

## **STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE PERSONAL SECURITY** **IN A TROUBLED WORLD**

*The concept of “Personal Security” encompasses all measures put in place to protect an individual from threat to his life, position, status and reputation. Personal security includes the protection of life and property of an individual, his family and the environment. On the other hand, threats are acts with potentials of inhibiting the peace, stability and progress of an individual. Threat exists at home, in the office, on the street, places of worship or anywhere. It could manifest as robbery, assassination, arson, advanced fee fraud (419), hostage taking and terrorism among others.*

*Studies have shown that complacency and fatalism hinder personal security. Phrases such as “what will be will be”, “that is not my portion,” “God forbids”, “It can’t happen to me”, and “if it’s going to happen, it’s going to happen”, are common among Nigerians. It is safer to maintain an attitude that takes into cognizance the effect of societal decay. This should resonate with the motto, “Don’t say it can’t happen”. While anyone could be attacked anytime and anywhere, you can influence what happens in your environment by being more security conscious.*

*Accordingly, it is important that you take responsibility for your security in the following areas:*

### **General**

- Encourage security awareness in your family and discuss what to do if there is a security threat;*
- Be alert for surveillance attempts, presence of suspicious persons or activities and report them to the proper authorities;*
- Vary personal routines wherever possible;*

- *Get into the habit of checking in to let your friends and family know where you are or when to expect you;*
- *Know the location of Police stations, military installations and other safe locations where you can find refuge or assistance;*
- *Avoid public disputes and confrontations. Report any trouble to proper authorities;*
- *Set up simple signal systems to alert family members or associates that there is danger. Do not share this information with anyone not involved in your signal system;*
- *Keep a low profile. Shun publicity. Do not flash large sum of money;*
- *Do not divulge your home address, phone number, or family information unnecessarily;*
- *Carry identification showing your blood type and any special medical conditions.*

## ***Residential Security***

*Residential security is a critical component of any personal security strategy. The following guidelines should be used in reviewing security at your residence.*

- *All entrances, including service doors and gates should have quality locks--preferably deadbolt. Check your:*
  - *Front Door*
  - *Rear Door*
  - *Garage Door(s)*
  - *Service Door(s)*
  - *Patio Door*
  - *Sliding Glass Door*
  - *Gate*

- *Swimming Pool Gate*
- *Guest House Door(s).*
- *Have a clear view of approaches to your home.*
- *Install strong doors and locks.*
- *Change locks when you move in or when a key is lost.*
- *Have adequate lighting outside your house.*
- *Don't leave keys hidden outside the home. Leave an extra key with a trusted neighbor or colleague.*
- *Keep doors locked even when you or family members are at home.*
- *Have locks installed on all windows. Use them.*
- *Lock louvered windows--especially on the ground floor.*
- *Have locks installed on your fuse boxes and external power sources.*
- *If you have window grills and bars, review fire safety. Don't block bedroom windows with permanent grills if the windows are intended for use to exit the building during an emergency.*
- *If you have burglar or intrusion alarms, check and use them.*
- *Keep at least one (1) fire extinguisher on each floor as well as the kitchen. Show family members and Service staff how to use them.*
- *Periodically check smoke detectors and replace batteries when necessary.*
- *Keep flashlights in several areas in the house. Check the batteries often, especially if you have children in your home. (They love to play with flashlights!)*

- *A family dog can be a deterrent to criminals. But remember, even the best watch-dog can be controlled by food or poison.*
- *Choose a location that offers the most security. The less remote, the safer your home will be, particularly in a neighborhood close to Police and fire protection.*
- *Know your neighbors. Develop a rapport with them and offer to keep an eye on each other's homes, especially during trips.*
- *Establish safe family living patterns. If you understand the importance of your contribution to the family's overall security, the entire household will be safer.*
- *While at home, you and your family should rehearse safety drills and be aware of procedures to escape danger and get help.*
- *Educate family members and domestic help in the proper way to answer the telephone at home.*
- *Vary daily routines; avoid predictable patterns.*
- *Know where all family members are at all times.*
- *Use these same guidelines while on leave or in travel status.*
- *Install one-way viewing device indoors.*
- *Carefully screen all potential domestic help.*
- *Do not answer the telephone with your name and rank.*
- *Personally destroy all envelopes and other items that reflect personal information.*
- *Never accept unexpected package deliveries.*
- *Avoid frequent exposure on balconies and in windows.*
- *Don't let your trash become a source of information.*

### *Establishing a Safe haven*

*Follow three (3) basic steps in setting up a safe-haven in your home:*

- *Designate an internal room;*
- *Install a two-way communications system or telephone; and*
- *Furnish the safe haven with an emergency kit.*

