



Developing

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USA Alert: Suspect surrenders following bomb threat outside Library of Congress in Washington, DC, on August 19; political, security landscape to remain tense

Please be advised

- Reports indicate that an individual who claimed to have an explosive in a truck outside the Library of Congress near the US Capitol in Washington, DC, surrendered to the police following an hours-long standoff on August 19. The incident prompted evacuations in nearby buildings, including the Supreme Court, road closures, and the deployment of a large police unit, including sharpshooters.
- The suspect, identified as a 49-year-old resident of North Carolina, parked his vehicle on a sidewalk outside the library and began live-streaming the incident while talking about a "revolution." In a video posted on his social media on August 19, the suspect demanded that all "Democrats step down." He threatened an officer who approached him that he was in possession of an explosive and that he would detonate it if he was shot by the police. The police later confirmed that there were no explosives in his vehicle, but "possible bomb-making materials" had been recovered. The police are yet to determine the motive.
- The suspect had posted several videos in the past criticizing the current government led by President Joe Biden, including calling for US airstrikes in Afghanistan and Biden's resignation, in addition to complaints about immigrants. The suspect's former wife stated that he had been diagnosed with schizophrenia and threatened her with firearms in the past.
- The incident follows warnings by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Intelligence chief on August 13 of increasing online extremist rhetoric similar to the buildup ahead of the January 6 Capitol riot, including calls to "take action into their own hands." The warning followed a new militancy bulletin issued by the DHS highlighting the potential for violence surrounding the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks and the upcoming religious holidays.



Assessments & Forecast

1. In light of the suspect's statements and previous actions, it remains likely that he was partly motivated by the far-right rhetoric against the policies of the current administration and conspiracy theories of alleged election fraud. The suspect's mental illness is likely to have exacerbated his political stance, as previously seen to be a common trait among recent militant events in the USA.
2. The above is further supported by the suspect reportedly being a "MAGA" supporter and calling for the resignation of all Democrats. The incident nonetheless is indicative of a resurgence in extremist activity surrounding tensions between supporters of the current and past administration of former President Donald Trump.
3. Overall, the suspect is unlikely to have posed a credible threat given the absence of a ready-to-use explosive. Additionally, the fact that he live-streamed the incident and stated several times that he did not intend to harm anybody indicates that the incident was likely an attempt to draw the attention of Democratic leaders and President Biden rather than causing fatalities.
4. **FORECAST:** Extremist rhetoric against the Democrats and President Biden is expected to increase following the complete US troops withdrawal from Afghanistan. This is evidenced by the increasing activity on the Internet surrounding the issue. Political tensions between Democratic and Republican leaders over Biden's response to the issue are likely to exacerbate existing extremist sentiments. The August 19 incident is also likely to prompt similar copy-cat attempts to draw the attention of political leaders.
5. **FORECAST:** Regardless of the intent, the incident highlights the potential for such security incidents to cause major disruptions due to road closures and evacuations ordered in response to potential threats. With the level of response by security forces for threats near the Capitol raised following the January 6 riots, any potential security incident is expected to prompt the deployment of large law enforcement units and mass evacuations.
6. **FORECAST:** With the incident following the latest DHS bulletin on violence ahead of the 9/11 anniversary and religious holidays, security is expected to be further bolstered both in Washington, DC, as well as other major cities. While the threat of a large-scale coordinated attack remains limited, the domestic political and security landscape is expected to remain tense, especially amid the Afghan crisis and debate over the intake of refugees. That said, the threat of

small-scale lone-wolf attacks by far-right supporters in the form of shootings or vehicular ramming is likely to remain high over the coming weeks.

Recommendations

1. Travel to the USA can continue while maintaining heightened vigilance due to increasing extremist activity and the potential for small-scale militant attacks.
2. If alerted to suspicious activity, inform authorities immediately.
3. If a potential shooting or similar incident manifests, it is advised to leave the area immediately, if possible, or take shelter at a secure location.
4. Public, private, and third sector organizations are advised to increase their awareness of threats on social media through the use of threat monitoring services. Increased awareness of an organization's political footprint and perceptions from fringe online groups can help uncover potential violent actors and plots before they occur.