

Threat Assessment:

**Major Terror Attacks against Hotels,
2002-2011**

March 29, 2012

CTC- Risk Analysis Cell 12-01_TA

Major Terror Attacks against Hotels, 2002-2011

Scope

This product analyzes major terror attacks on hotels and provides a strategic-level assessment of the groups, tactics, and frequency of global terror attacks against hotels from 2002 - 2011. Additionally, the product identifies the deadliest types of attacks, comparing casualty counts and attack methods.

The product was derived from media reporting and unclassified, for official use only sources.

Key Assumptions

Radical Islamic groups, including al-Qaeda and al-Qaeda linked groups continue to plan attacks against the West, including the United States (US). These groups view civilians as potential targets and will continue to use a variety of attack methods. Lack of information pertaining to a certain category in this report does not necessarily represent the absence of a threat. However, the frequency and tactic of attack analyzed in this report may indicate the most common vulnerabilities to an attack on the hotel sector.

Executive Summary

Since 2002 there have been 18 major terrorist attacks against hotels worldwide; a major attack is defined as an attack resulting in at least 10 casualties. During this time period there were no attacks against US homeland-based hotels. Groups with a connection to al-Qaeda carried out all but one of these major attacks.

- An attack on a hotel within New York State or the US would most likely follow the current predominant worldwide trend and utilize explosives or small arms.
 - Major attacks against hotels were primarily carried out using a military grade explosive; however, an explosive device constructed within the US would most likely use homemade explosives, such as triacetone triperoxide (TATP).¹
 - The use of small arms to attack a US-based hotel may be seen as a more viable option than trying to assemble a homemade explosive. Al Qaeda and their affiliates have encouraged Western-based radicals to use small arms to carry out attacks because of their ease of use and availability in comparison to building an explosive device.
- The likelihood of an al-Qaeda-inspired lone actor successfully attacking a hotel is low. However, lone actors in the US have shown an interest in targeting hotels previously. For example, Farooque Ahmed, arrested in April 2010, conducted pre-operational surveillance at a Washington, D.C. area hotel.

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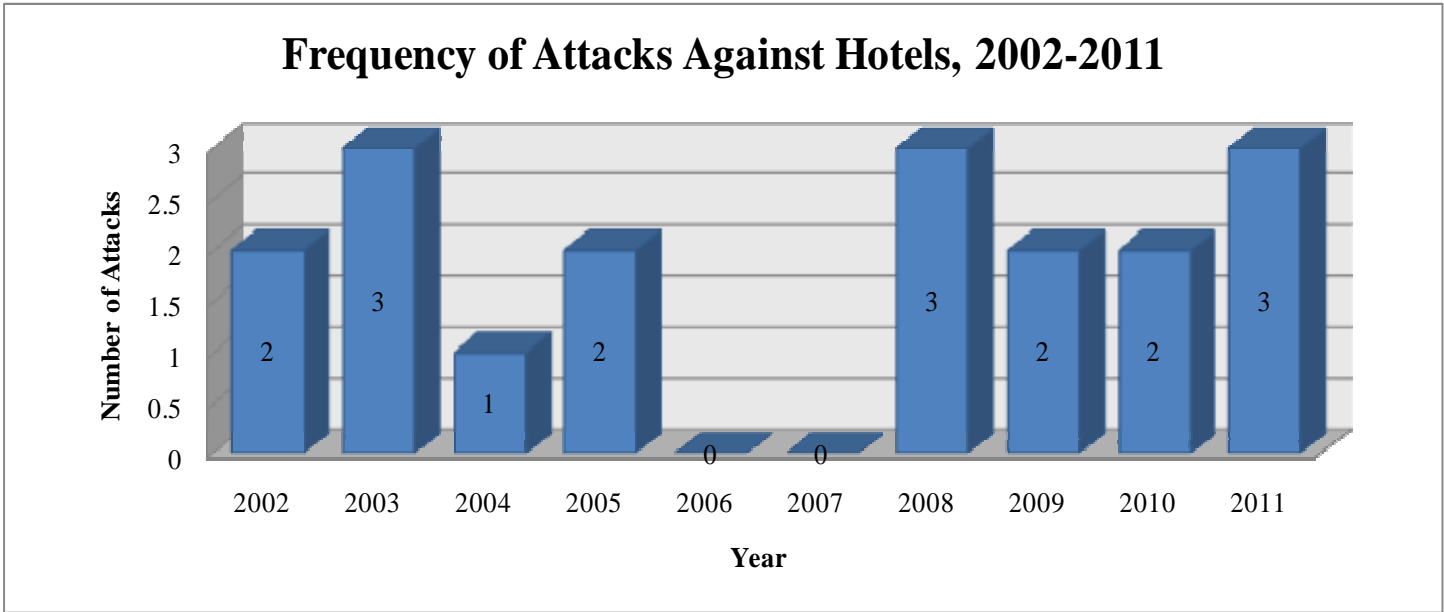
- A key leader or high-profile event/mass casualty opportunity was targeted in nearly 50% of the attacks, and represents a possible motivating factor for targeting.
- The most common tactic used against hotels is a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED), accounting for 43% of the attacks analyzed in this report.

