

A TOOL WITH ASSASSINS IN MIND • OLD MAXIMS, NEW WARS • FIRE SERVICE COUNTER TERRORISM

Journal for Law Enforcement, Intelligence & Special Operations Professionals

The Counter Terrorist

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2017

VOLUME 10 • NUMBER 1

TO BUILD OR
NOT TO BUILD



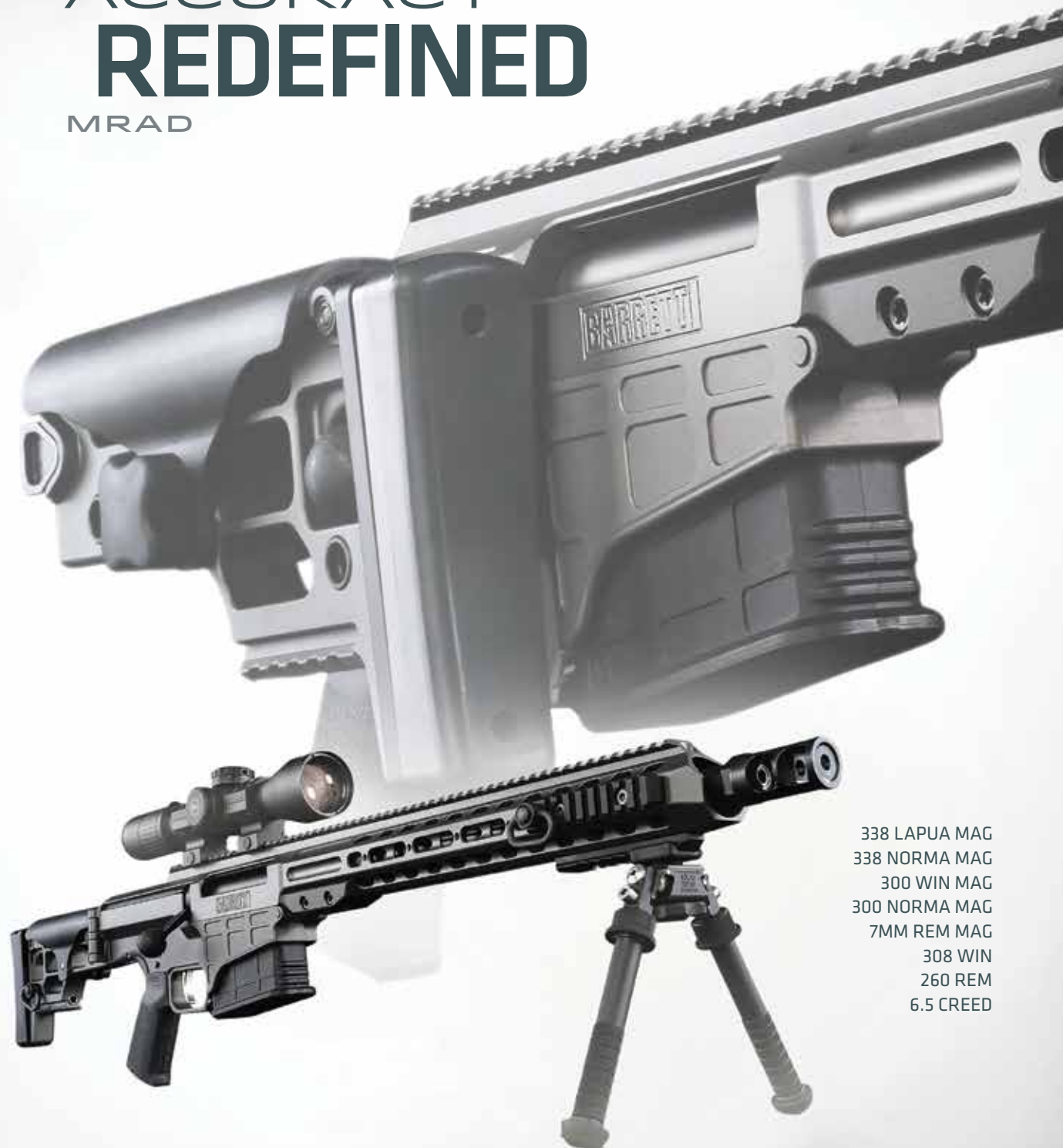
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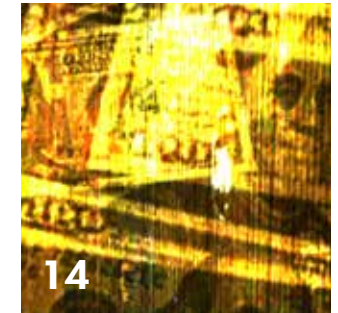
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The Counter Terrorist

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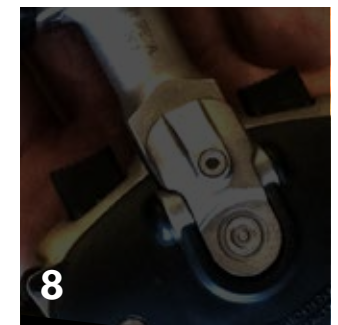
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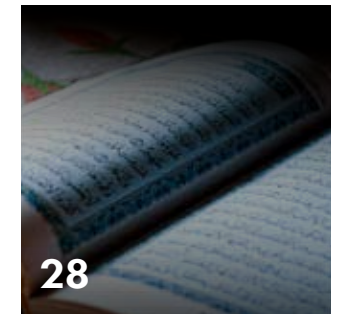
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Cover Photo: Illustration by Jennifer McKibben

by Garret Machine

Perhaps the key to a prosperous future is a mass of enlightened Muslims who will value peace and freedom more than the promises of the afterlife.

Garret Machine
Editor, *The Counter Terrorist*

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ELEVATED TACTICS

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by Editorial Staff

I have seen many smart, cunning, and innovative ways of concealing firearms, even M4 commando model firearms hidden in plain sight. Most of this I have seen within the scope of official duties, however this is a firearm I have not seen before.

I was impressed at how the inventor was able to single-handedly craft such a well-made and reliable device.

The Palm Pistol, as it's called, is labeled as a self-defense firearm for the handicapped and otherwise defenseless. The idea being that one who has a

physical deformity may not be capable of operating a traditional semiautomatic pistol or revolver. This device enables the user to load a single round and depress the trigger with their thumb or pinky or palm (fourteen different grip configurations and zero bore axis). The

device has several safeties built into the design (loaded chamber and cocked striker indicator), and some of them can double as the trigger if reconfigured. The weapon can also be modified to eliminate the safety aspect of the various pressure switches.



One would say that the pattern is designed to help the user set the device when calibrating the fine-tuning of the mechanism it is designed for.

When looking at the Palm Pistol, the unknowing would not be able to immediately identify that it is in fact a pistol. To make it street consumer friendly, the caliber is etched into the side of the device's barrel, but again you would have to look hard and know what .38 refers to. Meaning that in an x-ray machine, the device will of course show up, but can it be identified as a weapon? To most it may pass for a "calibration" tool, and the best part is that the barrel is threaded so you can add accessories to it, like say the housing of a socket wrench. Or perhaps a painted PVC pipe and call it a cane? Additionally, some models come with a laser sight, and the most ingenious part is that the laser is actually a cluster of laser beams showing a symmetrical pattern. One would say that the pattern is designed to help the user set the device when calibrating the fine-tuning of the mechanism it is designed for. While in reality it makes aiming out of arm's length a little more reliable, it does not look like a traditional firearm laser.



SPECIFICATIONS

MANUFACTURER: CONSITUION ARMS;
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ACTION TYPE: STRIKER-FIRED, SINGLE-SHOT,
BREECHLOADER

CALIBER: .38 SPL.

CAPACITY: 1 ROUND

FRAME MATERIAL: 4140 STEEL

FINISH: ELECTROLESS NICKEL

GRIPS: POLYMER

BARREL LENGTH: 2.5 INCHES

RIFLING: 6 GROOVES; 1:10-INCH RH TWIST

SIGHTS: NONE; OPTIONAL PICTINNY
RAIL FOR LASER-AIMING DEVICE

TRIGGER PULL WEIGHT: 8.6 POUNDS
(SINGLE-TRIGGER ACTUATION); 4.3
POUNDS (DUAL-TRIGGER ACTUATION)

LENGTH: 5.2 INCHES

WIDTH: 1.4 INCHES

HEIGHT: 3.6 INCHES

WEIGHT: 14 OUNCES

ACCESSORIES: TWO BACKSTRAPS,
HARD CASE AND MANUAL

MSRP: \$1,350

SHOOTING RESULTS

LOAD	VELOCITY	GROUP SIZE		
		SMALLEST	LARGEST	AVERAGE
SIG SAUER	904	.81	1.36	1.08
FEDERAL AMERICAN EAGLE 130-GRAIN FMJ	902	.96	1.70	1.32
HPR 158-GRAIN JHP	907	.52	2.21	1.12

Velocity measured in fps at the muzzle for 10 consecutive shots with an Oehler model 36 chronograph. Temperature: 54 degrees Fahrenheit. Accuracy measured in inches for five consecutive, five-shot groups from a sandbag rest at 5 yards.

