

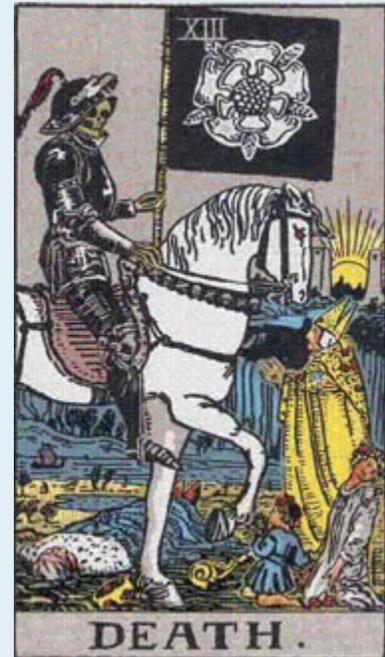
# DC SNIPER

**Situation:** Two men use sniper tactics to kill eleven people in Washington, DC area.

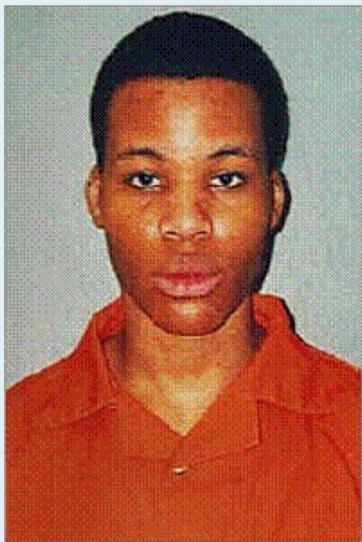
From 2 to 22 October 2002, two men terrorized the Washington, DC area through a series of sniper attacks. Eleven innocent people were killed and three were wounded.

The motivation for the attacks is not clear. One of the suspects may have wanted to kill his ex-wife who lived in the DC area, and planned the other attacks to confuse the investigation into her eventual murder. Both men were members of the Nation of Islam, had radical anti-American views, and made jihadist comments about their killing spree. Also, documents left at least one scene sought to extort money from the Government.

The DC sniper attacks demonstrate the indiscriminate selection of targets by some terrorists. The attacks also demonstrate the ability to paralyze entire communities with small-arms attacks.



[Not all terrorist attacks use IEDs or sophisticated weapons and tactics. Terrorists have launched several successful attacks with small-arms tactics not requiring specialized training or expertise.](#)



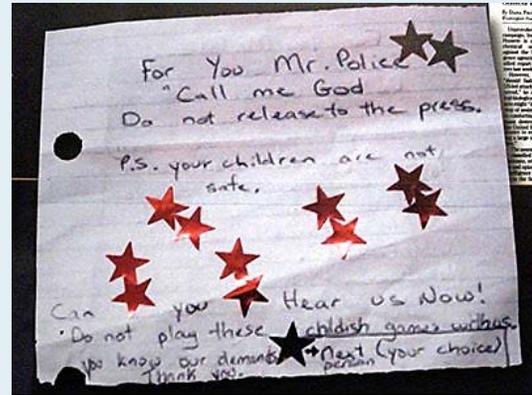
In the early evening of 2 October in Glenmont, Maryland, a government analyst was shot in a grocery store parking lot. The next morning, the snipers killed four additional people in attacks from 7:41 to 9:58 am. Those five homicides were the worst killing spree in the history of Montgomery County, Maryland. Later that evening, the attackers shot and killed a man on the street in northeast Washington, DC. All victims were shot a single time from long-range with a high-powered rifle.

On 4 October, they wounded a woman in the parking lot of an arts and crafts store in Spotsylvania County, Virginia. On 7 October, they wounded a 13-year old boy as he arrived at his middle school in Bowie, Maryland. Then, from 9 to 14 October they murdered four individuals at two gas stations, a shopping center, and a Ponderosa Steakhouse in four different Virginia counties. The final victim, a bus driver standing on the steps of his bus, was killed at 5:56 am on 22 October in Aspen Hill, Maryland.

The sniper attacks caused mass fear throughout the Washington, DC metropolitan area. Several schools implemented "Security Code Blue" and would not allow students outside during recess. Many outdoor activities were cancelled. Many of the attacks were at gas stations, and several gas station operators erected tarps around their pumps to block visibility while some customers hid behind their cars as they filled up.

If you are in an area that has an active threat, consider the types of targets that are being selected. This can help you avoid vulnerable circumstances and lower your risk.

Initially, police did not connect the murders. However, bullets from the shootings in Montgomery County and Washington DC were forensically linked to the same gun and authorities began an intensive, multi-jurisdiction investigation. The terrorists left items at several attack locations including tarot death cards and a letter, but nothing immediately identified the perpetrators. Eye witnesses described a white van near some of the attacks and police focused on this lead, but it proved to be inaccurate. Police later discovered that the New Jersey license plates on the perpetrators' actual vehicle had been checked by police in several jurisdictions before law enforcement networks were updated with accurate information.



During a phone call to police, one of the terrorists boasted of a murder they had committed in Montgomery, Alabama. The investigation in Alabama yielded a finger print traced to Lee Boyd Malvo, a Jamaican national whose fingerprints were on file with US Immigration. With this, authorities then identified a fingerprint from one of the attack locations. Investigators uncovered close links between Malvo and John Allen Williams, who had changed his name to John Allen Muhammad in 2001 after joining the Nation of Islam.

If you witness a terrorist or criminal act, make a note of any unusual activity regardless of how trivial it may seem. This information can help authorities in their investigations.



With two potential suspects, law enforcement launched an intensive manhunt. Authorities followed Muhammad's trail back to Tacoma, Washington where they found a tree stump evidently used for target practice. Police issued a description of Muhammad and Malvo and their blue Chevrolet Caprice with New Jersey license plates.

When truck driver Ron Lantz saw the Caprice at a rest stop on Interstate 70, he notified police and used his truck to block the entrance of the rest stop to prevent the car from escaping. Police

stormed the vehicle and took Malvo and Muhammad into custody. In the vehicle they found a Bushmaster XM-15 .223 caliber rifle and a small hole in the car body through which the shooter fired from the trunk.

Malvo and Muhammad were convicted of multiple murders and acts of terrorism as well as other crimes in multiple jurisdictions. Lee Boyd Malvo received life sentences because he was 17 at the time of the attacks. The Commonwealth of Virginia executed John Allen Muhammad by lethal injection on 10 November 2009.

Assist law enforcement efforts by being vigilant. Be attentive to law enforcement bulletins concerning suspected criminals and fugitives. If you believe you see a suspect wanted by the police, do not take direct action yourself but alert authorities immediately.