

Armed Assaults and Suicide Bombers

These are, without question, the most difficult topics to consider and take action against.

Statistics indicate that the chance of a suicide bomber or armed invader attacking your institution is remote. Such an event is obviously extremely dangerous and potentially deadly. While the risk of such an occurrence is very small, the possibility requires an institution give the issue some consideration and thought.

A word of caution: no security manual can adequately provide a response plan to either of these phenomena. What we attempt to do here is raise the issue, providing some insight into the phenomenon, so that you and your key staff can have a serious discussion of — and effective role-playing about — possible responses. It goes without saying that such responses will involve very hard choices made in a very compressed time period with serious repercussions.

Armed Intruders

This is an issue that your local police department has likely considered. It is important to involve them in these discussions.

While it is unlikely you will ever encounter this situation, if one does occur, your options are very limited. However, the only thing worse than dealing with an armed intruder is attempting to do so without having considered some response. Generally, your options will consist of either running or hiding. Some thoughts:

- It is vitally important to communicate with staff in order to direct a lockdown or to lead people to evacuation routes away from the area occupied by the gunman. As discussed above (in dealing with explosive threats and elsewhere), quickly establishing the three “Cs”: command, control and communications are all critical here.
- Fire alarms **should not be activated** as they cause panic and may lead people to move directly into the path of the intruder.
- You should have a way to contact your local police department that does not require your returning to an area of danger.

- When speaking with a police dispatcher, try to speak calmly and quietly, informing the dispatcher of the danger facing the institution. If shots are being fired, it is vitally important that you inform the dispatcher that there is an “active shooter” and that immediate intervention is required.
- Lockdown may be preferable to evacuation. During a lockdown, students and faculty should be directed to lock their room doors and windows and move away from windows and other glass. You may wish to develop a method of signaling to officials that a room contains locked-down persons. This may be as simple as placing a piece of green or red paper in a window, the former to indicate that there are people inside who are well, the latter that emergency attention is required.
- This is yet another opportunity to state the importance of a previously established relationship with law enforcement.
- Establish a way for employees to communicate with you that they are safe. One possibility is to use a muster point (though it may not be practical in light of the panic that follows an armed intrusion). Other possibilities include using a nearby institution known for your staff to contact that can begin to take names. For this purpose, you should always keep an off-site staff list available.

See “Considerations for Schools and Summer Camps” on page 79 for further discussion of lockdowns and evacuation pertaining to children.

Suicide Bombers

The possibility of a suicide bomber is perhaps the most horrible security issue you will be called upon to consider. THERE ARE NO EASY, CANNED ANSWERS TO THIS THREAT.

Role-Playing

It may be very useful to utilize a professional in developing role scenarios and analyzing lessons learned.

We strongly recommend that members of your security committee, the board of directors and your “front line” personnel — greeters, ushers, hired security guards or their managers and/or others — role-play as a team possible threat scenarios and responses. To do this, you may wish to determine whether any member of your institution has experience in this field. Otherwise, you and a small group should develop scenarios involving the approach of a suicide bomber, his/her attempt to gain entrance and the possibility that he/she may actually gain entrance to your facility and detonate. It is important to alter the nature of the scenarios and carefully analyze lessons learned. For instance, if role-playing leads you to try to engage the suspicious person in conversation while someone else dials 911, you need to determine (a) who will dial 911 or contact emergency personnel, and (b) what you will say to the bomber to try to engage him or her.

Possible Indicators of a Suicide Bomber

There is no commonly accepted or developed profile of a suicide bomber. Studies indicate that the only characteristic accepted by experts is that the overwhelming majority are prepared to die in the service of their cause.

Suspicious people may often be identified by their behavior. While no one behavior is proof that someone is planning to carry out an attack (many of the following behavioral indicators are perfectly consistent with innocent behavior) and while no list could ever be complete, these factors can help you assess whether someone poses such a threat.

Behavioral Factors to Consider

- Nervousness, nervous glancing or other signs of mental discomfort/being ill at ease. This may include sweating, “tunnel vision” (staring forward inappropriately) and repeated inappropriate prayer (e.g., outside the facility) or muttering. This may also include repeated entrances and exits from the building or facility.
- Inappropriate, oversized and/or loose-fitting clothes (e.g., a heavy overcoat on a warm day).

- Keeping hands in pockets or cupping hands (as if holding a triggering device).
- Constantly favoring one side or one area of the body as if wearing something unusual/uncomfortable (e.g., a holster or a bomb belt or vest). Pay attention to a person constantly adjusting waistbands, ankles, or other clothing. Projected angles under clothing may also be indicative of a firearm, e.g., at the waist or the ankle. Suicide bombers have been known to repeatedly pat themselves to verify that the bomb vest or belt is still attached.
- Carrying packages.
- Security personnel should be told to observe people, when possible, as they exit their cars. This can be done by watching how they adjust clothing and how they approach the building, looking for signs that a person might be carrying a weapon, etc.

Again, many of these, especially the last, are often consistent with perfectly innocent explanations.

The most important thing is to be observant. For example, Israelis have become aware that some suicide bombers shaved off their beards prior to committing their acts, thus leaving unusual facial tan lines. (In Israel, the majority of bombers have been males, 18–27.) Some also anointed themselves with scented oil, which may be obvious to someone in their vicinity.

Responding to a Perceived Threat

While no one factor is a certain indicator of a problem, once a potential threat is identified, ushers and security personnel have three options: do nothing, investigate before deciding whether to take emergency steps or immediately take emergency steps. **This is a decision only you can make in light of the circumstances, your personal comfort level and safety considerations.**

You must, at all times, be aware of the threat to worshipers, students or others if the individual about whom you are concerned gains access into your facility.

If you choose to investigate, one technique is to greet the person in a friendly fashion, asking, “Can I be of assistance?” Evasive or unusual answers may trigger your

emergency procedures. Excuse yourself and initiate your procedures, perhaps by using a predetermined code word with your colleagues.

If you believe that a person poses a threat, we urge you to try to prevent entry to the facility.

If you choose to call 911, make sure the dispatcher understands the emergency nature of the call and the need for law enforcement to respond without sirens.

If you remain suspicious, trust your instincts. Even if the person leaves immediately, call the police.

Disturbed Individuals

One somewhat related problem is dealing with what might appear to be a disturbed individual. Only you can make a decision on how to proceed in light of given facts and circumstances.

This is a tough call. We suggest you exclude any individual who you think poses a security risk. However, if you choose to admit the person to the facility pending assistance (e.g., arrival of police) it is important that the person be monitored (for example, invite the person to sit in an aisle seat). Assign an usher or employee to monitor the location of the individual and his or her actions to determine whether any additional, immediate action is necessary.



Barbara B. Balsler, *National Chair*
Abraham H. Foxman, *National Director*

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