

Diagnostic Key for Distinguishing Potential Terrorists from Peace (& political) Activists

Terrorists are:	Peace Activists are:
1. very secretive	1. very public
2. very quiet	2. very noisy
3. very dangerous, but smooth if touched	3. very nonviolent, but irritable (& irritating?)
4. fond of weapons	4. abhor weapons
5. if tagged, claim no or very few contacts	5. if tagged, claim to know the entire world
6. few contacts recorded at home, on computers	6. zillions of contacts recorded on every conceivable media. All of whom they call or email as soon as you tag them.
7. use cell phones judiciously	7. talk, text and tweet constantly
8. do not invite you to their meetings	8. beg you to come to their meetings (unless you clearly intend to arrest them)

Explanations:

Virtually everyone wants law enforcement to succeed at its legitimate mission of protecting the public from dangerous criminals. When vigilance is high, however, there is a constant danger of confusing noisy and deliberately irritating political activists with dangerous people.

In medicine, these would be called “false positives,” which can trigger inappropriate reactions that injure citizens of democracies. Those injuries prompt reactions that obstruct efficient law enforcement. The enlightened law enforcement philosophy called “Community Policing” recognizes the high costs to law enforcement and to democracy itself when communities come to view police as enemies rather than as partners in the common quest to protect our people.

Peace activists in particular are intimately familiar with historic examples of law enforcement targeting honorable citizens, like COINTELPRO and CHAOS ops that targeted peace activists specifically, and the 5 year FBI campaign against the Rev. Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement. Therefore activists also sometimes overreact and engage civil liberties organizations at the first signs of US law enforcement excesses. This dynamic drains precious resources from both law enforcement and the activist communities. Those resources, most especially time, would be far better spent by focusing on the very rare but real genuine threats to our society.

This diagnostic key is offered freely to help you increase your ability to distinguish truly dangerous terrorists from the many merely irritating political activists and groups you may encounter, especially peace groups which so often oppose U.S. government policies.

Best wishes with your important work and in life,

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