

# Defensive Driving Overseas

The kind of car you drive, where you drive and where you park it all influence your vulnerability to terrorist kidnapping or car bombing. Your first goal should be to lower your profile as a terrorist target. Use a plain car that doesn't attract attention to yourself as a "rich American." Consider avoiding government cars that immediately identify you as associated with the U.S. Government.

Terrorist acts against individuals, such as kidnappings or car bombings, usually occur outside the home and after the victim's habits have been established through surveillance over a period of time. Your most predictable habit that can be exploited by a terrorist is the route you travel between your home and place of work or commonly frequented local facilities. Vary these routes as much as possible.

Although you can never be immune from terrorist attack, there are measures you can take to reduce your chances of being kidnapped from your car or the victim of a car bombing. Many of the measures discussed below are most appropriate for high threat areas, but can be useful no matter where your duties take you.

## *Kidnapping from Your Car*

**One common method of kidnapping favored by terrorist organizations is to stop a victim's car as it is driving along a predictable route. That's why it is important to vary your route frequently.**

Check occasionally to see if another car is following you. If you think you are being followed, circle the block or change directions several times to confirm the presence of surveillance. Make note of a description of the car and its occupants, if possible. It is okay to let the surveillants know you have seen them, but *do not under any circumstances* take any action that might provoke them or that could lead to confrontation. If they do not stop following you, drive directly to the nearest safe haven, such as a U.S. military base or the U.S. Embassy and advise the appropriate security or police authorities. Consider carrying a cell phone.

Learn to recognize and be alert to events that could signal the start of a plan to stop your car and take you captive. Such events include a cyclist falling in front of your car, a flagman or workman stopping your car, an unusual detour, a fake police or government checkpoint, road blocked by a disabled vehicle or accident victim, an accident in which your car is deliberately struck, cars or pedestrian traffic that box you in, or any sudden activity or gunfire. Unusual and unexplained absence of local citizens may also precede a terrorist attack.

If you determine you are under attack, you will have to make an instantaneous decision without time to carefully weigh all the consequences. You can

prepare yourself to make this decision by rehearsing in your mind, in advance, how you will react under various possible circumstances.

You won't have many options. You can sound the horn to draw attention to your car. This will, at least, help ensure there will be witnesses to observe and report what happened. You can make a quick U- turn and try to escape. If you need to jump the curb, hit it at a 30-45 degree angle and maximum speed of 35 mph. If your path is blocked by a vehicle across the road, you can, at some risk to yourself and any passengers, ram the blocking vehicle in an effort to spin it out of the way. Hit the other vehicle on an angle, with the impact focused on the wheel you want to move out of the way.

Also see [Kidnapping and Hostage Survival Guidelines](#).

## ***Car Bombing***

A terrorist can't plant a bomb in your car without having access to the car, so routine security measures against car theft are doubly relevant in areas where you might become a terrorist target. Always lock your car. Don't leave it on the street overnight, if possible. If you have to leave a key with a parking attendant, be sure to leave only the ignition key. Never leave your garage doors open or unlocked.

Lock your gas cap and put a bolt through the tailpipe. This will make bomb placement more difficult. Don't allow anyone to have access to the trunk unless you are there to observe.

When parking your car in an open area, check the area for suspicious persons before getting out. If in doubt, drive away. When you return to your car after it has been parked in an open area, do a walk-around inspection of the vehicle before you get it. In a high risk area, you may wish to look under the car for any evidence of unusual wires or tape.

At home, it's a good idea to have a remote garage door opener, so that you can enter and exit your car in the security of the closed garage.