I tested the palm pistol extensively, I traveled with it to several training seminars and allowed over fifty other people to try and test it out at close range targets. The response was overwhelmingly positive. The device was reliable, well made, simple to use, and safe.

When you take the device apart, it has etched inside it the word "pistol" so as to alert those who may inspect the device for clarification purposes. However there is something else you can do with this device other than hide it in plain sight. The Palm Pistol can be disassembled and built (in its components) into another functioning machine. Think about that; imagination is the limit. At no point will any of its parts be mistaken for a firearm. For example, all parts could

be built into an espresso machine and the machine would function as normal with the parts integrated.

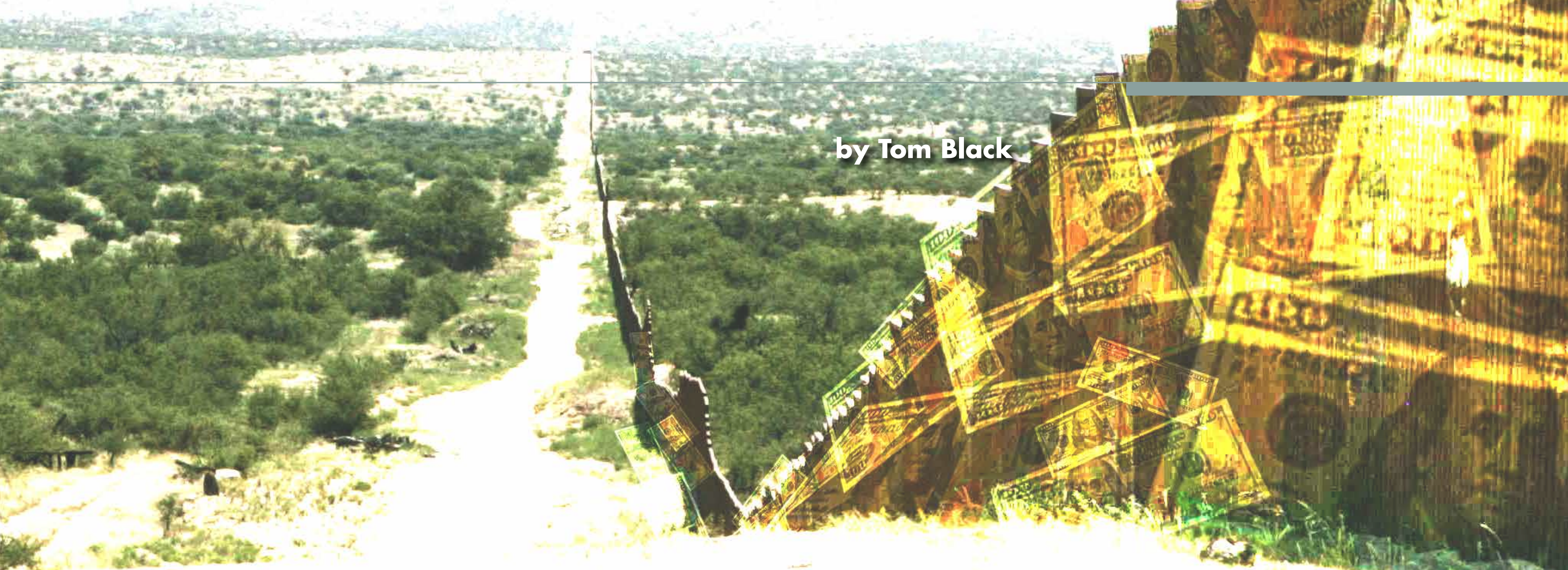
The bottom line is that this device could be traveled with internationally, domestically and in plain sight. I expect that the end user of this weapon will always obey the law, but those on official business may be able to secure themselves or others without unwanted attention with the help of this device. •

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by Tom Black

TO BUILD OR NOT TO BUILD:

THE QUESTION OF THE WALL BETWEEN
THE UNITED STATES & MEXICO

This article is focused on the border wall between the United States and Mexico. This is not about the myriad of issues surrounding illegal immigration. Plain and simple, most walls do not work.

While at first this notion may seem to shock those who are in favor of a wall, the continuation of this article will pose a new idea and shift the paradigm from building a wall to not building the wall,

insomuch that it is more safe and secure, with less cost to the taxpayer.

There is an adage that states, "Guns don't kill people...people kill people." This can also be attributed to the building of a wall with our southern neighbors.

History has shown us, from the Great Wall of China, to Hadrian's Wall the Romans built in northern England, that walls can be breached, dug under, climbed over, or tunneled through. *People keep people out.*



People keep people out.

The border fence between the United States and Mexico at the Pacific Ocean at Border Field State Park and Imperial Beach, south of San Diego, California. Photo by: Tony Webster

If the aforementioned is true, that *people* keep people out, more Customs Border Patrol (CBP) agents are necessary. To fund this initiative—the need to finance more CBP agents—without spending more taxpayer money, is plain and simple math. The average yearly income of CBP agents is \$66,044.50 per year. This is the average of GL-5 CBP agents making \$38,619 per year, and GL-12 CBP agents making \$93,412 per year. This information is one of the key statistics to find out how much money

the government needs to allocate for additional personnel and resources for the southwest border of the United States.

Another statistic is how many personnel are needed. There are approximately 20,000 personnel assigned to the 1,989 miles of border with Mexico. Of those personnel, 20% (4,000) are administrative and general officer personnel, which leaves 16,000 agents on the border. With each agent working eight hours a day, each day the CBP needs three individuals to cover a

24-hour period. This leaves 5,333 agents (16,000 divided by 3). Approximately 30% (1,599) of these agents are stationed at the border crossing checkpoints from Brownsville, TX to San Ysidro, CA. This leaves 3,734 agents to patrol the 1,989 miles of border; or just under two agents per border mile. Since this number is inclusive of the multiple border agents who are at each main border crossing point, this dwindles the number of active CBP agents to one person for every two miles along the vast Mexican-American border.

One agent per two border miles is not sufficient for a government to defend its borders. Five agents for every two miles, which is equal to one agent for every 640 yards (320 yards to the left and right of each agent) is workable. This may seem too many, but not listed above are vacation times for CBP agents, holidays, sick days, firings, and retirements. Multiplying the agents by five will give us the additional agents we need: 14,936 more agents to accompany the 3,734 there already.

To allocate the funding for this project will take \$986,440,652, and additional resources of approximately \$13,559,348 for weapons, ATVs, uniforms, and associated items. This brings the total cost to \$1 billion. This may seem like a large amount, but with intelligent and original thinking, this is very possible. Not only is this possible, but the additional funding can come from many resources.

Before looking at the United States, and what ways to save or reallocate funding for resources to include the CBP, an outward look should first be examined. For example, 2016 U.S. planned foreign aid is \$33,680,468,000. The bulk (over two-thirds) of this funding

is for Afghanistan and Pakistan, who will receive over \$23 billion combined. Reducing the foreign aid the United States donates to other countries by 10% would result in \$3.36 billion, which would aid in the CBP and in other areas.

Another way to fund the additional CBP agents is to cut the foreign aid to Pakistan and Afghanistan by half, leaving them only \$600 million each. This would provide the additional \$1 billion in resources for the CBP. Any combination of percentages or cuts that is spent overseas can help here in America to defend its borders. On a side note regarding foreign aid, why is the United States giving Saudi Arabia \$10 million per year? Just a thought...

While the CBP and other law enforcement agents arrest and detain illegal immigrants, there is also an additional cost of returning the illegal personnel to their home country. In 2010, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement deputy director stated that it cost \$12,500 to arrest, detain and deport someone from the United States. This was stated during the first immigration congressional subcommittee hearing in 2011.

When the United States presents a cost to the home countries of the illegal immigrants for the cost of arresting, detaining, and deporting the illegal individuals, this will provide the United States with a two-fold response. The first being that America will no longer bear the burden of arresting, detaining, and deporting illegal individuals: the host country will bear this cost. The second response is the United States will see an alarming increase in the border presence of other countries since they are being charged by the United States for the cost



CBP Border Patrol agent conducts a pat down of a female Mexican being placed in a holding facility. Photo by: Gerald L. Nino, CBP, U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security

*U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers inspect underneath a tractor trailer at the Otay Mesa, California, port of entry June 23, 2016. After a canine seemed to pick up on peculiar scents from the transmission area of the vehicle, officers determined that they would need to take a closer look. Nothing was found and the vehicle and its driver was soon on its way.
Photo by: Glenn Fawcett*





Federal agents continue to investigate the discovery of a sophisticated cross-border drug tunnel uncovered overnight, following a traffic stop by local police that yielded more than two tons of marijuana. Photos by: Daniel Barrios

of one of their citizens being arrested, detained, and deported.

