

College Campuses are Vulnerable to Terrorism: All-Hazards Preparation is Key

By W. Roger Webb -- MIPT Board Member

President, University of Central Oklahoma

College and university presidents have considered the possibility that their campus might someday be the target of a terrorist attack, but few have instituted any precautions. Most members of the academic community have never allowed themselves to consider the awful prospect. But, after the recent tragic events on the campus of Virginia Tech University, it is more appropriate than ever to think about the unthinkable and to initiate a reasonable campus alert approach.

This is not a call to “lock down” the campus or to spread fear amongst the student body. However, this is a strong recommendation that, given the quality of existing intelligence information, it would be imprudent to ignore the signs or do nothing in preparation.

Across America parents are asking what colleges and universities are doing to protect their students. Parents want, and have a right to know, how safe are institutions of higher learning?



MIPT Memorial Institute for the
Prevention of Terrorism

Countering Terrorism with Knowledge

Amid the recent tragedy on the Virginia Tech University campus, the Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT) released this document written by MIPT Board Member and University of Central Oklahoma President W. Roger Webb, discussing the topic of campus security and preparedness. With his experience and distinguished career in higher education and in public safety, Webb provides critical insight into the topic that other specialists cannot. MIPT also offers more information regarding schools and terrorism on its website, www.mipt.org.

Points of view in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position of MIPT or the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Supported under Award Number 2006-MU-T6-K001.

Since the terrible event at Virginia Tech, there have been three sets of tension created on college campuses:

- I. The tension of an open campus versus a secure campus.
- II. The tension of individual privacy versus community safety.
- III. The tension of expensive systems and training versus limited resources.

College administrators face competing priorities rarely found outside an educational environment. Not the least among these is providing a secure environment for a community disposed toward freedom: freedom of thought, of speech, of access and of movement.

For a campus to move in front of an actual threat, threat assessments are necessary in order to determine possible risks to critical support facilities,

critical research infrastructure, communication systems, cyber systems, and most importantly, its people. Protection of students, faculty and staff and spaces such as, residence halls, classrooms and common areas are vital to every campus.

CAMPUS VULNERABILITIES

Why must the implementation of serious and meaningful preparations to help guard against all hazards be taken by schools so quickly? The answers are very clear.

- Campuses are widely accessible and convenient places for terrorists to hide, easily blending in with students in dormitories, student unions and libraries.
- Campuses have large stadiums, arenas and performance centers which attract huge crowds and are inviting targets.

These events frequently bring to campus unfamiliar faces and outside visitors who are unknown to campus security.

- High-rise buildings on campus are attractive platforms for snipers.
- Campuses have chemical, biological, medical and animal research laboratories which house toxic and hazardous agents.
- Campuses often have central power plants, as well as heating and cooling terminals.
- Many campuses have child development centers which are soft targets.
- Most campuses have elaborate information technology systems which are easily

accessible and vulnerable.

- Most campus police officers are not yet trained to recognize or be alert for terrorist threats.
- The appeal of a campus setting to terrorists is strong because of the potential for fear and panic that will spread far beyond the specific campus to families, friends and other institutions.

UNDERSTAND THE MINDSET

Perhaps the most compelling reason action must be taken is that campuses are “target rich environments.” The motives of a domestic or international terrorist will immediately gain maximum international attention, such as after the shooting at Virginia Tech.

Additionally, many campus populations live with a sense of invincibility, even naivety. The academic mindset often assumes a sort of “moral protective barrier” around college campuses. Moreover, some administrators believe that campus security officers are paranoid and capable of

dreaming up fear-inducing scenarios to reinforce job security.

