

# A Homeland Security Model for Assessing US Domestic Threats

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Since 9/11, local, state, and federal governments in conjunction with corporate agencies have conducted a wide variety of risk assessments. These include identifying and assigning the threat and vulnerability to a number of infrastructures based on potential terrorist attacks. Many of these assessments are conducted with international or foreign terrorists in mind. Unfortunately, there are a number of domestic threats that may prove to be just as dangerous. This article proposes a model to focus attention of viable potential domestic threats. By measuring the intent and capabilities of domestic threats based on historical evidence of previous incidents, local, state, federal government, and commercial organizations are able to apply constrained resources to mitigate the viable potential domestic threats. Metrics are defined and the domestic threat groups are depicted on a scatter graph. This is the first step in identifying domestic threats in order to focus critical resources and fiscally constrained assets on mitigating the risk of these threats.

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## Changes in Threat Since 9/11

Currently, many intergovernmental efforts are focused on threats from international terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda, Hamas, and Hezbollah. Over the past five years since 9/11, a number of government institutions and processes changed to meet those threats. Some of the changes included making the Office of Homeland Security, a cabinet level Department of Homeland Security. Another change was the issuance of the Homeland Security Presidential Directive – 3 (HSPD-3), which describes the Homeland Security Advisory system based on threat conditions. This document gave US citizens the now familiar five threat conditions with corresponding colors. The threat conditions and color constantly change based on the assessed threat. Originally this system was simple; however, it is not compounded by assessing various sectors in the US with different levels of threat. For example, currently the US airline travel is rated Orange for High threat based on the thwarted attacks aimed at UK to US overseas flights in the summer of 2006. The rest of the US is rated at Yellow of Elevated threat. Those threats are real, but what methods are used in assessing that threat and applying resources against those threats?

When encountering a problem, it is usually best to consult an expert for some advice or counsel. Dr. Bruce Hoffman is one such expert in the field of terrorism. In a Risk Management Solutions, Inc. document, Dr. Bruce Hoffman contends, “as military and government targets increase their protection levels, softer targets such as economic and commercial targets become more attractive” (Hoffman, 2003).

## Risk Assessment Models

Risk assessment models are used to assess the threat to critical infrastructure, military operations, buildings, unexpected events for insurance purposes, and a number of other areas. The application of

these models allows many decision-makers to manage constrained resources. They are able to properly determine adequate mitigation measures to protect organizational assets. "Ultimately, efficient allocation of homeland security resources should be based upon assessment of the cost-effectiveness of alternative risk reduction opportunities" (Willis, 2006). The question is how to choose from the multitude of risk assessment models to determine cost-effectiveness.

But what about the threat posed by domestic terrorists and the risk to lives, property, and the economy they pose? How does the US provide an adequate method? There are a number of methods and models that show risk, threat, and vulnerability to interdiction. Some that are well known and are illustrated in Table 1.1. Although the merits of each of these models could be discussed and debated, the purpose of this paper is to propose a method to narrow the focus of possible domestic threats.

**Table 1**

*Indicators of Domestic Terrorist Groups' Intentions*

Risk Assessment Models	Used in This Area
CARVER + Shock	Military Special Operations and US Department of Agriculture & FDA
Risk Analysis and Vulnerability Assessment (RAVA)	US Government
Operational Risk Management (ORM)	US military
Five Step Model	National Infrastructure Protection Center Model
Threat, Vulnerability, Risk, (TVR) Model	Computer Industry Security Model
Threat Ensemble Vulnerability Assessment Model	EPA software model

However, before these models are taken into consideration, an assessment of the actual intent and capability of a domestic threat group should be addressed. There is a step required to focus attention on actual domestic threats. A refinement of the actual threat posed by these domestic groups is required due to federal, state, and local government constrained resources time, money, people, etc. All levels of government within the law enforcement are charged with *Prevention* Phase of the National Response Plan (National Response Plan, 2004). In order to apply the resources available more appropriately, a method of sorting and identifying the threats is necessary.

