
Course Learning Outcomes for Unit I

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Analyze the importance of a pre-attack threat assessment.

Reading Assignment

Chapter 9: Intelligence and Information Sharing for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, pp. 156-160

Chapter 16: Integrating Risk Management with Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Resource Allocation Decision Making, pp. 335-363

Chapter 18: The Psychological Perception of Risk, pp. 399-400

Chapter 38: Perceptual Framing of Homeland Security, pp. 883-887

Unit Lesson

Terrorism

On a regular basis, terrorism is in the news and has an effect on the daily lives of millions of people. Modern terrorism started back during the 1972 Munich Olympics with the kidnapping and murder of the entire Israeli Olympic team. The remainder of the 1970s saw a steady increase in terrorist activity, culminating with the 444-day American hostage situation at the U.S. Embassy in Iran that immediately followed the Islamic Revolution. The beginning of the 1980s saw the American hostages freed, but also saw an increase in terrorism. By 1983, an American military peacekeeping force in Beirut suffered the loss of 236 United States Marines in a single suicide attack by Hezbollah, making *suicide attack* a household word.

The mid 1980s brought Libyan terrorists who specialized in hijacking airliners, culminating with the destruction of Pan Am flight 103, which was blown up over Lockerbie, Scotland, in December of 1988. The 1990s brought the first World Trade Center attack with Al Qaeda declaring all Americans legitimate targets. By the mid-90s, the Khobar Towers suicide bombing in Saudi Arabia, which was a joint attack by Al Qaeda and Hezbollah, killed another nineteen United States military personnel and injured 370 soldiers. The late 1990s brought the American embassies throughout Africa under attack by Al Qaeda; then, the millennium plot to blow up Los Angeles International Airport left a violent decade behind.

Following the stress of Y2K, October of 2000 saw the attack on the USS Cole in Yemen, which brought us to our defining moment eleven months later. The September 11, 2001, New York City attack, or 9/11, was the worst-ever attack on American soil, with more lives lost than the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor sixty years earlier. After 13 years of fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, 2014 saw a new threat immerge, ISIS, targeting Americans and anyone who does not see things as they do or agree with their views. Televised beheadings and other horrendous acts are now frequently in the news.

To further complicate the issue of terrorism, the 1990s brought us domestic terrorism. The Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas; Timothy McVeigh and the Oklahoma City bombing; and Eric Rudolph and the 1996 Olympic bombing in Atlanta changed the American view of terrorism and introduced us to domestic terrorism. The Earth Liberation Front (ELF) and the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) have also become well known; this is in addition to all the other issues and complicated ideologies that make up foreign and domestic terrorism (Burke, 2007).

United States armed forces are deployed all over the world protecting American interests, while here at home and in every community, local emergency responders are also on the front lines in the war on terrorism. It may not be the traditional role of local emergency services to prepare for and fight the battles on American soil, but this is the reality when facing foreign and domestic threats and terrorist attacks. On September 11, 2001, emergency responders unknowingly fought the first battle in the global war on terrorism. They were not equipped or prepared to face an attack of the magnitude seen in New York City, at the Pentagon, or Flight 93 that crashed in the vacant field of rural Pennsylvania. Comparing September 11, 2001, to the last full-scale attack on the United States on December 7, 1941, against the Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, there was a common element. In both cases, the U.S. was caught off guard due to improper pre-attack assessment.

The World Trade Center attacks of February 26, 1993, and September 11, 2001, presented missed opportunities to save lives and prevent foreign terrorist attacks on American soil by identifying potential targets of foreign terrorists. Pre-attack threat assessments either missed vital information or were improperly conducted. On September 11, 2012, the American embassy in Benghazi, Libya, was attacked resulting in the deaths of the American Ambassador and several other Americans. Other attacks include the USS Cole that was attacked in Yemen on October 8, 2000; the August 7, 1998, attack where two car bombs exploded at the American Embassies in Nairobi; the Khobar Towers bombing took place on June 25, 1996, in Saudi Arabia; and the November 13, 1995, attack in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where a car bomb exploded at the United States military headquarters. Conducting a pre-attack threat assessment takes time, trained personnel, and an understanding of the region and culture. Threat assessments must be combined with leadership that will take the appropriate steps to mitigate the assessments and not just file the information away for later use (Kamien, 2012).

