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RESIDENTIAL SECURITY

By: Orlando Wilson



RESIDENTIAL SECURITY

Residential security (RS) is something that is usually taken very lightly, most believe putting in an alarm system and maybe a camera or two is all that's required.

It is common knowledge that one of the favored places for criminals and terrorists to target a victim is when they are in, entering or leaving their residence; RS must be taken very seriously. In times of civil unrest looters will be looking to target any location that has valuables, weapons

or assets that they can use and that has minimal security, this means most residential properties.

If your threat is from criminals or terrorists and you're going to hire security personnel for your residence or office make sure they are

in some way trustworthy, just because someone has a security or private investigators license it does not mean they are competent or not working with the criminals. What a lot of people forget when hiring security personnel is that you get what you pay for. I am approached all the time by people who require security personnel, many of whom are having problems with their current security contractor, but they do not want to pay a professional rate. Sure, you can always get a cheaper option but don't expect the budget security guard to be too concerned about your assets or wellbeing.

The basic procedures I have listed here can be applied on all residences or offices. What will differ is the type and size of the residence, the manpower and budget available. When taking over or moving into a residence, a threat assessment must be compiled and all vulnerable spots identified. A set of orders needs to be compiled and procedures drawn up for every eventuality. Before you occupy a residence, the residence and its grounds need to be searched for IEDs, electronic surveillance

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devices and contraband such as illegal drugs or weapons that could have been left there by the previous occupants.

If the budget allows, electronic security devices should be employed. There is a vast array of security devices available on the commercial market, ranging from CCTV to laser sensors. Always choose the best that you can afford and buy it from a reputable dealer; it is best to also get a service agreement and have all equipment regularly serviced by trusted people.

Even if your residence is in an apartment block, CCTV should be considered for the corridors and public parts of the building. Covert and portable CCTV systems are available at affordable prices and have a variety of uses. These days there are also affordable CCTV system that you can monitor over the internet. I had one client who told me while he was working in East Africa he watched Hurricane Katrina destroy his house in Louisiana over the internet. Remember if you use internet camera's they can be hacked into, if someone gets access to your computers, passwords or

on a more professional level access to your server they can also see what you're up to.

Many people have alarms systems and panic buttons in their residences and it amuses me that a lot of people believe that installing an alarm is all they require to protect their families. We have all seen the adverts on TV where a woman is home alone, the alarm goes off, the bad guy runs away and the alarm company phones here to make sure she is OK; if only the world was that perfect. What if the bad guys aren't worried and expect an alarm to go off because they know they have at least 15 minutes before the police will respond. If you have an alarm system you need to know what the response time will be for those responding, be it an armed response company or the local police. In some places the response can take hours, even in the U.S. if the responding police believe there is a serious incident taking place with shots fired they will usually back off, call for support, cordon the area and assemble a SWAT team to respond if you're lucky this may take an hour or two!

Another criminal tactic to counter the alarm system on a residence is to keep setting them off until the target turns the system off. Think about it, if over a period of two weeks the alarm on your back door keeps going off between 1am to 4am what would you do? Initially for the first few alarm activations the police will respond, in a lot of places after 3 false alarm activations the police will no longer respond, if you have

an armed response company they will be charging you for every alarm they respond to. So, I am sure you will call out the alarm company to fix the alarm but they will find nothing wrong with it. Would you keep putting up with the cost and aggravation of the apparently false alarm activations or just turn the alarm off? Take nothing at face value, if you have an alarm that starts going off for no apparent reason, look deeper!



“ All routes leading up to the residence need to be regularly searched for IEDs, surveillance and signs of an ambush ”

Security for a residence needs to be planned in depth with multiple rings of defense, how many you have will depend on the type and size of the residence. When planning the security for a residence you need to think like the criminals. In 1994 I was working in South Africa and was tasked to provide security for numerous residences that had active threats on them. My working day usually started in the early evening and went through to after first light the next morning. When I arrived at a residence the first thing I would do would be to assess the area around the residence for likely criminal surveillance points and approach routes. I would then assess the fence or wall around the garden for the most likely point the criminals would use as an entry point. I would then take up a position in the garden where I could see

the likely criminal entry point or points and as much of the residence as possible, then I waited.

