GAO

United States Government Accountability Office

Report to Congressional Requesters

May 2022

CAPITOL ATTACK

Federal Agencies' Use of Open Source Data and Related Threat Products Prior to January 6, 2021

CAPITOL ATTACK

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Why GAO Did This Study

Open source data indicated that the potential for violence at the U.S. Capitol appeared online months prior to the attack on January 6, 2021. Law enforcement agencies may use posts on social media platforms and other open source information to identify potential criminal activity, to develop "threat products," and to conduct criminal investigations. Agencies must consider the protection of privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties when collecting and sharing this information.

GAO was asked to review information related to the January 6 Capitol attack. This is the fifth in a series of reports on aspects of the attack. This report addresses what open source data selected federal agencies obtained and shared, as well as threat products they developed that leveraged such data related to the events of January 6.

To conduct this work, GAO reviewed open source data that agencies obtained and shared, as well as threat products that leveraged the data. Agencies in GAO's review included those within DHS; the Departments of Justice and the Interior; Architect of the Capitol; U.S. Capitol Police; House and Senate Sergeants at Arms; and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, as they had specific roles in preparing for the planned events of January 6. GAO interviewed officials from Facebook, Parler, and Twitter about the extent to which they shared information with agencies. GAO selected social media platforms based on, for example, if they had appeared in threat products.

This report is a public version of a sensitive report issued in February 2022. Information that agencies deemed sensitive has been omitted.

View GAO-22-105963. For more information, contact Triana McNeil at (202) 512-8777 or McNeilT@gao.gov.

## What GAO Found

Federal agencies obtained and shared social media posts and other publicly available information—referred to in this report as "open source data"—on potential criminal activity prior to January 6, 2021. All 10 selected agencies—including the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Intelligence and Analysis who have lead roles in countering domestic terrorism and violent extremism—were aware of open source data about planned events on January 6, and seven were aware of potential violence planned for that day. They obtained the data through manual web searches, sharing with each other, and social media platforms. For example, prior to January 6, the FBI reviewed information regarding an online threat that discussed calls for violence, including "Congress needs to hear glass breaking, doors being kicked in, and blood…Get violent…Go there ready for war." In addition, in mid-December 2020, DHS's Office of Intelligence and Analysis received information regarding threats to Congress and elected officials and discussions of bringing guns into D.C. on January 6. Further, one agency received data from a social media platform on December 24, 2020, that included a user threatening to kill politicians and coordinate armed forces on January 6.

Number of Relevant Threat Products Agencies Developed Prior to January 6, 2021
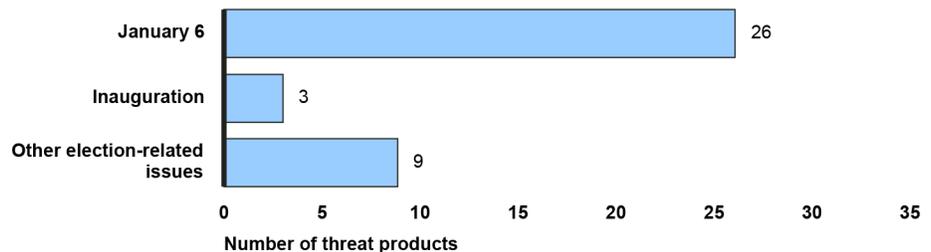
Source: GAO analysis of selected agencies' threat products. | GAO-22-105963

Seven of the 10 agencies developed 38 election-related threat products based partly on open source data to inform security planning (see fig.). Twenty-six of those were about planned events for January 6. Of those, the FBI prepared one and DHS prepared two threat products. The 26 products included these threats:

- **Potential for violence between opposing groups.** Six agencies identified that violence could occur if opposing groups came into contact.

- **Groups or individuals may be armed.** Five agencies identified that individuals or groups planned to attend events while armed.

- **Groups or individuals may use improvised weapons.** Three agencies identified that individuals may use weapons, such as explosives.

- **Extremist groups may commit or incite violence.** Seven agencies identified that extremists could incite violence at demonstrations.

- **Groups may attack the Capitol or Congress.** Two agencies identified the Capitol or Congress as targets of violent attacks based on election results.

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Abbreviations

DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DOJ	Department of Justice
DVE	domestic violent extremist
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
MAGA	Make America Great Again
MPD	Metropolitan Police Department for the District of Columbia
NCTC	National Counterterrorism Center
NPS	National Park Service
SAA	Senate Sergeant at Arms
2017 Resource Guide	Real-Time and Open Source Analysis Resource Guide
2013 Social Media Policy Guide	Developing a Policy on the Use of Social Media
USCP	U.S. Capitol Police
USPP	U.S. Park Police

May 2, 2022

Congressional Requesters

Social media posts and other publicly available information involving the potential for violence at the U.S. Capitol appeared in the months leading up to the attack on January 6, 2021. Law enforcement agencies may use posts made on social media platforms and other open source information—referred to in this report as "open source data"—to identify potential criminal activity, develop "threat products," and conduct criminal investigations.[1] In addition to using open source data, these agencies may use judicial procedures, such as obtaining search warrants and subpoenas, to identify and investigate potential criminal activity, in appropriate circumstances.

While the open source data can be a valuable resource to law enforcement, agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and the U.S. Capitol Police (USCP), among others, must also consider the protection of privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties when collecting and sharing this information. In particular, the FBI and DHS are the lead agencies responsible for obtaining and sharing information on domestic terrorism and violent extremism. See figure 1 for protesters breaching the U.S. Capitol during the January 6 attack.

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[1]For the purposes of this report, we use the term "threat products" to refer to a range of intelligence and information reports and assessments, and other types of related documents, not all of which pertain to specific threats.

Figure 1: U.S. Capitol Police Photo of January 6, 2021, Attack

Source: U.S. Capitol Police January 6, 2021, photo. | GAO-22-105963

You asked us to review the extent to which information sharing and coordination related to the Capitol attack occurred on or before January 6, 2021. This report is the fifth in a series of reports on aspects of the attack.[2] Specifically, this report describes (1) open source data obtained and shared by selected federal entities about potential violence prior to January 6 and (2) threat products that selected federal entities developed

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[2]We have issued four prior reports on the January 6 attack, including the sensitive version of this report. See GAO, *Capitol Attack: Special Event Designations Could Have Been Requested for January 6, 2021, but Not All DHS Guidance Is Clear*, GAO-21-105255 (Washington, D.C.: Aug. 9, 2021); *Capitol Attack: The Capitol Police Need Clearer Emergency Procedures and a Comprehensive Security Risk Assessment Process*, GAO-22-105001 (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 17,2022); and *Capitol Attack: Additional Actions Needed to Better Prepare Capitol Police Officers for Violent Demonstrations*, GAO-22-104829 (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 7, 2022).

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using open source data prior to January 6. This report is a public version of a sensitive report that we issued on February 16, 2022.[3] Some federal agencies deemed information in our report to be sensitive, which must be protected from public disclosure. Therefore, this report omits sensitive information regarding how some agencies obtained threat-related information and information related to developing threat products. Although the information provided in this report is more limited, the report addresses the same objectives as the sensitive report and uses the same methodology.

To address our objectives, we reviewed agency policies and processes for obtaining and sharing open source data. We also reviewed the open source data that these agencies obtained from manual searches or use of open source analysis tools and data that agencies received from other agencies and social media platforms.[4] In addition, we reviewed open source data that agencies shared and the threat products they developed that leveraged such data related to the events of January 6.[5] We reviewed agency threat products that included information on potential violence in response to the joint session of Congress to count electoral

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[3]GAO, *Capitol Attack: Federal Agencies' Use of Open Source Data and Related Threat Products Prior to January 6, 2021*, GAO-22-105256SU (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 16, 2022).

[4]Open source analysis tools refers to tools that access open source or publicly available information and are capable of searching multiple platforms simultaneously. A tool may be used to capture data and monitor social media sites by using automated features to obtain data.

[5]We requested and reviewed open source data that federal agencies obtained, assessed, and shared, as well as threat products leveraging such data related to and developed in advance of the events of January 6. The open source data we reviewed may not consist of the entire scope of open source data that was available to federal agencies prior to January 6 for a number of reasons. For example, some personnel responsible for conducting manual searches of open sources were no longer with the agencies at the time of our review, and the agencies did not maintain those individuals' records. As part of an ongoing review, we plan to review agencies' policies and processes related to maintaining and sharing records related to open source information. The threat products we assessed for this report were not specific to particular demonstrations other than those planned for January 6.

votes on January 6, the inauguration, or other election-related issues.[6] We defined the potential for violence by individuals and groups as violence between opposing groups, and groups or individuals to be armed, to use improvised weapons, to incite violence, and to attack the Capitol or Congress. We also analyzed additional information about planned events for January 6, such as the protest location, date, and number of attendees.

We reviewed documents from 10 selected federal agencies regarding their roles in obtaining and sharing open source data related to the 2020 election or the events of January 6.[7] We selected these 10 federal agencies based on their roles in preparing for the planned events of January 6 or sharing information relevant to January 6 prior to that date. For example, some agencies conducted law enforcement activities, such as investigating potential threats of violence associated with January 6. Other agencies analyzed open source data that they disseminated related to January 6. Specifically, we reviewed documents from the FBI, DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis, U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Park Police, National Park Service, Architect of the Capitol, U.S. Capitol Police, House Sergeant at Arms, Senate Sergeant at Arms, and U.S. Postal Inspection Service. We also reviewed documents from the lead law enforcement agencies for the District of Columbia, as well as from the Northern Virginia Regional Intelligence Center, including open source data they

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[6]In accordance with the process established by the U.S. Constitution and federal law, following the general election for President and Vice President that occurred on November 3, 2020, officials in all 50 states and the District of Columbia certified the results on or prior to December 8, 2020. Electors in each state then convened to vote for President and Vice President on December 14, 2020, and sent signed certificates of the results to federal officials, including the Vice President of the United States, who, in his capacity as President of the Senate, presides over the counting of electoral votes. See U.S. Const. art. I, § 4, cl. 1, art. II, § 1, cl. 2, amend. XII; 3 U.S.C. § 6. The joint session of Congress convened to count the electoral votes and declare the results on January 6, 2021, as outlined in the Twelfth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and federal law. See U.S. Const. amend. XII; 3 U.S.C. § 15.

[7]For the purpose of this report, we refer to all of the federal entities, including the House Sergeant at Arms and the Senate Sergeant at Arms, as "federal agencies." Additionally, for the purposes of this report, we describe the role of the U.S. Park Police separately from the National Park Service; however, the U.S. Park Police is a component of the National Park Service (and both entities are housed within the Department of the Interior).

shared with federal agencies prior to January 6.[8] To obtain insights on the products and information-sharing process, we interviewed officials from DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis, U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Park Police, National Park Service, Architect of the Capitol, U.S. Capitol Police, House Sergeant at Arms, Senate Sergeant at Arms, and U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

We also interviewed representatives from three social media platforms, including two large social media platforms—Facebook and Twitter—and a smaller platform—Parler—to determine the extent to which they shared open source information with federal agencies. We selected social media entities that (1) met the definition of a social media platform as defined by the 2013 Social Media Policy Guide, (2) were mentioned in the agency threat products we analyzed, and (3) shared information with federal agencies relevant to the events of January 6.[9]

The performance audit upon which this report is based was conducted from February 2021 to February 2022 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We subsequently worked with the relevant entities from February 2022 to May 2022 to prepare this version of the original

[8]We also interviewed officials from the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) because they assessed open source data *during* and *after* the events of January 6. NCTC serves as the primary organization in the U.S. government for analyzing and integrating all intelligence possessed or acquired by the U.S. government pertaining to terrorism and counterterrorism, excepting intelligence pertaining exclusively to domestic terrorists and domestic counterterrorism. We did not include the NCTC's activities in our analysis because there was no indication of involvement from foreign international terrorist groups or domestic groups or individuals involved in transnational terrorism, and NCTC did not obtain or receive related open source data *prior* to the events of January 6. NCTC did develop threat products jointly with the FBI and DHS on extremist activity that was not in response to January 6 or election-related issues.

