

Suicide Bombing in a Money Lending Shop – A Rare Non-Terrorist Explosion Scene Report

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Abstract

Suicide is an intentional act of a person causing one's own death. Suicide bombing is the choice of an individual or organization member to embrace death for achievement. Suicide bombers are mostly from terrorist organization. It is a crime scene report wherein a normal citizen, a lorry driver in India triggered suicidal bombing in a money lending shop. Suicidal death with explosive by normal citizens is rare. The author, then Government forensic crime scene investigator had investigated the suicidal bombing scene wherein a lorry driver aged about 42 years committed suicide bombing in a money lending shop. It was not a terrorist attack, from any terrorist organization. The author examined the blasting site and identified the type of explosive used in this act. After the bombing, the bomber survived for a while and subsequently collapsed within a shop, a rental house. The dead body found on the floor, within the shop with injuries on abdomen with exposed viscera. The body was intact, nor blown to pieces as appeared in terrorist suicide attack. An improvised device found attached in abdomen region and the chemical substance used was low power explosives, never used by the terrorists for the suicide attack. The author concluded with a finding that the local lorry driver had committed suicide bombing under stress, because of his inability to pay the lorry loan instalments for many months. It was an act of psychological stress rather than terrorist attack since the moneylender was safe, even in his close range of the bomber.

Keywords: Crime scene, suicide bomber, non-terrorist, low power explosive

Introduction

Suicide is an intentional act of a person causing one's own death which is a serious problem to public health and society¹. The choice of committing suicide is based on access or available source to end their life. Most common method of suicide is the deliberate consumption of insecticides and pesticides that easily available in the market used for agricultural usage.

Hence in many countries, hazardous pesticides and insecticide have been banned to reduce the number of suicides². Suicides while in traffic are also reported, while a person jumps under a moving train or heavy vehicles³. The other means of committing suicide is jumping from heights such as multi-storey buildings and towers, mostly by young people suffering from schizophrenia⁴. Researchers have indicated that suicide by jumping from a bridge is the choice of some people, mostly males⁵⁻⁶. Suicide committed by firearms to the heads are also occurred in developed countries because of their usage and easy accessibility⁷⁻⁸. Death due to explosions are mostly accidental and sometimes they are by homicidal act. But suicide by explosives is exceedingly rare and literature review showed the incidences as non-terrorist suicides⁹⁻¹¹. Suicide operations by terrorist organization are used by fanatic religious and nationalistic groups

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and regard them as a kind of holy war by divine command¹²⁻¹³. There are about ten terrorist groups that are using suicide terrorism as a tactic against their own or foreign governments and VIPs to achieve their target by using improvised high power explosive devices¹⁴⁻¹⁵. Explosives involved suicidal deaths are rare and they used crackers, contain low power explosives like black powder or gun powder. The use of low power explosive can be ascertained with the analytical report obtained from forensic science laboratory. The present crime scene report is a non-terrorist suicidal death involving low power explosive, the chemical substance used in crackers.

Leaping from heights in general is a method with high lethality (Rock et al., 2005). It is the fourth most frequent suicide method in Switzerland, representing 10.7% of all suicides. Also jumping from high buildings, also into well and rivers are other ways of suicides. In the developed countries, firearms like revolver and pistol are the easy available source for suicidal deaths. The most common risk factors for suicide is depression and mood disorders

Suicide by jumping in general appears to be more often chosen by subjects suffering from schizophrenia. Among those who jump, young subjects, in particular, choose bridges to end their lives. suicide by jumping from a bridge may be the choice of a population which differs from people jumping from other sites in certain demographic characteristics

Method and Observation

The author, then Government Forensic Crime Scene Investigator in India, investigated this suicide bombing, wherein a lorry driver initiated the improvised explosive device (IED) in a money lending shop, that occurred in Tamilnadu state, South India.



Figure 1: Suicide bomber was alive for a while after the blast and subsequently collapsed

Figure 1 shows the presence of dead body of the suicide bomber lying on the floor after the blast and alive for a while. Even the bicycle of the owner, parked near the deceased within the shop did not show any mark of damage or dent in any place of the bicycle. As the police station was extremely near to the money lending shop, the police arrived immediately while the lorry driver was still alive for a while with sitting posture. Under low voice he informed the police that he was unable to pay the instalments for many months for the loan obtained and bought a lorry. He planned to get the money from a money lender under threat using bomb but in vain.

Observation and Reconstruction

As requested by the Deputy Superintendent of Police, the forensic crime scene investigator (the author) rushed to the money lending shop, the blasting scene. The money lender hired a house as money lending shop. He used to come to this shop from his residence through bicycle and park the cycle within the hall as seen in the figure. The suicide bomber was found dead near the bicycle. The body was intact, unlike body pieces found in terrorist suicide attack, wherein high-power explosives like RDX, PETN with missiles are tied in the body under dressing and after the blast the body of the terrorist maybe thrown away into pieces with damages in the surrounding area. But on examination of the body in the money lender shop, the hands, legs, and chest areas have no noticeable injuries. The shirt and the dhoti have shown characteristic damages and the inner blue trouser went to pieces and two pieces found on the body. I noticed burned match sticks on the floor and charred cloth pieces. In a terrorist suicide attack, the bomber used missiles like nails, glass pieces, iron balls and other metal fragments within the high-power explosive to cause more casualties to the people who are far away from the blasting site. But the author did not observe any such missiles near the dead body, or any missile strike marks on the walls nearby. The owner who was sitting on a chair, away from the bomber did not sustain any injuries or damages in the furniture he used. The lower abdomen region of the body showed the protruding of intestine with excess bleeding that caused the death.

Based on the crime scene observation, the bomber might have collected black powder from the crackers and made an improvised bomb with a wick and tied around

the abdomen region. He entered into the money lending shop and demanded money but the money lender scolded him to get away from the shop. Then the lorry driver, suicide bomber might have triggered the improvised country made bomb with fire. The improvised explosive device exploded in the abdomen region that caused injury with a hole through which a part of intestine projected out. The dress in the abdomen region burned, as found in the crime scene. The charred pieces and bloodstain evidence were collected for the onward transmission to the Forensic Sciences Laboratory, Chennai, India for analysis. The body was sent to Department of Forensic Medicine for autopsy examination. The forensic laboratory identified and reported the presence of black powder used in firecrackers, a pyrotechnic chemical substance. The autopsy report confirmed the explosive injuries caused by the explosion of firecracker chemical substance that classified as low power explosive. The author reconstructed the blasting scene based on physical evidence in the crime scene.

Discussion

Suicide bombing forms a tool for many terrorist organizations and using as a tactic against their own government or other governments¹⁶. Terrorist organization preferred young women to participate in the suicide bombing operations, considering the gender advantage¹⁷. Social networks play a role of predicting the terrorist organization, who triggered the suicide bombing. Explosives associated deaths occur at work places or homicidal discharge during terrorist activity¹⁸. Non-suicidal deaths are reported infrequently but require keen crime scene observation and investigation. Literature review shows only countable number of non-suicidal death cases reported¹⁹⁻²⁰.

Collection of physical evidence in the death scenes and crime reconstruction is an important key to solve the mystery and to arrive a conclusion²¹. Examination of injuries, distribution, and pattern of the victim in the crime scene provides valuable information for the manner of death²². In the developing countries, it is generally considered that depressions, mental illness, economic burden, and unemployment are the causes for committing suicide²³.

Conclusion

In the present case report a lorry driver turned to be a suicide bomber due to stress and financial crisis and ended his life. Based on the keen crime scene examination and autopsy examination, this fact was identified and solved the mystery by eliminated the possibility of terrorist attack.

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