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ST & PT ISACs TRANSIT AND RAIL INTELLIGENCE AWARENESS DAILY REPORT (TRIAD)

Tuesday, January 05, 2021

SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY AND INCIDENT REPORTS

No significant suspicious activity or incidents to report.

TERRORISM

10 People to Stand Trial Over Deadly 2016 Brussels Attacks

AP News, 1/5/2021

Ten people including the lone known surviving suspect in the 2015 deadly Paris attacks have been ordered to stand trial in connection with the suicide bombings which killed 32 people and injured hundreds in the Brussels subway and airport nearly five years ago. According to the federal prosecutor's office, the Brussels Chamber of the Council also decided on Tuesday that charges against three others suspects should be dismissed. Earlier this year, prosecutors requested that eight of the 13 main suspects should be referred to the criminal court of assizes — the court that tries the most serious crimes — for charges of assassinations and attempted assassinations in a terrorism context, and for belonging to a terror group... Among the those to stand trial is Salah Abdeslam, who is also suspected of playing a major role in the Paris attacks, and Mohamed Abrini, the Brussels native who walked away from Brussels' Zaventem airport after his explosives failed to detonate... Around 900 people are among those who suffered physical or mental trauma in the Brussels attacks, which were claimed by IS.

<https://apnews.com/article/paris-trials-assassinations-suicide-bombings-bombings-6883dcd8128124778dd69ecedeb3271c>

Al Qaeda Branch Claims Responsibility for Killing Two French Soldiers in Mali

Reuters, 1/4/2021

Al Qaeda's branch in North Africa has claimed responsibility for killing two French soldiers who died when their armoured vehicle was hit by an improvised explosive device in eastern Mali, Site Intelligence Group reported on Monday. The soldiers were on a reconnaissance and intelligence-gathering mission in the eastern region of Menaka when the blast occurred. The group, known as Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin or JNIM, condemned the "indiscriminate" killing of 100 civilians in western Niger over the weekend, SITE Intel said.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mali-security-france/al-qaeda-branch-claims-responsibility-for-killing-two-french-soldiers-in-mali-idUSKBN2992LU?il=0>

ANALYST COMMENTARY: *The recent al-Qaeda-claimed attacks in Mali further heighten concerns regarding the growing Islamic terrorist presence in Africa. Analysts warn that this increased threat is destabilizing the security situation in multiple regions, including the Sahel. The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) lists the conflict in Mali as "worsening," noting that it has already created 43,000 Malian refugees and over 287,000 displaced people. CFR adds that "the continued strengthening of militant groups in Mali and their spread to neighboring countries could allow al-Qaeda and the Islamic State [Group] to establish a new safe haven and destabilize the region through militancy and terrorism." One of the main contributors to violence in Mali and the surrounding area is the al-Qaeda affiliated group Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM). JNIM formed from three existing al-Qaeda affiliated extremist groups: Ansar al-Din; al-Murabitoon; and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb's (AQIM). The 2019 Global Terrorism Index (GTI) lists JNIM, which is active in multiple Sahelian nations, as one of the main drivers behind Burkina Faso's large increase in terror-related deaths. The GTI explains that JNIM achieved success by "portraying itself as a defender of ethnic groups."*

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U.S. Again Shatters Record After 2,800 New Patients Require Hospitalization in A Single Day

The Washington Post, 1/5/2021

First responders in Los Angeles County have been told not to bring patients to hospitals if their survival chances are low, as health-care workers try to dig out from a deluge of covid-19 patients. More than 128,000 people across the United States were hospitalized with covid-19 on Monday, according to data tracked by The Washington Post. That number is a record and represents an increase of 2,800 patients in a single day... There is compelling evidence that covid-19 will have long-term effects on the brains and nervous systems of survivors as they age, and researchers on Tuesday announced a large international study to investigate the correlation between the coronavirus and cognitive decline, Alzheimer's disease and other dementia in later life. Decades of evidence from other respiratory viruses, along with observations of patients in recent months, suggests such infections may increase a person's risk for Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease and other brain disorders, according to a paper announcing the study, published Tuesday in *Alzheimer's & Dementia: The Journal of the Alzheimer's Association*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2021/01/05/coronavirus-covid-live-updates-us/>

Additional Resources:

