

# Terrorism 101

## Nearly any disgruntled group can wreak urban havoc



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As construction heightens and continues to block traffic in all directions, we watch in awe — jaws left open and somewhat closer to our feet. We watch as many men sweat and slave themselves to build ... a small wall.

When construction began around the federal building that humbly sits downtown, I wondered what it could be that was so important to involve so much manpower. It looked as if they were planning to build a massive structure around the building. Personally I was hoping for a small roller coaster; I would've definitely become more involved with the government given the chance to hurl myself against the ground, then swoop around, or even corkscrew. But I am a dreamer; they would never build anything that practical.

It is true that the complex needs an overhaul. Just by looking at the building you would have no clue that it was a federal building. It hoards an entire block and is surrounded by light poles that look like cotton swabs.

After the Oklahoma City bombing, many officials realized it really is not difficult to shoot the government in the foot. So they took a look at all major government buildings, and decided to spend a couple jillion dollars beefing up security. Thus, here in Lincoln, they believe that a structure as fierce as a two-foot wall will protect all who inhabit the building.

Security cameras were also placed on the corners of the building. They're configured to go off whenever they see a certain shade of yellow, such as that used by the Ryder Truck Corporation.

The question is, will a small speed bump-like structure protect our Federal Building from early retirement by a home-grown terrorist. (Not to say Tim McViegh is guilty. In this era nothing is ruled out. Poker-playing dogs could have blown up the building.) If a Ryder truck pulled up to the aforementioned structure, and just happened to explode, the wall would function well and keep ground-scorching down to a minimum.

One thing people don't know is how easy it is to cause anarchy. Just by mixing certain household cleansers you can blow up plastic bottles. With a little flammable powder and a wick you can send a phone booth into a different area code — this is something I have wanted to do ever since they raised the price on calls to 35 cents. I am purposely vague about how easy it is to become an urban terrorist because I don't want to take responsibility for others' actions, and I really do not want to let out any trade secrets.

To demonstrate how easy it is to become a social nightmare, I've created a hypothetical situation.

First you need a cause. As with every terrorist group, you must be pissed off. Just for example's sake, you are irritated; the university is just not conforming to your needs, namely your need for more desk space. Everywhere on campus the desks have tops that barely hold theoretical particles.

Second, you organize people who have the same fundamental beliefs that you do. Six liquored-up friends, for example.

Third, you mail a letter to the chancellor and deans, claiming that if the madness of the mini-desks does not

end, you and your forces will have to unleash a blanket of terror.

Once the high officials have had a good laugh, and in no way are going to take you seriously, you organize your militia. They stand proud behind you. They know that they may die for their cause, but they show no fear. You have trained them well.

It is time for war: You and your forces kidnap multiple classrooms of desks, bind and tie them, and march them to the top of Oldfather Hall. This is where the desks become bargaining chips. You shout, "For every minute you waste by not meeting our demands, a desk will plummet to the Earth."

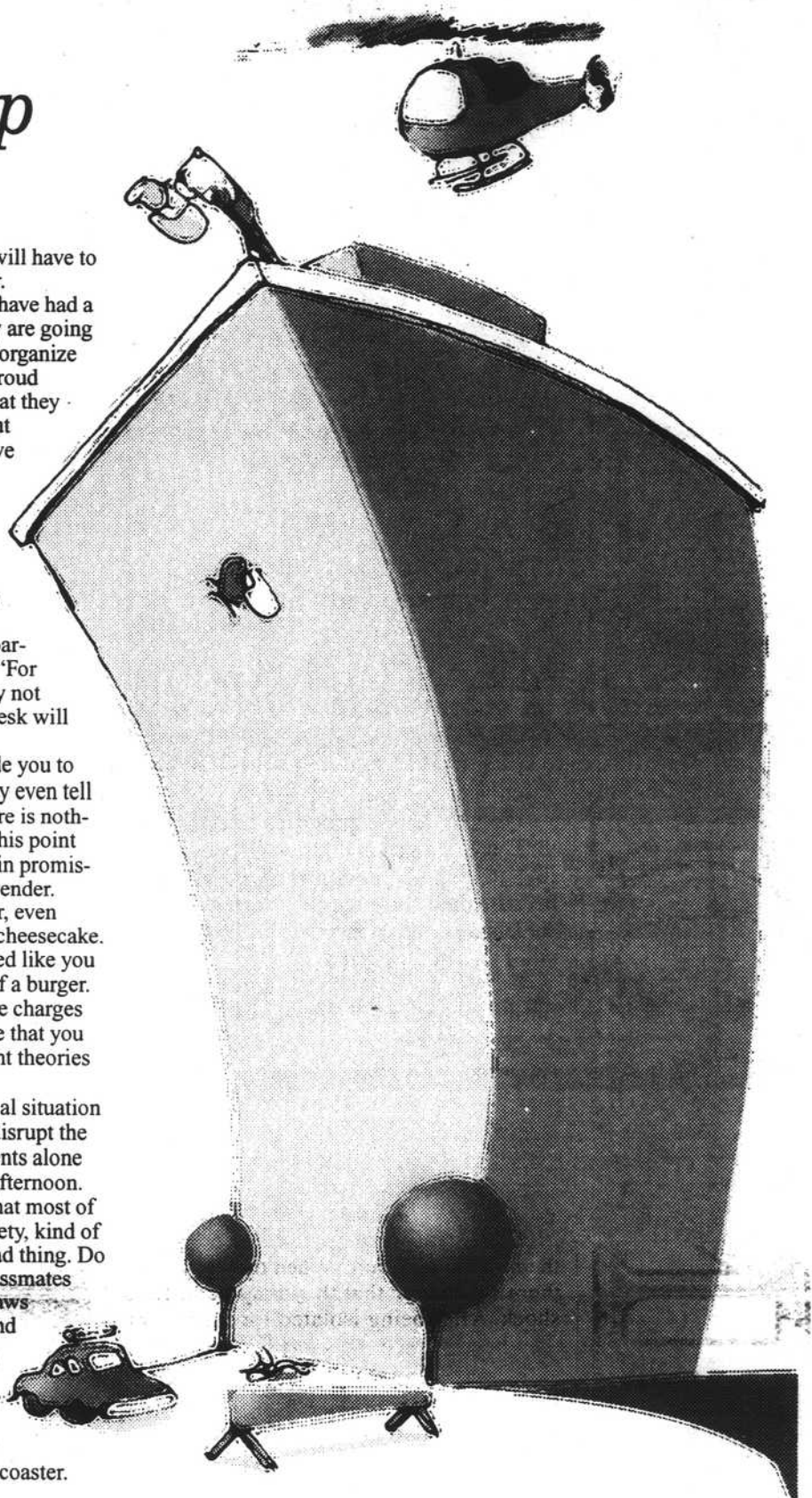
They will try to persuade you to give yourself up. They may even tell your mother. Fear not, there is nothing they can do to you at this point unless they fight dirty, as in promising cheesecake if you surrender.

