

2024 North Carolina Statewide Threat Assessment *EXECUTIVE SUMMARY*



Prepared by the
North Carolina
Information Sharing and Analysis Center

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It is my privilege to introduce North Carolina's **2024 Statewide Threat Assessment (STA)**, a product of the North Carolina Information Sharing and Analysis Center (NC ISAAC). NC ISAAC is the State's only federally designated fusion center and serves as the focal point for the collection, assessment, analysis, and dissemination of terrorism and criminal information relating to North Carolina.

This assessment is issued under the authority and command structure of the NC ISAAC and the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation (SBI). This product is produced annually based on intelligence directives of the SBI and NC ISAAC, as well as the standing information needs from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Its purpose is to identify and scope threats to the citizens and infrastructure of North Carolina by presenting a statewide analysis on threat prevalence, prominence, and evolution. Ultimately, this assessment is intended to guide the priorities for NC ISAAC's intelligence work in the year ahead, as well as serve as an informational resource for other federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial (FSLTT) law enforcement agency partners and public safety decision-makers.

NC ISAAC's ability to produce intelligence that transforms data into actionable insights relies on active engagement and support from our many FSLTT partners. This includes over 600 field liaison officers (FLOs) that serve as the eyes and ears of NC ISAAC in communities throughout the state. We are extremely grateful for the active support of all these dedicated professionals.

As you read the STA you will become more deeply aware of the threats facing the North Carolina and our citizens. It is my hope that this year's STA serves as a useful reference and contributes to our shared mission of keeping North Carolina and our communities safe.



Steven Holmes

Director

North Carolina Information Sharing and Analysis Center (NC ISAAC)



(U) North Carolina Information Sharing and Analysis Center (NC ISAAC)

(U) The North Carolina Information Sharing and Analysis Center (NC ISAAC) serves as the focal point for the collection, assessment, analysis, and dissemination of terrorism and criminal information relating to North Carolina. The ISAAC has the primary responsibility for developing and evaluating information about persons and organizations engaged in suspicious, potential, and/or confirmed criminal activity; specifically, information relevant to North Carolina and the greater United States.

(U) The NC ISAAC serves as a liaison with the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation (SBI) and other law enforcement agencies engaged in antiterrorism and criminal interdiction operations and investigations, as well as other organizations associated with the homeland security mission space such as fire & medical emergency services, emergency management, and the National Guard.

(U) The NC ISAAC is not intended to replace or duplicate the counter-terrorism duties of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, but rather to enhance and facilitate the collection of information from local and state sources, and to integrate that information into a system that will benefit homeland security and criminal interdiction programs at all levels.

(U) The NC ISAAC is intended to serve North Carolina law enforcement as a clearinghouse for terrorism and criminal related information. Protocols and relationships have been established to enhance capabilities for the gathering, assessment, analysis, exchange, and dissemination of information between local, state, and federal government agencies; corporate security executives; and private sector owners and operators of critical infrastructure assets.

(U) This assessment is issued under the authority and command structure of the NC ISAAC and the SBI. Though limited in scope at this time, the NC ISAAC plans to extend the reach of this document to include additional topics and future publications.

(U) Agencies of the NC ISAAC

(U) Fusion centers are typically organized by amalgamating representatives from different federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies into one physical location. Each representative is intended to be a conduit of raw information to and from his or her agency who can infuse that agency-specific information into the collective body of information for analysis. The full-time agencies and partners that make up the NC ISAAC include:

- Chapel Hill Police Department
- Department of Homeland Security
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- North Carolina Division of Adult Corrections
- North Carolina Division of Emergency Management
- North Carolina Division of Motor Vehicles
- North Carolina Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force
- North Carolina Joint Cybersecurity Task Force
- North Carolina National Guard
- North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation
- North Carolina State Highway Patrol
- North Carolina State University Police Department
- UNC Chapel Hill Police Department

- United States Secret Service
- Wake County Sheriff's Office
- Winston-Salem Police Department



(U) Preface

(U) Scope

(U) This publication examines the comprehensive threat picture of critical infrastructure and key resource (CIKR) areas, cyber threats, human trafficking, illicit drug activity, internet crimes against children, school safety, and terrorism within North Carolina. Sections present analyses results relevant to each topic while examining threat outlook and identifying intelligence gaps for further intelligence directives.

