What is a kinetic attack?

A kinetic attack is an attack that uses physical force to cause damage, injury, or destruction. In military and national security terminology, kinetic generally refers to actions involving physical force, as opposed to non-kinetic actions such as cyberattacks, electronic warfare, or psychological operations.

Examples of kinetic attacks



1. Military attacks

Artillery strikes, missile strikes, bombs, and gunfire used against military targets or other targets.



2. Physical attacks on infrastructure

Physical destruction of buildings, bridges, power facilities, vehicles, or other infrastructure.



3. Physical violence in a civilian setting

Assaults, bombings, or other acts of physical violence. In military analysis, the term may be used differently depending on the context.

Kinetic vs. non-kinetic attacks

Kinetic	Non-kinetic
Missile strike	Cyberattack
Bombing	Disinformation campaign
Physical assault	Psychological operations
Destruction of a facility using explosives	Electronic jamming

The distinction is not always absolute. For example, a cyberattack could disrupt a power grid without physically damaging equipment, or it could trigger a physical event that causes damage.

What does it mean in national security analysis?

A kinetic response means responding with physical force. A kinetic conflict involves physical attacks, often as part of a broader military confrontation. Analysts may distinguish kinetic actions from information warfare, economic pressure, political interference, and other forms of strategic competition.

Important distinction: A kinetic attack does not necessarily mean an attack involving firearms or explosives. The defining feature is the use of physical force to produce a physical effect.

Are you asking about kinetic attacks in military strategy, domestic terrorism and civil unrest, or political and information warfare? The meaning can vary somewhat depending on the context.

These attacks may be conducted during “activism,” or “protest terrorism.” They may also occur in the United States.

What Cowdrey proposes:

Rather than going back and forth about which politician is better than the other or getting into heated conflicts and debates about politics, let’s move beyond these forms of communication and try something else: “Safety Circulars” and “Security Advisory” circulars, which may be presented in the forms of paper documents and packets and handed to family, friends, and loved ones in a respectful and sensitive manner. Safety Circulars may be provided by designated “safe guardians” for example, veterans or public servants in the family and can be offered as a kind gesture so that all are informed. Though these subjects are very sensitive and may cause elevated emotions, it is very important that we keep one another tuned into the current war that is targeting our home and people.

I would include three distinct sections so the circular discusses current risks:

- Russian threats and kinetic risks: physical attacks, sabotage, missiles, and the risk of escalation from the war in Ukraine.
- Domestic racial violence and efforts to provoke a “race war”: extremist rhetoric, threats, recruitment, and attempts to inflame racial hostility.
- Practical protective measures: what families can verify, what they can report, and how they can prepare.

There are concrete events we can reference. The U.S. Department of Justice announced on September 15, 2026, that five people alleged to be working for Russian intelligence had been charged in a network involving planned attacks and targeted killings. These are allegations in criminal proceedings, not proof that every alleged act was completed.



United States Department of Justice

The U.S. Intelligence Community's 2026 threat assessment also warns that Russia's war against Ukraine creates a risk of escalation into direct conflict with NATO, including the potential use of nuclear weapons.

ODNI+1

Safe circular with real-world threat example:

SECURITY ADVISORY

Foreign Threats, Domestic Extremism, and Family Preparedness

Safe Circle · October 27, 2026

PURPOSE

This circular is intended to help American families understand documented national security concerns, recognize efforts to provoke violence and division, and take reasonable steps to protect themselves and their communities. It is an educational advisory, not an official government alert or a claim that a specific attack is imminent.

1. Russian threats and kinetic warfare

The war in Ukraine continues to present risks beyond the battlefield. The March 2026 U.S. Intelligence Community Annual Threat Assessment identifies the possibility of escalation between Russia and NATO, including risks associated with sabotage and Russia's nuclear-capable missile systems. In September 2026, the U.S. Department of Justice also announced charges against five individuals alleged to have worked with Russian intelligence on a network involving planned attacks and targeted killings. These developments illustrate why foreign intelligence operations, physical sabotage, cyber threats, and the possibility of military escalation deserve serious attention.

ODNI+1

What this means for families: Families can maintain emergency supplies, follow official alerts, protect their digital accounts, and learn where to find verified emergency instructions.

2. Domestic extremism and attempts to provoke a race war

Racially motivated violence is a documented national security concern. The FBI and Department of Homeland Security have described extremist movements that promote racial superiority, encourage violence against racial or ethnic groups, and, in some cases, advocate

accelerationist violence intended to provoke a wider conflict described by adherents as a “race war.”



FBI+1

What this means for families: Be alert to credible threats, direct calls for violence, targeted harassment, and attempts to recruit people into violent activity. Do not assume that inflammatory language alone proves a person is planning an attack, and do not attribute the actions of extremists to an entire race, political party, or community.

3. Information warfare and social division

Foreign influence operations and domestic extremist propaganda can exploit real grievances, circulate misleading claims, and encourage hostility between Americans. The FBI identifies Russian intelligence activity involving espionage, attempts to obtain sensitive technology, and threats to critical infrastructure as continuing counterintelligence concerns.



FBI

What this means for families: Verify alarming claims before forwarding them, preserve the original source of a credible threat, and avoid spreading unverified allegations about individuals or groups. Political disagreement is not itself evidence of hostile activity.

4. Household preparedness checklist

- Review emergency contacts and establish a family communication plan.
- Keep essential supplies available for power outages and other emergencies.
- Follow official local emergency alerts and instructions.
- Use strong passwords and multifactor authentication.
- Report credible threats to appropriate authorities rather than confronting suspected individuals.
- Discuss difficult security issues calmly and make room for questions and disagreement.

5. A message to our families

We do not have to agree on every political issue to recognize the importance of peace, security, and the protection of our loved ones. We can acknowledge genuine threats without exaggerating them, oppose racial violence without creating racial hostility, and take preparedness seriously without allowing fear to divide our families.

Rather than allowing every political disagreement to become a conflict, together, let’s share reliable information, check on one another, and exercise sound judgment.

Peace. Preservation. Progress. Protection.

Prepared for educational and household preparedness purposes. Verify changing threat information through official sources before distributing updates. This circular is not issued by a government agency.

Sources for verification

2026 U.S. Annual Threat Assessment

U.S. Department of Justice: September 15, 2026, Russian intelligence network charges

FBI and DHS: Domestic Terrorism Strategic Report

FBI: The Russia Threat

Ready.gov: Emergency Preparedness