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U.S. Department of State,
Bureau of Diplomatic Security

Terrorist *Tactics*



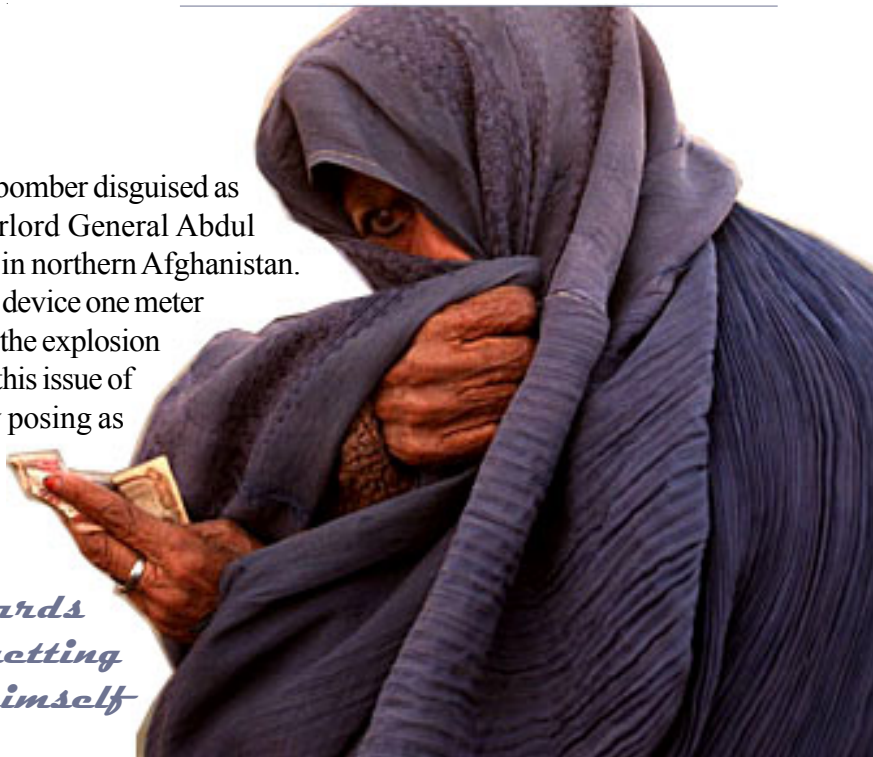
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Surveillance by those with their hands out

Prepared by Andy Corsun, DS/IP/ITA

(SBU) On January 20, a suicide bomber disguised as a beggar approached Afghan warlord General Abdul Rashid Dostum outside a mosque in northern Afghanistan. Though the “beggar” detonated his device one meter from Dostum, no one was killed in the explosion other than the bombers himself. In this issue of *Terrorist Tactics*, we will see how posing as a beggar can serve as a clever ruse to carry out pre-operational surveillance.

“When the bodyguards stopped him from getting any closer, he blew himself up.” -- Security guard



(SBU) As part of the Eid Al-Adha celebrations, a public prayer was held at Boghdi park in the northern Afghanistan city of Sheberghan, Jawzjan Province.* Afghan warlord General Abdul Rashid Dostum was among the 2,000 attendees. At approximately 9:30 a.m., just after Eid prayers, a suicide bomber disguised as a beggar approached Dostum outside a local mosque. Dostum’s bodyguards immediately stopped the “beggar” and he detonated his device as they were wres-

ting him down to the ground. The bomber was killed in the explosion, and Dostum -- standing approximately one meter from the bomber -- was knocked down by the blast. He was rushed to a local hospital for an examination, but was unhurt. According to reports, as many as 26 other people were injured in the explosion, some seriously. Among the injured was Dostum’s brother, Abdul Khadir, who is the deputy chief of mission at the Afghanistan Embassy in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

**Eid Al-Adha (Feast of Sacrifice) is the most important feast of the Muslim calendar. It concludes the Pilgrimage to Mecca.*

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(U) Following the attack, Mullah Adul Hakim Latifi -- claiming to speak for the Taliban -- said “*thousands of Taliban had surrendered but Dostum and his men had killed them ...we will attack any Afghans who are allies of the Americans or the present government.*” His remarks were via a satellite call from an undisclosed location. (Note: The Taliban accuses Dostum’s militia of “slaughtering” Taliban prisoners during the U.S.- led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001.)

