

THE USE OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION AS AN URBAN TERRORIST TACTIC
AND ITS IMPACT ON THE LEVEL OF LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT'S
PREPAREDNESS BY THE YEAR 2005

Article

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The year is 2005. The threat of urban terrorist actions has become a serious concern after the incidence of threats and violence against certain groups and government agencies have become commonplace and increasingly violent. Weapons of mass destruction have been used by terrorists in other parts of the world and incidents of the use of WMD on U.S. soil by both domestic and foreign terrorist groups has resulted in the deaths of 50,000 people. Many believe this carnage could have been prevented had local law enforcement been better prepared to counteract and prevent such occurrences.

People live in fear. Society has become closed with personal freedoms being restricted. A fortress mentality has taken over. Some feel that terrorists have won the war, as their primary objective was to instill fear. Some say it was a self-fulfilling prophecy. People are restricted in their travels. Identification is required for almost every movement a person makes, whether it is at their work or just shopping at the local grocery store.

The role of local law enforcement has changed dramatically but it was not prepared to deal with such radical changes and demands on its services. Calls for service, particularly in regard to suspicious persons and objects, have increased 2000 percent. The State Legislature, as a result of federal law, has mandated a response time of 5 minutes or less to any suspicious objects in public areas. Special strike units were created to address these types of calls. Gun sales increased 500 percent in 2004 alone. Calls for service involving violence have quadrupled in just two years. Homicides alone have increased 400 percent as paranoia and stress abound. People are generally taking the law into their own hands and self-protection has become the number one priority of most Americans.

Government has become increasingly more militaristic. Local law enforcement agencies have become an occupational army with specialized units trained in not only the handling of

WMD but also in their limited use. The federal government is on the verge of eliminating local law enforcement and establishing military control across the nation. Community policing is dead. Anarchy is on the horizon. Local government failed to realize the extreme and real threat posed by WMD and its impact on the communities they serve. They are all paying the price and local control is lost. Can such a catastrophic scenario be avoided? The answer is yes. But only if law enforcement is prepared.

Terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction – What Does It Mean to Law Enforcement

The use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) by terrorists poses a grave threat to the United States. Combating the proliferation of these weapons and their delivery systems is of paramount importance and will involve all levels of government. Traditional terrorist organizations with distinct military type command structures have been replaced with a fragmented, leaderless type of terrorist organization. This poses an even greater threat as individual terrorists become more difficult to track, less predictable in their actions, and have access to weapons of mass destruction. A successful attack on the United States would have a devastating impact. Even a credible threat will have a significant impact on the nation's sense of security and wellbeing.

A review of terrorist activities in the 20th century reveals that terrorists can acquire and use lethal chemical, biological, and radiological agents if they wish to do so. To date, however, such attacks have rarely produced significant casualties. In the last four decades, only a handful of cases have occurred where terrorist groups have threatened to use such lethal agents and materials, collectively referred to as Weapons of Mass Destruction or WMD, in a mass casualty causing act or one involving super-violence.

The likelihood of terrorists using weapons of mass destruction on American soil has increased exponentially in the last few years. Anthrax threats have begun to take the place of bomb threats in many of our large metropolitan areas. The availability of weapons of mass destruction has proliferated. The likelihood of local terrorist actions involving the response of local law enforcement has increased. The federal government has begun to provide significant funding to local agencies specifically for equipment and preparation in response to terrorist acts. Local law enforcement agencies must be prepared to respond to such incidents and take appropriate action.

Law Enforcement Preparedness – What Can Be Done

Strategic planning and management steps are necessary to assist an agency in identifying its own level of risk and being prepared to encounter a WMD terrorist attack. Lack of planning will most assuredly result in significant loss of life and lack of confidence in law enforcement to provide adequate public safety.

The Nominal Group Technique (NGT) is a reliable research technique that can be used to develop pertinent information relative to local law enforcement preparedness for the use of weapons of mass destruction by terrorists. Recently in Sacramento, a group of six local experts representing a variety of agencies from the Sacramento area met to discuss trends and events related to the topic.

Panel members were asked to identify trends that they believed would impact the issue. They were led through an open discussion allowing each of the members to state his/her thoughts and opinions. Thirty-two (32) trends were identified using the brainstorming and round robin techniques. From those, the top ten were derived for the purposes of this project. Twenty-three (23) possible events related to the topic were also identified using the brainstorming and round

robin techniques. From those, the top ten were derived using a voting and ranking process.

These were then used to develop potential future scenarios.

Three scenarios were developed to paint a future that ranges from the preservation of peace and the world as we know it to the end of the world as we know it. The following is a list of threats that have been specifically identified as those of greatest concern:

- Terrorist acquisition or use of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.
- Possession of, and the manufacturing capability for, nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons by Iran, Iraq, North Korea, or other unfriendly states.
- Diversion of WMD-related weapons, technology, materials, and expertise from Russia.
- China's role as a significant proliferator of ballistic missiles, weapons of mass destruction, and enabling technologies.
- Destabilizing consequences of WMD programs in the Middle East, South Asia, and East Asia.
- Militia groups becoming more active and more violent.

