



**Risk Mitigation Consulting Inc.**

*Intelligence and Analysis Division*

# OPEN SOURCE UPDATE

August 2019

## **INTENT**

This open source periodical is designed to provide an overview of relevant, publicly available information on threat and hazard events and analysis of potential impacts to the interests of the United States, both at home and abroad. This product is not intended to be a comprehensive overview of all threat and hazard news and inclusion in this product does not constitute a confirmation of credibility nor precedence by RMC.



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## Threats

### Camp Pendleton Marines Arrested for Migrant Smuggling – *Insider Threat*

**Excerpt:** On the surface, it seemed like a simple task: Drive to a spot a few miles north of the U.S.-Mexico border, pick up people and then drop them off at a McDonald's or other spot past the city of San Diego, and make anywhere from \$500 to \$1,000. No need to cross into Mexico.

Two Marines whose arrests earlier this month for migrant smuggling led to the stunning arrests of fellow Marines at Camp Pendleton described in federal court documents such an offer being made to them. The Naval Criminal Investigative Service said a total of 19 service members have been arrested at the base, including 18 Marines and a Navy corpsman, who all serve in the same unit.

The military personnel are accused of various crimes from migrant smuggling to drug-related offenses, but officials have not said exactly how they were involved.

U.S. Border Patrol officials say smuggling rings have been luring U.S. troops, police officers, Border Patrol agents and others to work for them as drivers — a crucial component of moving migrants further into the United States once smugglers get them over the border from Mexico.

Border Patrol agents over the years have routinely caught migrants walking onto Camp Pendleton or floating in skiffs off the coast nearby. The camp, dissected by Interstate 5 leading to Los Angeles, sits along a well-traversed route used by smugglers.

**Analyst Comment:** Personnel were targeted at casinos and bars by “recruiters.” They were given a cellphone number and told if they ever want to make money as a driver to call. Advertisements were also posted online on forums such as Craigslist. Online, they advertised for drivers, then contacted the driver and saying they can get quick money by going south to an area close to the border and picking people up.

It appears that these “recruiters” often don't pay those they hired to smuggle, instead promising to pay or bump up the money if more trips are done. If a driver refuses or gets arrested, smugglers can simply find a replacement.

While the numerous arrests at Camp Pendleton were intended to serve as an example, sending a message of warning to those who would consider engaging in smuggling, other U.S. troops, police officers, and Border Patrol agents will likely continue to be targeted by smuggling rings.

*Source:* <https://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/your-navy/2019/07/27/smugglers-offer-cash-to-marines-sailors/>



## Attempted Mass Stabbing in Australia – *Active Shooter/Active Assailant*

**Excerpt:** Australian police said a knife-wielding man yelling "Allahu akbar," or "God is great," attempted to stab several people in downtown Sydney before being arrested. At least one woman was brought to a hospital with non-life-threatening injuries after the attack, and another was found dead in a nearby residence.

Police said later that "all the evidence points to" a man with mental health issues lashing out, but they would not rule out any potential motives as the investigation was still at an early stage. Given the information they had, they said the incident was not being classed as terrorism and that the suspect was believed to have acted alone.

Witnesses said the man, wielding a long knife, tried to stab multiple people near a busy intersection. New South Wales state police said in a statement that the man was caught and the woman was in stable condition.

**Analyst Comment:** While an investigation into the suspect's motives and background is ongoing, preliminary statements by police do not indicate a clear link to terrorism. Police instead cited mental health issues as a primary contributing factor to the violent act. Still, the suspect shouted a phrase often associated with radical Islamic terror attacks during his attempting stabbing spree, and he was discovered to have been carrying a USB drive with information on recent terror attacks by white supremacists.

Regardless, the attack highlights the use of active assailant tactics, which are similar to those of an active shooter (targeting victims at random, engaging in attacks at public/crowded venues, etc...) while being armed with a weapon other than a firearm (such as a knife, axe, hammer, or vehicle). Such attacks are encouraged by foreign terrorist organizations such as the Islamic State and al-Qaeda due to the relative ease of procuring weapons and selecting a target, as well as the difficulty of identifying pre-attack indicators (as such attacks often involve weapons that are commonly used for non-malicious purposes).

