

COUNTER-TERRORISM 101

by Howard Linett

An Israeli officer offers you a crash course in terrorist tactics and how you can stop them.

Editor's Note: The following is taken from the book "Living with Terrorism: Survival Lessons from the Streets of Jerusalem" by Howard Linett. It is intended to give you insight into the terrorist mindset, the techniques and tactics used by terrorists in their campaign against Israel, and counter-terrorism methods of the Israeli police.



Although this information specifically relates to the Israeli experience, it's important to remember that many of the same terrorists orchestrating campaigns against Israel would love to conduct similar operations in the United States. As you read this article, imagine that terrorists are attacking your town and ask yourself these questions: What would they hit? How would they do it? How would you respond? Could you stop them?

In September 2000, Palestinian terrorists launched a campaign of terror against Israel unparalleled in its intensity, magnitude, and savagery. Day after day, often from hour to hour, living in Israel during the last five years has been nightmarish.

My northern Jerusalem neighborhood, and the area within a few minutes drive from my home, has been the site of more than 20 terrorist attacks. So I feel like I have earned a Ph.D. in attack tactics and techniques from Terrorist University. What I have learned I now share with you, the American law enforcement officer.

Your New Identity

When combating terrorists, you cannot think of yourself as just a crime-fighter. You must become a counter-terrorist. The difference is not just one of semantics; it is a matter of life and death. When fighting terrorists, it's kill or be killed, not capture and convict. That may sound a little harsh to you. But think about the difference between criminals and terrorists.

Criminals crave anonymity. They want to do the crime and get away clean. Confronted with a choice between capture or a bullet, they will overwhelmingly opt for a jail cell rather than a grave.

Terrorists are very different animals. They crave the spotlight. And they want to make a big splash. To do so, they strive to inflict the maximum death, devastation, and destruction that they can. The more horrific the carnage, the greater will be the terrorists' media exposure, which for the terrorists translates into tangible assets. In today's world, terrorist groups compete among themselves for resources. Whichever group does the most harm to the "Great Satan," America, becomes Number One in the jihadist pantheon and reaps the benefits of that position in the form of more recruits, funding from Saudi philanthropies, and sponsorships from terrorist states. For the actual terrorists who conduct the attack, there is even a greater incentive: paradise. They have chosen to become martyrs to earn automatic passage into heaven for themselves and their families and an additional personal reward of 70 virgins to pleasure them for all eternity. When the bad guy wants to die and wants to take you and as many innocent people as possible along with him, you can't respond to his attack like a cop. Terrorists kill crime-fighters. Counter-terrorists kill terrorists and stop them from killing innocents. That's a savage way to look at the world. But never forget terrorists are diabolical and totally lacking in remorse. They think "outside the box." Surprise is an essential element in each of their attacks. And all too often they achieve surprise because the targets they attack are simply beyond our ability to conceive of them as targets. For example, terrorists delight in brutally murdering five- and six-year-old children sleeping in their beds. Selecting the most innocent and defenseless and massacring them is the real face of terrorism. And that, above all, is the terrorist mindset.

Cellular Anatomy The organizational structure of the terrorist cell is a case study of what can be accomplished through a division of labor. The typical cell includes operation planners, intelligence collectors, arms and munitions procurers, tailors of explosive garments, bomb makers, fashion consultants, costumers, recruiters, drivers, handlers, communications professionals, and fund-raisers. Let's take a closer look at some of the players within a terrorist cell. **Intelligence Agents**—These terrorists and terrorist sympathizers collect information on potential targets. They do so over time, clandestinely and methodically. For example, they may pose as media and tourists in order to videotape and photograph the target. They also employ high-tech methods of gathering information. These include recording and broadcasting still photos and 10-second video bites via cellular phones without the need of a computer and capturing real-time video with tiny and inexpensive Web cameras. The intelligence is used to select a target, determine the route to the target, choose the means of delivering the attackers to that target, and strategize how to counter the response of security at the site and public safety personnel who may respond. The planners also use it to select the day and time of the attack. They will choose the time when the target will be most packed with innocents, especially children. **Fashion Consultants and Costumers**—Clothing makes the man. Clothing also has the potential to make or break a terrorist operation. Active cells usually have fashion consultants who determine the most appropriate dress and grooming for the attackers based upon the location being attacked. They provide the clothes and the disguises the

