stages of the radicalization process. LE sources may also be able to provide group or neighborhood dynamics, including crucial insight regarding which individual may be a potential threat. LEOs can then engage traditional investigative and interview techniques to determine the extent of radicalization and potential for mobilization, and respond as needed.

Indonesia's de-radicalization program, for example, has not led directly to the capture of Jemaah Islamiyah militants or leaders, but it has opened channels of communication between Indonesian police, current militants, and ex-radicals. The program's current value is as a source of intelligence and non-stigmatizing connections with radicals and their families, and as a mechanism to identify future sources.<sup>95</sup>

### *Communications Monitoring*

The Internet provides much of the radicalization material for those who become LWTs—and, therefore, to the LE organizations working to identify potential lone actors. LE can monitor social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, along with websites and chat rooms known to profess extremist views. Reviewing search histories can provide useful leads and evidence of extremist activity, focusing their attention on individuals who have already been identified as potential threats. In the case of suspected terrorist Sohial Omar Kabir, the Department of Justice (DOJ) used his Facebook activity to identify his involvement in terrorist activity. Kabir had posted propaganda and “liked” a variety of extremist pages.<sup>96</sup> Recent advances in data analytics could provide faster and more accurate identification techniques of online behavior associated with lone wolves.

CT and counter-radicalization experts also engage potentially violent individuals in

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<sup>94</sup> Countering Violent Extremism Office, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Interview with Georgetown University National Security Critical Task Force, Personal interview, Washington D.C., June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>95</sup> Kathleen E. Schulze, “Indonesia’s Approach to Jihadist Deradicalization,” *CTC Sentinel* 1, no. 8, (2008): 9.

<sup>96</sup> *United States v. Sohial Omar Kabir, et al.*, Criminal Complaint, United States District Court for the Central District of California, November 16, 2012 (unsealed November 19, 2012).

online conversation, working with specialists to attempt de-radicalization. This last strategy has had mixed results. ISIL, for example, is known for its aggressive social media campaigns, but there have been successful counter-messaging efforts by Islamic ideology experts.<sup>97</sup> However, the DOS counter-messaging attempt against ISIL has fallen short of its intended target audience.<sup>98</sup> Its efficacy is also limited since the messages are sent from an official government source, a poor point of origin for those who are opposed to the US government. A well-planned and executed counter-messaging campaign is a useful tactic, but respected community leaders and experts should spearhead this campaign, rather than the USG.

### *The Internet and Countering Radicalization*

Until the growth of social media and the Internet, radicalization occurred via person-to-person interaction, which allowed LE to track known groups with standard surveillance and investigative tools. As use of the Internet increases, so does the availability of extremist material, thus facilitating the radicalization and mobilization processes. AQAP, for instance, has produced thirteen online issues of its English-language magazine *Inspire* to date.<sup>99</sup> The Internet reduces the need for face-to-face recruitment, enabling terrorist organizations to amass a global following.<sup>100</sup> Online information provides potential LWTs with instructions on obtaining weapons, building explosive devices from easily-obtained materials, and names and descriptions of potential US-owned targets.<sup>101</sup>

The importance of the Internet in shaping the US government's CVE response is well documented. In a 2010 Senate hearing, Garry Reid outlined the challenge of the Internet in the

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<sup>97</sup> Harry Bruinius, "Muslim youth counter Islamic State with #NotInMyName Twitter campaign," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 22, 2014, accessed June 12, 2015, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Europe/2014/0922/Muslim-youths-counter-Islamic-State-with-NotInMyName-Twitter-campaign>.

<sup>98</sup> Rita Katz, "The State Department's Twitter War with ISIS is Embarrassing," *Time*, December 16, 2014, accessed June 24, 2015, <http://time.com/3387065/isis-twitter-war-state-department/>.