**Assessing Domestic Terrorist Threats**

The first step in determining a risk and threat vulnerability assessment is to gain an understanding of a group's ability to engage a target. "A threat analysis, the first step in determining risk, identifies and evaluates each threat on the basis of various factors (General Accounting Office, 1998, p. 5). This is the first step described in a GAO report on Combating Terrorism. Understanding the terrorist's capability, lethality, likelihood of successful attack, and intent are all very important in assessing risk to a target. The very first thing that must be assessed is the threat of attack. Threat is composed of two distinct elements: intent and capability. These elements must exist within a terrorist organization or movement for them to pose a legitimate risk. Most assessments in the past have considered just the capability of a terrorist group or the intentions of a group in terms of threat. "It is not revolutionary to view terrorist through the lens of either intentions or capabilities. Yet terrorism analysis rarely combines the two across the range of potential threats" (Cragin & Daly, 2004, pg. 1). If both are considered, it provides a clearer picture on the threat that

any target would have from terrorist attack. The definitions used throughout the remainder of this text are outlined below.

**Intent + Capability = Threat**

**Intent** = purpose, will to perform an act

**Capability** = activities that sustain and allow terrorists to conduct a series of successful attacks  
(General Accounting Office, 1998)

**Threat** = a terrorist group must exhibit both intent and capability to be classified as a true threat to a particular target, process, or service

What types of terrorist groups should be assessed for potential threat to domestic targets? Domestic terrorism or groups on US soil that have the intentions and capability to conduct attacks are probably the most important to assess first. But how would one go about assessing the capability and threat of such groups? Since the 9/11 attacks, domestic groups have a head start on international terrorist groups based on their proximity to potential agricultural targets and the means to engage those targets. These groups are also the most familiar with security measures in place or lack there of and could penetrate those to attack agricultural targets. Until 9/11 most groups, no matter their affiliation, were treated as criminals but not necessarily terrorists.

Currently within the US domestic threats or terrorist groups can be categorized into five basic typologies. They are left-wing, right-wing, and special interest. Well known examples of left-wing groups are from a series of movements that peaked and died in the mid-1980's (Cragin & Daly, 2004). These include groups like the Armed Forces for Puerto Rican National Liberation (FALN), Weather Underground, and the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA). Most of these groups are gone with Puerto Rican separatists being the only ones still active (Cragin & Daly, 2004). Right-wing domestic terrorist groups are motivated by opposition to federal taxation, regulation, the United Nations, and the US government itself. There are also a number of groups fueled by hatred of racial and religious minorities. These groups have their origins in the activities of white supremacist groups such as the Klu Klux Klan (Cragin & Daly, 2004). Other examples of these groups include the National Alliance (NA), National Socialist Movement (NSM), and the Creativity Movement (O'Connor, 2004). Members of these groups perpetrated attacks such as the April 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, the July 1996 bombing at Centennial Park during the Atlanta Olympics (Cragin & Daly, 2004), and numerous other shooting sprees, bank robberies, and assassinations. Other attacks have occurred on US soil aside from 9/11. Most, if not all, of these attacks were perpetrated by domestic terrorist groups. Special interest domestic terrorism has a broad range of agendas. These agendas include abortion, the environment, and animal rights. These are mostly single-minded organizations and "account from the majority of domestic terrorist incidents in the past five years" (Cragin & Daly, 2004, p. 2). Terrorist groups that have a single-minded purpose include the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), Earth Liberation Front (ELF), Coalition to Save the Preserves (CSP), and the Army of God (AOG). These groups have committed arson resulting in over \$100 million in total damages, committed murder near abortion clinics, and have bombed various state and federal institutions. In June of 2004, the FBI stated that

“acts of violence, sabotage or property damage motivated by concern for animals or the environment – is the nation's top domestic terrorism threat” (Copeland, 2004, p. 1).

Using the intent + capabilities = threat model, an assessment of various domestic terrorist groups can be made by using the tables below modeled from a recently published book on international terrorist groups' intent and capabilities. Kim Cragin and Sara A. Daly co-authored *The Dynamic Terrorist Threat, An Assessment of Group Motivations and Capabilities in a Changing World*, in which they outlined a means and metric to define and assess both intent and capability of international terrorist organizations. Tables 1.2 and 1.3 in this article classify intent and capability of domestic terrorist groups using a metric that is similar to Cragin and Daly's analysis of foreign terrorist groups. The metrics consist of a 1 to 5 scale for intent and capability. A group would achieve a 1 for Anti-US rhetoric and/or stated goal of destabilizing US either at local, state, or federal levels (Cragin & Daly, 2004).

