



FBI Budget Proposal Advances Pre-crime Domestic Counterterrorism Framework

The FBI is moving further into a “pre-crime” posture. A 2027 budget request lays out a major expansion of domestic “counterterrorism” efforts. At the center is a new multi-agency unit designed to identify threats before they materialize. The initiative stems from President Donald Trump’s [September directive](#), National Security Presidential Memorandum-7, or NSPM-7.



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According to that directive, the unit would address a broad range of alleged threats, and would target individuals and networks believed capable of political violence or disruption. Officials present it as a necessary response to a volatile climate. Critics see something else: a framework broad enough to pull lawful dissent into the national-security net.

That concern is not abstract. Domestic groups and unstable individuals are often manipulated by more sophisticated actors to generate chaos, often against their own interests. The resulting disorder can then justify expanded surveillance and control, while those who engineered the crisis remain untouched. Critics also point to a documented pattern of FBI involvement in “hatching and financing terrorist plots,” as [detailed](#) by researchers such as Trevor Aaronson.

There is also a deeper issue. Political radicalization does not always arise from irrationality or outside manipulation. It can reflect a logical response to a system that grows increasingly tyrannical and unaccountable. In that context, the state’s definition of a “threat” begins to look less like neutral law enforcement and more like institutional self-preservation.

A New Center

The budget makes the shift concrete. It confirms the creation of an FBI-led NSPM-7 Joint Mission Center, or JMC. The unit brings together personnel from across the federal government and formalizes a centralized, preemptive model. Per the document:

The JMC is composed of personnel from 10 agencies who possess [counterterrorism] and criminal operational and analytical expertise. The JMC is working to counter [domestic terrorism] and organized political violence by integrating intelligence, operational support, and financial analysis to proactively identify networks and prosecute domestic terrorist and related criminal actors.



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The key word is “proactively.” The unit will map networks, flag individuals, and intervene before crimes occur.

The FBI argues that such measures are necessary. It describes domestic terrorism as an “elevated threat to the Homeland” driven by a mix of “ideologies” and “recent political and societal events.”

NSPM-7 translates that urgency into mandate. It directs the FBI and its Joint Terrorism Task Forces (JTTFs) to “coordinate a comprehensive national strategy” to investigate, prosecute, and disrupt actors engaged in political violence or intimidation. The stated goal is to protect lawful political activity and uphold the rule of law.

But the language is extremely broad, and that ambiguity flows directly into how “domestic terrorism” is defined.

Thought Crimes

The budget request outlines the scope of what qualifies as a threat. It moves beyond “traditional” violent extremism. The FBI states that “commonly” violent conduct relates to certain “views.” These include:

- anti-Americanism
- anti-capitalism
- anti-Christianity
- support for the overthrow of the U.S. government
- extremism on migration, race, and gender
- hostility toward those who hold traditional American views on family, religion, and morality.

That is a wide net. It places ideology closer to the center of threat assessment. The shift is subtle in wording, but significant in practice, as the focus moves from actions to beliefs.

Officials argue that this reflects real risks, citing a rise in political violence. And the budget references “heinous assassinations” and similar attacks, presenting these incidents as justification for earlier intervention and broader surveillance.

Critics see a structural problem. The categories collapse the line between ideology and intent. After all, in a constitutional republic, belief is not a crime, no matter how fringe or offensive. But in a preemptive framework, beliefs can be recast as “indicators” of terrorism, and expressing them can be enough to draw FBI scrutiny.

Social Media

The FBI places heavy emphasis on digital platforms:

Domestic terrorists exploit a variety of popular social media platforms, smaller websites with targeted audiences, and encrypted chat applications. They use these platforms to recruit new adherents, plan and rally support for in-person actions, and disseminate materials encouraging radicalization and mobilization to violence.

This reflects a broader shift, with online behavior now serving as a primary intelligence source. The problem is scale and ambiguity. Indeed, tens of millions of Americans use these platforms every day. However, under the FBI’s logic, ordinary digital behavior can begin to look like raw material for



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intelligence analysis. That gives the government vast room to confuse speech with threat, association with conspiracy, and dissent with danger.