<sup>99</sup> U.S. Senate, "U.S. Government Efforts to Counter Violent Extremism," hearing before the Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities of the Committee on Armed Services, One Hundred Eleventh Congress, March 10, 2010, accessed June 25, 2015. <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-111shrg63687/html/CHRG-111shrg63687.htm>.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Steve Hopkins, "Al-Qaeda Published Recipe For Easy-To-Make Bomb That Would Evade Airport Check That 'Any Determined Muslim Can Prepare,'" *Daily Mail*, December 2014, accessed June 9, 2015, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2905276/Al-Qaeda-publishes-recipe-easy-make-bomb-evade-airport-check-determined-Muslim-prepare.html>.

promotion of extremist ideology and radicalization, but US government programs have failed to produce effective counter-messaging strategies five years later. At the same hearing, Ambassador Daniel Benjamin, Coordinator for the Department of State Counterterrorism Bureau, addressed DOS' CVE efforts. Using partnerships with host countries and local non-governmental organizations in foreign nations, it has worked to make ideologies that counter extremist views available on the web.<sup>102</sup> Benjamin noted, "If you look at the history of terrorism, the Internet is probably the most important technological innovation since dynamite, and it's enormously difficult to deal with all the different aspects."<sup>103</sup>

Easily accessible websites provide much of the same radical ideology that previously relied on in-person contact. LE should therefore be prepared for a potential increase of lone wolf actors who would not otherwise have reached radical extremes, due to either a lack of resources or an unwillingness to interact with other radicalized individuals, both of which the Internet easily circumvents. Conversely, the increased prominence of online radicalization can provide extra opportunities for LE, who can track websites and monitor online communications to pinpoint radicalized individuals.

*"Enabled by 21st century technology, extremists have optimized the use of Internet chat rooms, Web sites, and email chains to spread their virulent messages and reach a global audience of potential recruits. What was once a lengthy process of establishing contact, exchanging ideas, arranging meetings, providing training, and developing attack plans can now be condensed into a much shorter timeline, across multiple international boundaries, and beyond the reach of any single law enforcement agency or military task force."*

*- Garry Reid, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Defense for Special Operations and Combating Terrorism, hearing to the Senate Committee for Armed Services<sup>29</sup>*

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<sup>102</sup> U.S. Senate, "U.S. Government Efforts to Counter Violent Extremism," hearing.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

## Finding 7: Law Enforcement Responses Can Result in Community Mistrust

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### *Surveillance and Civil Liberties*

The USG must strike the appropriate balance between monitoring potential LWTs and protection civil liberties. In response to the September 11, 2001 attacks, the US Congress passed legislation authorizing LEAs previously serving an investigative role to undertake intelligence-gathering missions.<sup>104</sup> Collectors and consumers of intelligence derived from these programs assert the data's value in thwarting terrorist (lone wolf included) plots, but other studies question that assessment. For instance, a December 2013 report by the President's Review Group on Intelligence and Communications Technologies stated: "Information contributed to terrorist investigations by the use of telephone metadata was not essential to preventing attacks and could readily have been obtained in a timely manner using conventional court orders."<sup>105</sup>

### *Tracking Identified Individuals*

The Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 and the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 for surveillance of suspected LWTs have offered the USG new legal means to combat lone wolf terrorism.<sup>106</sup> The US Congress passed the former law following Eric Rudolph's 1996 bombing at Atlanta's Centennial Olympic Park and allocated one billion dollars to "enhance federal LE capacity to deter, investigate, and prosecute terrorism."<sup>107</sup> The latter allows authorities to track non-US nationals suspected of being LWTs, even if they have no confirmed ties to terrorist groups. This provision corresponds to the surveillance authority provided to the USG in the USA PATRIOT Act that passed after September 11, 2001.

In January 2015, the New American Foundation conducted a study that concluded that NSA telephonic collection efforts were only useful in approximately 7.5 percent of terrorism

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<sup>104</sup> USA PATRIOT Act (U.S. H.R. 3162, Public Law 107-56).

<sup>105</sup> Richard Clarke, Michael Morell, Geoffrey Stone, Cass Sunstein, and Peter Swire, Swire, ell, Geome-Twitter-campaignntext=jpReview Group on Intelligence and Communications Technologies, December 12, 2013, 104, accessed on June 9, 2015, [https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2013-12-12\\_rg\\_final\\_report.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2013-12-12_rg_final_report.pdf).