(U) Source Summary

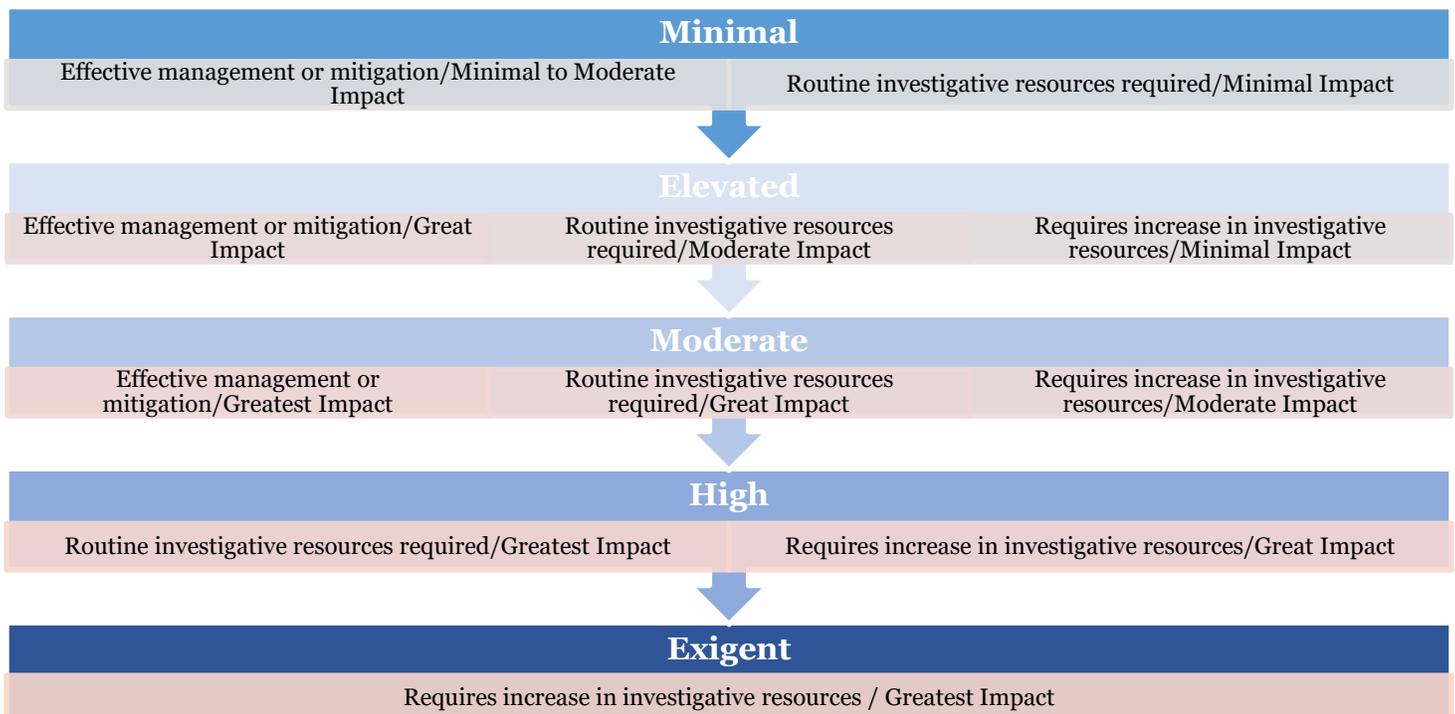
(U) Intelligence in this product was derived from open sources, law enforcement reports and private sector reporting. Law enforcement reports have been sanitized to allow for further dissemination. These publications were critical to the key judgments of this product. This source collection occurred between October 2023 and July 2024 examining data from 2022 through 2023. The reporting was current as of July 2024.

