Suicide Bombers

Profiles, Methods and Techniques

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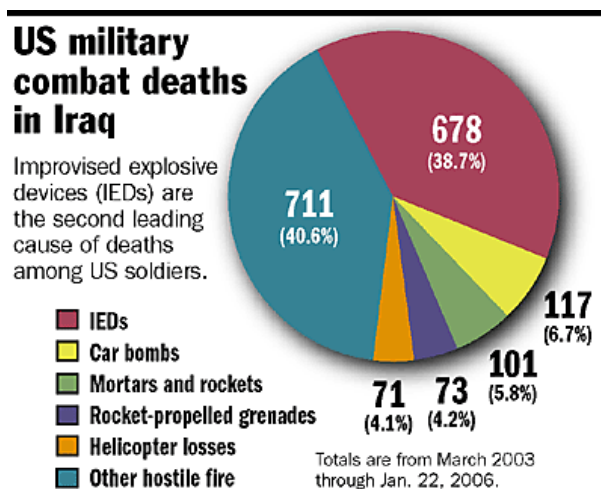
From 1986 to 2003, 17 groups in 14 different countries used suicide bombing tactics. Less than 400 of these attacks resulted in the deaths of more than 5,000 people with injuries to more than 20,000, and economic damages in excess of $121 billion.[1] This article explores the psychosocial aspects and methods and techniques of suicide bombers in general but with particular focus on those operating in Israel, Sri Lanka, and Great Britain.

<u>Whence Suicide Bombing?</u>

Suicide bombings as a tactic against the US military is not a new phenomenon. Until the signing of the Paris Peace Accords in 1973, Vietcong sympathizers employed suicide grenade attacks against ground forces.[2] Ten years after the Peace Accords and consequent withdrawal of US personnel from Vietnam, simultaneous truck bombings in Lebanon killed 241 US Marines, 58 French paratroopers, 18 US Sailors, and three US Soldiers.[3] Within six months after the 1983 suicide bombings, Presidents Ronald Reagan and François Mitterrand extricated American and French troops from the Lebanese Republic--a tacit admission that the new terrorism rendered all

known counterterrorist measures useless. In view of the apparent success of the bombings, five

other Lebanese organizations followed suit and carried out approximately 50 suicide attacks.

These attacks resulted in considerable prestige for the insurgent movement and are credited with

elevating suicide bombings to a symbol of martyrdom and a source of inspiration for terrorist

organizations worldwide.[4]

Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) have emerged as the most serious threat to

multinational forces participating in Operation Iraqi Freedom, with roadside bombings being the

insurgents' preferred method of attack. While new technology and improved security measures

aimed at countering roadside IEDs have improved the survivability of coalition forces, it has

concomitantly resulted in lessons learned for the insurgents. Adapting to an evolving operational

environment, insurgents have expanded their IED repertoire to include an increased use of

remote-detonated car bombs, suicide vehicle-borne IEDs, and human-delivered bombs.[5] A

suicide bomber can carry an explosive charge that ranges from 11-29 pounds for a vest or bag,

and it is commonly packed with nails, ball bearings and other metal fragments around the

explosives in order to maximize casualties.[6] The pie chart below depicts the impact of IEDs

upon US forces from March 2003 to January 2006.[7]

US military combat deaths in Iraq

Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) are the second leading cause of deaths among US soldiers.

- ■ IEDs
- ■ Car bombs
- ■ Mortars and rockets
- ■ Rocket-propelled grenades
- ■ Helicopter losses
- ■ Other hostile fire

678 (38.7%)

711 (40.6%)

117 (6.7%)

101 (5.8%)

71 (4.1%) 73 (4.2%)

Totals are from March 2003 through Jan. 22, 2006.

Why Suicide Bombing?

Suicide bombings have become a popular terrorists *modus operandi* because it represents a low-cost, low-tech, and low-risk weapon that is readily available, requires little training, leaves little forensic trace, and strikes fear into the general population.[8] Professor Robert Pape of the University of Chicago examined all suicide-terrorist attacks in the world that occurred from 1980 to 2001. Of the 188 worldwide suicide attacks during this period, 95% were undertaken as part of an organized political campaign. His findings indicate that suicide bombings made up 3% of total terrorist attacks but produced 45% of the casualties (not including the Twin Towers).[9] Although profiling has been controversial because it discriminates against a selected group of people, it is evident that terrorists are not evenly distributed among the world's population. Almost exclusively, suicide bombers emanate from distinct ethnicities and religions; furthermore, recent history indicates that they come from the Arab/Muslim or East Asian cultures.[10] As important as the suicide bombers are the circle of activists and sympathizers who offer them support and comfort. These activists may recoil from committing acts of violence themselves but may sympathize with those who do, and offer moral and material support.[11]

Professor Scott Atran of the University of Michigan examined suicide attacks that occurred from 2000 to 2003. He found that during this period, 300+ suicide attacks killed more than 5,300 people in 17 countries and wounded thousands more.[12] At least 70% of these attacks were religiously motivated, with more than 100 attacks allegedly conducted by Al Qaeda or affiliates acting in Al Qaeda's name. His research indicates that Islamic *jihadi* groups are networked in ways that permit "swarming" by actors contracted from different groups who strike from scattered locations upon multiple targets and then disperse, only to form new swarms. Atran asserts that multiple, coordinated suicide attacks across countries as well as continents are

