

SANTA ANA POLICE DEPARTMENT

DAVID VALENTIN · CHIEF OF POLICE

TRAINING BULLETIN

"Education promotes professional and responsive law enforcement"

Terrorism: Homicide Bombers

Purpose

The purpose of this Training Bulletin is to educate officers on the characteristics of a suspected bomber and to provide tactical strategies that they may employ when confronted with a homicide bomber in a public place.

Introduction

Recently, the use of homicide (suicide) bombers has significantly increased in the Middle East, especially Israel, and other parts of the world. The term homicide bomber has come to replace what has been called a suicide bomber, since the bomber's intent is to commit homicide, not suicide. At this time there has not been a successful homicide bombing (human body bomb) conducted within the United States. However, in the interest of public safety and current international trends, it is prudent to study these incidents and develop effective law enforcement counter-measures.

Terrorist attacks take many forms, including bombs in cars, trucks, airplanes, boats, motorcycles, or carried by humans, as well as drive-by shootings and active shooters. This Training Bulletin will narrow the focus to homicide bombers. The purpose of this Training Bulletin is to assist officers in identifying a homicide bomber and to provide tactical considerations when attempting to interdict a homicide bomber.

On New Year's Eve 1999, an Al Qaeda-trained terrorist planned to carry out an attack at the Los Angeles International Airport by placing a large suitcase bomb at the Tom Bradley International Terminal. The suspect was arrested prior to carrying out the bombing. However, the threat still remains because Al Qaeda-trained terrorists are mission-oriented and will continue to attack the same target until they are successful (World Trade Center attacks in 1993 and 2001). Homicide bombers generally target areas of dense population or specific high profile events.

I. The Homicide Bomber

A. Background

Like the individuals involved in the September 11, 2001 attack, homicide bombers are well trained to carry out their mission. Terrorist groups like Hamas and Hezbollah have been using

homicide bombers for years against the civilian population in Israel. These groups provide the best model of how homicide bombers are used against a civilian population.

School age children are indoctrinated to idolize those who martyr themselves as homicide bombers. Training camps located throughout the world teach terrorist tactics and mentally prepare the bombers for martyrdom. Some terrorist organizations train personnel for months in order to prepare for a single attack. The rewards for martyrdom may include both religious and financial promises. The resulting hero status and financial rewards supply a never-ending stream of recruits who are willing to become homicide bombers.

B. Terrorist Tactics

An attack by a homicide bomber is well organized, and involves up to four distinct groups to carry out the functions necessary for a successful attack. The first group recruits and trains potential homicide bombers. This group conducts interviews to determine the motivation of the recruit to ensure that they have the mental stability to complete the mission.

The second group determines the target and type of explosive device necessary. This group accomplishes planning, surveillance, and reconnaissance of the target. Officers should **immediately contact CATIC and our own intelligence unit** if they encounter any person they believe is engaged in this type of activity.

The third group assembles the bomb. The bomb is usually worn on the body in a belt or vest, or carried in a bag or backpack. In most cases, additional fragmentation (shrapnel, nails, etc.) is added to increase the lethality of the bomb.

The fourth group delivers the bomb to the homicide bomber. This group will then act as a support team, escorting the bomber to the target. The support team will provide security to the bomber, much like a “layoff man” at a robbery. The bomber does not normally become aware of the target until the last possible moment to maintain motivation. Only at the last minute is the bomber instructed on how to activate the bomb. **Officers need to be acutely aware of the presence of the support team if they encounter a suspected bomber.**

The body bomb is commonly worn on the upper torso in the form of a belt or vest (see attached photos). Activating a toggle or rocker-type switch, which is either attached to the mid-section of the vest or carried in the hand, easily detonates these devices. There may be a secondary detonation system present to allow detonation of the device even if law enforcement personnel interdict the bomber. Secondary timing devices may include a timing system or a fuse that is lit when the bomber arrives within close proximity to the target.

