



An Overview of Bombing and Arson Attacks by Environmental and Animal Rights Extremists in the United States, 1995-2010

*Final Report to the Resilient Systems Division,
Science and Technology Directorate,
U.S. Department of Homeland Security*

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National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism
A Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Center of Excellence
Based at the University of Maryland

8400 Baltimore Ave, Suite 250 • College Park, MD 20742 • 301.405.6600

www.start.umd.edu

About This Report

The authors of this report are: Steven M. Chermak, Ph.D., National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism & Responses to Terrorism (START), and School of Criminal Justice, Michigan State University; Joshua D. Freilich, J.D; Ph.D., National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism & Responses to Terrorism (START), and Doctoral Program in Criminal Justice, The Graduate Center & John Jay College, CUNY; Celinet Duran, Michigan State University; and William S. Parkin, Ph.D., National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism & Responses to Terrorism (START), and Criminal Justice Department, Seattle University. Questions about this report should be directed to infostart@start.umd.edu.

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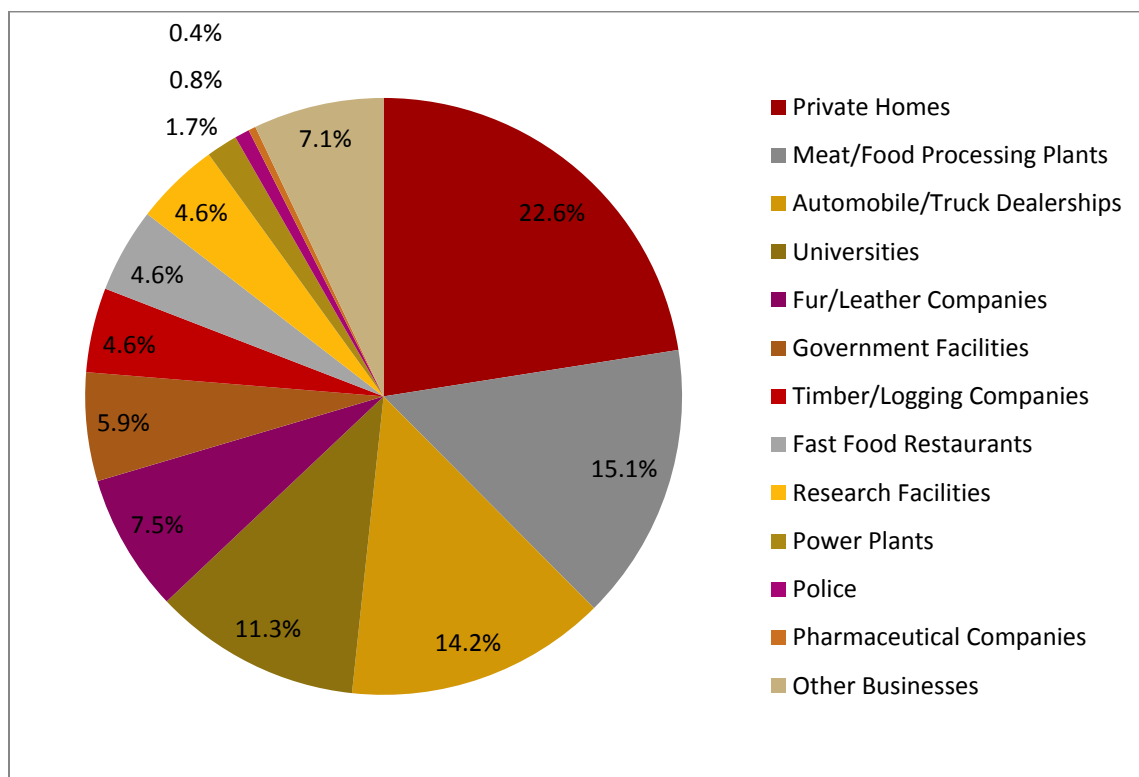
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Executive Summary

This report focuses on criminal incidents committed by environmental and animal rights extremists in the United States between 1995 and 2010, and specifically, the arsons and bombings conducted by individuals affiliated with the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) and Animal Liberation Front (ALF).

Between 1995 and 2010, there were a total of 239 arsons and bombings committed by these groups, with 55% attributed to ELF and 45% to ALF. Of these 239 incidents, 62% were bombings, and 38% were arsons. The vast majority of all incidents, 66%, occurred in the West. Over 42% of these incidents resulted in substantial or very substantial property damage and financial losses. Target types are displayed below.

Figure 3. Target Types



Analyzing data on the perpetrators convicted of committing these attacks, we found that the majority of offenders were male (74%), white (100%), not married (88%), and had at least had some college education (69%). Over half of the perpetrators had some connection to both ELF and ALF. Nearly 79% were members of informal groups affiliated with the movements, and half of all members were recruited

by other members. Many of the perpetrators were convicted of multiple crimes, most were prosecuted federally, and almost all pled guilty. Their average prison sentence was 86 months.

