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**FUNDAMENTALS OF
PHYSICAL SURVEILLANCE**



Chapter 1

PHYSICAL SURVEILLANCE (INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW)

The tendency is to think of physical surveillance as being either urban or rural, stationary or mobile, foot or vehicle, or to occur on public transportation. In reality, one surveillance operation can feature several or all of them.

INTRODUCTION

Physical surveillance is the direct visual observation of a person, object, activity, or location while remaining undetected. It is the art of seeing without being seen. The investigator is the surveillant. The person or location of interest is the subject, also referred to as the target. The term convoy refers to one or more associates of the subject that follows him or her, or does static surveillance at specified locations, for the purpose of detecting surveillance. During all phases of surveillance, the investigator is alert for countersurveillance. That is necessary because surveillance frequently occurs in an active countersurveillance environment.

Physical surveillance is an ancient intuitive art that remains an art in spite of modern tools. Surely, in the main, a skilled investigator with antiquated tools is more effective than a low-skilled surveillant with front line equipment is. However, the skilled investigator with up-to-date tools operates at peak efficiency.

Uninformed people tend to believe that keeping a person under constant observation is easy. In truth, keeping somebody in continuous view without detection is difficult. It requires skill, perseverance,

patience, and a measure of luck. Remaining undetected during mobile surveillance is necessary because a subject becomes aware of surveillance when observing the same person at different times and locations. As for static surveillance (stakeout), the vantage point (observation post) must permit eluding detection by the subject, area inhabitants, and sometimes by patrolling police officers.

Throughout this book, surveillance methods are isolated for the purpose of discussion even though a single surveillance operation frequently requires transitioning from one method to another. For example, static surveillance commonly precedes mobile surveillance, and occurs again when the subject reaches a destination. Often, at the destination, one investigator maintains watch of the subject's parked vehicle while another investigator follows the subject. During foot surveillance, if the subject boards public transportation, the investigator usually does likewise. In addition, surveillance may begin in the urban environment and venture into a rural region, or vice versa.

In addition to one method of surveillance yielding to another during the course of scrutiny, investigators assigned to different aspects of an investigation often apply different surveillance methods. For example, a surveillance team may follow the subject during periods of transit while another investigator maintains static surveillance of her home. Meantime, another investigator watches the place of employment. Additional surveillance teams may watch colleagues of the subject. During all that, manned and/or unmanned photographic surveillance may occur.

Sometimes, for static surveillance (stakeout), the investigator cannot secure a vantage point that provides adequate concealment. In such instances, a pretext is used to justify being in plain view. Whether the investigator must linger briefly or for an extended duration determines the nature of the pretext used. When working in view but obscured by the veil of a pretext, the investigator is hiding in plain sight.

Depending on the nature of a case, undercover (UC) surveillance may occur. For example, if the subject is affiliated with a particular business entity, it may be beneficial for an investigator to infiltrate the business by securing a job therein and reporting for work every day posing as a company employee. Once on the inside, because UC investigations are interactive, the investigator can acquire information

unavailable by conventional investigation and surveillance methods. In some instances, more than one investigator infiltrates the same business, securing jobs in different departments and/or on different shifts. Unfortunately, only a percentage of investigators have the abilities required for protracted UC investigations. Conceptualize a two-minute undercover drug buy versus an investigator arriving at a factory each day, for many months, carrying a lunchbox and wearing work clothes, hardhat, steel toe boots, safety glasses, and displaying a picture identification badge.

This book provides an assembly of information about physical surveillance, some of it universal and some of it unorthodox and not found in other books. Nevertheless, the student of surveillance should read several books on the topic because each writer provides a different perspective, and each delves deeper into some areas than others do. To be sure, the training and experience of each writer is different and they present the topic accordingly. In addition, that which each reader takes from a book varies based on their training and experience, and need. Indeed, the private investigator, police detective, and government intelligence collection officer each view surveillance differently. Maloy Krishna Dhar of India confirms this explaining that, “Policing is altogether a different domain than Intelligence operations and mastering intelligence tradecraft” (Dhar, 2011, p. 194).

To an extent, this book is a sister to the books *Clandestine Photography*¹ and *Undercover Disguise Methods for Investigators*.² These books treat their respective topic in greater detail than the limited space here permits.

REASONS FOR PHYSICAL SURVEILLANCE

When contemplating the reasons for physical surveillance, consider what information is best obtained by direct observation, what infor-

1. Siljander, R. & Juusola, L. (2012). *Clandestine Photography: Basic to Advanced Daytime and Nighttime Manual Surveillance Photography Techniques—For Military Special Operations Forces, Law Enforcement, Intelligence Agencies, and Investigators*. Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas. This book features 656 pages and 556 illustrations.

2. Mazzuki, A., Siljander, R., & Mitchell, S. (2015). *Undercover Disguise Methods for Investigators: Quick-change Techniques for Both Men and Women*. Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas. This book features 226 pages and 87 illustrations.