Attacks Analyzed

- November 2002: Paradise Hotel (Kenya)
- March 2002: Park Hotel (Israel)
- August 2003: Canal Hotel (Iraq)
- September: Canal Hotel (Iraq)
- August 2003: Jakarta JW Marriott (Indonesia)
- October 2004: Sinai Peninsula Bombings (Egypt)
- November 2005: Amman Bombings (Jordan)
- July 2005 Sharm el-Shiek Bombings (Egypt)
- January 2008: Serena Hotel Attack (Afghanistan)
- September 2008: Islamabad Marriott Hotel Bombing (Pakistan)
- November 2008: Mumbai Attack (India)
- June 2009: Pearl Continental Hotel Bombing (Pakistan)
- July 2009: Jakarta Marriott & Ritz-Carlton Bombings (Indonesia)
- January 2010: Baghdad Hotel Bombings (Iraq)
- August 2010: Muna Hotel Attack (Somalia)
- June 2011: Inter-Continental Hotel Attack (Afghanistan)
- August 2011: Bismillah Hotel Bombing (Pakistan)
- November 2011: Atilano Pension House (Philippines)

1. Attacks by Year

There have been 18 major attacks against hotels since 2002. The average number of major attacks has consistently averaged two to three per year since 2002. In 2003 and 2008, terrorists conducted the highest number of attacks, three each year, including some of the highest casualty rates of the attacks analyzed: the deadly 2003 JW Marriott bombing in Jakarta, Indonesia; the 2008 Mumbai, India attack; and the 2008 Islamabad, Pakistan Marriott bombing. In 2011, militants from the Taliban-linked Haqqani network attacked the Inter-Continental Hotel² in Kabul, Afghanistan in June, killing 11 people; and in August, Pakistan-based Baloch insurgents attacked a hotel in Dera Allayar, Pakistan killing 14 people.³



2. Attacks linked to al-Qaeda Core or al-Qaeda Affiliates

Seventeen attacks were carried out by a group that has a known connection to core al-Qaeda or an al-Qaeda affiliate, such as al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) or al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). A connection is defined as member(s) of al-Qaeda or an affiliate having contact with members of another group, and could be an association or direct support. Support can be in the form of technical, financial, or logistical assistance.

There are two attacks in the analysis that involved a group denying a connection to al-Qaeda or a larger jihadi group aligned with al-Qaeda. Initially, the organization that carried out the 2004 Taba Hilton bombing⁴ and the 2008 Islamabad Marriott⁵ bombings did not claim a connection to al-Qaeda; however, investigators believe that al-Qaeda-linked militants played a role.^{6,7}

In 2004, the Egyptian government initially stated that a new, local Egyptian Islamic extremist group, Tawid and Jihad, claimed responsibility for an attack on the Hilton hotel in Taba, Egypt.⁸ Officials investigating the 2005 Sharm-el Sheik bombing identified the perpetrators of the Taba Hilton blast and Sharm-el Sheik bombings as the Abdullah Azzam Brigades, an Egyptian-based Islamic terror organization with a connection to al-Qaeda.⁹ Less independently capable groups, such as the Abdullah Azzam Brigades, are likely capable of successfully attacking hotels overseas because of their connection to al-Qaeda or an affiliate who provide easy access to a bomb maker, materials or the funding for an operation.