Still another way to fund the additional CBP agents is to perform additional mathematics by reallocating the budget. Get out your calculators to follow along. The U.S. spends \$12 billion per year on the “war on drugs.” Seventy percent of the illegal drugs in the United States come from Mexico. With the addition of an increased amount of CBP agents, this percentage can be reduced to almost zero (for the sake of argument, 10% of the illegal drugs are still coming in to the United States). Instead of the \$12 billion for

the war on drugs, now that 60% of the illegal drugs are no longer coming from Mexico, the money can be put back into the coffers of the government, subtracting the \$1 billion for the new CBP agents.

The last suggestion will also create more jobs, which will stimulate the economy, and if veterans are hired, the troops coming home from the wars overseas can have a reason for civilian employment. On a separate note regarding financial resources, the average income for the American citizen is \$42,000. Why are there over 350 millionaires in Congress? Just a thought...

EDUCATION

Title I program	\$1,332,900,000
Migrant education program	\$236,900,000
Title III program	\$538,000,000
Education Subtotal	\$2,107,800,000

MEDICAL

Emergency medical care	\$250,000,000
Fraudulent use of Medicaid	\$1,235,000,000
Medicaid cost of childbirth	\$1,238,100,000
Medicaid for children	\$1,626,800,000
Other medical outlays	\$1,600,000,000
Medical Subtotal	\$5,949,900,000

LAW ENFORCEMENT

SCAAP compensation	\$330,000,000
Federal incarceration	\$678,400,000
Byrne grants	\$24,300,000
Detention and removal	\$2,545,000,000
Project safe neighborhoods	\$39,500,000
Residual ice functions	\$2,824,000,000
Exec. Office of Immigration Review	\$222,500,000
Southwest border prosecution	\$33,000,000
National Guard	\$642,000,000
Coast Guard	\$500,000,000
Law Enforcement Subtotal	\$7,838,700,000

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

Free and reduced meal program	\$2,264,600,000
Temporary Assist. Needy Families	\$1,030,000,000
Housing assistance programs	\$637,000,000
Child care & development fund	\$633,000,000

Public Assistance Subtotal	\$4,564,600,000
GENERAL EXPENDITURES	\$8,184,400,000
TOTAL	\$28,645,400,000

COST VS. PRICE

The cost of adding more CBP agents on the ground is not a hard decision. The decision to be made by lawmakers in Congress and the Senate is simple: do elected officials want the country to be safe, or do they want American citizens to live in fear of poverty, illegal weapons, illegal drugs, and illegal personnel? The cost is not only for more CBP agents, but also a cost savings to the American citizen and the federal, state, and local governments. Some of the costs are annotated to the left.

This \$28 billion will not be evident immediately, as it will take some time to educate, train and equip the necessary CBP agents. Within a minimum of three years, this money can be returned to the taxpayer, or to the coffers of the American government.

The financial numbers that the U.S. government produces are not incorrect; however, they are misleading. For example, a year or two ago, the CBP confiscated over \$1 billion in illegal drugs entering the United States. While at first this may seem like an impressive number, the illegal drugs coming from Mexico fuel a \$57 billion per year industry. If an American company lost 1/57th of its business and profits, it would not be catastrophic to the company.

The numbers are there not only for Congress to see: they are available for any and every American citizen to see. Instead of Congress enacting laws and regulations that provide no security (like the 804 page of the 2013 immigration reform act). Congress should enact laws that actually provide a method to keep the country safe and secure against any and all border compromise.



U.S. Senator Marco Rubio visiting the US-Mexican border in November 2011 with Customs and Border Patrol officials. Photo by: U.S. Government

While the building of a wall between Mexico and the United States is not only a bad idea, it is not cost effective, and will not stem the flow of illegal immigrants. There are also an abundance of sensors along the border. These can be associated with a wall inasmuch as they are both inanimate objects. Infrared sensors, ground sensors, night vision sensors, and others. But as stated before, people keep people out. Not sensors, and certainly not a wall. •

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tom Black is a 14-year Navy SEAL veteran, as well as a 10 year private security contractor veteran with over 23 deployments to Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Middle East. He has a Bachelor's and Master's Degree in Homeland Security, as well as a Master's Degree in Security Management.
xsealtom@yahoo.com



Avaaz members meet at the Brandenburg Gate to take down a 2,5-Meter high wall with an image of Donald Trump painted on it - just days before the US election voter registration deadline, participants call on all Americans living in Germany to make sure they register to vote and help stop Trump. Photo by: Avaaz

*A Border Patrol Riverine Unit conducts patrols in an Air and Marine Air-Boat in South Texas Laredo along the Rio Grande Valley river on September 26, 2013.
Photo by: Donna Burton*



Born to Run

An Overview of Today's National Bestseller

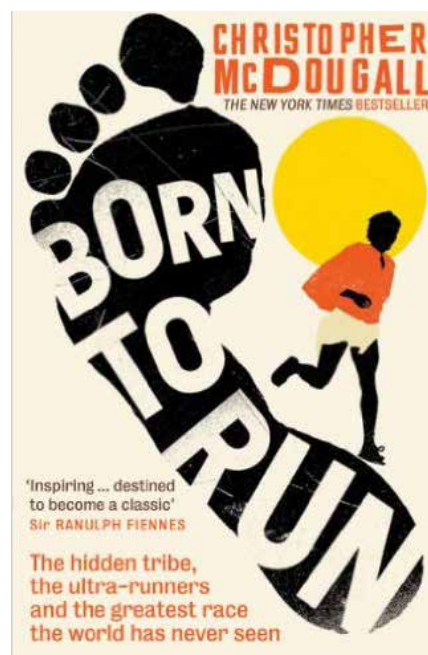
by Christopher McDougall

Reviewed by Erin Barttelt

Born to Run by Christopher McDougall is an ode to a hidden tribe of super athletes from the Copper Canyons of Mexico aptly named the "Tarahumara." In this book, former journalist and war correspondent Christopher McDougall is faced with the fact that no matter what expensive shoes or latest accessory he may don, he continues to have injuries in his running career. He learns of an elite tribe of runners called the Tarahumara who run hundreds of miles barefoot without any rest or injury. Fascinated, McDougall follows the tales to Mexico to find the tribe. In an informative and riveting narrative, McDougall begins his search in Mexico to discover not only the tribe and their existence, but their secrets to an elite level of running.

This book flows through his journey and his meetings with different characters along his path. The book gives mini profiles on famous athletes, doctors, scientists, and of course, elite racers, all the while staying on track with McDougall as he searches through mountains, valleys and small crevices to find his beloved Tarahumara. The book is jam packed with facts about the tribe as well: their histories, diet, training methods, education, and daily lives. McDougall is constantly surprised and fascinated about their way of living

The story makes lazy people seem more lazy, people who train seem elementary, and puts running in the spotlight where it should be.



(for example, a daily diet of chia seeds, piniolo, and grain alcohol). He looks for secrets to their success and is in constant awe and worship of the tribe.

This book can also even be viewed as a history of the world's most difficult Ultra races, as well. Talking about the birth of such races as the Leadville Trail

100 Marathon and Badwater, it seems that the Tarahumara have made ghostly appearances at the beginning of many races and then disappeared back into the Copper Canyons. We learn about the history of legendary races and what they currently have become.

McDougall himself makes for a likable character, and I felt that I could understand his frustrations and fascinations with what makes this tribe the super elite athletes they have become. He doesn't focus the book so much on his own issues, but interweaves them into stories and histories of the sport of running.

This book made me want to do nothing more than throw on my shoes and hit the pavement. The story makes lazy people seem more lazy, people who train seem elementary, and puts running in the spotlight where it should be. The base of all physical fitness. If ever you needed a reason to train again, pick up this book and find out why you shouldn't complain about your training programs anymore. •

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by P.S.

OLD MAXIMS, NEW WARS

UNDERSTANDING OUR ADVERSARY

“If you know the enemy and
know yourself, you need not
fear the results of 100 battles.”
– Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*

Many individuals involved in the war on terror are familiar with the aforementioned quote by the famous Chinese tactician, Sun Tzu. Whether their area of responsibility is on the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa, or the streets of America’s cities, the first part of Sun Tzu’s maxim is still as true today as it was when it was written over 2,000

years ago. Unfortunately, many of those involved in this current struggle, be they soldiers, intelligence agents or analysts, law enforcement officers, or politicians, don’t really know the enemy at all. The second part of the quote, “know yourself,” is something that the individual will have to answer for himself, and obviously is beyond the scope of this article. For our purposes, let’s focus on the enemy.