There are several interesting findings that highlight policy relevant concerns. First, there was a relatively small group of individuals responsible for a large number of offenses. Second, although it is important not to rule out the possibility that humans will be intentionally targeted by ELF or ALF (or other environmental and animal rights) extremists, their focus to date on property over human targets has influenced where and when they have attacked. Third, perpetrators were difficult to identify for several reasons: e.g., very few were actively engaged in legal protests and movement-related activities prior to committing their crimes, many came together through personal contacts, and most committed offenses working as part of a small cell.

Overall, findings indicate greater attention needs to be paid to the criminal activities of animal and environmental rights extremist organizations in order to support future investigations and risk assessments.

Introduction

This report focuses on arsons and bombings committed by environmental and animal rights extremists in the United States between 1995 and 2010. We focus on these perpetrators because there is considerable evidence that animal and environmental rights extremists pose a danger to homeland security (Arnold, 1997; Baird, 2006; Chalecki, 2002; Egan 1996; Jarboe, 2006; Liddick; 2006). Smith's (1994: 200) seminal domestic terrorism study in the early 1990s concluded that animal and environmental rights extremists "show distinct promise of increasing in number and activity." Indeed, a leading FBI domestic terrorism agent subsequently reported to Congress that environmental and animal rights extremists had committed over 600 criminal acts causing more than \$40 million in damages in the United States between 1996 and 2002 (Jarboe, 2002). Young's (2004) doctoral dissertation examined a longer period of time (1993- 2003) and identified over 1,400 incidents of terrorism committed by environmental and animal rights extremists, while Varriale-Carson, LaFree and Dugan (2012) documented 1,069 criminal incidents committed by these groups between 1970 and 2007.

Despite the threat posed by animal and environmental rights extremists, little systematic empirical research has been conducted on their criminal activities. This final report is an important step in this direction. Specifically, we focus on the most serious crimes- arsons and bombings- committed by supporters of the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) and the Animal Liberation Front (ALF). We first describe the characteristics of incidents committed by extremists affiliated with ELF and ALF. Second, we review key characteristics of the perpetrators involved in these incidents.¹ Third, we conclude with a discussion of the policy implication of the results.

Research Methodology

This study examines bombings and arsons committed by individuals who were affiliated with ELF or ALF. Importantly, this report only includes criminal incidents. Thus, for an event to be identified, searched, coded, and included in our analysis, two inclusion criteria must have been met. The first component, just described, is behavioral. Again, a criminal arson or bombing must have been committed in the United States between 1995 and 2010.

Only if this requirement was met did we investigate if the second requirement was also satisfied. The second criterion is attitudinal and requires that at least one of the perpetrators of the arson or bombing was an environmental and/or animal rights extremist. Based upon a systematic review of extant research, it was decided that *attitudinally*, environmental and animal rights extremists are individuals or

¹ In this report, we first present data on bombing and arson "incidents" committed by ELF or ALF or claimed by ELF or ALF through official communiqués or press releases. Data are presented on 239 incidents, each of which is a unique event separated in time and space. Second, for those incidents where a specific perpetrator or perpetrators were identified, we present the characteristics of those who were convicted of "offenses." Data are presented on 59 perpetrators, many of whom are linked to multiple offenses. Multiple offenses may also be linked to a unique incident.

groups that subscribe to aspects of the following ideals: Support for biodiversity and bio-centric equality (i.e., the view that humans are no greater than any other form of life and have no legitimate claim “to dominate” earth); the belief that the earth and/or animals are in imminent danger, the government and/or parts of society such as corporations are responsible for this danger, and this danger will ultimately result in the destruction of the modern environment and/or whole species; the view that the political system is incapable and/or unwilling to fix the crisis by taking actions to preserve American wilderness, protect the environment, and support biological diversity; and the belief that there is a need to defend the environment and/or animals. *Environmental rights extremists* are most focused on the environment, and in this study include those perpetrators who are primarily affiliated with ELF. *Animal rights extremists* are most concerned with the rights of animals and in this study include those primarily affiliated with ALF (Freilich, Chermak, Belli, Gruenewald and Parkin, in press).

Again, please note that our inclusion criteria specifically exclude animal/environmental rights activists who subscribe to this belief system but do not violate the criminal law. Thus, all perpetrators included in the Extremist Crime Database (ECDB) were convicted of committing arson or bombing attacks in the United States between 1995 and 2010 (see also German, 2007).

