



THREAT INSIGHT

North America: Recent COVID-19 pandemic-related violence

Issued: 3 June 2021

21-87-TI

1. (R) This report provides an overview and assessment of two recent violent extremist incidents associated with COVID-19-related conspiracy theories in Canada and the United States of America.
2. (R) We have moderate confidence in our assessments, which draw upon partner reporting and assessments, media reporting, and our understanding of individuals who adhere to COVID-19 pandemic-associated conspiracy theories in New Zealand. Canada's Integrated Terrorism Assessment Centre was consulted in preparation of this product.

Details

3. (R) On 19 May 2021, Canadian authorities in Ontario arrested an individual, reportedly a prominent figure in Canada's anti-lockdown and anti-mask movement, after he threatened to kill Canada's provincial premiers. During an initial arrest attempt, the individual drove his vehicle at a police officer and escaped, but handed himself in to authorities the following day. The individual had previously arranged, and been charged in relation to, demonstrations against COVID-19 public health orders across Canada.
4. (R) On 28 May 2021, an individual almost certainly motivated by QAnon and COVID-19 conspiracy theories, drove a vehicle at high speed through a COVID-19 vaccination site in Tennessee. The vehicle almost hit several workers, and the individual was charged with multiple counts of felony reckless endangerment.

Assessment

5. (R) CTAG assesses both incidents demonstrate the continued willingness of some individuals to use COVID-19 conspiracy theories, sometimes in conjunction with other conspiracy theories or personal grievances, to justify violent or threatening behaviour. Both incidents also highlight that acts of ideologically-motivated violence could occur with little or no forewarning, or during confrontations with law enforcement, and will likely involve basic capabilities.

6. (R) Anti-COVID-19 rhetoric is occurring online and amongst some communities in New Zealand. s6(a)

[REDACTED]

Should any such violence occur, we currently assess this would more likely manifest as an isolated instance of violent protest, rather than an act of terrorism.

7. (R) s6(a), s6(b)(i)

[REDACTED]

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s6(a)



CTAG Threat Definitions

Likelihood Assessment	Threat Level
Terrorist attack, or violent protest, or violent crime is expected	EXTREME
Terrorist attack, or violent protest, or violent crime is assessed as highly likely	HIGH
Terrorist attack, or violent protest, or violent crime is assessed as feasible and could well occur	MEDIUM
Terrorist attack, or violent protest, or violent crime is assessed as a realistic possibility	LOW
Terrorist attack, or violent protest, or violent crime is assessed as unlikely	VERY LOW

Probabilistic language

<< Lower likelihood		Even chance		Higher likelihood >>	
Remote/Highly unlikely	Unlikely	Realistic possibility	Likely Probable Probably	Highly likely	Almost certain