

BUSINESS BRIEFING

BUILDING SECURITY

EFFECTIVE AND VISIBLE MEASURES ARE KEY TO PROTECTING COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES AGAINST TERRORIST ATTACKS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In this briefing, we outline the “who, why, what and how” of terrorist targeting of commercial properties, from who the principal antagonists are to how they select properties to hit. We then outline the four primary phases of terrorist operations against commercial properties: operational research, surveillance and casing, dry run, and attack. Recommendations for identifying and mitigating such an attack follow.

We believe that the best defense against terrorist targeting of commercial properties is to maintain an effective and visible security program. If establishing when an attack will occur is next to impossible, determining that a facility may be under scrutiny as a potential target can provide a crucial advantage in protecting a building and its occupants.

INTRODUCTION

In July 2004, the Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Bureau of Investigation jointly announced that British intelligence had uncovered preparations for a possible al-Qa’ida attack against key financial institutions in the United States. The targeted facilities, including the New York Stock Exchange and Citicorp Center in Manhattan, the Prudential Financial Plaza in Newark, NJ, and the World Bank and International Monetary Fund buildings in Washington DC, had been the subject of painstaking surveillance by al-Qa’ida operatives and the results documented in detailed casing reports now in the authorities’ possession. While there was no indication of when an attack was to take place, the meticulous detail and cold, calculating evaluation of structural and security vulnerabilities of each target made clear that al-Qa’ida could strike a powerful and symbolic blow against the U.S. economy, and inflict massive casualties, should it choose to do so.



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While the timing of a planned terrorist attack against a commercial property is, in the absence of conclusive intelligence reporting, unknowable, evidence of terrorist targeting activities is detectable. Just as heightening security can reduce the odds that a given property will be targeted by terrorists, measures can be taken to increase the likelihood that pre-attack operational activities are detected in sufficient time to thwart an attacker's plans.

In this paper we will outline the “who, why, what and how” of terrorist targeting of commercial properties. We will explain who the principal antagonists are, why they target commercial properties, what types of attacks they are capable of undertaking and how they select properties to hit. Most importantly, we will specify how they prepare for an attack and how property management and security personnel can identify the signatures of pre-attack operational activity and mitigate the risks associated with terrorist attacks.

If establishing the “when” of a planned attack is next to impossible, determining that a particular property may be under scrutiny by terrorists as a potential target can give owners, property managers and security personnel a crucial advantage in protecting the building, its occupants and visitors.

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WHO IS THE THREAT?

The field of potential hostile actors is ever changing and highly dependent on location, current events, the notoriety of the property and, to some extent, the identities of the property's owners and occupants. While the focus since September 11th, 2001, has been on radical fundamentalist Islamic groups such as al-Qa'ida and Hezbollah, most terrorist attacks are carried out by domestic actors. The most devastating terrorist event in U.S. history prior to 9/11, the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah federal building in Oklahoma City, was perpetrated by an anti-government white supremacist and decorated U.S. Army veteran. Likewise, the protracted bombing campaigns by the Irish Republican Army in the United Kingdom and the Basque separatist movement ETA in Spain were arguably conducted by domestic terrorists.

The identity of a group targeting a commercial property is largely irrelevant from the standpoint of asset protection. Hostile actors can include international terrorist organizations, local groups inspired by main-line terrorist organizations, marginalized domestic groups and “lone-wolf” operators. What is far more significant is that all must, to a large extent, employ the same method of operation (MO) for an attack to have a reasonable chance of success. It is this reliance on a common set of preparatory steps that constitutes the terrorists' greatest vulnerability and that affords those responsible for protecting commercial property assets their greatest advantage.

WHAT ARE THE TERRORISTS TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH?

