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Data CodeBook

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What counts as a Suicide Attack?

Suicide attacks are defined by CPOST as attacks in which the attackers “kill others at the same time that they kill themselves.” Suicide missions, in contrast, are attacks in which the attackers expect to die but do not kill themselves (they are killed by others, e.g. the police). CPOST does not include cases of suicide missions in their dataset of suicide attacks.¹ CPOST does include cases of possible suicide and failed suicide attacks.

Examples of (Successful) Suicide Attacks:

- A bomber detonates his or her bomb near a mosque, killing 10.
- A bomber detonates his or her bomb near a mosque, but only kills him or herself.
- A bomber is discovered by police and is shot, but manages to detonate the bomb. If the shot (and not the bomber) set off the explosives, then the attack counts as a failed suicide attack.
- A bomber targeting a U.S. military base is discovered and detonates his bomb before reaching the intended target.

Examples of Failed Suicide Attacks (Include in database when encountered):

- A suspected suicide bomber attempts to target a checkpoint but is shot and killed without detonating bomb.
- A suspected suicide bomber is discovered and killed and a unit of the explosive division accidentally detonates the bomb.
- A bomber detonates his bomb but is only injured.

Examples of Possible Suicide Attacks (Include in database when encountered):

- The attack resembles a car bomb but witnesses claim that they saw a person behaving suspiciously and believe that he or she was a suicide bomber.
- A mutilated body was discovered and investigators suggest that it was the body of a bomber. (Usually bombers’ heads are found detached, while victims’ injuries resemble shrapnel wounds.)
- It is unclear whether the bomber detonated him or herself or was detonated remotely, by another party.
- One news article claims that the attack was a suicide bomb and other articles claim that the attack was a car bomb (an attack can be classified as suicide as long as two articles say that it was a suicide bomb, even if other articles say that it was a car bomb).

Examples of Non-Suicide Attacks (not included in the database):

¹ Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House, 2005), 10-11.

- A group of men accidentally detonate explosives upon installing them in a vehicle.
- A man enters a mosque to shoot attendees, knowing that he will be killed by security guards in the process.

In order to be counted as a suicide attack in the database, the attack *must* be independently verified by two news or media sources, preferably three. Two independent sources, for example, may be the International Herald Tribune and Agence France Presse. Two *non*-independent sources are the BBC World Stream and the BBC Monitoring South East Asia. *Non*-independent sources also occur when freelance journalists publish their stories with two different news or media agencies. Multiple sources increases our confidence that the attack actually happened and that the details are accurate.

Attack Details

Attack ID: The Attack ID is automatically generated.

Attack Date: Date attack occurred.

Groups Involved: Group that carried out the attack. Usually there is one group involved in each attack. However, groups occasionally work together to plan a suicide-attack and take joint responsibility. For example, in Israel, in 2007, a suicide-bomber detonated an explosive vest in a bakery in a resort neighborhood. The attack was planned by al-Fatah and Hamas, collectively, to inspire cooperation amongst their followers and to discourage in-fighting. For this attack, two groups were recorded.

- There are a few groups that have separate names, but operate under a larger organization. All attacks by Tanzim and Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade have been coded as al-Fatah. Izz al-din al-Qassan Brigades is the military wing of Hamas and has been coded as Hamas.
- There are some groups whose name often serves as an umbrella for many smaller groups who operate in tacit coordination with each other. For instance “Hezbollah” in the 1980s was often an umbrella term for attacks in Lebanon carried out by the following Islamic, secular, and Christian groups:

Arab Socialist Union
 Egyptian League for Arabness
 Hezbollah
 Islamic Holy War
 Islamic Jihad
 Islamic Revolutionary Front
 Lebanese Ba’ath Party
 Lebanese Communist Party

Lebanese National Resistance Front
Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
Sai'qa
Syrian Social Nationalist Party
Vanguard of Arab Christians

Campaign: CPOST data generally supports the theory that suicide campaigns are a result of foreign occupation and therefore our campaigns are organized geographically (in terms of occupied countries and their respective rebel forces).

Number killed and wounded:

- One source may site 12 deaths, source two may say 16, and source three may site 6. In this event, the **deaths low** would be 6 and the **deaths high** would be 16.
- If all sources confirm 12 deaths, then both **deaths low** and **deaths high** would be 12.

Countr(ies): Country in which attack occurred

Target(s)

Location:

- **Country:** Country in which attack occurred.
- **Region:** Region of the country in which the attack occurred.
- **City:** Towns and villages are also be included in this field. Occasionally an attack may take place in the outskirts of a city, or a mile outside the city. For example, if a suicide-attack occurred one mile outside Tikrit, Iraq. The City will be Tikrit and the Attack Place will be Outskirts of Tikrit.
- **Attack Place:** The Attack Place is a field for an increased level of specification. For example, if a suicide attack occurred in the al-Mansur neighborhood of Baghdad, the City would be Baghdad and Attack Place would be al-Mansur Neighborhood.

Target (aim-point): Most attacks only have one target. However, attacks are sometimes coordinated with multiple targets. Hypothetically, if Sunni suicide-bombers attacked the Kurdish city of Mosul: one suicide-bomber may have attacked the police station by means of a truck bomb, and another suicide-attacker targeted a civilian bridge, and another targeted K.D.P headquarters - this would essentially qualify as three aim-points

and three attackers. Likewise, if there were two suicide bombers in the truck bomb, this attack would still possess three aim-points.

Target Type: Target types are either Civilian, Political or Security.

- Civilian targets can be classified as Commercial, General, Infrastructure or Religious.
- Political targets are classified as Domestic or Foreign.
- Security targets are classified according to Civilian Support, Forces and Police.

Assassination: This field denotes whether the attack was an assassination or assassination attempt.

Weapon: This field includes the weapon used to carry out the attacks.

Attackers

Number of Attackers: Most attacks are comprised of one suicide-attacker, but they do very often have multiple attackers. The number of targets (aim-points) and the number of attackers can be the same number, but they mean different things. For example, if Sunni suicide-bombers attacked the Kurdish city of Mosul: one suicide-bomber attacked the police station by means of a truck bomb, and another suicide-attacker targeted a civilian bridge, and another targeted K.D.P headquarters, this would qualify as three aim-points and three attackers. However, if there were two suicide bombers in the truck bomb, this attack would still have three aim-points but four attackers.

Gender: Male, female, or unknown

Year of Birth: Year attacker was born.

Age: Age at time of death.

Occupation: Known employment status of attacker.

Religion: Religion of the attacker. Religion is coded according to ideology of the group.

Buddhist
Christian
Hindu
Jewish
Muslim (NA)
Muslim (Other)
Muslim (Shia)

Muslim (Sunni)
Secular
None
Unknown

Education: Level of education attained by the attacker.

- Elementary school is coded as “primary.”
- High school is coded as “secondary.”
- Any amount of post-secondary is coded as “post secondary.”

Marital Status: Single, married, or unknown