



By THE NUMBERS

ISIS CASES IN THE UNITED STATES

March 1, 2014 – June 22, 2015

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CENTERONNATIONALSECURITY.ORG

The rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is a relatively new and evolving phenomenon, both abroad and at home. In June 2014, ISIS took control of Mosul, Tikrit, al-Qaim, and three other towns in Iraq. In July 2014, ISIS announced the creation of a caliphate—an Islamic State—and over the course of the next twelve months succeeded in controlling increasing amounts of territory in Iraq and Syria. By June 2015, a rise in recruitment had led to an estimated 20,000 foreign fighters traveling to Syria and Iraq from Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

In the United States, law enforcement has turned its efforts to preventing individuals from joining ISIS forces abroad as well as from mounting attacks in the United States. The result has been an accelerating number of ISIS-related arrests. From March 2014 to June 22, 2015, 56 individuals have been charged in U.S. federal court with supporting ISIS. An additional 3 have been killed by law enforcement, each of whom were alleged associates of other individuals indicted on ISIS-related charges. After January 2015—the month ISIS first took over major cities in Syria—the frequency of arrests in the United States accelerated from an average rate of just over one per month (from March to December 2014) to an average rate of over seven per month (from January to June 22, 2015).

Researchers at the Center on National Security at Fordham Law (CNS) have analyzed the 59 individuals in this study, *ISIS Cases in the United States*.¹ There have been two consecutive developments in the ISIS cases to date. First, prior to March 2015, ISIS-related cases were largely comprised of alleged foreign fighters—those who attempted or aspired to join ISIS abroad and those who helped facilitate the aspirants' efforts. Second, beginning in late March 2015, there has been a substantial increase in cases involving individuals accused of plotting attacks in the United States in the name of ISIS. Out of the 59 individuals, 17 are domestic plotters, 15 of whom were identified or indicted since late March 2015.

Overall, the accused are diverse and difficult to profile, racially or ethnically. They belong to a wide swath of ethnic backgrounds, including African, African American, Caucasian, Central Asian, Eastern European, and South Asian. Few are of Middle Eastern Arab descent. Beyond that, characteristics of the alleged ISIS supporters in both the foreign fighter and domestic plotter groups include the following:

- The vast majority (81 percent) are U.S. citizens.
- The average age is 26.3 years and the median age is 24 years.
- Fifteen percent of the individuals are female.
- At least one-third are converts to Islam.
- Eight of the 59 (14 percent) have a previous felony conviction.
- Three of those charged have successfully made it to Syria to join ISIS.
- Eight of the individuals have family ties to others in the dataset.

¹ All legal information included in this report represents allegations against the accused; the majority of cases are pending. The term “case” refers to legal proceedings brought against each individual charged with crimes in U.S. federal court.

Social Media: ISIS has mastered the use of the Internet as a propaganda tool and has attracted followers through various social media platforms. Forty-five of the 56 cases (80 percent) involve communications sympathetic to ISIS or recruiting on behalf of ISIS through social media. At least 18 individuals were confirmed to have been discovered by law enforcement because of their postings on social media sites, including Twitter and Facebook.

Motivations: When it comes to motivations, the foreign fighters and the domestic plotters share some attitudes, notably:

- Resentment over U.S. foreign policy and personal alienation from U.S. society.
- Pride in ISIS's conquests abroad.
- Frustration with being “caged” inside the United States.

Among the foreign fighters, dominant motives include:

- Attraction to the idea of the caliphate as a homeland for fundamentalist Islam. The accused individuals intend to serve what they view as the caliphate with a wide range of services. In addition to fighting, they envision serving the caliphate through teaching, nursing, supporting soldiers, becoming wives and mothers, and policing.
- Determination to migrate to the caliphate. Many have declared a willingness to destroy their passports once they arrive as a sign of their intention to permanently migrate.
- Interest in toppling the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria.

