Critical Considerations:

Was January 1, 2025 a wake-up call?

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On New Year's Day, the U.S. woke up to news of a horrific mass casualty event in New Orleans. A man driving a pick-up truck plowed into revelers in the city's famed French Quarter, killing 14 people and injuring several dozen more. Later that morning, a Tesla Cybertruck packed with explosives was detonated in front of a Trump hotel in Las Vegas, killing the driver. The perpetrators in both of these incidents were U.S. military veterans.

According to the [National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism](#) (START), a research, education and training center at the University of Maryland, [analysis of the *Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States*](#) (PIRUS) database showed that having a U.S. military background is the strongest individual-level predictor of whether a person listed in the PIRUS data is classified as a mass casualty offender. This correlation outweighed other factors, including mental health issues, membership in an extremist group, criminal history and age.

Analysis of the ideology driving mass casualty events indicates that the majority (73.5%) of the offenders with military backgrounds in the PIRUS database had links to far-right domestic extremist groups (anti-government/militia/sovereign citizen, white supremacist/nativist). Only 15% had ties to foreign Islamic extremist groups such as ISIS or al Qaeda.

In a January 2, 2025 [article posted on his website, *Informed Comment*,](#) University of Michigan history professor Juan Cole examines the January 1 attacks and reflects on our tendency to look outside when a mass casualty event occurs within our borders. The initial assumption is often that the individual or individuals involved are immigrants and that they have ties to foreign terrorist groups. He also notes how the media treats white perpetrators differently from those of other races and ethnicities.

[In an interview with The Guardian](#) (a British newspaper), Bishop Garrison, a decorated military veteran who led the Biden administration's efforts to deal with extremism in the U.S. military, warned that there could be more attacks if the Pentagon does not take this threat seriously. Referring to January 1, he said, "Both incidents demonstrate the sleeping danger that we have failed to deal with as a country."