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The secret of BlueLeaks: security, police, and the continuum of pacification

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ABSTRACT

This paper reveals the secrets of BlueLeaks, a massive archive of documents hacked from police agencies, and intelligence centers in the United States. A September 2019 Intelligence Assessment by the Virginia Fusion Center cites counterinsurgency expert David Kilcullen to evaluate the 'insurgency tactics and strategies' of environmentalists. What is remarkable about the document is not the domestic application of counterinsurgency but how it reveals the biases of security. Read from an anti-security perspective, this document becomes a cipher to decode the political content of the BlueLeaks archive that is obscured by the deep acceptance of 'security' as an apolitical, unqualified social good. The analysis is grounded in document and network analysis of BlueLeaks documents from the New England region. It finds that practices commonly understood as 'counterinsurgency' span and animate the continuum of pacification. The secret of BlueLeaks is the secret of security: a ceaseless low-intensity class war that envelops and encompasses the continuum of pacification, protects property, administers poverty, depoliticizes social harms, and elicits participation in pacification.

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On June 10 2020, the transparency collective Distributed Denial of Secrets published BlueLeaks, 269 gigabytes of data hacked from Netsential, a company that administered 251 police websites. This unredacted archive covers the full scope of the US intelligence apparatus. Assessments on global and national trends from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) sit alongside an endless churn of 'criminal intelligence' on crimes, suspects, and wanted individuals from regional intelligence operations like the DHS-recognized fusion centers and, even, municipal police. Documents from private intelligence community,

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while regional 'organized retail crime alliances' bring corporate 'loss prevention specialists' together with police to share information about shoplifters. Unsurprisingly, the secrets of BlueLeaks remain undiscovered, even as journalists found 'newsworthy' documents.

On June 26, Will Parrish, a journalist who has examined thousands of fusion center documents, directed attention to a fusion center bulletin that he called 'unlike any I've seen – 10 unhinged pages on how anti-pipeline tree sitters are "co-opting" tactics from Al Qa'ida and the Taliban.'¹ The intelligence assessment – 'Criminal Environmental Groups Study and Adopt Militant Insurgent Strategies to Advance Goals in Virginia' produced by the Virginia Fusion Center (VFC) – cited counterinsurgency expert David Kilcullen to analyze "insurgency tactics and strategies" of environmentalists protesting the Mountain Valley Pipeline, a natural gas pipeline under construction in Virginia and West Virginia.² Months later, *The Intercept* published a story featuring the document along with other intelligence assessments that presented environmentalists as "extremists".³ The article aligned with the rest of BlueLeaks reporting, which neglected the majority of the archive and focused on "newsworthy" items like instances of political policing or specifics surveil-lance systems and programs.⁴

Taken as whole, however, BlueLeaks is so large and overwhelming that it defies easy summary or simple categorization. It is a mass of interrelated records that cut across a series of institutional boundaries: police/military, domestic/foreign, public/private, and state/market. BlueLeaks spans these boundaries because this is precisely what 'security' does. It 'straddles law and economy, police power and political economy'. Security obscures 'any distinction between the civil and military, the internal and external, to the extent that the whole of civil society ends up being administered according to the doctrine'.⁵ While the VFC document stands out as an egregious example of 'domestic counterinsurgency', it is more revealing as an expression of security ideology: its boundless nature, its strategic political orientation, its galvanizing call for participation.

The VFC assessment presents security as a global project. Environmentalists, al-Qa'ida, and the Taliban are all comparable enemies of order to be neutralized with similar techniques. The report notes that 'pipeline activity' is occurring in areas of Appalachia that 'have experienced economic hardship in the past twenty to thirty years'. Such relative deprivation, however, is an opportunity to build support for the pipeline. The document recommends 'patronage and use of local businesses'. Drawing on Kilcullen's reflection on a road-building project in US-occupied Afghanistan, the document invokes the '10 kilometer rule' to 'improve relations' by hiring 'locals from within a six mile radius' and 'create a sense of ownership' over the project by connecting it 'economic opportunities' for locals.⁶

This call for participation reveals the strategic political orientation of security. The construction of Mountain Valley Pipeline is presented as a fait accompli, not a controversial and contested proposal. The interests to be secured are those of Mountain Valley LLC partners and Equitrans LP. The assessment presents opposition to the pipeline as the work of outside agitators – presented in Kilcullen's terms as the 'accidental guerrilla syndrome', where 'extremists' build support through provocation and intimidation, extending the conflict and exhausting the finances and will of their opponents to achieve their object.⁷ The report recommends positioning local police as the public face of pipeline security. It suggests 'community policing' measures such as 'group meetings' between 'private partners and law enforcement' and 'non-criminal protest groups, local community groups and leaders, government leadership, and religious organization leadership' to build trust among the community and give them a voice in pipeline construction'.⁸ These assumptions communicate a vulgar truth: the interests to be 'secured' are those of property; all other concerns are secondary matters to be subordinated and incorporated or illegitimate protests to be crushed.

This vulgar truth – the political orientation of security to reinforce and reproduce class power – is the thread that binds the BlueLeaks archive. The VFC document says this quiet part out loud and, in this sense, it becomes a cipher to decode the political content of the BlueLeaks archive. The secret of BlueLeaks, then, is something both less sensational and further reaching than 'domestic counterinsurgency', or 'police militarization', explanations which suffice if the VFC assessment and other 'newsworthy' documents are considered in isolation. The secret of BlueLeaks is the secret of security: the pacification of the social world to meet the imperatives of capital, a perpetual class war that mobilizes war and police powers across institutional boundaries. Put differently, the VFC document is not as unique as it may appear. Practices associated with counterinsurgency pervade the security apparatus because 'security' is pacification: the low-intensity class war that bourgeois ideology presents as the 'law and order' or 'keeping the peace'.

While we open with the VFC intelligence assessment, our argument is grounded in a systematic analysis of BlueLeaks documents from the New England region. The websites of the New England High-Intensity Drug Trafficking Area, the New England Organized Retail Crime Alliance, and two of the region's seven fusion centers – the Boston Regional Intelligence Center and the Maine Information Analysis Center – were all compromised in the hack. Taken together, they provide thousands of records from dozens of state, local, and federal agencies, as well as private sector security initiatives. We analyze the data using mixed methods. A quantitative breakdown of the documents clarifies the priorities and activities of these intelligence operations, while a qualitative analysis of the documents provides insight into ideology and practices of police officers and other security professionals.

