NCITE Project Summary

Threats to Public Officials

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Threats against U.S. public officials have increased and span multiple sectors, creating uncertainty about what is protected speech versus criminal menace and how best to allocate protective resources. This project extends the NCITE-supported dataset of communicated threats (verbal, written, or digital) from 2013–2024 to include 2025–2026 and focuses on four sectors: law enforcement/military, election/elected, education, and healthcare. Researchers will analyze publicly available federal court records and case materials to quantify trends, compare sectors, and document context. The work is expected to identify which sectors and roles face the most frequent and serious threats, how ideologies and tactics vary, and where enforcement and protection gaps may exist. Recommendations and informational products will help inform DHS and partners in target hardening and resource prioritization.

Impact Statement

Delivers a cross-sector, evidence-based picture of communicated threats to public officials so DHS components and related operators (e.g., Office of Intelligence & Analysis, U.S. Secret Service, Customs and Border Protection, ICE – Homeland Security Investigations) can prioritize protective measures and deploy resources more effectively.

Policy Impact

- Executive Order 14161, "Protecting the United States From Foreign Terrorists and Other National Security and Public Safety Threats" (Jan. 20, 2025): Sector-by-sector threat data supports the order's public safety aims by informing DHS risk assessments and protective deployments tied to national security threats.
- Executive Order 14321, "Ending Crime and Disorder on America's Streets" — The White House (July 24, 2025): Trends in threats to officials help DOJ/DHS target crime-reduction efforts and allocate enforcement and protective resources where risks concentrate.
- Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, Judicial Security and Independence Task Force (Mar. 26, 2025): Cross-sector insights into communicated threats provide baseline metrics and typologies to support task force planning and recommendations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND DISCLAIMER

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End User Offices with Direct Operational Impact

U.S. Secret Service	DHS Office of Intelligence & Analysis
U.S. Capitol Police	Federal Bureau of Investigation – Joint Terrorism Task Forces
National Counterterrorism Center – Office of the Director of National Intelligence	U.S. House of Representatives
U.S. Senate	National Institutes of Health
National Education Association	Department of Justice – National Security Division
U.S. Administrative Office of the Courts	

Expected Findings and Outputs

- Evidence of continued growth in communicated threats to public officials requires further research; variation in frequency and severity across law enforcement/military, election/elected, education, and healthcare sectors calls for differential recommendations and resource use.
- Will summarize any differentiation of tactics, channels (e.g., mail, phone, digital platforms), and ideological motivations associated with threat activity, including sector-specific patterns.
- Identification of operational gaps affecting case outcomes (e.g., charging decisions, adjudication timelines) and protective posture will inform deterrence and target-hardening recommendations.
- Comparative analysis of sentencing outcomes across jurisdictions will surface potential variances and implications for deterrence.

NCITE Strategic Priority

Tactics — The project maps how threats are communicated and operationalized, clarifying the tactics adversaries use against public officials.

NCITE Operational Area of Excellence

Research and Development Translation and Transition — The team will produce operator-focused briefs, infographics, and engagements to move findings to practice.

Methodology

Researchers will extend an NCITE-supported archive of federal threat cases (2013–2024) through 2026 and will code variables from publicly available court records. Analyses compute frequencies and cross-sector comparisons (e.g., victim role, ideology indicators, modality), emphasizing patterns over personally identifiable details. The open-source design prioritizes privacy and civil liberties, and outputs include operator-oriented translation products and briefings.

Please visit the NCITE website for more information on the project at ncite.unomaha.edu

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