- Mexico Approves Oxford-AstraZeneca Vaccine, AP News, 1/5/2021
<https://apnews.com/article/pandemics-coronavirus-pandemic-bangkok-thailand-olympic-games-c9ef1fbc65c1b28c6f312691316c18d6>
- LA Paramedics Told Not to Transport Some Patients with Low Chance of Survival, NPR, 1/5/2021
<https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2021/01/05/953444637/l-a-paramedics-told-not-to-transport-some-patients-with-low-chance-of-survival>
- England Goes Into New Lockdown as COVID-19 Variant Rampages, Reuters, 1/3/2021
<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-britain/england-goes-into-new-lockdown-as-covid-19-variant-rampages-idUSKBN29900K?il=0>

Pentagon Approves DC Mayor's Request to Deploy National Guard for Upcoming Demonstrations

CNN, 1/4/2021

Acting Defense Secretary Christopher Miller on Monday approved a request from the mayor of Washington to deploy DC National Guard forces to the city to support local authorities during pro-Trump demonstrations scheduled in the city this week, a defense official told CNN. Mayor Muriel Bowser made the request Thursday in a letter addressed to Maj. Gen. William J. Walker, the commanding general of the DC National Guard, in which she referenced protests in the city in November and December that "resulted in a large influx of participants, violence and criminal activity." ... DC Police Chief Robert Contee told reporters on Monday that the National Guard will assist with "crowd management" and traffic control, freeing the city's police officers to focus on potential acts of violence and other security issues. This week's planned protests will occur as two significant political events take place: Tuesday's US Senate runoff elections in Georgia, which will determine the balance of power in the chamber, and Wednesday's congressional meeting to certify President-elect Joe Biden's victory over President Donald Trump. Speaking during a news conference on Monday, Bowser asked protesters to refrain from violence, regardless of their political views, and again urged residents to avoid the downtown area this week, as well as "people who are coming here to look for confrontations." The mayor also said that a potential curfew for the city was not off the table, saying it will be "a tool that we will evaluate during the week... Bowser's office told CNN that the plan includes the activation of 340 guardsmen, while the total deployment at any given time will be 114. The defense official said the personnel will be deployed to a few dozen points on the streets, accompanied by a DC police officer at each one. Guardsmen will also be deployed to Metro subway stations in the city alongside local officers. Their focus will primarily be on the Metro and traffic, a spokesperson for Bowser said. A chemical-biological response team will be on standby if needed, the defense official said, which is a standard practice for any large event. Finally, some guardsmen will be activated but on standby should civilian law enforcement be pulled away to respond to a situation. <https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/04/politics/muriel-bowser-dc-national-guard-protests/index.html>

ANALYST COMMENTARY: A large turnout is expected in Washington D.C. on January 6 as the U.S. Congress votes to confirm the Electoral College results of the Presidential election. Mayor Muriel Bowser advised residents to avoid the downtown area on that day. The majority of protests are expected to occur around the U.S. Capitol Building, the Ellipse, and the Washington Memorial. The Metropolitan Police Department placed signs along protest routes instructing demonstrators that openly carrying firearms is illegal in the District. Guns are also prohibited in National Parks and within 1,000 feet of a free speech event. Several streets in the downtown D.C. area will be closed. A list of these closures can be found at <https://mayor.dc.gov/release/mayor-bowser-continues-preparation-upcoming-first-amendment-demonstrations>. D.C. police reportedly arrested the leader of the Proud Boys, which the FBI has categorized as an extremist group, for property destruction. D.C. police found



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a high-capacity feeding device and two high-capacity firearm magazines during the arrest. The Proud Boys group stated they would be present for the demonstration. Reports indicate that other extremist groups could attend, including the anti-government Three Percenters and Oath Keepers. Law enforcement and security professionals warn that violence is possible at the demonstrations. The presence of demonstrators and counter-protesters previously led to violent clashes in the District. For example, a rally in D.C. in December 2019 led to the stabbing of four people and 33 arrests. Various calls for violence were posted on a YouTube video discussing a local D.C. hotel's decision to close during the January 6th rally. One comment stating, "At what point do armed Americans seize DC and start hanging politicians? It's an honest question that is not without merit or precedence" received more than 1,100 'up-votes'. Some extremism professionals warn that "D.C. is on a path to become the next battleground in increasingly violent confrontations with left-leaning counterdemonstrators."