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The network analysis of access logs maps the connections that constitute the normally opaque public/private intelligence apparatus. Analyzing what email accounts opened which documents reveals the relative interest in different types of intelligence reporting at different government and private sector end-points in the network.

Altogether, we find that the massive intelligence apparatus remains almost exclusively preoccupied with property crime, violent crime, drugs and homelessness. Despite official claims about counterterrorism and protection of vulnerable populations, the data show that the strategic orientation of the security is the administration of poverty and the protection of property. Pacification is a decentralized project organized on lines of class power. Routine policing, drug war operations, national security or counterterrorism, and private sector security are tied together in pulsing webs of relations. To analyze these connections, this paper introduces the anti-security perspective through a critique of the writing on domestic counterinsurgency and police militarization. This first section explains this theoretical orientation. From here, we describe the scope of the documents and explain our methods. Finally, we present our findings and provide an anti-security interpretation of them.

From domestic counterinsurgency and police militarization to anti-security

In recent years, scholars expanded counterinsurgency beyond its military meaning into a conceptualization of governing. Jordan Camp, for example, sees counterinsurgency in the defeat of the black freedom movement and the rise of mass incarceration.⁹ For Bernard Harcourt, the war on terror brought counterinsurgency home: 'foreign warfare, domestic antiterrorism policing, and ordinary domestic policing have all converged on the counter-insurgency model'.¹⁰ These arguments share conceptual affinity with the notion of police militarization, a 'process whereby civilian police increasingly draw from, and pattern themselves around, the tenets of militarism and the military model'.¹¹ While these arguments explain the 'newsworthy' BlueLeaks documents such as the VFC assessment on the 'insurgency tactics and strategies' of environmentalists, they cannot explain the more mundane ones. They are also inadequate on their own terms.

Both arguments are descriptions premised upon the conceptual distinctions that undergird liberal theories of social order. The line between military and police 'effectively amounts to a conceptual removal of war from the framing of social order and internal politics, ultimately reifying the "war" and "peace" distinction by misrecognizing "peace" as itself a "war" for capitalist social order'.¹² The domestic counterinsurgency and police militarization arguments bring 'war' back into analysis of social order but do so in way that reaffirms the war/police binary. As such, these explanations do not confront the structural violence of liberal order: social atomization and the compulsion of the market, which privatizes the means of subsistence and inscribes 'insecurity' into commodified social relations with the demand that one must sell their labor for their life.

Instead, these arguments, implicitly and explicitly, accept a series of distinctions entailed in the liberal theory of social order. Hence, Harcourt maintains that the 'methods and strategies that we developed to contain the colonized other have come back to inflect the way that our government now governs us'. This counterrevolution is the colonial exception coming home to roost, transforming the rule of law into arbitrary power. Indeed, Harcourt closes with a reference to heretical resistance to papal inquisitions to highlight the 'constant struggle over our own subjection, a recurring battle over the making of our own subjectivity, of ourselves as subjects'.¹³ Here, as throughout the text, he is notably silent about 'economic' aspects of power. This separation between economic and political – like police/war, normal/ emergency, foreign/domestic – is a constitutive category of liberal order. The domestic counterinsurgency and police militarization arguments muddle these categories but they never ask how 'war' constitutes the apparent 'peace' of domestic social order.

In contrast, an anti-security critique views Harcourt's 'counterrevolution' as another historical instance of pacification or the mutually constitutive operation of war, police, and policy in the fabrication of capitalist social order. If – following Foucault's inversion of Clausewitz – politics is war by other means, then police is simply the name given to 'war power in terms of what is, after all, the most fundamental and violent conflict in human history: the class war'.¹⁴ Pacification of class struggle entails more than repression of resistance. It is the 'systematic colonization of the social world by capitalthat creates, re-creates and permanently disciplines the proletariat. The violence is a form of war, a global and permanent process'.¹⁵ The coming together that Harcourt charts has always been a mutually constituting totality.

Indeed, the main empirical contribution of the anti-security critique has been to recuperation of two concepts – pacification and the original, expanded concept of police – from the obscurity of their early modern origins. As the Atlantic world-economy consolidated and capital became as a world-making social force, statesmen and intellectuals defined and pursued in terms of 'pacification' and 'police'. The Edicts of Pacification, ending the French Wars of Religion, first used the term 'pacification' to describe 'the powers used by a prince or state "to put an end to strife or discontent" and 'reduce [a population] to peaceful submission'.¹⁶ In 1573, Philip II proclaimed that all future growth of the Spanish Empire would be understood as 'pacifications' not conquest.¹⁷ In 1599, Captain Bernardo de Vargas Machucha's *Milicia Indiana*, arguably the first 'modern' text of counterrevolutionary

warfare or counterinsurgency, defined 'pacification' as encompassing the gathering of information, teaching of trades, religious indoctrination and the promotion of market activity, in addition to military action against resistors.¹⁸

Meanwhile, statesmen, jurists, moral philosophers, and proto-political economists debated 'police science', a discourse concerned with order and prosperity in the broadest sense.¹⁹ At this time, 'police' meant 'policy'. Historically, 'police science' became a major tributary for the modern disciplines of administrative science, political economy, public health, urban planning, criminology, and their correlative state apparatuses.²⁰ The core of these police powers is not violence but the discretion to handle the law including violence, rendered here as the lawful 'use of force' - to maintain order. Through police power, the state *administers* civil society, pacifying groups through the differential handling of the law. Political administration through police power is not limited to 'law enforcement'. The extension of the franchise, the legalization of unions and collective bargaining, the construction of disciplinary apparatuses to manage of problem populations, regulation of the market and commerce, seemingly beneficent social policies like public health and education are all institutionalizations of police power.²¹ Through this process, proliferating police apparatuses fragment civil society and obscure the operation of police power across institutional domains. These mechanisms appear distinct and different but form a continuum of pacification: education and corrections but not a school-to-prison pipeline; social services and police but not social-policy-as-social-police; police, military, and intelligence services but not the unity of war and police powers.²²

