

The volume of information available today on terrorism is enormous, making expertise on the subject by rank and file public safety officers a time consuming enterprise. The following bullet points are presented to simplify the information and current state of affairs in the United States:

- The weapons of choice for terrorists remain explosive bombs, incendiary bombs, and firearms.
- Ninety-five percent of terrorist attacks occur without warning.
- Approximately two-thirds of terrorist targets are businesses.
- Thus far, the only place suffering an intentional terrorist attack on a school filled with children has been the Islamic extremists attacks in Chechnya.
- Of the explosive bombs, the suicide bomber is considered the most dangerous because of the human intelligence behind the guidance and detonation systems.
- The most commonly used explosive containers for suicide bombers are backpacks and musical instrument cases.
- Whenever confronted with a terrorist incident, immediately suspect secondary devices.
- Chemical, biological and radiological agents are very difficult to weaponize and use for terrorist purposes. Nevertheless, the United States is one of the few places where biological agents have been used, i.e., five anthrax letters in 2001, biological toxin sprayed on food in Washington State, two ricin letters in Texas, and ricin discovered in the United States Senate Majority Leader's office in Washington D.C.
- The suspect behind the anthrax letters remains unidentified and at large.
- Biological agents are significantly more deadly than chemical agents.
- Persons exposed to harmful doses of chemical agents are likely to be symptomatic immediately. Persons exposed to harmful doses of biological agents are likely to take 18–48-hours for the symptoms to develop. Correct diagnosis will be difficult.
- Accurate recipes and ingredients to produce deadly chemical and biological agents are readily available. Production, however, poses significant life safety risks to the producer.

Terrorism 101 continued:

- Most people surviving the initial exposure to a chemical agent will survive. The same cannot be said of biological agents.
- There is no cure for exposure to ricin. It can be manufactured with common lab equipment from raw material readily available using instructions obtainable from the Internet. Ricin, like many chemical and biological agents, is most dangerous if inhaled. Inhalation of three micrograms will kill most people in 36–72 hours regardless of medical treatment.
- Experience tells us 80-percent of people exposed to a harmful chemical or biological agent will not remain at the scene awaiting field decontamination. Rather, they will seek medical attention on their own, possibly spreading contamination into emergency rooms and other medical facilities.
- Eighty to ninety-percent of contamination is removed with clothing.
- Within the United States, the Northeast and far West experience the most terrorist events. The most active terrorist groups within the United States are domestic extremists—the Earth Liberation Front and Animal Liberation Front—whose main terrorist weapon is arson.
- The Michigan Department of Community Health and the Michigan State Police laboratories are well equipped to analyze and identify unknown substances, such as suspicious white powders. However, analysis generally will not be conducted unless the substance is accompanied by a credible threat. (If this sounds familiar, it is the criteria established in the fall of 2001 during the height of the anthrax scare. It remains in place today.)
- Livingston County fire apparatus and ambulances are equipped with field test kits for suspicious powders. The kits cannot identify biological agents, but they can identify sugar, flour and other hoax white powders.
- A white powder substance suspected of being a biological agent can be transported to Lansing, tested, identified, and, if discovered to be a bona fide biological agent, treatment initiated before it risks health and life.
- To date, all white powder events in Michigan have been hoax.
- The Michigan Department of Community Health lab in Lansing is the only lab in FEMA Region Five, the Upper Midwest, and one of a handful in the country credentialed to analyze human body fluids to identify and quantify exposure to chemical agents. That is, identify what chemical agents the victim was exposed to and how much was inhaled, absorbed, etc.
- The disappearance of the extremely large quantities of HMX and RDX explosives in Iraq raises the terrorism threat worldwide.

