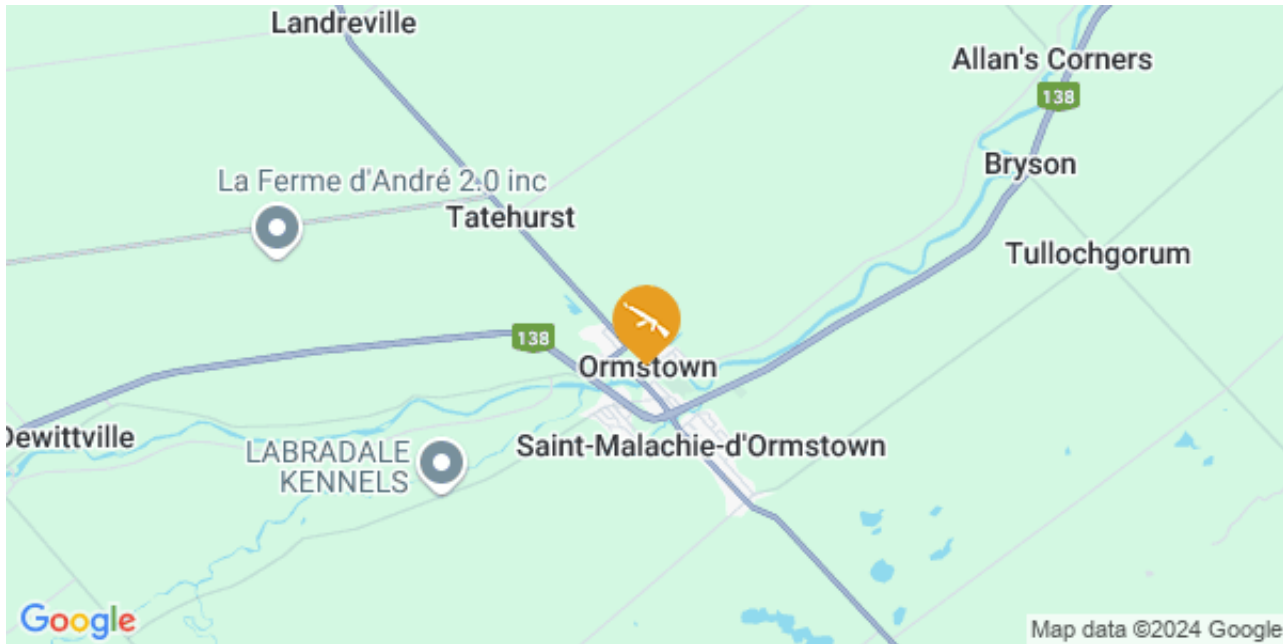




Militancy/Terrorism



07

SEP

11:18 UTC

Canada & USA Alert: Pakistani national arrested for plotting to attack Jews in New York City, per September 6 reports; threat to surge ahead of October 7 anniversary of Israel-Hamas war

Current Situation

- Per a September 6 release by the US Department of Justice, a Pakistani national, Muhammad Shahzeb Khan, residing in Ormstown, QC, Canada was arrested by authorities on September 4, following his suspected involvement in a “terrorist attack in New York City around October 7 of this year with the stated goal of slaughtering, in the name of the Islamic State (IS), as many Jewish people as possible.”
- Khan was allegedly attempting to travel to the USA and use automatic and semi-automatic weapons to carry out a mass shooting at an unspecified Jewish center in Brooklyn, NY. He has been charged with attempting to provide material support and resources to the IS.
- Canadian and US authorities, including the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), collaborated in joint efforts to identify Khan’s online activity around November 2023, and deter the escalation of the issue.

Source: [US Department of Justice](#)

Assessments & Forecast

1. Khan's arrest reflects the latent potential of mass casualty attacks or threats by religiously-motivated terrorist outfits, including Al Qaeda and IS, targeting Jewish individuals in localities across Canada and the USA hosting a significant Jewish population, including in New York City. This is reinforced by an email threat falsely alleging that backpacks with explosives had been planted at over 100 Canada-based Jewish institutions, including in Montreal, Ottawa, and Toronto, and would detonate within hours, on August 21.
2. While Khan has been charged with attempting to provide material support to IS and has admitted to attempting to establish a cell of IS-sleepers in the region, the incident is unlikely to have been carried out with the IS' organizational support, given its weak capacities in the Americas. Given this, recent calls by branches of the terror group, including those calling for attacks on the US Capitol in Washington, DC seen on social media on September 6, are unlikely to materialize. Nonetheless, such messaging by the group, coupled with the likely capitalization of the upcoming anniversary of the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, can be anticipated to sustain online recruitment and aid self-radicalization of vulnerable individuals, thereby prompting further lone-wolf incidents.
3. This development follows the [August 11 stabbing of a visibly Jewish individual near the Chabad Lubavitch World Headquarters](#) and a June 19 incident where an individual shouted "Free Palestine" and spat on another visibly Jewish individual, both in New York City. Therefore, the incident further highlights the surge in anti-Semitic crimes committed across Canada and the USA following the outbreak of hostilities between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, since 2023. This is supported by August 8 reports indicating that anti-Semitic incidents in the USA increased by over 340 percent between October 2023-July 2024, while in Canada, such incidents surged by nearly 670 percent.
4. **FORECAST:** Despite the sustained threat of Islamist-motivated terrorism, it is likely that most plots will, nonetheless, be foiled by authorities as a result of the heightened state of alert among law enforcement bodies, surveilling for vulnerable targets and of any indication of actors attempting to materialize such threats, particularly via increasing online surveillance efforts. Moreover, given the seemingly weak organizational capabilities of IS in the Americas region, any potential attacks influenced by IS propaganda would likely manifest as a rudimentary lone-wolf attack in the form of stabbings or shootings, as seen during the [pre-emptive arrest of Alexander Scott Mercurio in Coeur d'Alene, ID on April 6](#), rather than a large-scale and high-impact coordinated plot using more sophisticated means such as explosives.
5. **FORECAST:** Amid an environment of heightened pro-Palestinian sentiments denouncing the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict, and its approaching one-year anniversary on October 7, similar incidents and threats targeting individuals or institutions linked to Israel or the Jewish community are anticipated to surge in the coming months. The threat is expected to be particularly elevated during the upcoming Jewish Holidays in October when members of the community are more likely to attend synagogues and celebrations. Given this, security is likely to be bolstered in the vicinity of synagogues and Jewish community centers during symbolic days, including Rosh Hashanah (October 2-4), Yom Kippur (October 11-12), and Sukkot (October 16-23), as a precaution.

Recommendations

1. Those operating or residing in Canada and the USA in the coming months are advised to maintain heightened vigilance in the vicinity of prominent political establishments and political gatherings due to the potential for targeted attacks driven by religiously-motivated hate crimes and terror, particularly those targeting Jewish individuals and establishments.
2. Israeli nationals and Jewish individuals are advised to keep a low profile in the public sphere due to the tensions resulting from the conflict. Avoid revealing your identity and religion or political inclinations to strangers.
3. If alerted to suspicious activity inform authorities immediately.

