

TACTICAL COUNTERTERRORISM

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

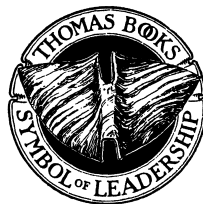
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TACTICAL COUNTERTERRORISM

**The Law Enforcement Manual
of Terrorism Prevention**

By

CAPTAIN DEAN T. OLSON



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*This manual is dedicated to
my grandson Brenden;
you add meaning to Sandburg's words
"A baby is God's opinion that the world should go on . . ."
and to the all too quickly forgotten victims of terrorism.*

PREFACE

*Federal agencies are not built to be the eyes and ears of local communities,
but local law enforcement-with the right training and support-can be.
As (terrorism evolves) cops are it. We are going to win this at the local level.*

Brian Michael Jenkins, terrorism expert and RAND senior advisor

A well-known scholar has written in a college textbook, “Police do not have the academic credentials or higher order critical thinking skills to understand the root causes of terrorism . . . or the ability to distinguish between terrorist sympathizers and criminal terrorists” (White, 2004). Comments about the FBI by then presidential candidate John Edwards during the 2008 campaign include, “They’re a law enforcement agency. They’re not in the business of fighting terrorism.” Pervasive uninformed and erroneous comments like these describe why our national counterterrorist strategy fails to underutilize hundreds of thousands of capable cops in homeland security. In this view, local law enforcement officers are viewed as “first responders” to incidents rather than as potential first preventers of terrorist violence. As a result, homeland security is far less effective than it should be.

Such comments belie the fact that the police officer on the beat, the patrol officer on routine patrol, all cops—local, state, tribal, and federal, 750,000 strong—doing what they do every day, are the first and most effective line of defense against terrorist acts committed in the homeland. From Diana Dean, the customs inspector who arrested Ahmed Ressay at the Port Angeles, Washington border crossing with a car full of explosives, and in the process disrupted a catastrophic terrorist attack on the Los Angeles airport, to rookie Murphy North Carolina Police Officer Jeff Postell who arrested Eric Rudolph,¹ the Olympic Centennial Park bomber who had eluded a massive federal manhunt for more than five years, to Oklahoma State Trooper Charlie Hanger who arrested Timothy McVeigh fleeing the scene of the Murrah Federal Building bombing in Oklahoma City, it is America’s cops on duty who are the most effective force in homeland security.

1. Rudolph had the assistance of sympathizers while eluding the FBI. Some in the area were vocal in support of him. Two country music songs were written about him, and locally a popular T-shirt read: “Run Rudolph Run.” Extremist comments on the Internet also praised Rudolph as a hero. Some adherents to hate groups even called for further acts of violence to emulate him, and Rudolph’s family supported him, believing he was innocent of all charges. In March, 1998 Rudolph’s older brother videotaped himself cutting off one of his own hands with a radial arm saw in order to “send a message to the FBI and the media.” According to his own writings, Rudolph survived as a fugitive by camping in the woods, gathering acorns, and salamanders, pilfering from vegetable gardens and a grain silo, and raiding dumpsters in a nearby town.

The most important factor in law enforcement terrorism prevention is that all terrorists must engage in preparatory actions before they can attack. Enlightened observers realize that the line officer is best positioned to identify these activities. An analysis of sources leading to 25 recently disrupted terrorist plots revealed that 80% of the initial clues came from the bottom up—police and the public properly observing, reporting, and acting on unusual behaviors including both directly threatening behavior, such as openly discussing plans for terror attacks, and suspicious activity such as conducting target site surveillance (Hollywood, Snyder, McKay, & Boon, 2004). Suspicious activity reports (SARs) filed by police based on terror-related activities were the second largest source of plot foilings. Eight (32%) came from unexpected discoveries made during police investigations. Six (24%) came from tips reporting a potential plot to law enforcement. Six came from police follow-up to suspicious activity—two (8%) from direct police action in response to observing suspicious activity and four (16%) from following up on tips reporting suspicious activity. Only 20% came from the top down, traditional intelligence efforts such as federal law enforcement or intelligence agencies. Significantly, 20% of these cases stemmed from follow-ups to ordinary crime that led alert police officers to discover incriminating material and terrorist activity (Hollywood, Snyder, McKay, & Boon, 2004).