September 2008 Islamabad Marriott Bombing

The September 20, 2008 attack on the Islamabad Marriott involved a truck laden with a 600 kilogram mixture of Research Department Explosive (RDX) and TNT that left a crater 30 feet deep and 50 feet wide and quickly ignited a natural gas line that engulfed the structure.

The bombing was traced back to Baitullah Mehsud, leader of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and other militant groups. Note: RDX is also known as cyclonite or hexogen.

3. Special Events on Location at Time of Attack

An analysis of each event showed nearly half of the time a key leader or high-profile event/mass casualty opportunity¹ was on location at the time of the attack. Terror groups may in fact target an event or key leader, as in the case of the 2005 Amman bombings¹⁰ and the 2011 Inter-Continental Hotel attack.¹¹ However, terror groups are just as likely to strike based on operational readiness, as evidenced in the 2008 Mumbai assault. The presence of a key leader or event may be a motivating factor for a terror organization to time a strike, as exemplified in the Taliban attack, below.

2011 Inter-Continental Hotel Attack

On June 28, 2011, nine Taliban suicide bombers attacked one of Kabul, Afghanistan's premier hotels killing seven civilians and two police officers and injuring 13 others. The raid started at approximately 10:45pm when a suicide bomber detonated his vest outside a less secure side gate of the hotel to gain access. Reports state that suicide bombers armed with Kalashnikovs, rocket-propelled grenades and at least one heavy machine gun were firing randomly throughout the hotel lobby.

At the time of the attack, a wedding party was pool-side, a separate function was in the ballroom and national and foreign officials were staying at the hotel for an upcoming meeting to discuss the transition of power in Afghanistan. Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid stated that the upcoming conference and the fact that hotel housed foreign advisors were the reasons for the attacks.

¹ A high profile event/mass casualty opportunity is characterized as the presence of an event, such as an important person or conference, at the hotel during the time of the attack.

4. Attack Method per Target

When analyzing each target separately, the most common tactic used to attack a hotel is a VBIED, used in 42% of the attacks, followed by suicide bombing accounting for 21% of the total attacks (See Figure 4). Tactics used by terrorists against hotels correspond with terror tactics worldwide; between 2002 and 2008 terrorists tended to rely on explosives and small arms in attacks against all target types.¹²

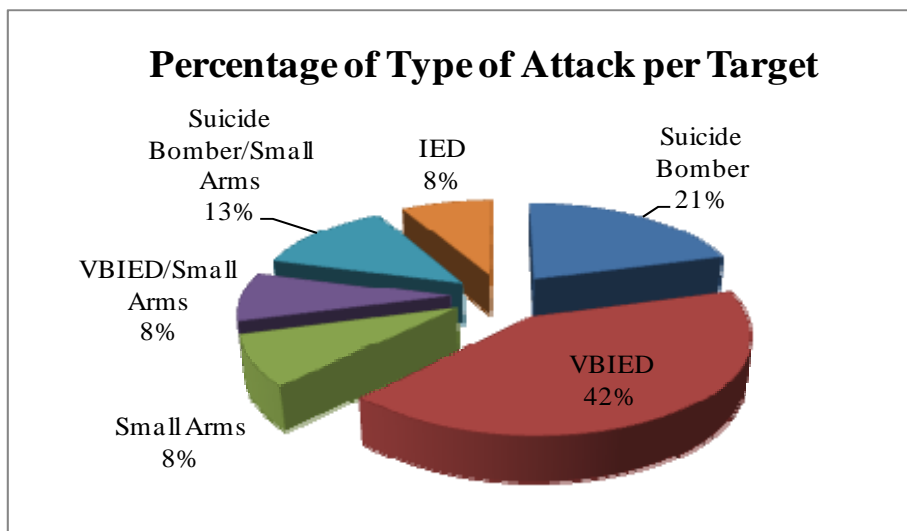
Attacks combining small arms with an explosive, either a suicide bomber or VBIED, against a single target were used in 21% of the attacks. For example, small arms were used successfully in breaching a security post in several attacks, including the attack against the Hamra Hotel in Baghdad in January 2010. In general, attacks incorporating multiple tactics are more complex and less likely, although they may also be harder to defend. Groups that have carried out successful multi-tactic attacks, such as the Haqqani Network, the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Shabaab, are typically large, well-funded groups connected to al-Qaeda.

