

## Bus Attacks Highlight Potential Tactics and Mitigation Efforts

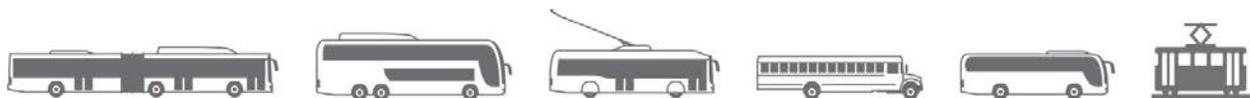
Terrorists have long targeted buses, primarily overseas, because of the potential to inflict a high number of casualties, perceived limited security, and the predictability of bus schedules and routes. First responders, public safety personnel, and bus operators play a critical role in deterring, detecting, and mitigating threats to buses, because of their regular interaction with travelers and understanding of the intricacies of bus operations, including routes, schedules, policies, and associated infrastructure.

A familiarity and understanding of terrorist trends and threats, accompanying threat mitigation techniques, and indicators of suspicious behavior will make bus transit more resilient. Stakeholders are encouraged to jointly develop information-sharing avenues, establish emergency-response strategies, and exercise responses on a regular basis.

**SCOPE:** Every weekday, Americans use public transportation 34 million times, including buses. Bus operators carry approximately 750 million intercity passengers each year, and almost 4,000 commercial bus companies travel on the 4 million miles of roadway in the United States. This product intends to assist public safety personnel and bus operators in detecting and mitigating a range of threats to public and private buses. This product was developed in coordination with city and private-sector bus operators.

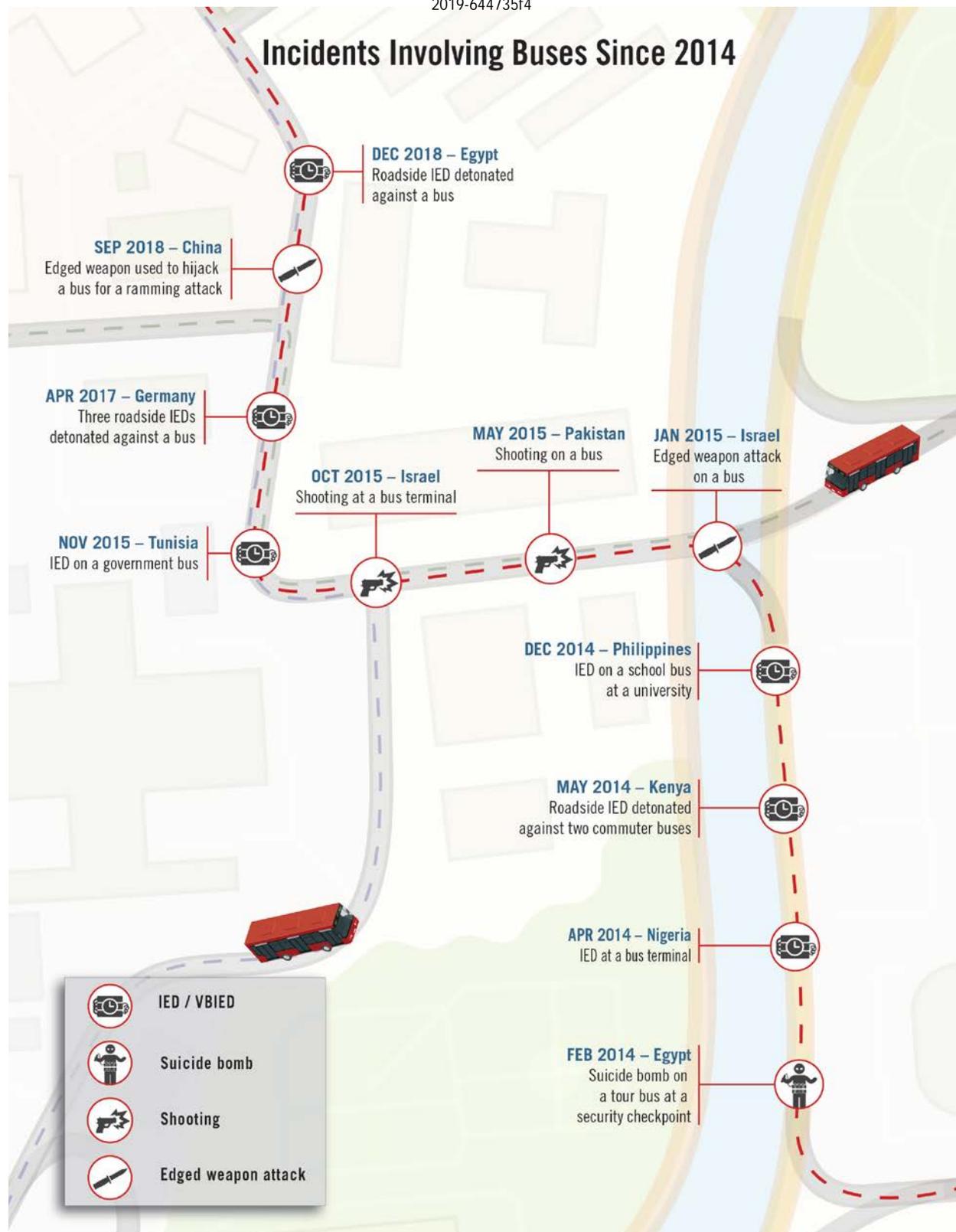
**ATTACK TACTICS:** Internationally, terrorists have used a variety of tactics to attack buses. The attacks often have not required a high level of training and were conducted with minimal planning or weapons. In addition, English-language terrorist media continues to promote attacks against US transportation infrastructure. For example, in 2017 a terrorist magazine highlighted the vulnerability of the US transportation industry, including buses.

