

# Mitigating Harms From Crisis Events: Violence Against Politicians & False Flag Conspiracies

## Manipulation and Harmful Narratives in the Aftermath of the White House Correspondents' Dinner Attempted Attack

### Crisis Background

On April 25, 2026, a lone suspect breached a security checkpoint just outside the main ballroom of the Washington Hilton in Washington, D.C. where the White House Correspondents' Association dinner was being held. One Secret Service officer was struck by a bullet in his protective vest, sustaining minor injuries.

While the investigation into the suspect's motive is ongoing, reporting has suggested that the suspect intended to target Trump Administration officials.

Following crises, limited verified information and heightened emotions can contribute to the rapid spread of falsehoods. During these moments, bad actors often exploit tensions and uncertainty to amplify misleading or unverified claims for their benefit. In particular, false flag conspiracy narratives have become increasingly common in the wake of attempted assassinations.

### False Flag Conspiracies

**False flag conspiracy narratives** claim that an incident was staged to pin blame on a person, group, or movement in order to manipulate public opinion, inflame tensions, or create a pretext for political, legal, or security actions.

**Spread of conspiracy theories can be reduced** by fostering **critical thinking**, engaging in **empathetic communication**, and **digital literacy education**.

### Circulated Conspiracies

Following the incident, several narratives quickly spread online. Claims included allegations that President Trump and/or Israel orchestrated the incident to:

- boost midterm polling,
- elevate support for or distract from the Iran war,
- divert attention from the Epstein files,
- justify unrelated political priorities, including the construction of a ballroom at the White House,
- or simultaneously pursue multiple objectives listed above.

Posts amplifying conspiratorial claims circulated selective clips, comparisons, and speculative interpretations as supposed "evidence":

- One example focused on a pre-incident interview in which White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt referenced there potentially being "shots fired." Users framed the comment as evidence of foreknowledge, despite no other supporting evidence.
- Another focused on President Trump's reaction during the incident and that the Secret Service response appeared delayed. Users argued – without evidence – that differences in President Trump's reactions suggested the event had been staged or anticipated.
- IDF/Israel narratives, like the example on the left which used falsified evidence, played on common suggestions of foreign influence in U.S. affairs. Foreign influence is often tied to false flag conspiracies in order to allude to deeper globalist and international cabal conspiracies.

### Example of Conspiracy

#### Evidence of AI Generation

Strange furniture placement

Can melds with hand

Width of pants doesn't match torso



Conspiracies leverage so-called "evidence," such as the above, likely AI-generated image of the alleged shooter supposedly wearing an Israeli Defense Force (IDF) sweatshirt. In just one example post this image garnered over 2.2 million views and 58 thousand likes. This widely circulated image suggested that the alleged perpetrator has IDF ties, spreading false flag conspiracies.