It is axiomatic that terrorists seek to sow terror within the societies they attack. More to the point, however,



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terrorists are trying to communicate their grievances to one or more target audiences. Groups like al-Qa'ida that repudiate U.S. foreign policy and its role in the world seek to broadcast their views by attacking symbols of U.S. power and influence, disrupting the U.S. economy and causing mass casualties. Others, such as so-called “eco-terrorist” groups, have more modest objectives – from calling public attention to environmental issues to causing economic damage to companies whose activities they deem to be injurious to the environment. A lone-wolf terrorist may be motivated solely by the desire to seek retribution against a person or institution that he believes has wronged him, and to let others know that “justice” has been served.

Terrorists' goals generally fall into two distinct categories: those whose intended audience is small, be it a single company, a family or perhaps even just a single individual; and those whose intended audience is broad – an industry, a government, a country or even the whole world community. Typically, the broader the audience, the greater the intended impact of the attack.

WHAT CAN THE TERRORISTS DO?

Terrorists can use a variety of techniques to attack a building. The technique they choose is as much related to the message they hope to convey and the audience to which they are appealing as it is to the unique characteristics of the target. Conventional and unconventional weapons may be employed with equally devastating effects.

If the attackers' grievances are local or their message is directed at a limited audience, an attack causing less than catastrophic damage is often the goal lest the public perceive the punishment as disproportionate to the alleged crime. For terrorists appealing to a broader audience, especially those seeking a global platform to redress supposedly grave injustices, an attack intended to destroy the property may be the operational objective. Internationally-recognized, iconic structures whose destruction could be seen as symbolic strikes against an avowed enemy are especially vulnerable to targeting.

Attack methodologies fall into two broad categories – conventional attacks involving firearms or explosives, and unconventional attacks employing chemical, biological or radiological technologies, sometimes in conjunction with conventional means.

On the conventional side, attacks with firearms are generally riskier to the attacker, shorter in duration, of lesser impact and less visually compelling than those involving explosives. For this reason, they are most likely to be used by terrorists whose audience is limited. The 1972 Munich Olympics attack in which eight Palestinian terrorists took hostage and subsequently executed 11 Israeli athletes is, however, a notable exception because of the notoriety of the venue and victims. Terrorist operations using firearms as the principal attack element include sniping, assaults in force and the taking of hostages.



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Explosive attacks tend to have greater impact and generate greater media attention because they are more visually compelling and often result in higher casualty figures. The three most common explosives attack methodologies include:

- Detonation of an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) placed by a person who vacates the scene prior to detonation
- Use of a Vehicular Borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED), which either can be detonated remotely or directly by the driver once the vehicle has reached its target
- Suicide bombings in which terrorists conceal explosives on their bodies, insinuate themselves into the target and then detonate themselves

Only VBIEDs have the capability of causing catastrophic structural damage to large commercial buildings. All three, however, can cause massive casualties.

Unconventional attacks typically employ chemical or biological agents, or radiological materials, to contaminate a building and/or its occupants, denying the use of the facility and potentially causing mass casualties. While the direct impact of such an attack may not necessarily be as dramatic or visually spectacular as one involving explosives, the public's fear of such insidious materials is likely to generate massive publicity and thus accomplish the terrorists' overarching goal of airing their grievances to a broad audience. Al-Qa'ida reportedly has the capability, and has expressed its desire, to use unconventional weapons against its enemies.

Unconventional weapons can be deployed in a variety of ways. Biological agents can be insinuated into a building by individuals discarding innocuous items bearing infectious materials inside the target, through the delivery of contaminated food or supplies or by release of a contagion into the building's Heating/Ventilation/Air Conditioning (HVAC) system. The latter can be accomplished either within the building interior or via an exterior air intake. Chemical agents are most likely to be targeted at the building's HVAC system as this is the single most effective means of circulating the agent to the largest number of people.