**Table 2**

*Indicators of Domestic Terrorist Groups' Intentions*

Levels of Anti-United States Ideology	Numerical Value
Anti-US rhetoric or stated desire to destabilize any level of government (Cragin & Daly, 2004).	1
Collaboration with other extremist groups that target US citizens and/or institutions (Cragin & Daly, 2004).	2
Explicit anti-US ideology (Cragin & Daly, 2004).	3
Targeting US property, citizens, and institutions to pursue group's agenda (Cragin & Daly, 2004).	4
Focused attacks on US government, business, or economic targets (Cragin & Daly, 2004).	5

**\*Note that the higher the number, the greater the intent to attack an asset.**

A domestic terrorist group's capability rating is directly tied to the domestic terrorism definition outlined in the US Code title 18 (Government Printing Office, 2006). The capability rating increases with each group based on the total number and type of attacks. Targets that are attacked are also factored into the higher ratings.

**Table 3**

*Indicators of Domestic Terrorist Groups' Capability*

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Level of Attack Capability	Numerical Value
*Acts dangerous to human life intended to coerce, influence policy of government, or to affect conduct of government by mass destruction assassination, or kidnapping	1
More than one act as described above (Cragin & Daly, 2004).	2
More than one type of act as described above (Cragin & Daly, 2004).	3
More than one type of act in multiple categories as noted above against targets that are guarded (Cragin & Daly, 2004).	4
Successfully conducts multiple coordinated acts described above (Cragin & Daly, 2004).	5

**\*Domestic Terrorism as defined in the US Code Title 18, Part I, Chapter 113B, Section 2331, 5 (A-C)**

It must be noted that capability increases dramatically in groups characterized by the following: well trained, ideologically committed, adequate finance, and logistics support structure (separate from operational cells) that can provide equipment, housing, and transportation assets as required.

The table below shows a coding of intent and capability based on the recorded attacks claimed or attributed to the domestic terrorist groups assessed. Each domestic terrorist group is given an intent rating and a capability rating. These metrics are based on historical data for the groups and the actions attributed to each group.

**Table 4***Coding Domestic Terrorist Groups for Intentions and Capabilities*

Group	Intentions	Capabilities
American Front (AF)	3	2
<b><i>Animal Liberation Front (ALF)</i></b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
Army of God (AOG)	3	3
Coalition to Save the Preserves (CSP)	4	2
Creativity Movement (CM) formerly World Church of the Creator	3	3
<b><i>Earth Liberation Front (ELF)</i></b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>
Klu Klux Klan (KKK)	2	1
National Alliance (NA)	2	3
National Socialist Movement (NSM)	2	3
Republic of Texas (ROT)	3	1
The New Order (TNO)	2	3
<b><i>Stop Huntington Animal Cruelty (SHAC)</i></b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

Once coding of groups is accomplished using objective metrics outlined above, they may be plotted on a diagram depicting all ratings for intent and capabilities. Intent would range from benign to