It is appropriate to consider a couple of the potential scenarios that may occur on a university campus. At one time, these scenarios would have seemed unthinkable, but recent intelligence makes them far more real:

Campus Security Questions for College Presidents

1. Does your campus have a Comprehensive Emergency Team in place? It is headed by a senior staff member? Does the team leadership have regular opportunities to participate in security exercises?
2. Does your campus have a Comprehensive Emergency Plan in place? Does it include procedures to deal with various events, including an active shooter? Can your campus be locked down?
3. What is the continuity plan for your campus? Would that plan be applicable to all types of emergencies?
4. Does your campus have multiple means of communicating with students, faculty, staff and visitors in the event of an immediate, ongoing emergency situation?
5. How often do your campus security personnel participate in all hazards training? How often do they participate in incident command training?
6. What action would your institution take if it identified a person posing a safety risk to him/herself or others?
7. How is your campus security leadership able to communicate and coordinate with local law enforcement, political officials, first responders and the Department of Health?
8. How does your campus handle threats against employees and students?

Courtesy: University of Central Oklahoma

Scenario One

Six men from a secret militia group based in a north central state steal radioactive waste material from a Canadian nuclear reactor and build a “dirty bomb.” They deposit the bomb in a trash receptacle in a large sports arena during a championship basketball game. The initial explosion destroys a section of the arena, killing and seriously injuring more than 100 people immediately, and poisoning the campus simultaneously.

Scenario Two

Two members of an international terrorist organization, posing as employees of a touring theater group “setting up” in a new university theater, place three pipe bombs in strategic locations. The bombs bring down a balcony and ignite a fire, fed by containers of incendiary material positioned near the pipe bombs. Eight die as a result of the

Checklist for Campus Security

- ✓ Establish a management team responsible for directing the implementation of a Campus Emergency operations plan.
- ✓ Develop a unified command plan with local governmental and law-enforcement agencies.
- ✓ Establish “threat-assessment teams” and develop checklists for each level of threat identified by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.
- ✓ Update risk assessment inventory.
- ✓ Consider assigning campus security officers as liaisons with international student groups. The officers may serve to build trust and allay fears among international students.
- ✓ Increase physical checks of critical facilities during periods of increased alert.
- ✓ Establish a single point of access for each critical facility and institute 100 percent identification checks.
- ✓ Increase administrative inspections of persons and their possessions entering critical facilities.
- ✓ Assess adequacy of video monitoring.
- ✓ Assess adequacy of physical barriers outside sensitive buildings and proximity of parking.
- ✓ Ensure adequacy of emergency alert and communication system for students, faculty, staff and visitors.
- ✓ Review institutional crisis communications plan including parent and stakeholder communications.

This checklist is not intended to be all-inclusive; it is proposed as a starting point for presidents and chancellors who understand that campus security is no longer routine.

Courtesy: American Association of State Colleges and Universities

balcony collapse. Dozens more are severely injured as a result of shrapnel, burns and smoke inhalation. That evening, a call to the national media from a so-called spokesman claims credit for this tragedy.

It does not take a criminal mind to envision many other frightening scenarios on any individual campus. Every campus is a potential target. Campus leaders must not assume that because a campus is small, rural or isolated it is immune to such attacks.

NOT “IF” BUT “WHEN”

Many living in the Heartland of America thought terrorism was only a threat on the coasts or in major cities. But in 1995 a Ryder truck carrying 4,000 pounds of fertilizer and race car fuel was the weapon that brought down the Oklahoma City Federal Building, killing 168 men, women and children. The damage, both physical and psychological, that would occur and the wave of panic that would reverberate across the country if such a truck were backed up to the loading dock of a student union or library and detonated is almost unimaginable.

The U.S. higher education system needs to recognize the reality that college

campuses are not safe harbors immune from violent attack. What is the probability of a terrorist incident occurring on a college campus? According to Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) officers, a better question is “when?”

In early December 2002, a conference hosted by the Department of Justice and the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administration (IACLEA) was held in Washington, D.C., on the campus of George Washington University. Attending were representatives from 40 colleges and universities, police departments, FBI, Office of Domestic Preparedness, Homeland Security and American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU). The messages and conclusions were stark and emphatic.

