



SAN DIEGO LAW ENFORCEMENT COORDINATION CENTER

Situational Awareness Bulletin

April 20, 2020

Handling Notice: Recipients are reminded that SD-LECC intelligence and analysis products contain sensitive homeland security information meant for use primarily within the law enforcement and homeland security communities. Such products shall not be released in either written or oral form to the media, the general public, or other personnel who do not have a valid need-to-know without prior approval.

(U//FOUO) Some Individual Reactions to COVID-19 Pandemic May Result in Acts or Calls for Violence, Posing Potential Threat to First Responders in the San Diego Region

(U//FOUO) This product is intended to provide awareness regarding criminal and public safety threats related to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic based on open source information, law enforcement reporting, and suspicious activity reports (SARs) submitted to the SD-LECC as of April 14, 2020. The SD-LECC recognizes that Americans have the freedom to exercise their Constitutionally-protected rights, including the right to free exercise of religion and the rights to assemble, speak, and petition the government. The SD-LECC safeguards these rights and only reports on Constitutionally-protected activities for situational awareness in the interest of ensuring the safety and security of the public.

(U//LES) Stressors related to COVID-19, such as job loss or perceived government errors or inaction, may cause some individuals to make threats or act violently toward members of the public, first responders, or public figures.

- *(U//LES) Regional reporting highlights the potential for firearm-related violence by individuals targeting family members, community members, and law enforcement as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, on March 16, 2020, the SD-LECC received reporting of a subject who blamed his loss of employment on the COVID-19 pandemic, became intoxicated, armed himself with multiple firearms, pointed a firearm at his neighbor, and then shot at the police helicopter providing assistance to law enforcement responding to the scene.¹ During a separate incident on March 24, 2020, local law enforcement arrested an individual for domestic violence and confiscated two firearms. The individual had allegedly become increasingly paranoid and aggressive since the outbreak of COVID-19 and reportedly believed the government was conspiring to kill him.²*
- *(U//LES) SARs submitted to the SD-LECC indicate some individuals in the San Diego region are willing to consider engaging in an exchange of gunfire with law enforcement to end their lives due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. On March 18, 2020, the SD-LECC received reporting regarding a subject who e-mailed a news outlet and stated he was considering "martyrdom," including a possible suicide by cop scenario, in response to the "pandemic frenzy."³ In a separate incident on March 26, 2020, a subject called a suicide hotline and stated he wanted to intentionally crash his vehicle into others to end his life and claimed he would participate in a shootout with law enforcement if police were called. The subject also claimed to have recently lost his job, potentially as a ramification of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.⁴*
- *(U//FOUO) Regional reporting indicates individuals residing in the San Diego region may use their online presence to incite violence against government officials for their perceived errors related to the U.S. government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to U.S. Department of Homeland Security reporting, on April 3, 2020, a subject reportedly residing in the region responded to other social media users with statements inciting violence against a White House senior adviser following the senior adviser's perceived misrepresentation of the appropriate use of the Strategic National Stockpile during COVID-19.⁵*

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(U//LES) Alternative narratives and trending online campaigns criticizing the U.S. government response to COVID-19 may result in individuals participating in a variety of activities ranging from first-amendment protected incidents that could lead to potential criminal activity to threats of violent action. Additional narratives and campaigns will likely continue to be developed in response to perceptions of government inaction or overreach.

- (U//FOUO) A social media campaign associated with the hashtag #filmyourhospital is targeting hospitals and medical facilities tasked with responding to and/or providing care for patients affected by COVID-19. The intent of the campaign is to reveal the perceived truth that COVID-19 is not a pandemic, hospitals and medical facilities are not overburdened or lacking medical supplies, and the government, public health entities, and the media have been inaccurately reporting on the impact of COVID-19.⁶ A review of open source reporting indicates multiple publicly available social media accounts are using the #filmyourhospital hashtag to document multiple medical facilities in the San Diego region, although no criminal activity was reported at the time these incidents occurred.
- (U//LES) An alternative narrative shared on various online platforms is focusing on a misinformation campaign surrounding 5G technology that claims radio waves associated with 5G are causing small changes to people's bodies that make them succumb to COVID-19.⁷ On April 13, 2020, the SD-LECC received a SAR regarding an individual who claimed to be residing in San Diego and posted on a publicly facing social media page calling for like-minded individuals to enter a telecommunications company's corporate office in San Diego to assault staff, decommission the cell towers, and shutter the company due to his belief the company is poisoning residents.⁸

(U//FOUO) The SD-LECC encourages partners to remain vigilant for potential criminal and extremist threats. To report suspected terrorism-related activities, please visit <https://sd-lecc.org/> and select "Submit Tip/Lead." For urgent threat reporting, please contact the San Diego JTTF at (858) 320-5380.

(U//FOUO) The SD-LECC also continues to gather information to analyze and share assessments regarding COVID-19 related threats in the San Diego region. Please refer to the "SD-LECC Priority Information Needs - COVID-19 Related Criminal and Public Safety Threats" document and provide any available information to info@sd-lecc.org.

(U) For comments or questions regarding this product, please contact the SD-LECC at (858) 495-7200 or info@sd-lecc.org. Your feedback is important to us and we encourage you to fill out a customer survey, accessible through the following link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SDLECC2009>

(U) Tracked By: HSEC-6.1, SD-UCO.02, SD-DHH.03

(U) Endnotes

¹ (U//LES); Law Enforcement Reporting; 16 March 2020; (U//LES); Suspicious Activity Report; Extracted information is U//LES; Overall document classification is U//LES.

² (U//LES); Law Enforcement Reporting; 24 March 2020; (U//LES); Suspicious Activity Report; Extracted information is U//LES; Overall document classification is U//LES.

³ (U//LES); Law Enforcement Reporting; 18 March 2020; (U//LES); Suspicious Activity Report; Extracted information is U//LES; Overall document classification is U//LES.

⁴ (U//LES); San Diego Police Department; 26 March 2020; (U//LES); Radio Call; Extracted information is U//LES; Overall document classification is U//LES.

⁵ (U//FOUO); U.S. Department of Homeland Security; OSIR-04001-0556-20; 3 April 2020; (U//FOUO); A California-Based Social Media User Incites Violence Against a Prominent Political Figure; Extracted information is U//FOUO; Overall document classification is U//FOUO.

⁶ (U//FOUO); Central Florida Intelligence Exchange; 20-04-29; 1 April 2020; (U//FOUO); New Social Media Trend May Lead to Increased Suspicious Activity at Hospitals; Extracted information is U//FOUO; Overall document classification is U//FOUO.

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⁷ (U); Internet News; *The New York Times*; “Burning Cell Towers, Out of Baseless Fear They Spread the Virus”; 11 April 2020; <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/10/technology/coronavirus-5g-uk.html>; accessed on 15 April 2020.

⁸ (U//LES); Law Enforcement Reporting; 13 April 2020; (U//LES); Suspicious Activity Report; Extracted information is U//LES; Overall document classification is U//LES.