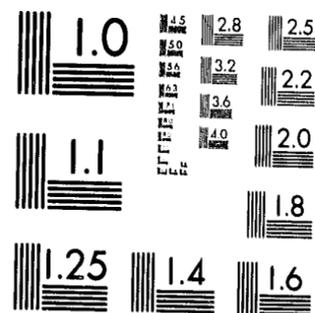


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National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice  
Law Enforcement Assistance Administration  
United States Department of Justice  
Washington, D. C. 20531

DATE FILMED

4-2-80

**BEHAVIOR AND MISBEHAVIOR OF TERRORISTS:  
SOME CROSS-NATIONAL COMPARISONS**

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Our world today is full of violence...our society, despite its claims to peaceableness and justice, is in fact one of the most violent societies in the history of the world.....the issue of violence is to this generation what the issue of sex was to the Victorian world.

—Kenneth Keniston  
Young Radicals, 1968

We are all exposed to the threat and/or use of violence in our daily lives, from the threat of mass "technological death" from nuclear war to terrorism and street violence, which are reinforced and even sensationalized by media coverage. Vicarious violence is so prevalent that by the age of 14, the average American child has witnessed 11,000 murders on television.<sup>1</sup> Our world today is not just full of violence; our world, while still disapproving, has come to accept violence. Megadeath, "ordinary" violence, and vicarious violence combine to produce a climate in which some people need to act violently in order to discharge their own excited rage (Keniston, 1968).

This discussion is concerned with one type of violence: terrorism. More specifically, the concern for the potential terrorist threat to nuclear facilities—a special form of terrorism that would combine the technological threat of mass violence with the apparent irrationality of the terrorist. We are trying to discover the differences between a violent person and a terrorist, and between an "ordinary" terrorist and the nuclear variety.

The responses terrorists seek are the creation of terror itself, and the subsequent alteration of behavior under actual or threatened duress. It would be desirable to have the National Bureau of Standards define a "standard nuclear terrorist" for us in much the same way as they define a standard meter, kilogram or teaspoon. Unfortunately, terrorists can be described only by attributes that are much less precise than physical standards.

**CHARACTERISTICS OF TERRORISTS**

This paper discusses the analytic approach and empirical evidence required for a thorough study of the terrorist threat posed by domestic insurgents. The first step for analysts is to determine which specific people or groups are likely to behave violently. Identification of particular types of violence-prone individuals would, it is hoped, permit the development of techniques and systems for preventing their antisocial behavior.

Within the group of those who are violence-prone, it is next important to distinguish those who could and would engage in terrorism, defined as the use of politically motivated violence by individuals or small groups directed against established authority, and often directed specifically at symbolic targets. Individual fanatics, non-political violent groups and even money-motivated sophisticated criminals are interesting departures for a study because some of their techniques and organizational structure could be copied by organized terrorists. They also contribute to a heightened climate of violence, which has led to "imitative violence."

<sup>1</sup>According to the National Citizens' Committee for Broadcasting, 1977.

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However, it would be dangerous to use the analogies as more than a departure for characterizing potential nuclear terrorists. Some of the characteristics of analogous groups clearly do not apply to potential nuclear terrorists. Empirical studies show that bank robbers attempt to avoid violence, for example (Fine, 1976), while terrorists do not. Further, the disruption of a nuclear facility or theft of special nuclear materials (SNM) would require special skills and knowledge in addition to those possessed by most of the analogous groups. To overcome existing security systems and safeguards would require an understanding of nuclear engineering, knowledge of plant design and security systems, coordination between several individuals, and most probably, inside help to gain access. Special equipment and techniques may also be required, such as weapons, explosives handling equipment and communications systems.

Because no single individual is likely to possess the necessary combination of knowledge, skills and access, it is hypothesized that the primary terrorist threat to nuclear facilities would be from a well-organized group with sophisticated planning and operational capabilities. Because it is further assumed that the nature of the operation requires a very high level of motivation, it is also assumed that potential nuclear terrorists would be politically or ideologically motivated.

In a recent Mitre study of "The Threat to Licensed Nuclear Facilities" (MTR-7022, 1975), the characteristics of members of a number of groups possessing capabilities that represent a credible potential for terrorism against nuclear facilities were analyzed. It was concluded that the types of terrorists most likely to possess the required combination of skills and motivations are foreign intelligence agents and domestic insurgents who are ideologically motivated and have received paramilitary and ideological training over a period of years.<sup>9</sup>

As a result of the study, the foreign intelligence agent was characterized as follows:

(1) The psychology of foreign intelligence agents operating in this country is clear. They are pragmatic. To them, international affairs are like a chess game, in which their task is to obtain information of an economic, social, political, military, scientific, industrial, and technological nature.