Source: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/sydney-australia-stabbing-spreed-man-yelling-god-is-great-arabic-today-2019-08-13/>

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## 6 Police Officers Shot in Philadelphia Standoff – *Violent Crime*

**Excerpt:** A suspect surrendered just after midnight after shooting six police officers in a north Philadelphia neighborhood, igniting a standoff that dragged on for hours in what authorities called a hostage situation.

The suspect is Maurice Hill, a 36-year-old Philadelphia resident with a history of gun convictions, his former lawyer, Shaka Johnson, told The Washington Post. Philadelphia Police Sgt. Eric Gripp said on Twitter that the suspect is in custody.



Johnson said he did not know Hill's motive. He said Hill would likely face several charges from the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office, including attempted murder and aggravated assault.

**Analyst Comment:** The recent shooting in Philadelphia does not fit the traditional profile of an active shooter incident, however, it resulted in similar lockdown procedures as an active shooter incident. The standoff reportedly began after law enforcement officers attempted to serve a narcotics-related warrant at the suspect's residence. Gunfire erupted from inside the residence and officers were wounded and forced to take cover and/or retreat. The initial reports of gunfire forced nearby Temple University's Health Sciences Campus (which is located less than 10 blocks from the scene of the standoff) to implement a lockdown procedure. The lockdown lasted for approximately two hours. The incident highlights the potential for active shooter-related protocols to be enacted in the event of what would otherwise be classified as a violent crime incident.

*Source:* <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2019/08/14/multiple-police-officers-wounded-active-philadelphia-shootout-officials-say/>

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## **Nationwide Protests Prompted by Immigration Policies – Civil Disturbance**

**Excerpt:** A Jewish group blocked the entrance to the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) headquarters in Washington, D.C., as part of a protest against the Trump administration's immigration policies.

Hundreds of protesters, including Jewish people, migrants and other supporters, joined Never Again Action in marching from the National Mall to the agency's headquarters in sweltering heat, according to live tweets from BuzzFeed News's Julia Reinstein. The group is protesting the conditions at migrant detention centers on the southern border and the separation of migrant families, as well as calling for an end to ICE.

Protesters chanted "Never again means now" and "Abolish ICE" during their march and as they stood with their arms linked in front of the headquarters, blocking the street, parking lot and front doors, according to one tweet from participant Sophie Ellman-Golan.

Police also arrived at the protest, and organizers told Reinstein 15 people were arrested when they entered ICE's building. More arrests are expected.

**Analyst Comment:** The group that organized the ICE headquarters blockade, Never Again Action, has promoted #ShutDownICE protests in various cities across the country in recent weeks. In addition to the Washington D.C. protest, other marches, rallies and protests have been held across the nation targeting ICE facilities. Many of these events are coordinated on social media platforms such as Facebook.

On 01 August, one person was arrested, and 17 people were cited during a protest in front of the ICE office of San Francisco. Eleven hours later, a peaceful protest was held in front of the same building with demonstrators calling for an end to family separation at the border. It kicked off what



organizers are calling a "month of momentum." Since then, protesters have been consistently present in front of the office.

Chicago also saw a rally against Trump's immigration policy, drawing thousands of people. On 13 July they marched from Daley Plaza to the Chicago ICE field office.

*Source:* <https://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/453359-jewish-group-blocks-entrances-to-ice-headquarters-during>

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## Hazards

### Earthquakes Caused up to \$5 Billion in Damage to China Lake Naval Base – *Geological Hazards*

**Excerpt:** Two months after twin earthquakes rocked the small towns of Ridgecrest and Trona, details are emerging about the damage done to the nearby China Lake Naval Air Weapons Station, the Navy’s largest base for developing and testing weapons of warfare.

The base was so badly damaged that officials are suggesting several buildings be demolished and replaced. The cost of returning the facilities to normal could top \$5 billion, according to Navy documents.