attackers will wear and prepare every aspect of the operatives' appearance. In Israel many terrorist gunmen have carried out their attacks while wearing police and military uniforms. The uniforms are perfect in every detail, right down to the equipment that would be carried by actual police and soldiers. The message that you should take from this is, don't assume a person dressed like a first responder is a first responder. The terrorists' vehicles will also be disguised. Whether the vehicle is used as transport or as a car bomb, it will be non-descript and display a number of appropriate decals and bumper stickers. Its windows will be dirty, making it difficult for anyone to see inside. Its license plates will be partially obscured with packed on, hardened mud. Tailors—These artisans take the ideas of the costumers and make them a reality. They not only fashion clothes that will help the terrorists blend into their target environment, they also produce vests and belts for suicide bombers. Each vest can hold between eight and 25 pounds of explosives, detonators, wires, and shrapnel. The vests and belts cannot be detected even by trained and watchful eyes. Each garment worn by the suicide bombers is fitted out with multiple detonation switches and triggers attached inside the pockets of an "over-garment" through openings cut in those pockets. If one switch fails or the terrorist's hand or arm is somehow incapacitated, she can always access an alternate by reaching inside another pocket. Handlers—Every terrorist cell has a number of individuals who are in charge of delivering the attackers to their jump-off point. That's one of the jobs of handlers, but they also do much, much more. They actually walk the attackers through several rehearsals of their attack at the very site to be attacked. Sometimes these rehearsals are performed in full dress. A run-through may even be designed to specifically cause interaction between the terrorists in the attack group and the security personnel they will have to defeat later. This is done so that planners and intelligence operatives can gauge the security response and so the attackers will know what the security force looks like. Types of Attacks In Israel, terrorists have developed and successfully employed a large number of attack tactics using both firearms and explosives. Just when you think you have figured out what they will do next, they will do something else.

Shootings Terrorist gunmen in Israel like to carry out their attacks with M16s and AK-47s. These weapons are easily concealable on one's person, together with plenty of 30-round magazines, and their civilian semi-auto models are easily modified to fire full-auto. The exception to this weapon preference is, of course, snipers. They use precision rifles with high-end optics. Shootings carried out by terrorists on foot can be divided into three categories: attacks where escape is intended, where escape is optional, and where escape is not even contemplated.

Shoot and Scoot Attacks where escape is either intended or optional comprise the largest number of terrorist attacks with firearms. In Israel, these attacks take place from "terrorist friendly" neighborhoods and along highways, from hillsides, and at intersections that afford immediate escape. The shooter rises up from his hiding place and fires 30 rounds in a few controlled full-auto bursts into the target and disappears. Sniper attacks are another variation of a terrorist shooting in

which the shooter expects to escape. Considering the hysteria caused by the Beltway snipers in 2003, it's likely that terrorists might want to use snipers in America. In Israel, sniper attacks have targeted homeowners and their families in their homes. Imagine how much panic that could cause in an American city and you get a feel for the horror of this tactic.

Suicide Shooters Officers in the United States who have faced active shooters in schools and workplaces are very familiar with gunmen who just want to kill as many people as possible before they are killed. We have the same problem in Israel, except our active shooters are jihadist terrorists seeking martyrdom. Warning: If you face a terrorist shooter, don't just assume that he or she is only armed with a gun. It's not uncommon for suicide shooters to also be suicide bombers. Carve this in stone. When it is clear that the terrorist shooter could neither have a reasonable expectation of escaping nor clearly reveals a desire to escape, you must consider him or her to be wearing an explosive garment. Israeli tactics for such situations are: two bullets to the head; get everyone at least 150 yards away; let the bomb squad's robot deal with the body. You will have to decide what tactics are suitable for your agency and permitted under your use-of-force policy. But be advised, it's best to have a plan before you need one. Suicide shootings are most likely to occur at major intersections and anywhere else that the terrorist can continue firing until shot to death. Oh, and a word of caution, in Israel suicide shooters love to ambush crime-fighters. Think before you go blindly tearing-off toward the sound of the gunfire.