Data Collection

The data for this study were collected in three related stages. The first stage was a multi-tiered data collection effort to identify all known bombings and arsons committed by members of ELF and/or ALF. Incidents were identified generally from six types of sources:

- (1)** Existing terrorism databases such as the ATS (American Terrorism Study), GTD (Global Terrorism Database), and RAND-MIPT (Terrorism Incident Database), as well as the Monterey Institute’s database on chemical, biological, nuclear cases.
- (2)** Official sources such as the FBI’s *Terrorism in the United States* annual report (published until 2005), and the State and Local Anti-Terrorism Training (SLATT) chronology (tracking cases since 1997); congressional hearing reports (e.g., the House and Senate have conducted hearings on animal and environmental rights extremists that featured testimony including listings and details of crimes committed by these extremists).
- (3)** Scholarly and Journalist Accounts. We conducted systematic reviews of the social science literature on these extremist movements. Close attention was paid to works that focused on crimes committed by supporters of these movements. Some of this research involved case studies that provided both chronologies and information about specific events, perpetrators, victims, and groups related to crimes committed by these extremists. Several journal articles, books, and newspaper articles have been written that include such incidents.

(4) Watch-groups, such as the *Southern Poverty Law Center*, the *Anti-Defamation League*, the Foundation for Biomedical Research, and the National Animal Interest Alliance. These sources provide chronological accounts of and information on incidents via the Internet, reports, and press releases.

(5) Media Searches. Media publications provide important open source materials. We conducted systematic searches for additional incidents in a variety of general newspaper and locally archived newspaper databases.

These sources were used to create a listing of all known bombings and arsons committed by ELF or ALF between 1995 and 2010.

In the second stage, each identified incident or scheme was treated as a case study with the goal of compiling as much open source information on it as possible. Each incident and identified perpetrators were systematically searched in existing terrorism databases, official sources, watch-group reports, and 26 web engines.

These searches uncovered all published open source materials on each case. The open source information uncovered includes media accounts; government documents; court records- indictments; appeals; videos; blogs; books; watch-group reports, movement-produced materials and scholarly accounts. Additional criminal cases uncovered during these searches were treated as separate incidents and added to the database.

In the third stage, each identified incident was then assigned to coders, who were provided the open source search files for each incident they were assigned. Our coders reviewed the open source material and created a timeline and a listing of exactly how many (and which) incidents and perpetrators met our inclusion criteria and were to be coded. Coders then searched for information using the engines listed above to double-check that the original searches were complete and did not miss important information. Importantly, if the original search materials were incomplete, the coder conducted "targeted follow up searches" to fill in missing values. These open source data were then used to code information about the incident and perpetrators linked to the criminal incident.

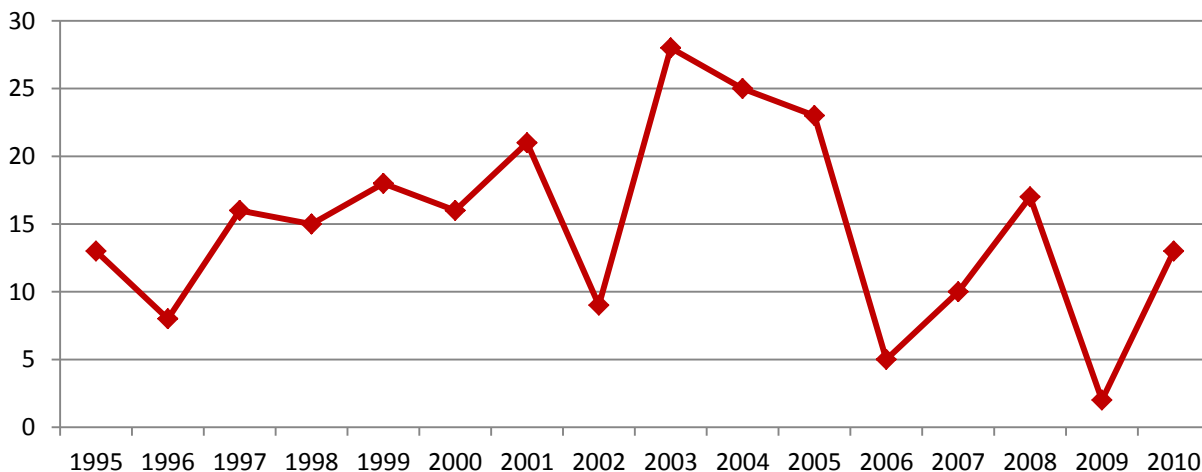
Findings

While there are a number of environmental and animal rights extremist groups, we focused on incidents involving ELF and ALF. We examined these two movements because they accounted for most environmental rights- and animal rights-related crimes that have occurred. An additional advantage is that members of these groups consistently "announce" their responsibility for crimes via communiqués and press releases. Our data thus include incidents that did not result in an arrest (and thus there are no specific perpetrators attached to these incidents) as well as events where there was an arrest and a conviction. In cases where arrests and convictions occurred, we also collected information on the characteristics of these perpetrators in addition to attributes of the incident.

