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(U//FOUO) Terrorist Targeting of First Responders and the Role of the Firefighter Terrorism Liaison Officer (TLO)

(U//FOUO) Valued Access and Role of the Firefighter TLO: Firefighters' roles as a first responder and an emergency medical service allow for unique access to people and information, which can generate invaluable tips and leads. Because the presence and effectiveness of firefighters mitigate the impact of a terrorist incident involving massive human casualties, terrorists have historically conducted preoperational planning that target firefighting agencies in order to limit the effectiveness of their reaction capabilities.

(U//FOUO) The following case studies provide details on how and why terrorists have historically conducted targeting and preoperational planning on firefighting organizations. Additionally, this bulletin will address related terrorist techniques and activities that will help the Fire TLO identify and report terrorist related activity.

(U//FOUO) Case 1: Dhiren Barot - Preoperational Planning Involving Fire Departments

(U//FOUO) Dhiren Barot, a Kenyan immigrant to the United Kingdom (UK), was arrested in 2004 for plotting to attack the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Washington, D.C., and other U.S. and international targets.ⁱ Dhiren Barot was a supposed al-Qa'ida operative who was trained in explosives.ⁱⁱ Barot was involved with high level al-Qa'ida planners, including 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed.ⁱⁱⁱ



(U//FOUO) Barot entered the U.S. on a student visa in 2000 and conducted preoperational planning and surveillance of domestic targets. Following his 2004 arrest, plans were discovered that included the intended bombings of the NYSE, the IMF and other financial targets. His preoperational activities included surveillance of firefighting and other first responder agencies located near those targets.^{iv} Barot's exploited documents detailed how he intended to implode the financial buildings and cause great loss of human life, while also crippling the western financial structure.

(U//FOUO) Barot conducted surveillance of the firefighting agencies located near his primary targets to gather information on what would limit the effectiveness of those agencies' response to the casualties, fires and implosion of the buildings. It is uncertain whether or not Barot would have used the planning information to choose primary targets that would have had a decreased response by emergency responders and the fire departments, and/or if he would have directly targeted them as a secondary node of the primary attack (i.e., through a simultaneous or secondary bombing of the fire stations themselves).

(U//FOUO) Case 2: Possible Surveillance at Northern CA Fire Stations^v

(U//FOUO) Between July and September 2007, four possible preoperational terrorist planning activities were observed and reported at Northern California fire stations. Three incidents involved video taping and

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photography of fire stations in Campbell, Yuba and Sacramento by suspects of either Middle Eastern or Ethiopian decent. The fourth incident involved Fresno City firefighters questioning two suspicious male observers (of possible Middle Eastern decent); the two males reportedly were observing the activities of the firefighting training facility from their car.

(U//FOUO) TLO Note: Terrorist organizations are most vulnerable to detection during preoperational planning stages. TLOs are strongly encouraged to report similar activity to their regional JTTF, regardless of how seemingly benign the activity may appear.

(U//FOUO) Case 3: Firefighters Uncover Bojinka Terrorist Plot

(U//FOUO) In 1995, Filipino firefighters uncovered activity that led to the discovery of the “Bojinka Plot,”¹ a plot to blow up eleven airliners headed from Asia to the U.S., assassinate Pope John Paul II, and crash a plane into the CIA Headquarters.^{vi} The plot was purportedly designed by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and Ramzi Yousef, who planned the 1993 World Trade Center bombing.



(U//FOUO) Firefighters visited an apartment in Manila, Philippines (later determined to belong to Ramzi Yousef) after local residents complained about a strange smell and a fire in the apartment. After the firefighters responded to the scene, the firefighters reportedly questioned two of the residents who told the firemen to stay away from the apartment and fled shortly thereafter.^{vii} Firefighters found bomb making precursor elements and equipment at the apartment, to include hot plates, chemical soaked cotton batting, and loops of three types of electrical wire.^{viii} The small fire supposedly started in the kitchen sink after one of the terrorists poured water on an unknown substance; the fire went out without the firefighter’s assistance.

(U//FOUO) Filipino police arrested Abdul Hakim Ali Hashim Murad when he returned to the apartment after the fire to collect a laptop computer. Murad gave the police the name of Ahmed Saeed and reportedly stated that firecrackers had gone off in the apartment and caused the incident. The reported fire and Murad’s arrest resulted in a full search of the apartment, which uncovered additional evidence and bomb making precursor chemicals. The apartment was purportedly used to make bombs and stage the plotting of the attack.^{ix} The Filipino firefighters were credited for the initial suspicion of the incident that developed into the discovery of the large-scale plot and gave U.S. law enforcement an indication of an attack, with distinctive similarities to 9/11.



(U//FOUO) TLO Note: Fire and emergency personnel may often come into contact with buildings that have “strange smells” or fires that go out without firefighter assistance. TLOs must use their knowledge of pre-incident indicators along with their assessment of the entire situation to determine whether the incident is suspicious and warrants reporting to JTTF.

Bomb making materials found in Yousef’s Manila apartment.