The continuum of pacification is a conceptualization that holds all aspects of administration – whether institutionalized in state or corporate bodies – in relation to each other. The position of a given historical instance or 'case' on the continuum of pacification is an empirical question. The preponderance of law enforcement documents in BlueLeaks should not be taken as generalizable evidence for the dominance of law enforcement. Indeed, different datasets corresponding to different historical instances would give different impressions: the military dominates the Iraq War logs; intelligence agencies are most prominent in the Snowden disclosures, etc. In theoretical terms, the unifying tendency across the continuum of pacification is police power, understood in the original, expanded sense that anti-security scholars have recuperated as a critical concept. Pacification is fabrication of capitalist social order, which, like the accumulation of capital, takes many institutional forms, often subsuming relations, practices, and institutions with histories that predate industrial capitalism and Western dominance of the world-economy. No doubt, there are clear conjectural developments – 'the revolution in military affair', 'mass incarceration' or 'workfare' – which could be analyzed as particular instances of pacification and its institutionalization. While a full parsing these institutional variations is far beyond the scope of this paper, an important distinction lies here. Insofar as 'police militarization' and 'domestic counterinsurgency' ignore the security-capital nexus, they misrecognize the specifics of particular instances and conjunctures as structural transformations with far reaching theoretical implications.²³

The anti-security critique guards against such oft-repeated and necessarily contradictory claims of novelty, focusing analysis on a more basic question: how does 'security' reproduce capitalist social order despite the vast 'insecurities' continually produced by capital accumulation? We bring this clarity to BlueLeaks, taking on a small part – four intelligence programs and collection of documents – and tracing out the constitutive relations among and around them.²⁴ Document and network analysis reveals the organization of the institutional apparatus and it strategic orientation. This approach constructs a whole, the continuum of pacification: distinct security initiatives operating across administrative boundaries, encompassing and amplifying private sector security. Despite claims about counterterrorism and national security, the strategic orientation of this sprawling intelligence apparatus is the administration of poverty. This project is not merely repressive. These intelligence programs are also efforts to encourage participation in pacification. The perpetual revolutionizing of the means of production that defines capitalism and produces constant social turbulence: 'crime', other interpersonal and social harms, and antisystemic resistance. Securing this order is pacification. Police, war, and social policy are the primary means to this end.

Case, data, and methods

Like all archives, BlueLeaks is incomplete. The hack compromised the platforms disseminate intelligence so the vast majority of BlueLeaks documents are finished intelligence assessments, requests for information, and announcements. The hack did not yield the same information from all the compromised websites. Many lacked access logs. Some hacked websites included thousands of documents. Others had hundreds. Some had none. While the data is uneven, the archive is authentic. An internal analysis conducted by the National Fusion Center Association and shared with cybersecurity blogger Brian Krebs confirmed the validity of the leak.²⁵ Access logs provide metadata about the intelligence products disseminated through these websites: when users downloaded files, the email associated with a given user, the document they accessed, and a timestamp for each download.²⁶ By analyzing of the *types* of documents different organizations accessed, we can understand the priorities and gain insight into police discretion: what behaviors and issues are viewed as security problems and by which institutions?

We chose a regional focus to maximize the overlap between intelligence initiatives, examining four intelligence operations in the New England region: New England Organized Retail Crime Alliance (NEORCA), New England High-Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (NEHIDTA), the Boston Regional Intelligence Center (BRIC) and the Maine Information Analysis Center (MIAC). This sample represents the scope of BlueLeaks. The NEORCA is a private security initiative. The NEHIDTA is federal program. The fusion centers are hybrid venture: recognized by-DHS, managed by state or local authorities, and operated conjunction with private sector. New England also presents interesting contrasts. The region is divided between the densely populated south (Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts) and the rural north (Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine). BlueLeaks includes records of fusion centers located on both sides of the region's rural-urban divide: the BRIC in south and MIAC in the north. The Boston metro area and the US–Canada border also are major 'national security' concerns that should feature prominently in intelligence assessments.

The NEORCA is a program formed by corporate retailers in 2013 to share information about shoplifting with other corporate loss prevention specialists *and* police departments. The NEOCRA also maintains a searchable database with photos of suspects and geographic information for mapping incidents. In April 2021, 10 months after the hacks, NEORCA launched a new information sharing platform and smartphone app.²⁷ The NEHIDTA is one of 33 federally designated areas to focus resources on narcotics control. It covers 15 counties, including at least one in each of the six New England states. The Office of National Drug Control Policy administers these 33 high-intensity drug trafficking areas and provides a budget for each region. In turn, each regional director distributes grants to programs in the area. Like other areas, the NEHIDTA operates its own intelligence hub called an Investigative and Support Center, the records of which the hacks did not compromise.

The BRIC and MIAC are fusion centers that were created along with DHS in the years following the 9/11 attacks. Although recognized and partially funded by DHS, state or local governments run fusion centers. The Boston Police Department manages the BRIC, which covers Boston and nine surrounding municipalities designated as the Metro Boston Homeland Security Region. The Maine State Police oversees the MIAC, which has jurisdiction over all of Maine. Personnel from a variety of federal, state, and local agencies staff the BRIC and the MIAC, like all other fusion centers. Similarly, fusion center budgets combine federal, state, and local resources. The BRIC has 'at least 41 employees' and a \$7.82 million budget for 2020.²⁸ The MIAC has six full-time positions, 10 part-time positions, and four management positions and a 2020 budget of \$829,051.²⁹ The first step in our analysis was to review every document hacked from each website. We separated documents into three general groups: (1) those produced by the intelligence operation in question; (2) those disseminated by the intelligence operation in question but produced by other entities; (3) those documents that were produced by other entities and not clearly disseminated by the intelligence operation in question. Next, we divided the documents into more specific categories that reflected the unique profile and output of each intelligence operation. Finally, we identified particularly interesting documents for further review. We approached these documents in a qualitative and constructivist manner, reading each item as both a singular record of particular instance and an example of a larger pattern or practice.

