



Brian Ross reports.

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Higher Education for Suicide Bombers

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Anna Schechter Reports:



The most spectacular and technically difficult Palestinian suicide bomb attacks are being assigned to older and better educated bombers because they are more likely to succeed, a new study shows.

Three of the deadliest suicide bomb attacks against targets in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank were carried out by bombers who had or were pursuing advanced degrees. One was a law school graduate.

Harvard University and RAND Corporation researchers used data collected by the Israeli Security Agency to review all suicide attacks from September 2000 to August 2005, a total of 151 incidents that killed 515 people and injured almost 3,500.

RAND economist Claude Berrebi, co-author of the report, said the findings show how intricate a suicide bomb attack really is. "The bomber has to decide in an instant whether to blow

themselves up, to hide or to continue to a better target or to abort. There is a lot in trying to hide themselves in the local population without being detected. There is a lot to it, much more than a bystander would think," Berrebi said.

Berrebi and his team ranked the suicide bombers by the perceived value of their targets -- large cities and civilian targets more valuable than small cities and military targets -- and the number of people they killed or wounded.

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They found the five most educated bombers all blew themselves up in major Israeli cities and killed an average of 22.8 people per attack and wounded an average of 88, while bombers in the rest of the sample took the lives of an average of three people and wounded an average of 25.2.

Younger and less educated bombers were more likely to detonate too early, get caught by authorities or decide not to go through with the mission.

Harvard economics Professor Efraim Benmelech, the other co-author of the study's findings, said he was not surprised by the results. "We as economists believe that in regular labor markets people who are more talented, more educated, usually carry more sophisticated jobs. So we were not surprised that one can apply the rationale, unfortunately, of labor markets to suicide bombers," said Benmelech.

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