

**THE BILL BLACKWOOD
LAW ENFORCEMENT MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE OF TEXAS**

**Instituting a Bomb Squad
and Training for Officers**

**A Policy Research Project
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Professional Designation
Graduate, Management Institute**

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September, 1997**

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ABSTRACT

As terrorism increases in America so does the use of explosive devices. Law enforcement agencies have to be prepared for encounters with explosive devices and train officers who are first line responders how to deal with these situations. The research obtained in this study was obtained through periodicals, journals, books, Federal Bureau of Investigation Bulletins, the Internet, and other Law Enforcement agencies. This study has determined that most small law enforcement agencies cannot bear the burden of creating a departmental Bomb Squad financially. However, this research has determined that training officers in explosive recognition and how to handle the scene of an explosive device is economical and readily available.

INTRODUCTION

The upward trend in the use of explosive devices in the last few years has prompted concern with law enforcement agencies as well as the private sector. The problem has been compounded by the increase in the patriot movements that have become more vocal in the last few years. Other countries across the globe have suffered from terrorist acts for decades, however in America this has been a recent phenomenon.. This is a problem that first affected Americans abroad, but it keeps getting closer to our shores.

The purpose of this research project is to determine if there is justification to initiate a departmental Bomb Squad. The research will further address the necessity for specialized training for departmental personnel as first responders to bomb calls.

Upon the conclusion of this project this writer will present the research findings to the command staff of the Webster Police Department. Information on this subject was collected from various periodicals, journals" books, Federal Bureau of Investigation Bulletins, the internet, and other law enforcement agencies.

The research developed in this project suggests that a need does not exist for a bomb squad due to the expense, however additional training for department personnel is feasible and recommended. A proposal will be completed and be presented to the police departments administration division and the city manager for next years budget.

HISTORICAL, LEGAL, AND THEORETICAL CONTEXT

Throughout the history of mankind, since the invention of gunpowder, explosive devices have been used as weapons (The History Channel). Originally these weapons were used by one army to thwart off other armies with great effect. In more recent times these weapons have provided a small number of people with the capability to create a great amount of damage with a large number of casualties. They also allow the person placing these devices in a pre-determined location to leave the area and be miles away before the device detonates (Hoffman 1). This hinders law enforcement efforts to apprehend these offenders as in most cases no one observes the suspect place the explosive device before detonation. Without the use of suspect information apprehension of the offender is difficult. For these reasons terrorist organizations have long preferred explosive devices as their weapons of choice. An example of this is a little known terrorist organization in Spain called the Basque separatists. This group has claimed nearly 800 deaths in Spain alone since 1968, mostly by use of explosive devices, with very few apprehensions (Houston Chronicle 021897 16A). Bombs are used as weapons of intimidation, destruction, and death. They are objects of terror for innocent citizens and a problem of the highest magnitude for law enforcement (Root 1). Explosive devices can come in a variety of sizes and materials. Some are concentrated in rather large quantities like the one used in car bombs which are designed to create a large amount of damage over a large area. Others types of high explosives can be small and concealed in almost

any type of container. These are designed to be used in precise applications to either destroy single individuals or can be camouflaged to be placed in largely populated areas. The latter adds to the appeal of terrorist groups to be used in areas such as train stations or like the one used in Atlanta Georgia during the 1996 Olympics.

Most explosive devices are intended to draw attention to the terrorist group and their causes (T.A.T. 8). The explosive device used in the Oklahoma City bombing of the Murry Federal Building by Timothy McVeigh, was detonated on April 19, 1995. This bombing was initiated by McVeigh as retaliation for the raid on the Branch Dividian compound in Waco two years earlier by agents of the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms (A.T.F.). This was meant to "wake up America to the danger of our federal government and their intrusion on our rights" (Houston Chronicle 020797 31A). The technology McVeigh used to construct the explosive device could have been obtained from any library in the country and from numerous locations on the Internet. Materials obtained for the device could be purchased legally at any hardware store. As this information is obtained by Militant or Patriot groups, America can expect more of these types of incidents. Militant groups in United States have become more vocal, better organized, and more dangerous. Examples of these groups can be located almost everywhere in the United States.

