

Evidence-Based Approaches to Prevention of Targeted Violence

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New FBI Study Shows Mass Shooters Aren't Loners Who Suddenly Just Snap

Rampage killers plan, give off warning signs—and mostly get their guns legally.



MARK FOLLMAN

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Based on research of Silver, Simons, & Craun (2018)

What is Targeted Violence?

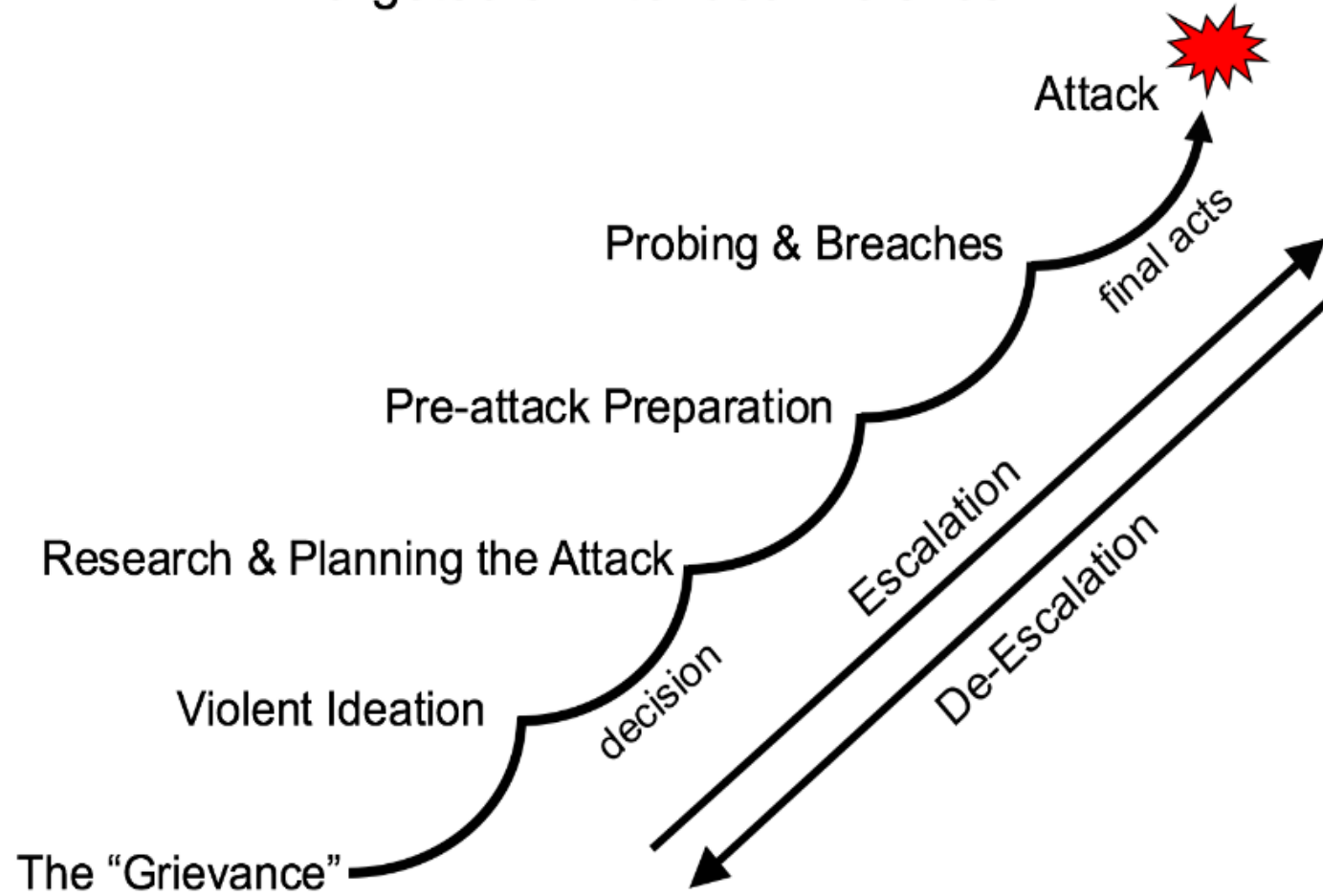
Violent incidents involving *an identifiable subject who possesses the intent and potential to cause harm to an identifiable target.*

Targets include other individual(s), members of a hated demographic, organizations, symbolic locations such as religious houses, or populated public spaces.

Usually motivated by personal grievance, hate-based ideology, religious or political extremism, or (about 20% per Stone, 2015) psychotic/delusional thinking.



Pathway to Workplace and Campus Targeted or Intended Violence



Adapted with permission from F.S. Calhoun and S.W. Weston (2003). *Contemporary threat management: A practical guide for identifying, assessing and managing individuals of violent intent.*

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Threat Assessment & Management



The set of investigative and operational techniques used to identify, assess, and manage the risks of targeted violence and its potential perpetrators.