- In December 2018, a concealed roadside IED in Giza, Egypt, exploded when a 16-passenger tourist bus drove past it, killing four passengers.
- In September 2018, a knife-wielding man in southeastern China killed a government official and a police officer, then hijacked a bus and drove nearly half a kilometer, striking pedestrians and vehicles. While not a terrorist attack, this tactic resulted in eight individuals killed and 22 wounded.



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**NOTICE:** This product was developed by the Joint Counterterrorism Assessment Team (JCAT), which is a collaboration by NCTC, DHS, the FBI, and state, local, tribal, and territorial government personnel to improve information sharing and enhance public safety. The product is intended to promote coordination among intergovernmental authorities and the private sector in identifying, preventing, and responding to foreign terrorist activities in the United States. It should be considered within the context of existing laws, authorities, agreements, policies, or procedures. For additional information, contact us at [JCAT@NCTC.GOV](mailto:JCAT@NCTC.GOV).



**MITIGATING COMMON ATTACK TACTICS:** Terrorists and criminals have used a variety of tactics, techniques, and procedures against buses, including small arms and edged weapons inside and outside the bus and IEDs concealed within or attached to the bus and along its route. By considering the most common tactics used against buses, bus stations, and their routes, and by planning, coordinating, and exercising against them, stakeholders will be better prepared to detect threats and prevent attacks, or to improve their response to mitigate the effects of terrorist attacks. Assessing the risks and vulnerabilities of bus infrastructure—along with maintaining vigilance and an appropriate security posture across the busing system—will enable stakeholders to identify risks, and develop and prioritize associated prevention, detection, response, and mitigation efforts.

**TYPE OF BUS, POWER, AND PASSENGER MAY INFLUENCE RESPONSE:** Public safety personnel should be familiar with the types of buses, their physical size, carrying capacity, and power sources, as these details may influence the type of response. After determining the power source or fuel type, first responders should follow their department's hazardous materials guidelines in conjunction with the appropriate Emergency Response Guide (the Orange Book) recommendations to determine evacuation, isolation, and decontamination procedures as needed.

TYPE OF BUS:	TYPE OF POWER:	TYPE OF PASSENGER:
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Articulated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Battery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children</li> </ul>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Double-decker</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Methane (rare)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special-needs</li> </ul>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electric</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electrical</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commuter</li> </ul>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gasoline</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourist</li> </ul>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commuter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Propane</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Military</li> </ul>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trolley</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compressed natural gas</li> </ul>	
		
		

**Active Shooter/Hijacking/Hostage-Taking:** Terrorists have used small arms and edged weapons at close range to attack bus operators and passengers, either inside or outside a bus. Additionally, hijacking a bus and its passengers has been a tactic used overseas, enabling the use of the bus in a vehicle-ramming attack. The following practices may help prevent or mitigate an attempt to assume control of a bus with small arms or edged weapons:

- Regular security training for bus operators and personnel, either in person or online, including:
  - Recognizing and reporting suspicious indicators.
  - Active shooter/hijacking/hostage scenarios.
  - When and how to engage an attacker when escape or evasion may not be possible.