(U) Methodology

(U) Threat prioritization for this document encompasses:

1. A standard, three-level measure of current investigative and intelligence activity and operational efforts of the ISAAC, SBI, and of Federal, State, Local, Tribal & Territorial (FSLTT) law enforcement agencies in North Carolina, on an understanding of the threat issue within these agencies, and in consideration of jurisdictional roles.
2. A standard, four-level evaluation of impact assessment considering likely damage of threat fruition and the capability of harm to national security, North Carolina, public safety, economic stability, and law enforcement resources.

(U) Evaluation of these areas takes place through a prioritization matrix, creating minimal, elevated, moderate, high or exigent threat band ratings.



(U) Executive Summary

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE MATERIAL (CSAM)

High

(U) Key Findings

- (U//FOUO) North Carolina Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force CyberTipline referrals have increased 559% since 2019 and are projected to grow another 103% by the end of 2024.¹

(U//FOUO) This assessment is made with high confidence.²

CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND KEY RESOURCES (CIKR)

High

(U) Key Findings

- (U//FOUO) The NC ISAAC identifies the major threats to CIKR to be intentional cyber-attacks and vulnerability exploitation, domestic violent extremism/terrorism, accidental or intentional disruption of services, and severe weather.
- (U//FOUO) The NC ISAAC assesses that the most significant threat of violence to outdoor events and public assembly stems from lone actors who could be motivated by a broad range of grievances; however, the NC ISAAC assesses the most likely instances of violence at the event would be spontaneous escalation of interpersonal conflict.
- (U//FOUO) The NC ISAAC assesses it to be highly probable³ that intentional substation/electrical grid disruption incidents will occur in North Carolina in the remainder of 2024 and into 2025.
- (U//FOUO) The NC ISAAC assesses that election-related incidents of disruption nearly certainly⁴ will occur in North Carolina in November of 2024; however, the likelihood of a politically motivated attack occurring is assessed as roughly even odds.⁵
- (U) The Center for Internet Security's Cyber Threat Intelligence team assesses it is likely that cyber-attacks against water and wastewater systems will continue into 2024, mainly driven by global conflicts.⁶

(U//FOUO) These assessments are made with high confidence.⁷

CYBER THREATS**(U) Key Findings**

- (U//FOUO) Cyber criminals, particularly initial access brokers and ransomware gangs, are the most immediate threat to North Carolina due to their numerous intrusions within state, local, private, and non-profit organizations across the country and their intent to cause harm to the US.
- (U//FOUO) People's Republic of China (PRC) Advanced Persistent Threats (APTs) are a threat to North Carolina due to their publicly attributed malicious cyber activity targeting US critical infrastructure entities.⁸ PRC will continue to be the greatest state threat actors to North Carolina as relations between the US and PRC are continuing to degrade. PRC also continues to demonstrate the capabilities to compromise common hardware and software utilized by North Carolina critical infrastructure entities as well as directly target private and public organizations.
- (U//FOUO) Russian APT activity and APTs from other nation-states hostile to the US are threats to North Carolina. However, these APTs have not demonstrated the sophistication and number of cyber intrusions within the US like the PRC.
- (U//FOUO) The risk for cyber-attacks in North Carolina is high due to the numerous and increasing TAs globally, the lowered skills required to conduct an attack, vulnerabilities in IT, and human error.

(U//FOUO) These assessments are made with high confidence.⁹

High

GANGS, CARTELS, AND TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME GROUPS**(U) Key Findings**

- (U//FOUO) The NC ISAAC assesses that gangs, cartels, and TOCs presence and prevalence within North Carolina likely¹⁰ will continue to grow in 2024 and into 2025.
- (U//FOUO) The NC ISAAC and SOUI assess that gangs, cartels, and TOCs presence and prevalence within the North Carolina state correctional facilities very likely¹¹ will continue to grow in 2024 and into 2025.

(U//FOUO) These assessments are made with medium¹² confidence.

High

ILLCIT DRUGS**((U) Key Findings**

- (U//FOUO) The NC ISAAC assesses it to be roughly even odds¹³ that drug crimes reported statewide to the FBI National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) will continue to decline.
- (U//FOUO) The NC ISAAC assesses methamphetamine very likely¹⁴ will continue to be the most common drug seized in North Carolina for the remainder of 2024 and into 2025.
- (U//FOUO) The NC ISAAC assesses illicit opioids, particularly fentanyl and hybrid or poly-drugs, almost certainly¹⁵ will continue posing a significant threat to law enforcement and the public health system in North Carolina for the remainder of 2024 and into 2025.
- (U//FOUO) The NC ISAAC assesses cocaine very likely¹⁶ will continue to increase in North Carolina for the remainder of 2024 and into 2025.