Gather relevant behavioral and contextual data to gauge risk and determine the best means of mitigating such risk

Represents a structured, systematic approach to PREVENTION which does not rely on PREDICTION.



Structured Professional Judgments (SPJ's)

Traditional violence risk assessment was **ACTUARIAL** – calculate likelihood of violent acts during a certain period, based on the individual's similarity to recidivists vs. non-recidivists.

TAM takes a “guided clinical approach” detailing the minimum set of risk factors that should be considered in every case of concern.

SPJ's bring greater consistency & visibility to any threat/risk assessment process.

Source: Canada Dept. of Justice, www.justice.gc.ca

SPJ Settings & Populations

- HCR-20 – Historical Clinical Risk Management (forensic, correctional and psychiatric settings)
- WAVR-21 – Workplace Assessment of Violence Risk
- SARA – Spousal Assault Risk Assessment
- SAVRY – Structured Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth
- PCL-R – Psychopathy Checklist, Revised
- VERA - Violent Extremist Risk Assessment
- TRAP-18: Terrorist Radicalization Assessment Protocol – Lone Attackers

TRAP-18

TERRORIST RADICALIZATION
ASSESSMENT PROTOCOL™

USER MANUAL

SPJ Example: Lone Attackers

A reliable and valid structured professional judgment instrument for assessing risk of lone actor (vs. group-based) attacks.

- **Eight Proximal Warning Behaviors** – identify patterns of proximal risk for intended or targeted violence
- **Ten Distal Characteristics** – derived from forensic expertise and the empirical & theoretical research on terrorism

Proximal Warning Behaviors (8)

Pathway - research, planning, preparation, or implementation of an attack

Fixation - pathological preoccupation with a person or a cause

Identification– “pseudo commando” presentation, identify with previous attackers or assassins, or as agent to advance a cause

Novel aggression– smaller-scale violent or aggressive acts that appear unrelated to targeted violence pathway

Proximal
Warning
Behaviors
(cont'd)

Energy burst - an increase in the frequency or variety of any noted activities related to the target in preceding days, weeks, or hours

Leakage - communication to a third party of an intent to do harm to a target

Last resort - evidence of a “violent action imperative” and “time imperative” - often a signal of desperation or distress

Directly communicated threat - the communication of a direct threat to the target or law enforcement beforehand

Distal Characteristics (10)

- Personal grievance and moral outrage
- Framed by an ideology
- Failure to affiliate
- Dependence on the virtual community
- Thwarting of occupational goals
- Changes in thinking and emotion
- Failure of sexual pair-bonding
- Mental disorder
- Creative and innovative
- Criminal violence

Frequency of Fixation Warning Behavior in 332 targeted attacks (2009-2014)

Meloy & Rahman, 2020

- Public figure attackers in U.S. (n=18) **78%**
- W. European attackers/politicians (n=24) **54%**
- German public figure attackers (n=14) **100%**
- German school shooters (n=9) **100%**
- European individual terrorists (n=22) **100%**
- US & European lone actor terrorists (n=111) **77%**
- Intimate partner homicide offenders (n=70) **93%**
- North American lone actor terrorists (n=33) **57%**
- School threateners (n=31) **16%**

Table 1 illustrates the frequency of pathological fixation as a proximal warning behavior across 377 subjects in an aggregated dataset of various targeted attackers studied over the past 15 years (range: 41%–100%, M = 81%).

Importance of Awareness & Reporting

Sensitize your population to behaviors or circumstances suggesting a potential for violent or destructive acts, for example:

- Escalating grievance, hostility toward others or the organization itself
- Direct or implied threats, physically menacing behavior
- Intimate partner violence, stalking, violating legal protective orders
- Escalating despair, despondency, suicidality for which someone won't accept help – risk increases with substance abuse
- Apparent admiration of mass attackers or unsettling references to notorious incidents of violence.

Primary & Secondary Prevention Guidance

- Maintain fair, respectful, and psychologically safe environments
- Offer a range of supportive and preventative services including mental health referrals, crisis intervention, and meaningful protection for targets of school/workplace bullying or harassment
- Emphasize collective responsibility to maintain safety & security
- Establish secure confidential mechanisms of reporting to officials who prepared to engage an interdisciplinary threat assessment team
- Take all threats and aggressive/intimidating gestures seriously
- Threat mitigation or management can include enhanced monitoring or organizational security measures, progressive discipline, psychiatric detention, protection orders, temporary surrender of firearms....



Violence is an admission that one's ideas and goals cannot prevail on their own merits.

-- *Edward Kennedy*

From: www.wisesayings.com



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