Environmental Extremists

Background

- Environmental rights extremists view manmade threats to the environment as so severe that violence and property damage are justified to prevent further destruction. Groups such as the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) and Earth First! adopt a "by any means necessary" approach, although violent tactics such as arson are considered a last resort. ELF considers acts of property destruction as "nonviolent" because no human beings or animals are directly targeted.

- The ELF ideology adopts a leaderless resistance model and has no formal membership. Adherents engage in the destruction of property and criminal activity, such as graffiti, trespassing, vandalism, sabotage, and arson to inflict economic loss.

- Environmental extremist activity is largely limited to the west coast in California, Washington, and Oregon.

In 2005, ELF members drew graffiti on an apartment complex in California

Threat to New Jersey: Low

Environmental rights extremists are not active in New Jersey because grassroots organizations already take an active role in environmental issues, reducing the perceived need for violent and criminal action. Aggressive oversight by environmental agencies at the state and federal levels and prosecutions of environmental extremists have also contributed to the low threat level. There have been no documented violent incidents involving environmental extremists in New Jersey since 1998.

- Conservation groups in New Jersey routinely join forces to oppose projects they deem detrimental to the environment such as natural gas and oil pipelines.

- In June 2013, a New Jersey-based waste management company was convicted in federal court of conspiring to violate the Clean Water Act and Superfund laws by illegally dumping thousands of tons of asbestos-contaminated construction debris in upstate New York. The court ordered that the company implement a plan to prevent future violations and pay $100,000 in fines, along with $494,000 in restitution.

In 1998, ELF attacked a ski resort in Vail, Colorado

Intelligence Gaps

- Are there any active environmental extremist groups in New Jersey threatening businesses?

- Are environmental extremists working with other groups in New Jersey to achieve their goals?

New Jersey Nexus

- Currently, no hydraulic fracturing, or "wastewater fracking" has occurred in New Jersey — a procedure which allows the extraction of oil and natural gas from underwater rock formations via a drilling process because there is no pipeline infrastructure to support it. Nonetheless, environmental extremists, particularly in neighboring Pennsylvania are concerned that drilling for natural gas by pumping large quantities of water and chemicals into the ground could affect the quality of drinking water. This issue may cause an uptick in vandalism or arrests.

Fracking: Four Steps to Extract Shale Gas

1. Explorers drill down over one mile and then sideways into gas-bearing shale deposits of mud, silt, clay, and organic matter
2. Shaped charge blasts make a series of holes one centimeter in diameter along well walls
3. Water and sand are pumped at high pressure to open fissures
4. Gas flows freely from the fissures up the well to the surface where it is collected

Contact Information

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