Among the domestic plotters, a distinctive narrative is emerging that includes:

- Efforts directed toward attacks in the U.S., due in part to the increasing difficulty of traveling to Syria.
- Inspiration from recent terrorist attacks, including the shooting in Garland, Texas; the Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris; and the Boston marathon bombing. Unlike a dominant narrative of al Qaeda-related cases after 2001, the references to 9/11 are infrequent.
- Intention to attack U.S. law enforcement officials and members of the military.

Intervention: Of the foreign fighter aspirants, 61 percent are 21 years old or younger. The FBI has tried with several of these individuals to follow a pattern of intervention rather than arrest. There are at least five instances where parents have tried to dissuade their child from taking steps to join ISIS. In at least one of these instances, parents worked with law enforcement in these efforts.

Thus far, only 4 of the 56 charged individuals have been sentenced. Although the longest sentence to date is 20.25 years, the other three have received relatively lenient sentences averaging 5.1 years. (In addition, one individual was held in a halfway hour prior to his conviction, an unprecedented circumstance in post-9/11 terrorism cases.)

***Overall:** Whether foreign fighters or domestic plotters, the ISIS-inspired individuals in this study reflect a new dimension in the landscape of post-9/11 domestic terrorism. This new terror threat is distinctive largely because of the young age of the accused, the presence of women, the role of social media in their radicalization, and the desire of many of them to travel abroad and serve the caliphate. There has also been a pattern of domestic plots directed at U.S. military and government targets rather than civilian targets, although very recent arrests have involved more mass murder plots.*

THE INDIVIDUALS

CATEGORIES OF ISIS CASES

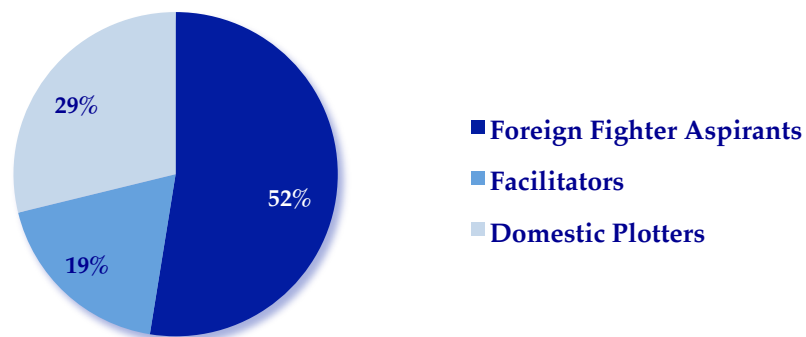
Note: These categories, as defined by CNS, represent allegations based on criminal complaints, media reports, and other public sources. The majority of cases are still in progress. The categories represent the primary accusation against the defendant and do not denote exclusivity.

TOTAL	59
Foreign Fighters	
Foreign Fighter Aspirants	31
Facilitators	11
Domestic Plotters	17

➤ Foreign Fighters

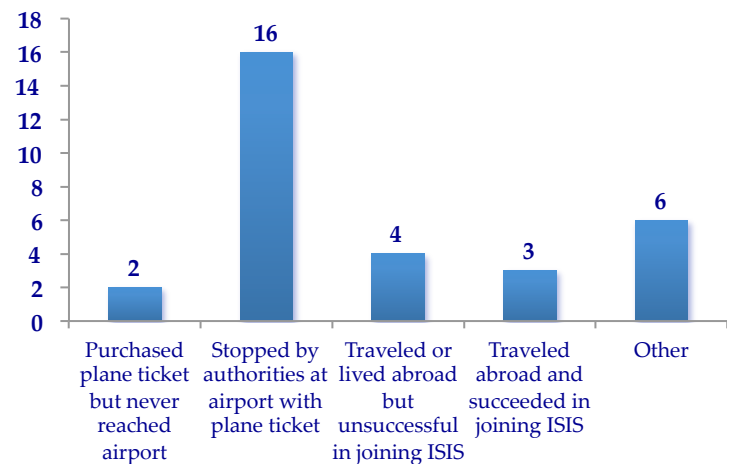
- ❖ **Foreign Fighter Aspirants:** Individuals who either allegedly succeeded in joining or attempted to join ISIS abroad.
- ❖ **Facilitators:** Individuals who allegedly assisted foreign fighter aspirants or ISIS abroad with activities including recruitment, funding, supplying, and/or logistics of travel.