The investigation

(SBU) The police indicated they conducted security patrols and checks of the park and surrounding area the day before the public prayers (January 19) . However, on the day of the attack, the “beggar” did not arouse suspicion, and was able to enter the area unchallenged. After the attack, the local police could not secure or preserve the crime scene. Tensions among the crowd were so high in their efforts to hit the body of the suicide bomber that they trampled the crime scene. The bomber is believed



to be 25-30 years of age. His identity has not been determined, and no conclusion has been made about his nationality, or ethnicity. Bits and pieces of paper were found on his body. One of them read, “*This book belongs to Gulnubi, Najjibullah, Hufizullal, Qayoumkhan, Wakil Khan.*” Another piece of paper had a phone number with the 0303 area code for Pakistan.



-The bomber is believed to be 25-30 years of age.
-The device also consisted of some steel/metal shrapnel such as ball bearings the size of a 12-gauge shotgun shell, among other undetermined items.

(SBU) Investigators also found a fuse wrapped in toilet paper, two batteries, and some wires at the crime scene. They described the device worn by the bomber as rather “*rudimentary*” and “*not very sophisticated.*” Postmortem x-rays taken of the bomber’s body at a local hospital indicated the device also consisted of some steel/metal shrapnel such as ball bearings the size of a 12-gauge shotgun shell, among other undetermined items.

“If we cannot use any of the above [read ‘overt surveillance,]’ than we use ‘covert surveillance.’ Example: a beggar, a shoe shiner, fruit vendor, a street sweeper, a newspaper seller, or a flower seller.”

— Excerpt from al-Qa’ida training manual on surveillance techniques

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When is a beggar just a beggar?

(SBU) The terrorist use of disguises can also be an effective tool to collect intelligence for target planning. Disguises enable the surveillant to blend into their surroundings without arousing suspicion -- a critical factor during the preoperational surveillance phase. It is at this stage that the terrorist is most vulnerable by exposing himself to the target prior to the attack. Posing as a beggar offers the surveillant a number of advantages that other ruses do not. Firstly, begging is universal and their behavior normally does not raise a red flag. In fact, people go out of their way to avoid them. Even law enforcement personnel view beggars as a nuisance, and do not perceive them as a threat. By making them “invisible” the “beggar” can case a target without being scrutinized. It also makes it more difficult to identify and/or describe them later on. Secondly, the nature of begging provides the surveillant with the flexibility to conduct both mobile and static surveillance. Thirdly, most beggars are prevalent in urban areas -- as are our diplomatic facilities.



General Abdul Rashid Dostum

(SBU) The following suspicious incidents from the Security Information Management and Analysis System (SIMAS) database further highlight other advantages of this ruse:

“... There was a person (beggar) asking people for money near the traffic light. The beggar was seen for three days straight in the same location.” **SIMAS Event 55930**

(SBU) The disguise of a beggar provides the surveillant with the cover needed to establish and maintain a presence near the targeted site. While the timeframe needed to conduct surveillance depends on a number of factors -- to include the type of target selected and its surrounding areas - - the al-Qa’ida training manual notes, “*if a target has enhanced security {for example, an embassy}, the target should be surveilled only one to three times.*” It is also not necessary for the “beggar” to make sketches or take notes. Al-Qa’ida operatives must have “*knowledge of the city,*” and “*possess good powers of observation and memory.*”

“... His name is Ateng, but he does not have an ID card.” **SIMAS Event 43220**

(SBU) If a beggar is detained by the police and is unable to produce identification, there is a good likelihood that the police will not detain or question him. Instead, they will just have him leave the area. Though a potentially sensitive issue, posts should explore various procedures to deter beggars (and other unidentified/suspicious individuals) from loitering around U.S. diplomatic missions and official residences.

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“While he [read ‘beggar’] was there, an American employee arrived at her residence and when she tried to get inside the building, the beggar headed toward her, asking for money ...” **SIMAS Event 50402**



(SBU) The nature of begging provides the surveillant with the cover needed to conduct close-up surveillance of the target. Mission personnel and family members should be briefed on terrorist surveillance techniques. Lessons learned have shown that when non-security personnel know what to look for, they become an effective addition to the post’s surveillance detection efforts.

Team effort

(SBU) Terrorist’s use of disguises as a surveillance method or to carry out a terrorist attack is timeless, low-tech, and effective. Members of a RSO’s entire security team -- including local police protecting our facilities -- should be cognizant of the potential danger of the use of disguises. Sometimes just conducting an identity check of the surveillant is enough to abort or at least interrupt the attack planning. Mission personnel and family members should be encouraged to immediately report any unusual incidents or any strangers who appear out of place. Remember, detecting terrorist surveillance is a team effort.