<sup>106</sup> Elizabeth B Bazan, "Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004: 'Lone Wolf' Amendment to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act," *CRS Report for Congress*, 2004, accessed June 10, 2015, <http://fas.org/irp/crs/RS22011.pdf>.

<sup>107</sup> Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism*, 78.

cases.<sup>108</sup> While these studies examined the efficacy of the phone data in terrorism cases generally, Lone Wolf Terrorism is a subset of terrorism in general. As such, if the mass of data was only useful in 7.5 percent of all terrorism cases, we can expect an even lower success rate against LWT. These studies likely will bolster public scrutiny of these programs.<sup>109</sup>

### *The Limitations of Sting Operations*

Sting operations are another successful, albeit controversial, LE tactic. After identifying an individual who appears likely to commit a violent act, LE establishes a relationship with the individual and engages in dialogue to determine how far the suspect is willing to go down the path of mobilization. By the time the suspect is ready to act, LE has a complete picture of the person's motivations, connections, and sufficient evidence for prosecution. As the events preceding the attack are controlled by LE, there is no risk of an actual attack.

Sting operations are sometimes criticized as entrapment, potentially pushing a suspect further than they would have gone alone by offering otherwise unobtainable financial, intellectual, or material support<sup>110</sup>. Even so, those resources are available from legitimately violent sources, and it is difficult to determine if sting operations add to the radicalization process rather than just substituting the source of the support. Despite the controversy, the operations are generally successful at preventing attacks, since they are managed at every step.

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<sup>108</sup> Bailey Cahall, David Sterman, Emily Schneider, and Peter Bergen. "Do NSA's Bulk Surveillance Programs Stop Terrorists?" New American Foundation, January 13, 2014, accessed June 9, 2015, <https://www.newamerica.org/international-security/do-nsas-bulk-surveillance-programs-stop-terrorists/>.

<sup>109</sup> George Gao, "What Americans Think about NSA surveillance, national security and privacy," *Pew Research Center*, May 29, 2015, accessed June 10, 2015, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/29/what-americans-think-about-nsa-surveillance-national-security-and-privacy/>

<sup>110</sup> "Illusion of Justice: Human Rights Abuses in U.S. Terrorism Prosecutions," Human Rights Watch in partnership with Human Rights Institute at Columbia University Law School, July 2014, accessed June 10, 2015, [http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/usterrorism0714\\_ForUpload\\_1\\_0.pdf](http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/usterrorism0714_ForUpload_1_0.pdf).

## Finding 8: The US Lacks a “Whole of Government” Approach

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### *Lack of Lead Agency/Organizer*

LEAs and the IC are not organizationally suited to address LWTs, and they face considerable bureaucratic and legal constraints. Many agencies and departments are addressing different facets of the problem, but there is no designated coordinator or lead agency. The current “to each their own” approach limits both programmatic and geographic efficacy. Departments have developed duplicate programs, which are at best a waste of funding and resources, and at worst may exacerbate the issue by highlighting government inefficiency, biases, or sending overlapping messages to the public, all of which risk further aggrieving a radicalized individual.<sup>111</sup> Creating metrics for analyzing program efficacy is also difficult: success against radical ideologies is reflected in changing attitudes and behaviors, which are difficult to measure, and since each agency’s focus is different, their measures of success may vary, too. However, we could track some progress by number of radicalized individuals arrested or rate of successful incidents.

### *Scattered Responses*

The most commonly applied initiatives for LWT prevention are aimed at countering the propagation of violence. A number of US and international programs attempt to defeat ideological narratives and violent extremism, and while all of them contain elements applicable to LWTs, they have not been fully applied or implemented.

It seeks to “empower...state, local, and community partners to assist in this effort,”<sup>112</sup> focusing primarily on Islamic extremism and deployed in only three cities: Boston, Minneapolis, and Los Angeles.<sup>113</sup> Despite establishing a full-time CVE Coordinator at the Department of

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<sup>111</sup> Jerome P. Bjelopera, “Countering Violent Extremism in the United States,” *Congressional Research Service* February 19, 2014, 27-28, accessed on June 9, 2015, available at <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/homesec/R42553.pdf>.

