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UNCLASSIFIED/LAW ENFORCEMENT SENSITIVE

Tactics Used by Eco-Terrorists to Detect and Thwart Law Enforcement Operations

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Prepared by

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Tactics Used by Eco-Terrorists to Detect and Thwart Law Enforcement Operations.

(U) Environmental extremists consistently study and disseminate the methods, tactics, and legal guidelines under which law enforcement officials operate in an effort to expose law enforcement undercover agents, sources, and cooperating witnesses. Literature appearing in print form or on websites sympathetic to the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), Earth Liberation Front (ELF), Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty (SHAC), and anarchist groups provides detailed instructional material on a variety of topics, including ways to evade and/or thwart law enforcement methods.

(U) One of the earliest examples of this type of instructional material is David Foreman's Eco-Defense: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching, segments of which continue to circulate on the Internet within the anarchist and radical environmentalist communities. Foreman was a founding member of Earth First in the 1980s. Despite being written in 1985, the book is still referenced by anarchists and animal rights/environmental extremists as a useful "how-to" manual.

(U) Law enforcement officials should be particularly cognizant of the sections of Eco-Defense that deal with the identification of undercover law enforcement officers, confidential informants, and cooperating witnesses. Among the admonishments listed in the book are the following:

- "Monkeywrenchers" (a term used to designate saboteurs) are urged to "study who has access to information now believed to be in the hands of the police" and "notice anyone who suddenly attempts to distance themselves [sic]."
- Foreman's book notes, "often a confidential informant is used to introduce the infiltrator to the group so that she will be more readily accepted." Thus, law enforcement officials should recognize that merely using an existing source to gain access for an undercover agent/officer might not be sufficient for establishing the officer's credibility.
- Eco-Defense warns that potential undercover officers may "assume roles outside the target organization" that could increase access for the officer. The book further advises, "a favorite is to pass themselves off as writers or members of the news media, or even as someone hoping to produce a documentary for public access television." Eco-Defense also suggests that undercover agents may pose as defense attorneys in an effort to gather information from recently arrested activists.
- The book also asserts that undercover agents frequently pose as utility workers or phone company repairmen for the purpose of gaining access to a suspect's living quarters. The book asserts that, once access is obtained, the agent is free to plant listening devices or observe illegal activities to justify a search warrant. The book advises readers to demand identification and verify the repairman's legitimacy.

- Finally, Eco-Defense warns incarcerated activists that “jailhouse snitches” may seek information for law enforcement authorities.

(U) Eco-Defense offers several ways to detect law enforcement sources or undercover officers, including applying strict operational security measures in preparation for acts of eco-terrorism. The book cautions activists to compartmentalize operational plans and to limit foreknowledge of the target to one person within the cell, revealing the target only en route to the action. The book further admonishes that “in such cases, be suspicious of someone who suddenly has to make a phone call after learning the target or other plans... suffice it to say that such operations should only be undertaken by small groups of people who have known each other for years and have previously operated together.”

(U) With individuals suspected of being an informant or undercover agent, the book recommends a tactic known as “baiting” – essentially providing the suspected agent/informant with singular information designed to provoke a law enforcement response. Specifically, the book suggests concocting a fictional future attack and providing the details of the attack to the suspected informant/agent. According to Eco-Defense, “if the suspected undercover agent is the only one provided with this information, and the police make the appropriate response, you have reasonable proof that the ‘suspect’ is indeed an agent.” The book suggests that this process can be employed against several people at one time by providing each individual with similar, but slightly different information, asserting that the law enforcement response will indicate which individual is acting as an informant/undercover agent.

(U) Eco-Defense identifies additional methods by which informants or undercover officers may expose themselves, including:

- Seeking information for which they have no need to know.
- Attempting to get people to repeat previous incriminating statements, ostensibly to record the statements.
- Casting suspicion on others to divert suspicion from themselves.
- Volunteering for clerical or leadership roles within an organization in hopes of gaining access to information about the group.
- Showing nervousness during an action.
- Leaving meetings or actions briefly to make phone calls.
- Probing for detailed information (e.g. names, times, dates, locations, etc.) indicating that an informant/agent may be taping the conversation.
- Repeatedly discussing illegal activities even after conversation has shifted to unrelated matters.
- Regularly inquiring about individuals believed to be leaders of a group.
- Expressing particularly radical or inflammatory ideas.

(U) To thwart the efforts of law enforcement officials – specifically undercover operations and confidential sources – the book provides several tips to current or prospective eco-extremists:

- Activists are urged to follow a “need-to-know” rule in which detailed information regarding planned direct actions is compartmentalized and restricted to the individuals involved in the action.
- Activists are advised that when an individual within the group expresses reservations about a specific direct action, that individual should be removed from the direct action cell. This removal should be done gradually without destroying personal bonds to the individual, thereby reducing the individual’s incentive to retaliate by cooperating with law enforcement authorities.
- The book cautions activists to be leery of individuals that introduce new members to the group and then suddenly disassociate themselves from the organization. The suggestion is that the new member may be an undercover agent and that the existing member may in fact be a law enforcement informant.
- Similarly, activists are advised to be suspicious of group members that are arrested for criminal charges with no connection to the group’s goals or objectives. For instance, individuals arrested on drug charges become vulnerable to law enforcement recruitment with promises of leniency in return for cooperation.
- Finally, activists are encouraged to sever any contacts with the so-called “criminal element,” such as violent gangs or drug-traffickers, warning that such groups are “teeming” with law enforcement informants.

(U) In addition to the methods and tactics discussed above, eco-terrorists promote and follow strict operational security with respect to communications, employing encryption in electronic communications and avoiding telephonic conversations about criminal activity. Eco-Defense also illustrates that eco-extremists are aware of traditional law enforcement investigative techniques, including analysis of telephone records, mail covers, vehicle tracking, and consensual recordings.

(U) Eco-Defense is merely one of the many documents within the eco-extremist movement demonstrating the movement’s in-depth study and knowledge of law enforcement techniques and methods of operation. By closely scrutinizing potential informants and undercover agents, eco-terrorists are more capable of thwarting successful law enforcement penetration. Law enforcement officials should be cognizant of the above-mentioned tactics, and recognize that eco-terrorists closely study law enforcement tactics, procedures, and policies. As a result, creative undercover scenarios must be carefully planned and adequately backstopped.

This assessment was prepared by the Counterterrorism and Cyber Divisions of the FBI. Comments and queries may be addressed to the Unit Chief, Domestic Terrorism Analysis Unit at (202) 324-8664.

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