*The following is a checklist of possible safe haven supplies.*

- *Fire extinguisher*
- *Fresh water*
- *5-day supply of food*
- *Candles, matches, flashlight*
- *Extra batteries*
- *Bedding*
- *Toilet facilities*
- *Steno stove, fuel*
- *Shortwave or other radio*
- *Medical/first aid kit*
- *Other items for your comfort and leisure--a change of clothing, books, games*

### *Home Security While You Are Away*

- *Notify few trusted people of your departure and return dates but don't otherwise publicize your travel or vacation plans. Leave contact numbers.*
- *Arrange to have a friend or colleague pick up your newspapers, mail, or other deliveries daily.*
- *Secure your home. Close and lock all windows and doors. Don't forget to lock garage or gate doors.*
- *Check outside lighting and replace older light bulbs. You don't want a light burning out while you are away.*

- *Ask a friend or colleague to check your residence periodically, ensuring your furnace or air conditioning is functioning and that timers and lights are working.*
- *Unplug all unnecessary appliances such as televisions, stereos, and personal computers.*
- *If you use a telephone answering machine, turn off the ringer on the telephone. If you don't have an answering machine, unplug or turn off ringers on all telephones.*
- *Lock all jewelry, important papers, currency, and other valuable portables in a safe place such as a safe deposit box or home safe.*
- *Ensure all personal and home insurance policies are up-to-date and that your coverage is adequate.*

### ***Personal Security While Traveling***

- *Check plane, train, and bus times before you travel.*
- *Sit near other people or near aisles or doors. Learn the location of emergency alarms and exits.*
- *Stay awake and alert when using public transportation.*
- *Consider purchasing special clothing or accessories to hide your passport, money, or credit cards. Keep the majority of your funds in travelers' checks and hidden; carry some in your wallet or handbag.*
- *Keep valuables out of sight and luggage close at hand. If carrying a handbag, keep it in front of you, closed, with the fastening toward your body. Keep a wallet in your front pants pocket.*
- *Let go if your bag is snatched.*
- *Do some research on the area you are visiting.*

- *When traveling, dress casually; dress down where appropriate. Be aware of local customs.*
- *Don't wear excess jewelry. Reduce wallet and purse contents, particularly cards denoting affiliations, memberships, accounts, etc.*
- *At airports, proceed through security checks and go to the boarding area as quickly as possible. These areas are usually the most secure in the airport.*
- *In any crowded situation, be aware of any crowding or jostling, even if it appears innocent. This is often a ploy by pickpockets to distract you.*

### **Personal Security in Hotels**

- *Do not discuss your business or travel plans in public areas where they may be overheard. Discuss your travel plans and movements during your stay with as few people as possible.*
- *Selecting a hotel room on the third to fifth floor generally will keep you out of reach of criminal activity from the street but still within reach of most fire truck ladders.*
- *Do not entertain strangers in your hotel room.*
- *Be alert to overly friendly locals who may have criminal intentions. They may offer to take you to a special restaurant. Their ruse may be to offer drugged refreshments.*
- *Never leave valuables in your hotel room exposed or unattended, even in a locked suitcase.*
- *Place valuables--money, jewelry, airplane tickets, credit cards, and passport--in a hotel safe deposit box or room safe.*
- *Familiarize yourself with escape routes in case of fire or other catastrophe.*

- *Use the door chain or bolt lock whenever you are in your room.*
- *Use the door viewer (peephole) before opening the door to visitors.*
- *Do not discuss your room number while standing in the lobby or leave your room key on restaurant or bar tables.*
- *Keep your room neat so you will notice disturbed or missing items quickly.*

## **Fire Safety at Home**

*Three (3) vital facts you should know about fire:*

- *It isn't usually fire that kills; it is the products of combustion--smoke, toxic gases, or superheated air.*
- *Fire travels at lightning speed--up to 19 feet per second.*
- *The critical hours for a house fire are 11 PM to 6 AM when most people are asleep.*

*This means you need to detect fire early, and you must move quickly when you do. You and your family can avoid becoming a statistic if you:*

- *Install smoke detectors in your home.*
- *Create and practice a fire escape plan.*
- *Take fire preventive measures such as those listed below.*

### Smoke Detectors

*A smoke detector can make the difference between life and death. They are inexpensive and are battery operated; they are not at the mercy of sporadic electrical service. You should have one on every level of your home, particularly in the hallway outside bedrooms. Test your detectors regularly, and replace the batteries as needed--usually twice a year.*

### Exit Drills

*You and your family should create a fire exit plan together. Learn how to escape the house from every room. Locate two (2) exits from each bedroom. Designate a meeting place outside the house. Most importantly--especially if you have children--PRACTICE YOUR PLAN!*