IDENTIFY THE ENEMY: ISLAMIST TERRORISTS

To truly know your enemy, you must first define him. Many of our politicians, members of the media, and academia, refuse to call our enemy by their proper name: Islamist terrorists (or, if you like, “militant Islamists”). Let’s begin with some definitions: a *Muslim* is simply a person who adheres to the faith of Islam. It is not a nationality, nor an ethnicity; it is a religious identifier like any other. An *Islamist*, however, is a Muslim who wants the whole world to be Muslim, and believes that there can be no peace in the world until the Sharia is the law of the land. Simply put, an *Islamist terrorist* is willing to fight (engage in jihad) to make this happen. Further, an Islamist believes in a literal, strict interpretation of the Koran, and wishes for a return to the ways of the Prophet and the Sunnah. Not incorrect, mind you, but literal and strict.

So is every Muslim an enemy of the Judeo-Christian West? No. Is every Islamist? Possibly. Just because someone would like the whole world to share their faith doesn’t necessarily make them an enemy of every other religion or a fundamentalist. The problem is when the Islamist becomes militant; and believes that violence is the method to use to enact their cause. Wishing and praying, to them, simply isn’t enough—they believe that they are mandated by Allah to use violence to effect this change. This is where they come into conflict with our Western, Judeo-Christian values. So to be clear (unlike some of the aforementioned officials) we are not at war with Islam; we are at war with militant Islamists. Unfortunately, key critical decision makers only become superficially educated on the topic to make a sufficient decision at that time, and then move on to the next controversy.

Why do these individuals have such a difficult time identifying the enemy, and calling them what they are? I believe it is two things: ignorance and Western liberal arrogance. It is simply too hard for many of these individuals (most of whom are “well educated” and atheists or agnostics) to believe that someone would believe that Allah (through the Koran) told them to enslave, rape, and murder (often by beheading) their enemies (Koran 47:4 “*When ye encounter the infidels, smite them at their necks*”)—and they would do it. Clearly, they reason, no sane person would believe such nonsense! These naysayers are guilty of the sin of what social scientists would call transference; or more specifically, a false consensus bias. Simply put, they think “Well, since I think this way, clearly they must think this way as well.” This is foolish and arrogant; the epitome of the “Ugly American.” In their haughty attempt to rationalize and explain the jihadi mindset, we are often told it is due to a lack of education, economic opportunity, or anger at Western (mostly U.S.) Middle East policy. That is a dangerous fallacy. Many terrorists are intelligent and educated. Some have advanced hard science degrees. The majority of them speak two or more languages. The author, on a military tour in Afghanistan, assisted in the capture of an admitted would-be suicide bomber who spoke three languages—including very good English—and had a degree from a European university! These people are not dumb—many are highly educated. Neither are they mentally ill. That attitude insults all people of faith. They just believe differently than we do, and embrace a different worldview.

As mentioned above, a common refrain given to excuse jihadist activity is a lack of economic opportunity. This fallacy is as dangerous as it is pervasive. One can

...“No, he’s not a *real* Muslim—he must be insane,” etc.

reply to this argument with the same one that those offering it are using: “No sane person would blow themselves up, so they must be crazy.” OK. Then, it stands to reason that no “sane” person would blow themselves up for money, right? Economic gain doesn’t do you much good when you’re dead, obviously. There is, however, some economic gain for the next of kin. Saddam Hussein was known to send the equivalent of \$25,000 to the families of Palestinian suicide bombers. That might be an incentive for a very few, but it still isn’t enough. Let’s look at the biggest reason why. And we need only look at their own rhetoric, videos, and writings for our evidence.

THE BIG LIE AND THE “WHY” OF MARTYRDOM

When the Orlando nightclub shooter (whom I shan’t name, because he doesn’t need to be made “famous” anymore than he already is) called Orlando PD’s 911 center, he told them why he was committing this atrocity, and pledged allegiance to the Islamic State. This scenario has been repeated too many times throughout the West in the last fifteen-plus years. And all too often, the powers that be say, “No, he’s not a *real* Muslim—he must be insane,” etc. Let me put it this way: if a suspect was found by police standing over his dead wife, covered in blood, holding a bloody knife, and confessed by saying, “I did it because I was furious with her,” the prosecutor isn’t going to say, “No, you weren’t mad. You just went temporarily insane.” Or even worse, “It must be her fault for driving you to this high level of emotion.” Of course not. The prosecutor will take the confessor at his word.

So where does this motivation come from? From the Koran and the Hadith, the holy books of Islam. Consider the following:

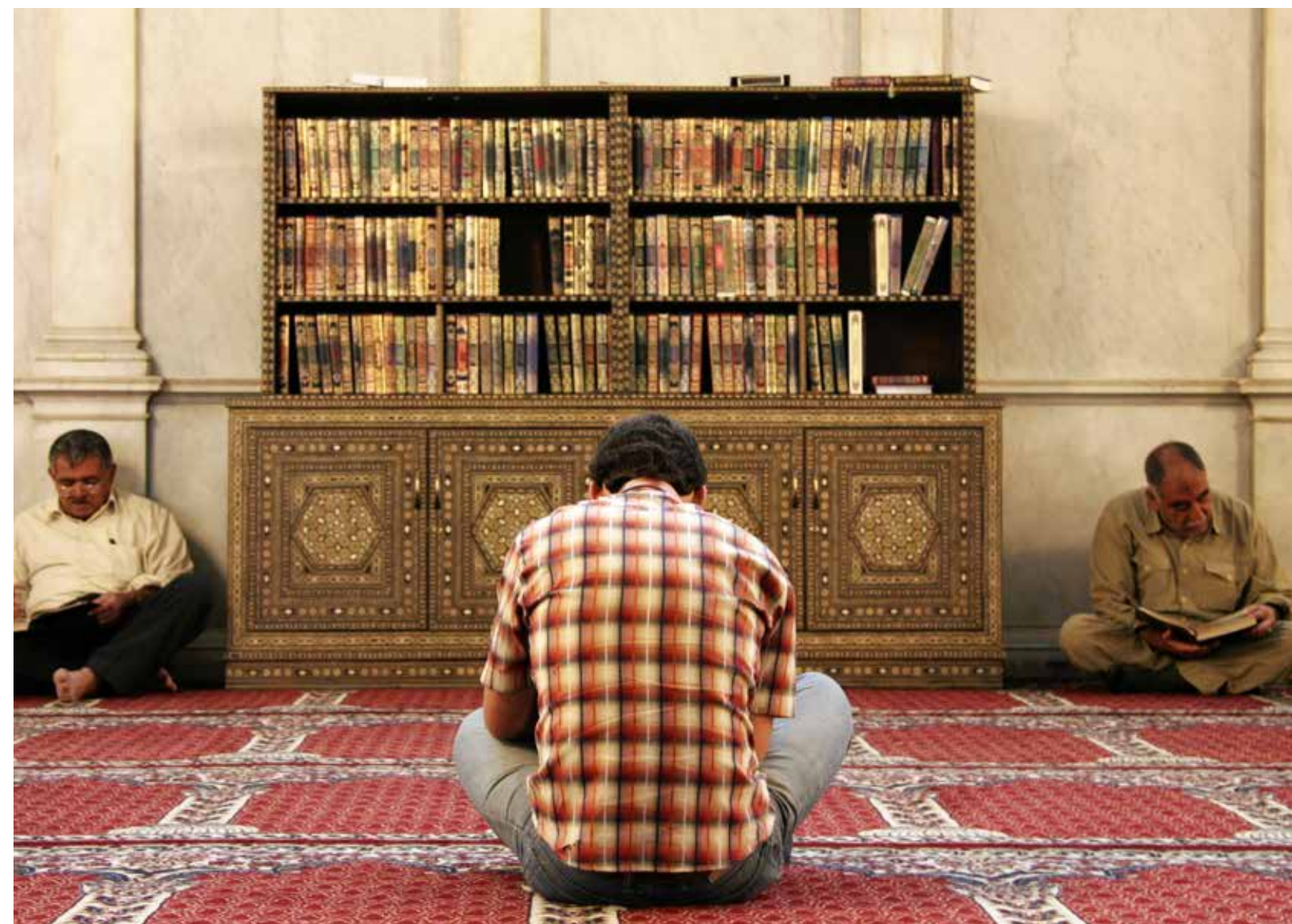
That the Messenger of Allah said: “There are six things with Allah for the martyr. He is forgiven with the first flow of blood (he suffers), he is shown his place in Paradise, he is protected from punishment in the grave, secured from the greatest terror, the crown of dignity is placed upon his head - and its gems are better than the world and what is in it - he is married to seventy two wives among Al-Huril-’Ayn of Paradise, and he may intercede for seventy of his close relatives.”

