



Press Release

For Immediate Release

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## Terrorist Attacks in DC and Maryland Rare Since 1980s

Following Wednesday's hostage situation at the Discovery Communications building in Silver Spring, Maryland, START has released background information on:

- Terrorist activity in the District of Columbia and Maryland
- Media targets in the U.S.
- Suicide terrorism in the U.S.
- Hostage situations in the U.S.

Top Findings:

- Given the nature of James Lee's political and social goals and his use of illegal force, this incident would qualify as a terrorist incident, according to the definition of START's Global Terrorism Database (GTD).
- Although hostage-takings like the one in Silver Spring are extremely rare globally, representing less than 1% of all terrorist attacks worldwide since 1970, three have occurred in the District of Columbia.
- Environmentally motivated perpetrators, like the gunman in this event, have been active in the United States since the 1970s.
- Environmentally motivated attacks almost always have no casualties but have caused tens of millions of dollars in property damage.
- In the event that the Discovery Communications attacker indeed wore explosives that he intended to detonate, this would be the first recorded incident of environmentally motivated suicide terrorism in the United States, and likely the first worldwide.
- Journalist and media targets are rare in the U.S. Prior to the events at the Discovery building, the most recent terrorist attacks on media targets in the United States were the 2001 anthrax attacks, which included targets such as The New York Post, CBS, ABC, and NBC, in New York, and American Media Inc. in Boca Raton, Florida.

According to START Director and Criminologist, Gary LaFree, "The use of violence by radical environmentalists is extremely rare."

For the full background report, see

[http://www.start.umd.edu/start/announcements/Background\\_Report\\_Discovery\\_building.pdf](http://www.start.umd.edu/start/announcements/Background_Report_Discovery_building.pdf).



Global Terrorism Database

The Global Terrorism Database (GTD) is an open-source database including information on terrorist events around the world from 1970 through 2008 (with annual updates planned for the future). Unlike many other event databases, the GTD includes systematic data on domestic as well as international terrorist attacks and now includes more than 87,000 cases. For each GTD incident, information is available on the date and location of the incident, the weapons used and nature of the target, the number of casualties, and—when identifiable—the group or individual responsible. The full dataset can be downloaded through the “Contact” section of the website at <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/>.



The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) is a U.S. Department of Homeland Security Center of Excellence based at the University of Maryland. START uses state-of-the-art theories, methods, and data from the social and behavioral sciences to improve understanding of the origins, dynamics, and social and psychological impacts of terrorism. Additional information on START is available at: [www.start.umd.edu](http://www.start.umd.edu).