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Joint Terrorism Task Force Teams

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Abstract

This document contains information pertaining to Joint Terrorism Task Force teams. Information included in this document will describe the history, who’s involved, what they do, training and an example of a one of the task force teams in the country. Keep in mind that this information can not completely cover the entire entity of the JTTF teams as a lot of information is kept confidential by the federal government.
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Background
In 1980, the Federal Bureau of Investigation established the first joint terrorism task force team in New York City. Since September 11, 2001, seventy one of these task forces have been created. They are located in 103 cities across the nation which includes one at each of the FBI’s field offices. The joint terrorism task force teams are considered to be the frontline of defense on terrorism and conduct many tasks as to chasing leads, gathering evidence, making arrests, providing security, training, the collection and sharing of intelligence, and responding to threats and incidents. The JTTFs now include over 4,400 members across the nation which is more than four times of what it was before 9/11. They consist of over 600 state and local agencies and 50 federal agencies (JTTF Main).

JTTF’s have played huge roles in stopping organizations such as the “Portland Seven”, “Lackawanna Six”, and Northern Virginia jihad. They have also stopped attacks from occurring on many military and civilian targets in Los Angeles as well as attacks on Fort Dix Army base and the JFK International Airport. The efforts that each task force puts forth are all coordinated through the interagency National Joint Terrorism Task Force. The National Joint Terrorism Task Force is in charge of making sure intelligence goes freely among local JTTFs and is located at the National Counterterrorism Center (JTTF Main).

What Is Terrorism?
There are two different types of terrorism; domestic and international. The FBI’s definition of international terrorism consists of “the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian
population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives” (Kramer pg.270). Many people used to believe that international terrorism was something that happened in other countries. If it actually happened to a U.S. citizen, it was because they were traveling or living in another country at the time. Organizations that would conduct this include right wing and left wing parties of political nature, religious groups, revolutionaries, and ruling governments. Typical means of this type of terrorism include bombings, shootings, and hijacking of aircraft or ground transportation (Kramer). A prime example of an organization that is considered one of international terrorism and well known is al-Qaeda.

Domestic terrorism is viewed by the FBI as “the unlawful use, or threatened use, of violence by a group or individual that is based and operating entirely in the United States or its territories without foreign direction, and which is committed against persons or property with the intent of intimidating or coercing a government or civilian population in furtherance of political or social objectives” (Kramer pg.273). Examples of domestic terrorism incidents are the Timothy McVeigh bombing and the Unabomber¹. Many Americans believed that the McVeigh bombing was an act of international terrorism, considering the first attack on the World Trade Center was two years prior. When the war on terror was declared, many people believed that this was solely for international terrorism (Kramer).

**Personnel Involved**

Leading the JTTF’s are FBI special agents. They work closely with partners from local, state, and federal personnel¹.

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¹ Lindgren, Todd. FBI. Interview-email, April 8, 2013
The main body of the JTTFs consists of local law enforcement agencies. They work with the JTTF either on part time or full time basis and are considered to be Task Force Officers. Each of the Task Force Officers brings their own contacts, experiences and many other resources to the JTTF and is considered force multipliers.2

Occasionally, a fire department will be involved with the JTFFs. Usually they are departments of bigger cities that have more resources including a fire department ran bomb squad. These departments that are involved will attend meeting regularly and be a part of the JTTF board in their region to get an overview of the threats in their area. They are welcome to attend any of the trainings put on by the JTTFs and typically do so with FBI Bomb Squad Specialists. Smaller departments will usually be minimally involved by the means of training with a special agent trained in bomb squad tactics.1

Some of the federal agencies involved are the Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. military, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the Transportation Security Administration.

Specialists involved in JTTF’s includes a Weapons of Mass Destruction Coordinator, FBI Special Agent trained in dealing with chemical, biological and radiological events, and a Special Agent Bomb Technician.2

National Joint Terrorism Task Force
Established in 2002, the National Joint Terrorism Task Force is the head of the entire Joint Terrorism Task Force Program consisting of 80 members from 48 different agencies. It was originally located at the FBI Headquarters but now resides at the National Counterterrorism Center. Its main purpose is to support each of the regional

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2 Lindgren, Todd. FBI. Interview-email, April 8, 2013
JTTFs in any way they possibly can. This includes offering guidance and oversight and giving manpower, equipment and space. The NJTTF also works on other initiatives involved with the battle on terrorism. These include Operation TRIPWIRE, Correctional Intelligence Initiative, Rail Liaison Agent Program, and Military Working Group (National JTTF).

**What Does The JTTF Do?**

Joint Terrorism Task Forces are in charge of investigating any type of terrorism related threat. This includes any threat in the means of domestic or international terrorism and anything to do with weapons of mass destruction. There are divisions of JTTFs on a national level that play major roles including Terrorism Fly Team, Terrorist Explosives Device Analytical Center, Terrorist Financing Operations Section, Terrorist Screening Center, Weapons of Mass Destruction, U.S. Military and Hostage Rescue Team. On a regional level, JTTFs have SWAT, Crisis Negotiations, and Tactical Aviation teams.

