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Be Prepared for Terrorism

How to Survive a Suicide Bombing

THREAT



The threat of a suicide bombing in the US is **SEVERE**. FBI, CIA and others judge a suicide bombing attack as the most likely next terrorist attack upon America.

May 20, 2002—AP—FBI Director Robert Mueller told a meeting that terrorist groups in the U.S. will begin using individual terrorist suicide bombers against civilian targets. "I think we will see that in the future. I think it's inevitable," Mueller said.

July 9, 2002—Al Qaeda spokesman Abu Ghaith said that al Qaeda's "suicide militants are ready and impatient to carry out attacks against U.S. and Jewish targets inside (America) and abroad." He repeated earlier statements, saying America should "fasten its seat belts... we will strike in a period of time which is not long.

What is a Suicide Bomber?

Suicide bombers are among the most difficult attackers against which to defend. But knowing how to prepare and react—knowledge you can absorb below—can make the difference between death and survival.

The concept of killing oneself while killing others is hardly new, nor is it a phenomenon confined to the Middle East. Suicide bombers have included World War II Japanese Kamikaze pilots, the militant Palestinians currently targeting Israeli civilians, and the 9/11 hijackers.

The Iranian-backed Islamic terrorist movement Hizbollah initiated the modern era of suicide bombings. In April 1983 Hizbollah suicide truck-bombers killed 64 U.S. embassy workers in Beirut, Lebanon. In October of that year, again using a suicide truck-bomber, Hizbollah murdered 240 people in the U.S. Marine compound near Beirut. The Lebanon attacks were so successful that Arab terrorists began to adopt the suicide-bombing tactic worldwide.

The most recent—and the deadliest—wave of suicide bombings began in Israel in 1993 and peaked there in September 2000 with a new Palestinian 'intifadah,' or uprising. The nightly-news is now replete with stories of terrorists placing explosives on their bodies, in bags, or into vehicles and detonating the bombs and themselves among crowds of Israeli civilians.

How Would a Suicide Bomber Attack?

Though the 9/11 terrorists were suicide bombers, it is now likely that passengers would aggressively fight against hijackers, as did the heroes of Flight 93. The increase in airport security meanwhile makes it less likely that a terrorist will again be successful in hijacking a jet and using it as a missile. More likely, the US will be targeted by terrorists hiding explosives on their bodies (such as the figure below), carrying bombs in bags or suitcases, or delivering explosives by a car or a truck.

We can predict with some certainty the type of suicide attack we should expect in the US by looking at the long history of suicide attacks in the Mid-East.

1. A suicide bomber in the US would likely be an Islamic fundamentalist, either from al-Qaeda or a Palestinian extremist group (Hamas, Hizbollah, etc.)
2. Because of the difficulty of creating a bomb and scouting a location, a suicide bomber in the US would likely work with co-conspirators.
3. The target of a suicide bomber would almost certainly be a highly populated space and is likely to be a well-known, public area. For instance, the al-Qaeda manual counsels terrorists to attack stadiums, and the Palestinian extremists have frequently attacked buses, restaurants and shopping areas. We can expect attacks in these places as well as subways, malls, churches or temples and other crowded public locations.



Top Targets:

Be extra alert for suicide bombers in crowded, public spaces, particularly at peak times. Top targets include:

1. Subways, trains or buses
2. Malls
3. Train or bus stations and airport check-in lines
4. Restaurants, discos, casinos and nightclubs
5. Stadiums

6. Movie theaters
7. Churches, temples and other religious gatherings
8. Schools or universities

What is the Impact of a Suicide Bomber?



A suicide bomber will typically place himself and his deadly payload wherever he thinks he will kill the most people.

A single suicide bomber can carry enough explosive on his body to kill or gravely wound everyone on a bus or train car, as seen in the photo on the left: an Israeli bus destroyed by a suicide bomber. A similar explosive, carried by one man, in an open area—such as a stadium or a train depot—could kill most people within a 50-foot radius.

A bomber driving a truck or car laden with explosives could destroy an entire building, as in the 1994 Oklahoma City bombing.

The destruction from the Palestinian attacks has varied depending on the power of the explosives, and the concentration of people in the immediate area. Some blasts have killed only the bomber, while others have destroyed city buses or packed dining rooms and killed most of the inhabitants inside. Suicide bombers in the US will make efforts not only to kill a large number of people, but also to foster deep fear among us. Suicide bombings not only have high physical destructive value, but are psychologically traumatizing, bringing the specter of terror nearly anywhere.