[9]The International Association of Chiefs of Police's Center for Social Media defines social media as "a category of Internet-based resources that integrate user-generated content and user participation. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites, microblogging sites, photo- and video-sharing sites, wikis, blogs, and news sites." See Department of Justice and Global Justice Information Sharing Initiative, *Developing a Policy on the Use of Social Media in Intelligence and Investigative Activities: Guidance and Recommendations* (Washington, D.C.: February 2013).

sensitive report for public release. This public version was also prepared in accordance with those standards.

Background

Roles and Responsibilities of Selected Agencies Involved in January 6 Preparation or Information Sharing

The 10 selected federal agencies in our scope had a range of responsibilities relevant to preparing for, or sharing information related to, the events of January 6. Table 1 describes each agency's respective responsibilities related to January 6.

Table 1: Selected Agencies' Roles and Responsibilities for Preparing for or Sharing Information Related to January 6, 2021

Agency	Roles and responsibilities
Executive branch agencies	
Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)	The FBI is one of several agencies in the Executive Branch whose authorities permit the collection, use, assessment, and sharing of open source data and information in the course of its authorized investigation. In accordance with *The Attorney General's Guidelines for Domestic FBI Investigations* and the *Domestic Investigations and Operations Guide*, pursuant to an authorized purpose, the FBI may search and acquire certain types of online information. Notably, the authorized purpose may not be based solely upon First Amendment protected activities, and the FBI's investigative activities are required to be carried out in accordance with all applicable Constitutional rights and civil liberties protections. The FBI analyzes, retains, and disseminates collected intelligence and information pursuant to applicable laws, guidelines, and policies, sharing this information, as appropriate, with federal, state, local, and tribal partners.
Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Intelligence and Analysis	The Office of Intelligence and Analysis is charged with delivering information to state, local, tribal, and territorial and private sector partners and developing intelligence from those partners for DHS and the intelligence community.
U.S. Secret Service	Within DHS, the U.S. Secret Service ensures the safety and security of the President, Vice President, and other protectees, key locations, and events of national significance. Protective Intelligence and Assessment Division experts support protective operations by analyzing information, investigating threats, assessing risk, and disseminating protective intelligence information. Additionally, they conduct research and gather, analyze, and disseminate information pertaining to threat assessment and preventing targeted violence through the National Threat Assessment Center.
U.S. Park Police	Within the National Park Service, the U.S. Park Police provides law enforcement services to ensure the safety of individuals and to preserve natural and cultural resources. U.S. Park Police may carry out services for events conducted in national parks, such as ensuring that citizens are free to safely exercise their First Amendment rights of free speech and assembly.[a] U.S. Park Police also shares information with the Metropolitan Police Department for the District of Columbia on demonstrations that occur within the National Capital Region.

Agency	Roles and responsibilities
National Park Service	Within the Department of the Interior, the National Park Service, in cooperation with partners, is responsible for preserving the natural and cultural resources of the National Park System and may issue permits for lawful demonstrations on national park lands. Further, National Mall and Memorial Parks officials coordinate and share information with the U.S. Park Police, Metropolitan Police Department for the District of Columbia, and the District of Columbia Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services, among others, regarding permitted events that occur in National Capital Region federal parklands. Officials share information on permitted events, such as the number of attendees and the location of the events.
Capitol Police Board agencies[b]	
Architect of the Capitol	The Architect of the Capitol is responsible for the preparation and execution of operations to secure the Capitol campus, its structures, assets, and artifacts during large-scale public gatherings (e.g., lawful demonstrations). Its Office of the Chief Security Officer coordinates interagency emergency preparedness, such as briefing agency leadership on preparedness. It also supports the U.S. Capitol Police in protecting the congressional community and refers threat-related information to the U.S. Capitol Police.
U.S. Capitol Police	The U.S. Capitol Police is responsible for safeguarding the Capitol complex and manages permits for events that occur on U.S. Capitol grounds (that is, lawful demonstrations). Within the U.S. Capitol Police, the Intelligence and Interagency Coordination division, among others, collects and analyzes information to produce intelligence, assess threats, enforce the law, identify risks, and develop and employ risk mitigation. The U.S. Capitol Police is also responsible for sharing information with the federal legislative branch and the Capitol Police Board[c] (e.g., develops threat products and holds briefings) on emerging threats by terrorist groups or individuals.
House Sergeant at Arms	The House Sergeant at Arms is the chief law enforcement and protocol officer of the House of Representatives and reviews and implements all issues relating to the safety and security of Members of Congress and the Capitol complex. The Sergeant at Arms is also responsible for coordinating with the U.S. Capitol Police and various intelligence agencies regarding threats against Members of Congress and the Capitol complex.
Senate Sergeant at Arms	The Senate Sergeant at Arms serves the Senate as its chief law enforcement and protocol officer and is the administrative manager for a host of support services in the Senate. The Sergeant at Arms supervises the Senate wing of the Capitol, maintaining security in the Capitol and in all the Senate buildings and controlling access to the Senate chamber and galleries. The Senate Sergeant at Arms shares threat-related information with the U.S. Capitol Police for further actions, such as determining when to investigate activities.
Other executive branch agency[d]	
U.S. Postal Inspection Service	The U.S. Postal Inspection Service is the law enforcement, crime prevention, and security arm of the U.S. Postal Service. The U.S. Postal Inspection Service enforces laws for using the U.S. mail and ensures the safety of its employees, customers, and facilities through information-gathering activities. Its analysts are assigned proactive intelligence assignments for specific program areas within the organization, including workplace violence. Activities include gathering information to support criminal investigations, preventing illegal and dangerous use of mail by terrorists, and assessing whether a threat to a postal employee or building is credible. The U.S. Postal Inspection Service shares information with relevant field offices regarding threats to employees and postal facilities and shares information with external law enforcement partners, when relevant.

Source: GAO analysis of agency information. | GAO-22-105963

[a]See 36 C.F.R. § 2.51.

[b]The Capitol Police Board is charged with overseeing and supporting the U.S. Capitol Police. The board includes the Architect of the Capitol, the House and Senate Sergeants at Arms, and the Chief of the U.S. Capitol Police (as a nonvoting member of the Capitol Police Board and is appointed by the other three voting members).

In addition to the 10 federal agencies, local agencies had roles in assessing and sharing information and coordinating with federal agencies related to January 6. The Metropolitan Police Department for the District of Columbia is the primary law enforcement agency for Washington, D.C., and is the agency responsible for permitting lawful demonstrations on public space under the jurisdiction of the District of Columbia.[10] The Metropolitan Police Department for the District of Columbia coordinates with the U.S. Capitol Police and the National Capital Region Threat Intelligence Consortium (also known as the D.C. Fusion Center).

Located within the D.C. Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency, the D.C. Fusion Center works in partnership with fusion centers in Maryland and Virginia, as well as the federal government, to conduct regional analysis and share information on terrorism, crime, and natural hazards. The D.C. Fusion Center is a component of the National Network of Fusion Centers that works with DHS and conducts regional analysis and shares information. The Northern Virginia Regional Intelligence Center, also a fusion center, has a liaison partnership with more than 15 local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies in the Northern Virginia and National Capital Region. The center gathers, evaluates, analyzes, and disseminates information regarding criminal and terrorist activity.

[10]See D.C. Code 5-331.01 et seq. While the Metropolitan Police Department issues parade permits and permits for First Amendment demonstrations for areas under the jurisdiction of the District of Columbia, under D.C. law neither a permit nor an approved assembly plan is required to hold any First Amendment activity.

Obtaining Open Source Data and Related Privacy Protections

Some federal agencies may obtain open source data under specific circumstances while adhering to legally established privacy protections.[11] These agencies may generally obtain open source data on potential criminal activity, such as potential violence, for law enforcement and other mission-related purposes. The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution protects citizens' right to freedom of speech and the right to peaceably assemble, among other rights.[12] By law, generally, executive branch agencies that maintain a system of records shall maintain no record describing how any individual exercises rights guaranteed by the First Amendment unless expressly authorized by statute or by the individual about whom the record is maintained or unless pertinent to and within the scope of an authorized law enforcement activity.[13]

In general, agencies may obtain open source data under specific circumstances while adhering to the Constitution and laws of the United States and protecting the public's constitutional rights, privacy, and civil liberties.[14] Guidance documents include recommendations for how federal law enforcement agencies may obtain open source data, including those related to social media platforms, within the law enforcement context. For example, a guidance document developed by the Department of Justice and others describes elements that law enforcement agencies could include in social media policies (2013 Social Media Policy Guide).[15] The 2013 Social Media Policy Guide states that while social media can serve as a platform for expressing First Amendment-protected rights, such as political ideals, it has also become a tool for conducting criminal activity. Social media platforms provide a forum and format for expression but also introduce a potential risk to

[11]While federal agencies refer to such data in their policies as "public information" or "publicly available information," for the purpose of this report, we refer to these types of information as "open source data."

[12]Pursuant to the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people to peaceably assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." U.S. Const. amend. I. The First Amendment operates as a constitutional protection for users that exercise their freedom of speech through posting content.

[13]Privacy Act of 1974, Pub. L. No. 93-579, 88 Stat. 1896. See 5 U.S.C. § 552a(e)(7).

[14]Our ongoing review will include an examination of select agencies' policies for obtaining and sharing open source data.

[15]Global Justice Information Sharing Initiative, *Developing a Policy on the Use of Social Media.*

individuals' privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties if unauthorized or inappropriate access or use occurs.

In addition to the 2013 Social Media Policy Guide, multiple agencies, including the FBI, DHS, and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, developed the *Real-Time and Open Source Analysis Resource Guide* in 2017 (2017 Resource Guide).[16] This guidance document assists agencies and fusion centers in understanding the lawful and appropriate use of open source data. As part of law enforcement agencies' mission to protect the public and property, personnel in such agencies must ensure the protection of privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties. The 2017 Resource Guide refers to open source data as "publicly available information," including traditional and social media information, data, subscription services available for purchase, and other media. According to the 2017 Resource Guide, publicly available information covers information that

- has been published or broadcast for public consumption,

- is available on request to the public,

- is accessible online or otherwise to the public,

- is available to the public by subscription or purchase,

- could be seen or heard by a casual observer,

- is obtained by visiting any place or attending any event that is open to the public, or

- is made available at a meeting open to the public.

In addition, the 2017 Resource Guide states that when considering publicly available social media information, protected speech can include text, emojis, pictures, videos, music and lyrics, and "Likes," as well as an individual's decision to post and share.

