Car bomb

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(Redirected from Truck bombs)

Improvised explosive device
For other uses, see Car bomb (disambiguation).

The result of a car bombing in Iraq

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A **car bomb**, **lorry bomb**, or **truck bomb**, also known as a **vehicle-borne improvised explosive device** (**VBIED**),[1] is an improvised explosive device designed to be detonated in an automobile or other vehicles.

Car bombs can be roughly divided into two main categories: those used primarily to kill the occupants of the vehicle (often as an assassination) and those used as a means to kill, injure or damage people and buildings outside the vehicle. The latter type may be parked (the vehicle disguising the bomb and allowing the bomber to get away), or the vehicle might be used to deliver the bomb (often as part of a suicide bombing).

It is commonly used as a weapon of terrorism or guerrilla warfare to kill people near the blast site or to damage buildings or other property. Car bombs act as their own delivery mechanisms and can carry a relatively large amount of explosives without attracting suspicion. In larger vehicles and trucks, weights of around 7,000 pounds (3,200 kg) or more have been used,[1] for example, in the Oklahoma City bombing. Car bombs are activated in a variety of ways, including opening the vehicle's doors, starting the engine, remote detonation, depressing the accelerator or brake pedals or simply lighting a fuse or setting a timing device.[2] The gasoline in the vehicle's fuel tank may make the explosion of the bomb more powerful by dispersing and igniting the fuel.

Contents

As a delivery system[edit]

Car bomb in Iraq, made up of a number of artillery shells concealed in the back of a pickup truck.

Car bombs are effective weapons as they are an easy way to transport a large amount of explosives to the intended target. A car bomb also produces copious shrapnel, or flying debris, and secondary damage to bystanders and buildings. In recent years, car bombs have become widely used by suicide bombers.[3][4][5]

Countermeasures[edit]

Defending against a car bomb involves keeping vehicles at a distance from vulnerable targets by using roadblocks and checkpoints, Jersey barriers, concrete blocks or bollards, metal barriers, or by hardening buildings to withstand an explosion. The entrance to Downing Street in London has been closed since 1991 in reaction to the Provisional Irish Republican Army campaign, preventing the general public from getting near Number 10. Where major public roads pass near buildings, road closures may be the only option (thus, for instance, in Washington, D.C. the portion of Pennsylvania Avenue immediately in front of the White House is closed to traffic). Historically these tactics have encouraged potential bombers to target "soft" or unprotected targets, such as markets.[6]

Suicide usage[edit]

In the Iraqi and Syrian Civil War, the car bomb concept was modified so that it could be driven and detonated by a driver, but armoured to withstand incoming fire. The vehicle would be driven to its target area, in a similar fashion to a kamikaze plane of WW2. These were known by the acronym SVBIED (from *Suicide Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device*) or VBIEDs. This saw generally civilian cars with armour plating added, that would protect the car for as long as possible, so that it could reach its intended target. Cars were sometimes driven into enemy troop areas, or into incoming enemy columns. Most often, the SVIEDs were used by ISIL against Government forces, but also used by Syrian rebels (FSA and allied militias, especially the Al-Nusra Front) against government troops.[7]

The vehicles have become more sophisticated, with armour plating on the vehicle, protected vision slits, armour plating over the wheels so they would withstand being shot at, and also in some cases, additional metal grating over the front of the vehicle designed to activate rocket propelled grenades before hitting the actual surface of the vehicle.[8]

A mock explosion of a pickup truck converted to [shahid](#)-mobile, used by [U.S. marines](#) for [OPFOR](#) purposes at [Camp Pendleton](#)

In some cases trucks were also used, as well as cars. They were sometimes used to start an assault. Generally the vehicles had a large space that would contain very heavy explosives. In some cases, animal drawn carts with improvised explosive devices have been used, generally either mules or horses.[*citation needed*] Tactically, a single vehicle may be used, or an initial "breakthrough" vehicle, then followed by another vehicle.[9]

While many car bombs are disguised as ordinary vehicles,[10] some that are used against military forces have [improvised vehicle armour](#) attached to prevent the driver from being shot when attacking a fortified outpost.[11]

History[[edit](#)]

Car bombs are preceded by the 16th century [hellburners](#), explosive-laden ships which were used to deadly effect by the besieged [Dutch](#) forces in [Antwerp](#) against the besieging [Spanish](#). Though using a less refined technology, the basic principle of the hellburner is similar to that of the car bomb.