<sup>112</sup> Robert Mueller, Statement Before the Senate Judiciary Committee, *Oversight of the Federal Bureau of Investigation*, Hearing, May 16, 2012, (Serial No. J-112-76), Washington: Government Printing Office, 2012, accessed June 10, 2015, <http://www.judiciary.senate.gov/mwg-internal/de5fs23hu73ds/progress?id=IJPYjIfojXMGCNSpCpo5fFR0dqdQk2S7msrNhT35ypk>.

<sup>113</sup> FBI National Security Branch, “A New Approach to Countering Violent Extremism: Sharing Expertise and Empowering Local Communities,” *Federal Bureau of Investigation*, October 7, 2014, accessed June 27, 2015, <http://leb.fbi.gov/2014/october/a-new-approach-to-countering-violent-extremism-sharing-expertise-and-empowering-local-communities>.

Homeland Security (DHS),<sup>114</sup> the absence of federal LE—including the FBI Director—at the White House’s February 2015 three-day CVE summit is a clear indication of the lack of federal planning coordination.<sup>115</sup>

### *US Attempts to Defeat Ideological Narratives*

The US government has historically focused on the identification and interdiction of violent actors through traditional LE methods; however, in 2011, it modified its policy to focus on the prevention and identification of violent extremists.<sup>116</sup> Broad policy objectives encourage the use of numerous existing programs originally designed to counter other national issues, such as drugs and gang activity. The DOJ’s Comprehensive Gang Model, providing community-led alternatives to youth targeted for gang recruitment, is an example.<sup>117</sup> Such programs are primarily targeted toward youth. Thus far, the programs are only in their initial stages and have produced limited visible effects,<sup>118</sup> but today’s programs build off historical US experiences in LE and government, attempting to reform criminals or counter ideology.

Other US programs include a joint DOJ/DHS effort, the Building Communities of Trust Initiative. This seeks to increase dialogue and transparency between federal, state, and local LE, communities, and civil liberty groups, highlighting the importance of meaningful information sharing, responding to community concerns, and distinguishing between cultural behaviors and indicators of legitimate terrorist activity.<sup>119</sup> By engaging in dialogue with communities and transparently disclosing the aims and activities of LE, extremist groups have difficulty proving to their would-be members that authorities are “evil” or “wrong” and must also compete with pre-established counter-narratives of unity and inclusion.

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<sup>114</sup> Office of the Press Secretary, “White House Countering Violent Extremism Fact Sheet,” *The White House*, February 18, 2015, accessed June 4, 2015, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/02/18/fact-sheet-white-house-summit-countering-violent-extremism>.

<sup>115</sup> Michael S. Schmidt, “FBI Chief Not Invited to Meeting on Countering Violent Extremism,” *The New York Times*, February 19, 2015, accessed June 15, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/20/us/politics/fbi-chief-not-invited-to-meeting-on-extremists.html>.

<sup>116</sup> National Security Council, “Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States,” *The White House*, August 2011, accessed June 4, 2015, [https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/empowering\\_local\\_partners.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/empowering_local_partners.pdf).

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> U.S. Army Brigadier General Russell D. Howard, Interview with Georgetown University National Security Critical Task Force, Personal Interview, Washington, D.C., June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>119</sup> National Security Council, “Empowering Local Partners.”

DOJ runs another joint program with the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services: the Safe Schools and Healthy Students initiative, which resulted from studies undertaken post-Columbine. Providing grants for individually developed programs to schools working with local LEOs and mental health professionals allows them the flexibility to combat a variety of radicalization factors, and initial results suggest a decrease in school violence.<sup>120</sup> The FBI has developed community outreach programs, providing radicalization briefings at the request of community leadership, local LEOs, and schools—while effective, the number of requests outstrips the number of agents, resulting in considerable backlog.<sup>121</sup>

