



Assessing Targeting of U.S. Military Facilities in CONUS

By Analytic Team, Kiernan Group Holdings (KGH)

Throughout modern history, military facilities and personnel within the United States have been frequent targets for violent attack by a variety of threat actors. While several attacks against military facilities were mostly racially-based prior to the official de-segregation of the armed forces in 1948, and anti-Vietnam war protestors had bombed military facilities in the 1960s, since then most of the attacks have been caused by politically-extremist far-right or Islamist terrorists or psychologically-driven active shooters, including workplace violence type incidents. This article assesses the nature and magnitude of these attacks by defining the types of military installations that are targeted, general motivations for attacking them, significant incidents since around 1990 (when they began to become more prevalent), and, in a conclusion, discusses some of the force protection measures that are implemented by the U.S. military.

Defining Military Installations

For the purposes of this article, military facilities are defined as U.S. government-owned or leased installations, buildings, or offices that are operated by the Department of Defense. These include National Guard facilities, including ones that are operated by their states. Within this framework, there are two types of military facilities. The first are military bases that are referred to as “on-installation,” which are hardened facilities, with high levels of layered security, such as armed guard entrances and perimeter fences. The second type are “off-installation” military facilities, such as recruiting stations and reserve centers. They are considered soft targets, because they are relatively small, are located in the midst of civilian buildings or complexes, such as strip malls, and are lightly guarded since they are intended to freely interact with the general public.

Motivation

A spectrum of motivating factors influences attackers to target military facilities and personnel. These range from terroristic propaganda, such as that espoused by jihadists, that views any manifestation of the U.S. military as a target for their vengeance against American foreign policy and military intervention in their foreign conflict regions. In response, groups such as the Islamic State, in particular, call on their adherents to conduct attacks against U.S. military facilities and personnel where they are located. Non-political psychological motivations drive other types of violent actors who engage in active shooting type attacks against military personnel, including those that engage in workplace violence type 3: worker-on-worker attacks, that are related to their self-perceived troubled experience in a military workplace.

908 King Street, Suite 200, Alexandria, VA. 22314. 571-290-0260

Analysis@Kiernan.co

“KGH for an Operational and Analytical Advantage”



Significant Incidents

As demonstrated by the incidents listed below, beginning in the 1990s and intensifying after September 2001, military facilities and personnel within the United States have become frequent targets by a variety of threat actors. Attesting to the escalation in the threat since 2001, according to data collected by David Sterman and Peter Bergen, of the Washington, DC-based New America research institute, from 2001 to mid-July 2015, about a third of the 119 American nationals (including those born overseas) accused of plotting a terrorist attack inside the United States, had deliberately targeted military facilities.

The incidents listed below cover the years of 1990 to 2018.

October 18, 1993: Arthur Hill, a civilian employee, carried out a shooting rampage at the Fort Knox Training Support Center, in Kentucky, killing three people and wounding two others. He then shot and severely wounded himself. He died of his self-inflicted gunshot wound three days later. He had been considered mentally unstable.

June 20, 1994: Airman Dean Melberg, 20, conducted a shooting rampage at the Fairchild Air Force Base hospital outside Spokane, Washington, killing four people and wounding 23 others. He was then shot by an Air Force security officer.

March 10, 1995: Ernest J. Cooper Jr., 58, a logistics expert and Air Force retiree, shot and wounded two co-workers at the Naval Air Systems Command, in Arlington, Virginia. He then shot himself in the head and died.

October 27, 1995: Sergeant William J. Kreutzer Jr., 26, carried out a shooting spree at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, killing an officer and wounding 18 other soldiers, as they were conducting their morning physical training exercises. He was sentenced to life in prison. Kreutzer was reported to have mental health problems.

September 11, 2001: One of four civilian airliners simultaneously hijacked by al Qaida terrorists deliberately crashed into the west side of the Pentagon, in Arlington, Virginia. The explosion set off by the crash killed 125 persons inside the building, as well as additional victims who were killed on board the hijacked Flight 77 aircraft.

