

School and School Bus Security Issues and Awareness

With the school year in full swing in Wisconsin's school districts, it is important that school officials and school bus drivers remain vigilant in schools, playgrounds, school surroundings and school buses. Terrorist planning an attack in the U.S. may choose a target that is easily accessible, allowing the individual to enter quickly and leave or detonate before security and potential victims can react. Schools and school buses may be of interest to terrorists due to a perceived lack of security, the number of potential victims, and the emotional impact of an attack on children.

Detailed surveillance of potential targets and surrounding areas is a vital part of a successfully executed suicide bombing. In past terrorist operations, a suicide bomber may personally conduct the surveillance in order to become familiar with the intended target or may rely on others in the terrorist organization. An operative may engage in other activities at the surveillance location so as not to draw suspicion, such as surveying school accessibility, inspecting school grounds, or documenting school bus routes and stops. There have been numerous incidents concerning suspicious activities with regards to school buses this year. The following are several school bus-related occurrences:

- On August 25, 2006, three unidentified males described as Middle Eastern entered the offices of a school bus sales and service company in Bergen, NY. The men were attempting to purchase school buses and requested access to buses the company had in inventory. They left the building after the request was refused and they then observed the bus service lot from a parked maroon sedan type vehicle with unidentified Ontario license plates for approximately 10 minutes.
- On August 24, 2006, two males entered the Dorchester Bus Shop in Saint George, South Carolina and attempted to buy a school bus. They sped away after being referred to another school bus sales company in the area.
- On July 27 and 28, 2006, an identified student transport contract company based in New Hampshire received two telephone calls from subjects in New Jersey who were attempting to purchase used school buses from the company. The callers, a male and female, identified themselves as representatives of a company that solicits import and export business that uses port facilities in the Sudan and the United Arab Emirates.
- On May 19, 2006, two Saudi Arabian men boarded a bus full of students in Tampa, Florida speaking Arabic and remained on the bus for at least 30 minutes before officials removed them for questioning. They then gave conflicting reasons about why they had entered the bus.
- More recently, one of the Canadians arrested on terrorism charges in June 2006, was a bus driver for a local high school.