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the adaptive hallmark of Al Qaeda's continued global web-making, and that the war in Iraq has served to energize disparate groups.[13] At the country level, Professor Alberto Abadie of Harvard University conducted an empirical investigation of the determinants of terrorism, and found that transitions from an authoritarian regime to a democracy may be accompanied by temporary increases in terrorism.[14]

Professor Ariel Merari of Tel Aviv University conducted a study of individuals who committed acts of suicide terrorism and concluded that there was no single psychological or demographic profile of suicide terrorists. He maintains that no organization can create a person's basic readiness to die and that the task of recruiters is not to produce but rather to identify this predisposition in candidates and to reinforce it. Recruiters exploit the religious beliefs of the would-be bombers using the person's faith that he/she will receive a reward in paradise in order to strengthen and solidify preexisting sacrificial motives (e.g., patriotism, hatred of the enemy, and a profound sense of victimization). Merari states that a suicide terrorist is almost always the last link in a long organizational chain that is comprised of numerous actors and that once the decision to launch a suicide attack has been made, its implementation requires at least six separate operations: target selection, intelligence gathering, recruitment, physical and "spiritual" training, preparation of explosives, and transportation of the suicide bombers to the target area. On the subject of profiling, Merari writes, "Although profiling suicide bombers may be a fascinating academic challenge, it is less relevant in the real-world struggle against them than understanding the *modus operandi* and mind-set of terrorist leaders who would never consider killing themselves, but opt for suicide terrorism as a result of cold reasoning."[15] Case studies reveal that suicide bombers are not lone zealots, but are instruments of terrorist leaders who expect their organizations to gain tangible benefits from this tactic. While it may not be

possible to apprehend would-be suicide bombers, once it has been established that an organization has resolved to use suicide terrorism, security services can strike against the commanders and field officers who recruit and train the assailants.[16]

Professor Randy Borum of the University of South Florida examined terrorist ideologies and the process of how these ideas or doctrines developed. He identified a four-stage process whereby individuals develop extremist beliefs: a group or individual first identifies some sort of undesirable state of affairs; then frames that event or condition as unjust; then blames the injustice on a target policy, person, or nation; and then vilifies or demonizes the responsible party so that aggression seems justified.[17] Those suffering from adverse conditions do not regard themselves as "bad" or "evil" but as the victims of injustice; ergo, their aggression against the "evildoers" is justified.[18] Some suicide attackers are motivated by religious ideology and believe that their god sent them on a mission; i.e., these individuals are motivated primarily by the promise of a happy afterlife and heavenly reward.[19] Many of these individuals are reportedly indoctrinated at an early age about the spiritual importance of purifying the world and sacrificing their lives to a holy war. Some radical religious groups purportedly use concepts of benevolence, self-sacrifice, and martyrdom to spread the idea that suicide bombing is a noble and godly act.[20]
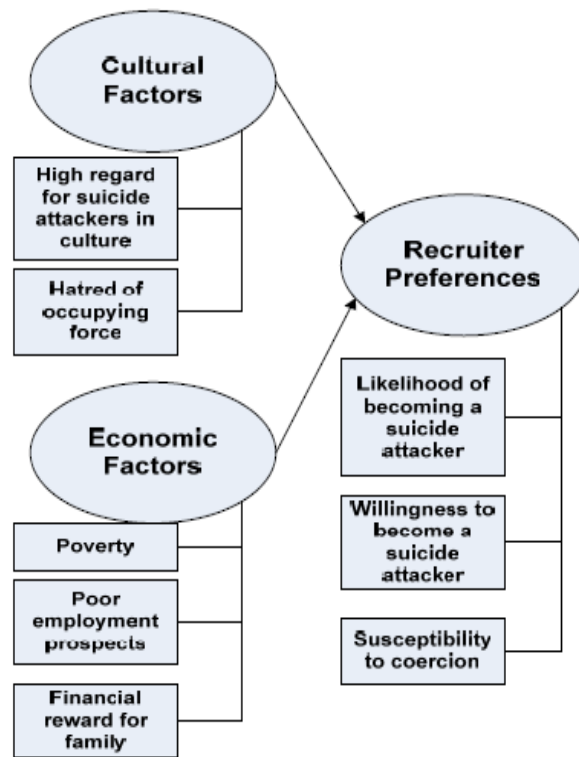
Research Fellow Michael Taarnby of the University of Aarhus (Denmark) asserts that the importance placed upon religion in the makeup of suicide terrorists is "just a myth" and that religious convictions, political sentiments, and social conditions are of secondary importance. He places Islamic suicide terrorists into two distinct categories according to their motivations. Suicide bombers in the first category are idealistically motivated and closest resemble the popular perception that they are unwavering fanatics. Suicide bombers in the second category

are personally motivated. Regarding cultural parameters, he writes, "Basically there are two types of cultures that is supportive of Islamic suicide terrorism. The first is somewhat traditional in the sense that it draws on existing cultural traits and notions and raises the same to a previously unseen level of cultural centrality. The second is the exact opposite of the first. This culture draws on nothing; it is an artificial construction. Both of these cultures reinforce the belief that self-sacrificial behavior is a cornerstone in Islam. They are equally deadly but are founded on very different cultural constructions within the Muslim communities."[21] Supporting Taarnby's view, historian Walter Laqueur asserts that no one can develop a composite picture of a terrorist because no such picture exists. He posits that terrorism fluctuates over time and that the profile of terrorism changes with circumstances; i.e., there can be no terrorist mosaic because there are different types of terrorism. Laqueur offers that most terrorists are young and that their actions and psychological makeup vary according to social and cultural conditions.[22]

