

*The Secure Zone; a cooperative effort between the  
police and business community*

*Marc Kahlberg Israeli Police Department*

At 6'4", 240lbs, the new immigrant from the ex-Soviet Union was an imposing security guard. He had seen, so he said, combat fighting against extremists in Afghanistan and said that he knew how to handle himself. By all accounts, he should have noticed the Palestinian man, disguised in a woman's burkah, walk into the hotel lobby. He was, after all, told to look for such deceiving characteristics. Video from inside the hotel later showed that the guard never even rose from the couch in the lobby as the suicide bomber walked directly past him through the double doors of the conference room that hosted more than 100 elderly Jews having a traditional Passover dinner.

The 19 year old Palestinian, who previously worked at the hotel, was wearing a 10-kilo bomb-vest with shrapnel in the shape of steel balls and nails under his "dress". He walked directly to the center of the large room, uttered a quick final prayer, and then detonated his device. The end result was devastating; 30 dead and over 100 injured. The Park Hotel in Netanya, Israel has recovered from that rainy September night in 2002. But the first responders from that night have not, and probably never will.

On that day, I was a Detective Sergeant Major and Commander of the Tourist Police responsible for the Hotel District along the beach in Netanya. I met with that security guard and the hotel manager not more than an hour before the bombing. After a secondary briefing, I went home to celebrate Passover with my family. I then got a call that "something terrible has happened, come quickly". I was at the scene in less than 5 minutes and stayed through the night and for the next two days, helping in the rescue and subsequent investigation.

In my career, I have been present at 16 suicide bombings. One bomber detonated his device not more than 40 meters in front of me. I have lost good friends and have had the good fortune to capture bombers who were on their way to their targets. After the Park Hotel massacre, almost out of pure instinct, I developed a proactive plan to help thwart future attacks – a "**Secure Zone**" concept.

With the approval of the Chief of Police, we initiated this plan into a pilot program in our hotel district along the beach where 29 hotels are situated. It was also established in our industrial and Hi-tech district, where there are more than 7000 businesses. The concept was set up to thwart terrorism, which it did. There has been only one attack in those two areas since the program's inception, and fortunately there were no casualties. However, an ancillary benefit that was realized, but not anticipated, was that the crime rate dropped by nearly 70% in both areas.

In addition to my role as a police sergeant, I have hosted hundreds of police officers from around the globe when they come to Israel for counter-terrorism training. Two officers I had the opportunity to meet were **Sgt. Jim Gort** and **Det. Tom Burgs** from

**Pembroke Pines Police Department**, in South Florida. As I do with all the visiting police officers, I showed them this concept and how it worked. They instantly saw the potential this program had to reduce crime, and sought a way to make it work for their city. They took the “**SECURE ZONE**” concept and applied it to the busiest retail area in the central part of their city. These two officers are a prime example of how this concept can be applied at any venue, anywhere in the world. It is with their permission and assistance that the Secure Zone concept is explained here. The **SECURE ZONE CONCEPT** is now called the “**KAHLBERG PLAN**”, a name given to it by the innovative Officers from Pembroke Pines.

The City of Pembroke Pines is just west of Ft. Lauderdale, Florida and a city of roughly 175,000 residents. They have a retail area that includes two large malls, several large retail chains, a county park, and a large regional hospital within a roughly 40 block area. The detectives first did an analysis of the retail area and found that most of the businesses had their own internal security personnel that operated independently of one another. Although the level of security ranged from adequate to superior, no one communicated with each other. This gap in communication allowed the criminal to operate freely throughout the retail district.

Like terrorism, crime does not occur in a vacuum. There are indicators that security personnel may observe. If he feels he has been detected, the criminal who is “scouting” one location may defer to another, more opportune location. Without the Secure Zone, the security personnel who witnessed the suspicious indicators would have no way to communicate with other stores in the area that there may be criminal activity pending. With the Secure Zone program, all businesses in the area would have a means of relaying important information to one another.

The Pembroke Pines Police Department provided that means of communication. After making their assessments, the detectives held a meeting with all of the main businesses bringing them in to explain the plan. Everyone readily accepted. The Pembroke Pines Police Department then contracted with a call messaging service to provide an instant means of communication. Training was then provided to the participating stores security personnel and management.

Here is how the Secure Zone works. A mall security officer observes two males walking through the parking lot looking into cars. The potential car burglars get scared off by the uniformed security guard and depart the area. Chances are, they are not done for the night, but merely moving on to a “less secure” parking lot. The astute security guard then places a call to a 1-800 number and leaves a brief message describing the suspects and their activity. This message is sent out instantly to upwards of 100 phone numbers, to include all member businesses, security personnel, road patrol police supervisors and any police units who wish to be notified. It is an instant and overwhelming force multiplier. This call system costs less than \$500 a year and includes 100 phone numbers.

The system has been used successfully for suspects using stolen credit cards, shoplifters, car thieves, car burglars and other criminals, as well as for missing children, and

Alzheimer patients who had wandered from the hospital (one was located along a nearby canal bank). It has also been used to send out messages of serious traffic conditions, BOLO information that might be useful, and even incoming inclement weather. Everyone on the system has access to utilize it and to log onto the website and listen again to the recorded message.

The Pembroke Pines Secure Zone is run by the Police Department's Antiterrorism Unit (ATU). The ATU sends out a monthly intelligence bulletin that shares relevant information with all Secure Zone members, as well as the crime statistics for the area. This is a true cooperative effort between the police and the business community and involves more than 30 businesses. Since Pembroke Pines has initiated this unique crime fighting tool in 2006, crime within the Secure Zone has dropped by 23% overall.

The Secure Zone is currently being tested in several other venues across the United States, such as gyms, religious centers, and schools. It has also proven successful in crime ridden South Africa as well.

What started out as a proactive, counter-terror concept, has evolved into a simple, yet effective proactive crime fighting tool that has proven successful time and time again. I encourage you to contact the Pembroke Pines Police Antiterrorism Unit at 954-436-3230 to learn more about their accomplished Secure Zone program.

*Marc Kahlberg is a veteran of the Israeli Police and has held several distinguished positions there including specialized covert and overt work in both Counter-Terror and Counter Crime Units. As a member of the Israeli Police, Marc has trained law enforcement from around the world. Marc had also served with the South African Defense Forces before Emigrating to Israel and then served in the Israel Defense Force with Honors. Marc is the CEO of [www.mkisc.com](http://www.mkisc.com) and trains and consults to Police Departments and the Private Sector around the World. Marc has been heavily involved with various aspects of Security Procedures leading to the "FIFA" 2010 Soccer World Cup to be held in South Africa. He can be contacted via: [marc@mkisc.com](mailto:marc@mkisc.com)*