(2) Strongly patriotic, most would rather die than defect. They are secretive by nature, quiet and unobtrusive in demeanor, and clandestine in their efforts. They are rational. They have specific assignments and explore every avenue to collect the information necessary. They are constantly alert to opportunities to exploit any individual they may convince, dupe, or coerce into aiding them. They are objective about the risks in their jobs.

(3) Frustrations do not unsettle their mental composure. They are optimists, confident that setbacks are only momentary and will not upset their scheme of things. They are working toward long-range successes they see as inevitable, and they derive personal satisfaction from their contributions toward that end. In short, they are very much in control of their emotions and psychologically are stable individuals, because they live and operate within a framework of personal conviction and dedicated discipline.

The responsibility for identifying, studying, monitoring, and controlling subversive acts by foreign intelligence agents rests with the CIA and the FBI. Because of similarities in organization, training, and operations, studies of foreign intelligence operations can also tell us something about the domestic insurgent. However, it was found that the domestic insurgent has many distinctively different attributes:

(1) The violent revolutionary in our society is equally dedicated; however, he is frustrated. He is convinced no legitimate channel exists through which he can change a system he sees as repressive, corrupt, and decadent. He claims protests and marches have failed, and that the only alternative is violence.

(2) He looks upon himself as a soldier. He is part of a group that has declared war on the enemy—the system. He is affiliated with a still larger army—the revolutionaries throughout the world, who fight for "liberation."

(3) He sees himself as playing a unique and important role. He is living within the enemy's camp. Therefore, he must use his wits and clandestine methods to avoid capture. Surrounded as he is, he often becomes paranoid.

(4) He obtains guidance and inspiration from the revolutionary leaders abroad. His ideology is a mixed blend of anarchist, Marxist-Leninist and Maoist concepts. His views emerge in the form of generalizations, rhetoric, and plagiarized revolutionary expressions.

(5) He is more an activist than a thinker. He depends more on passion and instinct than logic and rational analysis. He feels duty bound to strike out against all the symbols of repression, in order to let the enemy know that the forces of resistance have not given up.

(6) For some, the ultimate act is martyrdom. He will make his mark on the pages of history. His name will be recorded alongside those revolutionary heroes who have died for the cause throughout the world. This is in contrast to the espionage agent, who is content to work without the reward of fame.

(7) The psychological motivation of such individuals is as important to the selection of targets and choice of weapons as are external events. Certainly another situation raising mass public dissent like the Vietnam War would raise the likelihood of either a foreign or domestic group attacking a licensed nuclear facility or engaging in terrorism with a nuclear device. Plans for sabotage developed by foreign intelligence agents would then assume increased importance.

The domestic insurgent is a distinctive type, and it would be useful to know how to identify such individuals, how they are recruited and trained, how they are organized and how they operate.

Most American dissent is open, and as long as it remains so, concerns us only peripherally. When direct confrontation with authorities or sinister motivations drive opposition underground, however, it becomes more dangerous. Terrorist activities by domestic insurgents are more likely to emerge from small, secret groups than from public, mass movements. American insurgent groups, however, tend to be fragmentary, shortlived and incompletely formed; legal restrictions have also limited the collection of information on these groups, so that they have not been fully studied.

Most domestic insurgent groups, however, have emulated the examples of foreign revolutionary organizations employing terrorists, such as the Vietnamese National Liberation Front (NLF), the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), and the Cuban-style groups. Certain characteristics are common to the most successful of these; and it is even hypothesized that these characteristics are sufficient if not necessary in running a successful operation. Because the NLF represents a fully articulated, successful and highly imitated organizational model for violent domestic insurgents, and has been extensively studied,<sup>9</sup> this model and its applicability to the American terrorist potential is the focal point. Note that this model need not apply to other potential threats to nuclear facilities such as foreign agents or individual fanatics, who are beyond the scope of this discussion.

