

# KHOBAR TOWERS

**Situation:** Terrorists attack US Forces in an apartment tower in Saudi Arabia.

On June 25, 1996, terrorists exploded a massive truck bomb outside the Khobar Towers housing complex in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, killing 19 US service members, and injuring hundreds of other service members and Saudis. The bomb was huge, estimated at nearly 20,000 lbs.



Terrorists can mount devastating attacks anywhere, so teamwork and vigilance are essential. Unfortunately, unit security measures did not prevent this attack; but alert guards saved many lives. Guards saw a truck park near the fence and its occupants drive away in another car. They immediately started an evacuation but the bomb detonated only four minutes later. DoD investigated the attack and implemented new programs to promote the safety of US forces worldwide.

After Khobar Towers, DoD renewed efforts to improve force protection against terrorism while remaining engaged in the Middle East region.

Your best defense is to cooperate with unit security procedures and maintain vigilance. Immediately report changes in the local area such as reduced traffic, closed shops, and the absence of vendors. Respond immediately to evacuation orders.



Seven months before the attack on Khobar Towers, a 250 lb. car bomb exploded at the Office of the Program Manager, Saudi Arabia National Guard (OPM SANG) in Riyadh. The bomb killed 7, including 5 Americans, and injured approximately 70. US intelligence indicated terrorists were targeting US forces in Saudi Arabia, so US Central Command declared a HIGH threat level in the entire country.

US troops at Khobar Towers operated the King Abdul Aziz Air Base, and enforced the no-fly zone in southern Iraq. Khobar Towers was a high-rise complex in a densely populated area. A vulnerability assessment after the OPM SANG bombing concluded a vehicle bomb posed a serious threat to the Towers. In response, Brigadier General Terryl Schwalier took steps to tighten security and counter the terrorist threat.



Be alert to changes in the general security environment. Take emerging threats seriously.



Shortly before 10:00 PM, 3 roof guards saw two men park a fuel truck at the edge of a nearby parking lot, about 80 feet from their building, and then race away in a car. Seeing the possibility of a truck-bomb, they reported the threat to the Central Security Control and started an evacuation, knocking on doors and alerting personnel to the danger. In about four minutes, the sentries were able to alert the top three floors of the 8-story dormitory. Meanwhile, the CSC tried to contact the Wing Operations Center to activate Giant Voice, a base-wide loudspeaker and siren system.

Before Giant Voice could be activated, however, the truck-bomb exploded, causing a partial collapse of the building and damage to nearby buildings, killing 19 US service members.

A quick response to suspicious activities can save lives.

Hundreds of US service members and Saudis were injured, mostly by flying glass. Fortunately, many of the troops evacuating from the top floors were in the interior stairwells when the bomb went off, saving them from serious injury.

The extent of casualties at Khobar Towers resulted, in part, from the extraordinary size of the bomb. Its force disintegrated the truck; pictured here is its crankshaft. Reports initially estimated that the bomb equalled 3,000 to 8,000 pounds of TNT, but a study by the Defense Special Weapons Agency concluded it was actually the equivalent of nearly 20,000 pounds of TNT. Although there had been one



uncorroborated report of a large amount of C-4 explosive smuggled into Saudi Arabia, no one had anticipated an attack of this magnitude.

The assumptions you make concerning the size and nature of a possible attack will shape the preparations you make. Continually review your assumptions of the threat.