

## Appendix A

### Terrorist Planning Cycle

**The main point is to select targets where success is 100% assured.**

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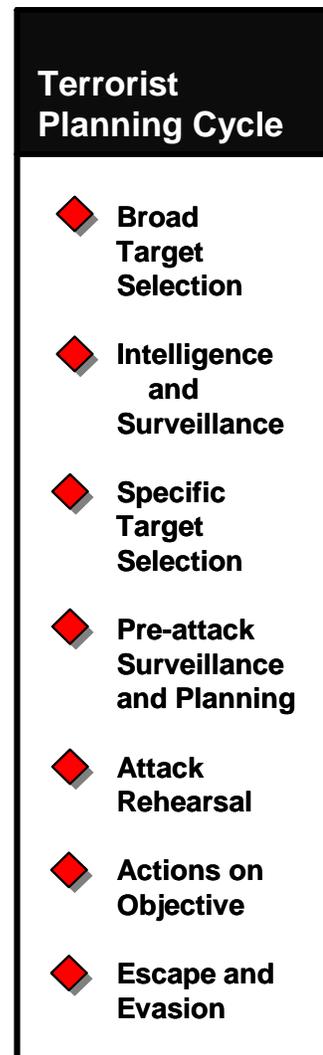
Terrorist operations are typically prepared to minimize risk and achieve the highest probability of success. Terrorists avoid an adversary’s strengths and concentrate on an adversary’s weaknesses. Emphasis is on maximizing security and target effects. This normally means the minimum number of attackers to successfully conduct an operation with the most effective<sup>256</sup> weapons available. Detailed planning is a norm but can be deliberately shortened when an opportunity arises and a terrorist.

Collection against potential targets may continue for years before an operation is decided upon. While some targets may be “soft” enough for shorter periods of observation, the information gathering will still be intense. Operations planned or underway may be altered, delayed, or cancelled due to changes to the target or local conditions.

Tactical missions combine to complement operational objectives and strategic goals. The psychological impact on the target population is the overarching objective of any terrorist operation.

There is no universal model for terrorist planning but experience and success have demonstrated traditional principles for plans and operations. Terrorist organizations exchange personnel and training and study methods and operational successes of other groups. Innovation is a proven key component of operational success.

Terrorist operational planning can be analyzed according to requirements common to all operations. The planning and operation cycle in this appendix provides a baseline in assessing particular terrorist cells and organization. The differences among organizations center on factors of intent and capability.




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<sup>256</sup> Note: Effective in this case need not mean modern or destructive, but most suitable to cause the desired target effects. Knives, machetes, and other edged weapons have been used against terrorist victims in the modern era because of psychological impact on atarget populations is a key intention .

Current terrorist threats display the increasing desire and ability of a learning organization. Terrorist cells gather information and intelligence, analyze strengths and weaknesses, determine patterns, trends, and emerging actions, and identify vulnerabilities in an adversary's security to attack.

## Phase I: Broad Target Selection

**"Information gathering is a continuous operation..."**

**Irish Republican Army's  
*Handbook for Volunteers of Irish Republican Army, 1956.***

This phase is the collection of information on a number of potential targets. Collection is gathered from diverse sources. Collectors may be core members of the terrorist cell, sympathizers, or people providing information without knowledge of the intended purpose. This phase also includes open source and general information collection. Some features of this type of collection are:

- Stories from newspapers and other media provide background information.
- Internet research provides data such as texts, pictures, blue prints, and video information.
- Potential targets are screened based on the intended objective and assesses areas such as symbolic value, critical infrastructure points of failure, expected number of mass casualties, and potential to generate high profile media attention.

The number of preliminary targets that can be screened is limited only by the capabilities of the group to collect information. Targets that are considered vulnerable and which would further terrorist goals are selected for the next phase of intelligence collection.