Incident Characteristics

Between 1995 and 2010, there were a total of 239 arsons and bombings committed by animal rights or environmental rights extremists, with 54.8% associated with environmental rights extremism and 45.2% with animal rights extremism. Figure 1 illustrates the number of incidents over time. These data indicate that the number of incidents gradually increased from 1995 through 2001 and dropped in 2002. Incidents then peaked in 2003 to 28 from 9 incidents the previous year. After 2003, the number of incidents slowly decreased in 2004 and 2005 and then significantly declined in 2006. The number of incidents increased somewhat in 2007 and 2008, decreased in 2009, and then increased in 2010. But, overall, the numbers of incidents between 2006 and 2010 remain low compared to the period between 2003 and 2005.

Figure 1. ELF and ALF Arson and Bombing Incidents by Year

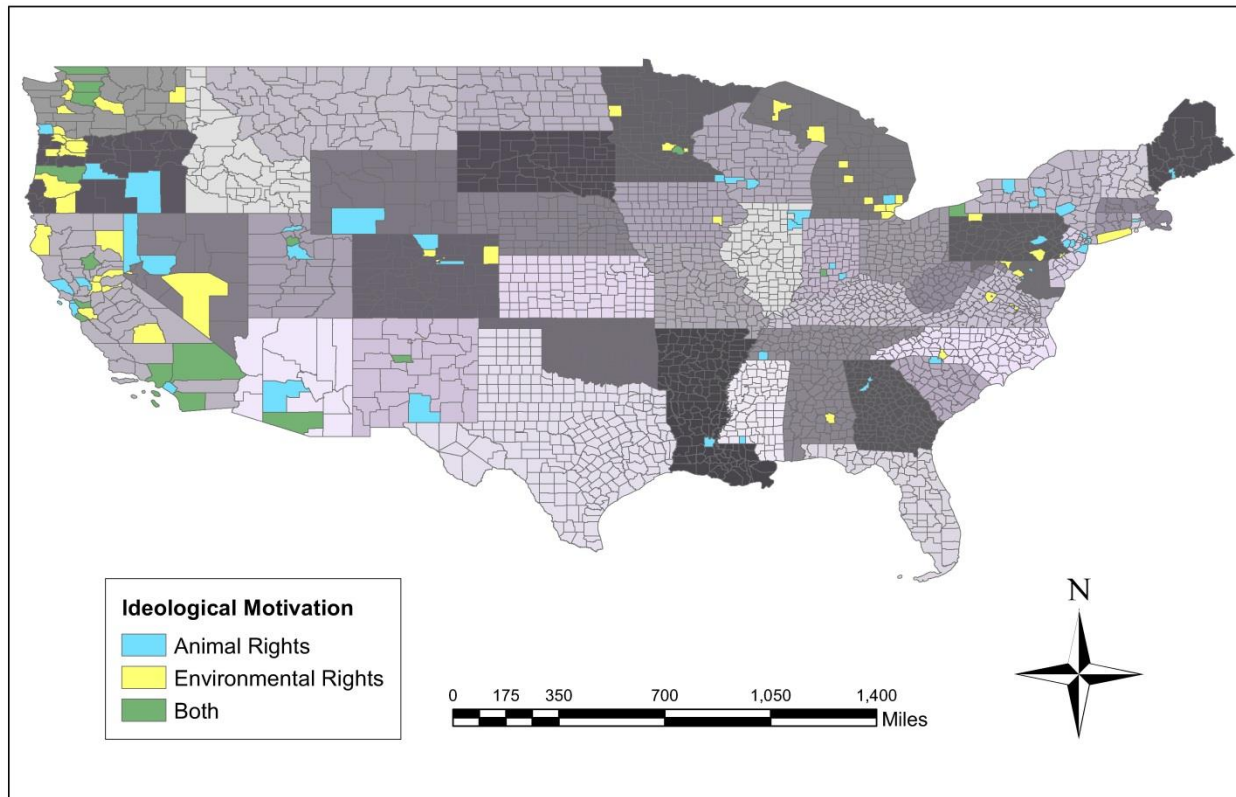


Incident locations were grouped according to the region in which they occurred. Looking at all incidents, 13.8% occurred in the Midwest, 12.6% occurred in the Northeast, 6.7% occurred in the South, and the vast majority, 66.1%, occurred in the West. The concentration of incidents in the West is graphically displayed on the United States map presented in Figure 2. This map also shows that a large number of states, including Texas and Florida, did not experience any bombings or arsons committed by ELF or ALF during this time frame.

Of the incidents in the database, 62.3% were bombings and 37.7% were arsons. The percentage of bombings and arsons committed by ELF and ALF extremists is similar. Please note that it was often difficult to categorize an event as a bombing or arson. For example, if a perpetrator used an incendiary device, we coded this incident as a bombing, even though the result of the use of that device was a home or business being burned to the ground. Of the bombings, the vast majority involved an incendiary device (83.9%). Other types of bombs include pipe bombs (4.7%), letter bombs (1.3%), smoke bombs (1.3%),

and car/truck bombs (.7%). Other bombings were completed with unknown materials (5.4%) and other types of bombs (1.3%), and a couple of incidents were only categorized as bomb threats (1.3%).

