

Surveillance Recognition

by U.S. Dept. of State

Surveillance is required for successful terrorist planning. Experience has taught us that terrorist attacks are generally preceded by pre-operational surveillance in which terrorists gather target intelligence. Surveillance is defined as the process of keeping facilities, vehicles and persons under observation in order to obtain detailed information. Any indications of surveillance should be reported immediately to the the security office of your organization and/or the police.

All training programs designed to protect individuals from becoming victims of terrorism recommend that people be alert to surveillance. This is excellent advice, but, unfortunately, in most instances it is insufficient, because people have had no training in detecting surveillance, and terrorist organizations are often relatively sophisticated in their surveillance methods. Detecting surveillance conducted by trained experts is not as easy as most Hollywood films would lead us to believe. Fortunately, however, the type of surveillance conducted by terrorist organizations is not normally as elaborate as that done by intelligence organizations nor does it involve as many people or as much equipment. Nevertheless, for people to have a reasonable chance at detecting most forms of surveillance they would have to be somewhat familiar with the techniques used.

The purpose of surveillance is to determine (1) the suitability of the potential target based upon the physical and procedural security precautions that the individual has taken and (2) the most suitable time, location, and method of attack. This surveillance may last for days or weeks depending upon the length of time it takes the surveillants to obtain the information that they require. Naturally, the surveillance of a person who has set routines and who takes few precautions will take less time. The people undertaking the surveillance will often not take part in the attack, nor will the attack take place while surveillance is still in progress.

Before undertaking surveillance most experts gather information about the subject from other sources. Public records of information made available to the terrorist organization from a sympathetic individual within an organization, local police, or other government office may reveal useful facts about an individual such as the names of family members, an address, a description of vehicles and license numbers, photographs, etc. The surveillants will also make a reconnaissance of the neighborhood in which the target lives and works. This permits them to select positions of observation, the types of vehicles to use, the clothing to be worn, and the type of ruse to use that will give them an ordinary or normal appearance and plausible reasons to be in the area.

There are basically three forms of surveillance: foot, vehicle, and stationary (generally categorized as either mobile or static). A brief description of the most common techniques used for each of these forms and methods for detecting each one follows:

One or more individuals may undertake foot surveillance. One-person foot surveillance is rather complicated and fairly easy to detect. The surveillance must remain close to the target, particularly in congested areas, to avoid losing him or her. In less congested areas the surveillant can maintain a greater distance, but the lack of other pedestrians makes the surveillant that much more noticeable. The one complicating factor is the use of a disguise to make the surveillant look different (perhaps a uniform). One possible use of a disguise is a shopping bag or some other container for a change of clothes, particularly if the shopping bag is from a store not found in the area or the container somehow seems out of place. Where a disguise is suspected, pay particular attention to shoes and slacks or skirts. These items are less easily and, therefore, less commonly changed. In elevators, watch for people who seem to wait for you to push a button and then select a floor one flight above or below yours.

Two-person foot surveillance is more effective in that the second surveillant provides greater flexibility. Normally, one surveillant remains close to the target while the other stays at a greater distance. The second surveillant may follow the first on the same side of the street or travel on the opposite side. Periodically the two surveillants change position so that if the target spots one of them, that one will soon be out of sight, leading the target to think that he or she was mistaken. Obviously, spotting this form of surveillance is more complicated, but individuals who are alert to the people in their vicinity will eventually detect the same surveillant over a period of time.

Foot surveillance with three or more people uses the most sophisticated techniques and is the most difficult to spot. Generally, one surveillant remains behind the target close enough to respond to any sudden moves. A second surveillant remains behind the first on the same side of the street with the first surveillant in sight. A third surveillant travels on the opposite side of the street parallel with or just behind the target. In areas where the target has few paths to choose, one surveillant may walk in front of the target, where he or she is least likely to cause suspicion. The positions of the surveillants are frequently changed, most commonly at intersections. The surveillant directly behind the target may move to the opposite side of the street, while another surveillant moves in close behind the target. With the additional surveillants, any surveillant who feels that he or she has been observed may drop out of the formation. The use of this sophisticated technique requires that people be alert not only to those people behind them but also to those across the street and perhaps in front of them. If the same person is seen more than once over a certain distance, surveillance may be suspected even if that person is not continuously seen.