- **Domestic Plotters:** Individuals who allegedly devised attacks on U.S. soil. Three of the 17 were killed while attempting to conduct attacks, one in Massachusetts by law enforcement and two in Texas by a traffic officer.



FOREIGN FIGHTER ASPIRANTS: EFFORTS TO JOIN ISIS

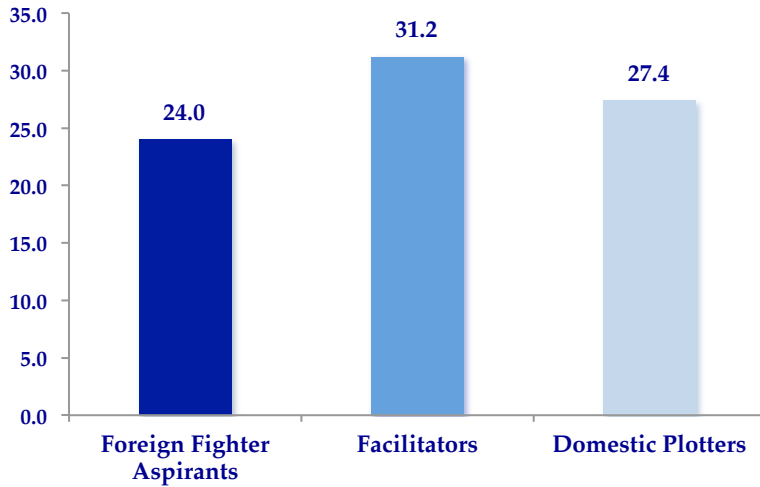
- This chart illustrates the furthest point the foreign fighter aspirants reached in their efforts to join ISIS abroad. The furthest point does not necessarily denote the point of arrest or the only attempt.
- Some of the foreign fighter aspirants expressed willingness or intent to plot at home should they not succeed in joining ISIS abroad.



THE INDIVIDUALS

AVERAGE AGE (AT TIME OF ARREST)

OVERALL (59 individuals)	26.3
Foreign Fighter Aspirants (31 individuals)	24.0
Facilitators (11 individuals)	31.2
Domestic Plotters (17 individuals)	27.4



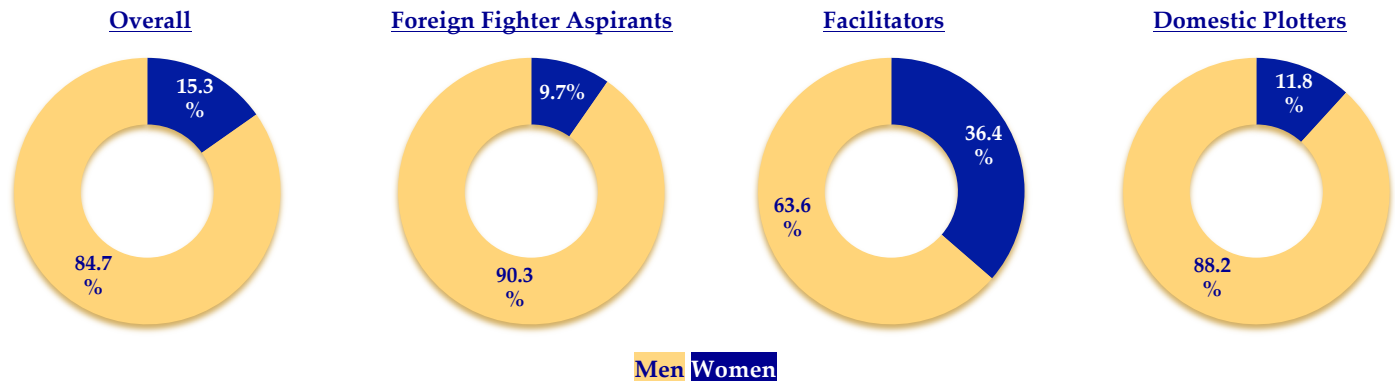
➤ The age range of the individuals at the time of arrest averages 26.3 years and spans 17 to 47 years.