Figure 2. ELF and ALF Arson and Bombing Incidents across U.S. Counties



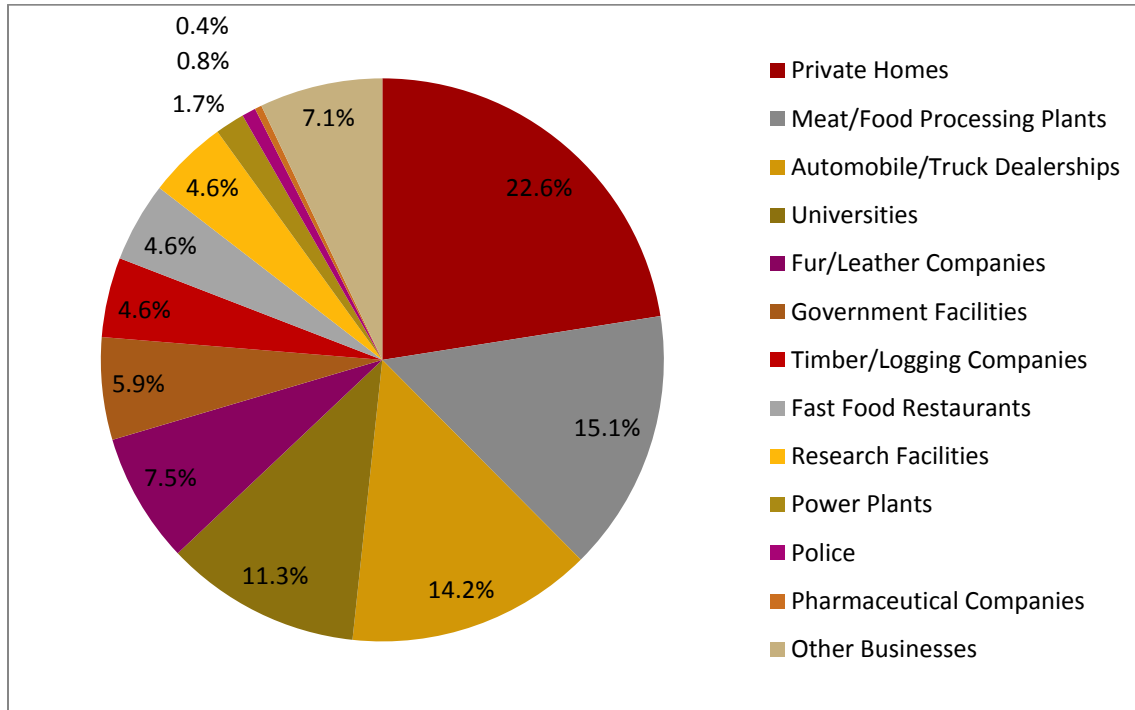
Interestingly, a high number of incidents were related to other incidents. Only 39% of the incidents were defined as isolated, unique incidents. Nearly 16% of the incidents were part of a spree - which occurs when an individual or group of individuals commits a series of distinct incidents in a short period of time. For example, there were eight vehicle arsons at a car dealership in Los Gatos, California in 2004. Nearly 45% of the incidents were not part of a spree, but were specifically related to other incidents. In these cases, a small cell of extremists was responsible for a significant number of incidents. For example, the “Family” accounted for over 20 incidents in the database.

There was some variation by group type. ALF extremists were more likely to conduct isolated attacks (48.1%) compared to ELF extremists (32.1%), and ELF extremists were more likely to conduct attacks in sprees (25.2%) compared to ALF extremists (4.6%). We examined the primary motive for these incidents. Overall, 45.2% of the incidents were motivated by the need to protect animals and/or prevent testing with animals, 23.0% by anti-sprawl concerns, 19.7% by anti-corporation/business development views, 9.6% by general concerns about the environment, 2.1% by anti-logging concerns, and .4% by anti-war concerns.

We estimated the property and financial consequences of these incidents.² We found that 35.4% of the incidents resulted in minor property damage, 21.9% in moderate property damage, 25.3% in substantial property damage, and 17.4% in very substantial damage. Similarly, 35.9% of the incidents resulted in a minor financial loss, 22.2% resulted in a moderate financial loss, 23.4% resulted in a substantial financial loss, and 18.6% resulted in a very substantial financial loss. Thus, the consequences of these attacks are not negligible as over 42% of the incidents resulted in substantial or very substantial damage and in substantial or very substantial financial losses.

