

WHY AND HOW
TERRORISTS CHANGE
TACTICS

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SO WHAT? WHO CARES?

- Mission: Preventing violence (not just ideologically based) on aircraft
- Problems needing solutions
 - *How can TSA recognize terrorists (and other violent actors)?*
 - *What can be done to deter terrorists (and other violent actors)?*
 - *How do we prevent terrorists from attacking soft targets?*
- Threat Assessment/Management as a useful model for solutions
- I can't promise answers, only considerations to be taken into account in the quest for technical solutions

THE FIELD

- From psychoanalytic anecdotes to actuarial models of violence
- Structured Professional Judgment
 - WAVR (Workplace Assessment of Violence Risk)
 - TRAP 18 (Terrorism Radicalization Assessment Protocol)
- Journal of Threat Assessment and Management
- My work:
 - Post hoc case analysis
 - Working groups: workplace violence, violent extremism, mental illness and mass violence
 - The operational side of the house

FIRST, THE ASSIGNED TOPIC: CHANGING TACTICS

Why? They want to succeed

- Terrorists (and others with criminal intent) as learning organizations
- Maximizing gains/minimizing losses—but not always rational actors
- Lessons from Behavioral Law and Economics
 - Bounded rationality
 - Bounded will power
 - Bounded self interest (and the problem of defining “self interest”)

How? The ISIS example

- Natural selection dictated by asymmetry
- Changing message/goals
- Changing philosophy

SOME THINGS KNOWN ABOUT VIOLENCE

- Targeted violence
 - Threat, approach, and attack behavior are the products of discernible processes of thinking and behavior
 - Motive and target selection are directly connected
 - Act of violence may be triggered by personal/significant stressor, including mental illness
- The Pathway to Violence
- The base rate/false positive problem
- Complex, multi-determined behavior: the 3-D model in space

SOME THINGS KNOWN ABOUT VIOLENCE

- No predictive profiles (at least so far)
- Violence = the interaction of 3 sets of factors
 - Individual
 - Environmental
 - Stressors, aka Triggers
- Terrorists more likely to surveil targets (at least so far) than mass shooters
- Leakage/observed concerning behavior common. In active shooter cases
 - 82% bystanders speak to attackers, only
 - 54% do nothing; 41 % reported to LE

IMPLICATIONS FOR PREVENTION & DETERRENCE SOLUTIONS

- Identification:
 - Risk factors
 - Pre-Screening for the presence of those factors and monitoring
- Solving the base rate problem: the importance of process variable
- Creating environments that signal decreased chances of success/increased risk of failure
 - Primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention
 - Counterradicalization
 - Community deterrence/services
 - Target hardening
- Awareness of community and individual stressors that can elevate risk
- Let's talk about the risk factors and how to model them: rschouten@mgh.harvard.edu