## Phase II: Intelligence Gathering and Surveillance

Targets showing vulnerabilities may receive additional attention and priority of effort. This priority establishes the requirement to gather additional information on a target's patterns over time. This phase may be very short or can span years. Examples include the 2004 accounts of terrorist surveillance conducted for years on the International Monetary Fund, Prudential Building, New York Stock Exchange, as well as facilities in Las Vegas, Nevada. The type of surveillance employed depends on the target type. Elements of information typically gathered include:

- Practices/Procedures/Routines – For facilities this includes scheduled deliveries, work shift changes, identification procedures and other observable routines. For individuals, it can include regularly scheduled errands such as laundry pick up days or car parking locations.
- Residence and Workplace – This category applies primarily to the physical layout and individual activities at the two places the target typically spends the most time.
- Transportation/Routes of Travel – For individuals, this is the mode of transport and common routes to any regular destination such as house, work, gym, and school. For facilities, it addresses ingress and egress points, types of vehicles allowed on the grounds, or availability of transportation into the target site.
- Security Measures – This topic includes collection areas depending on the complexity of the security around the target: presence of a guard force; the reaction time of response units; any hardening of structures, barriers, or sensors; personnel, package, and vehicle screening procedures; and the type and frequency of emergency reaction drills are examples of key collection objectives. This is one of the most important areas of information for attack site selection, since an intent is to bypass and avoid security measures and be able to strike the target during any period.

### **Phase III: Specific Target Selection**

Selection of a target for actual operational planning considers some of the following factors:

- Does success affect a larger audience than the immediate victim(s)?
- Will the target attract high profile media attention?
- Does success make the desired statement to the correct target audience(s)?
- Is the effect consistent with objectives of the group?
- Does the target provide an advantage to the group by demonstrating its capabilities?
- What are the costs versus benefits of conducting the operation?

A decision to proceed requires continued intelligence collection against the chosen target. Targets not receiving immediate consideration may still be collected against for future opportunities.

## **Phase IV: Pre-attack Surveillance and Planning**

Members of the actual operational cells begin to appear during this phase. Trained intelligence and surveillance personnel or members supportive of the terrorist cell may be organized to conduct the operation during this phase. This phase gathers information on the target's current patterns, usually days to weeks. The attack team confirms information gathered from previous surveillance and reconnaissance activities. The areas of concern are essentially the same as in Phase II but with greater focus based on known or perceived vulnerabilities.

The type of surveillance employed depends on the target's activities. The information gained is then used to:

- Conduct security studies.
- Conduct detailed preparatory operations.
- Recruit specialized operatives (if needed).
- Procure a base of operations in the target area (safe houses, caches, etc.).
- Design and test escape routes.
- Decide on type of weapon or attack.

## **Phase V: Rehearsals**

As with conventional military operations, rehearsals are conducted to improve the odds of success, confirm planning assumptions, and develop contingencies. Terrorists also rehearse to test security reactions to particular attack profiles. Terrorists use both their own operatives and unsuspecting people to test target reactions.

Typical rehearsals include:

- Equipment and weapons training and performance.
- Staging for final preparatory checks.
- Deployment into target area.
- Actions on the objective.
- Escape routes.

Tests in the target area will be conducted to confirm:

- Target information gathered to date.
- Target pattern of activities.
- Physical layout of target or operations area.
- Security force reactions such as state of alert, timing response, equipment and routes.

### **Phase VI: Actions on the Objective**

Once terrorists reach this stage of their operation, the odds favor a successful attack against the target.

Terrorists conducting planned operations possess important tactical advantages. Since they are the attacker, they possess all the advantages of initiative and provide:

- Use of Surprise.
- Choice of time, place, and conditions of attack.
- Employment of diversions and secondary or follow-up attacks.
- Employment of security and support positions to neutralize target reaction forces and security measures.

Because of the extensive preparation through surveillance and reconnaissance, enemy security measures will be planned for and neutralized.

### **Phase VII: Escape and Exploitation**

Escape plans are usually well rehearsed and executed. The exception is a suicide operation where the impact is enhanced by the willingness to die in achieving the attack. In suicide attacks, there are usually support personnel and handlers require escape or evasion from attack response forces.

Exploitation is the primary objective of the operation. The operation must be properly publicized to achieve an intended effect. Media control measures and prepared statements are examples of preparations to effectively exploit a successful operation. These will be timed to take advantage of media cycles for the selected target audiences.

Unsuccessful operations are disavowed when possible. The perception that a group has failed may severely damages the organization's prestige, indicate cell vulnerability, or ineffective conduct. In addition to the impact on the adversary, successful attacks bring favorable attention, notoriety and support such as funding and recruiting to the terrorist organization.