



# Intelligence Assessment

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**CSIS IA 2011-12/115  
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## **2012 Domestic Threat Environment In Canada (Part I): Left-Wing / Right-Wing Extremism**

### **Summary**

still consider transnational solidarity to be important

**Left-wing extremists**

the Initiative de résistance internationaliste /  
Résistance internationaliste (IRI/RI), the group which perpetrated three single bombings in 2004,  
2006 and 2010 respectively,

The anti-government Freeman on the Land (FOTL) ideology is present across Canada.

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**AB**

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**Introduction**

1. Canadian domestic extremists are capable of orchestrating serious acts of politically-motivated violence, as illustrated by the 2010 firebombing of a Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) branch in Ottawa. This two-part assessment provides an analysis of the domestic threat environment in Canada for 2012 and the potential for violence originating from left-wing extremism, right-wing extremism. The objective of this assessment is to identify potential tactics and targets in 2012 as well as triggers or potential for confrontations. Part one is dedicated to left-wing and right-wing extremism.

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**Left-wing extremism<sup>1</sup>**

2. In 2010, the level of left-wing extremist activity was unusually high due to the convergence of major international events (the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympics, the Muskoka G8 Summit and the Toronto G20 Summit) in Canada. In contrast, the level of activity in 2011 was low.

The relative quiet of 2011, however, should not be viewed as permanent. Canadian left-wing extremists can exploit the negative consequences of the current economic downturn in order to bring attention to perceived policy failures or negative effects of capitalism.

**Situation In Europe And Its Influence In Canada**

3. The effects of the global economic downturn and financial crisis resulting in severe austerity measures, government cutbacks, and high unemployment throughout Europe have been driving factors of growing social unrest and politically motivated violence in that region. These developments have been ongoing since 2007.

4. According to Europol, left-wing extremists remained very active in 2010. More bomb and arson attacks occurred than in previous years and the modus operandi in a number of attacks showed signs of increased transnational coordination. For example, in November 2010, the Greek terrorist organisation Conspiracy of Fire Nuclei / *Synomosia Pyrinon Fotias*<sup>2</sup> (SFP) was able to stage a large-scale synchronised attack by perpetrating a parcel bomb campaign against various embassies, foreign Heads of State, and European institutions. The motives of this parcel bomb campaign and its selection of targets remain somewhat unclear, but according to Europol, it appears that SFP has raised its profile towards a more international dimension. International calls for action by the SFP usually caused actions outside Greece's frontiers, either in Europe and Latin America.

<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this analysis, left-wing extremism refers to politically-motivated violent activities. This includes, but is not limited to, groups or individuals advocating or using violence in order to further their political agenda or ideology. Revolutionary communists, pro-insurrection anarchists and eco-extremists are examples of left-wing extremists.

<sup>2</sup> The SFP received a terrorist designation by the US Department of State in October 2011.

***Acts of solidarity with events in Europe***

5.

For example, in December 2010, minor acts of ideologically-motivated vandalism were claimed in Vancouver in support of street revolts in Europe, and in Montreal in support of an anarchist jailed in Greece. In March 2011, a community policing centre was vandalized in Vancouver in “solidarity” with the Greek struggle. The expression of solidarity with imprisoned ‘comrades’ is a typical motive for anarchists, and arrests or trials often generate international calls for action.

6. The end of the legal process of seventeen persons charged with planning to disrupt the G20 Toronto summit and the imprisonment of six key figures of the “Seventeen”

In November 2011, the “Seventeen” issued a collective statement which ends with a call of solidarity with those fighting “from Cairo to London, from Greece to Chile”.

***The October 2011 series of rail incidents***

7. The October 2011 series of rail incidents in Germany illustrate the potential for copycat actions and migration of tactics or ideas. In this case, a left-wing extremist group, the Hekla Reception Committee-Initiative for More Social Eruptions, claimed responsibility for planting multiple timed incendiary devices<sup>4</sup> in proximity to rail assets such as tracks, utility shafts, tunnels and cable ducts. In its online communiqué, Hekla indicated that the attacks were launched in response to the German troop presence in Afghanistan and called for the release of Bradley Manning, an American soldier jailed on charges that he passed restricted

<sup>4</sup> Often referred to as a firebomb, a timed incendiary device consists of a timer and an initiator that ignites a more volatile, flammable material in a bottle or other container. Since it burns, a timed incendiary device does not produce an explosion. It is meant to start a rapidly spreading fire rather than an explosion.

information to Wikileaks.

8. This series of incidents also illustrates the relative ease with which one or a few determined individuals can target critical infrastructure such as railways, causing economic disruption and risking death or injury. Information on constructing timed incendiary devices is widely available online and the needed material is easily obtained from hardware stores and gas stations. Such cheap and unsophisticated devices fit the purpose of small extremist groups with limited resources and capability.

***The December 2011 parcel bomb attack against bank representative***

9. The parcel bomb addressed to the Deutsche Bank Chief Executive Officer in Frankfurt, Germany, on December 7, 2011. The Deutsche Bank parcel bomb arrived amidst rising global discontent over the banking sector's role in the current financial crisis and growing income or wealth inequality. In Canada, banks have been one of the favourite targets of left-wing extremists.

