

## Terrorist Messaging Urges Use of Edged-Weapons

Terrorist messaging over the past several years has espoused the use of rudimentary and readily available edged weapons, which may result in fewer observable indicators and reduced time for detection and disruption. A recent example is an October 2020 publication of the pro-ISIS *The Voice of Hind* by the Kashmiri group Jund al-Khilafah titled "The Deviant Methodologies and Their Evil Endings," containing a graphic urging edged-weapon attacks against those accused of blasphemy. The publication highlighted the October 2020 knife attack in France of a teacher who was killed after instructing a class on freedom of expression in context of the Charlie Hebdo Muhammad cartoons. The tactic was seen again several days later when an individual killed at least three people and injured several others in a knife attack at a church in Nice, France, and another individual stabbed and slightly wounded a guard at the French Consulate in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.



Graphic from *The Voice of Hind*

**CONSIDERATIONS:** First responders may observe indications that an edged-weapon attack is terrorism-related during the course of an incident. An attacker's actions or statements during an operation may provide responders with insight into potential motivations and possible follow-on tactics, techniques, and procedures used by the attacker(s). Also important for consideration is that an incident may be part of a larger, complex and coordinated attack, which may entail additional attackers targeting first responders.

- A suspect motivated by violent ideology, including one that inspires martyrdom, may not comply with commands to discontinue the attack and disarm.
- Throughout an incident, the following indicators may be observed:
  - **PRE-ARRIVAL:** Information relayed by a 911 operator, such as attacker's statements or caller's reported observation of warning behaviors exhibited, such as allegiance to terrorist groups or revenge for a perceived injury or grievance.
  - **DURING RESPONSE:** Scene size-up and lifesaving actions, as well as visible or audible signs indicating violent extremist ideology (stickers, emblems, and flags).
  - **POST-INCIDENT:** Exploitation of media, pocket litter, journals, interviews (victims, witnesses, friends, and family), financial transactions, and travel records.



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**RESPONSE:** Responders should be highly aware of their surroundings and the nature of the call for service, which may provide indications of an attempt to lure responding officers into an ambush or follow-on attack.

- When being approached, watch a person's hands for palmed items or suspicious movements, such as reaching for pockets, waist, purse, or anywhere a weapon could be concealed.
- Seemingly innocuous items, such as lawnmower blades or wrenches, may be commercially modified or modified by an individual to artfully conceal edged weapons.
- Use of appropriate safety gear is recommended, including equipment such as ballistic vests, which may not be specifically intended to protect against edged weapons but may provide an extra measure of protection.

**TRAINING:** Responders are encouraged to prepare for edged-weapon attacks through continued service training. Studies have established parity of force between holstered firearms and impact or edged weapons at 21 feet, based on reaction time and marksmanship challenges, with firearms gaining advantage as distance increases.

- Update training plans and use-of-force policies to include edged- and impact-weapon attacks.
- Incorporate "self-aid" training for traumatic edged-weapon injuries, and ensure that associated equipment or tools, such as quick-clotting bandages and tourniquets, are readily accessible to officers.
- Perform interagency training and joint exercises to develop and establish effective emergency response plans, which can improve mitigation tactics, increase rapid lifesaving treatment, and assist with post-incident transition to the investigation phase.





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