TSA Closes 2020 with Dramatic Changes in Checkpoint Operations -- Commits to Ongoing Innovation in 2021

Transportation Security Administration, 1/4/2021

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) reported the final daily figure of estimated travel volume for calendar year 2020, closing a year that tested the agency's ability to innovate and quickly implement modifications across more than 440 federalized airports nationwide to address the pandemic. Between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 2020, the agency screened a total of approximately 324 million passengers throughout its airport security checkpoints. That figure represents just 39 percent of the approximately 824 million total passengers screened in 2019... As part of the ongoing "Stay Healthy. Stay Secure." campaign, a dedicated TSA COVID-19 page is updated daily to provide information on daily travel volume, employee infections by airport, travel tips, and general updates regarding TSA operations. That page will continue to be updated on a daily basis to remain as transparent as possible with the traveling public. Throughout 2021, TSA remains committed to the mission of protecting all transportation systems as well as the continued deployment of technologies that enhance security and reduce physical contact.

<https://www.tsa.gov/news/press/releases/2021/01/04/tsa-closes-2020-dramatic-changes-checkpoint-operations-commits>

South Korea Sending Troops, Contacting Other Nations After Iran Seizes Ship

Newsweek, 1/4/2021

South Korea is sending military forces to respond to the seizure of one of its tankers by Iran, an endeavor in which it is seeking to work with other nations operating in the region. Iran's elite Revolutionary Guard announced Monday that its Zulfiqar fleet had seized a South Korean vessel operating in the Islamic Republic's First Naval District in the Persian Gulf "due to a series of violations of marine environmental laws" after it departed from Saudi Arabia's Al-Jubail port. The ship, Hankuk Chemi, was said to be transporting up to 7,200 tons of oil-based chemicals, and carrying a crew of South Korean, Indonesian, Vietnamese and Myanmar nationals. Both ship and crew are being held at Iran's Bandar Abbas port, where the Revolutionary Guard said "the issue is to be dealt with by the judicial officials." In response to the incident, a South Korean Defense Ministry official told Newsweek the country, officially known as the Republic of Korea (ROK), had "sent anti-piracy troops near the Strait of Hormuz for the ROK oil tanker directly." Asked if South Korea would seek support from the International Maritime Security Construct, a U.S.-led coalition of at least nine nations designed to prevent acts of sabotage and prevent Iran from seizing international ships after a restive 2019 near the Strait of Hormuz, the official said Seoul sought "close cooperation with regards to the ROK government's and multinational anti-piracy naval troops." The Strait of Hormuz is the world's most important maritime oil traffic chokepoint and a recurring flashpoint for U.S.-Iran tensions and threats... The U.S. and South Korea are military allies and, while their mutual defense was established to ward off attacks from rival North Korea, it obliges each to come to the other's aid in the event of any "external armed attack." <https://www.newsweek.com/south-korea-send-troops-talk-other-navies-iran-seize-ship-1558874>

ANALYST COMMENTARY: The Pentagon reportedly ordered the USS Nimitz, which was due to return home following a 10-month deployment, to remain on station in the Middle East. According to acting Secretary of Defense Christopher Miller, the order was a response to "recent threats issued by Iranian leaders against President Trump and other U.S. government officials." The reversal followed a series of recent provocative acts, including the discovery of a suspicious object believed to be a limpet mine on a tanker near Iraq's Al Basrah Oil Terminal (ABOT), Iran's notification to the International Atomic Energy Organization (IAEA) that it would boost uranium enrichment levels at the Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant; the seizure of the South Korea-flagged Hankuk Chemi tanker; and Iran's announced plans to hold military exercises. Sunday marked the first anniversary of the U.S. drone strike that killed Iranian Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani and Iranian-backed Iraqi militia leader Abu Mahdi



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al-Muhandis. Security professionals previously warned of the potential for increased Iranian aggression. In response, the Navy announced the arrival of the guided-missile submarine USS Georgia and the guided-missile cruisers USS Port Royal and USS Philippine Sea in the Persian Gulf last month. The U.S. military also sent B-52H Stratofortress bombers on deterrence flights through the region on at least three occasions between late November and December. Analysts note that the tanker incident suggests Iran could be willing to resume targeting oil and gas infrastructure, a tactic the regime has used in the past to pressure global leaders. As a result, the risk to maritime traffic transiting the region may increase in the coming weeks. Iran also maintains ties with numerous militias and terrorist organizations and could also target nations outside of its immediate reach with cyber attacks. However, further Iranian provocations would heighten the risk of a direct military response.

