



SAN DIEGO - LAW ENFORCEMENT COORDINATION CENTER

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(U//FOUO) Hotels as Potential Bomb Labs

(U) Executive Summary

(U//FOUO) Hotels, motels, and other lodging facilities have been used by extremist individuals and groups as locations to manufacture improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in close proximity to their intended targets. Hotels, specifically rooms with kitchens or kitchenettes, allow these groups or individuals to greatly reduce the potential for a premature detonation. Given the short distance to the intended target the risk of premature detonation during transportation is minimized.

(U) Hotel Rooms Used as Terrorist Bomb Labs

(U//FOUO) Hotels provide a relatively inexpensive and low profile base of operations for the construction of explosive devices near potential targets.¹ Lodging facilities are accessible to the public and are privately owned and operated. These factors decrease the likelihood of detection by law enforcement and limit the potential for interdicting a terror plot. Individuals seeking to use hotels for terror related activities can mask their activities within a hotel's unregulated human and vehicle traffic, which is a high volume for major hotels.

(U//FOUO) Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) are one of the most common terror attack methods used around the world. Many of these explosives can be produced with readily available precursor chemicals. Terrorist groups have used IEDs constructed from homemade peroxide-based explosives extensively over the last 20 years. The most commonly used hydrogen peroxide based explosives used in terrorist attacks are triacetone triperoxide (TATP) and hexamethylene triperoxide diamine (HMTD). Peroxide based explosives can be highly unstable due to the level of impurities during the manufacturing process.²

(U//FOUO) Hotel rooms have served as bomb labs in close proximity to the intended bombing target. Hotel rooms, specifically rooms with kitchenettes, allow these groups or individuals to greatly reduce the potential for a premature detonation by transporting raw materials in a stable form to location near the intended target. Transporting highly sensitive and potentially unstable IEDs has in the past, resulted in unintended detonations or law enforcement interdiction of operatives behaving suspiciously while transporting highly explosive materials.³ The following are incidents where hotel rooms were used as bomb labs during terrorist attack plots.

- (U//FOUO) On September 10, 2010, one day prior to the 9/11 anniversary, Lors Doukaiev, a Chechen born Belgian citizen, was injured while attempting to assemble a letter-bomb.⁴ Doukaiev was attempting to construct the letter-bomb using TATP and steel pellets in a hotel in Copenhagen, Denmark. Doukaiev's intended target was the Danish newspaper that published the cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad.



(U) Lors Doukaiev captured on the hotel's security camera on the right and photographed after the premature detonation on the on the left.

He had traveled from Belgium to Denmark and picked a hotel near the Danish newspaper. Doukaiev traveled between Belgium, Germany, and Chechnya regularly and had three separate forms of false European identification in his hotel room at the time of his arrest. Danish authorities have also linked Doukaiev to terror groups in Germany that plotted other attacks against the Danish media.⁵

- (U//FOUO) In February 2010, Najibullah Zazi pleaded guilty to charges involving a plot to attack the New York subway system.⁶ Records from an Aurora Colorado hotel indicate that after purchasing large quantities of hydrogen peroxide and acetone from beauty supply stores, Zazi booked a suite at the hotel for the purpose of manufacturing and testing peroxide-based explosives. During the criminal investigation, chemical residue in the suite revealed the presence of acetone in the vent above the stove, and Zazi did admit to manufacturing TATP in his suite.⁷ After manufacturing the TATP, Zazi drove the raw materials to New York where he planned to construct and detonate IEDs in the New York subway system.⁸ Zazi likely would have greatly decreased the chances of interdiction if he had chosen to use a hotel room near one of the New York subway stations.



(U) Najibullah Zazi captured on security cameras purchasing a large quantity of TATP precursor products.