— Jami’ at-Tirmidh, Book 22, Hadith 46

There are several places in both books that mention this concept, but this is probably the best illustration that sums it all up. Let’s break it down:

1. The martyr, or shahid, is forgiven the blood he has shed.
2. He is admitted into Paradise (other sources state he will receive the highest level in Paradise).
3. His body will not be desecrated in the grave.
4. A crown is placed on his head. And the ones that get all the attention:
5. He receives the 72 “houris,” who are perpetual virgins, chaste, modest, full breasted, white skinned, hairless (except for their heads and eyebrows), don’t menstruate, urinate, defecate, blow their noses, etc.
6. He can intercede for 70 of his relatives.

Many apologists will argue the validity of this interpretation. I invite the reader to check numerous sources, specifically, the Koran and Hadith themselves. Now imagine this is in your holy book, which you believe with every fiber of your being. You’ve read this your whole life, and it is backed up by your faith leader. You’re guaranteed entry to Paradise (not only that, but the highest level), and 72 beautiful wives ready for your sexual



Men reading the Koran in between two prayer times in Umayyad Mosque, Damascus, Syria. Photo by: Erik Albers

pleasure, and to top it off, you get to pay the price of admission to heaven for 70 of your relatives. I would submit: what sane, religious person wouldn’t take this offer? To use the Christian perspective, the shahid serves as the savior of his family. Sometimes, after a suicide bombing, the media shows us a few second clip of a video showing the shahid, often wearing his suicide vest, with the obligatory AK-47 leaning against the wall in the background, and jihadi flag (either al-

Qaeda or ISIS) on the wall. He’s often reading from some papers, and then our sorrowful reporter moves on to the sports scores. Have you ever wondered what the terrorist is reading? That is the martyrdom video. He’s reading off the list of 70 names that he is doing this for!

A fundamental tenet of combat is realizing that you are in a fight to begin with. Once you realize that, you need to definitively identify your enemy. After that, knowing what motivates him can

help you shape the battlefield to suit you and your goals. This is just one step of many. Eventually, I hope we can get to a point where we can use another one of Sun Tzu’s maxims: “The best victory is the one you achieve without fighting.” •

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mr. P.S. Is the head of counter terrorism for the state police in...

FIRE SERVICE COUNTER TERRORISM

by John David Ortega, Jr.

Conventional wisdom has taught us that counter terrorism (CT) operations are the realm of our nation's military forces and intelligence community, not an area of responsibility for firefighters and other first responders, excepting select law enforcement officers in very large metropolitan areas.

An operations officer in the employ of the Central Intelligence Agency may carry out counter terror work by cultivating sources of information within a foreign terrorist network. A soldier within the United

States Special Operations Command may be tasked with targeting a specific terrorist high-value target. And an FBI agent may be working in an undercover capacity to infiltrate a domestic terror organization. All of these operations

could rightfully be considered examples of counter terrorism endeavors. However, in order to truly protect our communities from the threat of terrorism, a broader, more comprehensive approach must be undertaken—one that incorporates fire

Every fire scene and other emergency call represents a potential contact with persons undertaking criminal or terrorist operations. As such they represent an opportunity for trained fire service personnel to detect suspicious activity indicators and report them to law enforcement partners. Photo by: John Ortega



A specialized fire/explosion response vehicle. The truck carries an assortment of tools, evidence collection equipment combined with an onboard interview room. It also doubles as a command post for the investigation of large-scale fire scenes. Photo by: BCFMO

departments and fire marshals' offices into a *whole of community* strategy for counter terrorism within all public safety disciplines. For the fire service, the counter terrorism role focuses mainly on the response to terrorist acts within the community, as well as the prevention of terrorist activity through suspicious activity reporting.

FIRE SERVICE RESPONSE & CAPABILITIES

The history of the American fire service dates back to colonial times, when Benjamin Franklin participated

in a volunteer fire company in order to protect the property of his neighbors from the ravages of fire. The fire service has long devoted much of its focus to the preservation of life and property from fire and other perils. The modern fire department responds not only to fires, but to a wide variety of other emergencies, such as calls for emergency medical aid, hazardous materials responses, technical rescue incidents, searches, and other critical incidents.

There are an estimated 33,000 fire departments within the United States today, with over 1.5 million firefighters

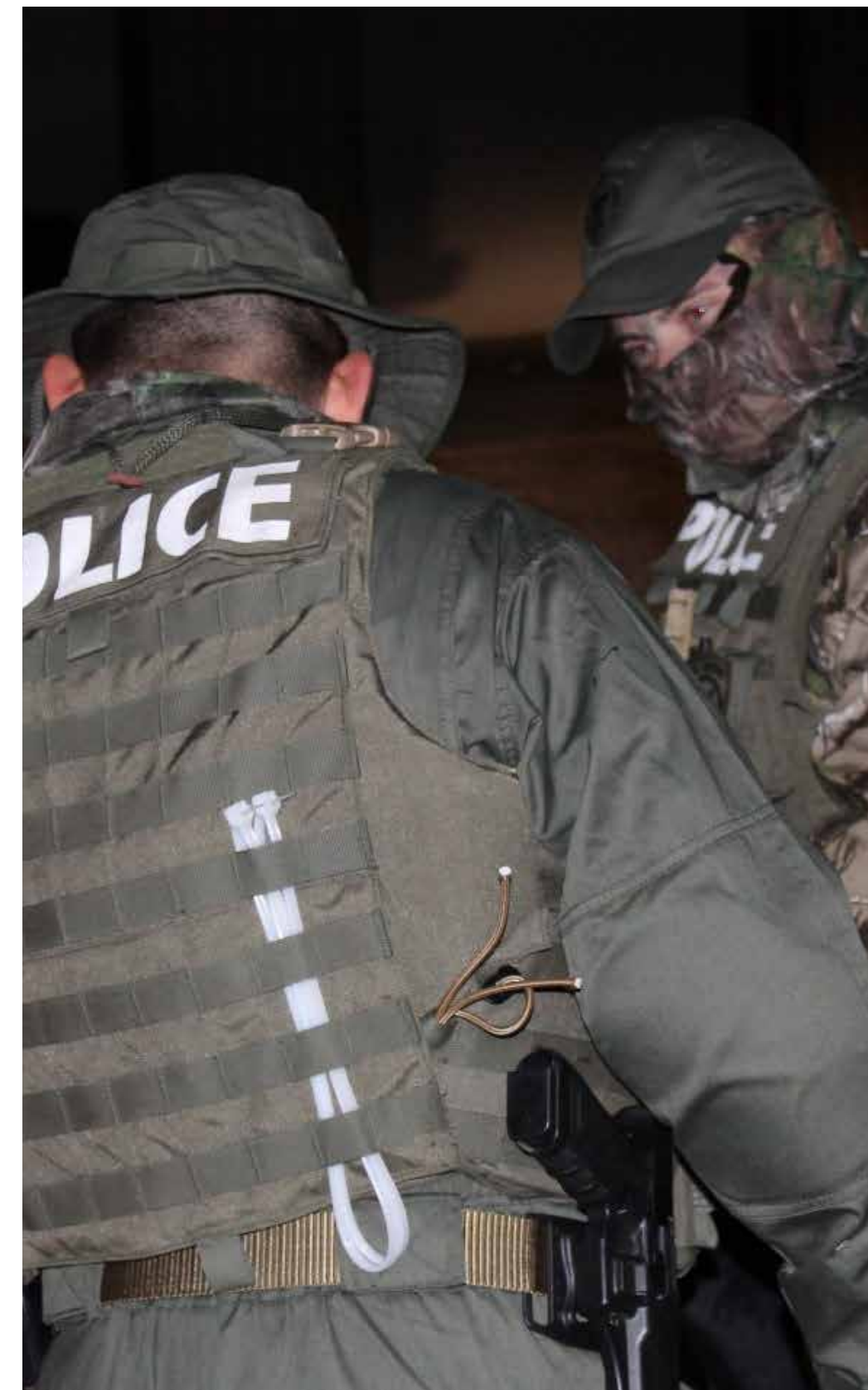
(Delmar, 2000). The contemporary fire service has become an institution that provides a “jack of all trades” service for their individual response areas.

Firefighters are cross-trained in many disciplines, from emergency medicine to the chemistry of hazardous materials.

The fire service, as well as the rest of the disciplines that make up the emergency service sector, are the “capable guardians” protecting the rest of the nation’s critical infrastructure and key resources. They are responsible for safeguarding the citizens and the systems that we rely on to maintain our way of life. Any attack on the fire service would severely undermine our nation’s ability to protect its citizenry. Firefighters play a key role in maintaining the public’s safety, protecting the environment, and ensuring commerce and a healthy economy.

As the nature of threats and hazards affecting public safety within our communities has changed, so too has the fire service evolved to face these threats. One need only look at the integration of emergency medical services within many fire departments throughout the country. Beginning in the 1960s, many fire departments took on the additional responsibility of responding to calls involving serious illness or injury. This has become a commonplace function of the fire service throughout the United States. In addition, the fire service takes a lead role in the response to and stabilization of hazardous materials calls, including toxic industrial chemical releases, and incidents involving chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and high-yield explosive (CBRNE) weapons (Delmar, 2000).