Pharmacist Who Spoiled More Than 500 Vaccine Doses Said He Thought They Were 'Unsafe'

NPR, 1/4/2021

The Wisconsin pharmacist accused of intentionally sabotaging more than 500 doses of the coronavirus vaccine at Christmastime told police he did it because he believed the drug is somehow hazardous. "He'd formed this belief they were unsafe," Ozaukee County District Attorney Adam Gerol said of Steven Brandenburg on Monday during a virtual hearing, The Associated Press reported. Gerol did not offer more information on why Brandenburg was convinced the inoculations could be harmful, but he did paint a picture of a troubled man in the midst of personal turmoil... Brandenburg, who worked as a pharmacist with the Advocate Aurora Health hospital system, has admitted he deliberately removed 57 vials of the Moderna vaccine from refrigeration and left them out overnight on Dec. 24 and again on Dec. 25. After leaving them out at room temperature overnight on Christmas Eve, Brandenburg returned the vials to their proper storage. But after he pulled them out the second night, they were discovered by a pharmacy technician... As a result of Brandenburg's tampering, health care workers were forced to discard about 570 doses of the potentially lifesaving vaccine. Hospital officials said 57 individuals did receive injections of what may have been useless doses. Those patients have been notified and are not at any risk of adverse health effects, hospital officials said on Friday.

<https://www.npr.org/2021/01/04/953348619/pharmacist-who-spoiled-more-than-500-vaccine-doses-said-he-thought-they-were-uns>

Police Investigating After Caller Reports Woman on Bus Shot in Dayton

Dayton Daily News, 1/5/2021

Police are investigating after a 911 caller reported that a woman on a bus had been shot on Germantown Pike Tuesday morning, according to police dispatchers. The shooting was reported around 8:15 a.m. in the 4400 of Germantown Pike. A man is in custody, but it is not clear if he is a suspect at this time. Initial reports indicate that the victim was shot multiple times, however further information on injuries were not available. Multiple Dayton police cruisers were on the scene, as well as three RTA vehicles. Blood could be seen on the steps of one of the RTA buses and an evidence crew was taking pictures of the vehicle.

<https://www.daytondailynews.com/news/police-investigating-after-caller-reports-woman-on-bus-shot-in-dayton/LS6OTO4CT5AGJFD6TDQ6ZOAVIM/>

Suspect in Queens Hoax Bomb Already Under NYPD Investigations for Far-Right Stunts

NBC News, 1/4/2021

A right-wing conspiracy theorist who allegedly planted a hoax bomb that forced evacuation of a New York City mall surrendered to police early Tuesday morning, authorities said. Louis Shenker, 22, who had recently been arrested and accused of arson, telephoned police before he turned himself in at about 3 a.m., officials said. Firefighters on Monday morning discovered a stolen car in Queens with wire, cans and electrical wiring in the form of a hoax bomb device on top of the vehicle's trunk. No explosives were found in the vehicle — a Tesla with Nevada plates parked on a spiral ramp between parking garage levels at the Queens Place mall — but police rescued a husky dog from inside it. The car had pro-Black Lives Matter movement signage, raising questions of whether the signs were intended to discredit the movement, three senior law enforcement officials said. Law enforcement officials say that police were already investigating Shenker and that they have arrested him twice in connection with other disruptive stunts. On Wednesday, he was arrested and charged with criminal mischief and two counts of low-level arson, accused of burning a poster affixed to a New York Police Department barricade, according to the Manhattan District Attorney's Office... The account also shows a recent post of an "Amtrak requires everyone to wear a face mask" sign burning, captioned, "It doesn't get better than this!" <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/suspect-queens-hoax-bombing-already-under-nypd-investigation-far-right-n1252777>



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Metro Transit's New Digital Signs Promise More Reliable Information for Downtown Bus Riders

Mass Transit Magazine, 1/5/2021

A majority of commuters who take the bus to their downtown Minneapolis jobs have yet to return to their desks, but when they do, Ben Rajkowski has a promise. "You will be coming back to a better system that is stronger and more reliable," said Rajkowski, Metro Transit's manager of transit information. He points to 36 new real-time double-sided digital signs that Metro Transit has put up over the past two months at bus stops along S. Marquette and 2nd avenues. The stops are served by express and limited-stop routes and starting this fall by the Orange Line, the new rapid bus line from downtown to Burnsville. The sleek new displays are connected to fiber optic lines, which will allow information to flow from buses to Metro Transit's information systems and onto signs more quickly and with fewer interruptions. That will allow riders to see trip times that are more accurate, Rajkowski said. The old digital signs, which were some of the first that Metro Transit deployed in the Twin Cities, were 10 years old and suffered because they relied on cellular connections to pass on information. When signals were disrupted, riders saw error messages or notices like "Times temporarily unavailable. Please see schedule." <https://www.masstransitmag.com/technology/passenger-info/signage-and-displays/news/21204518/mn-metro-transits-new-digital-signs-promise-more-reliable-information-for-downtown-bus-riders>