Domestic Terrorism

Domestic terrorism is just as deadly and dangerous as foreign terrorism, but the terrorists could be anyone: a foreigner or the kid who grew up next door. Tracking and conducting pre-attack assessments at home are more difficult. The target could be a military installation, emergency services, the banking industry, power plants, water departments, university research facilities, large building projects, car dealerships, family planning clinics, houses of worship, gay night clubs, sporting events, shopping centers, schools, airports, train stations, or any place where there are people and where the media will show up.

The U.S. suffered its worst domestic terrorist attack in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995, at the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. The attack was conducted Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, two disgruntled Americans who believed the American government had committed atrocities at Ruby Ridge in 1992 and at Waco, Texas, in 1993. Eric Rudolph bombed the Centennial Olympic Park in Atlanta, Georgia, on July 27, 1996; the Sandy Springs abortion clinic on January 16, 1997; and a lesbian bar in Atlanta on February 21, 1997. In more recent times, the Boston Marathon Bombings on April 15, 2013, by brothers Dzhokhar Tsarnaev and Tamerlan Tsarnaev made national headlines.

Domestic Terrorists and Foreign Terrorist Organizations

There are also domestic terrorists funded by foreign terrorist organizations, such as Abdul Mutallab, better known as the "Underwear Bomber," who tried to blow up a Delta Airline flight on Christmas day in 2009; this attempt was similar to Richard Reid's attempt to detonate a shoe bomb on an American Airlines flight on December 22, 2001. The 2001-2002 Anthrax attacks in the United States, which put the world on edge, forced emergency services to acquire the necessary and expensive equipment needed to test the air quality and surrounding area for any and all toxins. The Beltway Sniper in 2002 sent local law enforcement and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) back to the drawing board because John Allen Muhammad and Lee Boyd Malvo did not fit in any profile that had been established.

There have been many success stories and suspects identified, tracked, and caught by the FBI, but many slip through. After the Oklahoma City bombing, there was real concern regarding secondary devices planted to stop the first responders; however, none were ever found. Eric Rudolph took this idea and planted secondary devices that detonated while first responders were on scene. The challenge in a situation like this is one person acting alone or just two people acting in concert are difficult to track, prevent, and stop.

The American government has produced training aids and videos using The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Department of Homeland Security to educate the public and emergency services on what to look for to identify possible terrorist threats. The government is also informing

the public and emergency services on how to prepare in advance of an emergency disaster. FEMA advises to keep a stockpile of food and water for emergencies. Assessing threats from domestic terrorism on American soil is a lot more complex than one might expect and requires the cooperation of local, state, and federal emergency services. Many departments must communicate with each other, share information, and train together to combat terrorism.

The National Incident Management System (NIMS) was created to provide various emergency service agencies from coast to coast with a way to communicate, share ideas, and train. Terror attacks, whether foreign or domestic, are difficult to predict. If information leaks out with valuable intelligence for training procedures, terrorists can gain information to counter first-response team plans. Pre-attack threat assessments must take into consideration how to prevent and stop potential attacks, but there are many targets, and resources are limited. It is a dangerous job; those tasked with responding must also be prepared to become targeted.

References

Burke, R. (2007). *Counter-terrorism for emergency responders* (2nd ed.). Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.

Kamien, D. (Ed.). (2012). *McGraw-Hill homeland security handbook: Strategic guidance for a coordinated approach to effective security and emergency management* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Suggested Reading

The article below discusses the sophistication of cyber terrorism as a growing security threat. The article may be located in the International Security and Counter Terrorism Reference Center database in the CSU Online Library.

Bogdanoski, M., & Petreski, D. (2013). Cyber terrorism -- Global security threat. *Contemporary Macedonian Defense / Sovremena Makedonska Odbrana*, 13(24), 59-72.

View the following videos and consider how each underscores pre-attack assessment.

Bending Reality TV. (2013, July 14). *Are you a terrorist with Senator Rand Paul?* [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PaK1x1aORwk>

shareandprotect. (2011, November 18). *Interagency Threat Assessment and Coordination Group (ITACG)* [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_LDG5WFsGk