The use of explosive devices in the U.S. has increased in the last few years with a great loss of life. Reported explosive device uses increased from 1332 incidents in 1986 to 2989 incidents in 1992 (USBATF REPORT 1990 16; USBATF REPORT 1992 18).

The State of Texas was fourth in the nation for explosive device incidents for the year of 1992 (USBATF REPORT 1992 13).

In 1989 there were 184 anti-American explosive incidents in the world. 117 of these were in Latin America making the majority of these incidents at our own back door (USIPV AA 32). Latin America was ranked 2nd in the world in explosive device incidents being only second to the Middle East (USDOS #9743 22).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE OR PRACTICE

Recent trends in international terrorism present a mixed picture of change and continuity. The most salient features of these trends were the proliferation of terrorist groups and the large number of fatalities that terrorist inflicted. Today, at least 70 terrorist groups are active throughout the world. Only 11 identifiable terrorist groups were active in 1968, representing a nearly seven-fold increase in the number of terrorist organizations over the past three decades. Although the total volume of terrorist activity increased by only a third in the 1980s compared to the previous decade, terrorist killed twice as many people (Hoffman 1).

Few skills are required to manufacture a crude bomb. Bombings, therefore, do not require the same organizational skills like: expertise, logistics, and knowledge. Like those required of more complicated or sophisticated operations, such as kidnapping, assassination, and assaults against defended targets (Hoffman 2).

Terrorist must increase the amounts of explosives used in a device and increase the number of casualties per incident in order to compete with others for a wider audience share (Independent 2). To achieve this goal, terrorist organizations must have access to

more explosives. During the past decade, Czechoslovakia shipped more than 1,000 tons of Semtex plastic explosive to Libya, and 40,000 tons of Semtex to Syria, North Korea, Iran, and Iraq. These countries have long been cited as being sponsors of international terrorism (Hoffman 10). With such large amounts of this particular explosive available, it is readily accessible to any group with available funds to purchase any quantity they would like.

Although terrorist and militant groups are the most common sources of explosive devices, other sources do exist that affect the public. Explosive devices have been discovered in various sizes and quantities which have been abandoned over the years. One such cache was located in Houston. These devices consisted of several explosive cannon balls that were of Civil War vintage. These devices had been set in concrete for decoration purposes without the owner realizing that they were dangerous (Lewis 77). Two soldiers were killed by a shell from the First World War in a France while they were walking in a 1916 battle field (Houston Chronicle 020397 12A). A construction crew in Galveston located an unexploded aerial bomb from World War II while digging a water line. Several areas that are now inhabited by people were at one time either military practice ranges or battlefields. Although these devices are old, they still are very lethal and pose a threat to the public.

Basic training of first responders to explosive device calls is essential. Tactics used by Terrorist groups have not changed much over the last three decades. One of the basic tactics used is placing a second device in the area of 1st. This device is designed to be detonated upon the arrival of the responding officers and other emergency units (

Meyer 27 A). Not only does this create great confusion along with more casualties, but critical time is lost for the victims waiting for other personnel to arrive in the area.

Another area of concern is the use of radio equipment in the area of a device. Radios put out a high level of magnetic radio waves that translate to electrical energy. If a radio transmits in the area of a device it is highly possible to cause the device to detonate.

Simple procedures such as opening exterior windows and closing interior doors in a room where an explosive device is located would allow the room to vent in case of a detonation (BOMBTHRT.SOP 022196). Primary concerns for first responders should be to rescue casualties, evacuate everyone within the danger area, and cordon off the area in order to preserve the crime scene and provide additional time to search for other devices (Hoffman 17).