Professor Ian Ross of the University of Baltimore provides an alternate view and believes that profiling is possible by combining social factors and psychological factors. Social factors include the way a society is organized, its political and economic systems, the historical and cultural conditions, the number of grievances citizens have and their mechanisms for addressing grievances, the availability of weapons, and the effectiveness of counterterrorist forces. He states that modernization, democracy, and social unrest create the structural conditions that facilitate terrorism, and that urban areas produce the greatest potential for unrest and the greatest availability of weapons. These structural factors interact with the psychological factors of potentially violent people to produce terrorism. Ross identified five psychological factors in the development of terrorism: Facilitating Traits (Terrorists exhibit fear, anger, depression, guilt, antisocial behavior, a strong ego, the need for excitement, and a feeling of being lost. He says

the more of these traits a person exhibits, the more likely that the person will engage in terrorism); Frustration/Narcissism-Aggression (A person has suffered a blow to the ego and reacts hostilely. Frustration refers to aggression channeled toward another person or symbol. Ross believes that high frustration may result in terrorist acts, which in turn, interacts with structural factors to cause more violence); Associational Drives (Most terrorist acts are committed by groups. Ross believes that when potential terrorists perceive benefits from particular groups, they tend to join those groups. Once inside, acts of terror are likely to increase because the group reinforces violent behavior); Learning Opportunities (The existence of groups and engaging in acts of terrorism create an environment for teaching terrorism to others. As learning opportunities increase, the amount of terrorism increases); Cost-Benefit Calculations (The decision to engage in terrorism depends on the benefits of terrorist violence. If individuals feel they will realize gains from terrorist actions, terrorism will increase).[23]

Professor Barry Horowitz and Dr. Linton Wells III of the University of Virginia developed a model describing how terrorist organizations recruit suicide bombers. Although there is an array of theories regarding the attributes that terrorist handlers look for when recruiting a suicide bomber, conventional wisdom says that suicide bombers are drawn from the economically disadvantaged or from the religiously zealous members of a population. "Some researchers maintain that social networks of friends and family are a primary means of recruitment; others suggest that recruiters prefer individuals who express feelings of frustration and revenge towards the opposition force." They contend that rather than focusing on one factor as "the key" for a given terrorist support population, recruiters actually look for a mix of multiple attributes. Below is a simplified illustration of a path model relating the recruiting preferences of a terrorist organization to the cultural and economic factors surrounding potential recruits.[24]

Dr. Boaz Ganor of the Lauder School of Government and Diplomacy at the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya suggests that a typical Hamas martyr is a religious male, single and unemployed, with a high-school education and aged 18-27. He may be from a rural area, and his parents would likely be at the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum. In the case of a religious organization such as Hamas, it is highly probable that the potential attacker attended a religious school where he might have been recruited to join the terrorist organization.[25] Dr. Shaul Kimhi from Tel Hai College (Israel) and Dr. Shmuel Even of the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies offer a typology of suicide terrorists acting against Israel[26]:

Prototype	Prerequisites	Supporting Factors	Hypotheses as to the Prototype's Dominant Personality Traits

Religious Fanatic	• Religious indoctrination encouraging and urging suicide attacks. • Charismatic religious leaders with great influence on candidates for suicide operations.	• A sympathetic public atmosphere within the religious community that praises martyrs, which includes publicity, great honor, and commemoration. • A group that is characterized by intensive processes of collective thought. • Community support of the family of the deceased suicide terrorist.	Faithful, steadfast, goal-focused, belief in divinely determined fate, influenced by people whom s/he reveres, belief in the world to come.
Nationalist Fanatic	• Well-developed political consciousness, along with a sense of an uncompromising struggle to liberate Palestine. • A clear feeling that the armed struggle and suicide attacks are an effective and necessary weapon in achieving political goals.	• Participation of the organization to which the individual belongs in the suicide attack. • A sympathetic public atmosphere that praises the sacrifice. • Media that ensures wide coverage both in the Palestinian community and internationally.	Steadfast, sure in his/her ways, willing to sacrifice him/herself for the general public (idealist).
Avenger	Psychological injury based on one or more of the following events: • death or serious injury of a family member or another close individual • trauma related in	• A sympathetic public atmosphere that praises the martyrs, which includes publicity of names, great honor, and commemoration. • Financial support for	Hopeless, vengeful, tendency to see their life as worthless.

	some way to the Israeli occupation (personal humiliation, or witnessing the humiliation of a relative) • personal or family problems resulting in an individual's feeling that his or her life is worthless (culminating in or including depression)	the family of the deceased suicide terrorist.	
Exploited	Suicide terrorists who are unable to refuse others, or unable to withstand the organizations' pressures to "volunteer" for a suicide operation, such as: • children and youth • adults in social distress (collaborators, homosexuals, moral offenders) • people with weak personalities.	• A sympathetic public atmosphere that praises the martyrs. • The suicide terrorists' belief that all their sins will become "white as snow" and that they will be granted full atonement for their past.	Dependent, anxious, difficulty withstanding pressure, recognition-seeking.

