

# Pathways to Violence and Disruption

## Physical and Cyber Indicators in the Modern Threat Environment



PGI Protective Intelligence Brief

## **Stage 0 – Stable Coping and Social Alignment**

**Individuals maintain  
normal social  
engagement and conflict  
resolution without  
becoming fixated on  
grievances or hostility.**

**No operational indicators are  
present.**

## Stage 1 – The Rigid Mindset

**Individuals begin to adopt hardened views and reject alternative perspectives.**

### Possible physical indicators

- rejection of alternative viewpoints or facts that challenge their belief system
- growing tendency to frame issues in absolute terms (right vs wrong, us vs them)
- noticeable increase in grievance-focused conversations or arguments

### Possible cyber indicators

- increasing engagement with extremist forums
- ideological echo chambers
- narratives portraying institutions or groups as enemies

## Stage 2 – Tunnel Vision

**The grievance becomes central to the individual's thinking.**

**Indicators may include:**

### **Physical pathway**

- **fixation on a specific group or institution**

### **Cyber pathway**

- **increasing focus on infrastructure systems or symbolic targets**

## **Stage 3 – The Silent Wall**

**Withdrawal from normal dialogue and increased secrecy.**

**Indicators may include:**

### **Physical pathway**

- **reduced social interaction**
- **private grievance reinforcement**

### **Cyber pathway**

- **anonymous accounts**
- **private encrypted communication**
- **consumption of extremist technical content**

## Stage 4 – Seeds of Discord

Expressions of grievance begin to surface publicly, and hostility becomes more visible.

Indicators may include:

### Physical pathway

- increased hostility toward individuals or groups
- repeated expression of grievance in conversations

### Cyber pathway

- hostile messaging online
- grievance narratives shared publicly
- participation in antagonistic online discussions

## **Stage 5 – Public Defamation Strike**

**The grievance is now  
openly broadcast and  
reinforced.**

**Indicators may include:**

### **Physical pathway**

- **threats against individuals or communities**

### **Cyber pathway**

- **discussion of disruption or retaliation against systems or institutions**

## **Stage 6 – The Line in the Sand**

**Psychological commitment begins forming.**

**Indicators may include:**

### **Physical pathway**

- **statements about the need for action**

### **Cyber pathway**

- **discussion of attacking systems or disrupting services**

## Stage 7 – Precision Assault Blueprint

**Operational preparation  
activity becomes visible.**

**Indicators may include:**

### **Physical pathway**

- **weapon acquisition**
- **reconnaissance of locations**
- **logistical planning**

### **Cyber pathway**

- **network reconnaissance**
- **credential harvesting**
- **acquisition of cyber tools**
- **testing exploits**

## Stage 8 – The Attack

**The attack or disruption attempt occurs.**

**Indicators may include:**

### **Physical pathway**

- shootings
- vehicle ramming
- explosive devices

### **Cyber pathway**

- infrastructure intrusion
- ransomware or sabotage
- system shutdowns

## Stage 9 – The Final Gambit

**The actor proceeds despite consequences.**

Indicators may include:

### **Physical pathway**

- suicide attacks
- martyrdom narratives

### **Cyber pathway**

- deliberate irreversible system damage
- willingness to be identified or captured in order to ensure the cyber disruption occurs

# Key Operational Insight

Violence and disruption seldom happen without warning.

In many cases, people go through identifiable behavioral stages before an attack or disruptive act happens.

Recognizing early signs, both physical and cyber, enables investigators, security professionals, and threat assessment teams to intervene before the situation escalates into an attack.



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Operational insight for modern risk and protection

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