



Security for Activists



COMMON SENSE SECURITY

Popular consciousness of environmental issues has seen tremendous growth in the past few years. People organizing or speaking out against environmental degradation in this country and abroad are facing an escalating pattern of harassment. Increasing also is the number of arsons, robberies, burglaries, and attacks on environmental activists, especially on women- who are often on the front lines isolated rural areas. Investigators learned of more than one hundred cases between 1989 and 1992 alone. A pattern is emerging in these attacks which is similar to attacks on civil rights, anti-war, and Central American activists in the past.

As our movements have become stronger and more sophisticated, the techniques of the state, corporations and extreme right winger's have also become more sophisticated. We have seen government agents, corporate security and right wing intelligence networks share information as well as ideology. For instance, the FBI's security COINTELPRO operations targeted dissidents in America in the 1960's and 1970's. Caution and common sense measures in the face of the concentrated efforts to stop us, is therefore both prudent and necessary.

Spend a few minutes to assess your work from a security point of view:

Understand your vulnerabilities; assess your allies and your adversaries as obviously as possible; do not underestimate the opposition. Try to assess your organizational and personal strengths and weaknesses. Do not take chances. Plan for the worst; work and hope for the best.

Here are some specific suggestions for protecting yourself and your projects:

Office

- Keep your desk and work area clean. Don't leave documents lying around to

be removed or read. Never leave the only copy of a document or list behind; take a minute to duplicate an important document and keep the duplicate in a safe place off-site.

- Keep mailing and donor lists and personal phone books out of sight
- Always maintain a duplicate at a different location; update it frequently-
- Know your printer if you are about to publish and know your mailing house if you contract for distribution. The loss of camera ready copy or a change, in text could feel like a disaster, so back up and store important computer disks off-site. Sensitive data and membership lists should be kept under lock and key. Do not leave sensitive files on the hard disk, use floppies-, back them up and store the disks in secure spots. Use an encryption program to protect your data.
- Know the background of anyone you, are trusting to work on any part of a project that is sensitive. Projects have been bungled because an untrustworthy person has purposefully intervened or inadvertently screwed up.
- Don't hire a stranger as a messenger. Your message might not arrive or could arrive after being duplicated for an unintended party.
- Sweeps for electronic surveillance are only effective for the time they are being done, and are only effective as they are being done if you are sure of the person(s) doing the sweep. Sweeps tend to be expensive because to be effective one must sweep a large area. Many experts contend that the most sophisticated federal government and private agency tap cannot be detected.
- Keep a camera, loaded with film, handy at all times. If you are the last person to leave the office late at night, leave the light on when you depart. Do not advertise your departure.

- Keep your office door locked at night, especially if you are alone.

Trash

- What you consider trash could be a real treasure to someone looking for information about you or your projects. Don't throw information about you or your projects in your trash. Garbology has become a tactic because it is so useful.
- Keep a "Burn File" in a secure place and occasionally burn it or use a shredder. Make sure your shredder creates confetti because strips can easily be reconstructed with a little patience.

Telephone

- Do not list your address with your phone number in the directories.
- Consider having yourself unlisted.
- If you receive threatening calls on your answering machine, immediately remove and save the tape.
- Never say anything you don't want to hear repeated where there is any possibility of being recorded or overheard. Don't say anything on the phone you don't want to hear in open court.
- Don't talk in code on the telephone. If you are being tapped and the transcript is used against you in court, the coded conversation can be alleged to mean anything by government code "experts."
- Don't gossip about sensitive people or projects on the telephone. All information that can make an outsider "in the know" about you and your projects is valuable and makes everyone vulnerable.
- Keep a pad and pen next to the telephone. Jot down details of threatening or suspicious calls immediately. Note the time, date, and keep a file.
- Don't waste time worrying about phone taps or imagining that strange clicks or hums or other noises indicate a phone

tap. Many taps are virtually impossible to detect. Trust your instincts. If you think your phone is tapped, act accordingly.

- Remember. It is very easy to eavesdrop on cellular and mobile phones. Scanners have been developed specifically for that purpose. Neighbors report overhearing telephone calls via the radio, television and even the stove.
- Get a mail box through the Post Office or a private concern. Be aware that the United States Post Office will give your street address to inquirers under certain circumstances.
- If you receive a threatening letter, handle it as little as possible. Put both the letter and the envelope in a plastic bag or file folder. Give the original to the police only if they agree to fingerprint it. Give them a copy otherwise because you may wish to have your own expert examine it.

