

An Indirect Damage of Terror Attacks: Higher Traffic Fatalities

November 27, 2012

The Atlantic:

On Friday, convicted terrorist Adis Medunjanin was sentenced to life in prison for plotting an attack on the New York City subway system several years back. Public transit has been the target of a number of similar efforts in the post-9/11 era: Madrid trains in 2004, London subway and buses in 2005, the Moscow metro in 2010. Fortunately, in the case of Medunjanin and his cohorts, law enforcement spoiled the plan before its execution.

Society doesn't need any additional incentive to prevent a terror attack beyond avoiding the tragedy itself. When the focus of such attacks is public transit, however, stopping them doesn't just save the lives directly at stake. It may also save road fatalities that occur in the aftermath as people shift back to their cars despite the higher general risk of a traffic accident, according to recent research.

An Israeli research team led by Wafa Elias recently surveyed hundreds of residents of Jerusalem and Haifa to see how their travel behavior changed in response to terror attacks that targeted public buses in those cities. Transit attacks are all too common in each city, going all the way back to 1948, resulting in hundreds of deaths and injuries. Yet even in 2002, when about 200 people were killed by terrorism in the deadliest year on record in Israel, road fatalities were roughly three times higher.

Read the whole story: [*The Atlantic*](#)