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has outlined specialized capabilities related to the fire service: fire departments typically have their own search and rescue (SAR) teams, as well



The author and a fellow teammate preparing for a static night surveillance operation in rural terrain. The target of the surveillance was a suspected arsonist. Photo by: Chris Lopez

as their own hazardous materials teams. Additionally, a substantial group of fire departments and fire marshals' offices employ personnel certified by the FBI/ U.S. Army's Hazardous Devices School, as trained public safety bomb technicians. These firefighters receive extensive training in the techniques used to render safe improvised explosive devices. In fact, of the 442 certified bomb squads within the United States, more than 10% are a part of a fire department or fire marshal's office (Cox, 2004).

Along with state and local law enforcement, the fire service shoulders a majority of the first response capabilities to any critical incident within the nation. It is imperative that fire chiefs and fire marshals understand their counter terrorism role in a broader context and work to implement protective countermeasures to protect both their communities and firefighters. The intent of this article is to better inform policy makers as to the role that fire service personnel can play within a comprehensive CT program. Additionally, the author wishes to recommend viable, if somewhat unorthodox protective countermeasures, to safeguard fire-service personnel from potential terrorist attacks.

SECURITY THREATS & THE FIRE SERVICE

Common security threats faced by the fire service include criminal activity and terrorism. Incidents involving criminal activity should be familiar to most firefighters. As first responders to acts of violence, firefighters are at the scene ready to care for any injured victims of a criminal offender. The type of criminal actor that most firefighters are routinely in contact with may be characterized as the street level violent offender or an

actor in a domestic violence situation. It is important for firefighters to understand that just by carrying out their normal duties, they may inadvertently become targets of the actor's hostile intentions. Firefighters treating an injured party who was victimized by an offender may at times be targeted themselves due to their intervention.

Additionally, in recent years firefighters and law enforcement officers have fallen victim to calls where they were ambushed by violent offenders after reporting to the scene of a call for service. Three tragic "arson ambush" incidents come to mind:

- 2008 shooting death of firefighter Ryan Hummert in Maplewood, Missouri, by an arsonist/sniper who was waiting to ambush incoming personnel (FireRescue1, 2012).
- 2012 ambush of Webster, New York firefighters, where two firefighters were lost to hostile small arms fire while responding to an arson fire.
- 2014 Leon County, Florida ambush on responding Tallahassee firefighters and area LEOs, which ultimately took the life of one deputy.

In addition to targeted violence, calls involving domestic violence situations are especially hazardous due to the volatile nature of the interpersonal conflict that led to the call for service. There is no way of knowing what weapons are in the house, and there is an unlimited supply of improvised weapons with which they can strike out against responding personnel. In these types of situations, it is critical that firefighters operate with police assistance. It is equally critical that 911 dispatchers research the history of calls for service at the location to which crews are responding to in order to determine if any past indicators of violent activity exist.

In addition to routine criminal violence, firefighters may respond to

the scene of an incident involving more complex criminal organizations, such as prison-based gangs, criminal street gangs, outlaw motorcycle gangs (OMGs), and transnational criminal organizations (TCOs). For many of these groups, crime is an integral part of a commercial enterprise. Distribution of illegal narcotics, trafficking of persons and weapons, or money laundering are all lucrative endeavors to these organizations. While the nature and complexity of these operations will vary greatly—all the way from a street-level drug dealer to a multi-national criminal organization, firefighters will at some point likely have to respond to some form of violence resulting from these criminal operations.

Typically, in my experience, these incidents will likely involve some form of "enforcement action" carried out by the victim's own organization against him for taking part in activity not sanctioned by the organization, or for informing against them to law enforcement. These have included executions, as well as arson fires for extortion, retaliation-based arson fires, and finally arson used to conceal evidence of a primary criminal act, such as a homicide.

Depending on the specific threat, certain elements of the criminal organizations have historically favored the use of improvised explosive or incendiary devices for certain attacks. In responding to incidents involving devices, firefighters should always consider the possibility of secondary devices targeting arriving first responders. Additionally, in the author's experience, certain outlaw motorcycle gangs were known to alter improvised explosive devices to have anti-tamper types of initiation mechanisms in order to maim or kill anyone attempting to render safe the device.

Although usually the firefighter is not the target of organized crime,

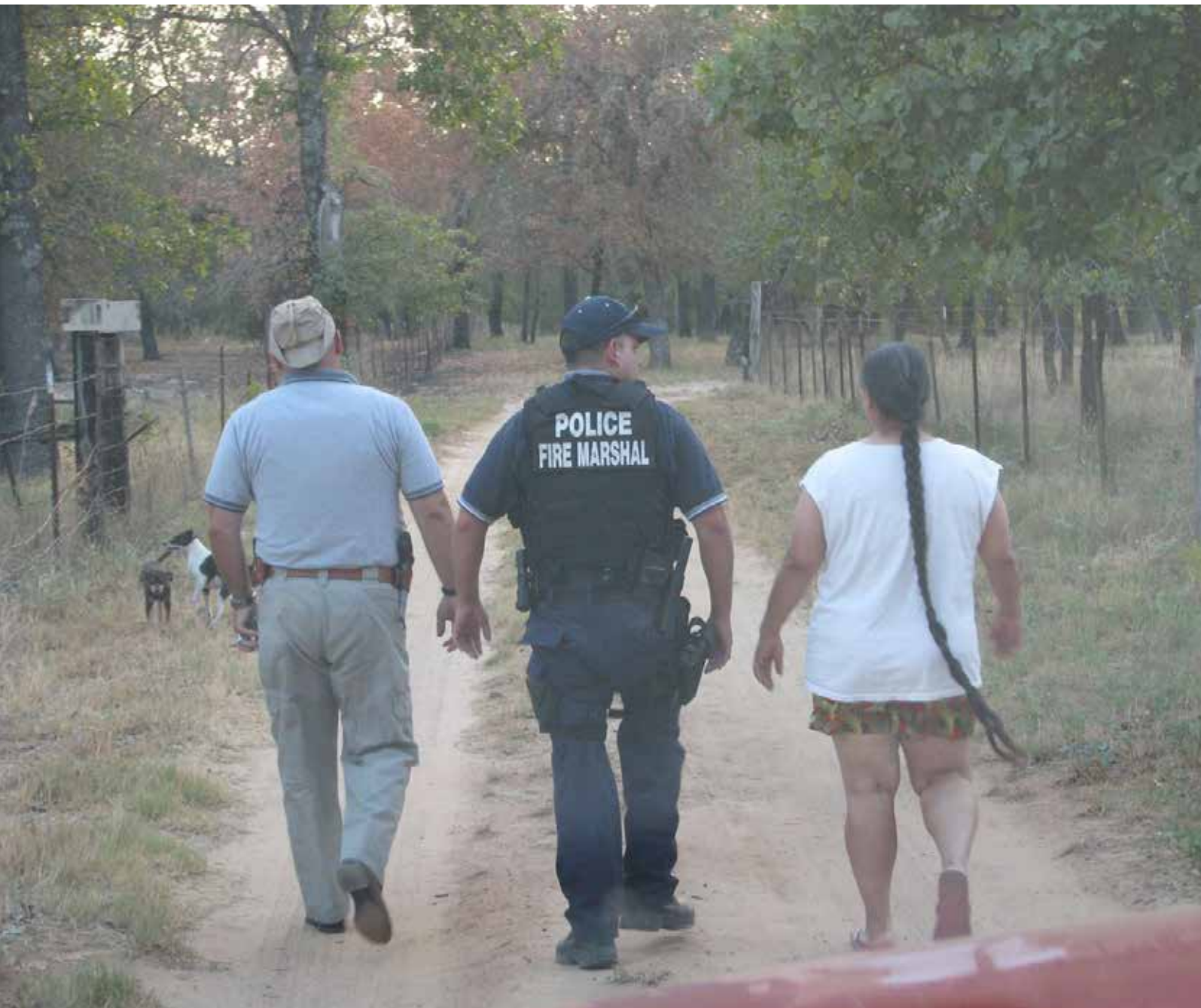
While engaged in fire suppression efforts, firefighters unfortunately may fall victim to incendiarism as a weapon.

there exists a potential for firefighters to be tangentially injured as a form of "collateral damage" during these types of crimes. It should be noted that with the increasingly unstable state of affairs in Mexico, a new more lethal form of transnational criminal organization is emerging. The Los Zetas TCO, has "repeatedly demonstrate(d) a willingness to brutally confront law enforcement..." (Hesterman, 2012). Certain TCOs have acquired paramilitary training and weapons, operate effectively utilizing what can be described as small unit "fire team" tactics, and also employ armed convoys, as well as vehicular assault type ambushes. Firefighters in areas of operation where there is a known TCO presence should coordinate their efforts with area law enforcement and become familiar with the nature of the local threat.