➤ Foreign fighter aspirants are notably young, with a median age of 21. **Sixty-one percent are 21 or younger.**

➤ By contrast, over 55 percent of those in the facilitator category are 30 or older.

GENDER

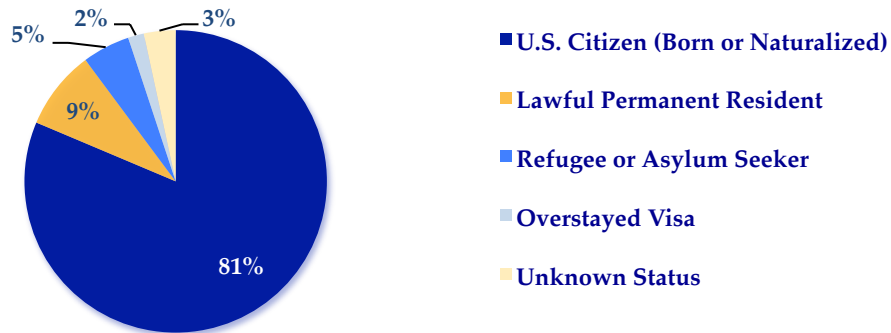
	Men	Women
OVERALL (59 individuals)	50	9
Foreign Fighter Aspirants (31 individuals)	28	3
Facilitators (11 individuals)	7	4
Domestic Plotters (17 individuals)	15	2



THE INDIVIDUALS

CITIZENSHIP/IMMIGRATION STATUS

	U.S. Citizen (Born or Naturalized)	Lawful Permanent Resident	Refugee or Asylum Seeker	Overstayed Visa	Unknown Status
OVERALL (59 individuals)	48	5	3	1	2
Foreign Fighter Aspirants (31 individuals)	27	3	0	0	1
Facilitators (11 individuals)	4	2	3	1	1
Domestic Plotters (17 individuals)	17	0	0	0	0

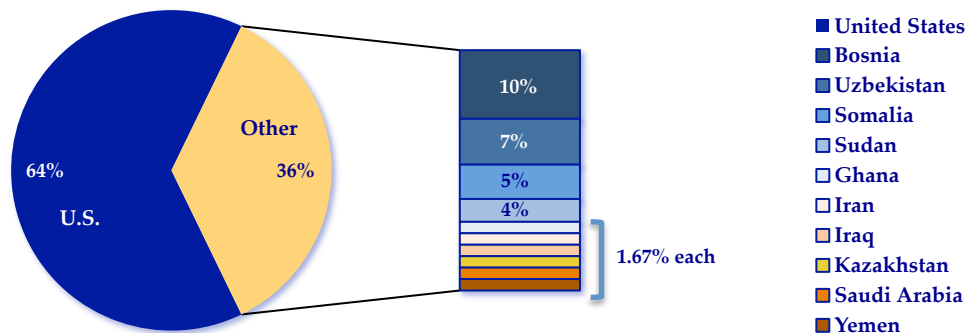


- **Eighty-one percent** overall are U.S. citizens, either through birth or naturalization.
- **One hundred percent** of the domestic plotters are U.S. citizens.