Automobiles

- Keep your automobile clean so you can see if there is an addition or loss.
- Put no bumper stickers on your car which identify you as an organizer.
- Make your car look ordinary.
- Put your literature in the trunk or in a closed box.
- Keep your car locked at all times.
- When traveling, put your purse or briefcase out of reach of the windows.
- Put them behind your legs or tuck them up under the dash against the fire wall.

Police Reports

- Report any incidents to the local police and ask for protection if you feel it is warranted. Report threats or harassment to your local police. Demand that they take a report and protect you if that is necessary. Talk to the press and report the police response as well as the incident(s).
- Report thefts of materials from your office or home to the police; these are criminal acts.



UNDER SURVEILLANCE?

- Brief your membership on known or suspected surveillance. Be scrupulous with documentation. Do not dismiss complaints as paranoia without careful investigation. The opposition can and frequently does have informants join organizations to learn about methods and strategy.
- Discuss incidents with colleagues, family and membership. Call the press if you have information about surveillance and harassment. Discussion makes the secret dirty work of the intelligence agencies and private spies easier to spot.
- If you wish to have a private conversation, leave your home or office and take a walk or go somewhere very public and notice who can hear you.
- If you know a secret, keep it to yourself. As the World War II poster warned: Loose lips sink ships.
- Photograph the person(s) following you or have a friend do so. Use caution. If someone is overtly following you or surveilling, they are trying to frighten you. Openly photographing them makes them uncomfortable. If you are covertly being followed, have a friend covertly photograph them.
- If you are being followed, get the license plate number and state. Try to get a description of the driver and the car as well as passengers. Notice anything different about the car.
- If you are followed or feel threatened, call a friend; don't "tough it out" alone. "They" are trying to frighten you. It is frightening to have someone threatening your freedom. Debrief yourself immediately after each incident. Write details down; time, date, occasion, incident, characteristics of the person(s),

impressions, anything odd about the situation.

- Keep a "Weirdo" file with detailed notes about unsettling situations and see if a pattern emerges.

Break Ins

- Check with knowledgeable people in your area about alarm systems, dogs, surveillance cameras, motion sensitive lights, dead bolt lock and traditional security measures to protect against break-ins.

Visits from the FBI

- Don't talk to the FBI or any government investigator without your attorney present. Get the names and addresses of the agents and tell them you will have your attorney contact them to set up a meeting. If you have attorney, give them the name and phone number. Under any circumstance, get the agents names and addresses.
- Information gleaned from a conversation can be used against you and your co-workers. The agents' report of even an innocuous conversation could "put words in your mouth" that you never uttered or your words could be distorted or made up if you don't have your attorney present.
- Call the National Lawyers Guild, American Civil Liberties Union or other sympathetic legal organizations if you need assistance locating a reliable attorney in your area. The FBI rarely set up interviews with counsel present. Often when the demand is made to have an interview with counsel, the FBI loses overt interest. Don't invite agents into your home. Speak with the agents outside. Once inside they glean information about your perspective and lifestyle.
- Don't let agents threaten you or talk you into having a short, personal conversation without your lawyer. Don't let them intimidate or trick you into talking. If the FBI wants to empanel a Grand Jury, a private talk with you will not change the

strategy of the FBI Don't try to outwit the FBI; your arrogance could get you or others into serious trouble.

- FBI agents sometimes try to trick you into giving information "to help a friend". Don't fall for it; meet with the agents in the presence of your attorney and then you can help your friend. Lying to the FBI is a criminal act. The best way to avoid charges is to say nothing. Any information you give the FBI can and will be used against you.
- Write for your government files under the Freedom of information Act (FOIA) and keep writing to the agencies until they give you all the documents filed under your name.
- Don't let the agents intimidate you. What if they do know where you live or work and what you do? We have a Constitutional right to lawful dissent. You are not required to speak with the FBI They might to frighten you; don't let them.
- Do not overlook the fact that government agencies sometimes share information within the government and with the private sector, particularly right-wing organizations. This has been documented.

Remember

If you feel you are under surveillance, your phones are tapped or that you are being followed, the best overall advice is to trust your instincts. If you feel something is wrong trust the feelings. Your instincts are usually right Most of us recall the times when we 'felt something was wrong' or we 'I knew better but did it anyway'. Talk to colleagues and make yourself as secure as you can. Experts claim that people who resist get away from attackers more often than those who do not. The same logic applies to keeping outsiders out of your business; it is a more subtle form of attack. Trust your instincts and resist when possible. One of the biggest blocks of resistance is the failure to recognize we are under attack. None of

this advice is intended to frighten but to create an awareness of the problems. Knowledge of the strategies and tactics of your adversaries will strengthen your movement. Cover yourself; it's a tough world out there.