The recommendations still have to be approved by Congress and President Trump, according to Lee Saunders, a spokesman for the Southwest division of the Naval Facilities Engineering Command.

The China Lake naval station is less than 10 miles from the epicenters of the Ridgecrest quakes that rocked the region on 04 July and 05 July. The base was open only to essential personnel after the first earthquake, a magnitude 6.4. But following the larger 7.1 temblor, the facility was evacuated.

**Analyst Comment:** Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake felt severe impacts from the recent earthquakes due to the installation’s proximity to the epicenter of the powerful tremors. As of mid-August 2019, the base was not deemed to be “fully mission-capable” due to the widespread damage to facilities and infrastructure. Additionally, the damage may have been exacerbated by the fact that over 50% of the installation’s damaged buildings were constructed prior to 1980 and did not meet established standards for seismic safety. The installation’s mission to research, test, and evaluate advanced weaponry has likely been severely degraded by the earthquakes, which may result in DoD-wide impacts such as delayed implementation of advanced weapons systems.

Additionally, secondary and tertiary effects of the quakes may include damage to surrounding infrastructure as well as the homes of installation personnel. In the immediate aftermath of the earthquakes, non-essential personnel were temporarily relocated to Naval Base Ventura County, and as such were likely limited in their capacity to assess and rectify any damage that did occur.

Source: <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2019-08-14/billions-earthquake-damage-china-lake-naval-base>

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## Heat Wave Across Western Europe, Scandinavia, and the Arctic – *Meteorological Hazards*

**Excerpt:** More temperature records are falling in Europe as the historic heat wave that brought the hottest weather ever recorded in Paris, London, the United Kingdom, Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany shifts northward. In a few days, the weather system responsible for the heat wave will stretch all the way across the top of the globe.

Norway, Sweden and Finland will experience unusually high temperatures through the weekend, as a potentially record strong area of high pressure in the mid-levels of the atmosphere sets up over the region, blocking any cold fronts or other storm systems from moving into the area, like a traffic light in the sky.

Temperatures in parts of Scandinavia will reach into the 90s or higher, on the heels of an intense heat wave in 2018 that led to an outbreak of damaging wildfires.

**Analyst Comment:** In 2019, the amount of Arctic sea ice has hovered at record lows during the melt season. As weather patterns favorable for increased melt have occurred, so too has an unusually mild summer, contributing to an increased melting rate of the Greenland ice sheet. A potentially similar significant melt event occurred over Scandinavia in 2012. During that summer, nearly all of the ice sheet experienced melting, including at the highest elevations that rarely exceed 32 degrees.

Unlike sea ice melt, runoff from the Greenland ice sheet increases sea levels, as it adds new water to the oceans. Should the entire Greenland ice sheet melt, it would raise global average sea levels by 23 feet. While these heatwaves have occurred in the past, studies have shown that both the frequency and intensity of these heatwaves have increased due to global warming.

Additionally, initial findings from the Swiss Glacier Monitoring Network show that Swiss glaciers also experienced unusually high melt rates during the last heat wave, which occurred in late July, and an earlier heat wave that struck the continent in late June. Scientists have observed these declines across Europe, including glaciers in the mountains of France, Austria, and Italy.

Other Arctic locations have been experiencing extreme heat. Alaska has reported its warmest June on record. Due to the abnormally high temperatures, over 2 million acres have gone up in flames across the state. Furthermore, wildfires have been burning across vast stretches of Siberia, an unusual occurrence. The smoke from these fires has been seen circling the globe.

*Source:* <https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2019/07/26/europes-heat-wave-is-about-bake-arctic/?noredirect=on>

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## Water Near Fort Jackson Contaminated by Hand Grenade Training

### — *Accidental Events*

**Excerpt:** More than 16 percent of the drinking water wells tested near Fort Jackson over the past six years have shown contamination from a toxic chemical found in hand grenades used to train soldiers, according to recently released federal data.