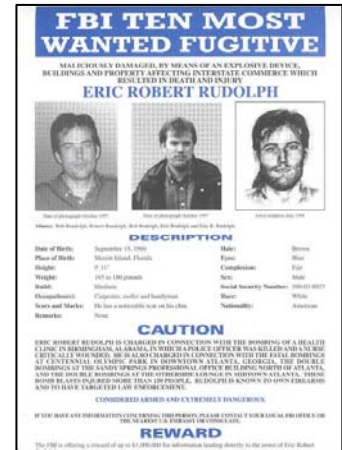
¹ The term “Bojinka” is a Serbo-Croatian term that means “big noise” and is also Arabic slang for “explosion.” “The Bojinka Plot.” [Global Jihad](http://www.globaljihad.net/view_page.asp?id=70). 03 October 2007 (published). 05 May 2009 (accessed). <http://www.globaljihad.net/view_page.asp?id=70>. “Project Bojinka.” [Webster’s Dictionary Online](http://www.websters-dictionary-online.org/definition/PROJECT+BOJINKA). 05 May 2009 (accessed). <<http://www.websters-dictionary-online.org/definition/PROJECT+BOJINKA>>.

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(U//FOUO) Terrorists Target First Responders with Secondary Devices:

(U//FOUO) Secondary explosive devices can be used after a terrorist bombing of a primary location to create further panic, a diversion, and cripple a response effort to the primary attack. As stated above, Barot Dhiren and possibly four other groups of men are suspected of conducting preoperational planning/targeting of fire stations. The concept of the second-stage tactic aimed at domestic first responders is not a recent development. As early as the late 1970s and early 1980s, a Puerto Rican pro-independence group used the tactic against first responders.^x

(U//FOUO) The case of anti-abortion extremist Eric Robert Rudolph illustrates the targeting of first responders in a secondary attack. In 1997, Rudolph bombed a facility in Georgia. The first blast was at 9 a.m. in front of a clinic followed by a secondary charge detonated an hour later where first responders had historically staged for previous incidents (e.g. during actual calls or suspected hoax calls); the secondary blast injured 57 people.^{xi}



(U//FOUO) Terrorist surveillance techniques and indicators of terrorist activities:^{xii}

- Unusual or prolonged interest in security measures or personnel, entry points and access controls, or perimeter fences or walls.
- Dry runs: attempting to gain access to secure facilities or bypassing security.
- Unusual behavior such as watching or documenting personnel or vehicles entering or leaving designated facilities or parking areas.
- Attempts to determine the number of security personnel and shift changes.
- Increase in anonymous telephone or e-mail threats to facilities in conjunction with suspected surveillance incidents.
- Two or three individuals, on foot, demonstrating a combination of observation and recording data (i.e., note-taking, photography, filming).

(U//FOUO) For comments or questions on this product, please contact the SD-RTTAC at (858) 503-5604 or rttac@sdrttac.org. To report suspected terrorism-related incidents, please contact the San Diego Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) at (858) 565-1255.

ⁱ "Man 'planned massive explosions.'" BBC News. 6 November 2006 (published). 05 May 2009 (accessed) <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/6120560.stm>.

ⁱⁱ "Dhiren Barot's co-conspirators." BBC News. 15 June 2007 (published). 05 May 2009 (accessed) <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/6756685.stm>.

ⁱⁱⁱ "Profile: Khalid Sheikh Mohammed." Times Online. 15 March 2007 (published). 05 May 2009 (accessed) <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/us_and_americas/article1517893.ece>.

^{iv} "Terrorist jailed for life for conspiracy to murder in the UK and US." Metropolitan Police. 07 November 2006 (published). 05 May 2009 (accessed).

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<http://cms.met.police.uk/news/convictions/terrorism/terrorist_jailed_for_life_for_conspiracy_to_murder_in_the_uk_and_us>.

^v San Diego RTTAC Bulletin. Possible Surveillance at Northern CA Fire Stations. Vol. 07-015. 24 September 2008.

^{vi} "Operation Bojinka." 911 Review. 05 May 2009 (accessed)

<<http://www.911review.com/precedent/scenarios/bojinka.html>>.

^{vii} "Operation Bojinka." Chemistry Daily. 01 January 2007 (published). 07 May 2009 (accessed).

<http://www.chemistrydaily.com/chemistry/Project_Bojinka>.

^{viii} "Project Bojinka." Webster's Dictionary Online. 05 May 2009 (accessed). <<http://www.websters-dictionary-online.org/definition/PROJECT+BOJINKA>>.

^{ix} "Bojinka." Knowledge Rush. 06 May 2009 (accessed) <<http://knowledgerush.com/kr/encyclopedia/Bojinka/>>.

^x New Mexico Tech Energetic Materials Research and Development Center, Department of Homeland Security. Weapons of Mass Destruction. Resident Course 230-1, V 2.03 January 2008.

^{xi} New Mexico Tech Energetic Materials Research and Development Center, Weapons of Mass Destruction.

^{xii} San Diego RTTAC Bulletin. Tourist or Terrorist: Surveillance Techniques and Indicators for Terrorism Liaison Officers. Vol. 08-002. 07 January 2008.

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