### *Preventive Measures*

*Carelessness with cigarettes is the most frequent cause of house fires. Never smoke in bed!*

*Open flames and the resulting sparks are dangerous. Don't place barbecue grills or other open flames on the balcony or near the house.*

*Check for: faulty electrical wiring; overloaded circuits; faulty equipment, including cooking and heating appliances; leaking propane tanks; overloaded or frayed extension cords; dirty chimneys and vents; and flammable liquids.*

*Keep a fire extinguisher in the house, preferably one on every level but particularly in the kitchen. Teach older children and household help how to use the extinguisher.*

### ***Security Do's for Children***

*Teach children never to admit strangers into the home.*

- Teach children local emergency phone numbers. Make sure younger children know their name, address, and phone number.*
- Caution teenagers about blind dates or meeting anyone they do not know.*
- Teach younger members of your family not to open mail or packages.*
- Teach young children how to answer the telephone so that they do not give out personal information, such as home address, absence of adults, etc.*

- *Teach children how to say no to strangers.*
- *Teach children how to exit the house in case of emergency.*

### **Letter and Parcel Bombs**

*Letter and parcel bombs generally are victim activated meaning that a victim or intended target must activate the device by opening it. They do not normally contain timing devices.*

*Bombs can range from the size of a cigarette package to a large parcel. Letter and package bombs have been disguised as letters, books, candy, and figurines. Delivery methods have included mail systems, personal delivery, or placement at the recipient's site.*

*A letter or parcel bomb might have some of the following indicators:*

- *Suspicious origin--especially if the postmark or name of sender is unusual, unknown, or no further address is given.*
- *Excessive or inadequate postage.*
- *Off-balance or lopsided letter or package.*
- *Unusual weight for the size of the letter or package. Letters also may be unusually thick.*
- *Stiffness or springiness of contents. (When checking, do not bend excessively.)*
- *Protruding wires or components; unusual grease or oil stains on the envelope.*
- *Strange smell, particularly almond or other suspicious odors.*
- *Handwriting of sender is not familiar or indicates a foreign style not normally received by recipient.*
- *Common words or names are misspelled.*
- *Rub on or block lettering.*
- *Restrictive markings such as confidential or personal or an honorific title appended to the name of the addressee.*
- *Small hole in the envelope or package wrapping that could be a provision for an arming/safety wire.*
- *Rattling inside the envelope or package--possibly loose components of a device.*

- *Visual distractions (i.e., currency).*

## **Carjacking**

- *When in your car, always keep the doors locked. Any time you drive through areas containing stoplights, stop signs, or anything that significantly reduces vehicular speed, keep your windows up.*
- *Leave ample maneuvering space between your vehicle and the one in front of you. If you are approached by suspicious persons while you are stopped, do not roll down windows; drive away quickly.*
- *If you are being followed or harassed by another driver, try to find the nearest police station, hotel, or other public facility. Once you find a place of safety, don't worry about using a legal parking space. Park as close as you can, and get inside fast.*
- *If another driver tries to force you to pull over or to cut you off, keep driving and try to get away. Try to note the license plate number of the car and a description of the car and driver. If this effort places you in danger, don't do it. The information is not as important as your safety.*
- *If you are being followed, never lead the person back to your home or stop and get out.*
- *If you are traveling alone and a car bumps into you, don't stop to exchange accident information. Go to the nearest police station or other public place to call the police.*
- *When you park, look for a spot that offers good lighting and is close to a location where there are a lot of people. Lock valuables in the trunk, and lock all doors.*
- *Extra precautions are necessary when shopping. If you take packages out to lock them in your trunk, then plan to return to the stores to do more shopping, it may be a good idea to move your*

*car to another section of the parking lot or street. The criminal knows that you will be coming back and can wait to ambush you. By moving your car, you give the impression you're leaving. If you think you are being followed, do not go back to your car. Return to the safety of the occupied shopping area or office building and contact the authorities.*

- If you have car trouble on the road, raise your hood. If you have a radio antenna, place a handkerchief or other flag there. When people stop to help, don't get out of the car unless you know them or it's the police. Ask the good Samaritan to stop at the nearest service station and report your problem.*
- If you are in a parking lot or parked on the street and have trouble, be wary of personal assistance from strangers. Go to the nearest telephone and call a repair service or friend for assistance. If you feel threatened by the presence of nearby strangers, lock yourself in your car and blow the horn to attract attention of others.*

## **Surveillance**

*The purpose of surveillance is to identify a potential target based on the security precautions that an individual takes, and the most suitable time, location, and method of attack. Surveillance may last for days or weeks. Naturally, the surveillance of a person who has set routines and who takes few precautions will take less time.*