When analyzing each attack in its entirety, attackers using only VBIEDs accounted for most attacks (39%), followed by suicide bomber(s) and small arms combined attacks (17%). Attacks involving only suicide bomber(s) and multi-method attacks using small arms, typically to breach security posts, and VBIEDs account for 11% of attacks respectively.

2005 Sharm el-Sheik Bombing

Two VBIEDs and an IED detonated in the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheik, Egypt on July 23, 2005. At 1:15 pm, VBIEDs exploded at a coffee shop in the Old Market area of Sharm el-Sheik, resulting in 217 casualties, and at the Ghazala Garden Hotel reception area, killing 60. The third bomb, an IED, was placed in a sack near a popular “beach-side walkway” and killed six.

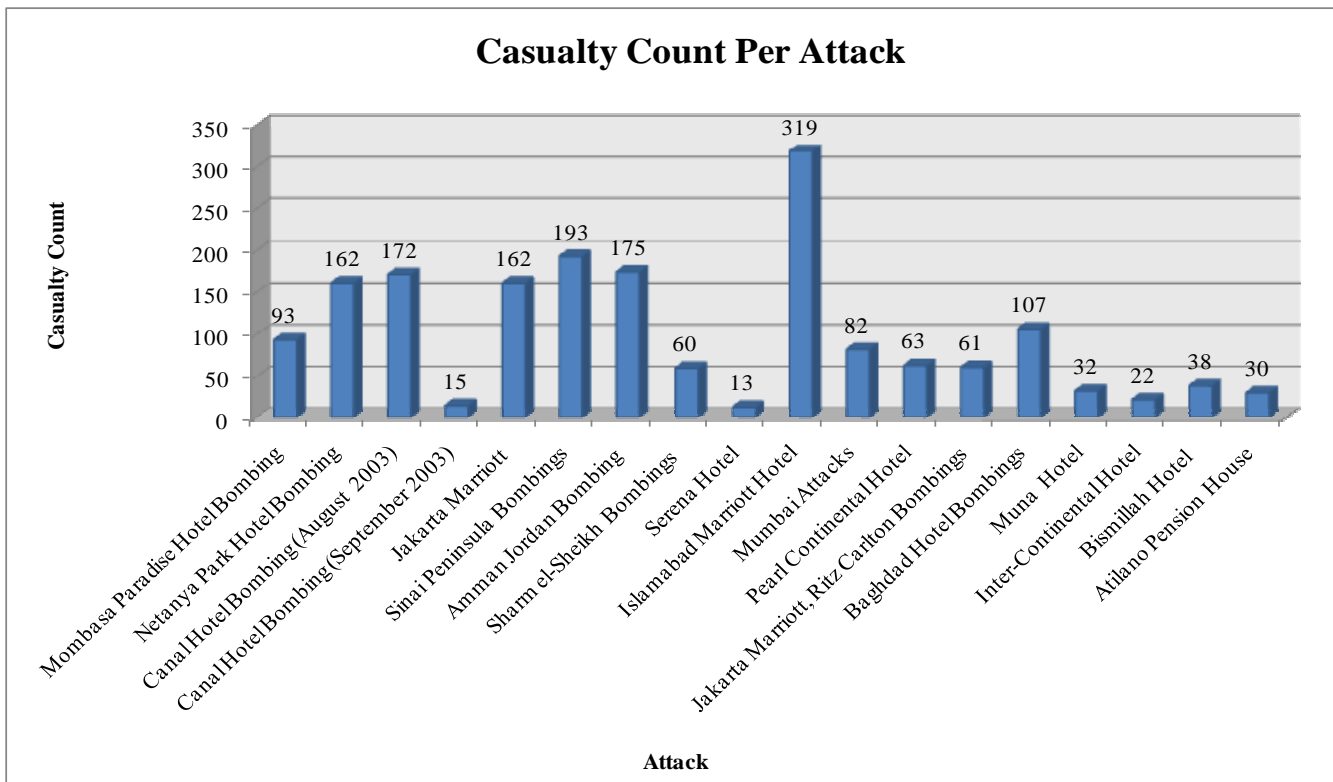
The Abdullah Azzam Brigades, a small group connected to al-Qaeda, claimed responsibility for the attack. The group is also responsible for the 2004 bombings of Egyptian resorts in Taba.



