



## **Information Bulletin**

**Title:** Potential Threat to Homeland Using Heavy Transport Vehicles

**Date:** July, 30 2004



**This is a joint DHS and FBI Information Bulletin.**

**DHS and FBI intend to update this Information Bulletin should they receive additional relevant information, including information provided to them by the user community. Based on this notification, no change to the Homeland Security Advisory System (HSAS) level is anticipated; the current HSAS level is YELLOW-ELEVATED.**

**ATTENTION:** State Homeland Security Advisors and Staff, Government Agencies, Information Sharing and Analysis Centers (ISACs), State Emergency Managers, Security Managers, and First Responders

### **OVERVIEW**

This information bulletin is provided to sensitize state and local authorities and the private sector responsible for security of critical infrastructure and key resources to the potential for terrorists to use heavy transport vehicles as vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs) against a range of attractive targets in the United States.

- Terrorists have repeatedly used heavy vehicles to conduct VBIED attacks in other countries as well as the United States.
- Some terrorist planners consider trucks to be one of the best tools to breach security measures and carry explosives since the U.S. airline industry significantly increased security procedures.
- Terrorist planners have considered how heavy vehicle drivers acquire training and Commercial Driver's Licenses (CDLs) with hazardous materials (HAZMAT) endorsement.
- Terrorists have shown an interest in planning attacks that employ quantities of HAZMAT that could be used as Weapons of Mass Effect (WME).
- There have been multiple suspicious incidents over the last six months that heighten concern over the potential terrorist acquisition of large trucks and commercial buses.
- VBIEDs can be used against symbolic icons and monuments or economic and infrastructure targets.

The chart below provides our current threat assessment of terrorist groups' intent and capability in using this tactic both in the Homeland and overseas.

**Terrorist Capability/Intent Level in the Homeland  
Heavy Transport Vehicles**

<b>Capability</b>	No evidence and even feasibility unconfirmed	No evidence of operational capability but feasibility confirmed	Some evidence that operational capability exists; not confirmed	Operational capability confirmed by credible evidence	<b>Similar exploit has been used</b> ✓
<b>Intent</b>	Tactic has not been used before and is not known to be under consideration	Tactic has not been used before but it may be under consideration	Tactic has not been used before but is under consideration	<b>Tactic has been used before and it is credible that it is now being considered for further use</b> ✓	Tactic has been used in the past and a similar attack is planned

**Terrorist Capability/Intent Level outside the United States  
Heavy Transport Vehicles**

<b>Capability</b>	No evidence and even feasibility unconfirmed	No evidence of operational capability but feasibility confirmed	Some evidence that operational capability exists; not confirmed	Operational capability confirmed by credible evidence	<b>Similar exploit has been used</b> ✓
<b>Intent</b>	Tactic has not been used before and is not known to be under consideration	Tactic has not been used before but it may be under consideration	Tactic has not been used before but is under consideration	Tactic has been used before and it is credible that it is now being considered for further use	<b>Tactic has been used in the past and a similar attack is planned</b> ✓

**DETAILS**

**Terrorists have repeatedly used heavy vehicles to conduct VBIED attacks in other countries as well as the United States.**

As far back as 18 April 1983, a 3/4-ton pickup VBIED driven by a suicide bomber penetrated the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, killing 89 and injuring 120. The device used an estimated 2,000 pounds (907 kg) of explosives. Investigators also found high-pressure gas cylinder fragments associated with the explosives package used in this attack.

Six months later in Beirut, on 23 October 1983, the U.S. Marine Corps Battalion Landing Team (BLT) headquarters was destroyed and the French military post was severely damaged by two nearly simultaneous VBIEDs driven by suicide bombers. In the U.S. incident, a Mercedes Benz truck penetrated a barbed wire and concertina barricade, entered the front

lobby of the BLT headquarters, and detonated an estimated 12,000 pounds (5,443 kg) of high explosives (HE). Forensic evidence indicated a substantial effort to increase the explosive force with flammable gas. However, while gas cylinders were used, there is no indication that any significant enhancement to the blast was achieved by using the cylinders. U.S. and French military personnel losses totaled 297 dead and 84 wounded in these attacks.

The 1993 World Trade Center (WTC) attack by Muslim extremists and the 1995 bombing of the Murrah Federal Building by Timothy McVeigh were carried out with rented vehicles. The VBIED for the WTC attack, estimated at 1,200 pounds (544 kg) of explosives, was assembled and transported in a late-model Ford F-350 Econoline van rented from Ryder Truck Rental. The Oklahoma City bomb was comprised of approximately 4,000 lbs of nitrate mixed with fuel and carried in a standard moving truck. Some VBIEDs used in overseas attacks in recent years have carried large explosive charges that weighed in excess of 2,000 pounds suggesting that continued use of large vans, sport utility vehicles, or trucks for this purpose is likely.