- Exercises incorporating law enforcement, including about gaining entry, evacuation, stand-off distances, and knowledge of how to disable/shut down various types of buses.
- Protective layers or barriers to shield drivers from attackers.
- External signage that a driver can activate to alert the public and first responders of an onboard emergency with a standardized statement, such as “Emergency, call 9-1-1.”

**IEDs:** Terrorists may use IEDs to target buses, and secondary IEDs could target first responders, the media, and bystanders in a complex and coordinated attack. In addition, buses can be used as VBIEDs to attack critical infrastructure, such as rail or bus stations, tunnels, bridges, or motorways. The following practices may help detect or prevent threats from IEDs:

- Random and routine K-9 and other explosive-ordnance-detection sweeps in and around buses, along bus routes, and at stations.
- Regular training on situations and suspicious activities involving bomb threats and recognizing potential explosives.
- Awareness of the identifiers of suspicious packages and behaviors of individuals who may be carrying or placing explosives.

**Attacks involving schoolbuses:** Every day, 25 million students ride nearly 500,000 schoolbuses in the United States. Although domestic attacks involving schoolbuses are rare, attacks involving buses may require first responders to deal with minors and passengers who have special needs, accessibility issues, or language barriers.

**Insider Threat:** Terrorists may attempt to gain employment within the bus industry as drivers or support staff, providing them an advantageous position from which to collect information to conduct or facilitate an attack. Additionally, the high turnover rate for bus drivers may hinder driver and staff screening. The following practices may help detect and mitigate insider threats:

- Regular insider-threat awareness briefings and training.
- Preemployment background investigations and periodic reinvestigations.
- Reporting to law enforcement: the theft of uniforms, badges, keys, or other related items that can be used to gain access to a bus, related equipment, or facilities.

#### Additional Mitigation Considerations:

- Credentialing through entry control points: consider checking driver and potentially passenger badges or identification when feasible or necessitated by threat level.
- Closed-circuit television on board buses or at bus lots to capture suspicious activity.
- A remote shutdown mechanism to allow authorities to disable buses in emergencies.
- License plate readers, where feasible and legally permissible, to check vehicles in bus parking lots against watchlists.
- Screening luggage when possible and addressing unattended luggage promptly and when safe to do so.
- Leveraging partnerships among the private sector and federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial stakeholders.



- Regularly updating official agreements and contingency personnel lists to leverage during emergencies.
- Training with nontraditional partners and including drills that incorporate managing vehicular traffic and personnel flow.
- Training about mass casualty incident plans, incorporating a range of government, public, and private-sector participation.
- Familiarizing first responders with mass-transit hubs and basic operations.
- Conducting periodic audits to ensure background checks and training are being delivered.
- Reminding passengers to report suspicious internet activity. Owners or operators could monitor private Wi-Fi networks to help identify threats.



**Security Considerations**

- 1) Passenger pickup/dropoff 2) Taxi, bus or ride-sharing 3) Onboarding areas 4) Mass-transit connections

**INDICATORS OF SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY:** First responders, public safety personnel, and bus operators may be challenged to recognize preoperational indicators of suspicious behavior, as attacks may require little planning or make use of common, unsophisticated weapons. However, drivers and other bus personnel frequently

**NOTE:** Any determination of possible illicit intent should be supported by additional facts that justify reasonable suspicion. Although one activity may be insignificant on its own, the indicators should be looked at under the totality of the circumstances.



interact with the public, including passengers, and may have opportunities to observe and report suspicious behavior. Being vigilant by watching for the following indicators can help identify and deter possible terrorist threats:

- Suspicious surveying or photographing of buses, bus lots, routes, or drivers.
- The presence of anyone who appears to be loitering without a legitimate reason, especially in areas where it may be possible to access a bus in an unauthorized manner.
- Activities that may indicate a “rehearsal” for an attack, such as passengers boarding with suspicious baggage or asking unusual or probing questions about routes or bus operations, security, and travel patterns.
- Vehicles seemingly following buses in an unusual manner along their routes.
- Suspicious attempts to acquire decommissioned buses, which could be used in a future attack.
- Threats delivered via social media, which should be shared with law enforcement.
- Luggage that may be suspicious because of size, weight, shape, or other physical characteristics (stains, odors).
- Makeshift blockades, particularly on rural roads, which may indicate an attempt to stop a bus.
- The theft or disappearance of transportation safety and operational equipment and tools, including radios, identification badges, uniforms, track tools, or “switch keys” that could enable an attack or are needed to prevent an attack.
- Inappropriate access of bus or station Wi-Fi or communications.