Although the First Amendment guarantees the right to free speech, the 2017 Resource Guide states that the right does not extend to credible threats. Within potential criminal activity, a potential threat is a natural or manufactured occurrence, individual, entity, or action that has or indicates the potential to harm life, information, operations, the environment, or property. With respect to threats, "true" threats or "credibility" of threats

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[16]Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, *Real-Time and Open Source Analysis Resource Guide: Understanding and Using Open Source Resources for Law Enforcement Operational and Analytic Activities* (July 2017).

refers to whether statements communicate a serious expression of a speaker's intent to commit an act of violence to a particular individual or group of individuals. The 2017 Resource Guide suggests that agencies could assess the credibility of an open source threat when there is a risk to public safety. In some cases, it may be difficult to make a determination about the credibility of a threat identified in open source data. However, information about that potential threat may still be communicated to other agencies via reports, such as situational awareness reports. These products are disseminated to facilitate information sharing about potential threats so that relevant law enforcement agencies can plan and coordinate.

Open source data on potential criminal activity may be used to enhance other products, referred to in this report as "threat products." Law enforcement agencies may develop threat products based, in part, on open source data related to potential criminal activity. These products include intelligence and threat assessments, open source reviews, and other documents developed by intelligence analysts or law enforcement personnel, some of which convey information, including threat-related information, about a specific event.

Agencies Obtained and Shared Open Source Threat Data Prior to January 6

According to our analysis, all 10 federal agencies in our review obtained open source data about the planned events for January 6, 2021, prior to the attack on the Capitol. For example, FBI officials indicated that the FBI had information about potential violence in Washington, D.C. as early as November 3, 2020, but was not specific to an attack on the U.S. Capitol on January 6. In addition, seven of the 10 federal agencies obtained open source data specifically related to the potential for violence on January 6 in advance of the events of that day. For example, on December 21, 2020, the D.C. Fusion Center shared open source data with the Metropolitan Police Department and DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis officials regarding threats to Congress and elected officials, groups strategizing to avoid arrest in D.C., and discussions of bringing guns into D.C. on January 6. For additional information on when selected federal agencies obtained and received open source data related to the events of January 6, see the time line and a link to an interactive graphic in app. I.

According to our analysis of the sources of these data, all 10 of the agencies obtained or received data both through manual searches and from other federal, state, or local agencies. Some of the agencies also received data directly from social media platforms or using open source analysis tools. The open source data that agencies received across the

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different sources included posts or articles that identified heightened tension and publicity around protesting the presidential election results, or potential violence during lawful demonstrations planned for January 6. Table 2 describes the sources of the open source data that agencies obtained prior to January 6.

Table 2: Methods That Selected Federal Agencies Used to Obtain Open Source Data Prior to the January 6, 2021, Capitol Attack

	Obtained data through manual searches	Received data from other local, federal, and state agencies	Received data from social media platforms	Obtained data from open source analysis tools
Executive branch agencies				
Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)	Yes[a]	Yes[b]	Yes	Yes
Department of Homeland Security Office of Intelligence and Analysis	Yes	Yes	No	No
U.S. Secret Service	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
U.S. Park Police	Yes	Yes	No	No
National Park Service	Yes	Yes	No	No
Capitol Police Board agencies				
Architect of the Capitol	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
U.S. Capitol Police	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
House Sergeant at Arms	Yes	Yes	No	No
Senate Sergeant at Arms	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Other executive branch agency[c]				
U.S. Postal Inspection Service	Yes	Yes	No	No

Source: GAO analysis of agency information. | GAO-22-105963

[a]Using statements contained in threat products developed by the FBI, the FBI conducted manual searches of open source data on social media platforms.

[b]The FBI received information from other agencies based on reported attendance at interagency security briefings held by law enforcement partners where potential threats to January 6 were discussed. In addition, we determined that the FBI shared information with Washington Field Office Task Force Officers within the National Capital Region, including U.S. Capitol Police, the Metropolitan Police Department, and the U.S. Park Police.

[c]We include the U.S. Postal Inspection Service as an "Other executive branch agency," because while it had no law enforcement responsibilities for securing the U.S. Capitol or Congress against domestic threats, it assessed and shared relevant open source data with federal agencies prior to the events of January 6.

Open source data obtained through manual searches. According to agency officials, all 10 federal agencies we spoke with obtained open source data on the events of January 6 by conducting web searches. Seven of these agencies (the FBI, DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis, U.S. Park Police, Architect of the Capitol, U.S. Capitol Police,

House Sergeant at Arms, and U.S. Postal Inspection Service) obtained open source data in advance on the potential for violence on January 6. Such open source data included violent rhetoric between opposing groups that planned to attend, threats that individuals planned to attend events armed, and threats against Members of Congress. For example, the U.S. Park Police obtained information from the Patriot Action for America website that noted organization members were encouraged to amass "a large enough force of American citizen patriots to, at all costs, prevent…the inaugurat[ion]…" The website also encouraged members to detain Democratic politicians for trial by military tribunal for high treason. In addition, on January 6, 2021, the Architect of the Capitol identified a Twitter post that indicated the Proud Boys planned to disable fire suppression systems in government buildings, including the U.S. Capitol.[17]

Open source data received from other agencies. All 10 of the federal agencies in our review received open source data from local agencies or other federal agencies related to potential violence on January 6 prior to that day. Nine of these federal agencies (the FBI, DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis, U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Park Police, Architect of the Capitol, U.S. Capitol Police, House and Senate Sergeants at Arms, and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service) shared open source data with other federal agencies. Three local agencies (Metropolitan Police Department, the D.C. Fusion Center, and the Northern Virginia Regional Intelligence Center) shared open source data with federal agencies. For example, the Senate Sergeant at Arms reported that it received open source data on December 29, 2020, from a local partner agency about a social media post encouraging supporters to march to the Capitol and use intimidation tactics against Members of Congress on January 6. Figure 2 shows protesters gaining entry into the U.S. Capitol during the January 6 attack.

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[17]An agency identified infrastructure vulnerabilities of the U.S. Capitol as sensitive. Therefore, we have omitted language and the social media post relating to the vulnerabilities.

Figure 2: U.S. Capitol Police Photo of January 6, 2021
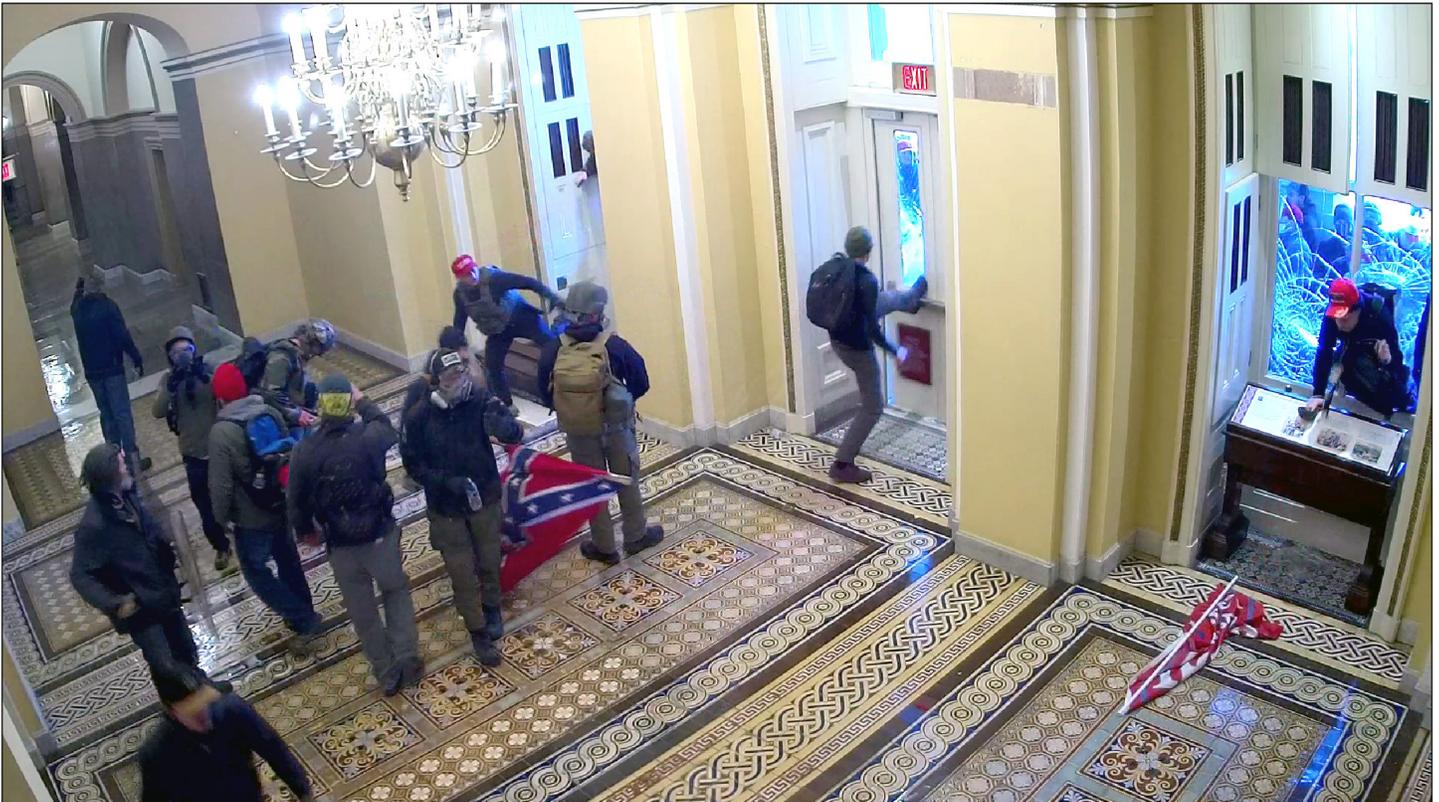
Source: U.S. Capitol Police January 6, 2021, photo. | GAO-22-105963

Figure 3 describes how agencies shared open source information prior to January 6. In our planned final report on the Capitol attack, we will further examine individual agencies' policies for sharing information, as well as specific roles, responsibilities, and interagency agreements for leading and coordinating the sharing of this information.

Figure 3: Open Source Data Sharing among Selected Federal and Local Agencies Prior to the Events of January 6, 2021

EXECUTIVE BRANCH AGENCIES

STATE AND LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AND FUSION CENTERS

OTHER EXECUTIVE BRANCH AGENCY

CAPITOL POLICE BOARD AGENCIES

January 6 open source data

Department of Homeland Security

National Park Service

D.C. Metropolitan Police

U.S. Park Police

Northern Virginia Regional Intelligence Center

Federal Bureau of Investigation

D.C. Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency

To and from all agencies except House Sergeant at Arms

U.S. Secret Service

U.S. Postal Inspection Service

U.S. Capitol Police

Architect of the Capitol

House Sergeant at Arms

Legend

→ Information disseminating

↔ Information disseminating and receiving

▭ Washington Field Office Joint Terrorism Task Force

Source: GAO analysis of agency information. | GAO-22-105963

Note: The D.C. Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency shares open source data via email with all agencies, excluding the House Sergeant at Arms. The Federal Bureau of Investigation has information sharing agreements with members of the Washington Field Office Joint Terrorism Task Force, to include U.S. Park Police, U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Capitol Police, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the Metropolitan Police Department, and components of the Department of Homeland Security. The Department of Homeland Security Office of Intelligence and Analysis is not a member of the Washington Field Office Joint Terrorism Task Force. We include the U.S. Postal Inspection Service as an "Other executive branch agency," because while it had no law enforcement

responsibilities for securing the U.S. Capitol or Congress against domestic threats, it assessed and shared relevant open source data with federal agencies prior to the events of January 6. In addition, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service shared its threat products with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Secret Service, National Park Service, U.S. Capitol Police, and the Northern Virginia Regional Intelligence Center, among others, via the Department of Homeland Security Executive Protection Working Group. Information sharing identified as sensitive was removed from this figure.