**Terrorism Fly Team**

The FBI Fly Team is a small group of terrorism first responders that are based out of the FBI headquarters. It consists of agents and analysts who are packed and ready to get anywhere on the map in a matter of a few hours. They have the ability to conduct sensitive investigations in what are very often dangerous environments. They also have the ability to speak about a dozen different languages. Once called upon, they gather intelligence about the situation at hand and gather equipment and specialists that are needed. Once the team is at the location, a command post is quickly

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3 Lindgren, Todd. FBI. Interview-email, April 8, 2013
set up and the team keeps in constant communications with the FBI Headquarters. From 2003 to 2005 the team was called out over seventy times (FBI-Fly Team).

_Terrorist Explosive Device Analytical Center_

Created in 2004, the TEDAC (for short) serves as a “single interagency organization to receive, fully analyze, and exploit all terrorist improvised explosive devices, or IEDs, of interest to the United States” (FBI-TEDAC). They perform activities such as disarming and disrupting IEDs, linking IEDs to their maker, and prevention of future attacks. The team consists of a director who is from the FBI, deputy director from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, a Department of Defense executive manager, and five units in relation to forensics, technical exploitation, intelligence, and investigations. The team’s location is the FBI Laboratory, in Quantico, Virginia (FBI-TEDAC).

_Terrorist Financing Operations Section_

The main goal of the Terrorist Financing Operations Section is to track and shut down financing for terrorist and to exploit and financial information to identify any previously unknown cells of terrorists. They conduct criminal financial investigations and have made great progress in the tracking and freezing of terrorists’ assets. The investigations include the conducting of full financial analysis of terrorism suspects to include their financial support and the financial support structure (FBI-Finance).

_Terrorist Screening Center_

The Terrorist Screening Center supports the front line of terrorism defense. It was created because of the events of 9/11 in 2003. The center is in charge of maintaining the government’s Terrorist Watchlist. They help screening agencies to recognize known or suspected terrorists who are trying to obtain visas, enter the
country, get aboard aircraft, or engage in any other activities. The watchlist has been one of the most effective tools for the U.S. (FBI-Screening).

**Weapons of Mass Destruction Directorate**

WMDD for short, it was created in July 2006 in order to build cohesive and coordinated approaches to incidents that involve nuclear, radiological, chemical, or biological weapons and to focus on prevention. They seek out and rely on intelligence for preparedness, countermeasures, and investigations that keep threats from becoming a reality (FBI-WMDD).

**U.S. Military**

The military involvement in JTTFs is related towards arrests, detaining, and the investigation of terrorists or suspected terrorists. Overseas is the primary location where they perform arrests and interrogations. Military intelligence personnel are in charge of performing the interrogations with assistance of the FBI. If suspects or terrorists are transported to Guantanamo Bay, Military Police personnel oversee their wellbeing as a detainee. The military will then act as a law enforcement agency would at any other penitentiary performing transports to tribunals, cell block clearings, and protection of detainees all under international law.

**Hostage Rescue Team**

The Hostage Rescue Team is based at the FBI Academy and is the government’s full-time counterterrorist tactical team. It was created in 1983 to provide manpower, training, and resources to confront threats. It is deployed under the FBI Director and is supported by field offices. Missions they deploy on involve hostage rescue, barricaded subjects, undercover operations, high-risk threats, and surveillance operations (FBI-Tactical).

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4 Donnelly, Mathew. Specialist (E4) United States Army Reserve. Interview-personal April 10, 2013
**SWAT**
Special Weapons and Tactics teams are located at every one of the 56 FBI field offices. They perform duties of breaching locks and structures, storming barricaded buildings and vehicles, arresting armed criminals, rescuing hostages, patrolling and providing security, navigating by means of climbing and rappelling, using techniques to stop fleeing cars, and conducting surveys for special event sites (FBI-Tactical).

**Crisis Negotiations**
Approximately, there are 300 Bureau negotiators located over all the FBI field divisions. They have the ability to rapidly deploy to any critical incident. They are usually deployed with the Hostage Rescue Team and often provide assistance to state and local police negotiators. The FBI is considered to be negotiation go to for the U.S. government (FBI-Tactical).

**Tactical Aviation**
The Tactical Helicopter Unit is the management source for tactical aviation assets. They support the Hostage Rescue Team and SWAT teams with a variety of helicopters. They perform the duties of arrest and assault force delivery, vehicle interdiction, medical evacuation, and other types of tactical operations (FBI-Tactical).

**Training**
Members of the JTTFs train in many different skills in order to prepare. Each member prepares differently depending on their assigned division or task of the JTTFs. The FBI also conducts a large scale simulated incident every year to simulate response to a terrorist attack on a large scale.
Hazardous Devices School

Located in Huntsville, Alabama, the school has provided training for more than 20,000 first responders on the state and local levels. There are national standards that have been published by the FBI for the training of local and state bomb squads which provides a solid baseline for effective responses to crimes that involve WMD, hazardous devices, and terrorist bombing campaigns (FBI-HDS).