Officers need to be aware that a bomb can be placed in a backpack, briefcase, suitcase, or any other large item that could conceal the explosives. Common items used in the past to disguise bombs include guitars, computers, and even a watermelon. The majority of these bombs are activated by the simple means of pushing a button or flipping a switch. In some incidents, cell phones have been used to activate the device.

Once the bomber arrives at the target location, the bomber will attempt to move to the center of the crowd to maximize the casualties. If confronted, the bomber will usually detonate the bomb, rather than be taken into custody. Just before activation of the bomb, the bomber will

often raise both arms in the air to prevent any mitigation of the fragmentation and shrapnel caused by the presence of the bomber's own body parts.

C. Characteristics of a Homicide Bomber

The following list of distinguishing characteristics was compiled by analyzing recent homicide bombing attacks in the Middle East. These characteristics are **not all-inclusive**, but may be utilized to establish reasonable suspicion to identify and detain potential homicide bombers.

Because patrol officers are highly visible, they need to be familiar with these characteristics due to the potential for a chance encounter with a terrorist. Officers may receive a radio call of suspicious activity from a variety of sources. Terrorists may be surveilling a target, renting a truck, or buying bomb-making components, which may raise the suspicion of the public. Additionally, officers may observe a traffic violation and during the encounter see photos, diagrams, or bomb components. **The knowledge and initial observations of the officer are critical to establish reasonable suspicion to detain and probable cause to further investigate the activity.** Officers should look for more than one characteristic when making their initial observations before drawing conclusions of reasonable suspicion of a homicide bomber. *Race or ethnicity alone* shall not be used to establish reasonable or probable cause.

D. Biographical Data

1. Mostly unmarried males, although recently some females.
2. Males between 16-40 years old.
3. Females between 16-25 years old.
4. Race or ethnicity may vary, and people from many countries and ethnicities could be potential bombers.

E. Clothing Description

1. The manner of dress is chosen to conceal a bomb.
2. Occasionally dressed as woman (pregnant).
3. Inappropriate for warmer temperatures.
4. Will be baggy, ill fitting, unusually long or heavy.
5. Overly elegant.
6. Disguised to blend into community surroundings.
7. Stolen uniforms.

F. Physical Description

1. Blank stare, wide-eyed, unresponsive, perspiring or preoccupied.
2. Gaunt appearance (may look ill).

3. Smiling or grinning (in some cases possibly due to thinking about the rewards in the afterlife).
4. Muttering or talking to self (perhaps saying a prayer).
5. Any other stress-related symptom associated with imminent death.

1. The following peculiar characteristics may be present because of the concealed bomb

- a. Torso appears unusually bulky or inflated.
- b. Unusual or suspicious bulges.
- c. Torso appears stiff, or lacks flexibility.
- d. Uneven gait, difficulty walking.
- e. Visible explosive-laden belts, protruding from under clothing.
- f. Carrying a heavy or unbalanced backpack, suitcase, box or knapsack.
- g. Switch wire hanging from the sleeve.

2. The following are less common, but also may be present

- a. Possibly clean or freshly shaven – face and body, closely cropped hair. This is a ceremonial religious act that has become less common since it makes homicide bombers easy to identify.
- b. Herbal or chemical smell emitting from the person due to the presence of poison(s) added to the device.

II. Legal Review

It is important for responding officers to understand the legal and policy requirements for reasonable suspicion, probable cause and the use of lethal force when attempting to investigate a potential homicide bomber. The Department's use of force policies and other relevant information must be kept in mind in these situations.

A. Reasonable Suspicion

1. Unusual activity has occurred, is occurring or is about to occur.
2. Unusual activity is related to a crime.
3. The person detained is connected with the unusual activity.

When developing reasonable suspicion, officers should consider the following factors, among others: the location, the manner of dress, the weather, the suspect's overall appearance and actions. For example, if the suspect looks inflated, is wearing a heavy trench coat in hot weather, and walking towards a large crowded location, the officers may attempt a detention to investigate further.

B. Probable Cause

1. The state of facts that would cause a reasonable and trained officer (or person of similar training and experience) to form an honest and strong suspicion that the person to be arrested has committed a crime.