Open source data received from social media platforms. According to two of the three social media platforms included in our review, they provided information to one of the 10 federal agencies related to potential violence prior to January 6.[18] Specifically, Facebook and Parler representatives indicated that the platforms shared information with a federal agency regarding potential violence at the U.S. Capitol on January 6. For example, on December 24, 2020, Parler emailed information on a user posting threats to kill politicians and to coordinate armed forces of individuals on January 6 (see fig. 4).

Figure 4: Parler Post Shared with a Federal Agency on December 24, 2020
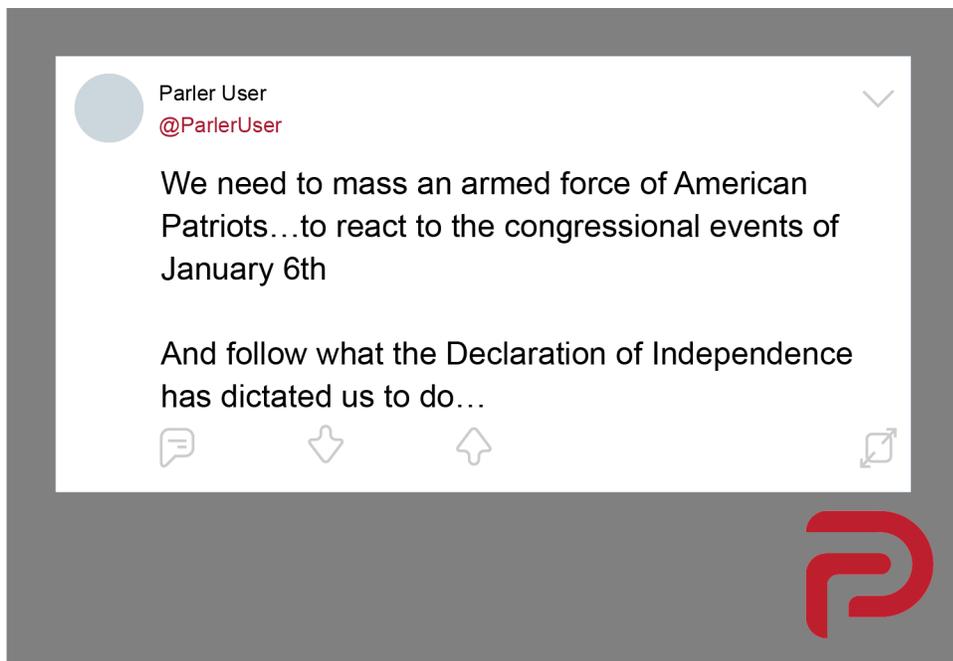
Source: Parler post shared with a federal agency. | GAO-22-105963

[18]Facebook, Twitter, and Parler have documented policies and standards that specify violent content or users posting violent content, among other prohibited content, are subject to potential removal from the platform.

According to FBI officials, the FBI reviewed social media posts, dated November 3, 2020, through January 5, 2021. FBI officials noted that its review of these posts did not reveal information specifically citing the "U.S. Capitol" during this review period. The review did, however, reveal one post related to potential violence in Washington, D.C., on January 6, 2021. In addition, Facebook officials noted that they shared information with the FBI before, during, and after January 6. For example, officials from the platform noted that they were in regular contact with the FBI and the Metropolitan Police Department during the events of January 6— providing information on multiple individuals during the attack on the Capitol. Officials from Twitter stated that they were in ongoing contact with the FBI and DHS on January 5, 2021, to share information relating to the election. However, Twitter officials stated that the platform did not share information with federal agencies related to January 6.[19]

Open source data obtained through open source analysis tools. Five agencies (the FBI, U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Capitol Police, Architect of the Capitol, and Senate Sergeant at Arms) used open source analysis tools to perform web searches of social media platforms prior to January 6. Three of the five agencies (the FBI, U.S. Capitol Police, and Architect of the Capitol) obtained information from those tools about potential violence at the U.S. Capitol prior to January 6. Specifically, FBI officials noted that they received information from an entity about potential violence related to January 6. In addition, U.S. Capitol Police personnel used an open source analysis tool, and identified posts on January 5, 2021, and January 6, 2021, related to testing the loyalty of the then Vice President and protesting the election results. [20]

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[19]Information identifying sources and timeframes for receiving information has been omitted as some agencies deemed it sensitive.

[20]Following the MAGA I demonstration on November 14, 2020, clashes between protesters and counterprotesters led to one person being stabbed, four police officers being injured, and more than 20 people being arrested for charges including inciting violence, assault, and weapons possession. Following the MAGA II demonstration on December 12, 2020, clashes between protesters and counterprotesters led to four people being stabbed and more than 30 people being arrested, including six people charged with assaulting officers, four charged with rioting, and one for carrying an illegal electronic shock weapon. The leader of the Proud Boys, a far-right group, was arrested for destruction of property for burning a Black Lives Matter banner torn from a historic African-American church. Specific search terms used in these tools have been omitted as some agencies deemed them sensitive.

In addition, on January 5, 2021, an Architect of the Capitol official received information from an entity providing third-party open source analysis services about a post that indicated an individual's plan to kill federal law enforcement employees and "storm the Capit[o]l". The Architect of the Capitol's Chief Security Officer spoke with a representative from the entity and subsequently forwarded the information via email to the Watch Commander at the Capitol Command Center.[21]

Agencies Used Open Source Data to Develop Threat Products Prior to January 6

Agencies developed threat products prior to events on January 6, including products that summarized protest-related information and those that assessed potential threats. Seven of the 10 federal agencies in our review used open source information, in part, to develop a total of 38 threat products prior to the January 6 Capitol attack (See table 3 and app. II for more information on the 38 threat products).

Of the 38 threat products, 26 threat products focused on events planned for January 6, with three developed by the FBI or the DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis. The remaining 12 of 38 threat products addressed the inauguration and other election-related issues. To develop these products, the selected federal agencies in our review used open source data on potential criminal activity, human sources, observed outcomes of prior demonstrations, and other investigative tools and methods. Agencies used threat products in various ways, including to inform agency planning efforts and situational awareness.

Thirty-Eight Threat Products on Election-Related Threats

The 38 threat products described election-related issues and underlying potential violence or included information related to planned events for January 6, such as the event date, location, and number of anticipated attendees.

Table 3: Number of Threat Products That Selected Federal Agencies Developed Using Open Source Data on Election-Related Issues Prior to January 6, 2021[a]

Agency	Developed threat products using open source data	January 6 counting of electoral votes	Inauguration	Other election-related issues[b]
Executive branch agencies				
Federal Bureau of Investigation	Yes	1	2	3

[21]The U.S. Capitol Police Command Center's Watch Commander serves as Area Command in the absence of the U.S. Capitol Police Chief of Police and Chief of Operations. The Command Center assists units in the field, as necessary, with the coordination and response of assets to incidents and events.

Agency	Developed threat products using open source data	January 6 counting of electoral votes	Inauguration	Other election-related issues[b]
Department of Homeland Security Office of Intelligence and Analysis	Yes	2	0	5
U.S. Secret Service	Yes	3	0	0
U.S. Park Police	Yes	7	0	0
National Park Service[c]	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
Capitol Police Board agencies				
Architect of the Capitol[c]	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
U.S. Capitol Police	Yes	8	0	1
House Sergeant at Arms[c]	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
Senate Sergeant at Arms	Yes	3	0	0
Other executive branch agency[d]				
U.S. Postal Inspection Service	Yes	2	1	0
Total		26	3	9

Source: GAO analysis of agency documents. | GAO-22-105963

Note: "N/A," or Not Applicable, refers to cases where agencies did not develop threat products.

[a]According to U.S. Secret Service officials, they did not identify credible threats of violence related to the events of January 6. According to Senate Sergeant at Arms officials, they generally do not assess threat-related data.

[b]Threat products addressing other election-related issues include the 2020 elections, election results, and the U.S. Senate runoff elections in Georgia. We did not include threat products agencies developed for specific demonstrations that occurred in fiscal year 2020.

[c]Not all entities assessed open source threats to support development of threat products related to January 6, including the National Park Service, House Sergeant at Arms, and the Architect of the Capitol.

[d]We include the U.S. Postal Inspection Service as an "Other executive branch agency," because while it had no law enforcement responsibilities for securing the U.S. Capitol or Congress against domestic threats, it assessed relevant open source data prior to the events of January 6.

Further, of the 38 threat products that agencies developed, 28 cited potential violence from opposing groups clashing at demonstrations, and 29 cited potential violence by extremists.[22] Fourteen products indicated that individuals attending the events, such as permitted demonstrations on January 6, planned to be armed (see fig. 5).
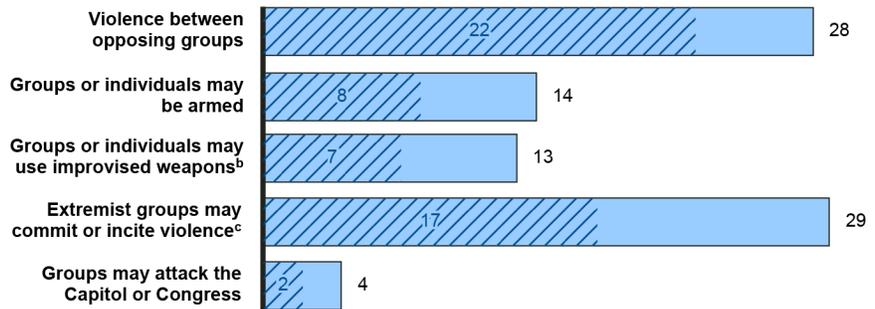
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[22]These numbers do not equal 38 because some products covered multiple categories.

Figure 5: Information Included in the 38 Election-Related Threat Products Prior to the January 6, 2021, Capitol Attack
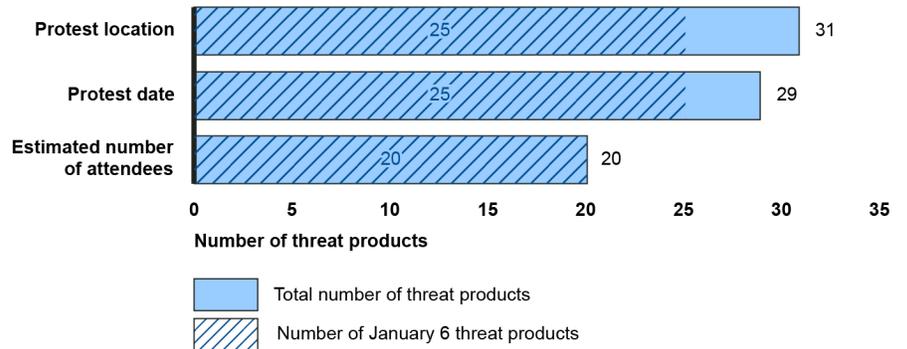
Number of threat products that included election-related issues

Category	Value
January 6	26
Inauguration	3
Other election-related issues[a]	9
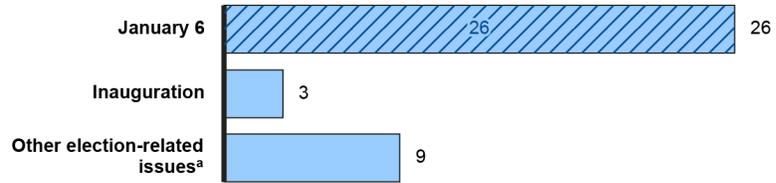
Number of threat products that included potential violence by groups or individuals participating in election-related events

Category	January 6 products	Total
Violence between opposing groups	22	28
Groups or individuals may be armed	8	14
Groups or individuals may use improvised weapons[b]	7	13
Extremist groups may commit or incite violence[c]	17	29
Groups may attack the Capitol or Congress	2	4

Number of threat products that included data on protests

Category	January 6 products	Total
Protest location	25	31
Protest date	25	29
Estimated number of attendees	20	20

Number of threat products

Legend:
- Total number of threat products
- Number of January 6 threat products

Source: GAO analysis of selected agencies' threat products. | GAO-22-105963

Note: Numbers may not equal 38 because some products covered multiple categories.