COUNTRY OF BIRTH

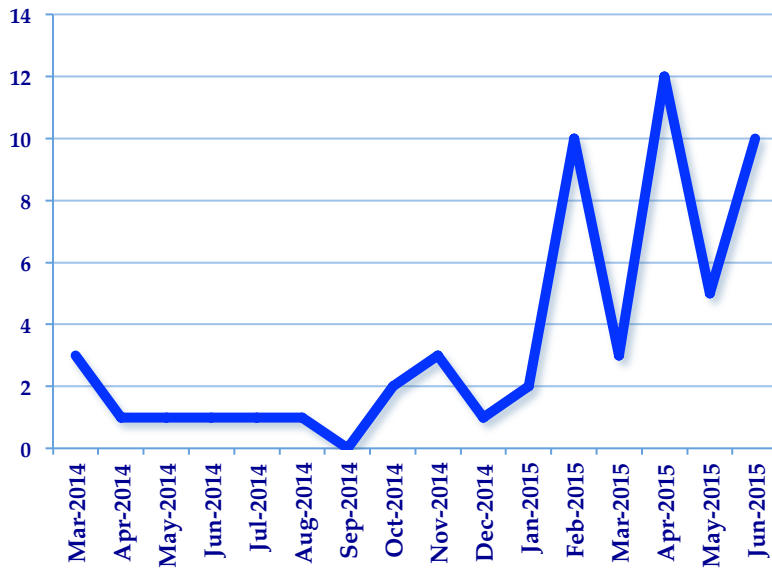
	U.S.	Bosnia	Uzbekistan	Somalia	Sudan	Ghana	Iran	Iraq	Kazakhstan	Saudi Arabia	Yemen
OVERALL (59 individuals)	38	6	4	3	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Foreign Fighter Aspirants (31 individuals)	23	1	1	3	0	0	1	1	1	0	0
Facilitators (11 individuals)	1	5	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Domestic Plotters (17 individuals)	14	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1

- **Sixty-four percent** of all individuals were born in the United States.



THE CASES

CHRONOLOGY AND GEOGRAPHY



Location of Case	# of Cases
New York	11
Minnesota	10
Missouri	6
California	4
North Carolina	4
Illinois	3
Texas	3
Virginia	3
Kansas	2
Massachusetts	2
Ohio	2
Arizona	1
Colorado	1
Georgia	1
New Jersey	1
Pennsylvania	1
Wisconsin	1

- Thus far in 2015, there have been 42 legal cases compared with 14 from March through December 2014.²
- There have been ISIS-related legal cases in 17 states, with the largest concentrations in New York and Minnesota.
- The FBI has ISIS-related investigations open in all 50 states.³

INFORMANT CASES

	# of Informant Cases	Percentage
OVERALL (56 CASES)	29	52%
Foreign Fighter Aspirants (31 Cases)	14	45%
Facilitators (11 Cases)	4	36%
Domestic Plotters (14 Cases)	11	79%

- **Over half** of the ISIS cases involved at least one confidential human source, informant, or undercover agent, and some involved multiple.
- **Seventy-nine percent** of the domestic plotter cases involved confidential human sources, informants, or undercover agents.

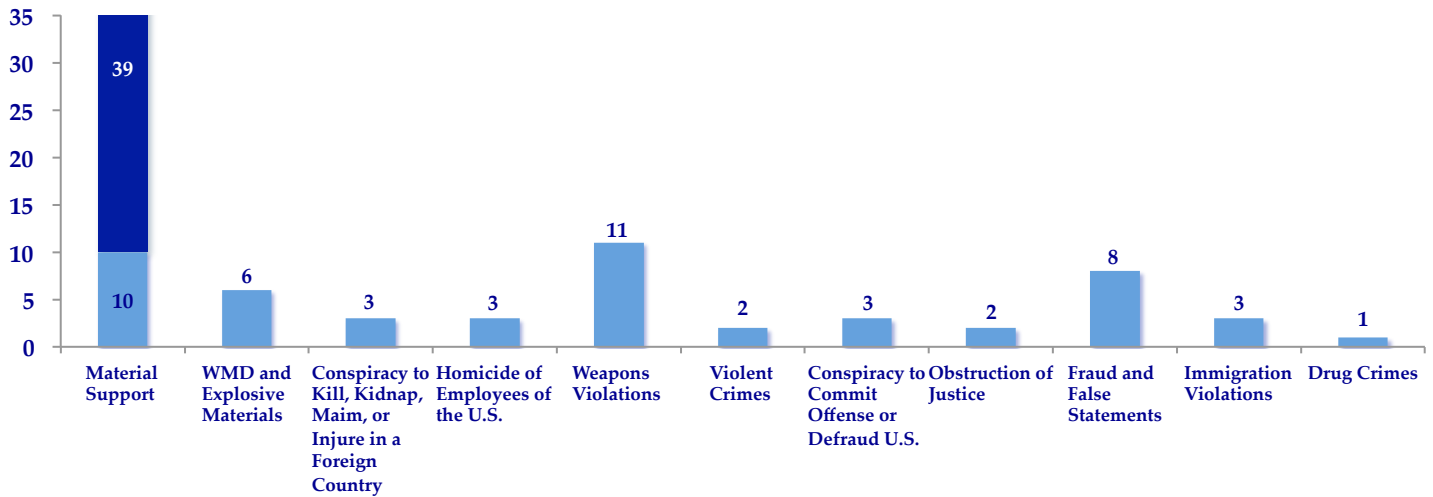
² As no charges were brought against the three individuals who were killed, they are not reflected in "The Cases" section of this report.

