



Aim for the head, police chiefs agree

By Sari Horwitz in Washington

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The organisation that represents police chiefs around the world has issued guidelines saying that officers who confront a suicide bomber should shoot the suspect in the head.

The recommendations from the International Association of Chiefs of Police take a more aggressive posture than typical lethal-force guidelines.

London police, acting on a similar policy, last month killed an innocent man they mistook for a suicide bomber. He was shot seven times in the head.

In spite of this example, a *Herald Poll* published on Wednesday indicated relatively strong support in Australia for giving police the authority to "shoot to kill" when pursuing terrorist suspects. Forty per cent of people polled wanted police to have such powers, while 55 per cent opposed it.

After the July 7 attacks on the London transit system by suicide bombers, the global police chiefs organisation produced a detailed training guide for dealing with suicide bombers. It recommends that if an officer needs to use lethal force to stop someone who fits a certain behavioral profile, the officer should "aim for the head" to kill the person instantly and prevent the possibility of the suspect setting off a bomb they could be carrying.

The association's behavioural profile says such a person might exhibit "multiple anomalies", including wearing a heavy coat or jacket in warm weather or carrying a briefcase, duffle bag or backpack with protrusions or visible wires. The person might display nervousness, an unwillingness to make eye contact or excessive sweating. There might be chemical burns on the clothing or stains on the hands. The person might mumble prayers or be "pacing back and forth in front of a venue."

The guidelines also say the threat to officers does not have to be "imminent" as police training traditionally teaches. Officers do not have to wait until a suspected bomber makes a move, another traditional requirement for police to use deadly force. There just needs to be a "reasonable basis" to believe the suspect can detonate a bomb, the guidelines say.

In Israel and Britain, two countries with a history of confronting terrorist violence, police have adopted a policy of shooting a suspected suicide bomber in the head to prevent detonation of a suicide vest.

The Israeli training of British and US law-enforcement officials has led some US groups to ask whether the police are going too far.

"The London situation where an innocent man was shot and killed was based on Israeli procedure, and I don't think that we want to be replicating the actions of a foreign government engaged in a brutal occupation of another people," said Ibrahim Hooper, a spokesman for the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

The Washington Post

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