In some cases, the pollution levels are high enough to exceed federal safety advisories for RDX — a chemical that can cause seizures and cancer in people from long-term exposure, The State reported. In other cases, RDX in private wells has fallen within safe drinking water limits, Army officials and state regulators reported this week.

The contaminant was found in groundwater at Fort Jackson six years ago as part of an Army initiative to check military bases for pollution from explosives. At first, the Army reported that it had not found unsafe levels in groundwater wells off the base. But further testing in 2014 found elevated levels of RDX in wells that served five homes across from Fort Jackson.

Since 2013, the Army has conducted more than 800 tests involving 186 wells off the military base, finding 31 wells polluted by RDX. That's 16.6 percent. Of those 31 wells, 16 exceeded federal standards for safe drinking water or were over a risk limit established by the federal government, according to data released this week by Fort Jackson and the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control.

RDX is an ingredient in hand grenades that makes them explode. Fort Jackson officials estimated that soldiers throw 100,000 hand grenades a year at the base, but they think the pollution along Leesburg Road was caused from training soldiers decades ago.

**Analyst Comment:** Beginning in the early 1940's, Fort Jackson used about 18,000 acres south off the base as a training ground for soldiers. The area has developed since that time, with housing being built on land one used for training and testing weapons like the hand grenades. As the chemicals seeped into the earth, groundwater became contaminated. In addition to past testing, there is a chance that current training could be another possible source. Fort Jackson has undertaken measures to prevent RDX from flowing toward private wells, including treating soil with lime to neutralize the chemical. The base has also supplied bottled water and installed water filtration systems to keep it out of tap water.

RDX has caused convulsions (seizures) in military field personnel ingesting it, and in munition workers inhaling its dust during manufacture. At least one fatality was attributed to RDX toxicity in a European munitions manufacturing plant. During the Vietnam War, at least 40 American soldiers were hospitalized with composition C-4 (which is 91% RDX) intoxication from December 1968 to December 1969. RDX is also known to be a kidney toxin in humans and highly toxic to earthworms and plants. While the groundwater will need further testing to ensure the drinking water is being appropriately filtered and treated, remediating RDX-contaminated water supplies has proven to be successful in the past.



Source: <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/south-carolina/articles/2019-07-27/data-shows-toxins-poison-drinking-water-near-fort-jackson>

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## Deadly Nuclear Explosion in Russia – *Accidental Events*

**Excerpt:** A mysterious explosion at an offshore Russian military site involving a nuclear power source for a missile is fueling international speculation as few details are available about what caused the blast and what its effects are.

Officials with Russia's nuclear energy company Rosatom said five of its scientists were killed in an explosion Thursday during a test of "a nuclear isotope power source" for a rocket.

The accident occurred on a platform in the White Sea off Nyonoksa and caused a reported radiation spike in nearby Severodvinsk.

**Analyst Comment:** Although Russian officials have issued conflicting statements regarding the incident, it was confirmed by the state-owned enterprise Rosatom that five scientists were killed and media reports indicate that the total death toll from the incident was 7 individuals. Additionally, some media reports stated that individuals were transported for to hospitals for radiation-related conditions, and that other injuries may have occurred in the blast.

The testing which led to the blast was reportedly associated with an advanced cruise missile touted by Russian President Vladimir Putin, which uses a miniaturized nuclear reactor for propulsion, which would allow the missile to have an extreme range beyond that which is capable with conventional solid or liquid missile fuels. However, some U.S. officials have expressed skepticism that such a system is feasible. Such claims may also be an attempt by Russia to falsely bolster claims of military superiority.

In the wake of the blast, radiation levels reportedly spiked significantly in nearby cities, and evacuation orders were temporarily ordered, then later lifted. Moreover, on 15 August, Norwegian authorities stated that radioactive iodine was detected at an air filter station, although the amount was reportedly low enough not to pose a risk to health or the environment. Additional radiation-related conditions may be reported in the surrounding region in the coming weeks as the full scale of the incident is understood, and response/monitoring operations are enacted.

Source: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2019/08/13/russia-explosion-nyonoksa-evacuated-after-missile-accident-radiation/1996779001/>

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