The first reported suicide car bombing (and possibly the first suicide bombing) was the [Bath School bombings](#) of 1927, where 45 people, including the bomber, were killed and half of a school was blown up.

Mass-casualty car bombing, and especially suicide car bombing, is currently a predominantly [Middle Eastern](#) phenomenon. The tactic was first introduced to the region by the [Zionist](#) paramilitary organization [Lehi](#), who used it extensively against Palestinian and British civilian and military targets; it was subsequently taken up by Palestinian militants as well.[12] The tactic was used in the [Lebanese Civil War](#) by the Shia militia group [Hezbollah](#). A notable suicide car bombing was the [1983 Beirut barracks bombing](#), when two simultaneous attacks killed 241 U.S. Marines and 58 French military personnel. The perpetrator of these attacks has never been positively confirmed. In the [Lebanese Civil War](#), an estimated 3,641 car bombs were detonated.[13]

While not an adaptation of a people-carrying vehicle, the WW2 German [Goliath](#) remote control mine, shares many parallels with a vehicle-based [IED](#). It approached a target (often a tank or another armoured vehicle) at some speed, and then exploded, destroying itself and the target. It was armoured so that it could not be destroyed en route. However, it was not driven by a person, instead operated by remote control from a safe distance.

As a booby trap[edit]

Operation[edit]

TSA officers view the post-blast remains of a Dodge Neon after an explosive was detonated inside it during training.

Car bombs and detonators function in a diverse manner of ways and there are numerous variables in the operation and placement of the bomb within the vehicle. Earlier and less advanced car bombs were often wired to the car's ignition system, but this practice is now considered more laborious and less effective than other more recent methods, as it required a greater amount of work for a system that could often be quite easily defused. While it is more common nowadays for car bombs to be fixed magnetically to the underside of the car, underneath the passenger or driver's seat, or inside of the mudguard, detonators triggered by the opening of the vehicle door or by pressure applied to the brakes or accelerating pedals are also used.[2]

Bombs operating by the former method of fixation to the underside of the car more often than not make use of a device called a tilt fuse. A small tube made of glass or plastic, the tilt fuse is not dissimilar to a mercury switch or medical tablet tube. One end of the fuse will be filled with mercury, while the other open end is wired with the ends of an open circuit to an electrical firing system. Naturally, when the tilt fuse moves or is jerked, the supply of mercury will flow to the top of the tube and close the circuit. Thus, as the vehicle goes through the regular bumping and dipping that comes with driving over a terrain, the circuit is completed and the bomb or explosive is allowed to function.[2]

As a safety mechanism to protect the bomber, the placer of the bomb may rig a timing device incorporated with the circuit to activate the circuit only after a certain time period, therefore ensuring the bomber will not accidentally activate the bomb before he or she is able to get clear of the blast radius.[2]

History[edit]

Prior to the 20th century, bombs planted in horse carts had been used in assassination plots, notably in the unsuccessful "*machine infernale*" attempt to kill Napoleon on 24 December 1800.

The first car bomb may have been the one used for the assassination attempt on Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II in 1905 in Istanbul by Armenian separatists, in the command of Papken Siuni belonging to the Armenian Revolutionary Federation.

Car bombing was a significant part of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) campaign during The Troubles in Northern Ireland. Dáithí Ó Conaill is credited with introducing the car bomb to Northern Ireland. [14][*circular reference*]Car bombs were also used by Ulster loyalist groups (for example, by the UVF during

the [Dublin and Monaghan bombings](#)).[15][16][17]

PIRA Chief of Staff [Seán Mac Stíofáin](#) defines the car bomb as both a tactical and a strategic guerrilla weapon. Strategically, it disrupts the ability of the enemy government to administer the country, and hits simultaneously at the core of its economic structure by means of massive destruction. From a tactical point of view, it ties down a large number of security forces and troops around the main urban areas of the region in conflict.[18]

Examples[[edit](#)]

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Main article: [List of mass car bombings](#)