Though less common than other forms of violence, terrorism is no less lethal. It may be further subdivided into the categories of domestic terrorism and international terrorism. By and large, the

majority of terrorist events that take place within the United States are perpetrated by domestic terror (DT) groups or homegrown violent extremists (HVEs). Domestic terrorists are those who operate within the U.S. and have no foreign nexus. International terrorism includes acts perpetrated against U.S. interests that originate outside the United States. The notion behind terrorism is to create an environment that impairs the everyday way of life of the target in order to spur some sort of political or ideological change. Because terrorists cannot take on the conventional forces of their enemy in a direct engagement, they prefer unconventional tactics and weapons targeting civilians and noncombatants. In order to carry this out, terrorists have long favored the use of fire and explosives as a weapon.

While engaged in fire suppression efforts, firefighters unfortunately may fall victim to incendiarism as a weapon. This is true whether dealing with extremism or regular criminal activity, while attempting to fight arson fires. In 2000, in the City



Canvassing a rural location while attempting to locate a wanted arson fugitive. Photo by: Chris Lopez

of Houston, Texas, firefighters Lewis Mayo and Kim Smith were killed in an arson fire that was set in an attempt to cover up evidence of a burglary. During his attacks on abortion clinics, Eric Robert Rudolph specifically placed secondary explosive devices to target emergency responders.

PROTECTING FIREFIGHTERS

To lessen the danger posed by these various security threats, it is incumbent upon fire service leadership to take an active role in promoting protective countermeasures for the fire service.

These can be broken down into four separate but related areas: protective intelligence, operational security, force protection, and physical security. Just as fire chiefs train and equip firefighters to deal with the dangers associated with fires and building collapse, fire service managers must embrace this new aspect of firefighter safety.

PROTECTIVE INTELLIGENCE

The premise behind protective intelligence is rooted in the principle of situational awareness. Firefighters must be aware of their surroundings at all times. Situational awareness is a skill of active observation, and the critical evaluation of information obtained during that observation. By maintaining a solid foundation of situational awareness, firefighters are better prepared to deal with threats. Situational awareness may be as simple as knowing where an exit is relative to your location inside a building, or noticing that someone has a knife clipped to their belt, or it may require reading and digesting information available to you regarding a known criminal threat in your area of operation. By maintaining situational awareness, fire service leaders are able to implement a strategy of protective intelligence, which is basically identifying and assessing known or suspected threats, and then evaluating your defenses against them. Protective intelligence also includes a counter surveillance aspect, which is crucial because every adversary will at some point need to observe their target in order to exploit a particular weakness. While conducting this surveillance, the adversary himself is vulnerable to being detected and a good protective intelligence program would take advantage of this fact.

Operational security can be summed up by the old adage “Loose lips sink ships.”

OPERATIONAL SECURITY

Operational security focuses on limiting the amount of information known to the adversary about the capabilities of that particular fire service agency and their operations, especially with regards to emergency responses. Operational security seeks to limit the spread of any information that could be obtained by an adversary and then exploited against the fire service. For example, if a fire department’s website contains information regarding the training and specific capabilities of its hazardous materials crew, a would-be terrorist could exploit this information and plan an attack which would extend beyond the training and capabilities of the local team. Operational security can be summed up by the old adage “Loose lips sink ships.” While the general public has a right to know that we are good stewards of their tax dollars, they should not be afforded intimate knowledge regarding specific training, capabilities, and tactics, techniques and procedures employed by the fire department (Martinez, 2006).



The author and a colleague search for weapons and other contraband after executing a search-and-arrest warrant at a target location. Photo by: Chris Lopez

FORCE PROTECTION

Force protection is a term applied to measures used to provide protection to fire service personnel from an adversary's offensive attack. Specific force protection techniques include active counter surveillance, varying your routine, and maintaining an *overwatch* while engaged



Tattoos displayed by an arrested arson/explosives offender representing his affiliation to a White/Arayan Prison Gang. Photo by: John Ortega

in a critical operation. For the fire service, an example of this would be a fire engineer watching over two firefighters while they are busy providing patient care. The engineer's sole responsibility at that point is to identify any danger that could harm the other firefighters while their attention is focused on caring of the injured party. This concept is extremely similar to police officers' use of "contact and cover": the primary officer handles the contact while the cover officer watches out for any threats that might otherwise go unnoticed by the primary officer. This is a tried and true tactic that is successfully employed by police officers on a daily basis. Formal instruction in this technique during basic fire academy training is currently lacking but would go a long way in ensuring firefighter safety. During basic training, firefighters are taught to have a spotter when engaged in a hazardous operation: operating a power saw or a hydraulic rescue during a vehicle extrication, or backing a fire truck in a crowded area. Unfortunately, basic firefighter training oftentimes fails to recognize the fundamental *human* threat: interpersonal violence, despite the fact that there is potential to deal with this issue at virtually every call we respond to. The concept of an overwatch would help mitigate this threat by providing early warning of a situation going awry.

PHYSICAL SECURITY

Physical security practices are aimed at making "harder" targets of fire service assets, whether they are fixed locations or vehicles. A number of physical security strategies are financially feasible for even the smallest fire department. Illumination of the fire station, and key/lock accountability are two quick solutions which assist in placing another obstacle in

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the way of a would-be adversary. Physical security solutions include denying entry to unauthorized visitors to restricted parts of the fire station, and installing gates, access control points, and surveillance cameras. Obviously, the department's budget would play a key role in determining the size of the physical security program.

PREVENTION/ DISRUPTION OF TERRORIST ACTS

SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY REPORTING

A key component to counter terrorism for the fire service is the prevention of terrorist acts. Firefighters represent another trained, responsible form of eyes and ears on the street. For this reason, fire departments should set up a suspicious activity-reporting program to encourage personnel to report any information that might be related to terrorism or to a security threat. This type of program would be geared toward every firefighter being trained in the specific indicators, which would then

allow them to recognize potentially dangerous or threatening activities. This type of training is readily available through the U.S. government's National Suspicious Activity Reporting Initiative. Additionally, this program must have a focal point for firefighters to make their reports to.

FIRE SERVICE LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

Many fire service agencies already employ sworn law enforcement officers within their departmental structure. Depending on the area and jurisdiction, these officers are frequently trained criminal investigators with full police authority and may be variously referred to as arson investigators or fire marshals. In jurisdictions where these investigators have full police powers, it is imperative that they network with other area LEOs. Because these officers are cross-trained as firefighters and criminal investigators, they are particularly well suited to serve as the link between the fire service and police communities. Progressive leaders within the fire service have realized the impact that their arson units and fire marshals can have in responding

to critical incidents: they can be trained and equipped to provide superior force protection during active shooter responses, serve as liaisons with law enforcement during joint operations, and occupy staff positions within Fusion Centers in order to leverage the sharing of critical information to ensure public safety.

Arson investigators are generally familiar with criminal investigative techniques and should additionally familiarize themselves with security and protective operations. Many fire marshals/investigators frequently execute tactical operations—specifically execution of search and arrest warrants—and so are already well-versed in close-quarter enforcement operations. Each LEO should undergo active shooter response training as well. It is critical to remember that the crime of arson and related explosive offenses may be interconnected with a terrorist plot. For this reason it is imperative for suspicious explosions, and/or burn injuries that are suspect to be thoroughly investigated.

In this manner, the fire marshals/arson units are able to serve as a resource to provide for the security of their entire departments, and assist other law enforcement and intelligence agencies by providing critical information that may help fill existing intelligence gaps. Fire department investigators may be particularly well suited to integrate into the Incident Command System for large-scale incidents involving the Investigative/Intelligence or Security components. In this capacity, they would be responsible for the collection, analysis, and dissemination of critical intelligence to the General and Command Staff with respect to any threats posed to the Incident Management Team. For administrators in the fire service, investing a small amount of funding

into the training and equipment of these specialized units can pay off significantly in the long run.

FIRE AS A WEAPON

The reality of an emerging threat is becoming evident: the use of fire as a weapon by terrorists in coordinated attacks. This practice has been termed *pyroterrorism*. However, the use of fire as a weapon within the context of irregular warfare is nothing new and should not surprise us. Newman (2011) identifies this critical threat and points out the following instances as examples: 2008 in Mumbai, India, 2004 in Beslan, Russia, and 1999 in Columbine, Colorado. Newman's past research has recognized these incidents as an emerging threat where a network of actors enter an area, possibly engaging multiple targets simultaneously, using a variety of weapons, including small arms, fire and explosives. Pyroterrorism is closely tied to the modus operandi of so-called active shooter incidents. Under these circumstances, terrorists will use both incendiary fires and small arms fire to trap persons in order to achieve a higher body count.

Pyroterrorism is closely tied to the modus operandi of so-called active shooter incidents.

