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Welcome Thank you for all you do

ILAPT.net

First Observer

Section III

What makes you a First Observer?

Bus drivers are the eyes and ears of the community. They are familiar with their route, students, cars and people in the area.

School buses are very prevalent in the United States and transportation professionals must be vigilant and possess the knowledge of appropriate actions to be taken in the event of a security incident.

Definition of Terrorism:

“The threat or use of force or violence to coerce a government or civilian population or social objectives”

Types of Terrorism:

- Hijacking
- Bombing
- Diplomatic kidnapping
- Assassination

Why would a terrorist target school buses?

- Easy access, relatively unguarded
- Large number of potential victims
- Schools virtually everywhere
- Relatively easy to make a getaway
- Pull at the heartstrings of America

How Can I Foil the Attack?

For a terrorist to be successful they must be successful at all of these five stages:

Targeting - Support - Observations - Casing -Rehearsal-
Attack

For us to be successful at disrupting the terrorist, we need only to succeed at one point.

Break the chain, foil the attack by **Observing-Assessing-Reporting** any one of these stages.

Where to start observing:

Pre-tripping your bus could be the most important step.

Your job is not only making sure the vehicle is technically sound but that no one has put any threat material on the vehicle that could harm the students.

Where and What to look for:

- Look for signs of unauthorized entry.
- Check for abandoned items, unusual packages or objects.
- Look in battery box.
- Look under the hood.
- Look at the fuel cap.
- Look under the seats.
- Look under driver's seat.
- Look under the bus.
- Look in bulkhead.
- Look for anything that seems out of place.

Security Sweep

If you leave your vehicle unattended for any amount of time, you need to do another security sweep prior to passengers boarding your vehicle. Parked buses are especially vulnerable on activity or sports trips. It is safest to keep your bus within view at all times at the destination.

Observing along your route

- Stay on approved route or make sure dispatch knows if you must reroute for any reason.
- Do not be on autopilot.
- Notice your surroundings.
- Identify risks.
- Limit risks.
- Protect the children.
- Do not open the door; force people to talk to you through the driver's window.
- Look for vehicles whose drivers might be rehearsing or studying your route.
- Report strange detours.
- If in doubt, call dispatch.

What makes someone suspicious?

- Asking questions about school dismissal times or bus stops. Inappropriate questions are a big red flag that somebody could be up to something they should not be doing.
- Repeatedly sighted within the school/bus environment.
- Taking videos or photos at bus stops or school loading zones.
- Looking lost or wandering around school areas when they are unauthorized to do so.
- Openly possessing a weapon.
- Trust your gut.

Remember that a potential hijacker could be anyone of any age, race, ethnicity or background. This is why it is so important to follow policies of not allowing anyone on the bus unless they are authorized. This must include both adults and children.

Assessing suspicious activity could include:

- People you have never seen near a bus stop
- Disabled vehicles
- A situation where your bus might get blocked in

Children are vulnerable

- Encourage students to tell you about anything or anyone that makes them feel uncomfortable.
- Notify your supervisor or school official immediately if a student reports the presence of strangers, gang activity, bullying or harassment.
- Don't release students if something seems out of the norm. Radio dispatcher for instructions and reassure students.

Reporting Suspicious Activity:

Know your local reporting policy. Report to supervisor or dispatcher or call First Observer call center directly at 1-888-217-5902.

First Observer does NOT replace 911.

The call center forwards the information to a TSA analyst who evaluates its immediate and long-range value. The information is shared with other state/local/federal agencies as appropriate.

If you see something suspicious:

- Stay calm.
- Safety first. Driving the children safely is the priority.
- There could be more than one accomplice in the area.
- Move to a safe place to make your report.
- Be aware of what got your attention.
- Record key details.
- “Zoom out” to see the whole situation.
- Strive for accuracy on what you are reporting.

If you see what you believe to be rehearsing.

Do not be a hero.

Get your bus and students out of danger and
then report your situation.

Report emergencies to 911 first.

If you suspect a vehicle is following you, what should you do?

- It could be innocent; however, you should not take the chance.
- Report to dispatch.
- Give them your location.
- Make/model of car.
- License plate.
- Description of driver or passengers.
- Once you are safe, report information to the First Observer call center.

What if my uniform or school ID is missing?

Could this be a threat?

Yes, a terrorist could have stolen it in an attempt to blend in.

You should:

- Report this to your school or company.
- Report this to the First Observer call center.

What if you are hijacked?

- Stay calm and try to keep everyone else calm.
- Do not challenge the hijackers physically or verbally. Comply with their instructions.
- Do not struggle or try to escape unless you are absolutely certain of success.
- If your district has a code word to use on the radio, use it if you think you can do so without endangering the students.
- Do not pick up any more passengers.

- Mentally prepare yourself for possibly being physically and mentally abused until the ordeal is over.
- Try to remember things about the hijacker in case they escape.
- If shooting occurs, keep your head down or drop to the floor.
- Remember, when the police do arrive they may not know if you are a hijacker or the bus driver. It will be noisy, chaotic and dangerous, but try to stay calm and cooperate.

A message from the TSA

When you are a First Observer, you will make a difference.

You will help protect our fellow citizens.

Half of public safety is the public.

Thank you.