Figure 3 presents the results of an analysis of the types of targets attacked. Over 22% of the bombings and arsons targeted private homes. Typically, a series of homes that were built or were in the process of being built in a particular area were targeted by members of ELF. Over 15% of the targets were meat or other food processing plants, 14% of the targets were automobile or truck dealerships, and 11% of the targets were universities. Specific individuals working for a university (usually a professor that uses animal subjects in her/his research) or university research labs were included in the university target category. Other targets include fur/leather companies (7.5%), government facilities (5.9%), timber/logging companies (4.6%), fast food restaurants (4.6%), other research facilities (4.6%), power plants (1.7%), police (0.8%), and pharmaceutical companies (0.4%). A variety of other businesses were also targeted (7.1% of all targets).

Figure 3. Target Types



² Since specific property/monetary damage values are not frequently included in open source materials, we trained coders to use a “reasonable person standard” when coding these variables. At the one extreme is the total destruction of a target or very substantial damage, and at the other extreme is minor damage (e.g., broken windows). The property and monetary estimates are significantly correlated.

Table 1 includes a comparison of ALF and ELF targets. The data in this table show that the targets of ALF and ELF are significantly different. For example, members of ALF did not specifically target private homes, timber/logging companies, or power plants. In contrast, 41.2% of ELF targets were private homes, 8.4% were timber/logging companies, and 3.1% were power plants. Similarly, only 2.8% of ALF targets, but 23.7% of the ELF targets, were automobile/truck dealerships. There were several targets that were high priority for ALF extremists, but were low priority for ELF extremists. Specifically, meat/food processing plants (29.6%), universities (21.3%), fur/leather companies (16.7%), and fast food restaurants (10.2%) were high priority topics for ALF, but were low priority targets for ELF extremists.

Table 1. Target Types of ALF and ELF

Target Type	ALF	ELF
Private Homes	---	41.2%
Meat/Food Processing Plant	29.6%	3.1%
Automobile/Truck Dealerships	2.8%	23.7%
Universities	21.3%	3.1%
Fur/Leather Companies	16.7%	---
Government Facilities	3.7%	7.6%
Timber/Logging Companies	---	8.4%
Fast Food Restaurants	10.2%	---
Research Facilities	6.5%	3.1%
Power Plants	---	3.1%
Police	.9%	.8%
Pharmaceutical Companies	.9%	---
Other Businesses	7.4%	6.1%

The database includes both incidents where a perpetrator was arrested and convicted as well as events in which no arrests were made.³ In fact, at least one arrest was made in only about 34% of the incidents. Law enforcement was significantly more likely to make an arrest when the perpetrator was affiliated with ELF compared to ALF. Similarly, extremists who committed bombings were significantly more likely to be arrested than those who committed arsons.

Perpetrator Characteristics

For a perpetrator to be included in this analysis, she/he had to be convicted of a bombing or arson. There are 147 total perpetrators in the database, but only 59 unique offenders. Thus, the same individual could be included in the database multiple times when convicted of different crimes. For example, if

³ In these cases, ELF and/or ALF claimed responsibility for the incidents via communiqués or press releases.

perpetrator A was convicted of three unique attacks (e.g., arsons at a university, an auto dealership, and a private home), separated by time and space, perpetrator A would be in the database three times. We include a perpetrator multiple times when linked to different offenses because some perpetrator characteristics (e.g., role in the group, ideology, age) can change.

The results indicate that offending is driven by chronic, repeat offenders. Many of the offenders in the database were convicted of multiple crimes, and seven were linked to at least seven offenses. Table 2 presents data on the number of offenses tied to each convicted offender. This table indicates that there are 32 convicted offenders in the database linked to just one offense, 13 convicted offenders were linked to two offenses, four convicted offenders were linked to three offenses, and three convicted offenders were linked to four offenses. In addition, three offenders were linked to seven offenses, and one convicted offender each was linked to 8, 10, 11, and 15 offenses.

Table 2. Number of Offenses by Offender

Number of Offenses	Number of Offenders
1	32
2	13
3	4
4	3
7	3
8	1
10	1
11	1
15	1

Table 3 presents the characteristics of the perpetrators. This table also breaks down the characteristics of offenders who were linked to only one offense (column 3) and offenders who were linked to more than one offense (column 4). Table 3 indicates that 26.5% of the offenders were female, and 73.5% were male. In addition, all of the offenders were white, most were single (88.4%), and most had attended college, graduated from college, or had attended some graduate school (68.9%). On average, these offenders were 27 years old, and none of the offenders had ever served time in the military.

When comparing the one-time and frequent offenders, there were interesting differences on two variables. First, offenders who were linked to only one offense were much less likely to be female (9.4%) compared to those linked to multiple offenses (31.3%). In addition, only 36.4% of the one time offenders had attended college or graduated from college. In contrast, 74.9% of the offenders linked to multiple offenses had attended college, graduated from college, or had some post-graduate work completed.