Cassandra Chandler, assistant director for the FBI Training Division, pointed out that “there exists a gap in training between campus police and smaller police agencies with what larger departments receive.”

Another speaker, Louis Quijas, assistant director for the FBI Office of Law Enforcement Coordinator, correctly stated that,

“Campus law enforcement has to be a player in the war on terrorism, but campus police must be better trained and equipped.”

OTHER ISSUES: TRAINING

Needed today on most college campuses is training in threat assessment and analysis in order to provide proper response and intervention. This training should be comprehensive and include senior campus administration, decision makers, counselors and school psychologists, security and law enforcement leaders, risk managers, and communication specialists.

The federal government should make broader availability of the materials, resources and programs that already exist. Campuses across the nation should be encouraged to become more active and take advantage of the many existing opportunities for assistance in planning and preparation.

In the aftermath of the Columbine High School shooting, federal dollars were distributed as grants to agencies and institutions for training materials that should be in the hands of campus leaders today. These materials and training aids must be easily accessible and readily available so that

all campuses can take advantage of the tremendous effort produced from past attacks.

Maintaining a safe campus requires a holistic approach that brings all relevant personnel and tools together in a coordinated and balanced effort. While every

school is unique, essential elements of an effective security program are the same.

For this reason every campus must have a thorough understanding of Critical Incident Management and the roles to be filled from decision

makers to security personnel. A Critical Incident Management Plan is a must for every campus and one that should be rehearsed regularly.

College and university campuses also encounter another challenge. There has been a significant rise in the percentage of students who, when enrolling, already have mental illnesses. Laws, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, prevent discrimination due to a disability, including mental illness.

Universities must weigh the rights of individuals against the safety concerns of the community. Balancing the rights of individual students while protecting the student body at large is a particularly complex task.

Presidents will also be concerned about overreaction by police and about “cookie cutter” responses imposed on every incident. They may also be understandably concerned about any unnecessary disruption of classes and the free flow of students and faculty.

However, good planning will minimize such disruptions, while, in turn, saving student, faculty and staff lives and answering the question that everyone asks: “How safe is your campus?”

Cycle of Crisis Planning



Crisis management is a continuous process in which all phases of the plan are being reviewed and revised. Good plans are never finished. They can always be updated based on experience, research and changing vulnerabilities.

Mitigation/Prevention addresses what schools and districts can do to reduce or eliminate risk to life and property.

Preparedness focuses on the process of planning for the worst-case scenario.

Response is devoted to the steps to take during a crisis.

Recovery deals with how to restore the learning and teaching environment after a crisis.

Courtesy: Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools (OSDFS), U.S. Department of Education

SPOTLIGHT ON THE AUTHOR

PRESIDENT W. ROGER WEBB



W. Roger Webb became the nineteenth President of the University of Central Oklahoma in July of 1997. A native of eastern Oklahoma, Webb graduated from Heavener High School, received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Oklahoma State University and received his Juris Doctorate degree from the University of Oklahoma, College of Law.

From 1974-1978, Webb served as Oklahoma Commissioner of Public Safety before beginning his career in higher education as the President of Northeastern State University. Webb served in that capacity until 1997, when he was named president of UCO.

In 1995, Webb was named to the Oklahoma Higher Education Hall of Fame. He also served as the President/Chairman of Oklahoma Academy for State Goals and as the State Chairman of Oklahoma Homecoming '90.

Currently, Webb serves on numerous boards at the community, state and national level. Within the Oklahoma City area, Webb is a member of the Board of Directors for the Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism, Mercy Hospital Board, Delta Dental of Oklahoma, the Oklahoma City Petroleum Club, Oklahoma River Chesapeake Boathouse and the Oklahoma Metro United Way.

At the state level, Webb served on the executive committee for Leadership Oklahoma and is a board member for the Oklahoma Science and Technology Research and Development Board, Oklahoma Business Roundtable and the Governor's International Roundtable.

