

# FM 3-37.2, *Antiterrorism*: A Doctrinal Guide for Preventing Terrorist Attacks

By Colonel Richard Vanderlinden (Retired) and Lieutenant Colonel Craig Benedict (Retired)

*Doctrine . . . is a guide to action, not hard and fast rules. . . . Its objective is to foster initiative and creative thinking. . . . It also provides a menu of practical options based on experience from which self-aware and adaptive Army leaders can create their own solutions quickly and effectively.*

—Field Manual (FM) 1, The Army<sup>1</sup>

**W**hat is antiterrorism (AT)? How does it apply to my situation? What actions can be taken to prevent a terrorist attack? If insufficient protection assets are available, can I assume the associated risk? Although there are no precise answers to these questions, the questions are worth contemplating.

Colonel John S. Mosby, Confederate cavalry commander, once opined that “. . . war is not an exact science, and it is necessary to take some chances.”<sup>2</sup> This statement is just as applicable to preventing a terrorist attack today as it was to defending against Union cavalry during the Civil War. Colonel Mosby’s statement highlights the basic challenges facing virtually all Soldiers in every situation (including terrorist-related incidents): knowing how to act, what to do, and when to do it. Army policy (Army Regulation [AR] 525-13, *Antiterrorism*)<sup>3</sup> outlines the *basic fundamentals* of what *must* be done with regard to AT; but it does not account for the endless possibilities driven by available resources, the security environment, and any number of other variables. And until recently, there was no AT doctrine to help “guide” leaders and Soldiers through these considerations. But in February 2011, the Army unveiled FM 3-37.2, *Antiterrorism*—its first-ever AT doctrine.<sup>4</sup> Now that we are more than a year into the implementation of this doctrinal guidance, let’s reflect on its purpose—to ensure our understanding and to gauge unit success in integrating AT doctrine into Army operations.

Terrorism is a persistent and enduring threat to our Nation and to our Army at home and abroad. As we pursue terrorists

around the world, we must also prevent attacks against our Army community. Units involved in AT (the defensive fight against terrorists) must constantly seek to improve their defensive posture. They must be able to understand the threat; detect terrorist activities; and prevent, warn, and defend against the full range of terrorist tactics. The remedy lies within each organization according to its mission. As early as 1783, American icon Daniel Boone (who was a major in the militia) issued the following instructions to his subordinate commanders: “If [sign] be found, the commander must act as he thinks most prudent—as [he] will be the best judge when on the spot.”<sup>5</sup> Boone recognized that, because no two situations are ever exactly the same, threat warnings must be addressed according to the situation—rather than by prescribed rules and regulations. Random solutions to unique challenges often lead to chaotic, ineffective solutions; however, Soldiers who are guided by bedrock principles stand a better chance of formulating effective plans. Doctrine, which is a critical element in the formulation of an effective and successful plan, can help guide the way. Within a framework bound by policy and broad principles, Army doctrine encourages resourcefulness and creative solutions that are rooted in history and experience.

AT efforts have undergone significant changes and improvements throughout the past two decades. As President Theodore Roosevelt observed, “We must strike out for ourselves, we must work according to our own ideas, and we must free ourselves from the shackles of conventionality before we can do anything.”<sup>6</sup> To address the growing and

evolving threat of terrorism, the Army combined the most important elements of AT policy with the practical application and doctrinal wisdom gained from operational forces, installations, and stand-alone facilities. Sound doctrinal principles, tools, and processes have emerged by leveraging extensive AT expertise from across the force; and FM 3-37.2 now provides Soldiers with a blueprint to help build AT plans and programs. It outlines AT principles, integrates AT within the combating terrorism framework and the protection warfighting function, and builds on the Army's effective operations and intelligence processes.