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In a recent example, the Los Zetas TCO successfully killed 53 people—mainly women—who had no ties to the drug trade, after corralling them into a confined area under threat of small arms fire, and then intentionally setting a gasoline-fueled fire in a casino in Monterrey, Mexico. The motivation behind this was because the casino owner was not paying his extortion money to Los Zetas (personal communication, 2011).

Yet another tragic illustration of the lethality of fire as a weapon are the deaths of U.S. Ambassador Chris Stevens and Foreign Service Officer Sean Smith at the diplomatic mission in Benghazi on September 11, 2012. Their deaths were due to exposure to smoke and heat produced by an arson fire set within the compound by elements of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (see Pfeifer, 2013 for an instructive article on this).

Newman (2011) argues that firefighters must be ready to engage this new threat in order to effectively suppress fires and rescue trapped occupants while operating in a hostile environment under the threat of small arms fire. In his research, Newman suggests that a team of firefighters along with an armed police escort may be able to effectively function in this type of environment. In this manner, firefighters would suppress the fire and rescue persons trapped while police officers engage the hostile threat with rifle fire. Newman suggests that extensive training between selected groups of personnel could lead to an integrated unit, which would allow both law enforcement and fire service operators to rapidly enter into an environment to affect rescues and neutralize threats. This type of joint operation closely resembles the concept behind the Rescue Task Force, a joint law enforcement/fire service task force utilized to move into

the warm zone during an active shooter/hostile event and stabilize and evacuate critical casualties in order to maximize lives saved.

Following Columbine and several other school incidents involving active shooters, police in the United States underwent a paradigmatic shift from the old “isolate and contain” tactic to an aggressive active shooter response led by the first arriving officers to effectively destroy the active shooter threat before any more lives are taken. I believe that this lesson can be employed in a scenario involving active shooters and fire as a weapon. I feel that all front-line fire and police personnel should receive operational level training in order to counter this threat and operate in this type of environment. Firefighters and police officers should be ready to arrive at an incident and from the first moment on scene execute a coordinated plan whereby the terrorist threat is neutralized and life safety is provided for.

As both a law enforcement officer and a member of the fire service, I have heard the oft-quoted refrain of “If I wanted to be a cop, I would’ve joined the police department” frequently uttered by some firefighters who still desperately want to cling to a mentality that does not match today’s threat environment. I have also heard the argument against firefighters being issued ballistic armor for their own protection based upon the notion that “if you look like a police officer you are more likely to be shot.” Indeed, there are some fire service leaders out there who undoubtedly will disagree with taking active steps to prepare for a terrorist threat.

This dangerous mindset is caused by outmoded thinking. The Aurora, Colorado shooting should be a watershed moment for the fire service, just as Columbine was for policing in this

country. The fire service can no longer resign itself to a safe position in the cold-zone while lives are being lost to the hands of criminals or terrorists. Bold yet prudent measures must be taken in order to stop the loss of life.

I have been fortunate enough to have spent the entirety of my career in law enforcement as part of an agency that has actively embraced this changing paradigm, providing training, equipment and policy shifts which help to integrate strengths of the local fire service into various counter terrorism and anti-crime initiatives, with the end goal of saving lives. This has been accomplished both by direct intervention in critical incidents and by engaging in proactive criminal investigations.

The executive leadership in my agency has aggressively pushed for integrated training for all fire/arson investigators in the following areas, to name a few: active shooter response, suspicious

activity reporting, tactical operations and firearms proficiency, IED awareness and familiarization, self-aid/buddy aid, collection of evidence in hazardous environments/support of tactical operations in hazardous environments, and continuing education in terrorist threats and organizations. Additionally, we interface on a daily basis with members of our local Sheriff’s Office Criminal Investigation Division and Criminal Intelligence Unit, as well as our local fusion center, in addition to other area law enforcement agencies at the state, local and federal levels, in order to share critical intelligence and suspicious activity.

Operationally, we routinely carry out warrant service on arson/explosives offenders and our unit is often part of a joint response to various critical incidents: from conducting protective surveillance of critical infrastructure to responding to potential active shooter



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incidents. My agency has spent from its budget to provide quality equipment to my fellow deputy fire marshals, including NIJ IIIA Ballistic Armor with Level IV Rifle Plates, man-portable aerosolized fire extinguishers to be utilized during an active shooter events involving arson, mass-casualty trauma bags, Individual First Aid Kits (IFAKs), and training in the skills necessary to effectively deploy this equipment during a critical incident. It is worth noting that the majority of all investigators assigned within the unit are experienced law enforcement officers with fire rescue backgrounds and have completed additional training in fire/explosion investigation.

Anecdotally, I am aware that several large metropolitan fire departments have integrated their arson/fire investigation units into a more comprehensive counter terrorism or tactical support section, even going as far as detailing out arson investigators into federal Terrorism Task Forces and state and major urban area fusion centers. I feel that this will continue to be a trend among progressive fire service agencies that recognize the specter of terrorism is something that must be confronted from a “whole of community” perspective and one that must be managed from an all-hazards and all-threats standpoint.

Whether we like it or not, by virtue of the function that we provide to our communities, firefighters are now at the forefront of many violent critical incidents alongside our police brethren. It is time for tired notions of division within the fire and police services to be put to rest. What I am proposing is not for the fire service in general to take on law enforcement functions. However, we live in a period in time when the traditional threat landscape has evolved. Now more than ever, the possibility for homegrown violent extremists and other actors with

nefarious intentions to operate within our communities is very real. In light of this, what should be encouraged is leveraging the strengths inherent within each of the public safety disciplines in order to be best integrated into a comprehensive effort to protect the homeland from terrorist attacks. Instead of making tired excuses, battling egos, and engaging in “turf wars,” emergency responders across all disciplines would be well advised to borrow from our military counterparts and take on the mantra of “One Mission, One Team, One Fight.” •

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John David Ortega, Jr. serves as the Chief Investigator for the Bexar County Fire Marshal's Office Arson & Explosion Unit in San Antonio, Texas. Ortega is an adjunct faculty member at St. Mary's University. He holds an M.S. in Criminal Justice from Sul Ross State University and a B.A. in Criminology from St. Mary's University, as well as a Master Peace Officer Certification for the State of Texas. He has over 16 years of experience in public safety as a firefighter and criminal investigator specializing in arson and explosive crimes. His interests include both the academic and operational aspects of arson and explosive offenses within the context of violent criminality, as well as the terrorist use of explosives and incendiarism. Ortega can be reached at firecop1608@gmail.com.

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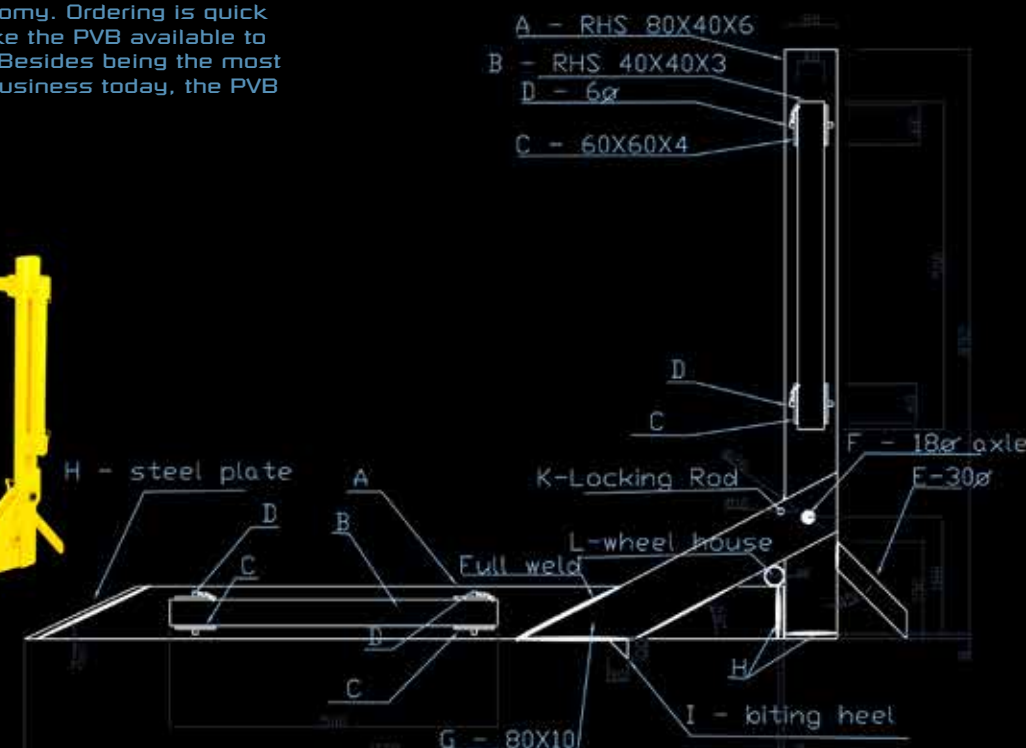
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