## A MODEL OF TERRORIST ORGANIZATION AND OPERATION

For terrorists to launch an attack against a nuclear target would require a combination of institutional opportunity, appropriate "objective conditions" (a term by which Marxist-Leninists refer to current events), and the existence of a trained, dedicated team of individuals with a specialized mix of skills. From previous experience with terrorists of this sort, it may be fairly certain that such a plan is not likely to originate with the people who are responsible for carrying it out. Rather, the planning and decision to launch a coordinated attack against a nuclear facility is more likely to originate at the top echelons of an organized, ideologically committed, extensive network of cadre. Having assessed "objective conditions" to be ripe, the leaders would commit selected individuals in the organization to execute the action.

<sup>9</sup>It should be noted that domestic insurgents need not be U.S. citizens. They may be members of the informal brotherhood of transnational terrorists.

<sup>9</sup>e.g., Pike, 1966; Pratt, 1975; The Road Corporation, 1965.

There are a number of groups, both domestic and foreign, whose characteristics fit the model just described. Typical organization of the most threatening subversive groups is likely to be based on the principle of a strict hierarchy with authority flowing from the top down. Individual members are frequently organized into three-member cells, and strict secrecy is maintained, particularly with terrorist squads. Communications between cells is limited and based on "need to know." An act of nuclear terrorism would most probably be decided upon, planned and ordered by the highest levels of such an organization; the operation, however, is more likely to be carried out by specially selected individuals at other levels, who may well be unaware of the identity of those who plan the action.

The organizational principle of the three-member cell may be extended into a general principle of triadic structure for operations. The taking of hostages in three separate locations, or the simultaneous attack on three different targets, for example, are based on this principle. Multiple targets increase the likelihood of success by severely constraining the response available to authorities. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that a terrorist attack on a nuclear facility may be launched against more than one nuclear target; or, major non-nuclear attacks may be launched simultaneously or just prior to a nuclear attack to divert and disperse security forces.

Tactics of terrorist groups aim at high visibility for their (public) operations for the terror is itself an end, demonstrating the weakness and vulnerability of the system, creating chaos and distrust of the government's ability to provide basic security for its citizens, and undermining the most fundamental basis of government authority.

The nuclear terrorist is most likely to be a member of an established group or organization, rather than a newly created group. Members most likely to be employed in sabotage or violence are the hardest to detect within such organizations, for they are generally kept hidden until told to act. Great care is exercised to keep such individuals isolated from public activities; they do not, as a rule, participate in overt propagandizing but may be associated with those who do. Such associations explain the official alarm that arose when it became known that a physics professor in Germany had friendly ties to associates of the Baader-Meinhof gang.

## RECRUITMENT TO THE ORGANIZATION

Within Marxist-Leninist, Maoist and Cuban-style revolutionary organizations, recruitment follows a guided strategy, everywhere relevant to and consistent with general ideological considerations. An examination of the selection process, therefore, can tell a great deal about the type of individual who becomes a terrorist.

A terrorist is unlikely to be involved directly in any but the final stages of the process of recruiting new members. Rather, the initial and intermediate phases of the process are usually undertaken by members with less sensitive functions.

According to a former Communist Party member who served the Vietnam National Liberation Front as a propaganda and education cadre:

Yes, there are norms. Whenever they are looking for new memberships, and this does apply to all people's organizations, they have principles to stick to. There are inquiries to be conducted, propaganda works to be done, there are training courses, there are trials before they accept new members. Inquiries, propaganda, training, trials, organization. These are the five phases, all of them mandatory, which lead to memberships. They have called them the five steps of the recruitment process.

The NLF exercised definite and regular preferences with regard to the type of person targeted for recruitment. In general, it was the Party that selected the recruit, and not vice versa: "The Front has a political network with experienced cadre, and they have the responsibility for selecting, for contacting the students. The students don't need to look for them, but they will look for the students," according to a former Party member. As a general rule, particular attention was paid to the potential target's mental attitude; but doctrine also required that the inquiry focus on class origins and current class affiliations.

A former professor of Marxism-Leninism at the University of Hanoi stated categorically in an interview:

The priority for recruitment comes from the worker's families. Because according to Marxism-Leninism, this class really hates—they are the most miserable class of the society, and for this reason they're very displeased with the present government. And [as a contrast] take me, for example. Even though I know very well Marxism-Leninism, because I don't come from this class, it's very difficult to motivate people like me! For that reason, in North Vietnam, it's usually the children from the poorer, the peasant class who are selected to be sent to Russia for training; and the children of the rich people are not allowed to go abroad.

But I also have to tell you this. What Marx said in his written work is that when the ideology penetrates the public, it will convert into a material force. And in the present circumstances, because of this, the intellectual class can be considered as a basic class too. For that reason, the Communist cadre carry out their propaganda with the intellectual class, and that's something very important.