**POSTATTACK CONSIDERATIONS:** First responders, public safety personnel, and bus operators are encouraged to plan effectively to ensure that adequate resources are available immediately following an attack. A well-rehearsed, unified response plan can ensure the effectiveness of response operations, enable information sharing, control the scene of the incident, and facilitate the employment of nontraditional partners to assist in the response. The following considerations may assist in mitigating the effects of an attack:

- Develop a well-integrated and unified incident command.
- Consider secondary attacks that may target first responders, media, bystanders, other buses, or responding vehicles. A scene survey to clear and secure adjacent areas may be necessary.

**“IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING®”**

The DHS campaign raises public awareness of the indicators of terrorism and terrorism-related crimes, as well as the importance of reporting suspicious activity to state and local law enforcement. The campaign encourages people to follow their intuition and report suspicious activity but leaves it to law enforcement to decide whether an observed activity or behavior merits investigation. In other words, if you see something you know should not be there or observe behavior that does not seem quite right, say something. To report suspicious activity, contact local law enforcement or call 9-1-1, and describe the incident in as much detail as possible, including:

- Who or what you saw.
- When you saw it.
- Where it occurred.
- Why it is suspicious.

[www.dhs.gov/see-something-say-something](http://www.dhs.gov/see-something-say-something)



- Be aware of reports of additional attacks and other “false positives” that may be purposefully used to divert and drain public and private resources.
- Ensure communications plans are in place in the event that transportation systems need to be shut down or diverted.
- Use social media to support communication and information sharing among bus operators, first responders, and the public.
  - Monitor social media and public outlets, issue general alerts, report social media concerns to law enforcement, and provide overall situational awareness.
  - Disseminate public service announcements regarding family reunification, to direct public assistance, and to clarify the risk associated with additional threats or attack claims.
- Develop postincident reports in collaboration with public, private, and government partners to be distributed as widely as possible.

## RESOURCES

- DHS/Transportation Security Administration (TSA):
  - TSA Intermodal Security Training and Exercise Program: <https://www.tsa.gov/for-industry/intermodal-security-training-and-exercise-program>
  - TSA First Observer Plus™ program: <https://www.tsa.gov/for-industry/firstobserver>
  - TSA briefings, Public Transportation Information Sharing and Analysis Center (PT-ISAC): <https://www.surfacetransportationisac.org>
  - TSA/Maritime & Land Security Employee Guide to School Bus Security: [https://www.isbe.net/Documents/school\\_bus\\_security.pdf](https://www.isbe.net/Documents/school_bus_security.pdf)
- DHS/Federal Emergency Management Agency:
  - Insider Threat: <https://www.dhs.gov/training-awareness>
  - Counter-IED Awareness and Training: <https://www.dhs.gov/bombing-prevention-training>
- DHS/Private Sector Office: <https://www.dhs.gov/private-sector-office>
- DHS/Office for Bombing Prevention: <https://www.dhs.gov/cisa/office-bombing-prevention-obp>
- DHS/TRIPwire (Technical Resource for Incident Prevention): <https://www.dhs.gov/tripwire>
- US Department of Transportation (USDOT)/Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration:
  - Truck and Bus Traffic Enforcement: <https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/national-training-center/large-truck-and-bus-traffic-enforcement>
  - Registration Requirements: <http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/registration>
  - Passenger Carrier and Bus Safety: <https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/safety/passenger-safety/passenger-carrier-and-bus-safety>
  - Motorcoach Security – Best Practices: <https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/sites/fmcsa.dot.gov/files/docs/TSA-Motorcoach-Best-Practices.pdf>



- USDOT/Federal Transit Authority:
  - Bus Safety Program: <https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-guidance/safety/bus-safety-program>
  - Effective Practices in Bus Transit Safety: Emergency Response: <https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-guidance/safety/effective-practices-bus-transit-safety-emergency-response>
- National Criminal Intelligence Resource Center/Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting Initiative: <https://nsi.ncirc.gov>





## PRODUCT FEEDBACK FORM

(U) JCAT MISSION: To improve information sharing and enhance public safety. In coordination with the FBI and DHS, collaborate with other members of the IC to research, produce, and disseminate counterterrorism (CT) intelligence products for federal, state, local, tribal and territorial government agencies and the private sector. Advocate for the CT intelligence requirements and needs of these partners throughout the IC.

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PRODUCT TITLE:



ADDITIONAL COMMENTS, SUGGESTIONS, OR QUESTIONS. HOW DOES JCAT MAKE PRODUCTS BETTER?

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WHAT TOPICS DO YOU RECOMMEND?

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