Blueleaks also includes access logs from BRIC and MIAC but not NEHIDTA and NEORCA. While most logs are incomplete (fusion center privacy policies mandate purges of such information), MIAC access logs from the second half of 2017 are comprehensive.³⁰ We used the MIAC access logs from the second half of 2017 to construct a bipartite or two-mode network linking organizations and documents. The access logs included in BlueLeaks are too sparse in some years to analyze the changing information-sharing network topology over time. We thus only examined a time period for which we had complete data. For each record, we removed individual identifying information so only the organization associated the email remained (i.e. '@maine.gov'). We counted the times email addresses associated with an organization accessed a given document. Next, we constructed a bipartite affiliation matrix. Each row is a unique organization and each column is a document. We examined the bipartite network as a whole to understand both organizational and informational connectivity patterns. 'Cohesion centrality' - a metric of which nodes have the greatest capacity to transmit a signal within a network - captures the associations of interest. It computes the average of the distances from a given node to all other nodes, ranking nodes by average closeness. High connectivity nodes are actors whose ties allow them to reach widely within the network and can 'most quickly diffuse a signal throughout the network'.³¹

Findings and analysis

The document and network analysis shows clear and robust connections between these intelligence operations, what we regard as a continuum of pacification operating across administrative boundaries and the public/private boundary. The NEOCRA, NEHIDTA, BRIC, and MIAC are connected with each other and other sites within the security apparatus. Moreover, the document analysis shows a functional blurring of focus and language across nominally separate institutions and missions. The strategic orientation of the intelligence apparatus toward violent crime and (largely low-level) property 10 🛞 B. MCQUADE ET AL.

crime is evident in both the focus of documents and what the network analysis reveals about the relative interest in different fusion center products. Document analysis also shows how intelligence operations depoliticize social problems and elicit participation in security. These matters are especially clear in the way these intelligence operations present drug use.

Descriptive summary of documents

There are fewer documents from NEORCA and NEHIDTA than the fusion centers. BlueLeaks includes 114 NEORCA documents ranging from July 2014 to May 2020. They breakdown into three categories: (1) 43 BOLOs or 'Be On the Look Out', which share information about a wanted suspect, a person of interest, or vehicle; (2) 60 announcements, including 40 notifications about intelligence sharing meetings for corporate loss prevention specialists and law enforcement officers and 20 more publicizing relevant trainings; (3) 11 documents we classified as 'other', which included job ads, promotional materials, and other ephemera.³² The 495 documents from the NEHIDTA cover 8 years from August 2012 to June 2020. They include 205 notifications of NEHIDTA-sponsored trainings, 279 announcements of trainings hosted by other agencies, one agenda for a meeting of NEHIDTA partners, and 10 documents labeled other.³³

The fusion centers included considerably more documents. BlueLeaks includes 973 documents from the BRIC websites. The dates of these documents range from December 2017 to June 2020. Nearly a quarter of those documents were authored by other agencies and, while fusion centers often disseminate 'pass throughs' or reports from other agencies, there is nothing to indicate that the BRIC did anything other than receive these 225 documents. The majority of these documents produced by the BRIC are Daily Information Summaries, one or two-page summaries of reported property and violent crimes in the Boston metro area. There are 635 Daily Information Summaries, 84% of the 753 documents produced by BRIC and published in BlueLeaks.

With the exception of the BRIC's privacy policy, the remaining documents are intelligence reports. There are seven 'Situational Awareness' reports that either provide details related to specific crimes, such as 'skimming devices' that can be attached to point-of-sale systems to steal credit card data, or provide advice for dealing with circumstances that could lead to crime or a harm such as 'Bomb Threat Awareness Reporting Guidance'. Thirteen officer safety reports detail unusual weapons seized by law enforcement and information on cybersecurity and terrorism, often summarized from other federal intelligence reports. The archive also included 54 BRIC Homeland Security Bulletins, which are two or three-page intelligence assessments of recent events. Only four bulletins refer to events directly connected to Massachusetts. The other 50 are assessments of national or global events, such as a May 2018 assessment of a 'Knife Attack in Paris, France' or an August 2019 report on 'Mass Shootings in Texas and Ohio'.³⁴

The six Quarterly Threat Assessments try to tailor this intelligence information for local audiences. These ten-page documents summarize incidents deemed to be international terrorism and domestic terrorism before providing a list of upcoming events in the Boston Metro Area considered 'significant'. Other reports are more specialized. Three Open Source Cyber Security Digests recap national news relating to cybersecurity. Seventeen Critical Infrastructure Digests review local, national, and global news items deemed relevant to the security of the private sector. Finally, there are 13 threat assessments analyzing the security risks for upcoming large public events, such as protests, parades, sporting events, and holiday celebrations.

BlueLeaks included 2883 unique documents hacked from the MIAC website. The dates range from June 2017 and June 2020. Like the BRIC, the MIAC documents largely focus on criminal matters. Unlike the BRIC, the MIAC produces less intelligence assessments of its own. There are 1,382 documents either produced by Maine's fusion center or labeled 'pass through', meaning that the MIAC shared the item with at least some of their 4,526 registered users. Over half of the total documents, 1,501, were produced by other local, state, federal, and private units but were not labeled 'pass through', meaning other agencies shared the documents with Maine's fusion center but the MIAC did not necessarily disseminate them.

The majority of these documents concern criminal matters. Two-thirds of the documents definitely shared by the MIAC – 939 of 1,382 – are (1) requests to identify a suspect or a wanted person, locate a person of interest or missing person, or provide information about possible crime or suspicious circumstances or (2) bulletins and reports on specific incidents, cases, or individuals considered relevant to law enforcement but not directly connected to a criminal investigation by a police agency in Maine. These documents are variously labeled, 'Request to Identify', 'Request for Information', 'BOLO', 'Missing Person' 'Pass Through' 'Situational Awareness' and 'Wanted'. Unlike documents produced by the BRIC labeled 'Situational Awareness', and 'Officer Safety', the MIAC documents are examples of information brokerage rather than intelligence analysis. Where the BRIC documents analyze multiple events, the MIAC documents are brief descriptions of particular individuals or events of reported crimes (usually property crimes). Add in the 147 cancellations and updates that follow up on requests for information and nearly 80% of the documents created or shared by the MIAC concern the sharing of criminal information.

The remaining 283 documents either produced or clearly disseminated by the MIAC move beyond information brokerage and meet higher standards of 'intelligence'. The most detailed intelligence reports produced by the MIAC 12 🛞 B. MCQUADE ET AL.

have a clear focus: drugs. The 2018 *Official State of Maine Threat Assessment* finds 'no specific, credible intelligence to indicate a terrorist threat to the state of Maine' and concludes 'that heroin and opioids present the most significant near term drug threat to public health and public safety'.³⁵ This finding is reflected in the focus of other MIAC intelligence reports: 20 reports titled 'Maine Drug Monitoring Initiative' and 16 'Opioid Arrest Bulletins'. The other major MIAC intelligence product is the COVID Daily Update. There are 100 of these reports – 35% of the 283 analytic products included the MIAC's contribution to BlueLeaks. The rest of the documents produced by the MIAC mostly concern protest and political violence, what intelligence reports deem 'extremism' or 'terrorism', 27 were produced by the MIAC and 132 were 'pass throughs' from other agencies. All told, the MIAC's intelligence reports and the announcements from consideration, and over one-third of the intelligence reports produced or otherwise disseminated by the MIAC concern drugs.

