

## Learn the Warning Signs of Terrorism

Every individual has the power to interrupt terrorist activity by reporting actions that seem out of the ordinary. Knowing what to report is important, however. Here are a few warning signs to illustrate the types of activity that generally precede a terrorist attack and therefore merit reporting:

**Surveillance** – Terrorists “do their homework” before an attack. Typically they observe from a location where they can watch people arrive and depart a facility. They also note patterns in activity. Techniques include:

- ▶ Static surveillance – Individuals sitting at a bus stop who do not board a bus.
- ▶ Foot surveillance – Children lingering in the area who do not appear to be playing, or adults who take turns walking past a facility.
- ▶ Mobile surveillance – Vehicles appearing repeatedly without an obvious purpose (i.e., repair vans that do not repair anything). Vehicles can include bicycles, scooters, motorcycles, cars, trucks, or utility vehicles.

**Asking suspicious questions (Elicitation)** – Terrorists gather information by requesting information about security plans, procedures, and events. They might submit questions in person, via e-mail, or in online chat rooms.

**Tests of Security** – Terrorists sometimes drive into prohibited zones or attempt to enter doors that should be secured, just to see how well security procedures are enforced or to gauge response time. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) suggest that school officials remain alert for these types of tests of security:

- ▶ Increase in telephone or e-mail threats to facilities.
- ▶ Observation of protective action drills.
- ▶ Attempts to enter secure doors or restricted areas.

**Acquiring Supplies** – Terrorists sometimes steal identification badges, vests, or uniforms to gain admission to restricted areas. Encourage staff and students to report theft of IDs immediately and publicize the reporting procedure so everyone knows where to go and whom to tell. It is important to report losses promptly because the theft of a badge puts others at risk.



**Dry Runs** – Terrorists usually practice their attacks in advance. Observable activity includes mapping out routes; timing traffic lights; or driving up to an entrance, hopping out of a vehicle, and moving into position.

**Deploying Assets** – Immediately before an attack, terrorists will place individuals, equipment, and supplies into position for an attack. This is often the final indicator. Reporting the following types of activity could thwart a terrorist incident, so immediately alert authorities if someone is observed:

- ▶ Leaving a suit case, purse, or bag in a public building and rapidly exiting the area.
- ▶ Parking in a restricted zone and exiting the area on foot.
- ▶ Unloading boxes from a van and leaving them.

Whether at school, in the community, or while travelling, erring on the side of “over-reporting” is better, especially if the Force Protection Condition (FPCON) has recently been raised. For additional information, consult the District or Area Safety and Security Officer or contact [safeschools@csc.com](mailto:safeschools@csc.com). ■