Radiological contamination typically would be accomplished through the use of a Radiological Dispersion Device (RDD), also known as a "dirty-bomb," in which radioactive material teamed with an IED is detonated to disseminate small radioactive particles over a wide area. While the use of an RDD is unlikely to cause a significant number of fatalities, the resulting contamination can render a property, or even part of a city, unusable for an extended period of time while decontamination operations are carried out. As the Litvinenko murder in London in 2006 demonstrated, radioactive contamination also can be spread intentionally or unknowingly over a wide area by a single person. This is less effective, however, owing to the significant risk of personal contamination to the individuals involved and the limited coverage area as compared to that of an RDD.

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HOW DO TERRORISTS SELECT TARGETS?

Once a terrorist group decides to mount an operation, it must select a target and mode of attack that will most effectively broadcast its message to its intended audience. These considerations must be carefully weighed against the probability of success, however, as the failure to complete the mission will not only prevent the message from getting out, but potentially can result in the compromise of the group or individuals involved in the operation.

By their very nature, terrorist cells operate clandestinely, concealing the identities of their members and the nature of their mission from all but those within the group with a demonstrable need-to-know. They



are also small, comprised of only enough persons to carry out their mission. Operational compromise can effectively wipe out a terrorist group's entire operational capability in a country, something that may have taken years or even decades to build. For this reason, selecting targets that offer the greatest chance of success is crucial.

Buildings, institutions and critical infrastructure that practice effective physical security measures are referred to as "hard" targets and pose the greatest challenge to terrorist groups. Examples include government installations, banks, key bridges and tunnels, airports, train stations and sports venues where rigorous institutional security programs are in place and visible. Unless striking a hard target is essential to the terrorist's message, as was the case in the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, terrorists will normally select less well-protected targets.

Soft targets, on the other hand, are those where stringent physical security measures either are not practiced or are judged by the terrorists to be ineffective or subject to manipulation. Most commercial properties fall into this category and can range from hotels and shopping malls to commercial office buildings, multifamily residential units and mixed-use complexes. Clearly, the single best strategy to mitigate terrorism risk is to institute meaningful, effective and visible physical security measures to compel terrorists to look elsewhere during the target selection phase.

THE FOUR PHASES OF TERRORIST OPERATIONS AGAINST PROPERTIES

Advance planning and careful preparation are essential for a terrorist operation against a commercial property to have a significant chance of success. The failure to adequately research the intended target, to identify its architectural and security strengths and weaknesses, to characterize patterns of activity in and



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around the target, and to plan the approach to and retreat from the target all reduce the likelihood that the attack will succeed. These preparatory steps require time to carry out and provide building management and security personnel opportunities to discover the terrorists' plans before they are carried out.

The four primary phases of a terrorist operation are:

- Operational research
- Surveillance and casing
- Dry run
- Attack

The operational research phase is the least likely to come to the attention of persons outside the terrorist cell as it is typically done remotely, usually from a personal computer via the Internet or in a library. During this phase, the terrorist cell assesses both the desirability of the property as a target as well as the degree of difficulty in attacking it.

Searches for news articles mentioning the property will help establish its public profile and potential value as a target. The property's own website, if it has one, can provide useful images of the property and surrounding area to assess possible attack vectors. Floor plans of public areas or of typical tenant floors can be especially useful to terrorists if they are posted on the website. Internet searches can identify some or all of the property's tenants, clarify what they do in the building and potentially identify notable personalities who work there.

A wealth of online resources can help the terrorist plan his operation. Free GIS databases can place the target into its geographic context, enable the terrorist to conceptualize a variety of attack scenarios and identify nearby "hostile" installations such as police stations or government offices. Architectural websites can

provide basic structural information, including building height, square footage, type of construction, depth of foundation and similar details. Publicly available overhead imagery websites are invaluable in evaluating vehicular approaches to the target and visual lines of sight, planning escape routes and identifying locations for conducting surveillance. All of this information is essential in selecting a target and formulating the broad outlines of an attack.