In 1996, terrorists planned and executed a successful attack in Saudi Arabia using a water truck carrying a bomb that exploded outside the U.S. military's Khobar Towers housing facility in Dhahran. Nineteen U.S. airmen were killed and 515 others were injured, including 260 U.S. military servicemen.

In May 2003, terrorists attacked three compounds in Riyadh occupied by western guest workers using a combination of automobiles, trucks laden with explosives and accompanied by assault personnel.

The recently disrupted plot in the United Kingdom, where over 1000 lbs of ammonium nitrate explosives were recovered, also points to terrorist intended use of large quantities of explosives that could most effectively be employed with larger vehicles. The disrupted Jordanian VBIED attack in early April 2004 also involved several tons of commercial fertilizer that have been demonstrated to be a viable explosive. Two heavy trucks were used to carry the fabricated bombs.

DHS Information Bulletin dated April 30, 2004 and titled "Situational Awareness Regarding Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Devices Tactics" outlined potential VBIED indicators that would cause a prudent observer to take further action in contacting local law enforcement. Although there is currently not specific information to discern the exact location or timing of a planned attack, indicators are such that increased diligence is warranted within the commercial trucking transportation sector and around Canadian and Mexican border crossings. Extra vigilance is also warranted at transportation node connections with other modes at seaports and rail yards. Sector authorities and operators should also be sensitive to irregular activity or circumstances out of the norm for a particular situation especially in connection with large public gatherings or significant public or private facilities with high economic or symbolic value. Examples include unusual activity around highway tunnels, bridges, or non-transportation high value buildings or facilities without substantial protective defenses in place.

**Some terrorist planners appear to consider trucks to be one of the best tools to breach security measures and carry explosives since the airline industry significantly increased security procedures.**

Intelligence community reporting reveals that terrorist planners consider trucks to be one of the best tools to breach security measures and carry explosives. Reports further revealed that planning should include acquiring the necessary vehicles through legitimate means to avoid exposure of the planned operation to security officials.

**Terrorist planners have considered how heavy vehicle drivers acquire training and Commercial Driver's Licenses (CDLs) with hazardous materials (HAZMAT) endorsement.**

Recent intelligence shows that terrorist planners understand the preparations necessary for requiring the drivers of certain vehicle types to possess a CDL. Reports further reveal that the decision to acquire appropriate licenses was influenced by how stringent the laws required for the legal operation and the likelihood of detection without the proper credentials. Reporting indicates that terrorists recognize the need to train driver operatives to avoid unnecessary risk of exposure for the operation.

Terrorist cadre might include non-Middle Eastern members who possess a valid CDL and certification to haul HAZMAT. For example, the press reported that in summer of 2003, Iyman Faris, aka Mohammad Rauf, a truck driver and naturalized U.S. citizen born in Kashmir, was involved in an al-Qaida plot that included possibly targeting the Brooklyn Bridge, rail, and commercial aircraft – the latter by driving a truck loaded with explosives beneath a commercial airliner as it sat on the tarmac.<sup>1</sup> CDL certified drivers possessing valid HAZMAT hauling credentials could also facilitate movement of explosives or weapons of mass effect (WME) across U.S. international borders with Canada and Mexico without attracting undue attention.

**Terrorists have shown an interest in planning attacks that employ quantities of hazardous materials that could be used as Weapons of Mass Effect (WME).**

There has also been reporting that terrorists have shown an interest in planning attacks that employ quantities of HAZMAT that could be used as WME. Attacks in the United States that involve chemicals/HAZMAT could take the form of the theft of a tanker truck of gasoline or some other volatile/toxic chemical (e.g., phosgene or chlorine) that would be detonated on the target.

**There have been multiple suspicious incidents over the last six months that heighten concern over the potential terrorist acquisition of large trucks and commercial buses.**

There have been several recent reports by the FBI of missing commercial buses and the reported theft of two propane tanker trucks in Texas. None of these incidents has been linked to terrorism, but all point to the relative ease of acquiring vehicles through illegal means.

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<sup>1</sup> "Al-Qaida in America: The Enemy Within," MSNBC.com, 23 June 2003

As an example, in early May 2004 there was a suspicious attempt to purchase a tractor trailer in Arkansas for approximately \$20,000 by an individual who did not know how to operate the vehicle but did possess a temporary paper California commercial driver's license. After his offer of purchase was refused by the dealership, the same individual attempted a similar purchase later the same day at another truck sales outlet, but departed the facility without making the purchase after receiving a cell phone call.