It should be obvious that crime fighting and counterterrorism go hand in hand, and the perceived dichotomy between counterterrorism and traditional crime fighting is illusory. In fact, good police work is good counterterrorism, and for the dots² to be connected, whether they have to do with crime or with its subcategory terrorism, information must be available to those who can best use it, and that frequently means local law enforcement. The good news is that since 9/11, law enforcement agencies have been working together better than ever before. Driving this change, at least in part, is Washington's gradual realization that the nation's 750,000 state and local police are our country's first preventers—who stop terrorist acts before they occur—rather than just first responders who react after an attack has taken place. As described in the first chapter of this manual, state and local police have foiled a growing number of homegrown terror plots even as they have not garnered much national attention.

The counterterrorist potential of local police is partly due to numbers. It is far more likely that the 750,000 local law enforcement officers will cross paths with terrorists than the 12,000 FBI agents. This should not be surprising considering that cops on the beat are the ones most often called to probe citizen tips. Local police officers have an everyday presence in the communities that they are sworn to protect (Kelling & Bratton, 2006). By walking the beat and communicating regularly with local residents and business owners, they are more likely to notice even subtle changes in the neighborhoods they patrol. They are often in the best position to know responsible leaders in the Islamic and Arab communities, and they can reach out to them for information or for help in developing informants.

As former CIA director James Woolsey testified to Congress in 2004, "Only an effective local police establishment that has the confidence of citizens is going to be likely to hear from, say, a local merchant in a part of town containing a number of

2. *Dots*—any piece of intelligence or data relevant to gaining knowledge of a terrorist group, threat, or attack.

new immigrants that a group of young men from abroad have recently moved into a nearby apartment and are acting suspiciously. Local police are best equipped to understand how to protect citizens' liberties and obtain such leads legally." The familiarity of police with the communities they serve sensitizes them to anomalies that can yield counterterrorist data valuable to other agencies. As Manhattan Institute senior fellow R. P. Eddy has defined them, local cops are our "first preventers" (as quoted in Kelling & Bratton, 2006).

The concept of local cops as first preventers is the focus of this manual. Officers who know how to identify the support structures of terrorists are better able to create an environment in which terrorists will not feel comfortable. For example, the Broken-Windows Theory formulated by Kelling and Wilson³ hinges on a simple construct: Focusing on minor offenses and community disorder could substantially reduce crime by creating an environment in which criminals did not feel at home. In the same manner, counterterrorist policing has two components: The first is creating a hostile environment for terrorists; the second is recognizing that terrorism's equivalents to subway fare beating are illegal border crossings, forged documents, and other relatively minor precursor crimes that terrorists commit to fund their operations and prepare their attacks (Kelling & Bratton, 2006).

As international terror groups like al Qaeda have evolved to franchise-type operations that deal in ideology and loosely affiliated lone wolves or homegrown terrorists, the need to involve local police grows. Local police must understand their new role in national security and how they can use effective crime-prevention tactics that they are familiar with and adept at using for homeland security. Cops on the beat must be aware of terrorist indicators and precursor crimes so they can be effective first preventers. Our national homeland security strategy must embrace a larger role for local police, who traditionally have not envisioned themselves as part of the national security apparatus. Empowering local police for this new role via training and education will lead to what Massachusetts State Police Chief Ed Flynn calls "Hometown Security." This occurs when counterterrorism is woven into the everyday workings of every law enforcement department so that officers on the street perform terrorism prevention as part of their everyday thinking and activities (Kelling & Bratton, 2006).

