

# Atlanta Forward »

## What is Atlanta Forward?

Our region is an important part of a complex world. On these pages, we will bring you a wide array of viewpoints and insights on the issues you've told us are most important to you. We're committed to bringing you smart work by some of the best thinkers in metro Atlanta and beyond. We want to involve you in the conversation, too, so let us know what you think.

## Today's moderator: Rick Badie

Rick Badie joined The Atlanta Journal-Constitution as an education reporter in 1997. A South Georgia native, he's covered the region's immigrant communities, was a feature obituary writer and opinion columnist for the AJC's Gwinnett edition.

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## TOPIC SCHEDULE

|           |                  |
|-----------|------------------|
| Monday    | Schools          |
| Tuesday   | Transportation   |
| Wednesday | Regional economy |
| Thursday  | Leadership       |
| Friday    | Quality of life  |

## GUEST COLUMN

# Expect attacks on 'soft targets'

By Robert R. Friedmann

Western civilization has a tendency to look at terrorism as if it's a B-rated movie: watching explosions and shootings, but paying little attention to the reasons these acts occur. We do not have the patience, nor interest, to understand, follow or realize the ideology that generates such acts. Naturally, we worry about terrorism more when it happens in the homeland, yet even then, we distance ourselves with passing time when we do not clearly define the villain.

To better understand terrorism, we need to look at the movie frames that precede the explosion. With well over 100 definitions of terrorism, I use Ganor's definition, where terrorism is the intentional use of, or threat to use, violence against civilians or against civilian targets to attain political aims.

What we are seeing is asymmetric warfare mostly against "soft targets" that are not in a combat mode. We can expect future attacks on such targets. And Atlanta is a tempting location due to its commercial, transportation, government, academic, health services and



Robert R. Friedmann is professor emeritus of criminal justice and is founding director of the Georgia International Law Enforcement Exchange at Georgia State University's Andrew Young School of Policy Studies.

many other centers that attract a large number of people.

These attacks have a common thread: an ideology that uses terrorism as a tool. It is out there, readily available for anyone should they want to see it.

What stands behind most of these attacks – and it should be noted that the majority of victims to date have been Muslim – is a power struggle for global domination. It is a shift in the tectonic plates that make up our social, political and cultural order, a violent attempt to shake up old political arrangements and create new ones. Much of it can

be traced to the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916, which demarcated the spheres of influence between the British and French empires and created new entities such as Iraq, Jordan and Syria.

But more so, it is the western sphere of values, scientific and technological advances, coupled with energy dependency, that was seen as a threat by radical elements in the Arab world and gave rise in 1928 to the Muslim Brotherhood, based on the premise that a common religious identity – not capitalism, communism or nationalism – should unify its members. The Brotherhood is the precursor of al-Qaida, which became the precursor of the Islamic State and its various offshoots, loosely tied together or in fierce competition. These and similar groups thrive now more than ever.

Terrorists try time and again, and suffice it for them to have one big pyrotechnical success out of 100 attempts, while the targets need to successfully thwart all 100 attempts. Yet what is even more difficult is the strategic effort – namely, coping with the pyromaniacs who create these explosions. They do not start in a rented apartment or a garage,

but in visible, overconfident incitement, blogs, advocacy, sermons, writings, and political and ideological support where violence is preached as a recruitment tool. Terrorists use an ideology that awards them "legitimate grievances" and allows them to turn their victims into perpetrators who "deserve their fate" simply because of who they are.

In a sense, the terrorists are in a win-win situation. Even when they fail an operation, they end up winning the long-term war.

Fighting terrorism on the tactical level alone is shortsighted and insufficient. The sad fact is that for every terrorist eliminated and every "senior leader" taken out, there are many who eagerly take their place.

Defeating terrorism requires a two-pronged, proactive effort that aggressively focuses on eliminating the tactical threat and fighting the ideology that dispatches the terrorists. Victory is not easy, but it is certainly an imperative. The Islamic State can be defeated, but a similar global ideology guides the worst state sponsor of terrorism – Iran. It will be a far greater challenge to defeat a nuclear Iran.

GUEST COLUMN

Could terrorist acts like those that occurred in Paris and San Bernardino take place in Atlanta? An expert on terrorism and community policing ponders that possibility in today's lead column. The companion piece, written by a Marietta police lieutenant, offers safety and survival tips when confronted by an "active shooter." Elsewhere, an Atlanta labor attorney addresses workplace violence.

GUEST COLUMN

# Avoid, deny, defend against active shooters

By Brian Marshall

An "active-shooter event" is not a new concern for citizens and law enforcement. These types of attacks go back many decades, but have become increasingly common and reported more frequently on a national level.

Over the last 20 years, law enforcement has been adjusting tactics and tools to better respond to active-shooter events. Many federal, state and local agencies have received training from the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training program out of Texas State University.

Patrol officers receive advanced tactics and weapons training to "go to the sound of the gunfire" and stop the killing immediately. This puts them at great risk, but there is no time to wait for specialized teams like SWAT. Even with this preparation, the national average response time to an active-shooter event is about three minutes. To the potential victims at the scene, this time can be an eternity.

Law enforcement agencies are frequently requested by schools, businesses and community members for presentations on what they should do if confronted with an active shooter. The Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events course, designed and built on the "Avoid, Deny, Defend" strategy developed by ALERRT in 2004, provides strategies, guidance and a proven plan for survival.

Topics include the history of such incidents, the role of professional guardians, civilian response options, medical issues and drills. In 2014, Wal-Mart Stores Inc. introduced Avoid, Deny, Defend in a na-



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tional awareness campaign for its more-than 1.3 million U.S. employees.

In August, law enforcement officers from agencies across metro Atlanta attended the Civilian Response program at the FBI field office and were certified to pass on what they learned to citizens. The Marietta Police Department received more than 700 RSVPs for its Wednesday presentation of the course.

By its very nature, an active-shooter attack is usually a fast, sudden ambush. It is very difficult for anyone to react decisively or effectively in those first few seconds. However, once the shooting starts and the element of surprise is gone, the actions of people in the attack area can dramatically affect the number of those killed and injured.

■ "Avoid" starts with your state of mind. Pay attention to your surroundings, and have an exit plan. Move away from the source of the threat as quickly as possible.

■ "Deny" access while get-



Brian Marshall is a lieutenant with the Marietta Police Department.

ting away may be difficult or even impossible. Keep distance between you and the source. Create barriers to prevent or slow down a threat. Turn lights off and remain out of sight and quiet by hiding behind large objects and silencing your phone.

■ "Defend," because you have the right to protect yourself. If you cannot avoid or deny, be prepared to defend yourself. Be aggressive and committed to your actions. Rally people around you to attack as a group and use improvised weapons if needed. Do not fight fairly; this is about

survival.

When the police arrive, it is vital that you respond to the officers appropriately. Put down any weapons you may have and keep your hands visible unless otherwise ordered. Follow all commands, regardless of whether you think their commands are reasonable or not. For more information, go to: [www.avoiddenydefend.org](http://www.avoiddenydefend.org)

When an armed robber or carjacker threatens someone and demands a wallet or car, the goal is generally to take your property for personal gain. Resistance "may" result in escalation of violence. An active shooter's only goal is taking your life. There is no higher escalation of violence.

Just as the hijackings on Sept. 11, 2001 changed the way airline crews and passengers react to in-flight disturbances, we must recognize we can control the outcome of an active-shooter event. We cannot sit passively and hope for the best. Our actions can affect the outcome of the attack.