Network analysis MIAC of access logs

Figure 1 is a visualization of the bipartite organization-to-document matrix. This visualization depicts the overall structure of the network.

Information does not flow uniformly. The nodes (both organizations and documents) with highest betweenness centrality are labeled. At the center of the network are a core of local and state governments that disproportionately read and disseminate documents (notably the email accounts associated with the state of Maine and the town of Penobscot). A periphery of private firms

MIAC (2017) Doc-Org Bipartite Network

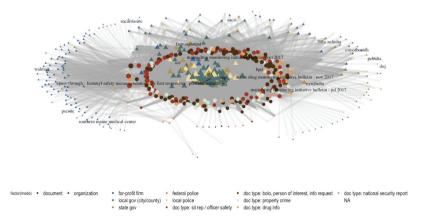


Figure 1. Network Analysis of MIAC Email Access log

access documents. There are a handful of very small towns where law enforcement officers disproportionately downloaded and accessed information from MIAC. The documents that exist on these pathways – connecting private interests to state security – are, in several instances, tied to the opioid epidemic. Two of the most widely accessed documents are Opioid Arrest Bulletins.

Firms and law enforcement officers also have distinct interests: threats to property, not the safety of persons nor anything that could be deemed 'counterterrorism', Table 1 shows the 30 entities in the MIAC 2017 network with the highest total cohesion centrality. Cohesion centrality is a metric designed to capture the speed of transmission from each node to other nodes in the network. A high score indicates that a given node is not only central to the network, but also likely widely tied to disparate nodes.

While other kinds of information spread through MIAC – missing persons, information on drug sales, and federal and national security-related information – property crime was the focus of law enforcement officers: 14 of 15 documents most central to the network directly related to property crime. The outlier is an 'attempt to identify' about a missing white female teenager with mental health issues that lead to multiple personalities, or dissociative identity disorder (DID). The attempt to identify describes DID and counsels law enforcement on how to approach this missing person. Why was this missing person report widely distributed and not the 85 others? It is possible law enforcement were genuinely interested in advice on how to help someone facing unique mental health challenges or perhaps law enforcement officers found the uniqueness of this person's situation entertaining.

The MIAC network has multiple pathways and not all intersect. Intelligence moves both across law enforcement agencies and upward from and downward to local law enforcement. The organizations most responsible for downloading documents that are central to many other organizations are not located in Maine: the Northern California Intelligence Center, State of Connecticut, the District of Columbia, and the Department of Homeland Security. The former three accessed documents on opioid arrestees and persons of interest who are suspects crossing state lines, while the latter is associated with documents relating to national security threats. Within Maine, Ogunquit, a town of barely a thousand, and South Berwick, a town of less than 10000, have unusually high centrality scores. What explains these outliers? Within the intelligence community, fusion centers are known for lowquality work, often disparaged and dismissed as 'intelligence spam'.³⁶ Perhaps the few officers in these small communities have enough time to read MIAC products that are ignored in busier jurisdictions? The most central private firm is the Auburn Mall, a shopping center located in Auburn, Maine, which, along with neighboring Lewiston, forms an economically depressed urban area of about 60,000. The Lewiston-Auburn region includes the four

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document fed security report 2.39 1.19	25 maine opioid arrests bulletin – july 2017	document	drug information	2.38	1.20	1.79
	26 fbi-behavioral perspective study	document	fed security report	2.39	1.19	1.79

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Table 1.

node	mode	category	Intramodal.cohesion. centrality	Crossmodal.cohesion. centrality	Total.cohesion. centrality
27 washingtoncountymaine	organization	organization local gov	2.37	1.21	1.79
28 situational awareness-cyber bulletin-miac-2017-1757	document	situational	2.37	1.20	1.79
		awareness			
29 pass-through: nh dept of health and dept of safety –	document	drug information	2.37	1.19	1.78
fentanyl safety					
30 residential burglary-buxton	document	document property crime	2.37	1.20	1.78

Table 1. (Continued).

highest poverty census tracts in Maine and the opioid epidemic has ravaged the area.³⁷ Mall security accessed documents on persons who have been arrested for opioid use and shoplifting.

Table 2 shows centrality measures for the organization-to-organization projection, which reveals the most frequent users of the MIAC.

The results are intuitive and consistent with Figure 1. Local governments and municipal police departments downloaded tens of thousands of files in 2017. As expected, this list includes emails from state government (maine. gov) as well as many – but not all – of the most populous municipalities in the state. Bangor, the third-largest city and the major population center outside of Southern Maine, is notable by its absence. The Department of Homeland Security and Customs and Border Protection are the two federal agencies whose officers most frequently downloaded documents from the MIAC. These officers frequently viewed opioid arrests and national security reports passed through from other intelligence operations. Altogether, the intelligence sharing networks that surrounds the MIAC are uneven. The geographic locus is Southern Maine and the substantive focus is property and drug crimes.

The continuum of pacification

The document and network analysis reveals the outlines of a continuum of pacification: an interlinked and overlapping series of initiatives animated by an expansive security imaginary. This continuum of pacification is evident in the blurring of entities and missions. The notices for trainings held at the