On the national scene, Webb is currently a member of the National Consortium of Academics and Sports and has previously served on the board of directors for the American Association of State Colleges and Universities and Lambda Chi Alpha.

2007 NATIONAL CAMPUS SECURITY SUMMIT

Wednesday, May 30, 2007
9 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Edmond, Oklahoma

University of Central Oklahoma
Nigh University Center

The 2007 National Campus Security Summit is bringing leading experts to explore and evaluate critical issues facing decision makers in higher education and offer practical measures for Campus Security. While recognizing that funds are *always* limited and that campuses cannot become fortified installations, the Summit will deliver actionable steps and best practices to apply to your university situation. Participants will also learn about programs offered by MIPT, such as Lessons Learned Information Sharing (LLIS.gov), to find examples of other school crisis plans.

For more information, or to register, visit <http://campussecuritysummit.ucok.edu>.

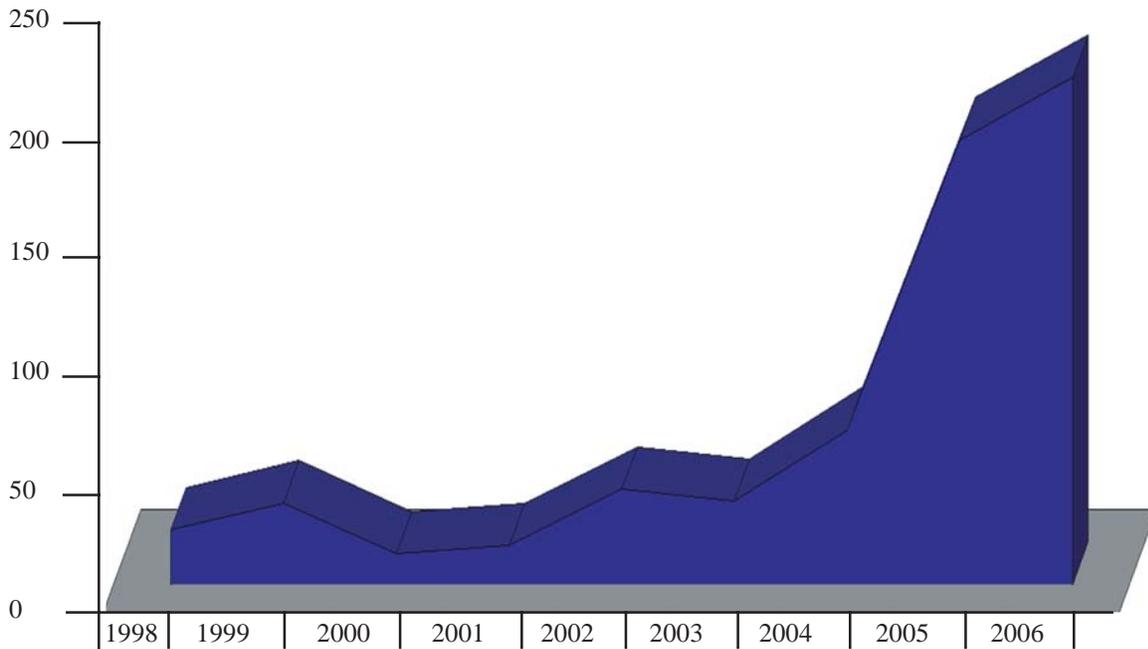
Sponsored by:



MIPT INSIGHT

TERRORIST ATTACKS AGAINST EDUCATION INSTITUTES 1998 - 2006

This trend graph shows terrorist attacks, both domestic and international, against education institutes from 1998 through 2006.



MIPT INSIGHT - MAY 2007

(Courtesy - The Terrorism Knowledge Base via www.mipt.org)

**Memorial Institute for the
Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT)**
P.O. Box 889
Oklahoma City, OK 73101