Once the target has been selected, the surveillance and casing phase offers the best opportunity to detect terrorism-related activity in and around the property. During this phase, which can last from one or two weeks to several months or even years, the terrorists must develop an in-depth knowledge of their target, including its layout, patterns of activity in and around the property, technical security systems employed and the locations of sensors, access control procedures, security guard practices and staffing patterns, local police activity patterns and a host of other operational considerations. To develop this information,

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operational members of the terrorist cell must physically observe the target, often repeatedly or for extended periods, thus exposing themselves to possible discovery.



Terrorists may employ static, foot and vehicular surveillance in amassing data on the proposed target. In static surveillance, a member of the team uses cover or concealment to position themselves in a location that affords a relatively unobstructed view of the target but where their presence would either be unnoticed or unremarkable. Seated in a coffee shop or restaurant, browsing merchandise in a store, reading a book or newspaper on a park bench or setting up a vendor's stand on the sidewalk, terrorists can use any of these ploys to patiently observe their target over extended periods of time. Vehicles can also be employed as static surveillance posts and offer the added security of being easily moved, although a person's presence in a stationary vehicle for an extended period of time is likely to draw unwanted attention. Perhaps the most effective means of conducting static surveillance is to

establish an "observation post," typically an apartment or hotel room within line of sight of the target. As a variation on the theme, terrorist cell members securing employment in businesses within line of sight of the target provides ideal cover for conducting long-term surveillance of the property.

Foot surveillance refers to the practice of walking by the targeted building to observe its layout, patterns of activity and security practices, but not entering it. It is less secure than static surveillance because the surveillants must either loiter in the vicinity of the target or make repeated passes in order to compile sufficient information of value, and in so doing risk drawing attention to themselves. To capitalize on their limited time in close proximity to the target, terrorists may attempt to record images of the property using cameras, video recorders or cell phones, either posing as tourists or attempting to conceal their use of these devices. Another ruse may be to pose as artists or students, sketching or photographing the building or its surrounds. Either tactic heightens the risk of discovery to the terrorist.

Similar to foot surveillance, vehicular surveillance involves driving by the target to observe activities at the property. Because of the difficulty of driving while attempting to note items of interest, especially in urban areas, terrorists are most likely to employ two or more persons while conducting vehicular surveillance. As with foot surveillance, they are very likely to try to record images of the target, although doing so successfully from a moving vehicle may require the driver to drive slower than the flow of traffic, causing the vehicle to stand out and increasing the prospect of discovery.

Casing involves the casual entry of a terrorist into the target building to observe its physical layout, security practices and pedestrian traffic flow, either committing details to memory so that a casing diagram can be drawn later or recording images. Individuals engaged in casing must have a plausible reason, or cover, for entering the property. For buildings that permit uncontrolled visitor access, a simple stroll through interior or exterior public areas, a visit to a retail establishment, the use of an ATM machine or a stop by the reception desk to ask for directions are all plausible covers for casing activities. A probe, on the other hand, is a variation



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on the casing theme that involves a more aggressive effort to either test security practices or to gain access to non-public areas by exploiting security weaknesses. The attempt by any unauthorized person to access non-public areas of a property should be cause for alarm and viewed as potentially terrorism-related.

In the dry run phase, terrorists will conduct at least one mock attack involving most or all of the personnel slated to participate in the actual operation to validate timing and routes, verify that security measures have been correctly characterized and work out communications between the team members. In most cases, the dry run will occur within a matter of days before the actual attack is slated to take place.



As operational security remains paramount, the terrorist team will avoid undertaking any activity that would draw attention to the group and will typically complete the exercise without commencing the final attack scenario, such as leaving a package ostensibly containing an IED, breaking into non-public areas of the property or attempting to maneuver a vehicle past security barriers to approach the target. One exception, however, involves underground parking; terrorists can be expected to try to park in subterranean garages during the dry run phase to validate vehicle inspection procedures, identify specific locations to park the vehicle to cause the most damage and verify that the vehicle can be safely maneuvered in the garage.