Table 2.	Та	bl	e	2.
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	organization	type	weighted between centrality	weighted freeman centrality
2	maine	local gov	324.7287485	21024258
17	dhs	fed police	166.4719918	4125567
26	lewistonmaine	local gov	166.4719918	3834702
60	penobscot	local gov	179.9944494	3655911
46	cumberlandcounty	local gov	184.927494	3520532
21	ellsworthmaine	local gov	166.4719918	3158754
6	augustamaine	local gov	166.4719918	2473929
38	cbp	fed police	166.4719918	2360986
25	auburnmaine	local gov	184.927494	2128159
65	brunswickpd	local police	161.6818043	1828349
22	biddefordmaine	private firm	184.927494	1822124
80	waterville	local gov	128.3073193	1717011
11	sacomaine	local gov	166.4719918	1420332
5	kennebunkmaine	local gov	166.4719918	1321239
10	kennebecso	local gov	184.927494	1282373
12	va	fed gov	166.4719918	1049878
40	southportland	local gov	166.4719918	1027345
43	kennebunkportme	local gov	166.4719918	1016726
53	gorham	local gov	166.4719918	947603
66	portlandmaine	local gov	179.9944494	877126

offices of NEHIDTA, for example, almost always include the statement: 'Training is open to Federal, State, Local, Law Enforcement, Probation & Parole and Military (SF, MP Only)'.³⁸ The acronyms 'SF' and 'MP' stand for 'Special Forces' and 'Military Police'. This notice speaks to the longstanding role of the military in drug interdiction. Indeed, Congress established the National Guard Counterdrug Program in 1969. Today, many fusion centers, including the MIAC, have intelligence analysts from this *military* program assigned to work at an intelligence center with a *domestic* jurisdiction.³⁹ Similarly, two other NEHIDTA documents, notices for Operation Jetway Trainings, show how drug interdiction blurs military and police.⁴⁰ Operation Jetway is the training program of the El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC), an interagency intelligence center founded in 1974 by the Drug Enforcement Administration, which works closely with the US Department of Defense, and US Northern Command as well as the militaries of Mexico and Caribbean states.⁴¹ Through Operation Jetway, the EPIC is conduit for the circulation of people and practices across the varied institutions that comprise the security apparatus. Police militarization or domestic counterinsurgency fail to capture the density and complexity of this tangled web of relations. These documents provide glimpses of something more complex and multifaceted: the continuum of pacification.

Moreover, when 'police' is understood in the original, expanded sense of the term recuperated by the anti-security critique, the continuum of pacification encompasses an important issue missed by other framings: the role of the private sector. BlueLeaks includes 17 samples of the BRIC Critical Infrastructure Digest, a bi-weekly report tailored to the interests of 'private sector security personnel for the detection and reporting of criminal and suspicious behavior'. In addition, the private sector is also more actively involved in intelligence operations through the NEORCA. When NEOCRA launched in 2013, the national manager for organized retail crime for The Gap and a crime analyst from the Leominster, MA police department cochaired the organization.⁴² These co-chairs are not random. Leominster, suburban town north of Worchester and northwest of Boston, is one of the major shopping centers in Massachusetts. Documents from the BRIC and MIAC also circulate through the NEORCA. BlueLeaks includes four BOLOs produced by the MIAC and 13 BOLOs produced by the BRIC in the NEORCA folder. Additionally, the NEORCA records also include 40 announcements of intelligence sharing meetings (including 13 announcements for Leominster Retail Watch meetings). Policing property crime is a major concern for retail capital, one too important to be left to the public police.

Other private sector documents take a broader view. The records hacked from the MIAC website included 34 examples of Amtrak Rail Watch, a weekly intelligence report of the Amtrak Police Department, and 22 examples of Rail Awareness Daily Analytic Report, a daily intelligence report produced by the American Association of Railroads. Where the NEOCRA simply shares information about suspected thefts, these documents are intelligence assessments that provide information and analysis concerning events and persons deemed interesting to railroads. Security, in other words, bridges the government and private sector and, in the case of Amtrak, the quasi-private sector.

This is not just a matter of 'politics'. Security is also an opportunity for accumulation in its own right and, as some scholars contend, an increasingly important one.⁴³ On this point, the NEHIDTA documents include several announcements for trainings that blur into corporate promotions, such as a 'complementary one-day training event where industry thought leaders and innovators will come together to learn about how Digital Intelligence can transform investigative capabilities' sponsored by Cellebrite, the Israeli digital forensics company.⁴⁴ These trainings-cum-promotions underscore one the key contributions of the anti-security critique and a major oversight of other interpretations. The continuum of pacification is also a 'security-industrial complex' that acts as 'the blast furnace of global capitalism, fueling both the conditions for the system's perpetuation while feeding relentlessly on the surpluses it has exacted.⁴⁵

The unity of police and war is also evident in police practice and displayed in the expansive security imaginary animating intelligence assessments. Consider the intelligence products produced by the BRIC. Fifty of 54 BRIC Homeland Security Bulletins, for example, provide intelligence assessments of national or international events. They position the 'Metro Boston Homeland Security Region' within a global theater. A 2019 BRIC Homeland Security Bulletin, for example, cites a drone attack on Saudi Arabian oil facilities as 'a reminder that hostile actors can use unmanned aerial systems to launch kinetic strikes against sensitive critical infrastructure targets'. The report notes that the 'the five percent drop in global oil supply resulting from the attack has caused turmoil in global financial markets' and speculates that these 'wide-ranging effects resulting from the attack could inspire extremists within the U.S. to launch similar strikes to achieve widespread impact'.⁴⁶ The documents often summarize reports from the federal intelligence community, making them conduits between more 'militarized' entities and local police. A similar global analysis is evident in the aforementioned BRIC Critical Infrastructure Digest. These reports regularly rely on information about incidents occurring far from the Boston Metro Region, such as a 'chemical leak at an Indian factory' or an 'alleged cyberattack on Israeli water infrastructure'.⁴⁷

The protection of property and administration of poverty

The overwhelming focus of the United States sprawling intelligence apparatus is the administration of poverty. The NEORCA is explicitly and obviously dedicated to the protection of property. The breakdown of the documents produced by fusion centers also shows a clear orientation toward the crimes of the powerless: 84% of the documents produced by BRIC and published in BlueLeaks are BRIC Daily Information Summaries, which recap reported property and violent crimes in the Boston metro area; nearly 80% of the documents created or shared by the MIAC concern the sharing of criminal information and over one-third of the intelligence reports produced or otherwise disseminated by the MIAC concern drugs.

This point is further underscored by the network analysis. A whistleblower complaint in May 2020 and BlueLeaks culminated in a proposed bill to shut down the MIAC.⁴⁸ To defend the fusion center, the MIAC director cited the disruption of a potential mass shooting, the prevention of potential suicide, and the location of sex offender.⁴⁹ Our analysis shows that this selection does not accurately depict the work of the MIAC. As previously stated and depicted above in Tables 1, 14 of the 15 most downloaded MIAC documents concerned property crimes. Moreover, the majority of MIAC reports did not concern missing person reports, information about perpetrators of violent crime, or potential self-harm but property crime and drug offenders, especially the sale of opioids. Domestic violence suspects are completely ignored. The most central 'wanted poster' for a domestic assault circulated roughly as frequently as a wanted poster for someone who had stolen a rare coin collection. The silence on domestic violence is a damning reflection of the MIAC's priorities. Maine has one the lowest crime rates in the United States. In recent years, the state records about 20 homicide annually and over half are connected to domestic violence.⁵⁰ The MIAC ignores what is arguably the most pressing public safety issue in the state in favor of property crime.

