



## **Post DVE Virtual Docent Tour Student Handout**

**Overview:** The threat landscape of national security is constantly changing and there are systems and organizations in place to mitigate the threat. This next exercise will help students gain a greater understanding of the rising threat of DVE and how the courts address DVE.

### **Activity 1: Understanding the Current Threat of Domestic Violent Extremism**

**Directions:** Read the article below and answer the five comprehension questions.

*"Domestic terrorism-related cases increased by more than 350% over 8 years: Watchdog  
The number of plots foiled also increased, according to the statistics"* - By Luke Barr, February 28, 2023, ABC news

Domestic terrorism-related cases increased 357% from 2013 to 2021, according to the Government Accountability Office, which urged the FBI and Department of Homeland Security to do more to combat the issue.

In 2013, there were 1,981 open domestic terrorism cases compared to the 9,049 open cases in 2021, according to statistics provided by the FBI to the GAO.

"From calendar year[s] 2010 to 2021, [DHS Intelligence and Analysis] tracked a total of 231 domestic terrorism incidents, with racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists committing the most violent incidents during the time period," the GAO report says. "More specifically, from 2013 to 2016, the total number of open domestic terrorism-related cases declined by over 400 (about 23%) but then increased by over 7,000 (about 490%) from fiscal years 2016 through 2021."

Out of 231 incidents, the GAO found that 35% were racially motivated, followed by anti-government motivations at 32% from 2010 to 2021.

Prosecutors charged 1,584 defendants in 1,255 cases in federal district court with crimes that were related to domestic terrorism from October 2010 through July 2021, the report says.

The number of plots that were disrupted grew by nearly three times, from 81 in 2014 to 456 in 2021, according to the data.

Since becoming Homeland Security secretary, Alejandro Mayorkas has focused the department's resources on combatting domestic violent extremism, which he calls one of the most persistent and lethal threats in the United States.

Deaths perpetrated by domestic terrorists also increased, the GAO found.



"The number of deaths from such incidents ranged from zero in 2011 to 32 in 2019, with 2015 and 2019 having the highest numbers of deaths," the GAO report says.

The GAO said domestic extremist attacks have "been perpetrated and promoted by a broad range of individuals and groups."

One of the core issues, the GAO said, is that the agencies track different types of information regarding domestic terrorism, but do not often share the information.

"DHS tracks classified, Law Enforcement Sensitive, For Official Use Only information and open-source information related to known offenders. The FBI, on the other hand, primarily tracks investigation information, including information reported to the FBI by state and local law enforcement agencies," the GAO said.

The agencies also did not sufficiently report "comprehensive domestic terrorism incident data in their 2021 and 2022 strategic intelligence reports," according to the report.

"In their first report pursuant to the act, issued in November 2020, the FBI and DHS provided their respective definitions and threat categories related to domestic terrorism," the report says. "However, the report did not include information on their methodologies for tracking incidents of domestic terrorism other than the FBI's description of an incident and a plot."

More support from state and local governments in reporting incidents that fall under the category of domestic extremism is needed, FBI agents interviewed by the GAO said.

### **Activity 1 Comprehension Questions:**

1. Why has the Department of Homeland Security secretary, Alejandro Mayorkas, focused additional resources on addressing domestic violent extremism?
2. What recommendation does the GAO make for local, state and federal agencies in their effort to combat domestic violent extremism?
3. While this article was written in February 2023, what is the current threat landscape of DVE today?
4. In your opinion, why is the threat of DVE increasing?
5. Based on your understanding of DVE and the FBI's definition of terrorism, are there additional mechanisms/strategies that could be employed to address the threat of DVE, explain?



## **Activity 2:** Analysis of the Current Threat of Domestic Violent Extremism

**Overview:** This activity will ground students in the current domestic violent extremism threat landscape of the United States, which reflects the international DVE threat landscape according to subject matter experts.

**Directions:** In preparation for the Socratic Seminar discussion, read the excerpt below and answer the comprehension questions provided.