[a]Threat products addressing other election-related issues include the 2020 elections, election results, and the U.S. Senate runoff elections in Georgia. We did not include threat products agencies developed for specific demonstrations that occurred in fiscal year 2020.

[b]In cases where threat products indicated that groups or individuals may use improvised weapons, we defined "improvised weapons" as weapons or tactics other than the use of knives and guns, such as explosives, gas, chemical irritants, fire/arson, and vehicle ramming.

[c]In cases where threat products indicated that extremist groups may commit or incite violence, we defined "extremist groups" as domestic violent extremists or individuals or groups based and operating primarily in the United States without direction or inspiration from a foreign terrorist group or other foreign power who seek to further political or social goals wholly or in part through unlawful acts

of force or violence. We also included far-right and far-left groups that agencies identified as either having a history of violence or planning to commit potential violence related to January 6.

Twenty-Six Threat Products on January 6 Electoral Vote Count

For the 26 threat products focused on planned events of January 6, all included threats based on reactions to the counting of the electoral votes. For example, on December 28, 2020, the U.S. Park Police developed an executive brief identifying the "StopTheSteal" and other events planned for January 6 as similar to the MAGA I and MAGA II demonstrations. The brief noted that individuals had "concrete" plans to travel to D.C. to dispute the counting of electoral votes and that desperation may lead to violent actions. Further, the brief noted that the demonstration activity would originate within U.S. Park Police jurisdiction and progress to Capitol Hill.

In addition, the U.S. Capitol Police developed an information paper on January 5, 2021, that identified 12 protests scheduled to occur on Capitol grounds related to the counting of electoral votes—six of which received permits through the U.S. Capitol Police Special Events Division. The paper identified that the Million MAGA March was scheduled to occur at the Freedom Plaza and the Ellipse on January 6, 2021. Using social media analysis, the U.S. Capitol Police noted that the event attendance would include up to 2,000 additional participants more than the 5,000 participants reported to the National Park Service on the permit application. See table 4 for additional information on the types of threats contained in the 26 threat products related to the events planned on January 6.

Table 4: Violent Threats in the 26 Threat Products That Focused on the January 6, 2021, Counting of Electoral Votes, by Agency

	Number of threat products	Potential for violence between opposing groups	Groups or individuals may be armed	Groups or individuals may use improvised weapons[a]	Extremist groups may commit or incite violence[b]	Groups may attack the Capitol or Congress
Executive branch agencies						
Federal Bureau of Investigation	1	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Department of Homeland Security Office of Intelligence and Analysis	2	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
U.S. Secret Service	3	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
U.S. Park Police	7	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

	Number of threat products	Potential for violence between opposing groups	Groups or individuals may be armed	Groups or individuals may use improvised weapons[a]	Extremist groups may commit or incite violence[b]	Groups may attack the Capitol or Congress
National Park Service	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Capitol Police Board agencies						
Architect of the Capitol	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
U.S. Capitol Police	8	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
House Sergeant at Arms	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Senate Sergeant at Arms	3	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Other executive branch agency[c]						
U.S. Postal Inspection Service	2	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No

Source: GAO analysis of agency information. | GAO-22-105963

Note: "N/A," or Not Applicable, refers to cases where agencies did not develop threat products.

[a]In cases where threat products indicated that groups or individuals may use improvised weapons, we defined these as weapons or tactics other than the use of knives and guns, such as explosives, gas, chemical irritants, fire/arson, and vehicle ramming.

[b]This includes cases where threat products indicated that extremist groups may commit or incite violence, which included domestic violent extremists, or individuals based and operating primarily in the U.S. without direction or inspiration from a foreign terrorist group or other foreign power, who seek to further political or social goals wholly or in part through unlawful acts of force or violence. We also included groups that agencies identified as "far right" or "far left" that either had a history of violence or planned to commit acts of violence related to January 6.

[c]We include the U.S. Postal Inspection Service as an "Other executive branch agency," because while it had no law enforcement responsibilities for securing the U.S. Capitol or Congress against domestic threats, it assessed and shared relevant threat products leveraging open source data with federal agencies prior to the events of January 6.

Potential for violence between opposing groups. Six agencies (the FBI, U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Park Police, U.S. Capitol Police, Senate Sergeant at Arms, and U.S. Postal Inspection Service) developed threat products that indicated that opposing groups may clash or violence could occur if opposing groups came into contact at January 6 events. For example, on December 31, 2020, the U.S. Secret Service developed a protective intelligence brief and identified increased social media attention around the protests of the presidential election results on January 6. The U.S. Secret Service brief reported that many of the groups planning to attend January 6 activities previously attended the MAGA I and MAGA II demonstrations and that clashes between opposing groups seemed likely.

Groups or individuals may be armed. Five agencies (DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis, U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Park Police, U.S.

Capitol Police, and U.S. Postal Inspection Service) developed threat products that noted that groups attending January 6 demonstrations planned to be armed. For example, on December 23, 2020, the U.S. Capitol Police developed an intelligence assessment that noted an individual posting online indicated calls for armed patriots to assemble in Washington, D.C., on January 6. The individual advised others to travel in large armed groups to discourage law enforcement from taking action against armed citizens.[23]

Groups or individuals may use improvised weapons. Three agencies (U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Park Police, and U.S. Capitol Police) developed threat products that indicated that groups or individuals may use improvised weapons at January 6 events, such as explosive devices, chemicals, or fireworks, among other items, as weapons during demonstrations. For example, on January 4, 2021, the U.S. Secret Service developed a trends and tactics brief that included a range of known tactics used in previous months against law enforcement. Tactics included improvised weapons, firearms, vehicle ramming, improvised incendiary and chemical devices, staging of weapons caches, and visual impairment. In addition, on December 28, 2020, the U.S. Park Police developed an executive brief that indicated that individuals will likely arm themselves with weapons, such as knives, baseball bats, and chemical irritants, such as bear spray. In addition, the U.S. Park Police expected that opposing groups planned to engage with weapons such as bottles, bricks, commercial grade fireworks, and laser pointers.
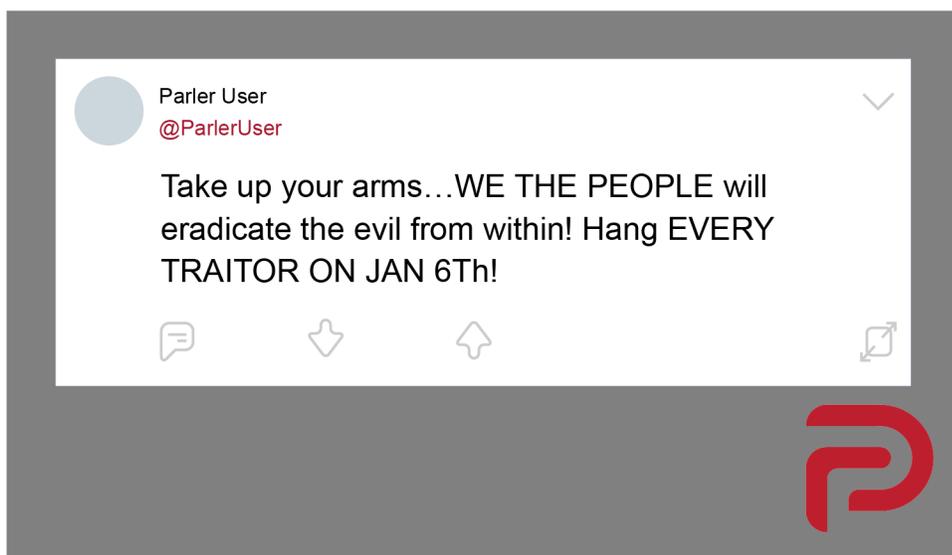
Extremist groups may commit or incite violence. All seven agencies developed threat products that indicated that domestic violent extremists or militia groups planned to incite violence on January 6.[24] Specifically, a December 29, 2020, U.S. Capitol Police information paper stated that domestic extremists and violent opportunists may attach themselves to otherwise peaceful demonstrations in order to commit acts of violence, destroy property, or sow civil unrest. In addition, a December 22, 2020, U.S. Postal Inspection Service threat assessment noted that there was a high potential for individuals to incite civil unrest during the demonstration on January 6. The assessment noted that one user urged "fellow patriots

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[23]The source of information obtained online was deemed sensitive, and has been omitted.

[24]A domestic violent extremist is an individual, based and operating primarily in the United States without direction or inspiration from a foreign terrorist group or other foreign power, who seeks to further political or social goals wholly or in part through unlawful acts of force or violence.

and oath keepers…[to] take up your arms…and hang every traitor."
Figure 6 illustrates the social media post that the U.S. Postal Inspection
Service used in its threat assessment.

Figure 6: Parler Post Included in a U.S. Postal Inspection Service December 22, 2020, Threat Product

Parler User
@ParlerUser

Take up your arms…WE THE PEOPLE will eradicate the evil from within! Hang EVERY TRAITOR ON JAN 6Th!

Source: Parler post identified in U.S. Postal Inspection Service threat assessment. | GAO-22-105963

Groups may attack the Capitol or Congress. Two agencies (the FBI
and U.S. Capitol Police) developed threat products that indicated either
that Congress was the target of a potentially violent attack or that a
potentially violent uprising could take place at the U.S. Capitol. For
example, on January 5, 2021, the FBI developed a report noting that its
office received information indicating calls for violence in response to
"unlawful lockdowns" starting on January 6, in Washington, D.C. Further,
the report cited an online threat that discussed calls for violence, including
"Congress needs to hear glass breaking, doors being kicked in, and
blood… Get violent…Go there ready for war." In addition, on January 3,
2021, the U.S. Capitol Police developed a special event assessment
noting that events on January 6, such as the "StopTheSteal" protest, may
lead to a significantly dangerous situation for law enforcement and the
general public. The assessment indicated that supporters of the then
President could see January 6 as their last opportunity to overturn the
election results. Further, the assessment noted that the sense of

desperation may lead to violence, where the targets of supporters are not necessarily counterprotesters but rather Congress itself.[25]

This report is the fifth in a series of reports on aspects of the attack. Our planned final report in the series will assess the extent to which agencies shared and used threat-related information, including open source data, to prepare security measures for the events of January 6. In addition, we will review specific federal agency policies for sharing threat-related information with federal, state, and local stakeholders. We will also identify differences among or similarities between the processes that federal agencies used to share threat-related information to prepare for January 6 and previous large gatherings in Washington, D.C.