Common methods for detecting surveillance apply to all three forms of foot surveillance. The most effective are:

1. stopping abruptly and looking to the rear,
2. suddenly reversing your course,
3. stopping abruptly after turning a corner,
4. watching reflections in shop windows or other reflective surfaces,
5. entering a building and leaving immediately by another exit,

6. walking slowly and then rapidly at intervals,
7. dropping a piece of paper to see if anyone retrieves it,
8. boarding or exiting a bus or subway just before it starts, and
9. making sudden turns or walking around the block.

While taking these actions, watch for people who are taken by surprise, react inappropriately, suddenly change direction, or give a signal to someone else. Surveillants will not normally look directly at the target, but they may do so if they are surprised or unaware that you are observing them.

Foot surveillance is often used in conjunction with vehicle surveillance since it is likely that the target will use a combination of foot and vehicle transportation. Vehicles used for surveillance are inconspicuous in appearance and of a subdued color. Frequently, the inside dome light is made inoperative so that it will not illuminate the interior of the car when the door is opened. Vehicles will have two or more people in them so that if the target parks his or her vehicle and walks away, the surveillance can be resumed on foot while the driver remains with the vehicle. While moving, the driver gives full attention to driving while the observer operates the radio, watches the target, and makes notes on the target's activities. Sometimes it will be necessary for surveillants to break traffic regulations to avoid losing you. If you see a vehicle run a red light, make an illegal U-turn, travel over the speed limit, or make dangerous or sudden lane changes in an apparent effort to keep up with you, you should, of course, be suspicious of that vehicle. The distance between a surveillance vehicle and the target will vary depending on the speed at which the vehicles are traveling and the amount of traffic. Surveillants will try to keep one or two vehicles between themselves and the target.

As with foot surveillance, vehicle surveillance may be undertaken using only one vehicle or using two or more vehicles. One-vehicle surveillance suffers from the same drawbacks as one-person foot surveillance. The target has to be kept in view at all times and followed by the same vehicle. Surveillants can try to overcome this advantage somewhat by changing seating arrangements within the vehicle; putting on and taking off hats, coats, and sunglasses; changing license plates; and turning off onto side streets and then turning back to resume the tail. This makes it necessary for a person suspecting surveillance to remember aspects of a following vehicle that cannot easily be changed such as the make, model, and color of the car and any body damage such as rust, dents, etc.

The use of two or more vehicles permits surveillance to switch positions or to drop out of the surveillance when necessary. One vehicle follows the target vehicle and directs other vehicles by radio. The other vehicle may follow behind the lead surveillance vehicle, precede the target vehicle, or travel on parallel roads. At intersections, the vehicle following directly behind the target vehicle will generally travel straight ahead while alerting all other vehicles of the direction in which the target vehicle has turned. Another vehicle in the formation will then take a position behind the target and become the lead vehicle, taking over the responsibility for giving instructions to other surveillants. The

former lead vehicle then makes a U-turn or travels around the block to take up a new position ready to resume the lead vehicle position again when necessary.

People who have well established routines permit surveillants to use methods that are much more difficult to detect. If, for example, you leave the office at the same time each day and travel by the most direct route to your home or if you live in a remote area with a few or no alternate routes to your home, surveillants have no need to follow you all the way to your residence. An alternative method of surveillance in such situations is leading surveillance and progressive surveillance. In leading surveillance the surveillant travels in front of the target while the observer watches for turns. When the target turns, this is noted. The next day the surveillant makes a turn where the target did the previous day. Over a period of time the surveillants will discover the entire route to the residence while still driving in a position that creates much less suspicion. There are two forms of progressive surveillance. In the first form, surveillants are placed at intersections along the probable routes of the target. When the target makes a turn, this is noted and the position of the surveillants is adjusted to check the next intersection. Eventually, this method leads the surveillants to the residence. In the second form or progressive surveillance, a vehicle will follow the target for a short distance and then turn off. On successive days the surveillant picks up the target where he or she left off the previous day. Leading and progressive surveillance are extremely difficult to detect, but you should not give anyone the opportunity to use these methods.