C. Deadly Force (D.O. 425)

There is no exception to the law or use of deadly force policy when encountering a suspected or confirmed homicide bomber. An officer **may not** use deadly force to stop someone who is “merely” suspected of being a homicide bomber. The officer must have probable cause to believe the suspect is presenting an immediate threat to life before deadly force can be utilized. If an officer observes an explosive device attached to the suspect, and believes the suspect presents an immediate threat of death or serious bodily injury to the officer or others, then deadly force is reasonable, since the officer is trying to “prevent a crime where the suspect’s actions place persons in jeopardy of death or serious bodily injury.”

III. Tactical Considerations

There is no precise formula for interdicting a homicide bomber. However, in all situations, officer and public safety must remain paramount. When confronted by a **possible homicide bomber** in light of the totality of the circumstances, the following tactics should be considered.

A. If the Suspect Is Aware of the Police Officer(s) Presence

1. Assume cover and maintain a tactical advantage.
2. Do not approach, if possible.
3. Maintain a reasonable (safe) standoff distance.
4. Request assistance and deploy responding officers to covered positions.
5. Order the suspect to **stop** all movement.
6. Warn bystanders in the area to leave immediately.

1. If the Suspect Complies With the Contact Officer’s Direction to Stop

- a. Have the suspect open the palms of both hands and demonstrate that nothing is contained within them.
- b. Have the suspect turn around and raise the outer garment to neck level.
- c. Once the suspect’s hands and waist area are visible and nothing of a suspicious nature is observed, the contact officer may order the suspect into a high-risk kneeling or high-risk standing position until arrival of the Bomb Squad. **Avoid the High Risk Prone Position**, since bomb switches may be located on the chest or waistband area of the suspect.
- d. Officers should remain in a position of cover and evacuate any bystanders.

- e. Request the Bomb Squad.

2. If the Suspect Does Not Comply With the Contact Officer's Direction to Stop

- a. Continue to warn bystanders to leave the area.
- b. Maintain a position of cover and monitor the actions of the suspect.
- c. Based on the actions of the suspect, (i.e. the officers have established probable cause to believe the suspect is in possession of an explosive device, Penal Code Section 12303) **AND** they believe the suspect represents an immediate threat of death or serious bodily injury to themselves or others, **officers may utilize deadly force to stop the suspect.**
- d. If the suspect is believed to no longer present a threat, officers should stop and detain the suspect and conduct an investigation.

Historically, when confronted by law enforcement, bombing suspects will often detonate the bomb, rather than be taken into custody. However, officers must be mindful of the Department's Use of Force Policy at all times.

Although the Department neither recommends nor endorses the below listed tactic, it is important to know the tactic has been used in Israel. It is being discussed here only to make officers aware of its use in Israel and to provide a different perspective.

B. If the Suspect Is Not Aware of the Police Officer(s) Presence

1. Utilizing the element of surprise, officers and military in Israel have chosen to surreptitiously approach the suspect and grab both arms, keeping them away from the torso. The object is to prevent the suspect from activating the bomb.
2. Once the suspect's arms are secured, the authorities have talked to the suspect, explained their actions and attempted to gain voluntary compliance. Officers should avoid taking the suspect to the ground to avoid accidental detonation.
3. Unlike other high-risk situations, in this situation in Israel **close proximity to the suspect has been desirable** to ensure quick contact and control.

C. Using Deadly Force

Where deadly force is warranted and the suspect is believed to be wearing body armor, a head shot may be necessary to stop the suspect. Likewise, in a deadly force situation with a homicide bomber, officers may be forced to attempt a head shot to prevent detonation of the device by the suspect. Since homicide bombers may wear the bomb on the upper torso in the form of a belt or vest, a shot to this area could trigger a detonation; therefore, a head shot may be necessary under these circumstances.

D. When a Suspect Has Been Neutralized

1. **Do not approach the suspect.**

2. Do not allow others to approach the suspect.
3. Immediately evacuate the area (the explosive device may still be detonated by other means).
4. Officers should maintain a minimum of 300 feet on all sides of the bomber.
5. Seek and maintain cover.
6. Await the arrival of the Bomb Squad.