Such is the Communists' angle, even though a student comes from the rich class of society, if he has changed his mind already, sure he will be accepted to be a Party member—but with all the precautions.

I have to stress this point. The objectives are to take students and school children into the organization. Then, the basic elements here are those with good political inclinations—the intellectual people they have called the progressive intellectuals. You see, such elements have realized the slogan, "Unite farmers, workers and small capitalists." Basic elements in students' organizations do not need to come from the basic social classes. The Communists are very flexible with tactics! [Emphasis added.]

The conclusion, then, is that the NLF, for ideological reasons, preferred when possible to recruit new members from the "basic classes"—the workers' class and the poor peasants' class. In practice, however, the true working class is small and the poor farmers unsophisticated, while students are eager, willing and capable. The result was that—for students at least—"basic class" meant students who had an appropriate mental attitude, and this amounted to little more than rationalizing in ideological terms the very sensible practice of selecting those who were already predisposed towards the movement and its aims.

The same practices have been employed by groups in Latin America, where membership in terrorist organizations often consists of an otherwise unlikely combination of students, workers, and peasants. Liberalism and strong anti-government views suggest predispositions suitable for potential recruits. Further, youth itself is almost a prerequisite, for all such groups prefer to train individuals whose beliefs are incompletely formed. Individuals with strong religious ties are not considered suitable for selection. However, high moral standards are considered necessary; for corrupt, immoral members are generally considered untrustworthy for sensitive operations.

Who is recruited varies somewhat among countries and groups. Within the model being described, however, selection criteria tend to be quite consistent, so that it is possible to describe a characteristic type for many groups. As noted earlier, for example, activist students recruited in the U.S. in the mid-60's were frequently children of liberal or leftist parents whose only outstanding complaint about the older generation was that they did not act out their beliefs. Many of these activists were recruited as students in leading universities, a large proportion were actually "self-recruited," participating in open protest before being driven underground. They were of predominantly liberal, middle- or upper-middle-class families, good students, and disproportionately Jewish—perhaps reflecting the strong intellectual tradition of a large segment of American Jewry (Keniston, 1968).

## THE TERRORIST THREAT: NOW AND WHEN

It is quite certain that thefts of significant quantities of SNM have occurred. It is equally certain that nuclear facilities are vulnerable to a determined terrorist attack, and that opportunities exist, as do trained individuals to carry out instructions for attack. Although existing security systems and safeguards do serve the function of making nuclear targets less attractive, the fact that no major attack has yet been aimed at disrupting an operating facility in the United States does not prove security systems effective. Equally, the lack of an attempt could be due to an assessment by terrorist leaders that "objective conditions" are not yet suitable or that more promising targets exist elsewhere.

Fortunately, a change in objective conditions may be as perceptible to would-be preventors as to would-be perpetrators of a terrorist attack on nuclear facilities. Because of the organizational imperative of groups such as those described in this study, it is even probable that the existence and extent of a heightened threat would be signaled in advance:

- (1) Increased attacks by terrorists on nuclear facilities abroad would...signal an immediate need for tighter security here. Whether by design or imitation, these activities often follow a pattern: skyjacking and political kidnappings serve as an example. The recent attacks on operating nuclear power plants in France are likely to be a precursor of a series of such attacks, in France, and perhaps, in other Western European countries.
- (2) Expanded contacts between organized crime here and supporters of terrorist groups abroad would also raise significant questions. For example, published reports have indicated that Colonel Qadhafi of Libya has offered millions of dollars for strategic quantities of plutonium. These large sums of money could attract the attention of organized crime.
- (3) Any movement which organizes very large demonstrations at nuclear sites might attract extremists to the cause. Such demonstrations could escalate, either by accident or design, to confrontations and clashes with police forces. Increased militancy of a clandestine nature, including the use of explosives, might follow.
- (4) Further indication might be found in the underground press. In the past, such publications not only supplied the drum beat but also pointed the way for those marching with destructive intent on government and corporate structures.

Given warning of an increased danger, increased security and surveillance could lessen the chances of terrorist success.

Because the consequences of a successful terrorist attack against a nuclear facility are potentially catastrophic, the problem of identifying and characterizing potential terrorists is urgent. We must also begin immediately to focus on how to deal with the ones who have, and will, get through the preventive screens; and we can learn how to do this only by learning what they teach us about themselves.

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