- (U//FOUO) On July 17, 2009 two near-simultaneous suicide bomber attacks were carried out at the western-owned hotels JW Marriott and Ritz-Carlton in central Jakarta, Indonesia.⁹ The attacks killed eight people and wounded at least 52 others. A Jemaah Islamiya (JI) affiliated cell led by Noordin Mohammed Top, conducted the attack.¹⁰ The cell had used one of the suites in the JW Marriott as their bomb lab on the night before the attacks. Ibrohim Muharram, a florist who had worked at both hotels, conducted dry runs with the two suicide bombers and provided access to the hotel loading docks.¹¹ The docks were used to move the raw bomb-making materials to the hotel room with no detection. The use of the hotel room allowed the JI members to construct the IEDs onsite, thus reducing the distance the suicide bombers had to travel to their intended targets and limiting the opportunity for interdiction.¹²



(U) Pictures captured by hotel security cameras of suicide bombers before they detonated themselves.

(U//FOUO) Hotel rooms have also been used in the manufacture of other illicit materials. Production methods for clandestinely manufactured narcotics and poisons create a potential hazard for law enforcement and first responders. On January 21, 2010 a methamphetamine lab exploded in a Florida hotel room resulting in third degree burns to the suspects and significant damage to the hotel room.¹³ In 2008, an individual was arrested for manufacturing the deadly poison ricin in his Las Vegas hotel room.¹⁴

(U) Indicators of a Hotel Bomb Lab

(U//FOUO) The key elements in producing improvised explosives are precursor chemicals and manufacturing equipment. TATP and HMTD not only require precursor chemicals, but also require specific manufacturing and safety equipment. Many of these items are innocuous when found independently. However, the presence of any combination of these items in a hotel room could be an indicator of a hotel bomb lab and should be treated as a potential explosive hazard.¹⁵

<p>Chemicals, equipment, and safety gear needed for the production of TATP and HMTD.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Photos: USDOJ</p>			
			
Slow Cooker	Coffee Filters	Acid Catalyst	Hexamine
			
Blenders	Chemical Ice Baths	Acetone	Hydrogen Peroxide
			
Goggles	Dust & Vapor Masks	Rubber Gloves	

(U//FOUO) NOTE: Law Enforcement and First Responders should not approach or handle any suspected explosive devices, precursor chemicals or clandestine lab materials.

(U//FOUO) Indicators of Terrorist Activity at Hotels

(U//FOUO) The majority of potentially suspicious activity related to U.S. hotels may have no nexus to terrorism and often resemble common behaviors by hotel guests. However, certain suspicious activity could be part of criminal activity or terrorist pre-operational planning.¹⁶ Examples include:

- Not providing professional or personal details on hotel registrations—such as place of employment, contact information, or place of residence.
- Extending departure dates one day at a time for prolonged periods.
- Refusal of housekeeping services for extended periods.
- Access or attempted access to areas of the hotel normally restricted to staff.

- Use of cash for large transactions.
- Requests for specific rooms, floors, or other locations in the hotel.
- Multiple visitors or deliveries to one individual or room.
- Unusual interest in hotel access, including main and alternate entrances, emergency exits, and surrounding routes.
- Unusual interest in hotel staff operating procedures, shift changes, closed-circuit TV systems, fire alarms, and security systems.
- Leaving the property for several days and then returning.

(U) Conclusion

(U//FOUO) Hotels will continue to provide terrorist and criminal organizations a viable location to conduct illicit activities. As a relatively inexpensive and low profile base of operations for the construction of explosive devices, extremist groups will likely continue to use hotels in an effort to avoid law enforcement detection and minimize the dangers of transporting volatile explosives.

(U//FOUO) There is currently no credible information regarding a plan to use hotels in conjunction with terrorist plots in the United States. However, the use of hotels as a terrorist bomb lab have increased, including western-owned hotels or hotels that cater to a Western clientele overseas.

(U) Intelligence Gaps

- (U//FOUO) Have there been any suspicious incidents reported by hotels that could be indicative of terrorist related activity?
- (U//FOUO) Have there been any suspicious incidents reported by hotels that could have resulted in an explosive hazard (i.e., bomb-making, methamphetamine, etc.)?
- (U//FOUO) Are there any terrorist groups operating in Southern California who have a history of using hotels in their pre-operational planning?

(U) For comments or questions regarding this product, please contact the SD-LECC at (858) 503-5604 or sandiegofusioncenter@sd-lecc.org. To report suspected terrorism-related activities, please visit www.sdrttac.org and select "Submit a Tip or Lead" or email the SD JTTF at San.Diego@ic.fbi.gov.

(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/s/SDLECC11-004>.

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