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Information Bulletin
**Title: POTENTIAL TERRORIST USE OF
PRESSURE COOKERS**

ATTENTION: Federal Departments and Agencies, Homeland Security Advisors, State Emergency Managers, First Responders and Security Managers

DHS intends to update this information bulletin should it receive additional relevant information, including information provided to it by the user community. Based on this notification, no change to the Homeland Security Advisory System (HSAS) level is anticipated; the current HSAS level is YELLOW.

OVERVIEW

The Department of Homeland Security is issuing this information bulletin to alert frontline border inspectors and agents, state and local officers, and other first responders that there is continued interest by terrorist organizations to use innocuous items to package improvised explosive devices (IEDs.) A technique commonly taught in Afghan terrorist training camps is the use/conversion of pressure cookers into IEDs.

DETAILS

In September 2003, India's security forces in Jammu foiled a major terrorist attack during the Navratra celebrations by seizing 40 kg of an explosive, RDX, which was put in two large pressure cookers.

In March 2003, four Algerians, three of whom admitted training in Afghan terror camps, were convicted of plotting to bomb a French Christmas market using pressure cookers packed with explosives.

In February 2002, two pressure cooker bombs were used in an attack on the old tower of Lukla Airport, shattering windows and blowing off the tin roof. Lukla Airport is located in the gateway to Solokhumbu at the foot of Mount Everest.

February 2001, Maoist Rebels used two pressure cooker bombs in an attack on a convoy containing judicial officials. Four policemen on the escort team died instantly.

Typically, these bombs are made by placing TNT or other explosives in a pressure cooker and attaching a blasting cap at the top of the pressure cooker. The size of the blast depends on the size of the pressure cooker and the amount of explosive placed inside. Pressure cooker bombs are made with readily available materials and can be as simple or as complex as the builder decides. These types of devices can be initiated using simple electronic components including, but not limited to, digital watches, garage door openers, cell phones or pagers. As a common cooking utensil, the pressure cooker is often overlooked when searching vehicles, residences or merchandise crossing the U.S. Borders.

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TYPICAL PRESSURE COOKERS

“A **pressure cooker** ... is an airtight utensil for quick cooking or preserving of foods by means of high-temperature steam under pressure”¹ “There are few fundamental differences among pressure cookers as they all work on the same basic principle. Most pressure cookers bear the following components at a minimum:”²

- “Pressure Regulator: Controls and maintains pressure inside the cooker.
- “Vent Pipe: The pressure regulator fits on the vent pipe and allows excess pressure to be released.
- “Sealing Ring: Forms a pressure-tight seal between the cover and the pressure cooker body.”

SUGGESTED PROTECTIVE MEASURES

- Don't move the suspect item. **Note:** Any pressure cooker weighing more than expected may be suspect.
- Don't transmit radio signals within 50 feet of item.
- Persons within 50 feet must turn off cell phones and pagers.
- Evacuate personnel from the immediate area. Minimum evacuation distances, based on the TSWG Bomb Threat Stand-Off Card 11-99, are noted:
 - Suspect item inside building: evacuation distance--150 feet.

Safety Note: Safe distance should be measured from the building and away from windows to avoid being hit with debris, metal fragments, and glass particles produced should the device explode.

- Suspect item outside of building: evacuation distance—1,850 feet

Safety Note: Personnel must remain out of direct line of sight or behind adequate cover after evacuating to the minimum distance to avoid fragments from the improvised explosive device.

¹ Merriam-Webster OnLine, (<http://www.m-w.com/>), on Feb 4, 2004.

² <http://virat.8m.com/howtouse.html>, on Feb 4, 2004.

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Immediately call the Explosive Ordnance Detachment (EOD)/Bomb Squad and give a detailed description of suspect item, such as size, construction and location. At that point EOD/Bomb Squad might adjust minimum evacuation distance.



Confiscated Malaysian Pressure Cookers

DHS encourages recipients of this Information Bulletin to report information concerning suspicious or criminal activity to local law enforcement, local FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force or the Homeland Security Operations Center (HSOC). The HSOC may be contacted at: Phone: (202) 282-8101.