So, the first cordon of security you should consider is the general area around the residence. You need to identify any potential surveillance positions, choke points and possible ambush locations. Consider using CCTV to cover the streets and exterior of the walls of your grounds. All routes leading up to the residence need to be regularly searched for IEDs, surveillance and signs of an ambush which may be in the process of being set up, to do this the routes and exterior would need to be walked by trusted and alert personnel.

If your residence is in an apartment block, the next level of security could take the form of covert CCTV in public areas or placing

the building under general protective surveillance. In a large house, this cordon will be the walls or hedges that surround the grounds; these can be monitored by CCTV, with sensors or where legal topped with razor or electric wire.

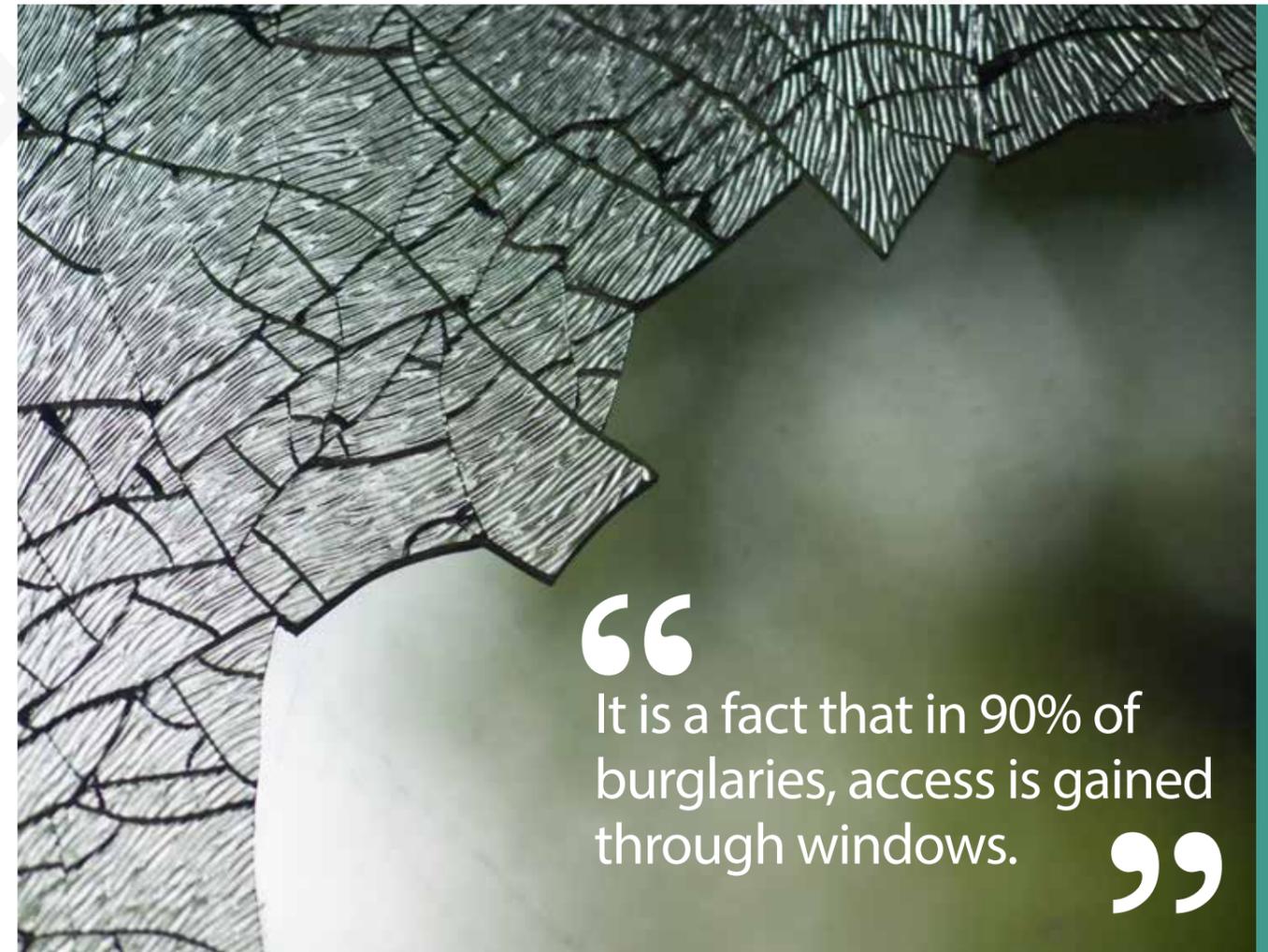
In a large residence the next cordon would be the grounds or garden. This area could be covered by CCTV and be patrolled regularly by security personnel, day and night and in all weather. All external buildings such as garages and tool sheds need to be properly secured. A lot of people ask me about using guard dogs, something which I tend to dissuade people from doing. Dogs can be weapons and must be kept under control, in South Africa I had two German Sheppard's attack me; they did not die because the client was screaming at me not hurt them. The dogs had been let out of their cage, as they usually were in the evening, by a staff member who did not know I was working there. OK, it was only me, so no problems but what if it was a child or woman and the dog's owner was not there to take control of them?

