



Office of the Attorney General

Washington, D. C. 20530

October 16, 2019

MEMORANDUM FOR ALL UNITED STATES ATTORNEYS
ALL HEADS OF DEPARTMENT COMPONENTS
ALL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

FROM: THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. Barr", written over the printed name "THE ATTORNEY GENERAL".

SUBJECT: IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL DISRUPTION AND EARLY
ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS TO COUNTER THE THREAT OF
MASS SHOOTINGS

I know you share my grave concern regarding the atrocious acts of mass violence that have plagued our country over recent years and that you are committed to preventing these types of attacks whenever possible. Targeted killings of innocent people are senseless and cowardly, and demand the full attention of the United States government. Because of the nature of these threats, I have directed the Department and the FBI to lead an effort to refine our ability to identify, assess and engage potential mass shooters before they strike. While we are cognizant that irrational acts of violence by lone actors are very challenging to prevent in every instance, quiet professionals in the Department have a strong record of swift action in meeting these threats, though many of our successes receive little public attention.

On many occasions, FBI agents and task force officers working shoulder to shoulder with prosecutors have been able to disrupt violent acts before lives are lost. But sadly, law enforcement has not been able to stop every mass shooting and these events fill our hearts with grief. That is why it is critically important to me that we learn from our experiences over the last two decades fighting terrorism and violent crime and that we apply those lessons to hone an efficient, effective and programmatic strategy to disrupt individuals who are mobilizing towards violence, by all lawful means. When the public "says something" to alert us to a potential threat, we must do something.

During my time as Attorney General, I have been heartened by the outstanding work you are doing to protect the public from a variety of evolving threats, including terrorists and gun violence. Indeed, some of our most creative and effective disruption and early engagement tactics were born of the posture we adopted with respect to terrorist threats. I have observed that some of these tactics also are being successfully employed to disrupt rapidly evolving firearm-related threats against school children, police officers, employers, houses of worship and other innocents. In many instances, federal agents and prosecutors have brought charges to swiftly disrupt concerning criminal activity and reach just resolutions.

Subject: Implementation of Disruption and Early Engagement Programs to Counter the Threat of Mass Shootings

Unlike some historical terrorism cases, however, where subjects of an investigation may spend months or even years in preparation, many of today's public safety threats appear abruptly and with sometimes only ambiguous indications of intent. Often, subjects of recent threat investigations exhibit symptoms of mental illness and/or have substance abuse problems that affect their behavior, all of which present significant challenges to criminal investigations. Accordingly, newly-developed tactics, based on the needs of our front line operators, have expanded the "all-tools" approach adopted by our Joint Terrorist Task Forces to include the use of clinical psychologists, threat assessment professionals, intervention teams and community groups when such resources are helpful to detect, understand and mitigate risk.

Often these cases result in detention and court ordered mental health treatment, substance abuse counseling, electronic monitoring and other important conditions of supervised release to help mitigate recidivism. In one case, for example, the FBI worked cooperatively with parents and mental health professionals to disrupt a young person and achieve a swift agreed resolution and court-ordered supervision that required the defendant to submit to ongoing mental health treatment and close monitoring. We need to apply the same type of forward leaning and thoughtful strategies more broadly to help triage threats and prevent violence wherever we detect reliable indicators of criminal activity or potential danger to the public. Although this work already is being done in the field in a number of places, the information and expertise we have accumulated could be better shared, and the efforts better coordinated to maximize our effect.

In sum, in taking on these complicated and dangerous threats alongside our local law enforcement partners, I want our federal agents and prosecutors to have all of the information and resources necessary to accomplish their mission, even if that means at times turning to new partners and experimenting with new approaches. To that end, in December 2019, we will be hosting a training conference at FBI Headquarters in Washington, D.C. to present proven models for engaging extremely challenging individuals, applying the lessons learned from our FBI subject matter experts, U.S. Attorney's Offices, private sector partners and Department components. We will also welcome new ideas to face these threats. A notice from the Department will soon follow this memorandum with additional details. I encourage you to send your best and brightest to participate in this important event. I have no greater priority than the safety and well-being of our communities, and particularly our children, who are the most vulnerable among us to the threat of mass violence. I am confident that you will continue to meet the challenge of protecting the public with your proven tenacity, creativity and commitment to justice. Thank you for your outstanding work, and for your eternal vigilance.