IV. Post Homicide Bombing Incident

When a homicide bombing occurs, the post-blast crime scene will be bloody and chaotic, requiring officers to be emotionally and mentally prepared to take control of the incident. Officers must remain focused because there may be a significant threat to rescue personnel in the form of secondary devices, blood-borne pathogens, hazardous chemicals, and the potential for structural collapse.

V. Response to an Exploded Device

As with any bombing incident, officers must look for the presence of secondary devices placed to kill rescue personnel. The initial bomb may have been detonated to draw rescue personnel to the location where a second bomb has been planted. The explosive device may be in the form of a car bomb or could be concealed in a trash can or other item large enough to hide explosives. Terrorists have used common items such as thermos bottles, backpacks, and flashlights to disguise their bombs. The devices may be command-detonated by remote means such as the use of a cellular telephone wired into the firing mechanism of the bomb, or by means of a timer. Terrorists may place secondary devices at main points of ingress and egress, as well as possible command post (CP) locations, to maximize the potential for injury and death to rescue personnel. If a possible secondary device is located, the area around the device should be immediately evacuated to a **minimum of 300 feet** in all directions and then handled as any other suspected explosive device.

Another hazard to rescue workers at the scene of a homicide bombing involves blood-borne pathogens. Due to massive trauma caused by the explosion, there will be a tremendous amount of bodily fluids and tissue present. These fluids and tissue can contain human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), hepatitis, or other blood-borne pathogens.

Do not approach the suspect or the suspect's remains. In addition to the threat of secondary devices, there may be undetonated or partially detonated explosives present on or near the suspect. Evacuate the area to a minimum of 300 feet from the location of the bombing. Body bombs can cause severe structural damage, including downed electrical lines and ruptured gas and water pipes. To ensure the safety of the public and rescue personnel, officers should immediately establish a large crime scene perimeter. A general rule for a post-blast crime scene perimeter is to look for the furthest blast debris/damage from the center of the explosion and then double that distance. Before decreasing the size of the perimeter, the Incident Commander should contact the Bomb Squad for advice.

It is the responsibility of officers on the perimeter to limit access in and out of the blast area/crime scene. This will reduce crime scene contamination and further injury caused by a

secondary device. Once the Fire Department has completed the rescue mission, no one should be allowed to enter the post blast crime scene until the Bomb Squad has cleared the area. Blast debris should not be moved or examined by anyone except Bomb Squad personnel. The location of the debris can give clues as to the type of device used. Because blast debris can spread in wide areas, vehicle tires and shoes can pick up key blast evidence, so if possible they should be checked before leaving the perimeter.

The Incident Commander should assign an officer to record the hospitals where the victims are transported. This can be coordinated through the Fire Department. Officers should then be assigned to each hospital to gather victim information, record any statements and preserve evidence pending the arrival of detectives assigned to investigate the bombing. The Incident Commander should also assign someone to locate any security cameras that may have captured the incident on tape. Security tapes should be recovered as soon as possible to avoid any critical images being lost. All tapes of the affected area that are available, regardless of the date recorded, should be recovered, since they may show terrorists scouting the location weeks or even months prior to the incident.

Summary

In the interest of public safety, it is imperative that law enforcement assumes a proactive role in countering homicide bombers, should this scourge ever occur in our country. Officers can help prevent attacks by remaining vigilant to signs of terrorism, reporting suspicious activity, understanding trends and being tactically and emotionally prepared. As stated previously, there is no precise tactical or investigative formula to be applied to a homicide bomber incident. The safety of the community and our officers must always remain our highest priority.

Officers must be mentally prepared to contend with the chaos and carnage caused by a homicide bombing incident. Officers need to look for possible secondary devices and wear appropriate Personal Protective Equipment to reduce the risk to themselves or others. By being prepared, the first officers on scene of a bombing incident will have the knowledge to prevent further casualties, preserve crucial evidence, and assist in the apprehension of additional suspects.

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