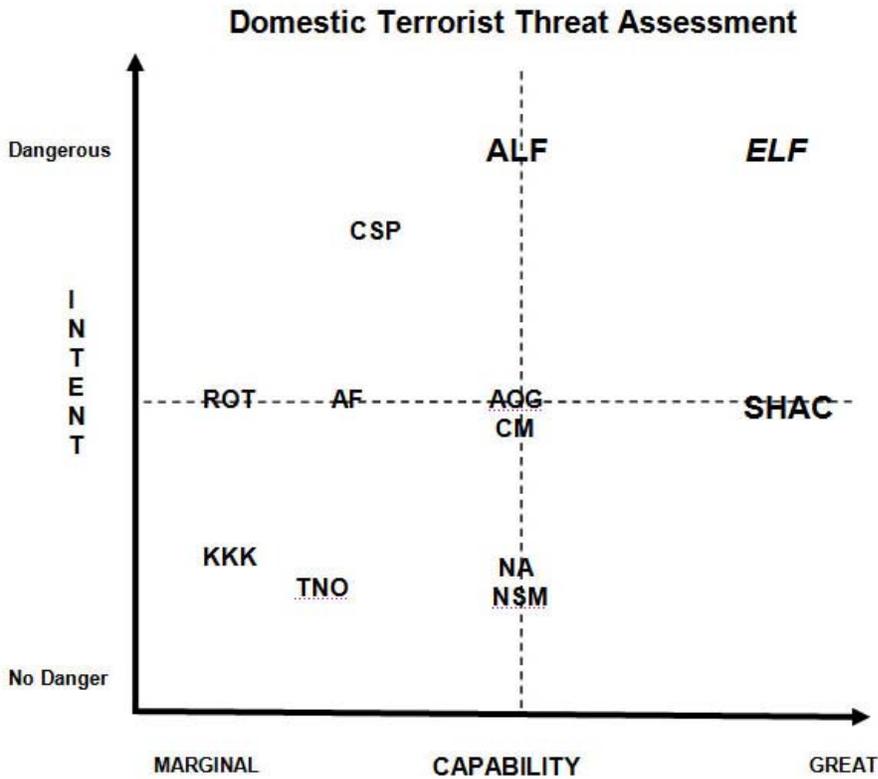


Figure 1  
Mapping Intentions Against Capabilities for 11 Domestic Terrorist Groups

hostile and capabilities from low to high based on the groups' characteristics and history of attacks. Figure 1.1. demonstrates this process of plotting intent and capability in a process that is similar to that noted by Cragin and Daly (2004) when plotting intentions and capability among foreign extremist groups.

### One Possible Terrorist Group

The Earth Liberation Front (ELF) and its sister group the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) has been purported to be America's most active and dangerous domestic terrorist organizations (Earth First!, 2006). These two organizations operate in a manner that is similar to Al-Qaeda and are similar in the use of small, isolated cells which enhance overall operational security. The one thing they do not have is an Osama Bin Laden, at least not one that is recognized by the FBI or other law enforcement agencies. However, this does not reduce the threat they pose to US targets, especially targets that are agricultural and involved with research and/or production concerning Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) or plant species that are enhanced at the genome level for growth, hardiness, or yield.

Their attacks on GMO targets have included research facilities and universities. These have included attacks and arson on the following facilities:

**Table 5**

*Selected ELF GMO targets attacked within the last 5 years*

Date	Location	Type of Damage	Damage Total
20 Nov 99	Washington State University	damage with acid	\$240,000
31 Dec 99	Michigan State University	fire	\$1,000,000
20 Jul 00	US Forest Research, Wisconsin	physical destruction	\$1,000,000
21 May 01	University of Washington	fire	\$5,600,000
10 Jun 01	University of Idaho	fire and destruction	\$20,000
3 Sep 02	US Forest Service, Irvine, PA	fire	\$700,000

In fact, of attacks perpetrated by ELF from 1996-2001, over half were directed against government, corporate, and genetic research facilities (Leader & Probst, 2004)

These attacks almost always involved arson, which is ELF's weapon of choice. "It views this as a legitimate act of political protest and correctly notes can be more destructive than explosives" (Leader & Probst, 2004). It also has increased its attacks on what it calls "anti-GE/GMO, (Genetic Engineering/Genetic Modified Organism) actions. ELF has said that they believe there is a direct link between oppression of animals, destruction of the planet, and the genetic alteration of life forms" (Leader & Probst, 2004).

### **Conclusion**

There are many tools and methods available for assessing risk. Some are quite simple while other assessment tools are relatively complex and involved. However, before a model is used the intent and capability quadrant graph will help define how critical resources are used. It is a key part of assigning threat under the auspices of HSPD-3. There are many issues unresolved with interagency cooperation on Homeland Security concerns, but the use of resources is the most contentious. Using a model like the intent and capability graph will identify the most dangerous threat so that the finite interagency resources may be adequately used.

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