Bombing Tactics A bombing is so sudden and so violent that it does exactly what a terrorist weapon is designed to do: it terrorizes. Its heat incinerates some victims; its concussion wave inflicts massive internal injuries; and its blast force tears off limbs. And even people who aren't wounded who are in a bombing are physically and mentally affected for a long time. That's just the effects of the explosives themselves. Terrorist bomb makers know that the way to kill a lot of people with a bomb is with shrapnel. They epoxy together nuts, ball bearings, and "sheets" of nails forming a shell around the bomb's explosive. The result is a deadly barrage that creates an extensive kill zone out to more than 100 yards. On occasion terrorists have even incorporated a chemical component in their bombs. They pack the holes in their nut shrapnel with anti-coagulant rat poison. This makes it difficult and sometimes impossible for medical personnel to save the wounded. Palestinian terrorists have also tried some crude bio weapons during bombings in Israel. Some suicide bombers have carried hepatitis B and AIDS in their bodies. The concept behind this seems to be that the shrapnel will be sprayed with the infected body fluids from the bomber and this could infect the wounded. There is no evidence that this works. Even if it does, the trauma from the actual bombing is a much more immediate concern than the potential for disease.

Exploding Objects Contrary to the impression that most Americans receive from the media, not all bombs used by the terrorists in their campaign against Israel

are carried on the bodies of martyrs. Many bombs have been hidden inside objects. Doing so allows the bomb to be clandestinely transported and “planted” so that it can later be detonated by remote control. Common items used to conceal bombs include food packages and hand-held electronic devices. Larger bombs have been found in discarded household appliances. If you put an old TV set out with your garbage in Israel, someone will call the bomb squad. The oldest form of terrorist bomb is the “leave it behind” bag. All over the world, terrorists of all stripes have used this method. The standard tactic is for the bomber to carry a bag, briefcase, satchel, backpack, etc., onto a bus or into a restaurant. He or she then rides a few stops or has a nice meal and gets off the bus or exits the restaurant, leaving behind the bomb. Generally, these bombs used to be timed devices, but now they are often detonated remotely using a cellular phone. This method lets the terrorists watch the target and detonate the bomb when it is most crowded. And if any attempt is made to remove the bomb or evacuate the kill zone, the watcher will detonate it immediately.

Vehicle Bombs Car bombs come in all sizes, from hijacked tanker trucks to a soccer mom’s minivan. And they can be packed with military grade plastic explosives, fertilizer and diesel fuel, or just a bunch of the propane tanks like you might use in your backyard barbecue. Terrorists do not need commercial explosives to kill lots of people in a series of attacks. In Israel, terrorists have been very creative with car bombs. They will sometimes detonate a car bomb to lure first responders into the kill zone where they can be attacked by suicide bombers or gunmen or both. Also, beware the Trojan ambulance. It could hold as much as half a ton of explosives. Stolen emergency vehicles make excellent platforms for suicide car bomb attacks, and they are especially deadly when used against police, firefighters, and paramedics who are responding to an earlier attack.

Here’s something you should always remember when planning your response to terrorism. The Trojan ambulance and other disguises of both personnel and vehicles are all about one thing: gaining a split-second advantage over the security forces. When responding to a terrorist incident, you must be alert and you must be prepared to take action. If you hesitate for even a fraction of a second, the terrorists will kill you and the people you are trying to protect.

Born and bred in Connecticut, Howard Linett has lived in Jerusalem, Israel, half his adult life. He is an attorney, a journalist, a veteran of the Israeli Defense Forces, an active Israeli Police Civil Guard sniper instructor, a TRENDO speaker, and author of “Living With Terrorism: Survival Lessons from the Streets of Jerusalem.”