



Bike Patrol Officers: The First Line of Defense

By Mike Woida

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Ed's Note: Mike Woida will conduct a workshop entitled State and Local Anti-Terrorist Training for the Patrol Officer during the 18th Annual IPMBA Conference, April 24-26, 2008, in Indianapolis. This 4.25 hour workshop is designed to help bike patrol officers maximize their unique relationship with the community in order to prevent terrorist activity. For more information or to register, visit www.ipmba.org, or request a conference registration packet via mail or e-mail.

As we are all aware, the utilization of bike patrol officers by a police department enhances the agency's overall effectiveness in combating crime and developing a strong bond with the community. The bikes serve as a supplement to the marked patrol cars and foot patrols in use by the department. Their versatile mobility on the streets, over the sidewalks, and through alleyways, coupled with the use of "stealth tactics" can get officers to incidents quickly. Bike patrol is also a great means of Community Policing because it affords officers the opportunity to work closely with citizens, which improves trust and community relations because officers are viewed as more approachable. All of these qualities also make bike patrol effective in detecting potential terrorist activity.

Like the uniformed street patrol officer utilizing a car, the bike patrol officer can be responsible for patrolling a particular area of the jurisdiction, responding to crimes in progress and taking report runs. This jurisdiction, by design, is usually smaller geographically than the beats covered by officers assigned to cars. With less territory to cover, the bike patrol officer has more time to become familiar with the "hot spots" of his/her beat and can more easily develop those much needed relationships with the citizens who work and live in the area. These relationships create a vital link between officer and citizen and result in an increase in the exchange of information between the two. The more information that we as law enforcement officers have, the better we can do our jobs. We know from experience that most crimes, or at least parts of crimes, are observed by "someone". We call those people "window monitors". Finding these "window monitors" becomes our job when a crime has occurred. Information must be distributed to those who may have had the opportunity to observe the crime or its parts along with a means to contact the officer to provide needed information. This can be achieved by simply stopping by a business, asking a few directed questions and providing a name and pager number to call. Officers can also develop an informational flyer that can be distributed in a neighborhood, office building or business.



As these relationships of trust develop, bike officers can begin to educate the citizens about what to look for based upon the crimes or terrorism threats that are already occurring or are possible in their beat area. As the citizens become more aware of what to look for, they will, on their own, contact the officers with information relating suspicious activity. Not only is every officer on the department a collector of information but your citizenry are as well. Citizens function as extra “eyes and ears”, thereby expanding your ability to prevent criminal activity.

Knowing what to look for is often the key to crime prevention. Knowing what to look for becomes even more important when it comes to preventing a terrorist attack. Police officers have become the local first line of defense against terrorism. Your education can start by familiarizing yourself – and your community – with the Seven Signs of Terrorism. These signs were developed to assist the patrol officer in recognizing steps that a potential terrorist might take when planning an attack on a particular target. These signs should be passed along to the citizens on your beat to enhance their recognition ability as well.

The Seven Signs of Terrorism

1. Surveillance

Examples of surveillance activities include: recording or monitoring activities, drawing diagrams, making notes on maps, using vision-enhancing devices such as binoculars, and/or possessing floor plans or blueprints of places such as high-tech firms, financial institutions, government or military facilities.

2. Elicitation

This is when someone attempts to gain information about an important place, operation, or workers.

3. Testing security

Walking or driving into restricted areas to observe security or law enforcement response, and/or attempting to enter physical security barriers or access procedures in order to assess strengths and weaknesses.

4. Acquiring supplies

Terrorists need to acquire supplies and equipment to carry out their attacks. This may include purchasing or stealing law enforcement or military equipment, identification badges, uniforms, and decals.

5. Suspicious persons who don't belong

These are individuals in a workplace, building, neighborhood, or business that are suspicious because of their behavior, the unusual questions they ask, or the statements they make.



6. Dry or trial runs

A trial run consists of putting people into position and moving them around according to the plan without actually committing the terrorist act. It could also include mapping out routes to determine traffic flow.

7. Deploying assets or getting into position

Deploying assets is placing people, equipment, and supplies at or near the target. If you see suspicious activity, this may be the last opportunity you have to report it to the proper authorities.

Become familiar with the Seven Signs of Terrorism; pass them along to the citizens you serve and enable them to become information collectors. Ultimately, criminal activity and terrorist attacks might be prevented based upon these tips. It's a simple concept if practiced with dedication.

Officer Mike Woida joined the Indianapolis Police Department in 1993. He has worked uniformed patrol, as a field training officer, as a district detective in the property crimes section, and is currently assigned to the Operations Division. He is a law enforcement trainer certified by the Indiana Law Enforcement Training Board. He was previously assigned to the Emergency Preparedness Section. There he worked to develop the plans for large scale events such as the Indianapolis 500, Indiana Black Expo Summer celebration and the 2006 Men's Final Four Basketball Tournament. He assisted in the development of the department's respiratory protection plan and is qualified to teach several WMD, Anti-Terrorism and Incident Command Courses. He is also certified as a trainer through the Indiana Law Enforcement Training Board. Mike can be reached at w4042@indygov.org.

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