Depoliticization and participation

The strategic orientation of police and security toward the protection of property is closely related to another issue: the depoliticization of social harms and the contention around them. While the BlueLeaks documents under consideration in this paper include several examples of political policing along the lines of the VFC document (including some that helped fuel the ongoing controversy around the MIAC),⁵¹ the best example of the role of fusion centers in depoliticization social harms is drug use. The MIAC documents included three different Lewiston Police Department Bulletins that reported on Jesse Harvey, a harm reduction activist. Harvey founded the Church of Safe Injection, an organization that distributed distribute clean hypodermic needles and naloxone, the medication to counteract opioid overdoses, as an act of civil disobedience against the criminalization opioid addiction. The bulletins dated issued between May 29 and 5 June 2020 include a description of Harvey in the 'Officer Safety & Awareness' section. The bulletins noted that 'HARVEY is **NOT** affiliated

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with a needle exchange organization and therefore, it is not legal for HARVEY to be handing needles out'. They cited his criminal history and instructed officers to 'remind him of the Governor's stay-at-home order and summons him (if he is in possession of needles).⁵² Harvey died in early September 2020 in what police called a possible overdose. A tribute published in *Mainer* explained the circumstances leading to his death: constant police monitoring that disrupted his harm reduction work, continuing struggles with substance use, legal troubles and stigmatizing press coverage all compounded by the isolation and stress of the COVID-19 pandemic. Friends and colleagues concluded that 'relentless police surveillance and harassment helped push Harvey over the edge'.⁵³

While it is unclear what the MIAC did with the bulletins that mentioned Harvey, other documents produced by the MIAC also treat opioid addiction as a straightforward criminal matter. The most extensive intelligence report regularly produced by the MIAC is the 'Maine Drug Monitoring Initiative', which seeks to 'establish a multi-jurisdictional, drug-incident information sharing environment through the collection and analysis of drug seizures, overdoses, related criminal behavior, and healthcare-related services with a specific emphasis on heroin and opioids'. Under the present order of things where opioid use and addiction are criminalized, 'Maine Drug Monitoring Initiative' has some intelligence value to law enforcement. It provides information on issues in trends related to drug use and overdose and drug market dynamics. In contrast, the 16 'Opioid Arrest Bulletins' are examples of gratuitous criminalization. These monthly reports list everyone arrested for opioid trafficking, including names and addresses but never any intelligence information that connects the arrested people to ongoing investigation. In her testimony to the Maine State Legislature in support of the bill to close the MIAC, Whitney Parrish, advocacy director of Maine Equity Alliance, concluded that the 'discernable reason for these bulletins is to distribute this information to every law enforcement agency in the state, putting officers on notice with nothing short of a modern day roque's gallery.'54

Addiction and drug abuse clarifies how policing and security depoliticize social harms because the legal status of drug use is politically contested. In Maine, for example, the most recent state legislature came five senate votes short of sending a bill to decriminalize drug possession to the governor's desk.⁵⁵ While the contention around drugs makes this depoliticization easier to appreciate, the same analysis applies to other harms. The intelligence centers we analyzed were all preoccupied with crimes of the powerless: drug use, property crime, and interpersonal violence. All of these harms have social determinants, which are disavowed by basic assumptions of criminal legal systems. Arresting an offender is the individualization of social

problems. It is an attempt to pacify the social *insecurities* without acknowledging – to say nothing of addressing – the structural coordinates of social harm.

The complement to depoliticization is a call for participation in pacification. This is best expressed in the constant call on intelligence products to be vigilant about potential threats and report information, even – and especially – in the cases with no evidence of threat. The BRIC Homeland Security Bulletins, for example, always end with some variation of the following disclaimer/call for vigilance:

The BRIC has no credible intelligence indicating a specific threat of violence in the Metro Boston Homeland Security Reason (MBHSR). However, this incident serves as a reminder that a variety of violent extremist groups encourage the targeting of civilians with weapons and tactics that are easily accessible to the average person.

Law enforcement officers should remain vigilant given the current threat environment and be on alert for potential suspicious activity – timely reporting may help bring criminal or terroristic activity to the attention of law enforcement before an attack takes place. 56

These types of statements are standard on police intelligence reports and have been documented in other studies, which conclude 'these statements and related intelligence products are productive: they organize the work done at fusion centers, while also attempting to construct the threat of terrorism, while encouraging others to report information'.⁵⁷ We should expand this statement beyond terrorism and understand the broader ambit of participation in pacification. As Stuart Schrader writes, in reference to the Vietnam War, 'objects of pacification are also its active subjects, responsible for their own pacification, constructing themselves as cohesive community through this action'. This participation is directly connected to depoliticization. Schrader elaborates 'Pacification actually makes the pacified *active* and constructs subjects to be arbiters of their own needs while not allowing much change to the dramatically foreshortened political horizons attendant to the imperatives of the control of crime and subversion'.⁵⁸

Taken together, this study deciphers the secrets of BlueLeaks by connecting the seemingly exceptional 'domestic counterinsurgency' exemplified by the VFC report that opens this paper to the mundane churn of intelligence that circulates across the United States' sprawling security apparatus. Our documents and network analyses logs support similar conclusions and ones consonant with expectations of the anti-security critique. The secret of BlueLeaks is the secret of security: a ceaseless low-intensity class war that envelops and encompasses the continuum of pacification, protects property, administers poverty, depoliticizes social harms, and elicits participation in pacification. The core contribution of the anti-security critique is to analyze 22 👄 B. MCQUADE ET AL.

state violence and capitalist exploitation as inseparable processes. State violence is not an aberration – whether the seemingly exceptional 'domestic counterinsurgency' unleashed on environmentalists or the routine policing that targeted Jesse Harvey and continues to target innumerable, nameless people living in the margins. Instead, this violence is integral to the nature of state and its police powers because violence is integral to capitalist exploitation: the violence of social atomization and compulsion of the market. This violence is the social war that continually reproduces the working class. In this way, BlueLeaks is not just an archive the United States's massive domestic security apparatus. It is an archive of perpetual pacification that communicates the vulgar truth that 'security' is a political project to reinforce and reproduce class power.