The most effective methods for detecting most forms of vehicle surveillance are:

1. making a U-turn where it is safe to do so,
2. making a turn to the right or left (in general, right turns create greater complications for surveillants because of oncoming traffic that may delay a turn),
3. going through a traffic light just as it is turning red, stopping just beyond a curve or hill, and circling a block.

In each case, watch for the reactions of any vehicles that you may suspect. Any vehicles that make unusual maneuvers should be carefully noted. Do not forget to check for motorcycles or motorbikes, since in many parts of the world they seem to be favored by surveillants because they move easily through heavy traffic.

Stationary surveillance is commonly used by terrorist organizations. As mentioned earlier, most attacks take place near the residence or office because that part of the route is least easily varied. Most people are more vulnerable in the morning when departing for work, because morning departure times are more predictable than are evening arrivals.

Surveillants seek a position that permits them to observe the residence or office clearly without being observed or suspected. Surveillants want to identify observation points that afford the best view of the target. Foot and vehicular traffic, buildings and terrain around each government facility vary with each location. Pedestrian traffic, rush hour traffic flow, temporary street closure, etc. will affect observation points. If the surveillants decide that it is best not to be seen, they may obtain an apartment or rent office space in

the area that provides for an adequate view, but such apartments or office space may not be available and the renting of an apartment or office space could provide clues for a subsequent investigation. The use of an apartment or office space for surveillance, while possibly the most difficult to detect, is generally not the easiest or safest method. Many surveillance teams use vans with windows in the side or back that permit observation from the interior of the van. Often the van will have the name of a store or utility company to provide some pretext for its being in the area. The driver may park the van and walk away, leaving the surveillance team inside. Some teams use automobiles for stationary surveillance, parking the vehicle far enough from the residence or office to be less noticeable, using other vehicles for cover, facing the vehicle away from the target, and using the rear view mirrors to watch.

Where it is not possible to watch the residence or office unobserved, surveillants must come up with a plausible reason for being in the area. The types of ruses used are limited only by the surveillant's imagination. Some of the more commonly used covers are automotive repairs due to engine trouble or a flat tire, door to door sales, utility repair crews, lovers in a park, walking a dog, construction work, or sitting at a cafe. Women and children are often used to give a greater appearance of innocence.

Some things to check for are parked vehicles with people in them, cars with more mirrors or mirrors that are larger than normal, people seen in the area more frequently than seems normal, people who are dressed inappropriately, and workers who seem to accomplish nothing.

If you become suspicious of a van, note any information printed on the side of the van, including telephone numbers. Check the telephone book to see if such a business exists. Note the license numbers of any suspicious vehicles and provide them to your security office so they can be checked. Make a habit of checking the neighborhood through a window before you go out each day.

Detecting surveillance requires a constant state of alertness and must become an unconscious habit. We do not want to encourage paranoia, but a good sense of what is normal and what is unusual in your surroundings could be more important than any other type of security precaution you take. Above all, do not hesitate to report any unusual events to the police. Many people who have been kidnapped realized afterwards that their suspicions had been well founded. If those suspicions had been reported, their ordeal might have been avoided.

Since surveillance attempts to determine the suitability of a potential target and the most opportune time for an attack, it is crucial to avoid predictability. Although the recommendation to vary routes and times of arrivals and departures has become trite, implementing it in one's daily schedule has proven to be effective in deterring sufficient terrorist planning. Varying times and routes apply to jogging, shopping and all activities where a pattern can develop.