5. Deadliest Attacks

The 2008 Islamabad Marriott bombings (319 casualties)¹³, the 2004 Taba Hilton bombing (193 casualties)¹⁴ and the 2005 triple-bombing in Amman, Jordan (175 casualties) were the deadliest hotel attacks (See Figure 2). All groups responsible for these attacks have a connection to al-Qaeda, and two of the three attacks targeted multiple sites within close proximity to one another, leading to numerous casualties.¹¹

Eight of the ten deadliest attacks against hotels involved the use of a VBIED; a suicide bomber and active shooters accounted for the remaining two deadliest attacks targeting hotels. Military grade explosives were the primary explosive in three of the four deadliest bombings. The two deadliest attacks used VBIEDs that combined military grade explosives, such as RDX, with commercial explosives like TNT.



6. Attack Method Lethality

To analyze a weapon’s lethality, each target, attack type and the corresponding number killed were compared individually.¹¹¹ Attacks involving a VBIED accounted for the largest percentage of those killed (39%) (See Figure 5). The second most lethal attack type is small arms (20%), the primary tactic used in the 2008 Mumbai attack. The third most lethal method was suicide bombings (17%). Notable suicide bombings include the deadly 2008 attacks against Jakarta’s

¹¹ Only casualty counts, attack types and explosive types of the hotels were analyzed.

¹¹¹ Therefore, multiple tactics could have been employed against one target, such as a suicide bomber and small arms.

JW Marriott and Ritz-Carlton hotels. The high casualty percentages from VBIEDs and suicide bombings are correlated both to the frequency of these methods, and their lethality.

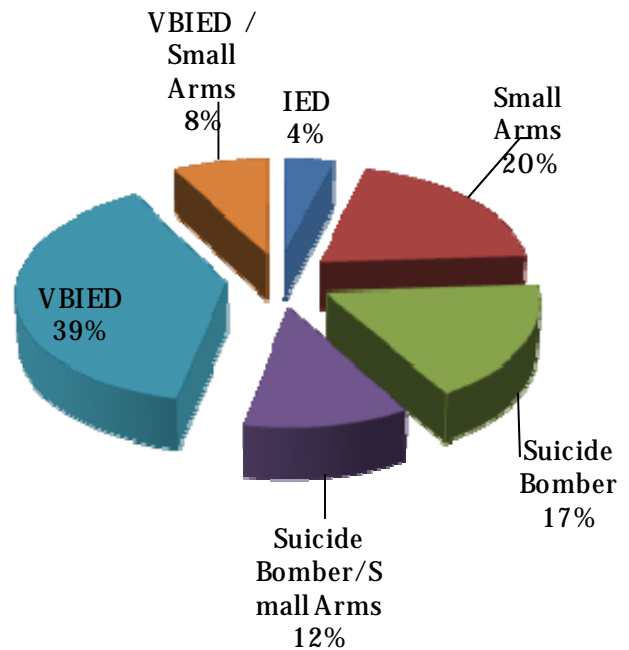
In November 2008, trained Lashkar e-Taiba militants used small arms to attack the Taj and Trident Oberoi Hotels in Mumbai, India and killed 82 people before being killed by police. This attack accounted for 8% of attacks against hotels (due to multiple targets) and 20% of the casualties. The lethality of VBIEDs is partially attributed to the frequency, but also the type of explosive, most often a military grade explosive, and the ability to carry a larger payload.

2005 Amman Jordan Bombings

The November 9, 2005 bombing of three hotels in Amman, Jordan killed 57 people and wounded approximately 300. The near simultaneous blasts occurred at approximately 8:50pm when a suicide bomber detonated his device in the lobby of the Hyatt, followed by another suicide bomber in the Radisson ballroom, and a VBIED outside the Days Inn.

The suicide bomber at the Radisson caused the most destruction when he detonated his device during a 300-person wedding reception. The attack on the Radisson was originally supposed to be a dual suicide bomber attack; however, the explosives on the second bomber, the man's wife, failed to explode. At the Days Inn, a concrete barrier prevented the suicide bomber from getting his VBIED into the hotel, limiting the lethality of the blast. The attacks were orchestrated by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq at that time.

Percentage Killed by Attack Type (Excludes Wounded)



7. Analysis of Known Explosive Materials

Military grade explosives were used in nine of the ten attacks where the explosive type was known. Analysis of known explosive material can indicate the capability of a group; however, the type of explosive used often goes unreported.