Female suicide bombers are not an anomaly. In 1985, the Syrian Socialist National Party (SSNP), a secular pro-Syrian Lebanese organization, sent the first female bomber, a 17-year-old Lebanese girl, to blow herself up near an Israeli convoy in Lebanon. Out of 12 suicide attacks conducted by the SSNP, women took part in five of them. After Lebanon in the 1980s, female bombers spread to other parts of the globe, including Sri Lanka, Turkey, Chechnya, and Israel.

Worldwide, 17 groups have reportedly incorporated suicide bombing, with women operatives accounting for 15% of those attacks.[27] According to Professor Rohan Gunaratna of the University of St. Andrews, almost 30% of suicide attackers are women.[28] Most have belonged to secular separatist groups such as Sri Lanka's Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and Iraq's Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Recent events have also witnessed the emergence of women suicide bombers in religious organizations.[29] In terms of the employment of female bombers, the LTTE is credited with committing the most attacks utilizing 200 women, a 30% to 40% representation of their total attacks. In terms of casualties attributed to female bombers, a "high number" of Chechen female rebels participated in the seizure of the Moscow Theater Center in October 2002 which resulted in the deaths of 129 captives and 41 rebels during a Russian rescue effort.[30]

Professor Ayla Schbley of Wichita State University offers a 32-trait profile of Islamist terrorists designed to outline their psychosocial anomalies[31]:

1. Islamic religious terrorism is a method of forcefully communicating a perceived divine message/command.

2. Islamic religious terrorism is performed by elements with strong religious identity.

3. Most Islamic terrorist cells are made up of four to eight members who are interconnected through the cells' stem elements only.

4. A Muslim religious terrorist is recruited by and from the concentric circles of the family, friendship, or fellowship of its stem element who is the first among equals.

5. In most cases, cell members themselves choose the symbolic target for their terrorism to maintain cell security and operational integrity. The stem element secures operational provisions, funds, technical and intelligence support.

6. Each cell member is constantly under other cell members' observation or control. The culting process of religious terrorism restricts or discourages the

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uncheronced contact of cell elements with outsiders to sustain their indoctrination and maintain their commitment.

7. Once a cell member commits self-immolation, most other members will commit the same act within 30 days.

8. Most Muslim religious terrorists choose to commit self-immolation during Ramadan or Ashura.

9. Muslim religious terrorism is not restricted to the influence of governmental decision-making.

10. Most Muslim religious terrorists prefer "theocratic to democratic practices" (Appleby, 2000).

11. Most are willing to "subordinate secular laws to sacred epistemology" (Appleby, 2000).

12. Most Muslim religious terrorists who have committed and/or are willing to commit suicide missions are between the ages of 13-27, are from poor families, have one or more siblings, and are geoculturally immobile.

13. While there have been a few females, paid mercenaries, and married men with children among the ranks of religious terrorists, these cells have been the exceptions.

14. Most religious terrorists who are not from poor families or refugee camps are the by-products of the migration of middle/lower middle class college bound high achievers into economically stagnant urban slums.

15. The inconsistency of prospective Muslim terrorists' educational status with that of their parents (who are illiterate or have up to a fifth grade education), employment opportunities, imposed restrictions based on ethnoreligious identities, and a sense of inequity synergize their affinity for fundamentalism.

16. Most Muslim religious terrorists are "absolutist in orientation" (Appleby, 2000).

17. Most Muslim religious terrorists are "poorly trained, mediocrities in religio-legal and theological matters" (Appleby, 2000).

18. Most Muslim terrorists' beliefs are based on the interpretations of charismatic religious leadership.

19. A Muslim religious terrorist's affinity for self-immolation is inversely related to his/her wealth.

20. Muslim religious terrorism is mostly executed for fulfilling personal salvation by answering a perceived divine message/will or following directives from charismatic religious leaderships.

21. Terrorism provides some Muslim zealots with profound spiritual satisfaction and fulfillment. It is perceived as a measurable indicator of their dedication, the upper-limit of which is the extent of their willingness to commit self-immolation.

22. To a Muslim terrorist, perceived religious obligations and/or divine messages transcend social consciousness and social obligations.

23. Non-self-defensive acts of violence distinguish Islamic terrorism from those acts committed to fighting for religious freedom.

24. The potential religious terrorist has an affinity for martyrdom, is not averse to risk, and is a risk taker.

25. As a Muslim religious terrorist becomes committed to the act of self-immolation, s/he exhibits signs of Serene Disengagement (SD). These signs of snapping and/or detachment from their secular milieu are marked by a faint smile, distant look, lack of eye contact with the interviewers, disciplined and/or submissive body posture, and what appears to be a contentment and/or inner peace with imminent fate.

26. Muslim religious terrorists committed to self-immolation would attempt to follow strict Islamic Sharia/rules of conduct to maintain their perceived purity and qualification for heavenly admissions. They would speak in the plural, refrain from vulgarity, perform all religious and secular obligations, pay all legal debts, and bequest 1/5 of their earthly possessions to the needy (Almsgiving).