Heavy Rains May Have Been Factor in Oil Train Derailment

The Daily Herald, 1/3/2021

Last week, I received an alert for potential landslides in Western Washington in my inbox. On Dec. 21, a landslide did occur forcing the cancellation of the Sounder rail service between Edmonds and Mukilteo. Tuesday also was also the same day of the most recent BNSF Railway derailment, fire and spill involving seven tankers of the highly volatile and toxic Bakken crude oil just north of Bellingham. This accident could have been much, much worse. With a landslide alert in place, all rail traffic of hazardous materials should have been halted or at least restricted to less than 5 mph. The ground underneath the tracks was supersaturated beyond the engineering estimates for safe use of the rails. BNSF needs to pay for the immediate and swift cleanup of this spill and should also pay serious fines for letting it happen. Gov. Jay Inslee and the state of Washington need to make sure such derailments never happen again, otherwise we will likely see similar, and perhaps much worse, catastrophes that are just as predictable in the future. <https://www.heraldnet.com/opinion/heavy-rains-may-have-been-factor-in-oil-train-derailment/>

CYBER SECURITY

The Threats Arising from the Massive SolarWinds Hack

CBS News, 1/3/2021

Like the coronavirus, it came from overseas, arriving, initially, unnoticed. When it was finally, belatedly discovered, the outrage (for a few days at least) was epic... The Russians, it's believed, hacked into the software of a company called SolarWinds, causing them to push out malicious updates – call it a "cyber virus" – infecting the computer systems of more than 18,000 private and government customers. Almost a cyber pandemic... Like its medical counterpart, a cyber virus spreads through bad hygiene. Former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper called the security breach "a huge intelligence failure." <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/the-threats-arising-from-the-massive-solarwinds-hack/>

A COVID-19 Shot got \$150? Online Scams Surge as Slow Vaccine Rollout Frustrates

Reuters, 1/5/2021

As millions of people await their turn to get a COVID-19 vaccine that could be months away, scammers online, in emails and on messaging apps are luring victims with claims they can deliver shots within days for as little as \$150... COVID-19 vaccine scams are on the rise, according to European and U.S. government officials who are warning the public of fraudsters out for money and personal data. A Reuters search online, in dark web forums and on messaging app Telegram found seven different offers for alleged COVID-19 vaccines. Scams include emails promising entry to supposedly secret lists for early vaccine access and robocallers impersonating government agencies. Message boards on the so-called dark web have added COVID-19 vaccines to more traditional illicit goods for sale. The U.S. FBI and Interpol, among others, have warned of emerging pandemic-related fraud schemes, saying false cures and vaccines advertised on fake websites could pose cyber threats and a significant risk to peoples' health, or even lives. Website domains containing the word vaccine in combination with COVID-19 or coronavirus more than doubled since October to roughly 2,500 in November, when the first legitimate vaccines were nearing regulatory approval, according to cybersecurity firm Recorded



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Future, which is tracking COVID-19 fraud online... On another dark web site, a seller claiming to be from the "Wuhan Institute of Science" offered COVID-19 vaccines in exchange for a donation, and asked buyers to provide their medical history. On Telegram, several channels claimed to offer COVID-19 vaccines, accompanied by stock images. One user offered supposed Moderna Inc vaccines for \$180, and claimed the vaccine from Pfizer Inc and BioNTech SE could be had for \$150 and AstraZeneca's for \$110 per vial. Asked how the vaccines would be shipped, the account creator said they were transported in "regulated temperature packs" and ice packs within a few days, or overnight for an additional charge... The HHS, FBI and U.S. Department of Justice have urged the public to report any COVID-19 vaccine scams, including people asking for out-of-pocket payments for the vaccine and online vaccine advertisements.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-vaccine-scams/a-covid-19-shot-for-150-online-scams-surge-as-slow-vaccine-rollout-frustrates-idUSKBN29A19Z>

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