May 8, 2007: A group of six Muslim men were arrested by the FBI for conspiring to conduct a shooting attack against U.S. military personnel stationed at Fort Dix, New Jersey. The plotters were reported to be Islamic extremists. Five of the men were found guilty of conspiracy to commit murder, with four of them receiving life sentences, while one received 33 years in prison. The remaining member was sentenced to five years for weapons-related offenses.

June 1, 2009: Abdulhakim Mujahid Muhammad (formerly known as Carlos Bledsoe), carried out a shooting rampage at a military recruiting center in Little Rock, Arkansas, that killed a soldier and critically wounded a private. Muhammad had shot them from close range with a SKS

908 King Street, Suite 200, Alexandria, VA. 22314. 571-290-0260

Analysis@Kiernan.co

"KGH for an Operational and Analytical Advantage"



semiautomatic rifle from the window of his black Ford Explorer. Muhammad received a life sentence without parole for these crimes.

November 5, 2009: U.S. Army Major Nidal Hasan, 39, opened fire at the Fort Hood military installation's Readiness Center, near Killeen, Texas, where he was based, killing 12 soldiers and wounding at least 31 others. Hasan had used his military base's access to hide his FN 5-7 tactical pistol in his car and deliberately target Afghanistan-bound soldiers at the Readiness Center.

March 4, 2010: John Patrick Bedell, 36, shot and wounded two Pentagon police officers at a security checkpoint at the Pentagon's metro station, in Arlington, Virginia. With the officers returning fire, the shooter was critically wounded and died a few hours later. The shooter, who had been diagnosed with a bipolar disorder, had expressed strong anti-government views.

October and November, 2010: Marine Corps reservist Yonathan Melaku, 22, a naturalized American from Ethiopia and Marine Corps Reserve Lance Corporal, was arrested for carrying out a series of drive-by shootings with a rifle at several military facilities in Northern Virginia. These included the Pentagon, Marine and Coast Guard recruiting offices, and the National Museum of the Marine Corps, in Quantico, Virginia, as well as attempting to desecrate graves at Arlington National Cemetery. The buildings were unoccupied during the time of the shootings. Upon his arrest, law enforcement agents found bomb making material in his possession. Melaku, who was diagnosed with schizophrenia, was sentenced to 25 years in prison.

December 8, 2010: Antonio Martinez (aka Muhammad Hussain), 21, was arrested and indicted for attempting to use an explosive device to remotely bomb a Catonsville, Maryland, Armed Forces recruitment center and kill military personnel. He had packed what he believed to be barrels of explosives into a sport utility vehicle that had been parked by the recruitment center, while under surveillance by the FBI, which, in a sting operation, had foiled the attack by providing him fake explosives. ne 2011: Abu Khalid Abdul-Latif and Walli Mujahidh were arrested and indicted for conspiring to use machine guns and grenades to kill military and civilian employees of the Department of Defense who worked at the Military Entrance Processing Stations (MEPS) located in the Federal Center South building in Seattle, Washington.

July 2011: Army Pfc. Nasser Abdo, 21, was arrested in Killeen, Texas, near Fort Hood, on warrants out of Fort Campbell, Kentucky, for being AWOL. Upon his arrest, Abdo admitted to planning a "massive" attack at a restaurant near the Fort Hood base, with bomb-making materials found in his motel room, including large amounts of ammunition, weapons and a bomb in a backpack.

September 16, 2013: Aaron Alexis, 34, a contractor for the Navy, carried out a shooting rampage at the Washington Navy Yard, Washington, DC, killing 12 people and wounding three others. He was killed in a shootout with a responding police officer.

908 King Street, Suite 200, Alexandria, VA. 22314. 571-290-0260

Analysis@Kiernan.co

"KGH for an Operational and Analytical Advantage"



April 2014: Ivan A. Lopez, 34, an army serviceman, opened fire at the Fort Hood military base near Killeen, Texas, killing three persons and wounding 16 others, before committing suicide. He shot himself when he was confronted by a police officer. Lopez was reported to be suffering from mental health disorders.