Suggested Readings:

Caignon, Denise and Groves, Gail. Her Wits About Her: Self Defense Success Stories by Women. New York, Harper & Row, 1987;

Churchill, Ward and Vander Wall, Jim. Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars Against the Black Panther Party and The American Indian Movement. Boston: South End Press, 1988; Donner, Frank J. The Age of Surveillance. New York.- Random House, 1981;

Gelbspan, Ross. Break-ins, Death Threats and the FBI; the Covert War Against the Central America Movement. South End Press, 1991;

Glick, Brian. War at Home; Covert Action Against US Activists and What We can Do About it. Boston: South End Press, 1989.

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YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS WHEN STOPPED BY THE POLICE

Know Your Rights!

How many of us know what our legal rights are when a cop stops us on the street, or when he or she tells us they want to search us? We need not only to KNOW our rights, we also need to know HOW to assert them in a real situation. And we need to know how to actively DEMAND our rights over and over again, if we hope to have them respected, given that many officers are ready and willing to ignore them. This is a short introduction to a complex legal subject. Call us at Berkeley COPWATCH for more info (510) 548-0425.

Street Guidelines

If the police stop you or a friend, or if you're watching the police stop someone you don't know, do what you can to calm the situation down. Officers often feel a need to be in control. If they get too agitated, you or someone else could end up hurt, in jail, or worse. Keep your hands visible at all times. If you have to go into your pockets tell the cop, "I'm going to reach into my pocket now to get my ID." Don't make any sudden moves, don't move behind an officer, and walk instead of running whenever possible. Speak slowly, calmly, and loudly, so any witnesses can hear your words. Be polite but be insistent too.



Write down all the details of any incident involving the police immediately afterwards. You may think you'll never forget what happened, but unpleasant memories and important details sometimes fade fast. ALWAYS get the cops names and badge numbers, as well as car numbers and the name of their police department. Take photos of any injuries and go to a doctor to get a medical report on them.

Don't voluntarily come into physical contact with a police officer. In fact, if you as so much touch a cop, or their uniform or equipment, even accidentally, you can be legally charged with assault on a police officer. That's often charged as a violent felony, which is a strike if you are convicted. Also, police become very angry when they meet resistance, and they know that if they use their weapons the system will back them up, not you. Physically resisting an arrest will mean much more force from the cops and more charges in court.

If you see the police stopping someone, stop and watch, and try to get other people to stop too. Let the person who's been stopped know you're willing to be a witness. Get the names and numbers of other witnesses.

If the cops search you or detain you illegally, tell both the cops and any witnesses that it is against your consent, and repeat that over and over again. But you may not want to tell the cops exactly what they are doing wrong, because they could find a more legal way to search or detain you. Instead, just refuse your consent, take note of what happens, and if you get arrested, tell your lawyer later what the police did that was illegal. The cop's mistakes could invalidate the charges against you, and it will probably help more to talk about it in court than in the street.

If you see someone consenting to a search of a stop by the police, let them know they have the right to refuse their consent.

If you see severe misconduct, such as the police beating someone, you can call 911. The 911 dispatchers must record your call and it could be useful evidence later.

YOUR RIGHTS AND HOW TO USE THEM

LAW: You have the right to watch the police when they stop someone.

REALITY: The police get very nervous when people watch their actions. They may threaten you with arrest for ‘interfering’ (Penal Code section 148). Tell them politely but firmly that you don’t want to interfere, but you have the right to observe. Step back if necessary.

LAW: Police must identify themselves to the public. Officers must wear a nameplate or badge number while on duty (PC 830.10).

REALITY: Those tiny little- plates are hard to read, and cops will often refuse to give you their name and number. Ask insistently until you get it. If you are being ticketed, one of the officer’s names will be on the ticket. If you are arrested, most of them should be in the police report which you can get from your lawyer or your public defender.

LAW: There are three ways you can be stopped by police. In a casual encounter, the cop has no legal right to talk to you, but is “inviting” you to talk. A detention is when the police have “reasonable suspicion”: specific reasons (not a hunch, not a generalization) to believe that you have committed a specific crime or to believe that you’re about to commit a specific crime. Finally, the police can arrest you when they have -”probable cause” to believe that you have committed a crime. This is more than reasonable suspicion, but less than complete proof. They don’t need to have a warrant to already arrest you. If you were just a witness to a crime, the cops cannot legally detain you.

