The Mail-Bomb Plot
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Purpose Statement

The purpose of this briefing note is to examine the alleged mail-bomb plot which unfolded in the United States at the end of October 2018. The document hypothesizes that these incidents are ideologically driven. We build this assumption based on the targets of the bombs; a mix of high profile democratic and/or left-leaning individuals who have spoken out against the policies of the current administration. This fits within the framework of 5th generation warfare, both tactically and in the motivations of the perpetrators.

The Security Problem

If these incidents are indeed motivated by a rift in ideological viewpoints, then it can be argued that this incident marks a new precedent for group on group (5G) conflict in America. While the motives behind the bomb plot are not entirely known, it is plausible that the similarity in targets, delivery method and timeframe indicate some level of coordination and planning. If groups or individuals with opposing views are willing to undertake mass mail-bombing as a modus operandi to further their cause, then this is a security threat which should be addressed.

Key Facts

At least thirteen suspicious packages have been mailed to the residences and offices of leading American politicians, news outlets and personalities. An apparent trend which emerged about the targets was that they are all vocal critics of U.S President Donald Trump. It has been reported that while none of these packages have resulted in damage to persons or property, they are being treated as explosive devices by officials. The alleged perpetrator is 56-year-old American Cesar Sayoc, who appears to be an avid supporter of President Trump. The events have been unfolding approximately two weeks before the American midterm elections, and while this has not yet been determined as a motive, it appears suspiciously coincidental.

Background

It can be argued that tensions within the American populace have been rising exponentially since the 2016 election. Various cultural groups who have a proclivity for Alt-Right or Right-Wing Extremism appear to be growing in activity. It appears that they, and many other ethno-religious groups have ascribed to

identity-based political ideologies, allegedly claiming that grievances and perceived discrimination against them have driven them to act. If this is true, then these groups fit the model of 5th generation of warfare. Their methods and modes of operation would therefore be asymmetric by default. Furthermore, it follows that groups and individuals would carry out their mission by exploiting ethnic and cultural divisions within a state. A combination of disinformation campaigns and the violent or non-violent targeting of leaders of opposition groups, could conceivably be employed to further such a movement.

Key Considerations and Implications

If the actions of Cesar Sayoc were indeed ideologically driven, which it can be argued that they are, then this is a prime example of identity-based group on group conflict and therefore, 5th generation warfare. The bombings may also have an effect on the upcoming midterm elections whether this was intended or not.

The potential bombings were dubbed as terrorist attacks by most politicians, which means that the writ of national security reigns supreme as law enforcement officials gather more evidence. If a politically motivated group/individual committed these crimes, law enforcement's targeting and subsequent arrest could further sow division between groups who claim the perpetrators were acting righteously.

Alternative Perspectives to be Considered

- It could be argued that the perpetrator was acting independent of any ideology.
- It could be argued that more perpetrators were involved.

What is Not Known

- It is not known if all of these packages were the work of Cesar Sayoc.
- It is not known if the intent was to harm or to send a message of some kind.
- It is not known if there are more devices to be delivered or discovered.

Next Steps

- Further analysis of the source of these suspicious devices will hopefully determine if Cesar Sayoc. acted alone or with the help of others.
- Questioning of Cesar Sayoc will hopefully reveal more information into his motives.

Available Options

- The President and politicians from across the political spectrum should denounce the incidents as an affront to American values.
- Local law enforcement and security forces should be on guard for more incidents.
- Intelligence sharing should be a priority among local and national law enforcement agencies.
- Domestic security organizations should be conscious of future incidents of similar nature.

Recommendations and Justifications

1. It is recommended that politicians of all political stripes condemn these actions and any attempts to affect political change through violence, emphasizing that these actions have no place in a democratic society. This type of rhetoric should be aimed to dissuade groups and individuals from acting in this way.
2. Given the apparent pattern of targets, more attention should be paid to high ranking officials from both political parties, as well as media organizations such as CNN, FOX, and NBC. It is plausible that other groups or individuals could follow this example in the future.

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