### *Foreign Responses to LWT*

Indonesia's program, run by the country's national police's Bomb Task Force, is founded on the premise that a moderate community leader will have limited credibility with extremists,<sup>122</sup> and reformed radicals should therefore be the primary spokespersons of de-radicalization programs. This program is specific to radical Islam and focuses primarily on de-radicalizing the jihadist mindset regarding "the killing of civilians, and the "need" for an Islamic state."<sup>123</sup> However, this program's success is dependent on a supply of de-radicalized people who are willing to speak out. Since the United States has not introduced any formal de-radicalization programs, it would be difficult to identify any de-radicalized individuals who could participate in an initiative like Indonesia's. This finding suggests that the United States should consider implementing de-radicalization programs, which would not only provide alternatives ways to address threats from radicalized individuals but would also identify potential participants for a spokesperson position.

Saudi Arabia uses a six-week prison program with a combination of counseling and societal reintegration assistance, under the guidance of religious clerics, psychologists, and security officers.<sup>124</sup> The program has included four thousand prisoners and has expanded to

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<sup>120</sup>“Findings from the National Evaluation of the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative: Program Overview and Update – 2013,” *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration*, n.d., accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.samhsa.gov/safe-schools-healthy-students/national-evaluation>.

<sup>121</sup> Countering Violent Extremism Office, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Personal interview, June 4, 2015.

<sup>122</sup> Schulze, “Indonesia's Approach to Jihadist Deradicalization,” 8.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

<sup>124</sup> Marisa Porges, “The Saudi Deradicalization Experiment,” *The Council on Foreign Relations*, January 22, 2010, accessed June 08, 2015, <http://www.cfr.org/radicalization-and-extremism/saudi-deradicalization->

include repatriated Guantanamo Bay detainees, but the primary challenge lies in determining its effectiveness. Its most notable result is the establishment of a government-funded halfway house dedicated to assisting parolees with societal integration, as well as concentrated re-education targeting radical beliefs and the misinterpretation of scripture.

This program is consistent with most US criminal reintegration assistance programs, which could in turn apply to developing US programs. Current criminal programs incorporate vocational rehabilitation and regular visits by social workers have reduced rates of recidivism and risk of re-exposure to the individual's previous criminal lifestyle.<sup>125,126</sup> Disengaging from a community supportive of detrimental behavior is critical to maintaining good behavior in other released inmates, and providing radicals—operating alone or in groups—with that opportunity appears to have had a parallel effect in maintaining de-radicalization. Ultimately, Saudi Arabia's results indicate altering an existing US program to address LWTs is a suitable option, and Minneapolis may be an unintentional pilot city. While Abdullahi Yusuf failed to obtain a passport to travel to Syria awaits sentencing, the federal judge has remanded him to a halfway house to see if reintegration is possible.<sup>127</sup> If this is successful, it could establish a precedent for more thorough programs designed to provide the psychological and lifestyle assistance necessary to redirect radical thinking.

In the United Kingdom, the PREVENT program, a coordinated, comprehensive approach to countering violent extremism and stopping individual actors, hopes to eliminate or minimize virtually all radicalization factors and directly combats extremist ideologies through collaboration and logical argument on a national scale.<sup>128</sup> Its success has yet to be determined, and the relationship between NGOs and the government has been strained, preventing many of the community-based programs from developing dialogue between the communities and the

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[experiment/p21292](#).

<sup>125</sup> Richard P. Seiter and Karen R. Kadela, "Prisoner Reentry: What Works, What Does Not, and What Is Promising," *Crime and Delinquency* 49, no. 3 (2003), 373.

<sup>126</sup> Seiter and Kadela, "Prisoner Reentry," 378.

<sup>127</sup> John G. Horgan, "De-radicalization Programs Offer Hope in Countering Terrorism," *Los Angeles Times*, February 13, 2015, accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-0215-horgan-terrorist-deradicalization-20150215-story.html>.

<sup>128</sup> "Preventing Violent Extremism: A Strategy for Delivery," *Government of the United Kingdom*, May 2008, accessed June 7, 2015, <http://www.northants.police.uk/files/linked/terrorism/Preventing%20Violent%20Extremism.pdf>.

authorities.<sup>129</sup> Even so, its focus on youth, disrupting those who promote violent extremism, and increasing LE engagement both parallel some U.S. attempts and highlight what the United States still needs to accomplish.

