



SAN DIEGO LAW ENFORCEMENT COORDINATION CENTER

Situational Awareness Bulletin

February 1, 2018

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(U//FOUO) Altered Vehicle Resembling Ambulance Used to Conceal Improvised Explosive Device in Kabul, Afghanistan

(U//FOUO) The SD-LECC developed this bulletin at the request of local first responder partners to provide an overview of a January 2018 terrorist attack in Afghanistan and items for consideration regarding potential terrorism-related tactics and trends.

(U) Incident Overview

(U//FOUO) On January 27, 2018 at approximately 12:15pm local time, a vehicle resembling an ambulance and laden with explosives detonated after it passed through a police checkpoint in Kabul, Afghanistan. The explosion killed more than 100 people and wounded approximately 235 others.¹ According to the deputy spokesperson for the Afghanistan Interior Ministry, the vehicle was painted to resemble an ambulance and had successfully passed through a checkpoint after the attacker allegedly told police he was transporting a patient to a nearby hospital.² While stopped at a second checkpoint farther inside the city limits, the attacker detonated the explosives concealed in the vehicle.³ The explosion occurred in an area known as Chicken Street, which includes a prominent shopping zone and is in close proximity to foreign embassies and government buildings.⁴ A Taliban spokesman released a statement claiming responsibility and alleged the attack was in retaliation to an increased presence of U.S. troops and an increase in airstrikes throughout Afghanistan.⁵



(U) Aftermath of the explosion caused by an IED concealed inside of a vehicle disguised to resemble an ambulance. (Source: Sunday Post)

(U//FOUO) Individuals may consider using a variety of official vehicles or altering vehicles to look like official vehicles to further their terrorist objectives. The use of ambulances, law enforcement vehicles, fire vehicles, or other government vehicles could enable attackers to enter into secure areas to access sensitive sites or carry attackers, weapons, and/or explosives to an intended target location. Individuals may clone first responder vehicles by modifying unofficial vehicles with paint and decals to make them appear to be official; steal vehicles from residences, vulnerable vehicle lots, or while first responders are at a scene; or purchase retired, official vehicles and potentially re-equip them with equipment that was removed prior to sale to make them appear more legitimate. Incidents involving stealing or cloning first responder vehicles in the United States have often been associated with criminal activity, but individuals in the United States could also gain insight from international attacks to attempt similar tactical use of emergency response and government vehicles in terrorist attacks in the United States.

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(U//FOUO) First responders should follow agency protocols for responding to suspicious incidents and safeguarding equipment and vehicles. The following non-exhaustive list identifies potential indicators of misuse or misrepresentation of first responder vehicles.⁶

- (U//FOUO) Drivers of government vehicles who are not knowledgeable or who become increasingly nervous when questioned about the organization represented on the vehicle they are driving
- (U//FOUO) Incorrect vehicle decals, verbiage, colors, word font, and size
- (U//FOUO) Visible identifiers, such as phone number or license plates, that are inconsistent with the vehicle's operating area or mission
- (U//FOUO) Heavily loaded vehicles, possibly beyond capacity

(U//FOUO) First responders should also follow agency protocols for safeguarding equipment and vehicles. The following non-exhaustive list provide suggestions for best practices in safeguarding against vehicle theft.⁷

- (U//FOUO) Carry an extra set of keys to the vehicle on your person so the vehicle can remain locked while left unattended
- (U//FOUO) Place vehicles in a secure location while not in operation (i.e. garage or gated lot)
- (U//FOUO) Avoid leaving sensitive materials in a vehicle while it is unattended (i.e. badges, uniforms, other agency-issued items)

(U//FOUO) To report suspected terrorism-related activities, visit <https://sd-lecc.org/> and select "Submit Tip/Lead." For urgent threat reporting, contact the San Diego Joint Terrorism Task Force at (858) 320-5380. For imminent threats, call 911.

(U) For comments or questions regarding this product, please contact the SD-LECC at (858) 495-7200 or info@sd-lecc.org.

(U) Your feedback is important to us and we encourage you to fill out a customer survey, accessible through the following link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SDLECC1802>

(U) Tracked By: HSEC-8.3, HSEC-8.8, HSEC-8.10, SD-IT.01, SD-IT.03

(U) Endnotes

¹ (U); Internet News; Akram Walizada; *Reuters*; "Shock Gives Way to Despair in Kabul After Ambulance Bomb"; 27 January 2018; <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-blast/shock-gives-way-to-despair-in-kabul-after-ambulance-bomb-idUSKBN1FG086>; accessed on 1 February 2018.

² (U); Internet News; *BBC*; "Kabul Attack: Taliban Kill 95 with Ambulance Bomb in Afghan Capital"; 28 January 2018; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-42843897>; accessed on 1 February 2018.

³ (U); Internet News; Ehsan Popalzai, Faith Karimi, and Laura Smith-Spark, *CNN*; "Afghanistan Mourns After Ambulance Bomb Kills More Than 100"; 28 January 2018; <https://www.cnn.com/2018/01/28/asia/afghanistan-kabul-ambulance-bomb/index.html>; accessed on 1 February 2018.

⁴ (U); Internet News; *BBC*; "Kabul Attack: Taliban Kill 95 with Ambulance Bomb in Afghan Capital"; 28 January 2018; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-42843897>; accessed on 1 February 2018.

⁵ (U); Internet News; Akram Walizada; *Reuters*; "Shock Gives Way to Despair in Kabul After Ambulance Bomb"; 27 January 2018; <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-blast/shock-gives-way-to-despair-in-kabul-after-ambulance-bomb-idUSKBN1FG086>; accessed on 1 February 2018.

⁶ (U//FOUO); U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Federal Bureau of Investigation; IA-0053-13; 18 January 2013; (U//FOUO); Terrorist Tradecraft—Impersonation: Use of Stolen, Cloned, or Repurposed Vehicles; Extracted information is U//FOUO; Overall document classification is U//FOUO.

⁷ (U//FOUO) San Diego Police Department Detective Sergeant; Personal Meeting; 1 February 2018; Extracted information is U//FOUO; Overall meeting discussion was U//FOUO.