The goal of this manual is to provide essential and practical knowledge to you, the cop on the beat, to enable you to identify terrorist precursor activities and more effectively interdict and prevent an attack from occurring. In the pages that follow, we will explore the concepts of police counterterrorism and the role of line officers as first preventers. We will explore concepts such as terrorism, homeland security, and the types of terrorist threats posed by different terror groups ranging from right-wing extremists to anti-abortion to animal rights extremists and Islamist terrorists. In

3. *Broken Windows*—Originally conceived as officers focusing on minor offenses and community disorder to reduce crime by creating an environment in which criminals did not feel at home. For example, when transit cops arrested subway turnstile jumpers, they learned that one out of seven was either carrying a weapon or had an outstanding warrant. Police then asked the next questions: Where did you get the gun? What do you know about other crimes not related to guns? In the context of terrorism, officers recognizing terrorist precursor crimes would report such information (collecting the "dots" of intelligence) via SARs forwarded to regional intelligence fusion centers, and ask the next question by pursuing investigative leads related to terrorism.

the process, we will learn how terrorists “think globally, but act locally” and how aware and informed patrol officers and front-line detectives can recognize the “dots” by knowing what to report, how to report it, and to whom to report it.

We will also look at the lone wolf threat based on “leaderless resistance” by using numerous case studies. This analysis will yield behavioral indicators of radicalization that will be elaborated on in case studies of the JIS and London Transit Bombers. To better understand the operations of terrorists as they plan and prepare to attack the homeland, we will study terrorist tradecraft and operational principles such as cell structure, safe houses, the terrorist attack cycle, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and surveillance detection. We will also explore academic research on terrorism that helps us to expand our counterterrorism methods such as behavioral, geographic, and temporal patterns of preparatory conduct that all terror groups must engage in to mount an attack. As part of this information, we will also look at terrorism finance and how crimes committed by terrorist groups can be a valuable indicator of future violence.

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TACTICAL COUNTERTERRORISM

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

We're the ones out in the street. We talk to everyone in the community. We know what's happening in every block. . . .
—Baltimore Police Commissioner Ed Norris

The duties of American law enforcement expanded dramatically in the wake of the 9/11 terror attacks. Homeland security became a law enforcement priority as our nation's nearly 750,000 federal, tribal, state, and local law enforcement officers ramped up efforts to prevent another catastrophic terrorist attack. Homeland security, defined as “. . . a concerted national effort to prevent terrorist attacks within the United States, reduce America's vulnerability to terrorism, and minimize the damage and recover from attacks that do occur . . .” (National Strategy, 2010), reinforced the impulse for proactive policing that began in the 1990s. Proactive policing, via Community-Oriented and Problem-Oriented Policing, replaced the reactive model in which police responded to crimes that had already been committed.

FIRST PREVENTERS

The post-9/11 change in policing is predicated on the most important element of Preparedness—Prevention. Prevention embodies two key aspects: collaboration and information sharing. This manual focuses on Prevention via information sharing, threat recognition, and intelligence. It is more effective

to prevent terrorist violence than to respond to an incident once it has occurred.

To be effective, the First Preventer concept has to be woven into the everyday workings of every local police and sheriff's department. Counterterrorism should be included on the agenda of every meeting, and this new role must be imparted to officers on the street so that terrorism prevention becomes part of their everyday thinking and duties. This is not as ominous or difficult as it sounds. As the Torrance case, described in the JIS Case Study in Chapter 10, demonstrates, good police work is good counterterrorism (Kelling & Bratton, 2006).

The second aspect of Prevention is Information Sharing that focuses on threat recognition and intervention. The role of first responder evolved by necessity to that of *first preventer*. In this capacity, police are charged with the responsibility for identifying and collecting intelligence on terrorist precursor activities and other crimes in their communities. Once gathered, this information is forwarded to regional intelligence fusion centers¹ where it is analyzed with information from across the country looking for the tell-tale signs of terrorist precursor activities.