27. Before their self-immolation, a Muslim religious terrorist would not touch a non-kin of the opposite sex or indulge in earthly pleasures (e.g., sex, gambling, liquor, and dance).

28. A Muslim religious terrorist may most often suffer from one or more mental disorders including, but not limited to, oppositional defiant, impulse-control, antisocial, or other personality disorders. These disengaging characteristics and personality disorders, when aggravated by dogma-induced critical/psychotic depression, may be causal factors in the transition from zealotry to terrorism and self-immolation.

29. A Muslim terrorist's target would most likely be well-defined, limited in scope and dimension, and would not transcend a concentric target zone.

30. Most Islamic religious terrorists would not willingly use chemical, biological and/or nuclear weapons.

31. To Muslim religious terrorists, killing an infidel has Allah's blessing and is not considered by them to be unethical or immoral, let alone criminal.

32. Muslim religious terrorists may be distinguished from political terrorists not only by the prior 31 traits, but also by their unconscious awareness of the maliciousness of their terrorism This gestalt from reason is made possible by indoctrinating them -- in Mosques or madrasses [religious schools]-- to believe that: (1) their death and the death of their symbolic victims will only be temporal, (2) they are collectively chosen by Allah to be his tool, (3) they are prophets of his message, and (4) for their sacrifice they will all [victim and terrorists alike] be eternally alive in the Janna [heavens].

State of Israel

Between 1994 and 2003, there have been approximately 120 major terrorists attacks launched by Palestinian Islamic organizations against Israel, and suicide bombers are held responsible for 61 of those attacks. More than 436 Israelis were killed and thousands more were wounded.[32] Israel witnessed a significant upturn in attacks by Palestinian militants during the four-and-a-half year *Al-Aqsa Intifada* (uprising) which began in September 2000.[33] The *intifada* bolstered radical Islamic groups such as the Hamas which is credited with the initiation of suicide bombings that served as a model for subsequent *jihadi* tactics.[34] The military *modus operandi* of Hamas includes side charges, kidnapping and assassination of Israeli soldiers, knifing individuals, and shooting at Israeli vehicles from an ambush or from driven cars. Since 1994, the most efficient and spectacular method has been the use of suicide bombing against buses, restaurants, coffee shops, and hotels.[35] Suicide attackers have become legendary in Palestinian society, with their photographs being displayed in public areas and stories of their heroism being told in mosques and on the street.[36] "In Gaza, there is a cult of the suicide bomber. There is no higher calling, no higher fashion statement, than the bomb around the belt. The martyr is worshipped. He is on walls and in windows."[37]

The first female Palestinian suicide bomber attack occurred in Israel in 2002, and she was quickly imitated by others. Of the 20 suicide bombings since 2002, four were committed by women. One of the motives for committing suicide attacks is to transcend human mortality, but there exists another more practical incentive: the families of suicide martyrs benefit from financial compensation. The *Jerusalem Post* points out that when male suicide bombers commit their attacks, a reward of $25,000 funded by Iraq is given to their families to honor them, and that a parallel might exist for women who wish to improve their family's economic situation in much the same way. These women are similar to their male counterparts in that they are motivated by anger, hate and revenge directed at Israelis.[38] "The rapidity and willingness of other women to imitate female suicide bombers, and the present inability to profile them point to a changing situation to which society needs to understand and adapt."[39]

In March 2004, Palestinian terrorists "tricked" a 12-year-old boy into carrying a large bomb in his school bag to an Israeli checkpoint. The boy's life was saved because a cell phone rigged to detonate a 13-pound bomb failed to set off the explosive as it had been designed to do, and a border guard heard the cell phone and opened the bag. Also in March, a 16-year-old boy was "tricked" into carrying an 18-pound bomb vest to an Israeli checkpoint. In this incident, Israeli soldiers utilized a robot to provide the boy with scissors to remove the vest. Two other bombings that month involved 17-year-old boys.[40] As one leader phrased it, the recipe for a successful attack is "a willing young man...nails, gunpowder, a light switch and a short cable, mercury, acetone...The most expensive item is transportation to an Israeli town."[41] Dr. Andrew Silke, UN advisor and forensic psychologist at the University of Leicester (England)

writes, "In Israel, bombers can change their appearance dramatically before suicide operations. They shave and dye their hair. They dress as tourists, orthodox Jews, soldiers and policemen."[42]

Recruitment for suicide terrorists has been described as "a process, not an act" and usually begins with a recruiter seeking out potential candidates at mosques, refugee camps, and universities. Recruiters also seek out candidates at funerals of people who have been killed by Israeli forces, where there is a greater chance of finding an embittered person anxious to seek revenge. Candidates are generally single males 18 years or older, who exhibit a "steely composure" and have military training. Those who are an only child or the family's sole provider are usually not considered. Another important feature of candidates is that they have to "be reasonably religious [and] convinced of the meaning of martyrdom and of jihad (holy war)." Once the suitable suicide candidate is selected, the person undergoes a preparation period of three weeks to three months during which he/she is cocooned by the group and protected from outside influences, particularly the candidate's family, television and radio. In confinement, the candidate is immersed in the teachings of the Koran and repeatedly told that the suicide attack will put that person in favor with God. A contract is often drawn up between the suicide terrorist and his/her leader, and the organization affirms his/her identity as a "warrior martyr" and later presented to the public as a holy warrior who fulfilled the organization's goals and "the will of God."[43]