Violent extremism that leads to lone wolf terrorism is an international issue, and the countries mentioned here are only some of those that have implemented de-radicalization programs. While their applicability in the United States has not been tested, each carries important lessons.

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<sup>129</sup> “Countering Violent Extremism: The Counter-Narrative Study,” *Qatar International Academy for Security Studies*, September 9, 2013, accessed June 08, 2015, <http://qiass.org/test/>.

## Recommendations for the Future

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### *Recommandation One: Adopt a Standard Definition*

The NSCITF recommends the adoption of the definition: *Lone wolf terrorism is the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or threat of violence committed by a single actor who pursues political change linked to a formulated ideology, whether his own or that of a larger organization, and who does not receive orders, direction, or material support from outside sources.*

### *Recommendation Two: Appoint Clear Leadership over Lone Wolf Terrorism*

The USG should name a single individual to coordinate strategy and planning for lone wolf terrorism. This individual should ideally report to the White House. The organization within which the mission leader resides is not determined here, although Recommendation Six of the Congressionally mandated report—“The FBI - Protecting the Homeland in the Twenty-first Century”—recommends that CVE efforts be moved from the FBI to DHS or distributed to other agencies.<sup>130</sup>

### *Recommendation Three: Emphasize Preventing and Short Circuiting Radicalization*

Effectively addressing lone wolf terrorism requires a broader campaign that must include engaging with and strengthening the informal community, focusing on early childhood education, building resilience in childhood and adolescence, and instituting effective law enforcement practices. Unfortunately, CVE programs do not currently have effective ways to complete this range of requirements.

There are crises and decision points along the continuum of radicalization that can change directions, for better or worse. Of course, the earliest intervention possible can prevent the individual from getting on the continuum from the start. Early in the radicalization process, the close community of family, friends, schools and the informal network of neighbors and service providers begin to notice questionable behavior. The family, friends, and peers may not

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<sup>130</sup> Bruce Hoffman, Edwin Meese III, Timothy J. Roemer, “The FBI - Protecting the Homeland in the 21st Century,” *Report of the 9/11 Review Commission*, March 2015, accessed June 27, 2015, <https://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/protecting-the-homeland-in-the-21st-century>.

consider the individual a future terrorist at this point; rather, the individual appears odd. The current CVE educational efforts should be brought together under the mission leader to be strengthened and new ideas developed by including the best innovative thinkers from the film and music industry, sports, social media, and game developers.

As troubling behaviors escalate and the individual becomes more estranged from his or her community, the NSCITF finds that the resources available to assist the individual are minimal. It is often at this point that family members, friends, and peers face a difficult decision: ignore the behavior or call the police. Both responses are often not effective because the behavior is too important to ignore but likely not yet a law enforcement issue because the individual has not committed a crime. The mission leader will need to engage the education and social service network to enhance those programs that have been or could become effective alternatives to making the issue one of law enforcement at this point.

In the NSCIFT radicalization model, the aforementioned timeline precedes and includes the receptive point. Social support can provide an effective alternative if it is specifically tailored to the need and readily available. Unfortunately, even in the best environment with adequate social support, individuals may still adopt radical extremism as their solution to personal or social grievances. Therefore, the focus now shifts to law enforcement—specifically, the monitoring, surveillance, and potential arrest of the individual.

In addition to the focus on the individual, the mission leader will need to develop more effective counter messaging capabilities. Currently, the sophistication of extremist messaging for recruitment is exceeding that of our counter messaging approaches. The White House’s CVE summit earlier this year proposed a joint NCTC-Hollywood workshop to develop counter-extremist films, which holds potential for more effective media productions, along with a “CVE Hub,” a non-governmental organization to lead community involvement in countering violent extremist narratives.<sup>131</sup> Messages must be insightful, realistic, and interesting, and DOS’ coordination of US approaches to combating Islamic extremist ideology could benefit from widening its mission to combat general extremist ideology.

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<sup>131</sup> National Security Council, “White House Countering Violent Extremism Fact Sheet.”

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