

“RapidClear®– A New Methodology for Fast Clearing Mass Casualty Crime Scenes”

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Abstract

A wave of terror attacks forced the Israeli police and its CSI units to make a radical change in the way they processed the crime scenes. This change led to a new procedure of work, faster and more efficient, in order to quick clearing of a scene.

Introduction

On the year 2000, a new wave of terror attacks hit Israel. This wave included suicide-bombers blowing themselves amid crowd and on busses in Israeli cities, shooting sprees and stabbing attacks. Some of these terror acts resulted in mass casualty victims.

The initial response was to handle the aftermath in the same manner other mass casualty events were handled. This response called for a deliberate but painstakingly slow processing of the crime scene with procedures for tagging the victims and filling post and ante mortem documentation that generated a significant amount of paperwork. These procedures proved to be burdensome when a scene had to be "cleared" in a short timeframe so that life could return to "normal".

A need arose to do things much faster without compromising quality or forensic integrity. In response to these demands a new method was developed, named RapidClear®, to clear scenes within a few hours while maintaining the ability to identify victims beyond any doubt.

The fast clearing of the scenes was needed for few reasons:

- Short exposure time of the CSI's, in order to minimize the risk of PTSD.
- Returning life to normal ASAP has a significant economy value and public moral importance.

Adding to that the importance of bringing the murdered victims to burial as quickly as possible, because of Jewish religious demands, emphasize why RapidClear® is even more important.

Handling a Mass Casualty Scene

The "ordinary" mass casualty's scenes, any police (or other emergency) force needs to handle, include passenger plane crashing, building collapsing etc. In these incidents there is usually preliminary knowledge of the victim's identity. Also, the work procedure is slow and systematic. There is importance to the location of each of the victims, as it might point to its identity and it must be documented carefully. Therefore, the usual procedure calls for filling a post mortem documents, containing a lot of details, at the scene and filling ante mortem documents, also containing a lot of details, at the coroner's

office or at operation center near the scene. This kind of procedure was proved to be not efficient and not suitable for terrorist's crime scenes.

In the last ones, which take place on busses or other crowded places, there is usually a collection of people without any previous connections between themselves or any permanent relation to the scene. Therefore a documentation of the location of a body is not important and also all the details filled in the post mortem documents are not relevant at the scene.

In order to handle these kinds of scenes, rapidly and efficiently, a new method was developed by the CSI unit of Zion sub-district, Israel's national police, led by the author of this paper.

RapidClear® Procedure

The new method includes giving victims a temporary identification number and reducing post-mortem documentation to just one sheet of paper!

The new procedure also helps to prevent "mix-ups" between victim bodies arriving simultaneously from different units to the coroner's laboratory, a scenario that could happen in any country or large city.

Though the post mortem documentation was reduced to one sheet, it proved good enough for preliminary identification of about 80% of the victims, even before they were completely identified by the coroner!

The preliminary identification was done by crossing information received from worried families with the data from the RapidClear® identification form.

Why Use RapidClear®?

One of the goals of terrorists is to disrupt the normal course of life of the people they are attacking. While causing a mass casualties scene they inflict not only terror but also create havoc with significant damage to the economy. Stopping the life cycle of a megacity, or even a big city, can cause a loss of millions of dollars!

Using RapidClear® allowed the Israeli police to clear a scene with 30 bodies, some of them badly mutilated within only two hours!

If one will compare it to the clearing time of London's Subway attacks, which took more than a week to finish, or even to the attempted car bomb attack in Times Square, New-York, which paralyzed the city for many hours, one will see the efficiency of RapidClear®.

Another "side effect" of such an attack is the exposure of anyone handling the scene, i.e. firefighters, medics, bomb squad technicians, patrol officers and of course the CSI's, to the traumatic sights, sounds and smells of the scene. The prolong exposure for many such scenes or even the exposure for one traumatic scene for example, when babies or kids are among the victims or when finding a familiar face of friend or neighbor among them, can cause a mental trauma to the CSI's involved.

So another benefit of adopting RapidClear® procedures is reducing the exposure time of CSI personnel and others to the sights in crime scenes, thus minimizing the potential for onset of PTSD symptoms.

Using RapidClear® procedure also allowed quick final identification of the bodies at the coroner's laboratory. Since in Israel there is only one central coroner's laboratory, it is important to quickly identify the victims. As mentioned above, the initial identification of almost 80% of the victims by using RapidClear® procedure and documentation, made it easy to complete the identification, by scientific means as required in Israel, within a short time. Most of the victims were identified within

24 hours and in most cases, the rest of them, usually tourists or other foreigners staying in Israel, were identified within 48 hours!

How to Use RapidClear® in Other Countries

The reader of this paper must understand that RapidClear® is more a conception than a "close" methodology, because the final procedure and way of applying it, in the scene, is influenced by local laws, regulations and limitations.

In order to apply RapidClear® in a specific place, first it is needed to study the current procedures, to learn about the local laws and regulations and then to device new, more efficient, ways to process the scene. It is done by team work with the local CSI's and their commanding officers.

The new procedure and accessories, needed to apply it, are then tested on few simulated scenes. Analysis of the work, the use of documents and accessories is done after each simulation until reaching satisfactory results. Then and only then the procedure is finally written and distributed, the documentation and accessories are ordered and new working kits are assembled.

It is advised to exercise the new procedure until all of the CSI are controlling it.