Agency Comments

We provided a draft of this report to the U.S. Capitol Police; Architect of the Capitol; House Sergeant at Arms; Senate Sergeant at Arms; the Departments of Homeland Security, the Interior, and Justice; as well as to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, National Counterterrorism Center, the Metropolitan Police Department for the District of Columbia, and the District of Columbia Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency for their review and comment. The U.S. Capitol Police; Senate Sergeant at Arms; the Departments of Homeland Security and Justice; as well as the U.S. Postal Inspection Service provided technical comments, which we incorporated as appropriate.

We are sending this report to congressional leadership, appropriate committees, and the Chief of the U.S. Capitol Police; Architect of the Capitol; Sergeant at Arms of the United States House of Representatives; Senate Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper; the Secretaries of Homeland Security and the Interior; the Attorney General; as well as to the Chief Postal Inspector, the Assistant Director of National Intelligence, the Chief of the Metropolitan Police Department for the District of Columbia, and the Director of the District of Columbia Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency. In addition, the report will be available at no charge on the GAO website at http://www.gao.gov.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact Triana McNeil at (202) 512-8777 or McNeilT@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found

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[25]Information related to the specific field office and type of analysis completed was deemed sensitive and has been omitted.

on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made key contributions to this report are listed in appendix III.

Triana McNeil
Director
Homeland Security and Justice

The Honorable Gary C. Peters
Chairman
The Honorable Rob Portman
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
Chairwoman
The Honorable Roy Blunt
Ranking Member
Committee on Rules and Administration
United States Senate

The Honorable Steny H. Hoyer
Majority Leader
House of Representatives

The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security
House of Representatives

The Honorable Zoe Lofgren
Chairperson
The Honorable Rodney Davis
Ranking Member
Committee on House Administration
House of Representatives

The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney
Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight and Reform
House of Representatives

The Honorable Michael F. Bennet
United States Senate

The Honorable Jake Auchincloss
House of Representatives

The Honorable Cindy Axne
House of Representatives

The Honorable Nanette Diaz Barragán
House of Representatives

The Honorable Ami Bera, M.D.
House of Representatives

The Honorable Donald S. Beyer, Jr.
House of Representatives

The Honorable Sanford Bishop
House of Representatives

The Honorable Lisa Blunt Rochester
House of Representatives

The Honorable Suzanne Bonamici
House of Representatives

The Honorable Carolyn Bourdeaux
House of Representatives

The Honorable Jamaal Bowman
House of Representatives

The Honorable Anthony G. Brown
House of Representatives

The Honorable Cheri Bustos
House of Representatives

The Honorable Salud Carbajal
House of Representatives

The Honorable Tony Cárdenas
House of Representatives

The Honorable André Carson
House of Representatives

The Honorable Sean Casten
House of Representatives

The Honorable David N. Cicilline
House of Representatives

The Honorable Yvette D. Clarke
House of Representatives

The Honorable Steve Cohen
House of Representatives

The Honorable Gerald E. Connolly
House of Representatives

The Honorable Jim Cooper
House of Representatives

The Honorable Joe Courtney
House of Representatives

The Honorable Angie Craig
House of Representatives

The Honorable Jason Crow
House of Representatives

The Honorable Sharice L. Davids
House of Representatives

The Honorable Danny K. Davis
House of Representatives

The Honorable Madeleine Dean
House of Representatives

The Honorable Peter A. DeFazio
House of Representatives

The Honorable Diana DeGette
House of Representatives

The Honorable Suzan DelBene
House of Representatives

The Honorable Mark DeSaulnier
House of Representatives

The Honorable Debbie Dingell
House of Representatives

The Honorable Lloyd Doggett
House of Representatives

The Honorable Dwight Evans
House of Representatives

The Honorable Lizzie Fletcher
House of Representatives

The Honorable Bill Foster
House of Representatives

The Honorable Lois Frankel
House of Representatives

The Honorable Ruben Gallego
House of Representatives

The Honorable John Garamendi
House of Representatives

The Honorable Jimmy Gomez
House of Representatives

The Honorable Al Green
House of Representatives

The Honorable Raúl M. Grijalva
House of Representatives

The Honorable Jahana Hayes
House of Representatives

The Honorable Brian Higgins
House of Representatives

The Honorable Chrissy Houlahan
House of Representatives

The Honorable Jared Huffman
House of Representatives

The Honorable Sheila Jackson Lee
House of Representatives

The Honorable Sara Jacobs
House of Representatives

The Honorable Pramila Jayapal
House of Representatives

The Honorable Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
House of Representatives

The Honorable Mondaire Jones
House of Representatives

The Honorable Kai Kahele
House of Representatives

The Honorable Ro Khanna
House of Representatives

The Honorable Daniel T. Kildee
House of Representatives

The Honorable Derek Kilmer
House of Representatives

The Honorable Andy Kim
House of Representatives

The Honorable Raja Krishnamoorthi
House of Representatives

The Honorable Ann McLane Kuster
House of Representatives

The Honorable Barbara Lee
House of Representatives

The Honorable Mike Levin
House of Representatives

The Honorable Ted W. Lieu
House of Representatives

The Honorable Alan Lowenthal
House of Representatives

The Honorable Elaine G. Luria
House of Representatives

The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch
House of Representatives

The Honorable Tom Malinowski
House of Representatives

The Honorable Doris Matsui
House of Representatives

The Honorable A. Donald McEachin
House of Representatives

The Honorable James P. McGovern
House of Representatives

The Honorable Jerry McNerney
House of Representatives

The Honorable Grace Meng
House of Representatives

The Honorable Seth Moulton
House of Representatives

The Honorable Grace F. Napolitano
House of Representatives

The Honorable Marie Newman
House of Representatives

The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton
House of Representatives

The Honorable Tom O'Halleran
House of Representatives

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
House of Representatives

The Honorable Jimmy Panetta
House of Representatives

The Honorable Donald M. Payne, Jr.
House of Representatives

The Honorable Ed Perlmutter
House of Representatives

The Honorable Scott H. Peters
House of Representatives

The Honorable Dean Phillips
House of Representatives

The Honorable Stacey E. Plaskett
House of Representatives

The Honorable Katie Porter
House of Representatives

The Honorable Jamie Raskin
House of Representatives

The Honorable Kathleen M. Rice
House of Representatives

The Honorable Raul Ruiz, M.D.
House of Representatives

The Honorable Bobby L. Rush
House of Representatives

The Honorable Linda T. Sánchez
House of Representatives

The Honorable Mary Gay Scanlon
House of Representatives

The Honorable Kim Schrier, M.D.
House of Representatives

The Honorable Terri A. Sewell
House of Representatives

The Honorable Mikie Sherrill
House of Representatives

The Honorable Albio Sires
House of Representatives

The Honorable Elissa Slotkin
House of Representatives

The Honorable Darren Soto
House of Representatives

The Honorable Abigail D. Spanberger
House of Representatives

The Honorable Haley Stevens
House of Representatives

The Honorable Mark Takano
House of Representatives

The Honorable Rashida Tlaib
House of Representatives

The Honorable Paul Tonko
House of Representatives

The Honorable Norma J. Torres
House of Representatives

The Honorable David Trone
House of Representatives

The Honorable Lauren Underwood
House of Representatives

The Honorable Nydia Velázquez
House of Representatives

The Honorable Debbie Wasserman Schultz
House of Representatives

The Honorable Bonnie Watson Coleman
House of Representatives

The Honorable Peter Welch
House of Representatives

The Honorable Nikema Williams
House of Representatives

The Honorable Frederica S. Wilson
House of Representatives

The Honorable John Yarmuth
House of Representatives

Appendix I: Time Line of Federal Agencies' Open Source Data and Threat Products Prior to the January 6, 2021, Capitol Attack

From August 2020 through January 2021, all 10 of the agencies included in our review obtained or received open source data on the events of January 6. Of the 10 agencies, seven obtained open source data on potential violence at January 6 events. Table 5 provides an overview of open source data that federal agencies obtained either through manual web searches or the use of open source analysis tools or received from other entities, including social media platforms and state and local agencies. The time line in table 5 includes open source data, such as links to publicly available social media posts and web articles, and agency threat products based on open source data, among other sources. For additional information, please see our interactive graphic link.

Table 5: Time Line of Federal Agencies' Open Source Data and Threat Products Prior to the January 6, 2021, Capitol Attack

Date	Type	Description[a]
August 17, 2020	✪	Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Intelligence and Analysis intelligence product discussed likelihood of ideologically motivated violent extremists and others' ability to engage in violence due to policy-based grievances.
August 21, 2020	✪	Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) developed a report on the increase of domestic violent extremist (DVE) threats to the 2020 election.
October 1, 2020	✪	DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis developed an intelligence product judging that ideologically motivated lone offenders and small groups, some of whom may target events related to the election results, pose the greatest terrorist threat to the homeland through 2021.
October 6, 2020	✪	DHS 2020 Homeland Security Threat Assessment noted that white supremacist extremists posed a heightened threat to the 2020 election results.
October 27, 2020	✪	FBI analysis stated that DVEs may engage in uncoordinated acts of violence based on the 2020 election results.
October 27, 2020	✪	U.S. Capitol Police (USCP) developed an information paper that stated that the outcome of the election could motivate extremist plotting, and the tense political environment will almost certainly lead to protests in the days and weeks after the election.
October 30, 2020	✪	FBI report stated that disinformation on social media could increase violence around high-profile events in D.C., including the 2020 election.
November 3, 2020	#	According to FBI officials, information was obtained from a social media platform about possible violence in Washington, D.C.
November 14, 2020		Make America Great Again (MAGA) I demonstration
December 8, 2020	✪	FBI report stated that there could be violence at the Million Militia March, planned for January 20, 2021, based on the 2020 election results.
December 12, 2020		MAGA II demonstration
December 14, 2020	#	Officials from the Washington, D.C., Metropolitan Police Department for the District of Columbia (MPD) and the D.C. Fusion Center began sharing open source data on January 6 with other law enforcement partners, including the FBI, U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Park Police (USPP), and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.
December 19, 2020	#	The MPD shared a Twitter post with four of the 10 federal agencies—USCP, USPP, the National Park Service (NPS), and U.S. Secret Service. The Twitter post made by then President Trump indicated that there would be a protest to the 2020 election results.