³ "Comey: Extremists in All 50 States," *The Washington Post*, February 25, 2015,

http://www.washingtonpost.com/posttv/world/national-security/comey-extremists-exist-in-all-50-states/2015/02/25/8bb6a716-bcfd-11e4-9dfb-03366e719af8_video.html.

THE CASES

CHARGES



- Ten individuals were charged with 18 U.S.C. § 2339A and 39 with 18 U.S.C. § 2339B. (For an index of charges, refer to “Statutes by Category” on page 9.)

DISPOSITION

	Conviction by Plea (16%)	Unresolved (84%)
OVERALL (56 CASES)	9	47
Foreign Fighter Aspirants (31 Cases)	7	24
Facilitators (11 Cases)	2	9
Domestic Plotters (14 Cases)	0	14

- One individual has pleaded guilty to violating 18 U.S.C. § 2339B, 18 U.S.C. § 922, and 18 USC § 924. Four other individuals have pleaded guilty to violating 18 U.S.C. § 2339B and two individuals have pleaded guilty to violating 18 USC § 2339A. Additionally, one individual has pleaded guilty to violating 18 U.S.C. § 371 and one to violating 18 U.S.C. § 1001.

SENTENCING

- Although most of these cases are still proceeding through the judicial system, four defendants have received sentences of 20.25, 6.83, 4.5, and 4 years through plea deals.⁴
- The judge in one of the cases initially assigned the defendant to a halfway house pending sentencing, although the defendant is now back in prison; the possibility of assigning individuals to halfway houses continues to be considered by judges in some of the cases.

⁴ One individual was sentenced to 20.25 years for a violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2339B, 18 U.S.C. § 922, and 18 U.S.C. § 924. One individual was sentenced to 6.83 years for a violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2339B. One individual was sentenced to 4.5 years for a violation 18 U.S.C. § 1001. One individual was sentenced to 4 years for a violation 18 U.S.C. § 371, referencing 18 U.S.C. § 2339B.

INDEX OF ACCUSED INDIVIDUALS

Abdurahman, Zacharia
Abood, Bilal
Ahmed, Hamza
Al-Ghazi, Amir Said Abdul Rahman
Amin, Ali Shukri
Badawi, Muhanad
Blair, Alexander
Booker, John
Brown, Avin Marsalis
Coffman, Heather Elizabeth
Conley, Shannon Maureen
Cornell, Christopher Lee
Dandach, Adam
Daud, Abdirahman
Davis, Leon Nathan
Edmonds, Hasan
Edmonds, Jonas
Elfgeeh, Mufid
Elhuzayel, Nader
Farah, Adnan
Farah, Mohamed
Habibov, Abror
Harcevic, Armin
Hodzic, Ramiz Zijad
Hodzic, Sedina Unkcic
Ismail, Yusra
Jordan, Akba Jihad
Juraboev, Abdurasul
Kareem, Abdul Malik Abdul
Kasimov, Dilkhayot
Khan, Asher Abid
Khan, Mohammed Hamzah
Morgan, Donald Ray
Mumuni, Fareed
Musse, Hanad
Niknejad, Reza
Nur, Abdi
Omar, Guled
Pugh, Tairod Nathan Webster
Rahim, Usaamah
Ramic, Jasminka
Rosic, Nihad
Rovinski, Nicholas
Saidakhmetov, Akhror
Saleh, Munther Omar
Salkicevic, Mediha Medy
Siddiqui, Asia
Simpson, Elton
Soofi, Nadir Hamid
Sullivan, Justin Nojan
Teasant, Nicholas
Thomas, Keonna
Topaz, Samuel Rahamin
Van Haften, Joshua
Velentzas, Noelle
Wolfe, Michael Todd
Wright, David
Yusuf, Abdullahi
Zakirov, Akmal

