



E37 Terrorism and Policing in the 21st Century: Are We Ready For Suicide Bombers?

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After attending this presentation, attendees will learn about how current local law enforcement policies and practices affect the ability to deal with local terrorism and how those policies and practices must be adapted to effectively confront the continuing threat of local terrorism, particularly suicide bombers.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by assessing its ability to deal with the increasing threat of terrorism. Local law enforcement and local crime laboratories, which develop policies and practices based upon traditional crime fighting policies, must continually assess how those policies and practices must develop to deal with the continuing threat of terrorism.

In recent years, as terrorism has come from local sources, local law enforcement faces a continuing threat of terrorism, and must adapt its traditional crime fighting policies and practices to address the unique aspects of confronting terrorism here at home, particularly suicide bombers.

In the years since September 11, the threat of terrorism has increasingly come from those living among us, in our own cities and even in our own neighborhoods, rather than training camps and terrorist cells in far-away lands. The internet has come to serve as a recruiting tool and training ground for individuals sitting in their own American living rooms, disenfranchised from American society. As a result of the reality of local threats of terrorism, local law enforcement agencies are more likely than ever to find themselves in the position of confronting local terrorist cells, including suicide bombers intent on public destruction. As local law enforcement refines its strategies to combat urban crime, potential suicide bombers represent a challenge that traditional local law enforcement policies, practices and training are particularly inadequate to address.

This presentation will briefly review the history of terrorist threats of suicide bombers in the United States, and will discuss the increasing threat of local cells of terrorism in the United States. The presentation will review the lessons learned by local law enforcement from the Madrid and London train-bombing incidents, the terrorist attempts in London and Glasgow, and the more recent terrorist plots in New York City. The suicide bombings in Madrid and London leave no doubt that the war on terrorism will be fought in the streets of major urban areas, with local law enforcement as a primary combatant.

The threat of suicide bombers from a local law enforcement perspective will be addressed, including how the current police policies, training and practices, particularly regarding the use of force, which are followed by most local law enforcement in the United States, are not well suited to confronting a suicide bomber, and may even make the confrontation more dangerous and more likely to result in tragedy. This presentation also will touch upon how the current local law enforcement policies on crime scene investigation might affect evidence collection in the event of a suicide bomber. This presentation will discuss how local law enforcement's current policies, practices, and procedures will have to be adapted in order to address the threat of suicide bombers on United States soil. The presentation also will raise the issue of how any change in policies, practices, and procedures to effectively deal with terrorism and suicide bombers inevitably will be influenced by public acceptance and politics.

Given the future likelihood of suicide bombers in our cities, local law enforcement must immediately evaluate how to adapt its policies and practices, and how to train its rank-and-file, to address this horrific and possibly inevitable crime. This presentation will suggest policy and training changes that local law enforcement must consider to successfully address the threat of suicide bombers, and whether those policy and training changes will be acceptable to law enforcement as well as to the public which they serve, and what factors will influence such acceptance.

Terrorism, Suicide Bombers, Local Law Enforcement/Police