The widespread use of military grade explosives, specifically RDX, by well-organized groups such as Jemaah Islamiyah and al-Qaeda in Iraq, is indicative of these groups' ability to acquire and construct a powerful explosive. The use of TNT, extracted from mines planted throughout the Sinai Peninsula, and al-Qaeda in Iraq's use of improvised munitions is evidence that attackers often use materials that are accessible.

Investigators of the 2005 Amman, Jordan attack stated that al-Qaeda in Iraq operatives; a large, well funded group, used RDX-laden suicide vests to attack three hotels. Conversely, the Abdullah Azzam Brigades, a smaller and less capable group, used the less powerful but more widely available explosive TNT in devices used to attack the Taba Hilton¹⁵ hotel and Sharm el-Sheik resort¹⁶ in Egypt. Given the resources available, both groups deployed their weapons with devastating effects; all three attacks were among the deadliest attacks analyzed.

8. Implications to New York State

New York State remains a priority target for individuals and groups seeking to conduct a terror attack. Al-Qaeda and affiliated groups have been advising and inspiring individuals throughout the world to conduct attacks against "soft targets," such as hotels. Nearly all major attacks against hotels were carried out by groups that have a connection to al-Qaeda. Some of those groups referenced in this assessment, such as Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, have targeted entities in New York State in the past, demonstrating intent and capability.

Homegrown violent extremists and lone actor attacks continue to pose a threat to the Homeland. Jihadist literature, including *Inspire* magazine, has urged individuals to target easier to strike, populated areas. It is possible that a lone actor may choose to attack a soft target, such as a hotel, for several reasons, including a mass casualty opportunity or the presence of high-profile individuals.

- Hotels have been recently targeted by terrorism suspects in the US. During an FBI-led investigation, Farooque Ahmed conducted preoperational surveillance against a Washington, D.C. area hotel. In April 2010, he pleaded guilty to two counts of attempting to provide material support to a designated terrorist organization (al-Qaeda).

Those wanting to attack a hotel within New York State or the US will likely follow the current worldwide trend and utilize small arms or explosives.

- A bomb designed within the US would likely use homemade explosives, such as triacetone triperoxide (TATP) or pentaerythritol tetranitrate (PETN).¹⁷


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- Commercially available, controlled explosives such as TNT, have also been used in attacks overseas and may be seen as an alternative to military grade or homemade explosives by homegrown violent extremists.
 - Although military grade explosives were the primary type used in attacks overseas, they are strictly controlled within the US and those seeking to acquire them would likely face greater risk of detection.
- The number of terror attacks that involved small arms has risen since 2001. AQAP has advocated the use of small arms by Western radicals because of their simplicity of use and their availability. The number of law enforcement tripwires associated with obtaining a firearm is lower than for attempting to build or attain an IED, making a gun-based plot potentially more difficult to disrupt.

New York State's Operation Safeguard outreach program, similar to the NYPD's Operation Nexus and the nationwide "See Something, Say Something" campaign, informs public and private sector facilities about potential indicators and warnings of terrorist activity. New York has previously placed the hotel sector among its priority sectors because of historical threat reporting from the federal government.

To date, all suspicious activity reports regarding hotels received by NYSIC have been resolved with no nexus to terrorism identified. However, hotel owners and security personnel are encouraged to continue to report all suspicious activity to local law enforcement and the New York State Terrorism Tips Line at 1-866-SAFE-NYS (1-866-723-3697) for appropriate investigation.

Recommendations for Protective Security Measures

Attached is the US Department of Homeland Security's Infrastructure Protection Report on the hotel sector. The report addresses potential indicators of terrorist activity, common vulnerabilities and protective measures for consideration in hotel security planning. For more information, see the embedded attached document at the right: 