STATUTES BY CATEGORY

MATERIAL SUPPORT

18 U.S.C. § 2339A	Crimes and criminal procedure -- Crimes -- Terrorism: Providing material support to terrorists
18 U.S.C. § 2339B	Crimes and criminal procedure -- Crimes -- Terrorism: Providing material support or resources to designated foreign terrorist organizations

WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION AND EXPLOSIVE MATERIALS

18 U.S.C. § 842	Crimes and criminal procedure -- Crimes -- Importation, manufacture, distribution and storage of explosive materials: Unlawful acts
18 U.S.C. § 844	Crimes and criminal procedure -- Crimes -- Importation, manufacture, distribution and storage of explosive materials: Penalties
18 U.S.C. § 2332a	Crimes and criminal procedure -- Crimes -- Terrorism: Use of weapons of mass destruction

CONSPIRACY TO KILL, KIDNAP, MAIM, OR INJURE IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY

18 U.S.C. § 956	Crimes and criminal procedure -- Crimes -- Foreign relations: Conspiracy to kill, kidnap, maim, or injure persons or damage property in a foreign country
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HOMICIDE OF OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE U.S.

18 U.S.C. § 1114	Crimes and criminal procedure -- Crimes -- Homicide: Protection of officers and employees of the United States
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WEAPONS VIOLATIONS

18 U.S.C. § 922	Crimes and criminal procedure -- Crimes -- Firearms: Unlawful acts
18 U.S.C. § 924	Crimes and criminal procedure -- Crimes -- Firearms: Penalties
26 U.S.C. § 5861	Internal Revenue Code -- Alcohol, tobacco, and certain other excise taxes -- Machine guns, destructive devices, and certain other firearms -- Prohibited acts: Prohibited acts

VIOLENT CRIMES

18 U.S.C. § 111	Crimes and criminal procedure -- Crimes -- Assault: Assaulting, resisting, or impeding certain officers or employees
18 U.S.C. § 373	Crimes and criminal procedure -- Crimes -- Conspiracy: Solicitation to commit a crime of violence

CONSPIRACY TO COMMIT OFFENSE OR TO DEFRAUD U.S.

18 U.S.C. § 371	Crimes and criminal procedure -- Crimes -- Conspiracy: Conspiracy to commit offense or to defraud United States
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OBSTRUCTION OF JUSTICE

18 U.S.C. § 4	Crimes and criminal procedure -- Crimes -- General provisions: Misprision of felony
18 U.S.C. § 1512	Crimes and criminal procedure -- Crimes -- Obstruction of justice: Tampering with a witness, victim, or an informant

FRAUD AND FALSE STATEMENTS

18 U.S.C. § 1001	Crimes and criminal procedure -- Crimes -- Fraud and false statements: Statements or entries generally
20 U.S.C. § 1097(a)	Crimes and criminal procedure -- Crimes -- Fraud and false statements: Financial aid fraud

IMMIGRATION VIOLATIONS

18 U.S.C. § 1542	Crimes and criminal procedure -- Crimes -- Passports and visas: False statement in application and use of passport
18 U.S.C. § 1544	Crimes and criminal procedure -- Crimes -- Passports and visas: Misuse of passport
18 U.S.C. § 1546	Crimes and criminal procedure -- Crimes -- Passports and visas: Fraud and misuse of visas, permits, and other documents

DRUG CRIMES

21 U.S.C. § 841	Food and Drugs -- Drug abuse prevention and control -- Control and enforcement -- Offenses and penalties: Prohibited acts A
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