The Lone-actor Problem

The FBI identifies lone offenders as a major challenge:

[Domestic terrorist] lone offenders will continue to pose significant detection and disruption challenges because of their capacity for independent radicalization to violence, ability to mobilize [discreetly], and access to firearms.

That is why the bureau puts so much emphasis on early detection of their problematic “views.”

The document also points to “homegrown violent extremists” (HVE) inspired by foreign conflicts, particularly “violent Sunni extremist ideology.” It links recent cases to the October 7, 2023 Hamas attacks on Israel. That framing captures part of the picture, but leaves out another. Many Americans reacted with outrage not only at the attacks, but also at the United States’ response and its support for a military campaign that critics, including Israeli rights groups, have described as genocidal.

That tension matters. It complicates how the FBI defines “inspiration,” and raises the risk that political reaction, even when grounded in legitimate concerns, becomes folded into threat modeling.

The broader question remains: How early is too early? At what point does suspicion justify deeper surveillance or enforcement? In a system built on prediction, that boundary is not fixed.

Intelligence Machine

The strategy rests on data. The FBI states it “aims to eliminate the risk of international and domestic terrorism by gathering intelligence from sources and using analysis to enhance prevention and exploit links between terrorist groups and their support networks.”

The mechanics are explicit. “Training, finances, recruiting, logistical support, pre-attack planning, and preparation are all critical components of terrorist operations.” Each stage creates an opening. “These factors create vulnerabilities in planning and execution,” the FBI notes, and the bureau aims to exploit them by building “a comprehensive intelligence base.”

That system feeds a larger network. “Threat information and intelligence is shared with partner agencies” to support “efficient threat mitigation” and provide “timely and accurate analysis to the [intelligence community] and senior policy makers.” The goal is broad visibility and fast action.

The mandate is expansive. “The FBI is committed to stopping terrorism at any stage,” from disrupting intent to investigating those who provide “financial or other support.”

Control remains centralized. “FBI HQ maintains oversight of all [counterterrorism] investigations,” applying a “national perspective” aimed at creating “an inhospitable terrorist environment.” The structure relies on standardization and technology, including “rigorous program management” and the “development of technical tools to collect and exploit data.”

Operations are divided but integrated. Units are organized “geographically and by threat,” and will “integrate intelligence across multiple organizations,” enabling “real-time responses to threat information.” Coordination extends across the intelligence community and abroad.



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The counterterrorism line item shows where this is headed. The FBI is requesting 328 positions, 167 FTEs, and \$166.1 million for counterterrorism alone. The money would fund “artificial intelligence (AI)-powered, cutting-edge capabilities,” support intelligence community platforms, continue NSPM-7 implementation, and expand tactical, explosives, and “render safe” preparations for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

The Patel Expansion

Under Director Kash Patel, the FBI’s domestic focus is widening in both scope and method. Journalist Ken Klippenstein, who is closely tracking the shift and was the first to [report](#) on the budget request for the new unit, writes:

It’s hard to overstate how much the FBI is focusing of domestic terrorism under Patel and the Trump administration.

He notes that Patel testified to Congress that he was overseeing a “300 percent increase in domestic terrorism investigations.”

That expansion is not just rhetorical. As Klippenstein [reported](#) in October, the FBI replaced the old “Terrorist Screening Center” with a broader “Threat Screening Center,” whose mission now extends to “all national security threats.” That change places domestic “threats” inside a larger federal architecture of watchlists, intelligence fusion, and preventive targeting.

Constitutional Significance

The broader issue is constitutional. Ordinary crime control and public order have historically belonged to the states. Yet Washington continues to expand its role through larger budgets, broader threat definitions, growing watchlists, and deeper surveillance. Detention capacity [grows](#) along the same path.

That is the real significance of the budget request. It does not simply ask for funds to support investigations. It seeks to institutionalize a federal pre-crime framework, one with obvious room for abuse.

Patel’s own posture fits that trajectory. He has [backed](#) the extension of unconstitutional wiretapping authority, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA). He also recently [acknowledged](#) that the FBI purchases commercially available data on Americans.



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