

SURVEILLANCE

SOUTH AFRICA



by PETER JENKINS

I was recently invited to Johannesburg, South Africa by Garth Fuchs, the Director of Close Protection company 'Delta One International' to carry out surveillance training for his team and some of his associates.

I was there for 8 days and immediately picked up on the vibe of the place and how the differing cultures, topography and systems worked in this theatre. Surveillance here was not going to be easy and this place is definitely a 'semi-hostile' theatre. This is going to be an interesting week I thought and the team will be put through their paces.

Surveillance

Carrying out surveillance in South Africa was evidently challenging, especially if you are a white guy. It immediately came to mind that to carry out successful surveillance here you need two things, a reliable tracking system and a few black guys on the team.

Triggers

Most of the private properties, businesses and industrial areas are all enclosed and behind walls, topped with electric fences and razor wire. Access is normally gained via a manned security gate and so this posed immediate problems with wanting to 'trigger' any surveillance. With a private address – you just can't get anywhere near the private property. A drive past, walk past or even getting eyes on the car or garage is just about impossible. Forget about walking anywhere in Johannesburg, no-one walks anywhere except from the car into the shopping mall, unless you are a local living in one the townships.

'Okay, so if you can't get a trigger on the house, get a trigger on the main gate to the

compound', I hear you say... Not as easy as it sounds; no-one parks up on a roadside in a residential area, whether it's a car or a van. No one stops anywhere for anyone, you would just draw attention to yourself and may get robbed in the process if you did. You would not last long regardless of your skin colour, anyone parked up is treated with suspicion. As a consequence even carrying out a 'tertiary' stakeout covering the road options away can be equally difficult.

The only people seen walking around or just sat minding their own business are the black locals. You'll come across them walking in the middle of nowhere at any time of day or night or sat on a roadside curb for no apparent reason. Therefore it pays to have a black guy on the team, it's the only way you will get away with setting up a good trigger.

Shopping Malls, Restaurants & Banks

These malls and complexes contain just about



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everything for those who can afford it. If you follow a target to one of these places, the odds can be against you as security starts outside the mall. As soon as you come to a halt you are observed by one of the many car park attendants employed by the mall to keep an eye on their customers' cars. The poorly paid guys acknowledge you and wave as you park up, in the hope that you will give them a tip upon your return. If you just sit in your car you are watched with suspicion, after all, they are security and they've got eyes like a shit house rat.

Within the complexes, security guards and cameras are plentiful just as they are anywhere else. At one stage in training, we saturated a shopping mall with two teams and not one had any problems, their personal tradecraft paid off. Although security was everywhere, a poorly paid security guard (who doesn't get tipped) isn't the most switched on person (as you would find anywhere in the world).

Driving

Road discipline is totally nonexistent – it's 'Whacky Races' and so risk of a collision is high during mobile surveillance, especially with the illegal taxis who have this habit of pulling out in front of you with no warning. The cars and mini-buses don't need mirrors over there because they are never used.

Stopping at lights can also be fun. Even before your wheels stop, you are swarmed with traders and people handing out leaflets. Keep your windows up, doors locked, radios and cameras out of view and ignore them. It is not unusual for the 'point' car to even stop at a red light, especially if you are on your own. Most mobile surveillance tactics used are pretty much standard, it's just the 'third party' aspect which you have to be more aware of.

Trackers

If you can manage to get a tracker on the target's car – brilliant, it would be the best asset you can have by far. But remember the security at the home address and even in the shopping mall car parks can make this difficult to deploy. Petrol stations even have their own complications. You sit in the car whilst a guy fills it up as another washes your windows. You go to pay and they watch your car like hawks not wanting you to go without leaving that tip.

A large team, patience and knowing the Target's routine would certainly help carry out surveillance. Having carried out surveillance in about 14 different countries I would say Johannesburg has been one of the most challenging and certainly interesting to date.

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