**1.2 High-Profile Events In 2012**

10. High-profile international events in 2012 such as the NATO/G8 Summits in the United States (US) and the 2012 Olympic Games in the United Kingdom (UK)

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### **1.3 Situation In Canada**

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#### ***The “prison industrial complex”<sup>6</sup> a new target***

13. Since 2010, left-wing extremist publications in Canada have called for the “end of the prison industrial complex” and “solidarity with political prisoners”. In a post-G20 context, left-wing extremists considered comrades sentenced to jail as “political prisoners” and the prison system as “oppressive”. Financial institutions were the first to be targeted for their real or perceived support for the Canadian prison system. Immediate post-G8/G20 vandalism claims were indicative of this emerging trend. For example, during the night of June 27-28, 2010, two Bank of Montreal (BMO) branches in Toronto had several windows smashed. The claim explains that this action was done “to respond to the arrests” during the G20 Summit and in opposition to BMO’s financial support for the development of the Toronto South Detention Center.

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<sup>6</sup> For left-wing extremists, the prison industrial complex (PIC) refers to correctional facilities, private companies and businesses that supply goods and services to government prison agencies. The PIC is perceived as perpetuating a belief that imprisonment is a quick fix to underlying social problems such as homelessness, unemployment or mental illness.

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14. In addition to financial institutions, targeting of the “prison industrial complex” may also involve companies contributing to the functioning or construction of prisons. For example, since mid-2011, the Kingston office of an architectural firm responsible for the design of a new provincial prison has been repeatedly vandalized. In August 2011, the exterior door of this office was graffitied and the lock was sealed with glue. In mid-November, wanted posters with photos of the main architects began appearing in downtown Kingston. In early December 2011, an exterior door to the office was sprayed with a corrosive solution and the lock was again sealed with glue.

#### ***Another bombing in 2012?***

15. Since 2004, Canada has experienced nine politically-motivated bombings perpetrated by domestic extremists, the last one occurring in 2010. No politically-motivated bombing or firebombing took place in 2011.

Attacks on the Western Canadian oil industry, ranging from vandalism to bombings, during the nineties and more recently in 2008-2009, serve as a reminder that opposition to the oil and gas industry in Alberta and British Columbia can at times become violent.

16. In Quebec, the group Initiative de résistance internationaliste / Résistance internationaliste (IRI/RI) claimed three single bombings in 2004, 2006 and 2010 respectively. The 2004 communiqué condemned the destruction and pillaging of natural resources, the 2006 communiqué stated that IRI had acted in response to abuses perpetrated by the ravenous petroleum companies and in reaction to spikes in gasoline prices. In 2010, the group listed in its communiqué a long list of grievances including its opposition to the “militaristic ideals and practices of the Canadian state”.

## **II-Right-Wing Extremism**

### ***The lone actor threat and Breivik’s manifesto***

17. The July 22, 2011 attacks in Norway are an example of how effective a lone actor can be. Anders Behring Breivik’s manifesto can be regarded as a how-to guide. It provides a detailed

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blueprint for planning attacks from research through materiel procurement and bomb assembly to execution. The how-to information contained in this manifesto was extremely detailed, and therefore could assist other lone actors, regardless of their ideological affinity. Also, the writings of lone actors tend to have a life of their own. For example, the Unabomber's<sup>7</sup> manifesto still circulates on the Internet after more than fifteen years.

### ***The neo-Nazi and white supremacist/nationalist threat***

19.

Such ideologies are spreading in Europe and the United States, but in Canada, they still remain on the societal fringe. The majority of individuals involved in the milieu in Canada hold strong racist and anti-immigration views, but do not overly propose serious acts of violence. For example, they may organize anti-immigration poster campaigns or harass Canadian Aboriginals or visible minorities.

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<sup>7</sup> Theodore Kaczynski was a lone actor who engaged in a mail-bombing campaign in the US between 1978 and 1995. He wrote a 50 pages essay entitled "Industrial Society and its Future" which became known as the Unabomber's manifesto.



***The Freeman on the Land (FOTL) threat<sup>10</sup>***

20. Over the last two years, law-enforcement agencies have noted an increase in the number of incidents related to FOTL anti-government ideology in Canada. Proponents of FOTL ideology - and their US Sovereign Citizens counterparts - do not recognize the authority of the state and its agents (judges, police officers, etc.). They divorce themselves from the government by revoking all “contracts” –driver’s licence, social security numbers, birth certificates, etc- so that the Government no longer has jurisdiction over their lives. For example, Freeman on the Land and Sovereign Citizens believe that they should not be required to pay taxes or obey laws, and that they have the right to defend themselves -including the use of deadly force- if confronted by a State agent.

22. Estimates available on open sources put the number of Freemen in Canada at 30,000 people.

<sup>10</sup> For the purpose of this analysis, the Freeman on the Land ideology/movement is included in the right-wing extremism section. It is however a hybrid anti-government ideology that could be attractive for both left-wing and right-wing extremists.

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**Conclusion**

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