

## **S**uccess

In suicide terrorism, the death of the bomber is the key to the success of the attack; the bomber knows in advance that success depends entirely on this death. The homicide bomber can transport the explosives either on his body, in a vehicle, or in an item he may be carrying. He is fully aware of what he is doing, and approaches a previously chosen target and blows himself up. The homicide bomber chooses the time and place to execute the explosion so that it will cause the maximum damage to the target.

## **E**valuating Homicide Bomber Threats

When evaluating whether the threat of a homicide bombing exists, law enforcement primarily focuses on *capabilities* and *intentions*:

- ▶ If a specific target is a point of concern for an attack, determine the *capabilities* of various target groups:
  - ◆ Can they carry out a homicide bombing?
  - ◆ Can they operate in the target environment?
  - ◆ Can they attack a mobile point target with precision?
  - ◆ Do they have the infrastructure to infiltrate the bomber to the target location?
  - ◆ Can they obtain the materials required for the bomb in the target area without raising suspicions?
  - ◆ Can they defeat security measures?
- ▶ If the capabilities have been identified as existing for a specific target, then the *intentions* have to be considered:
  - ◆ Is this a target consistent with past attacks?
  - ◆ Does this group benefit from carrying out the attack?
  - ◆ What would be the group's view of the long-term ramifications of the attack?

## **P**rotection Strategy

Protection against homicide bomber attacks requires robust force protection measures:

- ▶ Alert and vigilant front-line security
- ▶ Effective standoff barriers
- ▶ Thorough inspections of personnel and vehicles

Pre-operational surveillance is often conducted to validate a target and identify physical security vulnerabilities. Counter-surveillance units should be vigilant to repeat visits by unauthorized personnel, since the attackers would need to be intimately familiar with the target. Nuisance/suspicious probes against the outer security perimeter are also an indication of potential targeting. Once a plan is developed, practice runs can increase the odds for mission success, although circumstances may prohibit the terrorist from taking such a risk prior to the attack.

## **C**ounteracting Homicide Bombers

- ▶ Intelligence is a key factor in identifying that a group intends to carry out an attack and in determining the location of the attack.
- ▶ Identification of security vulnerabilities or operational security concerns are essential in determining where the terrorists may strike.



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# Homicide Bombers

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## Are Homicide Bombers Terrorists?

Terrorism is defined as the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives. Previous definitions stressed fear in general and not the political movements. Today, we see terrorism used to coerce and/or force a government or population to modify its philosophy and direction. Homicide bombers—who are dedicated to the “cause,” are uncompromising, and are willing to give their life to the “cause”—are truly terrorists.

## What is a Homicide Bombing?

A homicide bombing is an "operational method in which the very act of the attack is dependent upon the death of the perpetrator." The terrorist is fully aware that if he does not kill himself, the planned attack will not be implemented. The attack is carried out by activating explosives worn or carried by the terrorist in the form of portable explosive charges or planted in a vehicle he is driving.

Terrorists use homicide bombing attacks to instill a feeling of helplessness in the population, filling citizens with a fear that they have no way of protecting themselves against such attacks. These feelings hurt public morale, creating fear and panic, as occurred in the United States after the attacks of September 11th.

## Who is the Homicide Bomber?

The homicide bomber is *shahid*—a martyr who dies in the process of fulfilling a religious command. An activist or a terrorist organization selects *shahid*. After *shahid* is selected, he will participate in long training sessions, to test his

attitudes and performance under pressure and in life-threatening situations. Only trainees who are both willing and cool-headed are permitted to become a homicide bomber. By the time of the attack, the target has already been chosen and the *shahid* is well trained, brainwashed, and willing and able to execute the suicide attack.

There is no standard profile for the typical homicide bomber (effective profiles can only be built after identifying and examining each specific threat organization). Depending on the threat organization, the bomber may be male or female.

## Reason

The reason for committing a suicide attack for most homicide bombers, first and foremost, is religious fanaticism combined with nationalist extremism and a wish for revenge, but not personal despair. Suicide attacks are not acts of a lone lunatic or desperate terrorist who decides impulsively to attack as an act of revenge. It is a well-planned terror attack that requires extensive preparation and the involvement of a number of activists and leaders.

## Tactics

A terrorist organization may use one or more homicide bombers, and may use men or women. The explosives can be concealed on the human body, on an animal, in a vehicle, or in an object carried by the bomber, such as a gym bag, backpack, guitar, or even a television.

While publicly accessible venues and facilities are susceptible to a homicide bomber attack, al-Qaeda and other Islamic extremist terrorists have demonstrated the ability to defeat force protection measures in relatively high security areas and personal protective details.

Tactics include:

- ▶ Breaching physical barriers prior to a main attack
- ▶ Conducting a diversion prior to a main attack
- ▶ Becoming a trusted party that has access to the target

Al-Qaeda may also attempt to insert homicide bombers into a target via unconventional means. There have been references to diver training and efforts to procure associated underwater equipment. Divers may attempt to board a ship at pier-side or at anchor. Additionally, facilities adjacent to a body of water may have underwater ingress points not adequately fortified to prevent a diver's access.

## Homicide Bomb Components

- ▶ Typically, a terrorist organization will produce devices using materials that contain explosive charges inside fragmentation-producing containers (such as pipes) or with material such as ball bearings, nuts, and bolts embedded in them.
- ▶ Explosives may be homemade improvised explosives, commercial explosives, or dynamite and military explosives recovered from ordinance or military demolition charges.
- ▶ Initiation systems have been described that include a simple firing switch; a two-switch system (with arming and firing circuits); a two-switch system with a push-button and pressure-release switch (dead-man's switch); and any or all of the above with a built-in timer to ensure that the device functions.