



## **(U//FOUO) Abortion-Related Violent Extremist Threats and Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act Violations Increase, Likely in Reaction to Recent Legislative Activities**

(U//FOUO) The FBI assesses the increase in abortion-related violent extremist threats and criminal activity, including violations of the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act, against targets including reproductive healthcare facilities (RHCFs) likely is driven in part by the recent rise in state legislative activities related to abortion services and access, based on a review of FBI and open source information.<sup>a</sup> Actors motivated by pro-life extremist beliefs have historically and continue to perpetrate the most lethal attacks, and have committed the majority of non-violent criminal violations, including obstruction of clinic entrances and intimidation of providers and patients, based on an ongoing annual review of FBI and open source information.

(U//LES) While the current legislative environment possibly could serve as a catalyst for pro-choice extremism, as restrictions impacting abortion services, including reductions in the number of RHCFs, are proposed or enacted in some states, incidents of pro-choice extremist violence are rare, and are likely to remain so. Since the *Roe versus Wade* ruling in 1973, 24 states have passed abortion-related laws or policies restricting or limiting RHCF functions. Eleven of those 24 states passed related legislation in 2019.

- (U//FOUO) Since August 2019 there has been a 40 percent increase in FACE Act investigations.<sup>1</sup> There also has been an increase in reports of trespassing, obstruction, and threats of harm at RHCFs, according to the pro-choice National Abortion Federation.<sup>2</sup>
- (U//LES) On 13 August 2019, a now-detained individual allegedly posted a threat of mass violence against an identified Chicago, Illinois-based RHCF, stating “On August 23<sup>rd</sup> 2019...I will proceed to slaughter and murder any doctor, patient, or visitor i see in the area...” and “I am done with my state and thier [sic] bullshit abortion laws and allowing innocrt [sic] kids to be slaughtered for the so called “womans right” [sic].” The subject was charged with transmitting a threat in interstate commerce.<sup>3</sup>
- (U//FOUO) In February 2019, an identified individual wrote a series of posts on Facebook stating “Democratic Socialist Lucifarian Baby Killers” need to be “sent to the gallows or purged from the face of the earth.” One post stated “Open Season for Abortionists.”<sup>4</sup> On 20 February 2019, a Texas-based individual posted an online threat to “commit jihad on an abortion clinic.” Local authorities subsequently arrested and charged the subject for making a terrorist threat, and seized several firearms and other evidence during a search of the subject’s house.<sup>5</sup>
- (U//FOUO) On 10 February 2019, an identified individual allegedly broke into a Missouri-based RHCF, placed a bucket inside the building, and threw a Molotov cocktail into the building. Subsequent smoke, fire, and water damage caused the facility to close temporarily. The subject was arrested and charged with malicious damage by fire or explosive to an organization receiving federal financial assistance.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>a</sup> (U) Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances: 18 U.S.C. § 248(a) Prohibited activities. Whoever by force or threat of force or by physical obstruction, intentionally injures, intimidates or interferes with or attempts to injure, intimidate or interfere with any person because that person is or has been, or in order to intimidate such person or any person or any class or persons from, obtaining or providing reproductive health services.

(U) LAW ENFORCEMENT SENSITIVE: The information marked (U//LES) in this document is the property of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and may be distributed within the federal government (and its contractors), U.S. intelligence, law enforcement, public safety or protection officials, and individuals with a need to know. Distribution beyond these entities without FBI authorization is prohibited. Precautions should be taken to ensure this information is stored and/or destroyed in a manner that precludes unauthorized access. Information bearing the LES caveat may not be used in legal proceedings without first receiving authorization from the originating agency. Recipients are prohibited from subsequently posting the information marked LES on a website on an unclassified network without first obtaining FBI approval.



- (U//LES) In January 2019, there was an increase in reported pro-life motivated individuals attempting to or successfully gaining access to the facilities to disrupt daily operations at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, area RHCFs, in possible violation of the FACE Act, likely due to increased national attention surrounding abortion rights, according to human source reporting.<sup>7</sup>

(U//FOUO) **Outlook:** In the midst of a rise in legislative changes to reproductive healthcare services in several states, and reported increases in obstruction, intimidation, and threats of violence in the last year, the FBI anticipates violent threats and FACE Act violations likely will remain elevated through the next 12 to 24 months in the midst of continuous debates during the 2020 election cycle. The US Supreme Court's decision to add a Louisiana abortion law case to its docket for the upcoming session also could result in increased threats and criminal activity within this timeframe. As states continue to enact laws regulating abortion services, RHCFs may close, placing a spotlight on remaining RHCFs, potentially exposing them to increased criminal acts, including FACE Act violations. Threats and acts of violence by those motivated by pro-choice extremist beliefs likely will remain comparatively low, given the pro-choice movement's historic reliance on non-violent, first amendment-protected activities, and lack of reporting indicating a possible shift towards extremist tactics.

*Prepared by Criminal Investigative Division and Counterterrorism Division*