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(U) Data Matrix

Major Attacks Against Hotels, 2002-2011												
Attack	Date	Location	Group	High-Profile Event?	Connection to Al Qaeda or Affiliate	Type	Explosive Material	Perpetrator Killed	Perpetrator Wounded	Killed	Wounded	Total Casualty
Paradise Hotel	28-Nov-02	Mombasa, Kenya	Political Office of al Qaeda Jihad Organization	0	1	VBIED (suicide)	Unknown	3	0	13	80	93
Park Hotel	27-Mar-02	Netanya, Israel	Hamas	1	1	Suicide Bomber	Unknown	1	0	19	143	162
Canal Hotel	19-Aug-03	Baghdad, Iraq	Al-Qaeda in Iraq	1	1	VBIED (suicide)	Improvised Munition (500 lbs. Bom	1	0	22	150	172
Canal Hotel	22-Sep-03	Baghdad, Iraq	Al-Qaeda in Iraq	1	1	VBIED (Suicide)	Unknown	1	0	3	12	15
Jakarta JW Marriott	05-Aug-03	Jakarta, Indonesia	Jamaah Islamiyah	0	1	VBIED (Suicide)	Military Grade	1		12	150	162
Taba Hilton Bombing	07-Oct-04	Taba, Egypt	Abdullah Azzam Brigades (Tawhid Islamic Brigades)	1	1	VBIED	TNT / Military Grade	1	0	34	159	193
Grand Hyatt	09-Nov-05	Amman, Jordan	Al-Qaeda in Iraq	0	1	Suicide Bomber	Military Grade (RDX)	1	0	36		36
Radisson SAS	09-Nov-05	Amman, Jordan	Al-Qaeda in Iraq	1	1	Suicide Bomber	Military Grade (RDX)	1	0	9		9
Days INN	09-Nov-05	Amman, Jordan	Al-Qaeda in Iraq	0	1	VBIED (suicide)	Military Grade (RDX)	1	0	3		3
Died in hospitals From Injuries												
Coffee Shop	23-Jul-05	Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt	Abdullah Azzam Brigades	0	1	VBIED (Suicide)	TNT / Military	1	0	17	200	217
Ghazala Gardens Hotel	23-Jul-05			0	1	VBIED (Suicide)	TNT / Military	1	0	60		60
Beachfront Parking Lot/Bus Stop	23-Jul-05			0	1	IED	TNT / Military	1	0	6		6
Serena Hotel	14-Jan-08	Kabul, Afghanistan	Taliban	0	1	Suicide Bomber/Small Arms	Unknown	2	0	7	6	13
Islamabad Marriott Hotel	20-Sep-08	Islamabad, Pakistan	Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan	1	1	VBIED (Suicide)	TNT/Military Explosives(RDX)	1	0	53	266	319
Taj Mahal	(26-29)-Nov-08	Mumbai, India	Lashkar-e-Taiba	0	1	Small Arms	NA	3	0	50	0	50
Trident/Oberoi Hotel	(26-29)-Nov-08			0	1	Small Arms	NA	2	0	32		32
Pearl Continental Hotel	09-Jun-09	Peshawar, Pakistan	Abdullah Azzam Shaheed	1	1	VBIED (Suicide) / Small Arms	Unknown	3	0	17	46	63
Marriott	17-Jul-09	Jakarta, Indonesia	Jamaah Islamiyah	1	1	Suicide Bomber	Military Grade	1	0	6	53	59
Ritz-Carlton	17-Jul-09	Jakarta, Indonesia	Jamaah Islamiyah	0	1	Suicide Bomber	Military Grade	1	0	2		2
Ishtar Sheraton	25-Jan-10	Baghdad, Iraq	Islamic State of Iraq	1	1	VBIED (Suicide)	Unknown	1	0	11	26	37
Babylon Hotel	25-Jan-10	Baghdad, Iraq	Islamic State of Iraq	0	1	VBIED (Suicide)	Unknown	1	0	9	12	21
Hamra Hotel	25-Jan-10	Baghdad, Iraq	Islamic State of Iraq	1	1	VBIED (Suicide) / Small Arms	Unknown	1	0	16	33	49
Muna Hotel	24-Aug-10	Mogadishu, Somali	Al-Shabaab	1	1	Suicide Bomber/Small Arms	Unknown	1	0	32	0	32
Inter-Continental Hotel	28-Jun-11	Kabul, Afghanistan	Haqqani Network	1	1	Suicide Bomber/Small Arms	Unknown	9	0	9	13	22
Bismillah Hotel	14-Aug-11	Dera Allah Yar, Pakistan	Baloch Liberation Tiger	0	0	IED	Unknown	0	0	14	24	38
Atilano Pension House	28-Nov-11	Zamboanga	Philippines	1	1	IED	TNT	0	0	3	27	30

Endnotes

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