- 1920: The [Wall Street bombing](#) — Suspected that Italian anarchist [Mario Buda](#) (a member of the "[Galleanists](#)") parked a horse-drawn wagon filled with explosives and [shrapnel](#) in the [Financial District](#) of [New York City](#). The blast killed 38 and wounded 143.
- 1927: The [Bath School disaster](#) — [Andrew Kehoe](#) used a detonator to ignite [dynamite](#) and hundreds of [pounds](#) of [pyrotol](#) which he had secretly planted inside a school. As rescuers started gathering at the school, Kehoe drove up, stopped, and detonated a bomb inside his shrapnel-filled vehicle, killing himself and the [school superintendent](#), and killing and injuring several others. In total, Kehoe killed 44 people and injured 58 making the Bath School bombing the deadliest act of [mass murder](#) in a school in U.S. history. It is possibly the first [suicide car bombing](#) in history.
- Militant group [Lehi](#) were the first group to use car bombs in the [British Mandate for Palestine](#).

[Vietcong](#) car bombing aftermath scene in [Saigon](#), 1965.

- The [Viet Cong](#) guerrillas used them at the end of the [First Indochina War](#) and throughout the [Vietnam War](#).
- The [OAS](#) used them at the end of the [French rule in Algeria](#).
- The [Sicilian Mafia](#) used them to assassinate independent magistrates up to the early 1990s.
- The [IRA](#) used them frequently during its [campaign](#) during [the Troubles](#) in [Northern Ireland](#) and England. The [Omagh bombing](#) by the [Real IRA](#), an IRA splinter group, caused the most casualties in [the Troubles](#) from a single car bomb.
- Former [Chilean](#) General [Carlos Prats](#) was killed by a car bomb on September 30, 1974, along with his wife.
- [Loyalist](#) organisations in Northern Ireland such as the [Ulster Volunteer Force](#) (UVF) and [Ulster Defence Association](#) used car bombs against civilians in both [Northern Ireland](#) and the [Republic of Ireland](#). The UVF bombs in [Dublin and Monaghan](#)[19][20] caused the most casualties in a single day during [the Troubles](#).
- The Basque separatist group [Euskadi Ta Askatasuna](#) (ETA) carried out at least 80 massive car bomb

attacks in Spain during the last decade before putting its activities on hold in 2011.[21]