### **VBIEDs can be used against symbolic icons and monuments or economic and infrastructure targets.**

Recent information suggests that al-Qaida remains interested in attacking military targets and centers of U.S. economic power. However, there are no specifics on the timing and which targets among them would receive al-Qaida priority. The Intelligence Community (IC) suggests that the large body of intelligence reporting since 9/11 on al-Qaida's plans for attacks in the United States include an exceptionally large array of targets, sectors, locations, techniques, tactics, and capabilities. The IC is particularly concerned about the potential for mass casualty and disruptive bombings against commercial and government buildings as well as transportation infrastructure such as bridges, tunnels, and subways. Targeting subways has been a strong threat theme since long before the Madrid bombings. However, simultaneous attacks against less obvious targets probably would be perceived by al-Qaida planners as more achievable and nearly as disruptive, therefore we remain concerned that high-profile events and activities that attract large crowds may be targeted for a mass-casualty attack.

The press reports of the Iyman Faris connection of a commercial truck targeting the Brooklyn Bridge, rail facilities, and commercial aircraft should be viewed in the context of other reporting where terrorist organizations are still trying to inflict mass casualties such as was done in the Madrid railroad bombings using conventional explosives.

### **SUGGESTED PROTECTIVE MEASURES**

Terrorists continue to select soft targets for attack -- particularly those that will yield a high casualty count. Some examples, though not all inclusive, are: residences, recreational and shopping venues, and business buildings and complexes. All available antiterrorism measures should be rigorously reexamined, to include physical security perimeters and set back distances between security fences, key buildings, and barricades.

#### **General Awareness Procedures**

- Review current contingency plans and, if not already in place, develop and implement procedures for: receiving and acting on threat information, alert notification; terrorist incident response; evacuation; bomb threat; hostage and barricade; chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN); incident management procedures, accountability; and media.

- After implementing plans and procedures, conduct internal training exercises and invite local emergency responders (fire, rescue, medical and bomb squads) to participate in joint exercises.
- Coordinate and establish partnerships with local authorities and other business/facility owners to develop intelligence and information sharing relationships.

### **Security Personnel Procedures**

- Arrange for law enforcement vehicles to be parked randomly near entrances and exits.
- Increase the number of visible security personnel wherever possible.
- Institute/increase vehicle, foot and roving security patrols varying in size, timing and routes.
- Implement random security guard shift changes.
- Approach all illegally parked vehicles in and around facilities, question drivers and direct them to move immediately; if the owner cannot be identified, have the vehicle towed by law enforcement.
- Institute a robust vehicle inspection program to include checking under the undercarriage of vehicles, under the hood, and in the trunk. Provide vehicle inspection training to security personnel.

### **Physical Security Procedures**

- In addition to Jersey barriers and manned checkpoints, ensure appropriate use of ditching and berms to prevent vehicles from driving through perimeter fencing.
- Limit the number of access points and strictly enforce access control procedures.
- Rearrange exterior vehicle barriers, traffic cones, and road blocks to alter traffic patterns near facilities and cover by alert security forces.
- Consider installing telephone caller I.D.; record phone calls, if necessary.
- Increase perimeter lighting.
- Deploy visible security cameras and motion sensors.
- Deploy explosive detection devices and explosive detection canine teams.
- Conduct vulnerability studies focusing on physical security, structural engineering, infrastructure engineering, power, water, and air infiltration, if feasible.
- Install special locking devices on manhole covers in and around facilities.
- Where practical, prevent vehicular traffic from having a straight approach to the security checkpoint. This measure will preclude vehicles from reaching high rates of speed and crashing through the checkpoint.

- Consider installing remotely controlled barrier gates, remove controls at potential entry points for a VBIED, and reinstall to a remote secure site with closed circuit TV and phones to monitor access. This would help counter an attack where terrorists kill guards and activate the barrier devices themselves.
- Facilities deemed to be high risk may consider establishing off-site delivery facilities where all vehicles bring outside cargo for screening.
- Establish multiple, layered entry points at high risk facilities.
- Post signs stating that vehicles parked in unauthorized areas will be towed immediately.
- Identify key areas in and/or adjacent to a facility where a terrorist could park a vehicle and be in close proximity to large numbers of personnel.
  - Exclude vehicular parking in these areas or conduct a thorough search.
  - Monitor such areas with security cameras.
- Commercial bus and truck park operators should review current security procedures and consider counter theft measures as appropriate.
- Ensure all levels of personnel are notified via briefings, email, voice mail and signage of any changes in threat conditions and protective measures.
- Encourage personnel to be alert and immediately report any situation that appears to constitute a threat or suspicious activity.
- Encourage personnel to take notice and report suspicious vehicles.
- Encourage personnel to know emergency exits and stairwells and the locations of rally points to ensure the safe egress of all employees.

**DHS encourages recipients of this Information Bulletin to report information concerning suspicious or criminal activity to local law enforcement, the local FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force, or the Homeland Security Operations Center (HSOC). The HSOC may be contacted via telephone at (202) 282-8101 or via email at [HSCenter@dhs.gov](mailto:HSCenter@dhs.gov).**