REALITY: Stay away from consensual encounters. If a cop starts talking to you, for whatever reason, ask “Am I free to go?” If yes, don’t talk. Just leave. If not, you are being detained. Ask, “Can you explain why you are detaining me?” and memorize the exact words of the cop’s response- this could be helpful in court if you are arrested. If there are any witnesses, repeat the cop’s

response (Oh, so I am being detained for ... ?) so that they can hear it.

LAW: You have the right to remain silent.

REALITY: Even if the police don’t read your rights, they are in effect. People often talk to the cops because they don’t know that they don’t have to. Although it can be difficult to refuse to answer any questions, it really is the best idea. Tell the police you don’t have anything to hide, but that you’ve been told by your lawyer not to answer any questions without your lawyer present. Don’t try to talk your way out of anything. Even the truth can be manipulated and used against you. -If you get confused and start talking, you can stop and assert your right to silence at anytime. The police may tempt you by saying that if you just answer a certain question, they will let you go, but this is often just a trick. Cops Lie! When you don’t answer questions, the police may threaten to arrest you for refusing to cooperate with their investigation. This threat is illegal.

LAW: You don’t have to show ID to the police, although you do have to show your driver’s license if you’re pulled over while driving.

REALITY: In a casual encounter, don’t even give the police your name- just walk away. If you’re being detained, you may want to give your name, but nothing more; the police have a right to take you in until you have been identified. If you are being ticketed, you should probably show your ID. If being arrested and taken in, you may have to show you’re citizenship is not secure (such as you are an undocumented immigrant), don’t even give your name.

LAW: When the police get your ID, they can run a warrant check. This basically checks to see if you have tickets you haven’t paid for a long time, or charges against you which you may not be aware of. If you have a warrant, they will arrest you.

REALITY: The computer system, or the cops, may make a “mistake” and say you have a warrant when you don’t. Keep copies at home of all your tickets and of the checks you paid the tickets with.

LAW: If the cops arrest you for an infraction (such as jaywalking or possession of less than an ounce of marijuana), they should give you a ticket and let you go. You may get a Pat-down for weapons, but you should not be searched. If you don't have an ID, the police may take you to the station to "verify your identity." If you're arrested for a misdemeanor, you may or may not be taken in. If the cops arrest you for a felony, you will be taken to the station and booked.

REALITY: Whether you are charged with a misdemeanor or a felony often depends on how the cop feels about you, not on what you've done or not done. It is common for the police to "over-book" people by adding on extra charges like resisting arrest or blocking the sidewalk.

SEARCHES

LAW: When you are detained, the police are allowed to do a pat-down search of your outer clothes to check for weapons.

REALITY: The cops may claim they feel a weapon when they don't, and use this as an excuse to go inside your pockets. This is an illegal search (see "If the cops search you illegally" above).

LAW: Other than a pat-down search, the police are only allowed to legally search you if you have been arrested, if they have a search warrant, or if you have a search clause as a condition of your probation or parole. This is true whether they're trying to search you or your bags or possessions. The police can also search you if you consent to a search.

REALITY: Never consent to a search. Silence can be consent, so whenever the cops start searching anything, say repeatedly to them and to bystanders, that "I don't consent to this search." Sometimes the police try to trick you into consenting; sometimes they just go ahead and search anyway. If you're arrested after an illegal search, some of your charges could be dropped. A great many searches happen when people give consent without realizing it. The cops may ask for

your consent in a way that does not sound like a question, such as, "I want to look in that bag." Say no anyway. Police may threaten to arrest you if you don't let them search. This is illegal.

LAW: The police can search your car if you're in it when they arrest you, or if they have probable cause to believe there is evidence of a crime inside.

REALITY: The cops may ask you for key to the trunk or glove compartment. If you're not under arrest, tell them "no." if they threaten to break it open, say, "Since you say you will break the car open, I will give you the keys but I do not consent to the search. Again, make sure witnesses can hear you.

LAW: Without your consent, the police can only enter your home if they have a search warrant, if they're arresting you, or if they have probable cause to believe there is evidence of a crime or an emergency in your house (for example, someone just called 911 with your address." The landlord or manager of where you live can't give legal permission for a police search. If you walk into your house when you're about to be arrested, they can search every room you walk through.

REALITY: If the police come to your door, step outside and lock the door behind you. If they have a search warrant, read it- check that the address is correct and the date is within the last several weeks. If they ask for consent to enter ("Mind if we come in?" or "We need to come in, OK?"), block the doorway with your body and say you'd prefer to talk outside. If they say they must enter and will break the door down, open the door, but repeat that you don't consent. Follow the cops if they search, to see if they try to plant anything.