If you use dogs they must

be properly trained, if I was in a high risk area would I consider having trained dogs in my garden, sure but they would need to be properly trained. Dogs can be targeted as same as security personnel, if they are not trained properly they are easy to poison. Guard dogs that bark a lot are easy to counter, same as an alarm system, we have used this numerous times in parts of Latin America where every house seems to have a pack of dogs, you just need to get the dogs barking and keep

them barking, the owner will soon get fed up with it or the dogs will get tired.

The next cordon would be the residence itself, all doors, windows and skylights need to be secured and controlled and if possible, alarmed. Consider defensive gardening to deter criminals gaining access to windows; below the window plant thorny bushes that would make it difficult and noisy for the criminals to get through. Ideally, all rooms should be fitted with motion detectors and in high risk ▶



“It is a fact that in 90% of burglaries, access is gained through windows.”

“
Do an assessment on your security personnel and evaluate how much you can really trust them; will they fight, flee or just rollover if there is a problem.

”

areas locked when not in use.

Now you need to consider what you are going to do if criminals try to make entry to your residence; you need to make plans and preparations for this. On my courses I usually ask people what they would have done if someone tried to break in to their house the previous night, a lot of people say they don't know or just then start to think about it. You need to put together sensible procedures, and then if you have an issue you will know what to do and not panic.

There are two general considerations when planning your procedures; are going to stay in the residence or evacuate, what you do will depend on your situation. A secure room needs to be designated within the residence to be used as a safe room for you and your family in the event of an

attack where immediate evacuation is not practical.

The room should be lockable from the inside and have several good communications links with the outside world; there should be a list of emergency numbers in the room, so help can be summoned in the event of an emergency. What equipment is in the room will depend on your situation and the length of time you will need to possible stay in to room, this where you need to know the approximate response times of those coming to help you. The main thing a safe room needs is an escape route, if I was a criminal and wanted to target someone who I knew took their security serious I would not enter their residence. In reality if someone knows how to defend a building, SWAT and room clearing tactics won't work, you're going to have big problems. The easiest way to clear a building is to

cordon it and set it on fire, then hit the inhabitants as they exit, if they don't exit then criminals have saved some bullets. Always have an escape route!

A set of procedures will need to be drawn up for dealing with visitors to the residence; this is the downfall of most residential security programs. A good example of this resulted in the kidnapping in Haiti of a family member of a business associate of mine. This person has a large residence and employed an armed guard to man his front gate. One evening the guard opened the gate to talk with someone who was asking after one of the staff members, as soon as he stepped outside the gate he had a gun to his put to his head by a criminal who was waiting next to the gate. The criminal with their crew gained access to the residence, as the doors were left open, robbed the place and kidnapped four people.

Why should the criminals try to break into a residence when in a lot of cases they

can get the occupants to easily open the doors and come to them? As you read this now what would you do if someone crashed into your car; go outside and see what had happened, now you can be kidnapped and the bad guys have access to your house. A lot of houses have their electric mains outside, same in places where generators are use, so if the criminals cut the power what will most people do; go out and investigate. Sever the connecting to most people satellite TV and what will they do, go outside and check the dish. See the pattern, so do the criminals!

This article and check list covers the fundamentals of residential security!

In the next issue I'll provide you with a detailed checklist to help you counter virtually all attempts that even a sophisticated criminal may make to breach your residential security. Until then, stay safe, keep low and keep moving.

Orlando Wilson has worked in the security industry internationally for over 25 years. He has become accustomed to the types of complications that can occur, when dealing with international law enforcement agencies, organized criminal and Mafia groups. He is the chief consultant for Risks Inc. and based in Miami but spends much of his time traveling and providing a wide range of kidnapping prevention and tactical training services to private and government clients.