While there is no one explanation for those who choose to perform suicide attacks, six influential factors have been linked with suicide bombers: Financial Factors (regardless of whether the suicide terrorist's family needs it or not, they profit financially from the terrorist act carried out by their loved one); Religious Factors (even though the

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teachings of Islam forbid suicide and the harming of innocent people, extremists view suicide attacks against Israelis as sacred acts); Nationalistic/Political Factors (suicide terrorists believe that when they assault Israel interests, they are actually defending their country and way of life); Psychological Factors (suicide terrorists share in an extreme need to become a part of a group and an intense anger/hate for Israelis); Strategic Goals (reinforces the Palestinian image as an oppressed and impoverished people using whatever meager weapons they have, including themselves).[44]

The Israeli government has utilized a variety of operative and punitive measures against terrorists with a goal of striking at the heart of the terrorist infrastructure and undermining terrorist morale. These include inflicting damage to terrorist squads, removing financial means, disrupting communications, assassinating terrorist leaders and operatives, destroying the homes of terrorists, and erecting a security barrier between Palestinian and Israeli settlements.[45] Atran proposes that a first line of defense is to get the communities from which suicide attackers stem to stop the attacks by learning how to minimize the receptivity of mostly ordinary people to recruiting organizations.[46]
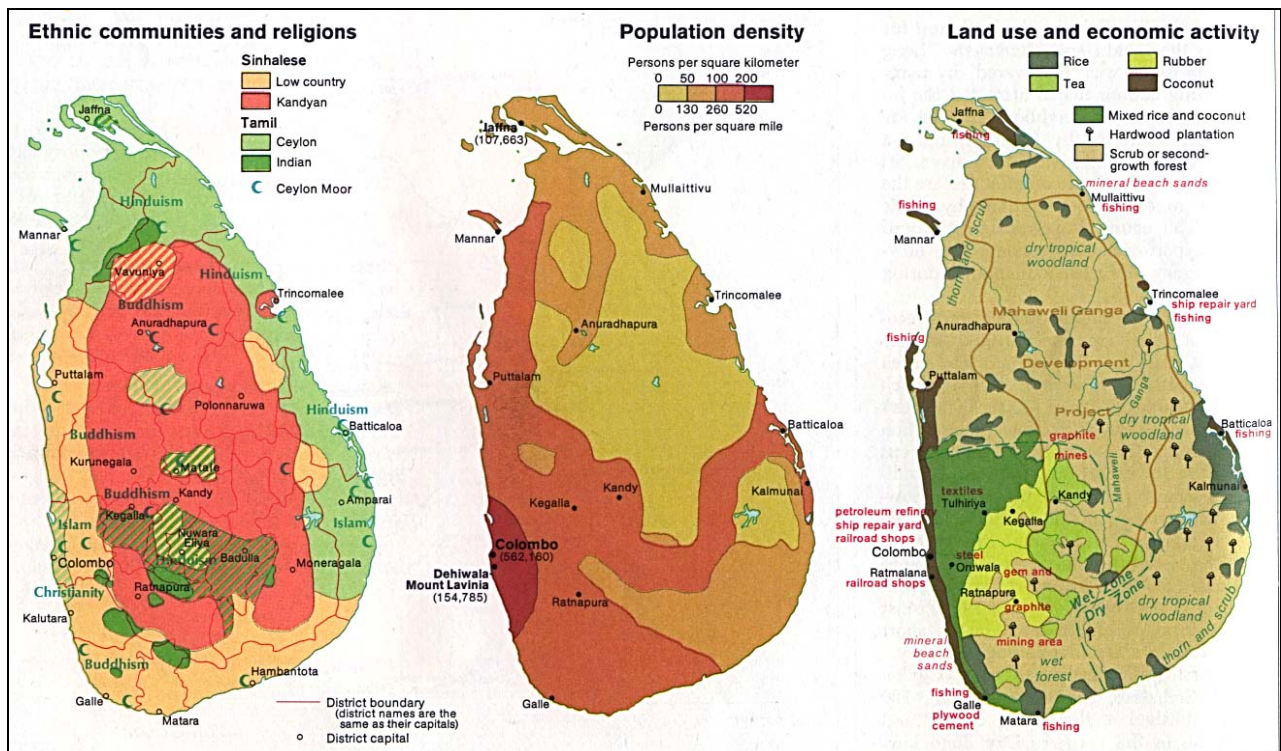
In March 2006, *Strategic Forecasting* reported that suicide bombings in Israel had declined in both numbers and effectiveness, and attributed the decline to political developments between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority, as well as the ability of security forces. There has not been a successful suicide car bombing in Israel since July 2005 and one of the reasons cited is the implementation of vehicle barriers. Security forces also utilize checkpoints at entrances to shopping centers and other public areas, and discourage long lines outside of buildings and other potential high-casualty public gathering areas.[47] Suicide bombing is popular among terrorists simply because they have learned that it works.[48] Due to advances in

technology and improved force protection measures, suicide bombings directed against military forces will likely decrease. Terrorists will instead focus on soft targets that will yield greater destructive dividends and draw more attention to their cause; i.e., the civilian populace, economic targets, and local governments. As a Hamas training manual aptly noted, it is foolish to hunt the tiger when there are plenty of sheep around.[49]

Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

With a population of over 20 million, the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka is comprised of Sinhalese-73.8%, Sri Lankan Moors (Muslims)-7.2%, Indian Tamils-4.6%, and Sri Lankan Tamils-3.9%.[50] The Tamils are an ethnic South Asian people with a recorded history going back more than 2,000 years. Worldwide, Tamils number 74 million with the oldest Tamil communities located in southern India and the northeastern-central regions of Sri Lanka. Additionally, Tamil emigrant communities are located in Malaysia, Singapore, Fiji, Mauritius, South Africa, Australia, Canada, and Europe.[51] In 1983, anti-Tamil violence in Sri Lanka resulted in the exodus of thousands of Tamils and a proliferation of in-country militant groups. By the late 1980s, there were at least 30 separate guerrilla groups operating in a nation slightly larger than the State of West Virginia.[52]

By 2002, six groups were considered to be active in Sri Lanka although the nature of their activities, their goals, and their enemy had undergone considerable changes over the years. The six groups are the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, the People's Liberation Organization of Tamileelam, the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front, the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization, the Eelam Revolutionary Organization of Students, and the Eelam People's Democratic Party. Today, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) is considered to be the leading militant group in Sri Lanka, and the primary reason cited for its dominance is its systematic destruction of other groups.[53]

In 1972, Ceylon changed its name to Sri Lanka and designated Buddhism as the official religion, a decision that served to further distance and antagonize the Tamil minority who were mostly Hindus. In 1976, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam was founded to revolt against the Sinhalese status quo. Many factors contributed to the emergence of the LTTE as a preeminent militant group: one is their efficient and extensive intelligence apparatus, which in addition to providing information about the movements of the Sri Lankan military, has also undermined the LTTE's rivals and protected its leadership from internal challenges. Financially, the LTTE has diversified investments and economic interests spread across continents, including a lucrative narcotics network. Logistically, the LTTE has established their own industrial units and ordnance factories with research and development wings in order to reduce their dependence on external suppliers.[54]

In 1983, the LTTE launched a secessionist war against the Sri Lankan government utilizing guerrilla and terrorist tactics. Headquartered in the Wanni region, the Tigers control most of the northern and eastern coastal areas of Sri Lanka, and are able to

execute island-wide operations utilizing their 10,000+ armed members. Their elite Black Tiger

unit conducts suicide bombings, and its members purportedly carry cyanide capsules with which

to kill themselves rather than submit to capture. In addition to ground forces, the LTTE has a

naval element known as the Sea Tigers who have been successful in sinking boats and attacking

Sri Lankan bases using seaborne suicide tactics. The LTTE has constructed their own stealth

vessels built especially for suicide missions and developed underwater IEDs with which to attack

the Sri Lankan Navy.[55] The Sea Tigers have destroyed one-third to one-half of the Navy's

coastal patrol craft, fast attack craft, ocean patrol vessels, fast gunboats, and sank its largest

warship in a wolf-pack suicide operation. In addition to its campaign of maritime guerrilla

warfare against the Sri Lankan Navy, the Sea Tigers conduct maritime terrorism against civilian

fishing vessels and engage in piracy against foreign commercial vessels.[56] In 2005, the LTTE

reportedly attempted to create an air wing (the Air Tigers) which was to be used for

reconnaissance operations and suicide missions.[57]

The only area where the Sri Lankan military purportedly maintains a clear superiority is

in terms of its air power. On the ground, the LTTE's artillery forms a vital part of its overall

military strategy and much of its armament was captured from the Sri

Lanka Army (SLA). Although both the LTTE and SLA use similar

equipment, it is said that the Tigers have a better close-quarters heavy

weapons capability. Their inventory consists of one T-55 main battle

tank, multiple rocket launchers, heavy mortars (40mm, 60mm, 81mm,

82mm), field artillery (120mm, 122mm, 130mm, 152mm howitzers),

light anti-tank weapons (20mm, 23mm, 25mm canons), surface-to-air

missiles (SA-14). Assault rifles consist of American M-16s, Russian

> Sri Lankan Army: 116,000. Armor (25 T-55 MBTs, 200+ APCs), Artillery (MRLs, Field Guns, Mountain Guns), Mortars, Air Defense.[X1]
>
> Sri Lankan Navy: 15,000. Thirty-eight Fast Attack and Patrol Boats (Dvora class, Super Dvora Mk II and Killer class).[X2]
>
> Sri Lankan Air Force: 18,000. Fighters (MiG 27, F-7BS, Kfir C2, FT-7BS), Transports (C-130K, BAe 748 Srs 2A, Y-12, An-32), Attack Helicopters (Mi-35P).[X3]

AK-47s, Chinese T-56s (including T-69 rocket propelled grenade launchers). Both the LTTE

and SLA use claymore mines, jumping mines, and pressure mines. In terms of IEDs, the Black

Tiger suicide squads employ them with a high degree of success, with the primary method

involving the strapping of explosives around ones body and detonating it when in close

proximity to the target.[58]

The LTTE has been described as a model for existing and emerging insurgent groups,

and the international security and intelligence community generally assesses the LTTE as the

world's most effective terrorist organization.[59] The former Chief of India's Counter-Terrorism

Division writes, "Suicide terrorism using IEDs had become its brand *modus operandi*. When

one spoke of suicide terrorism, one thought of the LTTE and when one spoke of the LTTE, one

thought of suicide terrorism."[60] Researcher Sudha Ramachandran writes, "The unquestioning

willingness to die for the cause has enabled the LTTE to build what is said to be one of the

world's most ruthless suicide squads. Tiger recruits are trained as much in the handling of

weapons as they are indoctrinated and motivated to kill and die for the cause of the LTTE and its

leader. It is in the tenacity of its fighters, their unquestioning loyalty to their leader and the cause

of Tamileelam [sic], and their willingness to die for this that the LTTE finds its richest resource."