Of course you surrender, even Superman couldn't resist cheesecake. You are arrested and treated like you are one meat patty short of a burger. Eventually you will get the charges dropped with some excuse that you were testing many different theories of gravity.

This is just a hypothetical situation proving how easy it is to disrupt the lives around us. These events alone may disrupt somebody's afternoon.

We are very fortunate that most of us follow the rules of society, kind of like sheep. This is not a bad thing. Do not turn to your fellow classmates and slaughter them. The laws are here to prevent this kind of activity, if they were not you would spend your whole day killing people and not appreciating the finer things in life, like a roller coaster.

AARON STECKELBERG/DN



# Neurological name-dropping

## He eats ketchup on salad, but his appellation eludes you



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To the handsome man I met the week before school started in the circle drive of the Wick Alumni Center, I'm sorry. Remember how we introduced ourselves? Within minutes, your name was gone. I felt terrible. It's not that you didn't make an impression, trust me you did. I remember that you were dropping off tickets for someone, that you don't go to school here yet still read the DN, and that you had a great smile.

But I just can't remember your name.

Unfortunately, you're not alone. It is a daily struggle for me to remember people's names. As a

Lincoln native, I encounter people from high school or old jobs or community activities all the time. But I can't remember any of their names.

It happened again yesterday, I'm embarrassed to admit. I ran into a friend from my days in the dorms, I remembered all sorts of details about him, except his name.

My family gets exasperated with me ... I routinely fail to remember the names of distant relatives — or how I'm connected to them. I even recall an incident a few years back when I couldn't remember one of my cousin's names for several days.

It's truly a problematic characteristic.

I know most of you have experienced this phenomenon too ... you greet someone on the street, smile, maybe strike up a little conversation. You even make a point to bring up details you know about that person. But the entire time you're conversing, you're frantically searching your mental database for a name. Something to call them, to reassure them you know who they are, so you don't feel like a bloody moron.

After bemoaning the sad state of my memory, a friend recommended repeating a person's name three

times upon meeting them. And good advice it was ... for all the new people I met this fall. But I'm screwed on the name-thing for those people I've known a while.

Names are so important in our society. They define who we are, our histories and our futures. On some little cutesy knickknack, my name was defined as meaning wisdom. My middle name is a family name that has been passed down for hundreds of years on my father's side, and my last name, well, it's my family name.

I, of all people, should be sensitive to being called the wrong name. There are so many women my age named Jen, Jenny or Jennifer that many people mistakenly assume I'm a Jennifer too. More than once has a superior repeatedly call me Jennifer; a very demeaning experience.

Despite my experiences and in spite of my awareness this debilitating trait, I still forget names regularly.

I almost always remember where I know you from, the fact your cat died in sixth grade, that your parents are from Iceland, and that your sister goes to Lincoln Northeast. But I can't, for the life of me, remember your name.

More than once in the last four months have I turned to my roommate and whispered, "how do I know them," or have made her play six degrees of separation.

"OK, remember Jenny, from our freshman year? Her friend Scott, who was in AGS? Yeah, you remember? He was friends with Chem boy — you know, the one who always sat with Milk boy at dinner. OK Milk boy's ex-girlfriend — the one from your bio class. I saw her on campus today. WHAT WAS HER NAME?"

Sure, we've all been there — that familiar face that smiles and occasionally says hi.

But my life has reached epidemic proportions. Just look: I forgot someone's name yesterday, it happened again last Friday; it happens all the damn time.

So I have some solutions.

The first option is to have everyone wear name tags. At least then I might have a fighting chance. First names — and sometimes only last — are enough to quick-fire my memory. I don't care how it's done — law, regulations, mandatory clothes labeling, genetic imprinting — it just needs to happen. And soon.

My second choice would be to

require everyone to introduce themselves in conversations, especially when you haven't seen the person for some time, or if you've only had one class together.

Finally, there's the whole memory workshop thing. I suppose that's probably the most feasible option. I've heard the claims: Remember 300 names on the first try. Sure they haven't met me yet.

It's a problem I've to fix mighty soon.

I want to work in university advancement after graduation, a field that will put me in contact with people daily; probably people who are important to the university. People whose names I should know. People's names that I will know!

To all the people I meet on the street, where we start talking and have a jolly conversation, and I happen not to mention your name: I'm probably too embarrassed to admit that I can't remember and am too damn stubborn to ask.

So, for you and all the world to hear, I apologize in advance. It's not that I don't know you or don't remember who you are, I'm just forgetting a little tiny thing.

Your name.