The attempt by any unauthorized person to access non-public areas of a property should be cause for alarm and viewed as potentially terrorism-related.

Once all preparations have been made, the attack phase commences. No particular warning should be expected before a terrorist attack occurs. If the terrorists have done their preparations well, the team members will assume their respective positions innocuously and according to a pre-established timetable. Except to issue an abort or danger signal, little communication between cell members should be expected. Only in the case of a major, unanticipated change in security procedures is the actual attack likely to be aborted.

TERRORIST TARGETING INDICATORS

Although subtle, there are discernible indicators of terrorist targeting activities in each of the phases. It must be cautioned, however, that months or years can go by from the time a group first considers mounting an attack to the actual operation. For this reason, suspicious incidents may appear unrelated due to the length of time between them. Maintaining a database of suspicious or odd incidents in or around a facility, and periodically reviewing the data, is vital in identifying terrorist activity before an attack actually occurs.

Research phase:

- An increase in the number of “hits” to a property’s Internet website
- An increase in the amount of time that single users access the property’s website
- Internet users accessing the property’s website from ISPs in foreign countries
- Pretext phone calls to the property management company inquiring about the identity of tenants, asking for architectural or structural data or requesting floorplans



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Casing and surveillance phase:

- Individuals loitering in or around the facility
- Persons loitering in nearby commercial establishments, parks, or similar locations with unobstructed direct line-of-sight to the facility
- Persons repeatedly walking by or through the property without apparent purpose
- Occupied vehicles parked in close proximity to, or within direct line of site of, the facility
- Vehicles driving by the facility at conspicuously slower speeds than the normal flow of traffic
- Individuals photographing or taking videos of the facility from moving vehicles
- Persons walking aimlessly around the property
- Persons appearing to pace-off distances within or outside the building
- Persons using a pretext to take photographs of the facility, sketch or draw the building or taking notes while observing the building
- Persons paying an unusual amount of attention to structural aspects of the facility or to the tenant directory
- Persons observing or studying security devices, personnel or procedures
- Individuals attempting to gain access to non-public areas of the facility
- “Tailgaters” attempting to follow authorized personnel through security check points

Dry run phase:

- Persons attempting to conceal themselves in areas with direct line of site to the building
- Individuals attempting to divert the attention of security personnel
- Persons with no apparent business at the property carrying bags, backpacks or other items capable of concealing weapons or an explosive device
- Individuals repeatedly checking their watches
- Individuals situated in various locations in or around the building appearing to communicate with one another or repeatedly making eye contact
- Vehicles attempting to approach the building through security barriers and then departing without conducting business or picking up or dropping off persons

Attack phase:

In addition to the indicators listed above for the dry run phase:

- Persons appearing nervous, apprehensive or disoriented
- Individuals avoiding eye contact, especially with building management or security personnel
- Persons carrying bulky or heavy items concealed in bags, back packs or other containers
- Persons dressed inappropriately for the weather, especially if overdressed or wearing bulky clothes in warm weather. (This is especially true for suicide bombers.)
- Individuals who appear disconnected from their surroundings, apparently mumbling or chanting under their breath. (Especially true of suicide bombers.)
- Persons obviously attempting to create a diversion
- Occupied, parked vehicles with motors running within line of sight of the facility



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- Visibly overloaded vehicles driving toward the facility
- Vehicles inappropriate to the local setting approaching the facility
- Individuals trying to distract security personnel responsible for controlling vehicular access to the property



MITIGATING THE TERRORISM THREAT

Without question, the single most effective way of mitigating terrorist threats to commercial properties is to avoid being targeted in the first place. Maintaining a rigorous and visible security posture in and around the property is very likely to compel potential attackers to look for a less challenging target elsewhere. Moreover, randomly altering security procedures to avoid setting predictable patterns can inject sufficient uncertainty into the mix to unnerve potential terrorists and cause them to abandon plans to attack.

