

Low-Tech vs. High-Tech:  
Different Types of Bombings in War

In recent days the United States military campaign in Iraq has been shocked by the addition of suicide bombings to the growing list of threats to American soldiers. Civilian soldiers, paramilitary groups, and false surrenders are now supplemented with the frightening prospect of bomb-laden vehicles, soldiers, and civilians with fatalistic senses of loyalty to either the Baath party of Iraq or the growing anti-American movement among Arab nations. Regardless of affiliation, the result for the Americans in Iraq is the same. The high-tech US military forces will have to adapt to and defend against low-tech attacks like suicide bombings.

The fear of suicide attacks was only an illusionary one until a few days ago when an attack on military forces in Iraq left several soldiers dead. This attack occurred on March 29, 2003 as a taxi driver drove his car up to a military checkpoint and called soldiers over to his car. The taxi driver then set off the explosives that were contained in his car and took the lives of four American soldiers. In response to this attack, the US military became more alert and suspicious of people who at first appear innocent. A story that is still developing at a similar checkpoint in Iraq seems to show the dangers that the military tactics of Iraq have for the United States' overall goal of Iraqi civilian safety. On Sunday, seven women and children were killed inside of a van that drove through a US checkpoint and ignored warning yells, shots and a shot at the engine of the vehicle. After exhausting all peaceful tactics, the soldiers at the checkpoint probably felt that the risk that the van was an attack was sufficiently high to open fire on the passengers. The

attack killed seven of thirteen passengers aboard and left America wondering what can be done to prevent suicide attacks and still protect the safety of the innocents in Iraq.

The situation that America faces is not unlike the dilemma that soldiers in Vietnam faced when Vietnamese citizens were suspected of being Viet Cong soldiers after many enemy soldiers in civilian clothing sacrificed themselves to make attacks on unsuspecting American camps and soldiers. The willingness of American soldiers to risk their own lives instead of killing the suspected VC eroded over prolonged exposure to such terrorism. The worry of American citizens and US military forces is that the integrity of Operation: Iraqi Freedom will degrade as soldiers are more and more afraid of suicide attacks. In the years since Vietnam, no technological developments have solved the issue that such attacks bring up and, consequently, our technological arsenal holds no weapons to use against such tactics. The world we live in has no weapons against these attacks. To quote a recent movie, "So much death. What can we do against such reckless hate?" These questions will lead us into the upcoming assault on Baghdad as these issues build in both frequency and amplitude.

What then is America doing in response to the recent announcement by Iraq that stated that 4,000 soldiers from many Arab nations have volunteered to serve as suicide bombers in the war with the United States? Thus far, almost nothing has changed on the war-planning side of the conflict. Instead, just as feared, much of the reactions are occurring within the troops of US soldiers. Perhaps, the only thing that can defend against the threat of bombings is to assuage the fears of American soldiers and convince them to remain focused on the military goals set before them. This is the only method that will prevent the effects of these tactics to reach the Iraqi citizens.