March 25, 2015: Hasan Edmonds, 22, a member of the Illinois National Guard, and his cousin Jonas Edmonds, 29, were arrested for plotting for Hasan to travel to Syria to fight with ISIS, with Jonas intending to conduct an attack against a military facility.

April 10, 2015: Mohammed Abdullah Hassan (previously known as John T. Booker), 20, was arrested for plotting to kill American soldiers with a vehicle bomb at the Fort Riley military base in Kansas.

June 16, 2015: Larry McElroy, 43, rammed his SUV, while also brandishing a rifle, to break into the Little Rock Air Force Base, near Jacksonville, Arkansas. He was critically shot (along with a bystander). McElroy, who had previous run-ins with law enforcement, was reported to suffer from paranoid delusions.

July 16, 2015: Mohammad Youssef Abdulazeez, 24, opened fire at a recruiting station and a naval reserve center in Chattanooga, Tennessee, killing four Marines and a Navy petty officer. He was killed in a shootout with the responding police officers.

Assessment

The 20 attacks listed in the incident chronology represent a variety of types of threat actors, motivations, tactics, weapons, and target selection. In accordance with the findings by Sterman and Bergen, the jihadi attackers ranged from “do-it yourself” terror plots by American homegrown lone wolves inspired by al Qaida or the Islamic State, and facilitated through the means of the Internet’s social media websites, to foreign-originated terrorist groups, such as, at the time, Afghanistan-based al Qaida, who had deployed a suicide team to hijack an aircraft to attack the Pentagon. In other current cases, with some plotters prevented from traveling to conflict places such as Syria to join their contingents of jihadi foreign fighters, they were directed by these groups to “kill where you are,” as former FBI Director James Comey had explained in a May 2015 testimony. This was the case with the Edmonds’ cousins, one of whom intended to join ISIS in Syria while the other had planned to carry out an attack against a military facility in the U.S., and the attack by Mohammad Youssef Abdulazeez, in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

In another type of threat actors who target military facilities, active duty soldiers, as opposed to civilian outsiders, attacked their fellow soldiers. This included the acts of jihadi terrorism by perpetrators and plotters such as Major Nidal Hasan and Pfc Jason Abdo.

Other types of attacks involved active-duty soldiers or private sector contractors to the military who had mental disorders. These included threat actors such as Arthur Hill, Dean

908 King Street, Suite 200, Alexandria, VA. 22314. 571-290-0260

Analysis@Kiernan.co

“KGH for an Operational and Analytical Advantage”



Melberg, John Patrick Bedell, Aaron Alexis, and Ivan Lopez. Other related attacks involved workplace violence, type 3: worker-on-worker motivations, such as the attack by Ernest J. Cooper Jr. Finally, some external civilians attempted to violently force their way into restricted military installations, such as Larry McElroy, who is reported to have had paranoid delusions that the military had been spying on him.

In terms of the types of military facilities targeted, both hard and soft targets were attacked, ranging from exploiting a hijacked airliner to crash into the hardened Pentagon, having an “insider” such as Major Hasan to attack fellow soldiers inside his installation, to shooting rampages against soft targets such as military recruitment centers in Little Rock, Arkansas, and Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Various weapons and tactics were employed in attacks against military facilities. These included firearms, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), a vehicular bomb, ramming an SUV, and hijacking an aircraft to use it as a weapon of mass destruction. The tactics also ranged from firing at personnel, shooting at facilities when they were unoccupied, to attempting to remotely bomb a facility with IEDs.

In conclusion, it is noteworthy that no major attack against a military facility had occurred from mid-2015 until early 2018. This may be due to the fact that military facilities have tightened their defensive security postures, making it more difficult for potential attackers to target them, whether externally or internally. It may still be possible, nevertheless, for attackers, such as terrorists, who are continuously looking for new defensive vulnerabilities to exploit, to employ new weaponized technologies, such as unmanned aerial systems (known as drones), to remotely target military facilities.

908 King Street, Suite 200, Alexandria, VA. 22314. 571-290-0260

Analysis@Kiernan.co

“KGH for an Operational and Analytical Advantage”