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COUNTERTERRORISM FLY TEAM

Terrorism is the use of intentionally indiscriminate violence (terror) in order to achieve a political, religious, or ideological aim. It is classified as fourth-generation warfare and as a violent crime. In modern times, terrorism is considered a major threat to society and therefore illegal under anti-terrorism laws in most jurisdictions. It is also considered a war crime under the laws of war when used to target non-combatants, such as civilians, neutral military personnel, or enemy prisoners of war.

In order to combat terrorists wherever they operate in the world, the FBI's Counterterrorism Division has created Counterterrorism Fly Teams that can mobilize and deploy to any location on the map in a matter of hours. These highly robust units possess immense field capability including tactical responses, intelligence gathering, and advanced linguistic skills. Composed of the Bureau's finest Special Agents and intelligence analysts, Fly Teams serve as the tip of the spear in investigative and counterterrorism operations.

Along with other elite teams in the FBI like the SWAT and HRT units, Counterterrorism Fly Teams must successfully pass a highly selective screening process. Only special agents with at least five years of field experience may compete for a position. If selected, they must complete a five month long training regimen that includes team building, medical skills, fingerprinting, cultural awareness, hostage retrieval, and physical fitness drills.

Genesis: On June 21, 2002, the FBI Director announced to Congress the establishment of the Fly Team as a significant counterterrorism initiative under the reorganization plan to refocus the Bureau's mission and priorities following the 9/11 terrorism attacks.

Fly Team mission: To bring the FBI's strategic and tactical counterterrorism capabilities to bear in partnership with other U.S.

government agencies and foreign partner-nation entities in critical overseas locations to detect, penetrate, and disrupt terrorist networks.

The Breadth and Scope of the FBI Counterterrorism Fly Team

These eminently qualified units are inserted into highly dangerous situations in foreign environments where they are tasked with penetrating terrorist facilities and collecting intelligence. The integrated analysts who support tactical personnel utilize high-tech analytical and communications equipment to relay information to Bureau facilities. They also provide on-site analysis which enables the Fly Team to take immediate action if it is required.

In addition to conducting field missions themselves, FBI Counterterrorism Fly Team jobs also involve acting as lead operatives in advance of the FBI's primary investigative or mission group. Fly Teams will enter a foreign environment and assess the situation providing recommendations to FBI managers, who will modify their deployment plans accordingly. The Fly Team also have the expertise and equipment to establish a field command post.

Counterterrorism Fly Team Job Description

Counterterrorism Fly Teams are expected to master the following skills:

- Seamlessly enter foreign cultures to obtain intelligence and understanding of situational conditions

- Coordinate intelligence gathering and tactical operations on foreign soil

- Conduct investigations into potential terrorist activity and relay information to analysts

- Conduct operations meant to capture subjects or disrupt terrorist operations

- Gather evidence or information regarding terrorist plans or resources

- Construct field command posts in anticipation of FBI personnel deployment

- Liaise with local police and security forces to ensure operational authorization

- Maintain the highest physical and professional standards as to ensure mission success

- Support and conduct hostage retrieval operations involving U.S. citizens

FBI Counterterrorism Fly Team Training

The Fly Team is a small, highly trained cadre of counterterrorism investigators—including special agents and intelligence analysts—based at FBI Headquarters who stand ready to deploy anywhere in the world on a moment's notice. The team brings the FBI's strategic and tactical counterterrorism capabilities to bear in partnership with other U.S. government agencies and foreign partner-nation entities in critical overseas locations to detect, penetrate, and disrupt terrorist networks.

What specific training and skills do Fly Team members have?

- Counter-terrorism subject matter expertise;
- Advanced interview and interrogation;
- Human intelligence operations;
- Evidence collection and sensitive site exploitation;
- Digital media exploitation and forensics;
- Explosive post blast investigations;
- Biometrics;
- Advanced tactical and force protection skills;
- Advanced medical training;
- Tactical evasive driving;
- Hostage survival and resistance training;
- Foreign language skills (Arabic, French, Somali, Spanish);
- Foreign weapons knowledge and proficiency; and
- Advanced surveillance techniques.

Since its creation, the Fly Team has conducted hundreds of strategic deployments throughout the Middle East and North Africa, South Asia, the Horn of Africa, and the war zones of Iraq & Afghanistan. The Fly Team has also responded to numerous counterterrorism critical incidents over the years, with recent examples listed below:

- Boston Marathon bombing;
- Benghazi, Libya - U.S. Consulate Attack;
- Nairobi, Kenya - Westgate Mall attack;
- Kampala, Uganda - World Cup bombing; and
- Abuja, Nigeria - Boko Haram kidnapping of school girls.