[‘Office of Intelligence and Analysis Homeland Threat Assessment 2024’](#) authored by Department of Homeland Security, p.3

In 2024, we expect the threat of violence from **violent extremists radicalized in the United States will remain high** but largely unchanged from the threat as described in the May 2023 National Threat Advisory System (NTAS) bulletin. Over the past year, both domestic violent extremists (DVEs) and homegrown violent extremists (HVEs) inspired by foreign terrorist organizations have engaged in violence in reaction to sociopolitical events. These actors will continue to be **inspired and motivated by a mix of conspiracy theories; personalized grievances; and enduring racial, ethnic, religious, and anti-government ideologies, often shared online.**

- Since January 2022, **DVEs have conducted three fatal attacks** in the Homeland resulting in 21 deaths and multiple non-lethal attacks. US law enforcement has disrupted over a half dozen other DVE plots. During the same period, only one attack was conducted by an individual inspired by a foreign terrorist organization. The individual—who is awaiting trial—was likely inspired by a spiritual mentor of al-Qa’ida and Taliban narratives and allegedly wounded three New York City Police Department officers on New Year’s Eve.
- Collectively, these incidents focused on a variety of **targets, including law enforcement, government, faith-based organizations, retail locations, ethnic and religious minorities, healthcare infrastructure, transportation, and the energy sector.** The most lethal attack this year occurred in May in Allen, Texas, where a now-deceased attacker killed eight people at a shopping mall. The attacker was fixated on mass violence and held views consistent with racially or ethnically motivated violent extremist (RMVE) and involuntary celibate violent extremist ideologies, judging from his writings and online activities.
- While violent extremists likely will **continue using accessible, easy-to-use weapons for attacks, they also will leverage online platforms and encrypted communications applications to share novel tactics and techniques.** Collaboration among violent extremists online likely will grow as they strive to spread their views, recruit followers, and inspire attacks. Some RMVEs have improved the quality of their video and magazine publications online, which could help them inspire more like-minded individuals to commit attacks.



### Activity 2 Comprehension Questions

1. In referring to the Homeland Threat Assessment excerpt, what are the targets of the DVE incidents? And what are DVE actors using to gain support?
2. What are these actors of DVE inspired and motivated by?
3. What are two or three things that contribute to the current rise of domestic violent extremism? Consider the trends of international and national security over the course of history and how those trends impact local communities.
4. How does domestic violent extremism move citizens of the U.S. away from the founding ideal of an inclusive democracy that the U.S. continues to work toward?
5. Reflect on your everyday interactions and consider if you have been exposed to any acts or precursory acts of domestic violent extremism. How do you think this exposure impacts our society?
6. What ideologies do you think/feel are driving these domestic violent extremist activities?

### Activity 3: Socratic Seminar Discussion

**Overview:** Using information from the past few lessons, including the tour at the CELL Exhibit and from our own experiences, this next activity will require participants to engage in civil discourse to help break down barriers, ask critical questions and understand different perspectives. It is important to establish some collective ground rules for civil discourse. Consider what civil discourse is and what civil discourse is not as we move into this Socratic Seminar.

**Directions:** Socratic Seminars lead with open-ended questions that are intended to facilitate further thought. Please list 1-3 guidelines you will commit to following while engaging in this Socratic Seminar.



- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

#### **Activity 4: Action plan to Champion Change**

**Overview:** This last activity will give you and your classmates an opportunity to create an action plan that helps your school and your community to Champion Change in the fight against domestic violent extremism.

**Directions:** Work in small groups to create an action plan that can help your community become champions of change in the fight against domestic violent extremism. In this activity, you will consider the guiding questions and then fill in the action plan based on your discussion.

Guiding questions to consider:

1. Discuss actions that you and your peers can take to mitigate vulnerability to push/pull factors.
2. What could you and your peers create for your community to implement these actions (club, awareness assembly, ongoing educational initiatives on DVE might be some examples, school policy)?
3. What are existing community organizations/programs that you could partner with or join to support these actions?
4. What changes would you propose to your school leaders that would support you and your classmates' schoolwide initiatives?
5. Here is a resource to help you ([PERIL](#)).



Group goal for action plan: \_\_\_\_\_

PROBLEM BEING ADDRESSED	POTENTIAL PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS/ PROGRAMS	ACTION IDEAS	POTENTIAL OBSTACLES	INTENDED OUTCOME
<i>Hate speech in schools</i>	<i>Anti-Defamation League Blue Bench</i>	<i>Awareness campaign about the impact words have on adolescents</i>	<i>School admin not supporting  Lack of time</i>	<i>Community talks about why we don't want to tolerate hate speech. Hate speech is not heard as often.</i>