Beyond making the property unattractive as a target, several measures can increase the likelihood that pre-attack activities can be detected in time to thwart the terrorists' plans. Training security personnel to engage persons as they come on the property affords greater opportunity to detect alerting behavior that might otherwise go unobserved. Whether performing surveillance, casing, or conducting a dry run, terrorists must avoid notice to accomplish their goals. Being engaged, even innocently, by a helpful security guard or lobby porter could unnerve a terrorist, causing them inadvertently to reveal that their activities are not as benign as they may wish others to believe.

Second, training all personnel employed at the facility in behavior pattern recognition (BPR), the art of detecting anomalies in persons' demeanor, activities or dress, can prove invaluable in detecting casing and surveillance activity. Developed by Israeli airport security personnel to detect terrorists, BPR is used by police departments, investigators, immigration and customs officers and transportation security personnel around the world to identify persons who are attempting to conceal some aspect of their activities. Short, one-day classes in basic BPR techniques can sensitize personnel from security officers and porters to engineers and janitorial staff to recognize and report suspicious individuals, enabling more highly trained personnel to assess whether the individual poses a potential threat to the facility.

Another important tactic in protecting commercial properties against terrorist attack is to extend the security perimeter well beyond the property line and into the surrounding community where terrorists are likely to operate while planning and preparing for an attack. By establishing cooperative relationships with neighboring property management and security personnel, shop keepers and local residents, security personnel can create an effective intelligence network to alert them to suspicious activities in the surrounding neighborhood that could foretell a possible future threat to the property. Establishing such relationships can serve as an invaluable force multiplier, in effect increasing the size of the property's security force and extending the security perimeter well into the surrounding neighborhood.



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On a similar vein, developing and maintaining close and cooperative relationships with local, state and federal law enforcement authorities and first responders should be a must for all property owners and managers. Granting them access to the property for training and exercises not only familiarizes them with the layout and emergency response programs at the property but heightens the property's security profile, reducing its desirability as a target.

As noted above, systematically recording security incidents, suspicious activities and anomalies in and around the property is essential to establish patterns that could reveal pre-attack terrorist interest. Whether the records are kept in a database, on-line or in hard-copy, security personnel must be trained to recognize potentially significant incidents. Equally important, security supervisors must periodically review the data, including dated material, to try to discern patterns or similarities among individual entries, enabling them to "connect the dots" to identify potential threats.

Physical security incident management (PSIM) software platforms that integrate technical security data from a variety of systems with guard force observations and incident reporting have begun to field diagnostic and assessment tools that can help accomplish this goal. For iconic properties that are relatively more likely to be targeted for a major act of terrorism, the investment in such systems, while not insubstantial, may be money well-spent.

Finally, perhaps the single most effective tool in reducing a facility's susceptibility to terrorist targeting is to determine what its true vulnerabilities are and then to develop an appropriate risk mitigation program. By commissioning an independent security evaluation and risk assessment by a competent outside expert, ownership and management should be able to identify those characteristics of the facility that are most likely to be viewed as desirable from a terrorist targeting standpoint. Once these factors have been identified and prioritized, funding can be directed at the most critical deficiencies and remediation efforts undertaken. By eliminating or mitigating the vulnerabilities that terrorists find appealing, one can lessen the likelihood that they will select the facility as a candidate for attack.

CONCLUSION

The best defense against terrorist targeting of commercial properties is to maintain an effective and visible security program that compels terrorists to look elsewhere in selecting a facility to attack. Should a terrorist group or lone-wolf actor decide to target a specific property, however, common elements in their operational methodology during the planning phases can be detected by a suitably trained and sensitized security force. By training property management and security personnel in behavior pattern recognition, extending the security perimeter beyond the property line into the surrounding community, establishing a security incident reporting system and periodically reviewing security incident data to discern patterns, property managers and owners significantly increase the probability that they will uncover terrorist targeting well before an attack is carried out and prevent the worst from happening.



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