LTTE suicide squads have inflicted severe blows to their enemy's morale and manpower as well

as to the Sri Lankan economy.[61]

In December 2004, the Asian Tsunami devastated 11 Indian Ocean countries and resulted

in the deaths of over 300,000 people.[62] Sri Lanka was the second hardest hit nation by the

disaster (after Indonesia) and its death toll exceeded 30,000.[63] The Tamil Tigers and Sri Lankan

government worked together to hand out relief supplies in the aftermath, until mid-2005 when

the Sri Lankan Supreme Court vetoed an agreement between the government and the LTTE to

distribute aid within Tiger-held territory.[64] Due to the tsunami, the Sea Tigers reportedly

suffered a great loss in terms of manpower and a complete loss of some their bases, although

losses of "regular" Tamil Tiger fighters could not be calculated. The LTTE did not wait long to

begin replenishing their ranks; in a UN report on the tsunami aftermath, they were accused of

recruiting a new generation of child soldiers from the orphans found in relief camps.[65]

According to a human rights group, the Tigers have enlisted more than 3,500 children since

2002.[66]

Despite a December 2001 cease fire agreement between the Sri Lankan government and

the LTTE, violations in 2005 continued to increase and by late January 2006, the Tigers were

accused of 3,500 violations and security forces were accused of 150 violations. In January 2006,

the Sri Lankan Navy detained an Indian ship carrying more than 60,000 detonators, ostensibly

destined for the LTTE. In the same month, the Sea Tigers conducted a suicide attack that

destroyed a Sri Lankan Navy fast attack vessel.[67] In March 2006, the Sri Lankan Navy received

intelligence that trawlers were transporting "war-like materials from a ship in the high seas."

The Navy intercepted an LTTE craft disguised as a multi-day fishing trawler whereupon the

trawler exploded itself, destroying the Naval vessel.[68] Sri Lanka's turbulent history and its

current *l'état des affaires* with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam suggest that the Black

Tigers will reemerge as the preeminent land-borne suicide apparatus, equal to that of the Sea

Tigers.

United Kingdom of Great Britain

In May 2003, Dr. Andrew Silke, UN advisor and forensic psychologist at the University of Leicester (England) wrote, "My research shows…that it is only a matter of time before a major terrorist attack occurs in the UK and…this could well take the form of a suicide attack."[69] In March 2004, then Metropolitan Police commissioner Sir John Stevens stated, "There is an inevitability that some sort of attack will get through."[70] In July 2005, Western Europe experienced it first suicide bombing attack when a series of four coordinated bombs struck London's public transport system during the morning rush hour. Three bombs exploded within 50 seconds of each other on three underground trains while a fourth bomb exploded on a bus, killing a total of 56 people (including the suicide terrorists) and injuring 700. The terrorist organization Al Qaeda claimed responsibility.[71]

One month after the suicide attacks, Scotland Yard issued a warning that terrorists could be preparing to use women and children as suicide bombers in further attacks on trains and other soft targets in London. Police officers were told to avoid racial profiling and not to focus on specific groups because "…there is no specific racial, ethnic, sexual or religious profile for terrorists."[72] Silke asserts that there can be no single profile because there are so many different groups which have different conflicts, cultures, religions, ethnic backgrounds, and agendas. In terms of Al Qaeda, he believes that it is not a "traditional" terrorist organization with a clear hierarchy, military mindset, and centralized command. He describes Al Qaeda as a network of affiliated groups, which share religious and ideological backgrounds, but which often interact sparingly. "Al Qaeda is a state of mind, as much as it is an organization, and it encompasses a wide range of members and followers who can differ dramatically from each other."[73]

In May 2006, the UK Intelligence and Security Committee released its official investigation of the London bombings which concluded that, "We record that *** [sic] terrorist plots in the UK have been thwarted by the intelligence and security Agencies since 11 September 2001, three of them since July 2005. Despite their successes disrupting these other plots, they did not manage to prevent the attacks that took place in London on 7 July 2005…Inter-Agency collaboration and cooperation with others, including the police and intelligence services abroad have developed well as a result of the universal appreciation that terrorism is a common threat, but continuing this improvement must be at the heart of future efforts...We believe that lessons have been learned."[74]

In a May 2006 presentation to the Netherlands Atlantic Committee at The Hague, General Lance Smith, Commander of US Joint Forces Command and NATO's Supreme Allied Commander said, "The IED is the weapon of the future. There's no more precise weapon than a suicide bomber with a trunk full of explosives and a tank full of gas. How to defend against that…we haven't found the answer to it yet."[75]

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