WHERE ARE YOU?

To survive a suicide bomber and the disruptions that will follow, you must adapt your strategy to your location.



At Home: If you are at home and learn of a suicide bombing in your city:

1. Try not to leave your home for a few hours. There may be follow-on bombings, and the roads should be kept clear for emergency personnel.
2. Listen to reliable media sources to determine if the bomb was a radiological dispersal device (RDD).
3. If you are within 1 mile of the detonation, presume it was a radiological dispersal device until you hear otherwise. Ensure that **all** vents, air conditioners and windows are closed at your home—use duct tape and plastic sheeting on your vents and anywhere else necessary. If the bomb was an RDD, authorities will determine this within 3 hours and broadcast the news and follow-on recommendations.



At the Office: If you are in the office and learn of a suicide bombing in your city:

1. Try not to leave your office for a few hours. There may be follow-on bombings, and the roads should be kept clear for emergency personnel.
2. Listen to reliable media sources to determine if the bomb was a radiological dispersal device (RDD).
3. If you are within 1 mile of the detonation, presume it was a radiological dispersal device until you hear otherwise. Ensure that **all** vents, air conditioners and windows are closed at your office—use duck tape and plastic sheeting on your vents and anywhere else necessary. If the bomb was an RDD, authorities will determine this within 3 hours and broadcast the news and follow-on recommendations.



In the air:

1. If you are in the air and learn that there has been a suicide bombing in the city of your arrival, ensure the crew and pilot are aware. Follow the flight crew's instructions and expect to be redirected to land in another city. Sit tight. You are in a sealed space plane and can land far from the incident. This is perhaps the safest place to be.
2. If the blast happened on your airplane, you are in immediate danger of a crash, but remember: planes have landed safely after major structural damage similar to the type a suicide bomber could cause. Follow the flight crew's instructions.
3. Ensure your seat belt is securely fastened. There is likely to be a breach in the plane's structure, a rapid depressurization and oxygen masks may drop.
4. Put your shoes on, remove eyeglasses and sharp objects (pens) from your pockets. Assume crash position.



In a bus or train: Suicide bombings on buses and train cars have been very lethal. The safest spots may be near the back of the train car or bus, away from the entrance. If you can choose your car on a subway, select a less-crowded car towards the rear of the train. In a crowded compartment, it is safer to be sitting rather than standing, because you are less exposed to shrapnel and head wounds.

1. If an explosion occurs on your train, but not in your car: prepare for a rapid derailment or stop. Put your shoes on, and remove eyeglasses and sharp objects (pens) from your pockets. Assume a crash position with your head between your knees.
2. If a bombing happens in your compartment on a bus or train: you are likely injured and in shock. Expect a follow-on bombing. Evacuate immediately. Exit the train or bus station expeditiously.



Walking, outside, at a public venue: If you are walking or sitting and a suicide bomber strikes nearby:

1. **At the first flash or blast, hit the ground** and get as low as possible to avoid debris and smoke. Shelter behind something and expect another bomb.
2. **Get yourself and anyone you can to an exit** and get out.
3. **Beware of building collapse.** Once you have made it out of the area, get away from any structures that could collapse from the first blast, or any other bombings that could follow.
4. **Beware that this explosion may have been a "Dirty Nuke"** or a radiological dispersal device. Take precautions to prevent radiation sickness.
5. **Determine if you are in the danger zone of radiation** (within one mile down-wind). If so, you should presume you may have been exposed to radiation. Ensure officials are aware of this and follow their instructions. Do not eat anything. Drink water only from a sealed bottle.

DETERRENCE

Though suicide bombers can be deadly, we cannot be scared away from crowded, public areas. In a high-risk area, you can take four easy steps to increase your chances of survival:

1. **Avoid the bomber's likely target spots.** As described above, a suicide bomber will most likely strike a crowded public area like a train station or a mall, at the place with the densest concentration of people, particularly if the crowd is close to an entrance or exit. If leaving or entering a crowded building, let crowds dissipate before you approach.
2. **Protect yourself from an explosion.** Most injuries from a bomb blast are caused by a pressure wave. The power of this wave decreases exponentially with distance: just a few feet from the suicide bomber's target—most likely a crowd or an entrance—can make a fateful difference.
3. **Use built-in "shields" and avoid built-in projectiles.** In a high-risk area, try to position yourself so that obstructions like support columns or kiosks are between you and the suicide bomber's likely target (the largest crowd or the entrance.) These objects deflect flying shrapnel and a bomb's deadly pressure wave. Conversely, try to position yourself away from large expanses of glass – for example, don't sit next to a large, glass, street-level window at a popular restaurant or café – as flying glass is a serious threat.
4. **Don't stand within an arm's length of walls.** Flying shrapnel and a bomb's pressure-blast do not deflect off walls at sharp angles like a tennis ball. Instead, they travel along walls like a wave. When a bomb explodes, pressure will gather along the walls with magnified force and "roll" along the wall. If you are in a potential target area, try not to stand within an arm's length of walls. An explosion could contain or generate projectiles, and walls could deflect these mini-missiles in your direction.

Identify a suicide bomber

74% of suicide bombers in Israel are Arab men aged 18 to 22 years old, but the terrorists have adopted practices that make it easier for them to blend into Israeli crowds. Women and older people are now being used as bomb-carriers, and the bombers have appeared in commonplace Israeli attire (including earrings on men, short haircuts, military uniforms). In the US, it will be difficult to identify a bomber by his sex, age or fashion of clothing; but there are other identifying traits:

1. A bomber carrying explosives on his body will require a jacket or bulky shirt for disguise and may appear artificially overweight. Be suspicious if you see someone wearing a winter jacket on a hot day. A bomber could also carry explosives in a bag or suitcase, and will often clutch it to his or her chests just before detonation.
2. Many suicide bombers work in teams of two. On final approach to the target site, the bomber will be accompanied by another terrorist to give the bomber mental support and help him or her pick the actual target spot. The partner will leave before the detonation.
3. In video review of Israeli suicide bombings, a large percentage of the bombers appeared to be apprehensive and agitated as they neared detonation. Many were sweaty and moving furtively.
4. Bombers in Israel have begun sewing explosives into their jackets. Therefore a suicide bomber may wear a jacket that appears to have unusual stitching or cinching.
5. Evidence of wires or electric switches connected to (our hanging from) clothes or packages is reason to evacuate immediately and contact authorities.

Disarm a suicide bomber

Passengers on an Air France Flight from Paris to Boston bravely disarmed Richard Reid, the notorious "shoe bomber." It is not unrealistic to assume civilians will be faced with the specter of stopping and disarming another suicide-terrorist.

If you are confronted with someone who appears to be a suicide bomber, your goal should be to prevent him/her from entering a target area containing a large group of people. Your first concern should be to isolate and control the bomber's hands. Though you will be putting your life at risk, you may be able to save the lives of many others.

The Israeli defense services have discovered an effective method to disarm a suicide bomber if—as a last ditch effort—they must physically grapple with one. If your legs are pulled from under you from behind, it is a human reflex to push your arms forward to break your fall. A suicide bomber generally needs to use his hands to detonate his explosive. If he is pulled to the floor from behind, his hands are likely to be momentarily removed from his triggering devices.

If you have disarmed a suicide bomber, or ever come upon an explosive, never touch the bomb or attempt to

move it. Bombs can be built to self-detonate if moved. Instantly evacuate the area and leave the explosives for the bomb squad.

SURVIVE

After a suicide bomber has struck, what do you do to ensure your safety? Here are the **Three Steps** to ensure that you rapidly make the right decisions.

First **If a bomb explodes, immediately expect another.** Like the 9/11 attacks, many bombings come in stages. A suicide bombing against the US is likely to be grand-scale. At the first sign of a flash or blast, hit the ground. Get as low as possible to avoid debris and smoke, and seek shelter. Get yourself and anyone you can to an exit and get out.

Second **Beware of building collapse.** Once you have made it out of the area, get away from any structures that could collapse from the first blast, or any other bombings that could follow.

Third **Beware that this explosion may have been a "Dirty Nuke",** or a radiological dispersal device. Take precautions to prevent radiation sickness: do not drink nor eat anything, take potassium iodide tablets (adults: 130 mg./ day), remove your clothes and shower as soon as you can.

If you are injured, covered in debris or hidden from sight:

- If you can elevate bleeding limbs above your heart or compress the bleeding, do so. Otherwise, move as little as possible to prevent further injury and to avoid kicking up dust, which can hinder breathing.
- If you are covered or out of view, try to remain calm. Struggling may aggravate your injuries. Unless you must, do not waste energy yelling, because this may cause you to inhale harmful dust and vapors. Instead, clap or tap on something. Help will get to you soon.

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