DISCUSSION OF RELEVANT ISSUES

The use of explosive devices have dramatically increased in the United States in the last few years primarily to the availability of information. The Internet has made available to anyone who has a computer the information necessary to construct an explosive device. On one web site alone there are instructions to construct 41 different types of ignitors and explosive compounds. A list is even included on common substitutes to be used for chemicals. Instruction is also given on how to construct 37 separate explosive devices (Viking 1&2). This is only one of over 3700 listed web sites for this subject. This information is easily accessible to anyone who is interested including young adults. Copies of this type of computer incarnation have been confiscated from junior high and high school students in the Houston area.

Future predictions of terrorism and the use of explosive devices in the United States are grim. In the next decade Americans can expect to have larger numbers of more organized left wing and right wing organizations. Left wing organizations will move up from Latin America into North America (Mullins 64). Domestically citizens dissatisfied with American expansionism can be expected to organize and/or join existing leftists organizations in order to conduct terrorist acts against military and government persons and installations. The extreme social conservatism of the 1980s is dying out and being replaced with a more questioning activism orientated belief (Mullins 64). Traditionally the most active terrorist activity carried out in America came from the right wing. They can be expected to increase significantly in the coming decade. They should become more sophisticated in their activities and include more youth in their ranks. One of these groups, the Skin Heads, increased their numbers from approximately 300 to over 7000 in just two years (Mullins 45).

Equipping a bomb unit in a police agency is no minor task. The basic equipment needed to safely operate even the smallest bomb unit will cost between \$15,000.00 and \$25,000.00. This would be very cost prohibitive to most smaller departments. The basic equipment needed consists of a bomb suit, portable X-ray machine, a disrupter or water cannon, demolition kit, and tool kit (Pilant 63). For added safety bomb blankets, barricades, and a robot are suggested. These items could raise the cost of the basic equipment by five times. Technicians are typically trained at the Hazardous Devices School at the Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama (Pilant 61). This training is given in conjunction with the Federal Bureau of Investigation Bomb Data Center. To date

over 5000 technicians have received training through this program.. The training consists of four weeks of intense instruction that is provided free of charge. Technicians are also required to attend a training course every three years. These courses are given across the country so travel expenses could be lessened. Transportation and accommodations must be provided by the officers department. The department must also provide the necessary equipment required for the bomb technician.

Although this is the best training available it is quite cost prohibited for most agencies. Other training for first responders can be located locally. The Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms will provide training to any law enforcement agency, upon request, free of charge. This service can be obtained by contacting the local A.T.F. office. The Harris County Sheriffs Department Training Academy provides a basic explosives training course once a year. The course is titled "Indoctrination of Explosives", it is three days long, and costs \$24.00 per student. Once a year a two day advanced training course is provided for \$16.00 per student. These courses provide the necessary basic information needed at a reasonable cost.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

Terrorism in America is on the rise as is the availability of information on how to construct explosive devices. Even if someone doesn't intend on purposely detonating an explosive device people will experiment and play (Houston Chronicle 030297 21A).

The purpose of this research was to determine if the justification existed to initiate a departmental Bomb Squad. It also addressed the necessity for specialized training for

departmental personnel as first responders to bomb calls. This topic was chosen due to the upward trend in the use of explosive devices by terrorist and militant groups.

The culmination of this research has shown two solutions. First, small agencies will find that the expense of initiating a departmental Bomb Squad is too cost prohibitive. To obtain the minimum equipment required to outfit just one bomb technician, a small agency would have to spend the entire years budget. The second solution shows that training of first responders to an explosive device call is necessary and very cost effective. The training of officers in basic response techniques could not only save lives but could provide a more complete service to the community. One point that cannot be overemphasized is the value of being prepared (A.T.F. P7550.2 1).

Most large metropolitan agencies have a well organized fully equipped bomb squad unit. Most also have a reciprocal agreement with smaller agencies that allow them to respond to explosive device calls. A small agency cannot accept the financial burden of starting their own bomb squad, or even having one fully equipped technician. They must rely on other agencies to assist them in their time of need. The Webster Police Department should ensure that it has a inter agency agreement with its surrounding larger agencies. It should also invest in explosive device first responder training to advance the level of readiness.

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