An extension of the bomb tech school is the Special Agent Bomb Technician Program. The program also provides training to bomb squads on state and local levels and performs operations and activities related to explosives worldwide (FBI-HDS).

Sniffing Out Terrorism

Trainings with K-9s have taken place in Virginia, Florida, and California due to a rise in use of peroxide-based explosives. The K-9s are taken through two training courses lined with cinderblocks in which some contain sealed containers. The sealed containers are carefully prepared and contain quantities of these explosives large enough to be considered a threat. Other blocks will consist of empty containers. A third and final course consists of parked cars with one that contains 100 pounds of ammonium nitrate in the trunk (FBI-K9).

Anti-Terror Training

The FBI has teamed up with the Combating Terrorism Center which is located at the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, New York. The center provides many training initiatives to include in-depth research, policy analysis, and education in regards to terrorism, counterterrorism, homeland security, and WMD. Members who attend are on all different levels from undergraduate students, non-profit, private enterprise, and all levels of government officials (FBI-Anti).
A three day course was developed by the center in 2006 to help strengthen the JTTFs around the nation. The course focuses on understanding Islam, roots of extremism, internet use by terrorists, and origins and the practices of terrorist networks (FBI-Anti).

**The Topoff Terror Drill**

TOPOFF 4, which is short for “Top Officials 4”, is the largest exercise in regards to terrorism in the U.S. It is led by the Department of Homeland Security and includes 15,000 participants. It tests the nation’s ability to respond to a terrorist attack. An example of a made up scenario includes terrorists sneaking in radioactive materials into the U.S. and launching three attacks; in Guam near a power plant, Portland, Oregon, and in Phoenix, Arizona. These radiological dispersal devices will release materials that are radioactive into surrounding areas causing all kinds of health and rescue issues (FBI-Topoff).

The FBI runs the law enforcement sector is this situation as it is the leading agency for terrorism investigations. Their capabilities are used in this drill to include evidence recovery experts, SWAT teams, HAZMAT specialists, intelligence analysts, crisis managers, IT specialists, surveillance experts, bomb technicians, WMD specialists, forensic scientists, victim-witness professionals, and media coordinators (FBI-Topoff).

**“Inside the Denver JTTF”**

The Denver JTTF is one of the older teams as it was created in 1994. According to Special Agent James Yacone, it’s “because we have a very large territory, a significant international footprint, and we are geographically located at the crossroads of...”
the U.S." The Denver JTTF covers seven military bases, roughly 400 defense contractors, constant stream of international visitors and students, and more than 1,000 high tech companies. The task force is made up of three squads, two dealing with international terrorism and one dealing with domestic terrorism (Denver Part 1).

A few days before the anniversary of 9/11 in September 2009, the Denver JTTF got word of a Colorado resident and al-Qaeda recruit planning to carry out a major attack. The multi-agency approach helped in conducting investigations and the gathering and sharing of information which lead to the locating of Najibullah Zazi in New York City. Zazi’s plan was to become a suicide bomber around the anniversary of 9/11 in a subway system. It was found out that Zazi had gone to Pakistan with two high school classmates to obtain al-Qaeda training which included training on making bombs. Zazi was planning his attack in Colorado; however his target was New York City. The Denver JTTF’s 20 agencies efforts foiled the attack planned by Zazi (Denver Part1).

The Denver JTTF relies heavily on the Colorado Information Analysis Center. The center brings different agencies together in order to gather, analyze and share intelligence. It consists of representatives from different agencies including the FBI, Department of Homeland Security, local emergency managers, local law enforcement, and local firefighters (Denver Part 2).

When it came to the Zazi case, the goal was to find out where bomb making chemicals were acquired. Terrorism liaison officers checked out beauty and farm supply stores over their jurisdictions (Denver Part 2).
There are over 650 terrorism liaison officers in the Colorado Information Analysis Center. They consist of local sheriff, police, and fire department personnel and are considered to be a force multiplier for the JTTF reaching parts of the state that the FBI is not able to readily access (Denver Part2).

“WMD Coordinator Focuses on Preparedness, Partnerships”
The Denver JTTF WMD team is coordinated by Special Agent Dave Autrey. The team relies on a network of roughly 80 different agencies in Colorado from first responders to executives of Colorado’s Department of Public Health. They reach out for reasons regarding to training to building relationships. Autrey states, “You don’t want to meet a partner from another agency for the first time on the scene of an incident; that puts everybody behind the curve” (Denver Part 3).

Conclusion
Joint Terrorism Task Force teams across the nation work around the clock to prevent, protect and mitigate when it comes to incidents of domestic and international terrorism. Having JTTFs in over 100 cities across the nation working with a multitude of different agencies is helping to fight the war on terror. With many different agencies being involved, it helps to multiply the force and bring many different resources and skills to the table to help fight this battle. With terrorism tactics changing and a rise in attempts of terrorists attacking from within the United States, the need for such task forces has never been greater.
References