As shown in subsequent chapters, the small, often subtle indicators recognized by trained and aware law enforcement officers, reported to fusion

1. *Fusion Centers*—as described in Chapter 9, a fusion center is the primary state and local law enforcement regional intelligence entity for the receipt and sharing of terrorism-related information. They are permanent state or regional intelligence operations that mesh numerous, formerly separate, entities to focus on all hazards including natural disasters such as hurricanes and floods or man-made incidents such as criminal and terrorist incidents.

centers, is an essential element in identifying terrorist plots while they are in the preparation phase before an attack occurs. By noticing and collecting such information, local cops become an indispensable asset in homeland security by gathering the bits of disparate intelligence that allow intelligence fusion and connecting the dots into a coherent picture of the terrorist threat.

Good policing also creates a hostile environment for terrorists. Trained and aware officers notice the precursor activities indicating a terrorist plot is unfolding in their community. This makes it difficult for terrorists and their sympathizers to hide in our communities as they plot and work toward attacking the innocent. Armed with the knowledge of what these telltale signs are, local cops become a force multiplier in the role of homeland security. The goal of this manual is to provide you with the information you need to excel at terrorism prevention via *tactical counterterrorism*.²

Hometown Security

Successful homeland security hinges on the realization that terrorist acts which occur within the United States, although they may have national and even international connections, are local crimes that are the responsibility of local police. While planning their attacks, terrorists often live in our communities. They travel on our streets and highways, and they shop in our stores. Local law enforcement officers, not federal agencies, have the primary responsibility for preventing, responding to, and recovering from terrorist attacks.

Law enforcement officials, unlike other members of the public safety community, who by training and experience are primarily focused on response and recovery efforts—the response, mitigation and recovery domains on the Preparedness Continuum depicted in Figure 1.1—understand that they have a dual responsibility. It is their responsibility to be the first to arrive at the scene of a crime, an accident, or a terrorist attack. They also realize that their fundamental duty is to prevent these events from happening in the first place. The first preventer concept stems from the realization that law enforcement officials view the need to build response and recovery capabilities as secondary to the need to build

our capacity to prevent terrorist attacks from happening in the first place.

As a result of their daily efforts to combat crime and violence, local law enforcement officers are uniquely situated to identify, investigate, and apprehend suspected terrorists. Incidents such as the pre-attack traffic stops of September 11 hijackers Muhammad Atta, Ziad Samir Jarrah, and Hani Hanjour, described below, demonstrate that local law enforcement officers may encounter suspected terrorists in the course of their routine duties. The arrests of terrorists Timothy McVeigh and Eric Rudolph highlight the often critical role that local law enforcement officers play in the apprehension of terrorists following attacks (IACP, n.d.).

A central element of our national homeland security strategy must be to ensure that local law enforcement agencies continue to have the ability to place officers out working in their communities, interacting with citizens, and investigating reports of strange or suspicious behavior that may have a nexus to terrorism. These activities are the cornerstone of any successful crime or terrorism prevention effort. A successful locally initiated hometown security program, built on tactical counterterrorism principles to prevent terrorism, will also result in the attainment of the overarching goal of more effective homeland security at the national level.

The State of Homeland Security

The current state of homeland security is shaped by five realities. These realities underscore the fact that local cops are the front-line of counterterrorism and homeland security.

Reality One—Terrorism is not really much different from conventional crime. Terrorism is crime with a political motive, and many terrorist groups carry out ordinary crimes such as bank robbery, drug trafficking, identity theft, and money laundering to support their terrorist activities. The behaviors that comprise terrorism, even suicide terrorism, are little different from those that conventional criminals display. In 2002, the Markle Foundation Task Force report underscored this fact, pointing out that most of the real front lines of homeland security are outside of Washington, DC. Terrorists are often encountered, and the targets they might attack are protect-

2. *Tactical Counterterrorism*—as opposed to strategic counterterrorism, focuses on terrorist precursor crimes that allow law enforcement officers to identify and interdict terrorist plots while still in the inchoate stage before violence occurs.

ed by local officials. Examples include a cop hearing a complaint from a landlord, an airport official who hears about a plane some pilot trainee left on the runway, an FBI agent puzzled by an odd flight school student in Arizona, or an emergency room resident trying to treat patients stricken by an unusual illness (Markle Foundation, 2002, p. 10).