*Detecting surveillance requires a fairly constant state of alertness and, therefore, must become a habit. A good sense of what is normal and what is unusual in your surroundings could be more important than any other type of security precaution you may take. Above all, do not hesitate to report any unusual event.*

*Forms of surveillance include foot, vehicular, and stationary. People who have well-established routines permit surveillants to use methods that are much more difficult to detect.*

*If, for example, you leave the office at the same time each day and travel by the most direct route to your home or if you live in a remote area with few or no alternate routes to your home, surveillants have no need to follow you all the way to your residence.*

*You should therefore:*

- Vary your routes and times of travel.*
- Be familiar with your route and have alternate routes.*
- Check regularly for surveillance.*

*Stationary surveillance is most commonly used by terrorist organizations. Most attacks take place near the victim's residence, because that part of the route is least easily varied. People are generally most vulnerable in the morning when departing for work because these times are more predictable than evening arrivals.*

*Where it is not possible to watch the residence unobserved, surveillants must come up with a plausible reason for being in the area. Women and children are often used to give an appearance of innocence. Try to check the street in front of your home from a window before you go out each day.*

- Don't wait to verify surveillance before you report it.*
- Be alert to people disguised as public utility crews, road workers, vendors, etc., who might station themselves near your home or office.*
- Whenever possible, leave your car in a secured parking area. Be especially alert in underground parking areas.*
- Always check your vehicle inside and out before entering it. If you notice anything unusual, do not enter the vehicle.*
- Household staff and family members should be reminded to look for suspicious activities around their residence; for example, surveillance, attempts to gain access to your residence by fraudulent means, and telephone calls or other inquiries requesting personal information.*

- *Tell your household staff and family members to note descriptions and license numbers of suspicious vehicles. Advise them to be alert for details. Household staff can be one of the most effective defensive mechanisms in your home--use them to your advantage.*

*While there are no guarantees that these precautions, even if diligently adhered to, will protect you from terrorist violence, they can reduce your vulnerability and, therefore, your chances of becoming a victim.*

### **Sexual Assault Prevention**

- *Be alert. Don't assume that you are always safe. Think about your safety everywhere. Your best protection is avoiding dangerous situations.*
- *Trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable in any situation, leave.*
- *Always walk, drive, and park your car in well-lit areas.*
- *Walk confidently at a steady pace on the side of the street facing traffic.*
- *Walk close to the kerb. Avoid doorways, bushes, and alleys.*
- *Wear clothes and shoes that allow freedom of movement.*
- *Walk to your car with keys in your hand.*
- *If you have car trouble, raise the hood and stay inside your car. If a stranger wants to help, have him or her call for help. Don't leave your car.*
- *Keep your car doors locked and never pick up hitchhikers.*
- *Make sure all windows and doors in your home are locked, especially if you are home alone.*
- *Never give the impression that you are home alone if strangers telephone or come to the door.*
- *If a stranger asks to use your phone, have him wait outside while you make the call.*
- *If you come home and find a door or window open or signs of forced entry, don't go in. Go to the nearest phone and call Police or other local law enforcement authorities.*

### **Hostage Defence Measures**

- *If your duties expose you to being taken hostage, make sure your family affairs are in order to ensure financial security. Concern for the family is a major source of stress for persons in kidnap or hostage situation.*
- *If you are taken hostage, decide not to resist, assure your captors of your intention to cooperate especially during abduction phase.*
- *Regain your composure as quickly as possible after capture, face your fears and try to master your emotion.*
- *Take mental note of the direction, time in transit, noise and other environmental factors that may help you identify your location.*
- *Note the numbers, names, physical characteristics accents, personal habits and rank structure of your captors.*
- *Anticipate isolation and terrorist effort to confuse you.*
- *Stay mentally active.*
- *Do not aggravate your abductors, instead, attempt to establish a positive relationship with them. Do not be fooled by a friendly approach-it may be used to get information from you.*
- *Avoid political or ideological discussions with your captors; comply with their instructions, but maintain your dignity.*
- *Do not discuss or divulge any classified information that you may possess.*
- *Exercise daily.*
- *Eat whatever food is offered to you to maintain your strength.*

*In the event of a rescue attempt:*

- *Drop to the floor.*
- *Be quiet and do not attract your captor's attention.*

- *Wait for instruction.*
- *Rescue forces will initially treat you as one of the terrorists until you are positively identified as friend or foe. This is for your security. Cooperate, even if you are initially handcuffed.*
- *Once released, avoid making comments to the news media until you have been debriefed by security agencies.*

### CONCLUSION

*The cardinal objective of all security measures is to detect, deter, delay, deny, and deflect a threat. These measures must be applied when considering security for your person, family, home, traveling and social life. By using these basic safety tips and your own common sense, you can help protect yourself.*