(U//FOUO) These assessments are made with high confidence.¹⁷

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL THREATS**(U) Key Findings**

- (U//FOUO) The NC ISAAC assesses that crime and violence in schools almost certainly¹⁸ will continue for the remainder of 2024, and into 2025.
- (U//FOUO) The NC ISAAC assesses possession of a weapon, possession of a firearm, bomb threats, shooting threats, and incidents of assault are all highly probable¹⁹ to increase for the remainder of 2024, and into 2025.
- (U//FOUO) The NC ISAAC assesses swatting threats very likely²⁰ will continue to be a persistent threat for the remainder of 2024, and into 2025.

(U//FOUO) These assessments are made with high confidence.²¹

TERRORISM

(U) Key Findings

- (U//FOUO) The NC ISAAC assesses composite violent extremists (CoVEs) likely²² will pose a persistent threat to North Carolina for the remainder of 2024 and into 2025.
- (U//FOUO) The NC ISAAC assesses Racially Motivated Violent Extremists (RMVEs) likely²³ will continue to pose a threat to North Carolina in 2024 and into 2025.
- (U//FOUO) The NC ISAAC assesses Anti-Government/Anti-Authority Violent Extremists (AGAAVEs) and Single-Issue Violent Extremists likely²⁴ will continue to pose a threat to North Carolina in 2024 and into 2025, though this is assessed to be less severe than CoVEs or RMVEs.
- (U//FOUO) The NC ISAAC assesses the threat of FTOs to North Carolina for the remainder of 2024 and into 2025 at roughly even odds²⁵.
- (U//FOUO) The NC ISAAC assesses that antisemitism is a concern for North Carolina and very likely²⁶ will persist for the remainder of 2024 and into 2025.

(U//FOUO) These assessments are made with high confidence.²⁷

High

¹ (U//FOUO) 2024 North Carolina ICAC/CyberTip Stats

² (U) Appendix A – Statements of Likelihood and Confidence

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ <https://learn.cisecurity.org/public-water-and-wastewater-Sector-face-mounting-cyber-threat>

⁷ (U) Appendix A – Statements of Likelihood and Confidence

⁸ <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/security/blog/2023/05/24/volt-typhoon-targets-us-critical-infrastructure-with-living-off-the-land-techniques/>

⁹ (U) Appendix A – Statements of Likelihood and Confidence

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

(U) Appendix A – Statements of Likelihood and Confidence

(U) Statements of likelihood, probability, and confidence in this product reflect Intelligence Community (IC) terminology. NC ISAAC utilizes the following guidance regarding statements of likelihood, probability, and confidence:

Terms of Likelihood	Almost No Chance	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Roughly Even Chance	Likely	Very Likely	Almost Certainly
Terms of Probability	Remote	Highly Improbable	Improbable	Roughly Even Odds	Probable	Highly Probable	Nearly Certain
Percentage of Chance	1-5%	5-20%	20-45%	45-55%	55-80%	80-95%	95-99%

(U) High Confidence: Generally, multiple high-quality sources were used, reporting quality and plausible information. This does not imply fact or certainty. While additional reporting and information sources may change the analytical judgments rendered, such changes are most likely to be refinements and not substantial in nature.

(U) Medium Confidence: Generally, a moderate number of good-quality sources were used, or a minimal number of high-quality sources were used, reporting quality and plausible information. Additional reporting or information sources have the potential to increase confidence levels or substantively change analytical judgments rendered.

(U) Low Confidence: Generally, minimal, fragmented or unknown credibility sources were used, and the quality and/or plausibility of information cannot be determined. Solid and reliable judgments are unable to be rendered, however the potential impact of the judgments makes reporting of them prudent. Absent any additional reporting or information sources, analytical judgments should be considered preliminary in nature. Additional reporting or information sources have the potential to increase confidence levels or substantively change analytical judgments rendered.

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