

CAPT NORDEEN

Situation: Terrorists killed US Navy Captain William Nordeen in Athens with a vehicle bomb.

On June 28, 1988, Greek terrorists attacked and killed US Naval Attache, CAPT William Nordeen, in Athens. Nordeen used an armored car due to the persistent threat of small arms attack. Terrorists of the November 17th Organization (N-17) placed 50 pounds of explosives in a stolen car 100 yards from his apartment and command detonated it as he drove by. The attack followed several weeks of surveillance by the terrorists.



Terrorists adapt their tactics to their targets. The N-17 had used pistol attacks on unarmored cars in traffic. To attack a US officer in an armored car, they command-detonated a car bomb on his normal route to work.

Changes in routines such as departure times from your residence and routes of travel make terrorist planning more difficult. Also, alertness to surveillance activities may discourage attackers from their plans.

Do not assume that you are safe just because you have a protective shield such as bullet-resistant windows and armor plates in an official car. Be vigilant, look for signs of surveillance and report them to your unit security officer.



From 1975 to the attack on CAPT Nordeen in 1988, the N-17 had been responsible for 11 assassinations, including the shooting of US Navy Captain George Tsantes in 1983 and the murder of Central Intelligence Agency station chief Richard Welch in 1975. Most of those attacks were made with a .45-calibre pistol against unarmored, soft targets.

The N-17 attempted a bomb attack in January 1988 against Drug Enforcement Administration Special Agent, George Carros. However, a radio-controlled device placed in a trashcan failed to detonate. In this incident, the bomb was planted outside the Carros home because his car was armor plated and difficult to attack with a pistol.

Key officials may be attacked as symbols of US policy. Greek terrorists had a history of assassinating US government officials. If you are seen as a representative of US policy, you could be a symbolic target.

After weeks of surveillance the terrorists made plans. They stole a blue Toyota, put counterfeit plates on it, and placed 50-pounds of high explosives in the trunk with a radio-controlled firing device. They lined the left side of the trunk, which would be nearest the curb, with bags of cement to direct the blast to the roadway.



On the morning of the attack, CAPT Nordeen left for work in his lightly armored Ford Grenada and turned left onto a one-way street as he always did. At 6:00 AM, as he passed the blue Toyota on his left, the terrorists detonated the bomb, throwing the armored car 18 feet, flipping it onto its roof and lodging it in a steel fence. The blast threw the Toyota 25 feet up the street. Nordeen died only 100-yards from his residence as his body was thrown 30 feet from his car.

Your best chance to avoid this sort of ambush is to appear so unpredictable that terrorists conclude attack plans are likely to fail. Change your travel routes, times, and modes of transportation to confuse terrorist planning.

Also, demonstrate a high level of security awareness to make suspicious observers believe you are conscious of their intentions. Report possible suspicious activities promptly and take steps to identify and discourage surveillance.



Many American and other foreign diplomats reside in Kifissia. But this quiet suburb on the northern edge of Athens was shaken as the blast hurled pieces of cars into adjacent houses and smoke blackened walls. A witness saw two men flee on a motorcycle. Although there was no immediate claim of responsibility, Greek authorities concluded it was the work of the N-17.

Nordeen was killed four days after Greek and American negotiators ended an unproductive seventh round of talks concerning US military bases in Greece. The N-17 opposed the US bases and attacked Nordeen as a symbol of US policy. This dedicated military officer died only shortly before his planned retirement from military service.

Through their violent actions, some terrorists appeal to the national hatreds and resentments of the general population. You could be attacked as a symbol of the United States even if you think your personal role is unimportant.

Be aware of the history of threats in your locale and be sensitive to the attitudes of the local population to the United States. Watch for suspicious activities and maintain the appearance of good security disciplines.