

# BRIC RFI Response

## Preliminary Analysis Criminal Activity & Threats at 19 August Events

# BRIC



BOSTON REGIONAL INTELLIGENCE CENTER

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### (U//LES) CRIMINAL ACTIVITY & THREATS – 19 AUGUST EVENTS

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(U//LES) The following is a summary of noted threats leading up to and criminal activity reported during events in and around Boston Common on 19 August 2017. Please note this information is preliminary and is based on current reporting of the events that transpired.

#### Background

The *Second Boston Free Speech Rally*<sup>1</sup> was organized on publicly available social media in July of 2017. The BRIC was aware of the event due to criminal activity at the previous *Free Speech Rally* and counter events held in May of 2017. Prior to the event in May, online interactions between opposing groups was contentious. Approximately 300 – 400 people attended the first *Free Speech Rally* and counter events; there were two arrests for affray related to these events. Prior to the violence in Charlottesville, VA, the *Second Boston Free Speech Rally* had not attracted much attention, there was no indication of counter events, and there was no indication of any planned criminal activity or risk to public safety. The events in Charlottesville heightened tensions and brought an increased level of awareness to the *Second Boston Free Speech Rally*. While the events in Charlottesville did not appear to impact numbers for the *Second Boston Free Speech Rally*, we saw the development and rapid increase in expected attendance at counter events. At this time the BRIC noted an increase in the potential for criminal activity as posts on publicly available social media were contentious and threatening. The *Second Boston Free Speech Rally* organizers applied for and were granted a permit on 16 August 2017. The counter events were not permitted events. The *Second Boston Free Speech Rally* had approximately 60 attendees, while the counter events swelled to an estimated 40K. BPD made 36 arrests related to these events.

#### Prior Threats / Information Reported:

- (U//LES) The majority of publicly available postings in relation to the event were noted to be contentious, with many advocating for self-defense and preparing for violence by bringing **defensive weapons to include batons and shields**.
- (U//LES) The BRIC noted an **increase in uncorroborated threats of violence on other publicly available social media as the event drew closer to include discussion of bringing knives, bats, bike locks, concealed firearms, and potentially gasoline**. This information was uncorroborated and it was unknown if these individuals were in the Boston area or intended to attend the events on 19 August.
- (U//LES) The BRIC received uncorroborated information from a credible source indicating that some individuals attending the counter events intended to **bring bottles filled with an unknown acid to use against the attendees of the event and / or law enforcement officers**.
- (U//LES) The BRIC received uncorroborated information from a private citizen that individuals may try to hide weapons in the Common in advance of the rallies. This information was investigated and no weapons were located.
- (U//LES) A flyer was reported to the BRIC that referenced “fascists coming to Boston Common on Sat. Aug 19th” and displayed “**White Nationalist / Neo-Nazi / Alt-Right Symbols & Logos**” to include the **Thin Blue Line symbol**. The BRIC disseminated this information for officer safety and awareness, as the flyer stated that anyone displaying these symbols / logos is not welcome in Boston. **The BRIC is not aware of any direct reports of this flyer being posted in the Boston area. The BRIC was sent a single image of a poster that was shared widely online.**
- (U//LES) Some individuals on publicly available social media referenced attendees being “Dodged” or “Dodging” people at the rally, likely in reference to the vehicular assault in Charlottesville, VA which involved a Dodge Challenger.

<sup>1</sup> **This information describes First Amendment protected activities. The BRIC recognizes that Americans have constitutionally protected rights to assemble, speak, and petition the government. The BRIC safeguards these rights and only reports on First Amendment protected activities for operational planning in the interest of assuring the safety and security of the demonstrators and the public.**

- (U//LES) The BRIC was aware of information on publicly available social media which indicated some gang-affiliated individuals planned to attend these events.
- (U//LES) Due to the potential for criminal activity, risk to public safety, and the continuous evolution of these events, the BRIC provided regular updates to law enforcement leading up to and during the events. Additionally, we provided high-level situational awareness alerts to our private sector partners.

#### Criminal Activity Observed:

- (U//LES) BPD **arrested 36 individuals** for charges including: Affray, Disorderly, Unlawful possession of a firearm / ammunition, A&B, Disturbing Public Assembly, Resisting Arrest, ABDW, Carrying Dangerous Weapon / Knife, Drinking Alcohol in Public, Trespassing, ABPO, Disturbing the Peace, Delinquent to wit ABDW, Delinquent to wit Disorderly Person.
- (U//LES) Individuals from both the permitted event and counter events were reportedly engaged in physical fights; there were multiple instances, both during and hours following the events, where officers were required to protect/surround/escort individuals affiliated with or perceived to be affiliated with the permitted event from / away from the counter group.
- (U//LES) Counter-event attendees reportedly crowded the area designated as the entrance / exit for the permitted event in attempts to verbally and physically assault attendees of that event.
- (U//LES) **Individuals were found with weapons and tactical gear to include: loaded firearms,<sup>2</sup> knives,<sup>3</sup> tactical vests,<sup>4</sup> and ball bearings concealed in a crown royal bag.<sup>5</sup>**
- (U//LES) Multiple individuals moved to adjacent areas / streets following the conclusion of the permitted event and refused to disperse; many of these individuals were reportedly behaving in a disorderly manner and some became violent toward law enforcement.

#### Criminal Activity against Law Enforcement:

- (U//LES) **Officers became the target of violence** from many of the attendees of the events.
- (U//LES) **Individuals reportedly interfered with law enforcement to impede their ability to pursue or arrest suspects and maintain public order.** This included stepping in the path of an officer in pursuit on a bicycle, resulting in a crash and injury;<sup>6</sup> jumping on officers as they intervened in fights;<sup>7</sup> and crowding officers getting people to safety.<sup>8</sup>
- (U//LES) Individuals reportedly **assaulted officers by biting,<sup>9</sup> spitting,<sup>10</sup> punching,<sup>11</sup> pushing,<sup>12</sup> and hitting them with objects. Objects thrown at officers (and rally attendees) included bottles,<sup>13</sup> bottles filled with urine,<sup>14</sup> traffic cones,<sup>15</sup> rocks,<sup>16</sup> other small objects,<sup>17</sup> and what officers describe as a petroleum-based gel-type starter fluid for home grill use.<sup>18</sup>**
  - Incident reports and video of altercations indicate that **multiple suspects assaulted officers and then retreated into the crowd to elude arrest.**
- (U//LES) Officers had protective gear and department radios ripped off and received **blows of sufficient force to crack the protective shield of one of the helmets.<sup>19</sup>**

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<sup>2</sup> I172068425, I172068450

<sup>3</sup> I172068425, I172068428

<sup>4</sup> I172068425

<sup>5</sup> I172068518 Supplemental Report

<sup>6</sup> I172068495

<sup>7</sup> I172068451

<sup>8</sup> I172068455, I172068464

<sup>9</sup> Per Massachusetts State Police

<sup>10</sup> I172068455

<sup>11</sup> I172068464

<sup>12</sup> I172068464

<sup>13</sup> I172068464, I172068485

<sup>14</sup> I172068904, I172068544

<sup>15</sup> I172068455

<sup>16</sup> I172068904, I172068479, I172068464

<sup>17</sup> I172068455, I172068479, I172068483, I172068495, I172068504, I172068518, I172068537

<sup>18</sup> I172068935

<sup>19</sup> I172068455