

MEMBER ALERT

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U.S. HOMELAND SECURITY INFORMATION BULLETIN - TACTICS & TECHNIQUES OF SUICIDE/HOMICIDE BOMBERS

Maritime security is a concern for all shipowners and operators worldwide. On September 12, 2003, the United States Coast Guard issued this homeland security information bulletin. Please recognize that this advice is useful both within the U.S. and internationally.

1.0 Introduction

Coast Guard Area, District, and Field Units are strongly encouraged to advise law enforcement agencies, port security committee stakeholders, and maritime industry partners of the contents of this homeland security information bulletin.

2.0 Overview

- A. This is a coordinated Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) information bulletin. Information bulletins are informational in nature and are designed to provide updates on the training, tactics, or strategies of terrorists. The following information is meant to advise owners of public venues of terrorist capabilities to recruit and employ suicide bombers. Occurrences of such incidents overseas indicate terrorist interest in conducting suicide operations. Reasons for this interest include the relative ease with which these operations can be conducted and executed; and the psychological impact on a population, and disruption at the scene of the event.

3.0 Details

- A. While there is no specific profile for those who have engaged in suicide/homicide bombings, males aged 16-50, seem to dominate. Females are also known to conduct suicide/homicide bombings. The effectiveness of a suicide/homicide bombing attack is largely dependent on how well it is executed rather than the characteristics of the device itself.
- B. Terrorists will employ novel methods to artfully conceal suicide devices. The devices may be concealed in jackets, shoes, belts, vests, gym bags, and briefcases. Additionally, the potential for terrorists to employ multiple suicide/homicide bombers in which the first attack is designed to cause casualties and draw first responders to the scene specifically to expose them to a suicide/bomber attack cannot be discounted.

4.0 Design of the suicide/homicide bomber explosive device

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The basic design and function of suicide devices used by different terrorist organizations worldwide are fundamentally the same, although subtle differences exist. Generally speaking, it will have the following characteristics:

- A. A simple switch for initiation consisting of a push-button or toggle switch completing an electrical circuit. Relatively small initiation devices reduce the chances of discovery.
- B. Fragmentation – such as nails, ball bearings, or other small metal pieces. Dispersed fragmentation is the primary kill mechanism in individual suicide bombing attacks.
- C. Devices are generally concealed within an article of clothing worn close to the body – such as a vest, belt, or jacket. However, there have been instances where the explosive device is disguised to look like a common, innocuous object.
- D. Main charge may consist of military grade plasticized explosive or homemade explosive mixture.
- E. Many devices have a backup trigger system, such as an electronic timer, pager, or booby-trap type switch. If the attacker is killed, apprehended, or attempts to abort the attack, a secondary trigger system provides an alternative ignition method.

5.0 Suggested protective measures

- A. Encourage personnel to be alert and immediately report any situation that appears to constitute a threat or suspicious activity.
- B. If an initial attack occurs, assume that a more powerful follow-up attack is possible, shortly thereafter, timed to inflict the maximum number of casualties against the responding police, fire and EMS responders, and gathering crowds.
- C. Although EMS responders will likely assume personal risk to immediately treat the injured, all other responding personnel and vehicles should stay clear of the immediate attack site.
- D. The first responsibility of responding officials should be to immediately disperse any crowds, and search for a secondary explosive device on loitering individuals, in suspicious packages, trash receptacles, or parked vehicles.
- E. If a suspicious person or item is identified, do not approach – back off, try and get behind solid shielding, and call for security personnel trained to deal with the threat.
- F. Only when the site is effectively secured and crowds are dispersed, should additional response personnel enter the secured attack site, while continuing to avoid any congregation of people or vehicles.

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6.0 Indicative behaviors of suicide bombers

- A. Clothing is out of sync with the weather.
- B. Clothing is loose. Clothing gives impression that body is disproportionately larger than head or feet.
- C. Suspect may be carrying heavy luggage, bag or wearing a backpack.
- D. Pale face from recent shaving of beard.
- E. Eyes appear to be focused and vigilant.
- F. No response to authoritative voice commands or direct salutations from a distance.
- G. Behavior is consistent with no future, e.g. individual purchases a one-way ticket or is unconcerned about receipts for purchases or, or receiving change.
- H. Suspect is walking with deliberation but not running.

7.0 Contacts

The DHS encourages recipients of this information bulletin to report information concerning suspicious or criminal activity to local law enforcement, local FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force, or the Homeland Security Operations Center (HSOC). The HSOC may be contacted at: phone: (202) 282-8101.

8.0 Updates

The DHS intends to update this information bulletin should it receive additional relevant information, including information provided to it by the user community. Based on this notification, no change to the Homeland Security Advisory System (HSAS) level is anticipated, the current HSAS level is YELLOW.

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