Table 3. Perpetrator Demographics (at the time of the offense)

Characteristic	All Offenders	Offenders with One Offense	Repeat Offenders
Female	26.5%	9.4%	31.3%
Male	73.5%	90.6%	68.7%
White	100%	100%	100%
Single	88.4%	100%	88.2%
Age (Mean)	27.3	23.5	28.2
Some High School	11.4%	8.8%	8.8%
Graduated High School	19%	36.4%	16.2%
Some College	53.2%	18.2%	58.8%
Graduated College	13.2%	18.2%	13.2%
Some Graduate School	2.5%	0%	2.9%
Military	0%	0%	0%

Table 4 presents information on perpetrators’ involvement in the criminal justice system. Almost 30% of the offenders had a criminal record prior to participating in these environmental rights- and/or animal rights-related attacks. In terms of how the criminal justice system responded to these incidents, the vast majority (89.4%) were prosecuted federally. These offenders were convicted, on average, of 2.2 counts, and 1.3 charges. Sixty percent were released on bail, and nearly all of the offenders pled guilty (97.3%). The average prison sentence was 86 months. The results by type of offender are similar, but the more serious offenders were less likely to be released on bail and were sentenced to lengthier prison sentences. On average, one-time offenders received 41.6 months in prison and those offenders linked to multiple offenses received 100.6 months in prison.⁴

Table 4. Criminal Justice Experiences

Characteristics	All Offenders	Offenders with One Offense	Repeat Offenders
Prior Criminal Record	28.6%	25.0%	29.6%
Released on Bail	60.0%	72.2%	55.7%
Counts	3.3	2.3	3.6
Counts Convicted	2.2	1.4	2.4
Charges	1.5	1.5	1.5

⁴ It is surprising that there are not larger differences between offenders with one offense and repeat offenders. This, in part, may be due to the wide range of repeat offenders grouped together (e.g., offenders linked to 2 offenses are analyzed with those with 15).

Charges Convicted	1.3	1.2	1.4
Federal Prosecution	89.4%	85.2%	90.4%
Pled Guilty	97.3%	87.5%	100.0%
Prison Time (in months)	86.0	41.6	100.6

Table 5 presents the results related to participation in movement-related activities. In general, the offenders who were involved in the bombing and arson incidents studied here were not particularly active in such activities. Only 12.2% possessed any specific movement literature at the time of arrest, 6.8% produced ideological literature (pamphlets, articles, books), 3.4% appeared in the media prior to their first bombing/arson offense, and 6.1% participated in movement-related protests. Even fewer offenders leafleted (2.0%), and very few had a web presence (0.7%). Although offenders linked to multiple incidents were somewhat more likely to have participated in movement-related protests, in general both categories of offenders were not strongly engaged in publically promoting the aims of their movements using legal avenues.

Table 5. Participation in Movement-related Activities

Characteristics	All Offenders	Offenders with One Offense	Repeat Offenders
Had Movement Literature	12.2%	12.5%	12.2%
In Media (prior to incident)	3.4%	0%	4.3%
Had Website	0.7%	0%	0.9%
Produced Literature	6.8%	0%	8.7%
Attended Protests	6.1%	3.1%	7.0%
Leafleted	2.0%	3.1%	1.7%

Table 6 presents data on the nature of involvement of the perpetrators in the environmental and/or animal rights movement. Overall, 5.3% of the offenders were lone actors, 6.9% acted in concert with at least one other individual, 9.2% were part of a formal group, and nearly 78.6% were members of informal groups. This finding is not surprising as previous research has highlighted the strong tendency of these movements to organize into leaderless resistance cells (Ackerman, 2003a; Dishman, 2005; Joosse, 2007; 2012). It is also interesting that offenders who were linked to multiple offenses were more likely to be in informal cells. Approximately 56% of the one-time offenders and 85% of the offenders linked to multiple crimes were involved in small, informal cells. The influence of leaderless resistance can also be observed in the role variable in that over 89% of the offenders were affiliated with a group, but few (2.1%) were designated leaders.

Another interesting finding presented in this table is the group affiliation variable. Some of the offenders had specific ties to either ALF (6.1%) or ELF (38.6%), but most of them (55.3%) had at least some connection to both groups. The data also show that recruitment efforts were not substantial. It appears that most groups came together informally through friends and personal contacts (Chermak, 2002; Sageman, 2004). Fifty percent of all offenders and all of the offenders linked to multiple offenses joined a group after being contacted by someone they knew. Finally, these individuals are not linked to groups with any substantial organizational capacity, and most of them received very little financial support. In fact, over 71% of the individuals did not receive any financial support for their activities.