Combating these threats and preventing potential crises requires that government be organized to develop and carry out a coherent, coordinated, and sustained response, using all available tools and appropriate level of resources. This can only be accomplished through a planning process.

By utilizing strategic planning, an organization can create and manage a desirable future based on the identification of trends and events that may impact an issue. The development of a strategic planning model that will prepare an agency to respond to a terrorist event in which weapons of mass destruction are utilized should be undertaken. Specifically, identifying what

steps agencies must complete to help create a response plan that will minimize casualties and effectively protect the public.

Strategic planning is a process by which guiding members of an organization envision its future and develop the necessary procedures and operations to achieve the desired result. An organization must anticipate the future and then prepare accordingly. The organization must also hold the belief that the future can be influenced and changed by what we do now.

Organizations engaging in planning for a response to the use of weapons of mass destruction by terrorists must consider a number of issues before starting. These include:

- What level of commitment is there to the planning process from key members of the organization and outside the organization (stakeholders)?
- Who should be involved in the planning process?
- How long will it take?
- What information do we need in order to plan successfully?
- Who will get the information we need?
- What resources/support do we need?
- How will we evaluate our effectiveness?

The organization must consider where it is in relation to its environment, and what it may face in the future. The development of trends and events, discussed previously, can assist a law enforcement organization in identifying things we cannot change but will continue to occur and things that may or may not occur. Analyzing these trends and events provides an agency with choices that can ultimately impact its success or failure.

In order to fully assess the level of risk an agency and a community face from a terrorist attack utilizing weapons of mass destruction, an analysis of the external environment must be

completed. This will allow an agency to identify specific challenges and vulnerabilities to a terrorist incident. This can be accomplished through a scanning process called STEEP. It allows for the analysis of the external environment across five domains: Social, Technological, Environmental, Economic, and Political. Accurate risk assessments based on valid threat data and an understanding of a community's vulnerability is critical to the successful planning for a response to a WMD event. The specific issues an agency must consider if they are to fully understand their key components of their own external environment and how they can contribute to their level of risk must be identified.

Doing an environmental scan and recognizing the potential threat for a community is the first step in the process. A thorough risk and threat assessment based on valid threat data must also be undertaken by the agency. This will provide direction to the agency as to the level of training and equipment that will be necessary to adequately address the threat posed. This must be constantly updated and revised as the threat of a WMD terrorist attack could shift from low probability to high probability over a period of time.

An agency must then analyze itself internally by assessing its readiness to meet an identified challenge. Focussing on the agency's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (S.W.O.T.) is often an effective tool for such an assessment. The S.W.O.T. analysis will identify questions and statements to consider to help guide the development of a preparedness plan for the use of WMD by terrorists.

The Defense Against Weapons of Mass Destruction Act of 1996 or Nunn-Lugar-Domenici (NLD) amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1997 advocates the training of first responders to deal with a WMD terrorist incident. The Nunn-Lugar-Domenici Domestic Preparedness Program began in Fiscal Year 97 to train first

responders -- fire, police, and emergency medical technicians in 120 of the largest cities in the country. By the end of 1998, forty cities had received training, with the remaining cities scheduled to complete training in 2001.

An implementation plan, or action plan, completes the overall strategic plan. Based on the recommendations of the NLD and basic disaster response protocols, nine components were identified and provided that should be comprehensively outlined and included in any agency's implementation plan. They are:

- Policy
- Intelligence and Threat Assessment
- Role and Responsibilities/Collaboration
- Psychological Preparedness
- Physical Preparedness
- Community Preparedness
- Training
- Equipment
- Funding

Leadership Implications and Recommendations

Law enforcement leaders are charged with protecting the public and enforcing the laws of the land. They have an inherent duty to forecast potential threats and take action to mitigate those threats. Terrorism has occurred on U.S. soil. We can no longer take the position that terrorism is something that happens in foreign lands. With the advent of weapons of mass destruction and the increasing ease of access to these weapons, the threat has become real. The public places a strong trust in its law enforcement leaders. The expectation is that should a

WMD event occur, law enforcement would be ready. Steps must be taken now to ensure that readiness.

Law enforcement leaders and the American public must understand that weapons of mass destruction – nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their means of delivery, pose a serious and grave threat to the United States. These threats define a new age and reality for our country. Because of their magnitude, new strategies must be formulated to be prepared to respond and to protect the public. Successful planning and training in preparation of a WMD event will result in:

- Greater efficiency, accountability and capability for defense against and response to a WMD incident.
- Better intelligence about the intentions and capabilities of terrorists.
- Enhanced capabilities by local law enforcement to take timely and effective operational actions that could deter or prevent the use of WMD.
- A more coordinated and systematic application of resources for their intended purposes, coordinating agency efforts, and evaluating progress.

The time is now to prepare. The threat is too serious and the consequences too grave for inaction. Agencies must assess the risk to their communities and prepare. The task is monumental, requiring a great deal of resources and time. By the year 2005, agencies must be equipped and trained to successfully address a WMD event, or face potentially serious consequences.

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