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20 July 2007

(U) Incidents at U.S. Airports May Suggest Possible Pre-Attack Probing

(U//FOUO) *A surge in recent suspicious incidents at U.S. airports may indicate terrorists are conducting pre-attack security probes and “dry runs” similar to dress rehearsals. Past terrorist attacks and plots show that such testing generally indicates attacks will soon follow, according to a joint FBI and Homeland Security assessment.*

(U//FOUO) Transportation security personnel and law enforcement officers nationwide have intercepted several items at airports resembling improvised explosive device (IED) components. These items include wires, switches, pipes or tubes, cell phone components, and dense clay-like substances. The unusual nature and increase in number of these improvised items raise concern, and TSA personnel should continue vigilance for groupings of ordinary items that look like IED components. Terrorists may repeat operational tests to desensitize, distract, or adapt plans for specific environments. Linking repetitious probing incidents or associated items possibly could alert authorities to future terrorist plots, tactics, and personalities.¹

(U//FOUO) Recent Suspicious Incidents



(U//FOUO) As photographed in a Milwaukee security incident, cheese has a consistency comparable to some explosive materials.

(U//FOUO) Individuals involved in these incidents were of varying gender, and initial investigations do not link them with criminal or terrorist organizations. However, most passengers' explanations for carrying the suspicious items were questionable, and some investigations are still ongoing. Many of the incidents caused airport terminal evacuations and at times, brief closures.²

- **(U//FOUO) 5 July 2007, San Diego, CA—A U.S. Person's (USPER) checked baggage contained two icepacks covered in duct tape. The icepacks had clay inside them rather than the normal blue gel.³**

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Transportation Intelligence Gazette



(U//FOUO) The items in Baltimore were taped together, likely raising the level of suspicion.

- **(U//FOUO) 4 June 2007, Milwaukee, WI**—The carry-on baggage of a USPER contained several items resembling IED components, such as a wire coil wrapped around a possible initiator, an electrical switch, batteries, three tubes, and two blocks of cheese.⁴
- **(U//FOUO) 8 November 2006, Houston, TX**—A USPER's checked baggage contained a plastic bag with a 9-volt battery, wires, a block of brown clay-like minerals, and pipes.⁵
- **(U//FOUO) 16 September 2006, Baltimore, MD**—

The checked baggage of a couple contained a plastic bag with a block of processed cheese taped to another plastic bag holding a cellular phone charger.⁶

(U//FOUO) Past Examples of Dry Runs

(U//FOUO) A recent joint FBI and Homeland Security assessment provides some examples of past terrorist attacks and plots where dry runs or probing played a major operational role:

- **(U) August 2006 Plot to Blow up Airliners Using Liquid Explosives**—Terrorists discussed dry runs to test airport security procedures.
- **(U) 7 July 2005 London Bombings**—The operatives discreetly practiced a mock attack while riding the London subway in late June 2005.
- **(U) 11 September 2001 Attacks**—The hijackers rehearsed events aboard transcontinental flights just months prior to the attacks.

(U) 1994 “Operation Bojinka” Plot—Ramzi Yousef planned to simultaneously bomb multiple airplanes while flying over the Pacific Ocean and his group conducted dry runs in environments similar to that of the intended targets.

(U//FOUO) The terrorist plots and attacks listed above demonstrate that operational test results hold unlimited value for terrorist planners and may even prepare terrorist operators for stress experienced on the actual attack day. *Identifying dry runs and probes—even though they are often seen in the end stages of pre-attack planning—is key to preventing future terrorist attacks on transportation modes.*⁷

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The banner features the title "Transportation Intelligence Gazette" in a bold, black, sans-serif font, centered against a blue background with a faint, light-colored image of an airport terminal or transportation hub.

(U//FOUO) Prepared by the TSA Office of Intelligence, Transportation Threat Unit. For dissemination questions, contact TSA Production Management, TSA-OI-PM@tsa.ic.gov.

¹(U) FBI Intelligence Bulletin No. 227, 272021Z DEC 06, (U)

²(U) TSA, Suspicious Incidents Report (SIR) 14-20 September 2006, (SSI)

³(U) TSA, Suspicious Incidents Report (SIR) 5-11 July 2007, (SSI)

⁴(U) TSA, Administrator's Daily Intelligence Brief (ADIB), 15 June 2007 (U//FOUO)

⁵(U) TSA, Suspicious Incidents Report (SIR) 9-15 November 2006, (SSI)

⁶(U) TSA, Suspicious Incidents Report (SIR) 14-20 September 2006, (SSI)

⁷(U) FBI Intelligence Bulletin No. 227, 272021Z DEC 06, (U)

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