Table 6. Relationship with Movement

Characteristics	All Offenders	Offenders with One Offense	Repeat Offenders
Nature of Involvement			
Lone Actor	5.3%	7.4%	4.8%
Acted with Others	6.9%	23.9%	1.9%
Formal Group	9.2%	11.1%	8.7%
Informal Group	78.6%	55.6%	84.6%
Group Affiliation			
ALF	6.1%	16.7%	4.2%
ELF	38.6%	50.0%	36.5%
ALF/ELF	55.3%	33.3%	59.4%
Role			
Leader	2.1%	0%	2.4%
Affiliated Member	89.4%	100.0%	88.1%
Other Role	8.5%	0%	9.4%
Recruited into Group			
Personal Connection	50.0%	14.3%	100.0%
Individual	33.3%	57.1%	0%
Decision			
Internet	16.7%	28.6%	0%
Financing			
No Support	71.4%	75.0%	66.7%
Criminal Activities	14.2%	25.0%	20.0%
Group Funds	14.4%	0%	33.3%

Discussion

Animal and environmental rights extremists pose a threat to American public safety. Domestic terrorism attacks outnumber international ones seven to one in the United States (LaFree, Dugan, Fogg and Scott, 2006), and animal and environmental rights extremists compose a dangerous segment of domestic extremist movements (Smith, 1994). To date, most terrorism research has focused on international terrorism (Lum, Kennedy and Sherley, 2006), and research on domestic political extremists has mostly focused on far-right extremists (Blazak, 2001). For example, Gruenewald, Freilich and Chermak (2009) identified over 320 studies on far-right extremists in the fields of criminology, political science, sociology and terrorism, while our review of the literature on animal and environmental rights extremists in these disciplines found less than 70 studies. The criminal activities of these extremists are thus a neglected research topic. This report begins to fill this gap through its systematic analysis of the attacks conducted by ALF and ELF extremists, as well as the characteristics of the perpetrators convicted for these crimes.

There are several interesting findings that highlight policy relevant concerns. First, there was a relatively small group of individuals who were responsible for a large number of the offenses in the database. One of the offenders, for example, was linked to 15 different offenses. The offenders who committed multiple offenses were also different compared to those offenders who committed only one bombing or arson. They were more likely to be female, were more educated, and were more likely to be part of an informal cell. The influence of these small cells might help to explain the wide variation over time in the number of ALF and ELF incidents that occur. That is, although the number of incidents that occur in any particular year is generally small, periods with larger numbers of incidents might be related to the operations of specific cells while periods with smaller numbers of incidents might be related to the apprehension of these cells. Such chronic offending is of particular concern to law enforcement because offenders have the opportunity to learn, adjust, and cause greater damage over time. That is, the more crimes they commit, the more efficient and effective they become.

Second, there are several characteristics that separate the attacks committed by animal and environmental right extremists from those committed by other types of violent extremists. For example, although many of the attacks resulted in substantial financial and property damage, none of them resulted in a loss of life. In addition, these attacks are not randomly dispersed across the country but appear to be concentrated in the West, and there are many states that did not experience an attack during the time period under investigation. ALF and ELF members also target specific types of businesses, like fur/leather companies, timber/logging companies, automobile/truck dealerships, private homes, and research and/or university facilities, although it is interesting how different the targets are when comparing the attacks of environmental rights groups to those of animal rights groups. Animal rights groups were significantly more likely to target universities, meat/food processing plants, and fur/leather companies. In contrast, environmental rights groups were more likely to target automobile/truck

dealerships, timber/logging companies, and private homes and construction sites. These results show that even though environmental and animal rights extremists are similar in several ways, there is a great need to better understand the underlying motives of these offenders. In addition, it supports the conclusion that there will be nuanced patterns of offending when comparing across and even within ideologies.

Third, these perpetrators were difficult to identify for several reasons (several of the chronic offenders offended for several years before apprehension). Very few of them were actively engaged in legal protests and movement-related activities prior to committing their crimes. Most were haphazardly organized into groups—they came together usually through personal contacts, functioned without a hierarchical organizational structure, and committed offenses as a small working cell. Such tactics make the collection of intelligence and investigation of such activities particularly challenging, and point to the continued need to attempt to better understand the criminal activities of such individuals and groups.

Finally, it was surprising that almost all offenders pled guilty to their crimes. One might suspect that “true believers” to a cause would be defiant and challenge the criminal justice system (or use it as a potential pulpit for their views), but this does not appear to be the case. Perpetrators pled guilty to very serious crimes and spent (or are spending) considerable time in prison because of it. They also provided leads that resulted in a better understanding of their practices and the individuals involved in particular cells.

The results of this study demonstrate that terrorism threats are dynamic and it is important to consider the subtle and not so subtle similarities and differences in the ideologies, structures, and criminal activities of the various segments and supporters within the animal and environmental rights extremist movements (Einwohner, 2002). Such an appreciation might make the difference between successful and unsuccessful investigations and useful and non-useful risk assessments.

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