The now-infamous Unabomber allegedly committed 16 bombings between May 25, 1978, and April 24, 1995. His 17-year serial bombing spree left 3 people dead and 28 others injured. He believed that the power of society to control the individual was expanding rapidly and that this progress, if not stopped, inevitably would lead to the extinction of individual liberty.[13] He also asserted that he was entitled to embark upon a bombing campaign in service of his antitechnology beliefs.

In the fall of 1997, a middle-aged woman in Roby, Illinois, barricaded herself in her residence for over 5 weeks while law enforcement officers attempted to serve a mental-health-commitment order. During this period of time, she fired at officers and shot a police dog. She believed that her food was being poisoned, that FBI personnel were trying to rape her, and that her family members were imposters trying to steal her money and harm her. After 39 days, the police took her into custody while she was trying to disable a covert surveillance camera. After 47 days in mental health custody, doctors released her, and she returned to her rural residence.[14]

Delusions, hallucinations, and general paranoia contributed in influencing the violent behavior of these individuals. When confronted with a person who exhibits unusual or potentially dangerous behavior, law enforcement officers should not focus on criminal responsibility, but rather on how they should respond to the person to deescalate the situation and maintain safety.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Incident Prevention/ Early Intervention

Ideally, management and intervention of potentially violent citizens with paranoid schizophrenia, as well as other disorders, begin with early recognition of an evolving problem. Prior to committing acts of violence, many subjects write letters, make telephone calls, and use other methods to communicate with those in the community and law enforcement. They often express concerns about hearing voices or being followed or have various other delusional beliefs. In addition, other individuals—for example, family members and private security employees— may bring the person to the attention of law enforcement because of these behaviors.[15] At this point, officers can assess individuals for risk and divert them to systems that can keep them from moving from thinking to acting. Unfortunately, all too often, when individuals call or send obscure complaint mail, law enforcement may merely view them as a nuisance, thus missing opportunities for assessment and early intervention prior to the development of a major problem.

Police officers can use numerous techniques and resources to assess threatening and desperate communications and behaviors. For example, law enforcement and mental health professionals can respond as teams to evaluate and intervene with citizens who have deteriorating conditions. Also, officers may conduct proactive interviewing of "problem" citizens in order to monitor signs of deterioration or escalation. Law enforcement also should increase its attention to mental health needs and intervention during sentencing phases of criminal trials involving individuals with schizophrenia, particularly if the individual will be released someday. Although police

© Mark C. Ide