Notes

- 1. Will Parrish, twitter post, 26 June 2020, 3:51 p.m., https://twitter.com/willpar rishca/status/1276604097177640960.
- 2. Virginia Fusion Center, "Criminal Environmental Groups Study and Adopt Militant Insurgent Strategies to Advance Goals in Virginia," 3 September 2019, BlueLeaks, Distributed Denial of Secrets; Kucullen, *The Accidental Guerilla*.
- 3. Murtaza Hussian and Alleen Brown, "Amid Terror Warnings, Railroad Industry Group Passed Intel on Environmental Journalist to Cops," *The Intercept*, September 13, 2020.
- 4. For comprehensive list of the reporting on BlueLeaks see, Distributed Denial of Secrets, "BlueLeaks: Research," 26 April 2021, https://ddosecrets.com/wiki/BlueLeaks#Research.
- 5. Neocleous, Critique of Security, 13, 111.
- 6. Virginia Fusion Center, "Criminal Environmental Groups Study and Adopt Militant Insurgent Strategies to Advance Goals in Virginia," 8–10.
- 7. Ibid., 2–4.
- 8. Ibid., 7–10.
- 9. Camp, Incarcerating the Crisis.
- 10. Harcourt, The Counterrevolution.
- 11. Kraska, "Militarization and policing," 3.
- 12. McMichael, "Pacification and police," 122.
- 13. Harcourt, *The Counterrevolution*, 249–54.
- 14. Neocleous, War Power, Police Power, 6.
- 15. Ibid., 7
- 16. Neocleous, "Security As Pacification," 38.
- 17. Ibid., 39.
- 18. de Vargas Machuca, The Indian Militia.
- 19. Neocleous, Fabrication of Social Order.
- 20. Rigakos et al, A General Police System.
- 21. Neocleous, Administering Civil Society; McQuade, "The Prose of Pacification".
- 22. The continuum of pacification is an effort to hold all aspects of administration whether institutionalized in state or corporate powers in relation to each other. The position of a given historical instance or 'case' on the continuum of

pacification is, of course, an empirical question. With this in mind, the preponderance of law enforcement agencies in #BlueLeaks should not be taken as a general finding that law enforcement is dominant. Indeed, different document sets corresponding to different historical instances would give different impressions: The Iraq War logs would make military look dominant, and the Snowden disclosures would put intelligence agencies at the center, etc. If anything dominates on the continuum of pacification on a theoretical level it is not law enforcement but police power, understood in the original, expanded sense that anti-security scholars have recuperated as a critical concept. In other words, dominant tendency in the continuum of pacification is fabrication of capitalist social order, which, like the accumulation of capital itself, can take seemingly endless array of institutional forms, often subsuming relations, practices, and institutions with histories that pre-date industrial capitalism and western dominance of the worldeconomy. No doubt, there are conjectural developments which stabilize and can be named. The last twenty years of the 'Global War on Terror,' for example, 'military traditionalists' lost ground to 'counterinsurgents,' leading Special Forces and intelligence capabilities of the US military to expand to a level never before reached. Similarly, the last forty years of 'mass incarceration' has subordinated many forms of social policy to law enforcement and corrections. These types of parsing these institutional developments are beyond the scope of this paper and represent a both some the major empirical contributions of antisecurity scholarship and future areas of research.

- 23. For an more thorough treatment of this argument and an extensive review of the relevant literature, see Walrath and Linneman, "War, Police and the Production of Global Social Order"
- For extended discussion of our methodological orientation, including principles of case selection and comparison, see: McQuade, *Pacifying the Homeland*, 41– 44, 175–81; McQuade and Schrader "Avoiding the Security Trap."
- Brian Krebs, ""BlueLeaks" Exposes Files from Hundreds of Police Departments," KrebsOnSecurity, 22 June 2020 https://krebsonsecurity.com/2020/06/blueleaksexposes-files-from-hundreds-of-police-departments/
- 26. This paper is not interested in any one particular person or document. No personally identifying information is used in this analysis and the constructions of the data structures used aggregates information in such a way that identifying individuals from this analysis is impossible. The unit of analysis is the organizations associated with a given user, not the user themselves.
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- 29. Maine State Police. MIAC Projected FY20 Budget, undated; Maine State Police, "The Maine Information and Analysis Center," July 2020, http://legislature. maine.gov/doc/4165.

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- 30. While we cannot be sure that some logs were individually removed, there are no systematic patterns of missingness. It is strictly speaking not empirically possible to test whether data is missing completely at random, but these logs indicate large fluctuations in use which have no obvious patterns.
- 31. Duxbury, "Identifying Key Players in Bipartite Networks," 44.
- 32. These 11 documents include four job ads for 'asset protection agents' for corporate retailers, a template of a training certificate, two nominations forms for the 'Law Enforcement Officer of the Year' from the New Organized Retail Crime Symposium and Tradeshow, one press release, one promotional flyer from the Capital One Law Enforcement Support Team, and two forms to become an authorized user of RISS Property and Recovery Tracking System, a database of pawn transactions in the New England region maintained by Regional Information Sharing System, a network of regional police information sharing centers created by the Department of Justice in the 1970s.
- 33. These 10 documents include seven permits for parking to attend specific trainings hosted the NE HIDTA office, two copies of the NE HIDTA organization chart, and contact list for Homeland Security Investigations personnel in the New England region.
- 34. Boston Regional Intelligence Center, "BRIC Homeland Security Bulletin: Knife Attack in Paris, France," 14 May 2018. BlueLeaks, Distributed Denial of Secrets, https://ddosecrets.com/wiki/BlueLeaks; Boston Regional Intelligence Center, "BRIC Homeland Security Bulletin: Mass Shootings in Texas and Ohio," 14 May 2018, BlueLeaks, Distributed Denial of Secrets, https://ddosecrets.com/ wiki/BlueLeaks.
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- 46. Boston Regional Intelligence Center, "BRIC Homeland Security Bulletin: Drone Strike on Saudi Arabian Oil Facilities," 17 September 2019, BlueLeaks, Distributed Denial of Secrets, https://ddosecrets.com/wiki/BlueLeaks.
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- 57. McQuade, Pacifying the Homeland, 33-34.
- 58. Schrader, "To Secure the Global Great Society," 245

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