- Freelance terrorist Carlos the Jackal claimed responsibility for three car bomb attacks on French newspapers accused of pro-Israeli bias during the 1970s.
- Cleveland mobster Danny Greene frequently used car bombs against his enemies, beginning in 1968. Afterwards, they also began to be used against Greene and his associates. The use of car bombs in Cleveland peaked in 1976, when 36 bombs exploded in the city, most of them car bombs, causing it to be nicknamed "Bomb City." Several people, including innocent bystanders, were killed or wounded. Greene himself was finally killed in a car bomb explosion on October 6, 1977.
- The German Red Army Faction occasionally used car bombs, such as in an unsuccessful attempt to attack a NATO school for officers in 1984.
- Constable Angela Taylor died on her way to collect lunch, sole fatality of the Russell Street bombing in Melbourne, Australia on 27 March 1986. 22 others were injured.
- On 23 November 1986 two members of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation carried out the Melbourne Turkish consulate bombing using a car bomb, which resulted in the death of one of the attackers.
- During the Soviet–Afghan War, at a variety of training camps in the tribal areas of Pakistan,[22] the Pakistani ISI, with the aid of the CIA, trained mujahideen in the preparation of car bombs. Car bombs became a regular occurrence during the war, the Afghan civil conflicts which followed, and then during the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan.
- Agents of the Chilean intelligence agency DINA were convicted of using car bombs to assassinate Orlando Letelier and Carlos Prats, who were exiled opponents of dictator Augusto Pinochet. Letelier was killed in Sheridan Circle, in the heart of Embassy Row in Washington, DC.
- In the 1980s, the Colombian drug lord Pablo Escobar used vehicle bombs extensively against government forces and population centers in Colombia and Latin America. The most notable car bombing attack was the DAS Building bombing, which killed 63 and injured about 1,000.
- From 1979 to early 1983, under the guise of the "Front for the Liberation of Lebanon From Foreigners" IDF commanders Rafael Eitan, Avigdor Ben-Gal and Meir Dagan launched a campaign of bombings, including car, bicycle, and even donkey bombs. Initially conducted as a response to the killing of Israeli civilians at Nahariya. Largely indiscriminate in its targeting of those associated with the PLO in south, Lebanon, the FLLF attacks killed hundreds of Palestinians and Lebanese, mainly in Tyre, SIdon and the surrounding PLO run refugee camps. After 1981, as part of Ariel Sharon's policy of goading the PLO into committing more acts of terror, justifying a military response, FLLF attacks escalated in intensity and scope, spreading to Beirut and northern Lebanon by September. The FLLF even took credit for fictional attacks on the IDF to maintain its cover as a Lebanese organisation.[23] Its most prominent attack on October 1 1981 in West Beirut killed at least 50 and injured over 250 people. Seven other similar bombs were found and defused before they could explode.[24]
- Suicide car bombs were a regular feature against Israel in the 1982 Lebanon War which lasted from 1982 until Israel's withdrawal in 2000. The bombing campaign was waged by several groups, most prominently Hezbollah.
- On 26 February 1993, Islamist terrorists led by Ramzi Yousef detonated a Ryder truck filled with explosives in the parking garage of the World Trade Center in New York City. Yousef's plan had been to cause one of the towers to collapse into the other, destroying both and killing thousands of people. Although this was not achieved, six people were killed, 1,402 others injured, and extensive damage was caused.
- On April 18, 1993 a tanker containing 500 kilograms of explosives exploded near the mosque in Vitez, destroying the offices of the Bosnian War Presidency, killing at least six people and injuring 50 others. The ICTY accepted that this action was a piece of pure terrorism committed by elements within the Croat forces, as an attack on the Bosniak population of Stari Vitez - Vitez old town. HVO members tied a Bosniak man, civilian from a concentration camp, to the steering wheel and set the truck in motion towards the old town. [25]
- The Quebec Biker War that lasted from 1994 to 2002 involved the use of car bombings, including one that killed an 11-year-old boy.
- On 19 April 1995, Timothy McVeigh detonated a Ryder box truck filled with an explosive mixture of

[ammonium nitrate fertilizer and fuel oil](#) (ANFO) in front of the [Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building](#) in [Oklahoma City](#) during the [Oklahoma City bombing](#), killing 168 people, including 19 children who were in the daycare.

- On June 25, 1996, a truck bomb [destroyed the Khobar Towers military complex](#) in Saudi Arabia, killing 19 [United States Air Force](#) (USAF) personnel and injuring 372 persons of all nationalities.
- In the late 1990s and early 2000s, vehicular explosives were used by [Chechen](#) nationalists against targets in Russia.
- On 20 April 1999, [Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold](#) planned to use two car bombs as the last act of the [Columbine High School massacre](#), apparently to murder first responders. Both failed to explode.
- Southeast Asia-based militant Islamist group [Jemaah Islamiyah](#) utilized car bombs in their campaigns during the early 2000s, the most prominent being the [2002 Bali bombings](#), which killed 202 people.
- Former [Lebanese](#) Prime Minister [Rafic Hariri](#) was assassinated by a car bomb during [Valentine's Day of 2005.](#) 21 others were also killed.
- The [Tamil Tigers](#) of [Sri Lanka](#) frequently made use of car bombs during that country's [civil war](#) in a campaign which lasted from 1976 until the group's defeat in 2009.
- [A car bomb which had misfired](#) was discovered in [Times Square](#), [New York City](#) on May 1, 2010. The bomb had been planted by [Faisal Shahzad](#). Evidence suggests that the bombing was planned by the [Pakistani Taliban](#).
- On 11 December 2010, ([2010 Stockholm bombings](#)) - a car bomb exploded in central [Stockholm](#) in [Sweden](#), slightly injuring two bystanders. Twelve minutes later, an Iraqi-born Swedish citizen accidentally detonated six pipe bombs he was carrying, but only one exploded.[26] The bomber was killed but there were no other casualties. It is believed that the attacks were the work of homegrown terrorists who were protesting Sweden's involvement in the war in Afghanistan and the publication in Sweden of cartoons depicting [Muhammad](#).
- On 22 July 2011, in the [Norway massacre](#), far-right extremist [Anders Behring Breivik](#) detonated a car bomb within the [executive government quarter](#) of [Oslo](#), [Norway](#), killing 8 people.
- During June 2015, in [Ramadi](#), [Iraq](#), a vehicle-borne [IED](#) resulted in the collapse of an 8 story tall building during fighting between the [Iraqi military forces](#) and [Daesh extremists](#). The Daesh truck bomb was fired upon by a [rocket-propelled grenade](#) which resulted in the explosion.[*[citation needed](#)*]
- On 16 October 2017, Maltese journalist and blogger [Daphne Caruana Galizia](#) died in a car bomb attack.[27]
- On 25 December 2020, a [car bomb was detonated](#) in downtown [Nashville, Tennessee](#), injuring at least 8 and killing the perpetrator, Anthony Quinn Warner.

