



## Militancy/Terrorism

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### **USA Alert: Four teenagers arrested in foiled coordinated school shooting plot in Dunmore, PA on September 25; liable to inspire similar coordinated attack plots**

#### **Please be advised**

- According to September 25 reports, four teenagers have been charged for plotting a school shooting at Dunmore High School in Dunmore, PA. The attack was scheduled to take place on April 20, 2024, to mark the 25th anniversary of the mass shooting at Columbine High School in Columbine, CO. Like the Columbine massacre, the planned attack would have been carried out using both firearms and explosives.
- Lackawanna County District Attorney Mark Powell stated on September 24 that two of the students, 15-year-old Xavier Lewis and 15-year-old Alyssa Kucharski, are being charged as adults due to the nature of the alleged crimes. Police discovered Molotov cocktails, components for bombs, information on how to make bombs, and handwritten lists of guns, ammunition, and tactical gear marked with prices at Kucharski's residence.
- The plot was discovered after one of the students' parents found a group chat in which the students were discussing how to "shoot up the school" and choosing which victims to target. The group chat also made several references to Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, the two perpetrators of the Columbine massacre. Moreover, the suspects expressed that they hated the school. Kucharski's mother stated that her daughter was "obsessed with Columbine."
- This development comes just days after authorities foiled a school shooting plot in Montreal, Canada on September 22, in which four 15-year-olds were charged.



## Assessments & Forecast

1. Given that police discovered explosives, manuals for building explosives, and a list of equipment, the suspects posed a credible threat to the public. Moreover, considering that the attack was meant to take place in 2024 on the 25th anniversary of Columbine, it is likely that the suspects were plotting a large-scale attack. **FORECAST:** Given that the foiled attack was meant to take place on the 25th anniversary of the Columbine massacre, authorities are likely to bolster surveillance online as well as security at high schools ahead of April 20, 2024.
2. Based on statements within the group chat and by the suspects' parents, the attack was clearly inspired by the Columbine massacre, with the suspects idolizing both Harris and Klebold. As such, the incident reiterates the potential for similar copycat attacks, with over 100 copycat plots allegedly inspired by the shooting since 1999, including the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Newtown, CT in 2012.
3. Moreover, the fact that four students were involved in coordinating the foiled attack suggests a shift in school shooting attacks, which are predominantly carried out by lone actors. As such, the media coverage of the arrests and foiled plot may inspire other youths to coordinate attacks rather than act alone.
4. In addition, the closures of schools in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic have led to the isolation of vulnerable students, making them more susceptible to extremist content online, including message boards and group chats idolizing the Columbine massacre and related school shootings. **FORECAST:** With the resumption of in-person classes in several states following the easing of COVID-19-related restrictions, the threat of school shootings is liable to increase significantly in the near term.

## Recommendations

1. Travel to the USA can continue while maintaining heightened vigilance due to the persisting threat

of gun violence.

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.