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# HOW CRIMINALS OPERATE

You need to be aware of how criminals and terrorists operate and what they look for in their victims; if you know this, you can hopefully avoid becoming a victim yourself.

**C**riminals and terrorists are generally business people; they commit crimes to make money or achieve a goal- some are good at it and some are not. At all levels of the crime business, criminals, to some degree, plan and organize their jobs, whether it is stealing someone's watch or assassinating someone.

In this chapter we will refer to the bad guys as criminals and will not differentiate

between criminals and terrorist, they are the same. You must remember that terrorists largely fund their terror campaigns from the proceeds of crime be it street crime, providing protection for criminal groups, smuggling drugs/people, protection rackets, kidnapping etc.

I tell my clients that the three golden rules to personal security are think like a criminal, keep a low profile and always have an escape route.

- Think like a criminal: Put yourself in the criminal's shoes and think how you would rob or kidnap yourself, how would you break into your home or hotel room.
- Keep a low profile: Do not draw attention to yourself, consider what you wear and drive, don't be loud and rowdy. And don't tell strangers too much about yourself, especially anything to do with your personal security. If you are trying to impress someone use a cover story.
- Always have an escape route: Make sure you know how and have the means to get out of your location to a safe area. Know how to get out of the hotel and have the means to get out of the city, and then possibly the country and you know how to get to a safe location.

Do they have valuables on them worth taking, will the target put up a fight and can they escape after committing the crime?

Be assured there is nothing listed here that criminals don't already know.

## Street crime

In general, the type of criminal most people will come into contact with will be from the lower echelon of the criminal world, such as muggers, car thieves, burglars and other petty criminals.

Think about if you were a mugger and you were going to rob yourself what three questions would you ask yourself about the target. Muggers will generally ask themselves three questions when choosing their victims: do they have valuables on them worth taking, will the target put up a fight and can they escape after committing the crime? The criminal has just done a basic threat assessment.

Wherever you go, you need to blend in with the environment and the people around >

## If you are a criminal taxi driver at an airport looking for targets for an express kidnapping who will you want to pick up?

wear expensive jewelry or clothing. Look online for some photos of street scenes from the location you'll be visiting and see how people dress.

It also makes sense that if you are dressed to blend in with your environment, so your luggage should blend in as well. If you are a criminal taxi driver at an airport looking for targets for an express kidnapping who will you want to pick up, the local with the sports bag or the foreigner in the tweed sports coat with the designer leather luggage.

Luggage theft is also big business, in the early 1990's there were crews of Latin American's who use to go to London during the summers and just steal luggage from the lobbies of 5 star hotels. Think what valuables people keep in their suit cases; jewelry, computers, cameras designer clothes etc. Whenever you check into a hotel keep your luggage with you and look around at others luggage and see how easy it would be to walk away with.

Luggage security is also something most do not consider, but consider this; you arrive at your hotel in a developing country and let the bell boy take your bags to your room for you while you complete your check in. You then proceed to your room and start to unpack, and then there is a knock on your door. When you answer it there is the hotel manager and two police officers who ask to search your room, are you going to say

no, can you say no? When they search your bags they find a small package of drugs, now are you going to pay the fine or go to a 3rd world prison? Do you think anyone will believe the drugs were not yours; there are 3 witnesses who were present when they were found in your bags. Never leave luggage unattended, in some places you need to be more concerned about things being put in your bags rather than taken!

If you are traveling to another country, it makes a lot sense not to advertise the fact that you are foreigner. There are many police forces that supplement their salaries by stopping and shaking down foreign visitors. In the late 90's I had an associate go to Moscow with a client who was dressed as he would in London, camelhair overcoat etc. The Moscow polices spotted him and called over and asked for his wallet, they took \$100.00 and gave him his wallet back. A simple a painless lesson, which I hope, but doubt he, learned from.

Another way to signal that you are a foreigner- and a potential target- is the language you speak on the streets. If you are in a high crime area and don't speak the local language, try not to talk whilst on the streets and if you must, keep it low. Criminals always look for people who are soft targets because they don't want a confrontation, thus drawing attention, which is bad for business. You always want to act like you know where you are going and what you are

doing and not to look and act like a victim.

When traveling, it is important that you plan your trip in detail from start to finish. For example, when planning the trip from the airport to your hotel, make sure that you use a reputable taxi company, such as one which is recommended or supplied by the hotel. Then, when being picked up make sure to verify it is the real taxi that has been sent by the hotel. Airports such as Simon Bolivar Airport in Caracas, Venezuela are very dangerous places and the starting point for many express kidnappings.

Think about it: would you let close family members or friends get into a car with a complete stranger where you live now? So, why do it in a foreign country, carrying a suitcase full of valuables? In many countries, the taxi business is unregulated and often associated with criminal activity- taxi fares are a source of hard cash and as long as

someone can drive, they are qualified to be cab drivers. Licenses can be bought or copied. The taxi business is also a good corporate front for organized criminal groups as it is a cash business and can be used for laundering Narco money and the like.

Many tourists have found themselves left on the side of the road, in the middle of nowhere watching their luggage, passport and travelers checks being driven off into the night. The lucky ones just get robbed and not raped, beaten senseless or murdered.

You should make sure you are staying in a reputable hotel that has good CCTV and professional 24-hour security personnel.

You also want to make sure that the restaurants, clubs and bars you go to are reputable. Criminals like to go to restaurants or other tourist hang-outs just as much as >





everyone else. In some places organized criminals are the only ones with the money to set up and frequent upscale restaurants and clubs. Incidentally, criminal venues can be very peaceful places to go but there is always the potential for problems and are therefore best avoided. Criminals will pay waiters or bar staff to tip them off when a suitable victim is noticed at their venue; the foreigner with the Rolex, designer clothes and the wallet full of cash and credit cards. When the victim leaves the venue they can be robbed on the street or steered into a criminal taxi.

You also need to be careful that when you are in a club or a bar you do not leave your drink unattended. Think about how many times when you have been at a hotel bar or club and left your drink unattended or with someone you have just met who seemed like a nice person. How easy would it have been for someone to spike your drink with drugs such as Rohypnol/Flunitrazepam. This commonly thought of as the "Date Rape" drug but is also used in robberies.

There was one nightclub in Riga, Latvia where it was common knowledge that visitors who flashed their money and Rolex's around could end up drugged and robbed, they would wake up in the morning somewhere missing their valuables. When they reported the robberies to the police they would not take the victims seriously, what was to prove they did not drink themselves unconscious, the victim could not remember what they were doing, so they could have given their valuables away etc. As long as no-one got hurt the police in Riga weren't concerned. At this time while writing this chapter the police in West Palm Beach and Broward Counties in South Florida are looking for a gang of females who have been drugging men in bars and nightclubs and robbing them.

You don't have to go to nightclubs to be exposed to the risk of being drugged, one Gypsy tactic in Europe is to get their small children to go out and sell glasses of tea or soft drinks to tourists, who would expect a little girl to give you a spiked drink. The children are accompanied by teenagers who then watch and follow the victim until they passed out or go and help them when they start to stumble at which time they rob them.

Rohypnol/Flunitrazepam is a tasteless and odorless drug; Flunitrazepam takes approximately 15 to 20 minutes to take effect and usually lasts four to six hours, depending on dosage. The drug makes individuals unable to remember what happened while under the influence of the drug. Flunitrazepam is commonly used in sexual assaults; victims may not be able to recall the assault, the assailant and be uncertain about the facts surrounding the assault.

## Tactical training for the real world



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