Groups that use car bombs[[edit](#)]

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- [Hezbollah](#) member [Imad Mughniyah](#) was assassinated by a car bomb in Syria in 2008, allegedly by [Mossad](#).
- Although it has never been officially acknowledged, the American [CIA](#) has occasionally been accused of being behind car bombings. One such attack was the failed assassination attempt on Grand Ayatollah [Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah](#) in the [Beirut car bombing on 8 March 1985](#). Although there has been widespread speculation of CIA involvement, this has never been proven conclusively.
- Various Palestinian militant groups, against both military and civilian [Israeli](#) targets.
- [Dissident republicans](#) in Northern Ireland used car bombs in the last two decades, the deadliest attack being the [Omagh bombing](#) of 1998.[28]
- [Al-Qaeda](#), in attacks around the world since the 1990s, most notably the [1998 United States embassy bombings](#).
- Militants and criminals in [India](#) occasionally utilize car bombs in attacks. This includes Muslim, [Sikh](#), [Kashmiri](#) and [Naxalite](#) militants, as well as rival politicians within the government and [organized](#)

[crime](#). A notable recent attack was the [25 August 2003 Mumbai bombings](#), in which two car bombs killed 54 people. The attack was claimed by the Pakistani-backed Kashmiri separatist group [Lashkar-e-Taiba](#).

- Since the beginning of the [U.S.-led war in Afghanistan](#) in 2001, the [Taliban](#) have often employed vehicular explosives against enemy targets. This has included not just cars and trucks but even [bicycle](#) bombs.

A 2005 car bombing in Iraq, in which a second car bomb was detonated while [US forces](#) were investigating the scene of an earlier such blast, resulting in 18 casualties.

- The [Iraqi insurgency](#). An estimated 578 car bombs were detonated in Iraq between June 2003 and June 2006. Car bombs continue to be commonly used.[29]
- The [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant](#), which has employed armored explosive-laden [crossovers](#), full-sized pickup trucks, motorbikes and [sport utility vehicles](#) as suicidal tactical units to breach enemy defensive fronts in Syria and Iraq. The use of armored tractors and [haul trucks](#) was also recorded over the course of the war.
- The [Pakistani Taliban](#) have occasionally used car bombs in their ongoing conflict with the government of Pakistan.
- The [Juárez Cartel](#)'s armed wing, [La Línea](#), used a car bomb to attack police officers in [Ciudad Juárez](#), [Mexico](#) on 15 July 2010.[30]
- The [Sinaloa Cartel](#) and the [Gulf Cartel](#) were blamed for using car bombs in [Nuevo Laredo](#), [Mexico](#) on 24 April 2011 to "heat up" the turf of [Los Zetas](#).[31][32][33]

See also[[edit](#)]

- [Deaths by car bomb](#)
- [Improvised explosive device](#) (IED)
- [Insurgency](#)
- *[Kamikaze](#)*

Notes[[edit](#)]

1. ^ [Jump up to:](#) *[a](#) [b](#)* *["Vehicle Borne IEDs (VBIEDs)"](#)*. Global Security. [Archived](#) from the original on 25 July 2008. Retrieved 3 August 2008.
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External links[edit]

Wikimedia Commons has media related to ***Car bombs***.

- Video of a detected car bomb (VBIED) going off
- A history of the car bomb (Asia Times)
- "Explosive reading", review by Daniel Swift for the *Financial Times*
- Car Bomb - manyriverfilms' award-winning documentary history of the car bomb

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