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HARRASMENT FROM LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Four Main Methods of Harassment:

While much FBI and police harassment was blatant during the 1960s, and surveillance and infiltration were suspected, talk of CIA-



style covert action against domestic dissidents was generally dismissed as “paranoia.” It was not until the 1970s, after the damage had been done, that the sordid history of COINTELPRO began to emerge.

Infiltration: Agents and informers did not merely spy on political activists. Their main purpose was to discredit and disrupt. Their very presence served to undermine trust and scare off potential supporters. The FBI agents and police exploited this fear to smear genuine activists and police used a police exploited this fear to smear genuine activists as agents.

Psychological Warfare From the Outside: ‘the FBI and police used a myriad of other “dirty tricks” to undermine progressive movements. They planted false media stories and published bogus leaflets and other publications in the name of targeted groups. They forged correspondence, sent anonymous letters, and made anonymous phone calls. They spread misinformation about meetings and events, set up pseudo movement groups run by government agents, and manipulated or strong-armed parents, employers, landlords, school officials and others to cause trouble for activists.

Harassment Through the Legal System: The FBI and police abuse the legal system to harass dissidents and make them appear to be criminals. Officers of the law give false testimony and present fabricated evidence as a pretext for false arrests and wrongful imprisonment. They discriminatorily enforce tax laws and other government regulations and used conspicuous surveillance, “investigative” interviews, and grand jury subpoenas in an effort to intimidate activists and silence their supporters.

Extralegal Force and Violence: The FBI and police threaten, instigate, and themselves conduct break-ins, vandalism, assaults, and beatings. The object is to frighten dissidents and disrupt their movements. In the cases of radical Black and Puerto Rican activists (and later Native Americans), these attacks- including political assassinations- were so extensive, vicious, and calculated that they can accurately be termed a form of official ‘terrorism.’

CHECKLIST ON HOW TO DEAL WITH INFILTRATORS

- **Check out the authenticity of any disturbing letter, rumor, phone call, or other communication before acting on it.** Ask the supposed source if she or he is responsible.
- **Keep records of any incidents** which appear to be government inspired. Evaluate your response and report your experiences to the Movement Support Network (212) 614-6422, and the National Lawyers Guild.
- **Deal openly and honestly with differences** within our movements (race, gender, class, age, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, physical limitations. etc.) before the FBI and the police can exploit them.
- **Don't try to expose a suspect agent or informer without solid proof.** Purges based on mere suspicion only help the FBI and police create distrust and paranoia.

STANDARD DIRECT

ACTION SECURITY

- **Support all movement activists who come under government attack.** Don't be put off by political slander, such as attempts to smear some militant opponents of the government as "terrorists." Organize public opposition to all FBI witchhunts, grand jury subpoenas, political trials, and other forms of government harrassment.
- **Cultivate relationships with sympathetic journalists** who seem willing to investigate and publicize domestic covert operations. Let them know when you are harassed. Since the FBI and police thrive on secrecy, public exposure can undermine their ability to subvert our work.
- **Don't try to tough it out alone.** Don't let others become isolated. Make sure that activists who are under extreme stress get the help they need (someone to talk with, rest, therapy, etc.) It is crucial that we build support networks and take care of one another.
- **Don't carry address books, friends' phone numbers, sensitive political documents, etc.,** to demonstrations; especially if you are risking arrest. They may be confiscated by the police. Don't bring illegal weapons or drugs to demonstrations.

Above all, **don't let our movements be diverted from their main political goals.** Our most powerful weapon against repression is effective political organizing around issues which directly affect people's lives.

This section is reprinted from a must read book for activists-War at Home: Covert Action Against Us Activists and What We Can Do About It by Brian Glick.

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for breaking laws and not getting caught (or at least until you are ready to get caught.)

1. Pick trusted people for your affinity groups, the longer you have known them the better.
2. Keep a low profile when scouting the site of your action.
3. Avoid or ostracize lunatics, advocates of violence, or immature, macho, big mouths.
4. If you plan to not get arrested, use a pseudonym during the action and when speaking to media and the public or use a spokesperson instead.
5. Keep sensitive information, such as the time and place of your action, on a strictly need to know basis; friends can't leak what they don't know.
6. Only use phone, e-mail, walkie-talkies, CBs, and the mail for information that you wouldn't care if the cops intercepted.
7. Remember that underground tactics are for underground movements; if you do any work publicly, don't use them.
8. Avoid knowing about the illegal activities of others; remind others not to ask; never gossip.
9. Make sure everyone in your group knows your security standards. Deal with violators immediately. Do not tolerate people who repeat behavior against your group's security standards.
10. Avoid unrelated lawbreaking such as the use or possession of illegal drugs during times of security concern.