Date	Type	Description[a]
December 19, 2020	#	The Senate Sergeant at Arms (SAA) obtained the same Twitter post made by the former President. Senate SAA shared the Twitter post with USCP.
December 20, 2020	#	USPP shared social media posts from protesters and counterprotesters with MPD and three of the 10 agencies—USCP, NPS, and U.S. Secret Service.
December 21, 2020	#	MPD shared a Twitter post with Senate SAA officials about the former President's January 6 event attendance and shared it with USCP.
December 21, 2020	✪	Senate SAA open source review indicated that the Twitter post by the former President encouraged a potential demonstration.
December 21, 2020	#	NPS official emailed other officials regarding a Twitter post in connection with the amended event permit for January 6.
December 21, 2020	✪	FBI report stated that threat actors may plan to commit acts of violence in D.C. during demonstrations related to the inauguration.
December 21, 2020	#	The D.C. Fusion Center shared open source threat data with MPD and DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis officials regarding threats to Congress and elected officials, groups strategizing to avoid arrest in D.C., and discussions of bringing guns into D.C. on January 6.
December 22, 2020	✪	U.S. Postal Inspection Service threat assessment noted right-wing extremists promoting "The Patriot Action for America" movement aimed to prevent the inauguration, engage any opposition by force, and capture and detain Democratic politicians. The assessment indicated unsuccessful online followings could lead to a lone-wolf attack.
December 22, 2020	✪	U.S. Postal Inspection Service threat assessment referred to a high potential for individuals to incite civil unrest during demonstrations on January 6.
December 22, 2020	✪	DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis field analysis report summarized threats to the U.S. Senate runoff election in Georgia and stated that extremists could quickly mobilize to violence in response to events, such as the election.
December 23, 2020	#	MPD shared open source data, such as a link to a demonstration website, with three of the 10 agencies—NPS, USCP, and U.S. Secret Service.
December 23, 2020	✪	USCP intelligence assessment stated that events would be similar to MAGA I and MAGA II demonstrations and that some protesters planned to be armed.
December 24, 2020	#	Parler shares the first of several social media posts that include references to potential violence related to events on January 6.
December 28, 2020	✪	USPP executive brief stated that individuals may display aggressive behavior.
December 28, 2020	✪	USCP special event assessment stated that though confrontation between opposing groups could occur, events were generally of low concern.
December 29, 2020	✪	USCP information paper stated that domestic extremists may attach themselves to demonstrations.
December 29, 2020	#	USCP personnel began using an open source analysis tool, and identified posts related to testing the loyalty of the former Vice President and protesting the election results.
December 29, 2020	#	D.C. Fusion Center shared a post from a neo-Nazi-affiliated telegram channel, with three of the 10 agencies—Senate SAA, the FBI, and USCP. The post encouraged supporters to march into the Capitol on January 6.
December 30, 2020	✪	USCP information paper stated that members of the Proud Boys may attend "incognito" and that there was no information on counterprotests.
December 30, 2020	✪	Senate SAA open source review identified continued posts by the then President encouraging demonstrations.

Date	Type	Description[a]
December 30, 2020	✪	DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis intelligence product specified that DVE social media activity, constrained the agency's ability to detect and disrupt plots and that lone racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists posed a persistent threat.
December 30, 2020	#	U.S. Postal Inspection Service obtained a post from a neo-Nazi-affiliated telegram channel that encouraged supporters to occupy the Capitol on January 6.
December 30, 2020	✪	U.S. Postal Inspection Service situational awareness bulletin discussed military extremists using a new platform to discuss plans to treat counterprotesters at the planned January 20, 2021, "Million Militia March" as enemy combatants.
December 30, 2020	#	USPP officials shared a Twitter post with U.S. Secret Service and MPD officials about a user threatening to bomb the White House.
December 31, 2020	✪	USPP operational snapshot stated that groups with diametrically opposed beliefs will attend demonstrations and that violence is almost certain.
December 31, 2020	✪	USCP information paper stated that domestic extremists may attach themselves to demonstrations.
December 31, 2020	✪	U.S. Secret Service protective intelligence brief stated that participants for January 6 events were the same as those who attended the MAGA I and MAGA II demonstrations.
December 31, 2020	#	DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis received open source data that referenced January 6 and was anti-law-enforcement in nature.
December 31, 2020	#	The D.C. Fusion Center shared notes from its January 6 operational coordination meeting that included a review of open source threats, such as individuals planning to bring weapons into D.C., with officials from DHS, NPS, and other agencies. Further, the D.C. Fusion Center also shared posts from Parler with the FBI, DHS, U.S. Secret Service, USCP, and MPD indicating that an individual was encouraging others to bring rifles to January 6 events.
January 1, 2021	✪	USPP operational snapshot stated that the "Million MAGA March" planned for January 6, 2021, may draw individuals from smaller rallies.
January 2, 2021	#	USCP confirmed that members of the Proud Boys may attend "incognito," according to social media, including posts on Parler.
January 2, 2021	#	Architect of the Capitol official internally shared a media article about the Proud Boys attending January 6 protests "incognito."
January 3, 2021	✪	USCP special event assessment stated that extremists planned to travel to D.C. and that protesters planned to be armed.
January 3, 2021	✪	USPP briefing statement noted that January 6 demonstrations will be similar to MAGA I and MAGA II, where widespread violence occurred.
January 3, 2021	#	DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis observed an increase in general threats posted in online forums related to January 6, such as individuals planning to travel to D.C. and clash with counterprotesters.
January 4, 2021	✪	Senate SAA open source review noted previous violence from MAGA I and MAGA II demonstrations and that members of the Proud Boys planned to attend January 6 demonstrations in record numbers.
January 4, 2021	✪	USPP operational snapshot stated that the probability of violence is likely if opposing groups come into contact.
January 4, 2021	#	USPP found a MAGA map guide on social media that mapped out protests planned for January 6.
January 4, 2021	#	The D.C. Fusion Center shared posts with USCP from militia members participating in January 6 events to coordinate with other groups, including QAnon and the Proud Boys. The posts indicated that protesters planned to "get" counterprotesters before "patriots" marched.

Date	Type	Description[a]
January 4, 2021	✪	USCP information paper stated that groups that attended the MAGA I and MAGA II demonstrations plan to attend January 6 demonstrations.
January 4, 2021	✪	U.S. Secret Service developed a protective intelligence brief, which stated that, as a result of past experiences and increased social media chatter, the Protective Intelligence and Assessment Division assessed that while the majority of individuals would remain peaceful, clashes between opposing demonstrations were possible.
January 4, 2021	✪	U.S. Secret Service trends and tactics brief stated that there is a continued threat of low- to mid-level violence instigated by violent rhetoric and reaction to police. In addition, political events will be targeted by anarchist extremists.
January 4, 2021	#	DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis shared open source data with MPD regarding concerns that traditionally violent groups may try to blend into peaceful planned activities on or around January 6.
January 5, 2021	✪	USPP operational snapshot stated that the arrest of the leader of the Proud Boys has an unknown effect on other members attending demonstrations.
January 5, 2021	✪	FBI report stated potential violence at "StopTheSteal" demonstration.
January 5, 2021	✪	USCP information paper stated that extremists may attach themselves to demonstrations and that confrontation may occur between participants and counterprotesters.
January 5, 2021	#	Architect of the Capitol received information from an open source analysis tool regarding posts on a Dark Web Blog, Twitter, and Parler indicating plans to "storm" the U.S. Capitol.[b]
January 5, 2021	#	Architect of the Capitol and USCP received open source data on a potential airborne threat to the U.S. Capitol on January 6.
January 5, 2021	#	Architect of the Capitol officials held an internal briefing on the events of January 6, which included a presentation on open source news articles.
January 5, 2021	✪	DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis developed a threat product about a user planning to bring firearms to January 6 events armed with enough ammo to "win a small war."
January 5, 2021	#	Senate SAA obtained data on potential threats related to groups planning to block Democratic Members of Congress from entering the Capitol through the tunnel system and to block Members of Congress generally from the perimeter of the Capitol complex.
January 5, 2021	#	House SAA obtained data from a news article on threats to the Capitol tunnels and an airborne threat to the Capitol and shared the threat with USCP.
January 6, 2021	✪	USPP operational snapshot stated that events on the previous day concluded without issue and that counterprotesters will be in a "defensive" posture.
January 6, 2021	✪	DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis developed a threat product about a user related to a foreign organization that posted strategies to "squash" elector challenges.
January 6, 2021	#	Architect of the Capitol officials observed social media posts where members of the Proud Boys planned to disable fire suppression systems in government buildings, including the U.S. Capitol.
January 6, 2021	#	U.S. Postal Inspection Service obtained open source data on an air threat to the U.S. Capitol.

Legend: ✪ = Threat product; # = Open source data

Source: GAO analysis of agency information. | GAO-22-105963

[a]Information related to the specific field offices and types of analysis completed was deemed sensitive and has been omitted.

[b]The Dark Web is an internet shadow world that provides secure communication and anonymizing technology to hide trade in an assortment of contraband, such as opioids and other drugs.

Appendix II: Threat Products Developed by Selected Federal Agencies Prior to the January 6, 2021, Capitol Attack

From August 2020 through January 2021, seven federal agencies developed 38 threat products based, in part, on open source data. Threat products included briefing statements that summarized protest-related information for operational use, and other products assessed potential threats for law enforcement planning purposes. See table 6 for additional information on the agency threat products.

Table 6: Summary of Threat Products Developed by Selected Federal Agencies Prior to the January 6, 2021, Capitol Attack

Date product developed	Responsible entity	Election-related issues	Summary of product threat-related assessments
FBI			
August 21, 2020	Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)	Other election-related issues	The report stated that domestic violent extremist threats would increase related to the 2020 presidential election. Using data on attacks from 2017 through 2020, the report noted that domestic violent extremists have engaged in threats toward political figures. In addition, some domestic violent extremists intended to alter or escalate attack plans, depending on the 2020 election results, according to the report.
October 27, 2020	FBI	Other election-related issues	The analysis indicated that domestic violent extremists might engage in uncoordinated acts of violence based on the 2020 election results.
October 30, 2020	FBI	Other election-related issues	The report indicated disinformation on social media that could exacerbate political and social tensions and that there was potential for violence during high-profile events in Washington, D.C. Using these findings, the FBI anticipated that disinformation on social media would likely increase closer in time to certain events, including the 2020 presidential election.
December 8, 2020	FBI	Inauguration	The report assessed that there could be potential violence in connection with the 'Million Militia March' planned for January 20, 2021, where, groups such as antigovernment violent extremists and militia extremists may oppose the 2020 presidential inauguration.
December 21, 2020	FBI	Inauguration	The report assessed that threat actors may plan to commit acts of violence in Washington, D.C., during First Amendment demonstrations related to the presidential inauguration.
January 5, 2021	FBI	January 6	The report, containing raw intelligence, indicated that potential violence could occur in Washington D.C., in connection with the "StopTheSteal" protest on January 6. In addition, the FBI identified an online thread discussing calls for violence, including a threat to "[spill] blood" of counterprotesters, with calls to "get violent."
DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis			

Date product developed	Responsible entity	Election-related issues	Summary of product threat-related assessments
August 17, 2020	Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Intelligence and Analysis	Other election-related issues	The intelligence product specified that ideologically motivated violent extremists and other violent actors could quickly mobilize or threaten to engage in violence against elections and other targets in response to partisan and policy-based grievances.
October 1, 2020	DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis	Other election-related issues	The intelligence threat product specified that ideologically motivated lone offenders and small groups will pose the greatest terrorism threats to the homeland through 2021, with domestic violent extremists presenting the most persistent and lethal threat. Some actors may target the election results themselves, the product noted.
October 6, 2020	DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis	Other election-related issues	The 2020 Homeland Threat Assessment identified that some domestic violent extremists and other violent actors may target the 2020 presidential election results and could quickly threaten or engage in violence.
December 22, 2020	DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis	Other election-related issues	The field analysis report specified potential violence related to the U.S. Senate runoff election cycle in Georgia. In addition, DHS officials reported that violent extremists could quickly mobilize to violence in response to issues, such as the results of the presidential election.
December 30, 2020	DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis	Other election-related issues	The intelligence threat product specified that use of domestic violent extremist activity on social media constrains DHS' ability to detect and disrupt plotting. In addition, the product noted that extremists were influenced by COVID-19 and civil unrest, which resulted in increased antigovernment violent extremist activity. In addition, the product said that lone racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists pose the most persistent threat of mass civilian casualty attacks.
January 5, 2021	DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis	January 6	The intelligence threat product indicated that an individual, potentially a member of the Proud Boys, staked out parking lots of federal buildings that required searches for entry to determine how to bring firearms to January 6 events in D.C. In addition, the individual noted that he or she was driving through North Dakota armed with enough ammo to "win a small war."
January 6, 2021	DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis	January 6	The intelligence threat product indicated that a foreign organization urged other users to "squash" elector challenges and posted videos discussing a Vice president of the United States strategy and sending electors back to states.
U.S. Secret Service			

