START researchers identified 109 jihadi-linked plots to use violence against the U.S. homeland January 1993-February 2016. Of these, only 13 were completed and successful. These findings are preliminary.

Significant findings

- Most perpetrators were American citizens or residents (75%); few returned foreign fighters (3%) were among them; and there were no refugees.
- Lone wolves were rare – only nine plots in 20+ years were orchestrated by someone acting alone throughout the course of the plot.
- About 25% of the plots could credibly be linked to a known terrorist organization.

The majority of the jihadi plots against the U.S. homeland were completely foiled (72%).

Target

20% Private citizens and property

Most Common Targets: Private citizens and property were the most common targets accounting for about 20% of all plots. Military institutions and personnel, airports and aircraft, and general government were next most frequently targeted, followed by transportation and business targets.

Location

Almost a fifth of all plots were aimed at the District of Columbia and Northern Virginia.

Over a quarter of all plots were meant to occur/did occur in the state of New York. If New Jersey is included in the metropolitan region, the number increases to more than 30%.

California, Florida, Texas, and Illinois accounted for a small distribution, each with 5-7 plots each over the entire period.

The authors of this study are Martha Crenshaw, Senior Fellow Center for International Security and Cooperation (CISAC), Professor of Political Science, by courtesy, at Stanford University; Erik Dahl, Associate Professor of National Security Affairs at the Naval Postgraduate School; and Margaret Wilson, Honorary Senior Research Fellow at Imperial College London. This research was supported by the Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Directorate’s Office of University Programs through Award Number 2012-ST-061-CS0001, Center for the Study of Terrorism and Behavior (CSTAB) CSTAB Project 2.8.