Although we tend to think of acts of terrorism as large, spectacular events on the magnitude of 9/11, many are also mundane criminal acts such as kidnapping or murder. This is a short list of the different forms that terrorism can take:

- Car or truck bombings (Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Devices, [VBIEDs]).
- Suicide bombings
- Ram bombings (truck, plane, boat)
- Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and other planted or left behind bombs
- Letter bombs/anthrax
- Dirty bombs (radiological dispersal devices, [RDDs])
- Chemical/nuclear/biological attacks
- Assassinations
- Sniper attacks
- Ambushes
- Drive-by shootings
- Hostage taking
- Kidnapping
- Airline hijacking
- Train hijacking
- Ship hijacking
- Rocket and missile attacks
- Fedayeen (armed) attacks on hotels, hospitals, shopping malls, theme parks, other soft targets

Many terrorists, especially foreigners who are in the United State illegally, have to live a fugitive lifestyle; they have to commit crimes not just to carry out an attack but simply to sustain themselves (Kelling & Bratton, 2006). They maintain themselves with illegal documents, committing burglary and

robbery, dealing drugs, committing fraud, and so on. Not all illegal immigrants or fugitives are terrorists, but many terrorists have to live underground like illegal immigrants or fugitives to get by in the United States. These types of crimes are likely to be discovered by the police officer on the beat or the detective working a case.

Local cops are the most likely to detect the beginning phases of a terrorist plot, particularly a homegrown plot. Such plots arise in local communities involving local people. They are also referred to as “grassroots operatives” involving American citizens who may become radicalized over the Internet or because of a recruiter and train themselves in a network or small group to carry out attacks like the London transportation bombings in 2007.

Reality Two—The threat to the homeland has morphed since 9/11. The threat has moved from large international terror groups to more loosely affiliated lone wolves³ or homegrown terrorists, such as the young men who perpetrated the London bombings detailed in the Case Study sections of Chapter 10. The need to involve local police is becoming even more apparent. As Brian Michael Jenkins, a senior advisor at the RAND Corporation and a respected authority on terrorism, has said, “As this thing metastasizes, cops are it” (as quoted in Kelling & Bratton, 2006).

The terrorist threat can be separated into three categories: homegrown terrorists inspired by an ideology promoted by al Qaeda or other groups, terrorists who come to the United States to raise money to conduct operations here or abroad, and terrorists who have footholds in both the United States and overseas and operate in both arenas. In the experience of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), the principal threats are local, self-generating, and self-directed. Direct connections with overseas groups are often initiated by the local actors. One example is the Ft. Hood shooting.⁴ This reality is not mentioned to minimize the international threat, but it serves as a caution that the number of U.S. local threats will likely increase.

3. *Lone wolf*—an individual who commits terrorist acts alone and without direction from a group or other individuals. The perpetrator may have contact with others, but they are not aware of the perpetrator’s plans or intentions.

4. *Fort Hood Shooting*—A mass shooting occurred on November 5, 2009, at Ft. Hood located just outside Killeen, Texas. Nidal Hasan, a U.S. Army major serving as a psychiatrist killed 13 people and wounded 29 others. Hasan is an American-born Muslim of Palestinian descent. Internal Army documents indicate that officers had discussed Hasan’s tendencies toward radical Islam since 2005. Investigators also discovered e-mail communications between Hasan and Yemen-based al Qaeda cleric Anwar al Awlaki who declared Hasan a hero “fighting against the U.S. army is an Islamic duty.”