Date product developed	Responsible entity	Election-related issues	Summary of product threat-related assessments
December 31, 2020	U.S. Secret Service Protective Intelligence and Assessment Division (PID)	January 6	The protective intelligence brief provided an overview of demonstrations similar to the "March for Trump" planned on January 6. The brief identified Metropolitan Police Department for the District of Columbia (MPD) arrests made at the previous Make America Great Again (MAGA) I and MAGA II demonstrations, including 54 arrests for assaults on police officers, riotous acts, and possession of a prohibited weapon. The brief assessment indicated that protesters from the previous demonstrations plan to attend. Using that information, the U.S. Secret Service determined that clashes between opposing groups were likely.
January 4, 2021	U.S. Secret Service PID	January 6	The protective intelligence brief provided an overview of demonstrations to the "March for Trump" planned on January 6. The brief identified MPD arrests made at the previous MAGA I and MAGA II demonstrations, including 54 arrests for assaults on police officers, riotous acts, and possession of a prohibited weapon. The brief assessment indicated that protesters from the previous demonstrations plan to attend. Using that information, the U.S. Secret Service determined that clashes between opposing groups were likely
January 4, 2021	U.S. Secret Service PID	January 6	The trends and tactics brief summarized U.S. Secret Service observations of large-scale demonstrations and social media. The U.S. Secret Service determined the threat of low- to mid-level violence instigated by rhetoric and reactions to police actions. In addition, the brief noted that political events will be targeted by anarchist extremists with vandalism and mass attacks. Further, the brief noted that demonstration activity related to the 2020 presidential election is a possibility.
U.S. Park Police			
December 28, 2020	U.S. Park Police Intelligence and Counter-terrorism Branch (INTEL)	January 6	The executive brief highlighted social media indicating events similar to MAGA I and MAGA II demonstrations. In addition, U.S. Park Police reported concerns that individuals may display more aggressive or desperate behavior, as January 6 has been interpreted to be an opportunity to act on grievances.
December 31, 2020	U.S. Park Police INTEL	January 6	The operational snapshot summarized information on a First Amendment demonstration scheduled for January 6 in D.C. U.S. Park Police noted that they expect that groups with diametrically opposed beliefs will be present and, if groups come into close contact, violence is almost certain.
January 1, 2021	U.S. Park Police INTEL	January 6	The operational snapshot noted that conditions continue to evolve, with a "main event" on the Ellipse. According to the snapshot, social media reports that various groups plan to meet at the U.S. Capitol, among other places. Further, the snapshot noted that the "Million MAGA March" may draw individuals from other, smaller rallies.
January 3, 2021	U.S. Park Police Special Events Unit	January 6	The briefing statement noted that First Amendment demonstrations on January 6 will be similar to the MAGA I and MAGA II demonstrations. The statement noted that, in both instances, widespread violence occurred in D.C.

Date product developed	Responsible entity	Election-related issues	Summary of product threat-related assessments
January 4, 2021	U.S. Park Police INTEL	January 6	The operational snapshot noted that the then President posted on Twitter that he planned to attend the permitted event at the Ellipse. According to the snapshot, more protesters and counterprotesters plan to attend the event, because of the post. U.S. Park Police noted that the probability of violent actions is likely, if opposing groups come into contact with each other. But, as of January 4, U.S. Park Police has no indication of any actions of violence, according to the snapshot.
January 5, 2021	U.S. Park Police INTEL	January 6	The operational snapshot noted that the Proud Boys leader was arrested on January 4, and it is unknown what effect the arrest will have on group members. U.S. Park Police officials noted that the leader was known to keep more violent factions "under control." As of January 5, none of the reports on social media posts calling for violence are deemed credible, according to the snapshot.
January 6, 2021	U.S. Park Police INTEL	January 6	The operational snapshot noted that the events of January 5 concluded without issues, while four firearms were uncovered near the Freedom Plaza. Later in the evening, there was a disturbance between police and demonstrators at the Black Lives Matter Plaza. U.S. Park Police officials noted that they expect that counterprotesters will remain in a "defensive" posture at the Black Lives Matter Plaza. While U.S. Park Police officials reported no credible threats, they noted that individuals or small groups may act out violently.
U.S. Capitol Police			
October 27, 2020	U.S. Capitol Police Intelligence and Interagency Coordination Division (IICD)	Other election-related issues	The information paper noted that violent extremists across the ideological spectrum will likely continue to plot politically motivated attacks against the government and election-related targets. The report also noted that the domestic violent extremist threats to the 2020 election will likely increase as the election approaches, and that politically motivated terrorists may seek to carry out attacks around Election Day.
December 23, 2020	U.S. Capitol Police IICD	January 6	The intelligence assessment noted that there are demonstrations that call for an election overturn. Groups participating in demonstrations are expected to gather at the U.S. Capitol and other locations in D.C., similar to the MAGA I and II events in November and December 2020, according to the assessment. In addition, the assessment noted that some participants plan to be armed.
December 28, 2020	U.S. Capitol Police IICD	January 6	The special event assessment indicated that participants from the MAGA I and II events plan to attend demonstrations and that events scheduled to occur on Capitol grounds were generally of low concern. Further, the assessment noted that there are no specific threats or persons of interest related to the counting of electoral votes. In addition, while there is no specific information to indicate any type of violence or civil unrest, it is anticipated that confrontations among opposing groups will occur.

Date product developed	Responsible entity	Election-related issues	Summary of product threat-related assessments
December 29, 2020	U.S. Capitol Police IICD	January 6	The information paper noted that participants from the MAGA I and MAGA II events plan to attend demonstrations and that they engaged in violence with counterprotesters. Between the two events, D.C. and federal police arrested approximately 60 people for assault, vandalism, and weapons charges, the paper noted. Violent or controversial events in other cities could spark potentially violent protests in D.C., and domestic extremists may attach themselves to demonstrations, according to the information paper.
December 30, 2020	U.S. Capitol Police IICD	January 6	The information paper indicated that organizers for the Million MAGA March applied for a 5,000-person permit for the Freedom Plaza and the Ellipse. In addition, the information paper noted that members of the Proud Boys plan to attend "incognito," while there were no specific counterprotests. The report analyst comment contained the same threat statement for potentially violent protests and domestic extremists potentially attaching themselves to demonstrations.
December 31, 2020	U.S. Capitol Police IICD	January 6	The information paper noted that while there were no planned protests for January 1, 2021, there were no additional protests planned since the previous assessment. The report analyst comment contained the same threat statement for potentially violent protests and domestic extremists potentially attaching themselves to demonstrations.
January 3, 2021	U.S. Capitol Police IICD	January 6	The special event assessment reported that events on January 6, such as the "StopTheSteal" protest, may lead to a significantly dangerous situation for law enforcement and the general public, as supporters of the former President could see January 6 as their last opportunity to overturn the election results. Further, the sense of desperation may lead to violence, where the targets of supporters are not necessarily counterprotesters, but rather Congress itself.
January 4, 2021	U.S. Capitol Police IICD	January 6	The information paper reported that participants from the MAGA I and MAGA II events plan to attend demonstrations and previously engaged in violence with counterprotesters. Between the two events, D.C. and federal police arrested approximately 60 people for assault, vandalism, and weapons charges, according to the information paper. The report analyst comment contained the same threat statement for potentially violent protests and domestic extremists potentially attaching themselves to demonstrations.

Date product developed	Responsible entity	Election-related issues	Summary of product threat-related assessments
January 5, 2021	U.S. Capitol Police IICD	January 6	The information paper provided an overview of protests to be held on Capitol grounds in conjunction with the counting of electoral votes, where the Million MAGA March will take place at the Freedom Plaza and Ellipse. Further, the information paper noted that members of the Proud Boys will likely confront counterprotesters and, using social media, counterprotests are nearly certain. Participants from the MAGA I and MAGA II events plan to attend demonstrations and previously engaged in violence with counterprotesters, according to the information paper. Between the two events, D.C. and federal police arrested approximately 60 people for assault, vandalism, and weapons charges, the information paper noted. The report analyst comment contained the same threat statement for potentially violent protests and domestic extremists potentially attaching themselves to demonstrations.
Senate Sergeant at Arms			
December 21, 2020	Senate Sergeant at Arms Office of Intelligence and Protective Services (IPS)	January 6	The open source review indicated that Tweets by the former President were encouraging a demonstration in Washington, D.C. The open source review identified the march as the third MAGA demonstration, where turnout reported for previous demonstrations was lower, but multiple acts of violence occurred after groups clashed.
December 30, 2020	Senate Sergeant at Arms IPS	January 6	The open source review indicated that members of the Proud Boys planned to attend the event of January 6 "incognito."
January 4, 2021	Senate Sergeant at Arms IPS	January 6	The open source review indicated that more posts on Parler by the Proud Boys show that members plan to attend in record numbers.
U.S. Postal Service			
December 22, 2020	U.S. Postal Inspection Service	Inauguration	The threat assessment noted right-wing extremists promoting "The Patriot Action for America" movement aimed to prevent the inauguration, to engage any opposition by force, and to capture and detain Democratic politicians. The threat assessment indicated that unsuccessful online followings could lead to a lone-wolf attack. In addition, the threat assessment noted that another event with similar goals, the Million Militia March, was also set to occur later in January.
December 22, 2020	U.S. Postal Inspection Service	January 6	The threat assessment indicated that individuals planning to attend the "Million MAGA March" on January 6 posted about potential violence. The threat assessment also noted a high potential for individuals to incite civil unrest during the demonstration. One post urged "fellow patriots and oath keepers" to "take up your arms…and hang every traitor," according to the threat assessment.

Date product developed	Responsible entity	Election-related issues	Summary of product threat-related assessments
December 30, 2020	U.S. Postal Inspection Service	January 6	The situational awareness bulletin identified a new social media platform, Wimkin, used in place of Parler and Gab generally by militia groups for communication purposes. These groups discussed attending the "Million Militia March," where individuals stated that they should treat counterprotesters as enemy combatants, noting "there will be blood," according to the situational awareness bulletin.

Source: GAO analysis of agency information. | GAO-22-105963

Note: Information related to the specific field offices and types of analysis was deemed sensitive and has been omitted.

Appendix III: GAO Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contacts	Triana McNeil, Director, Homeland Security and Justice, (202) 512-8777 or McNeilT@gao.gov
Staff Acknowledgments	In addition to the contact named above, Kevin Heinz (Assistant Director); Khaki LaRiviere (Analyst-in-Charge); Jennifer Bryant, Imoni Hampton Timberlake, Kathryn Lenart, Christina Puentes, Willie Commons III, Jan Montgomery, Mary Turgeon, Amanda Miller, S. Andrew Stavisky, Dominick Dale, Susan Hsu, Eric Hauswirth, James Arp, Taiyshawna Battle, Andrew Curry, Maria Edelstein, Michelle Everett, Brett Fallavollita, Geoffrey Hamilton, Erin O'Brien, Daniel Paepke, and Janet Temko-Blinder made key contributions to this report.