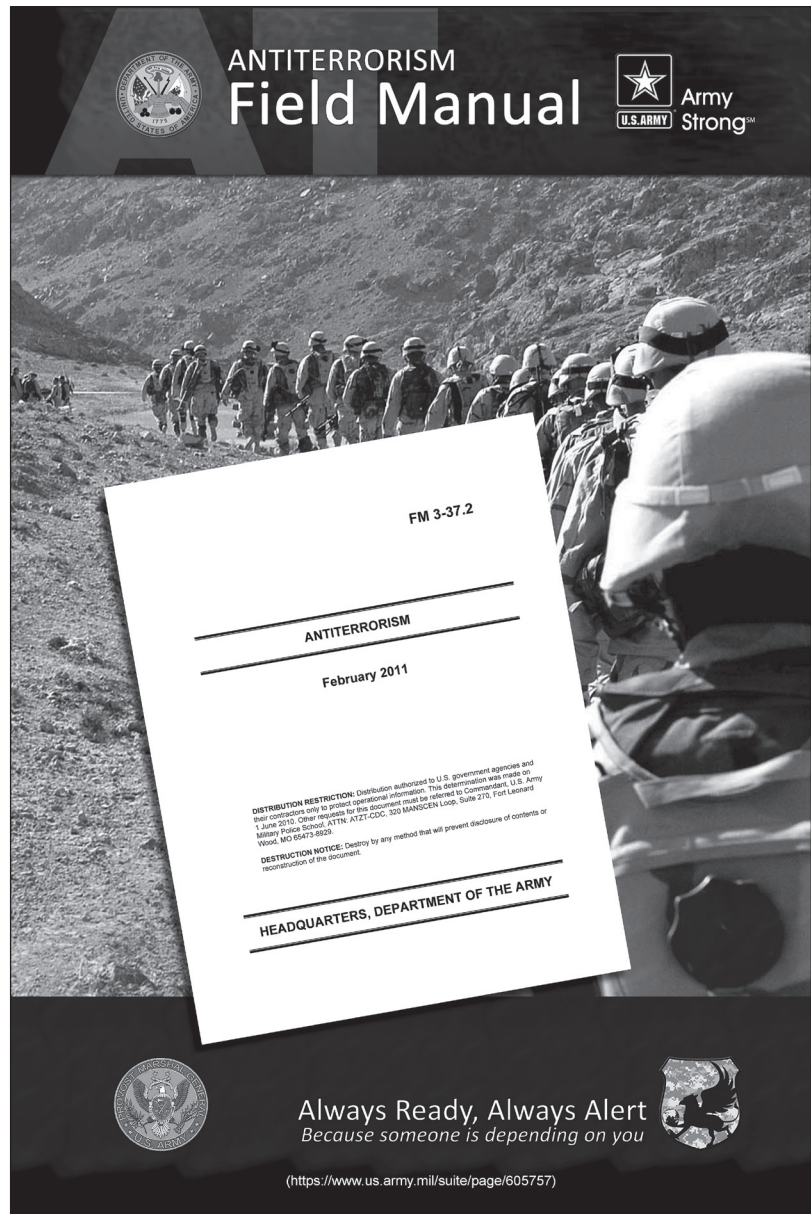
According to FM 3-37.2, the AT principles (which serve as key elements in guiding AT planning, program development, and execution) are<sup>7</sup>—

- Assess.
- Detect.
- Defend.
- Warn.
- Recover.

In addition to describing the characteristics of successful AT programs, these principles support the broader functional concept of protection. They provide operational forces with guidance about how to best protect personnel, units, information, operations, and critical assets from terrorist threats and attacks. Key protection measures include the integration of elements of other programs (physical security, information assurance, military and criminal intelligence, operations security, law enforcement, emergency management), persistent detection, shared understanding, and dissemination of threat information.

FM 3-37.2 assists commanders and units with the integration of AT concepts and principles across the full spectrum of operations, the development of AT awareness programs, and defense against the terrorist threat. It also provides AT officers with an approved doctrinal reference to better guide and support their units.

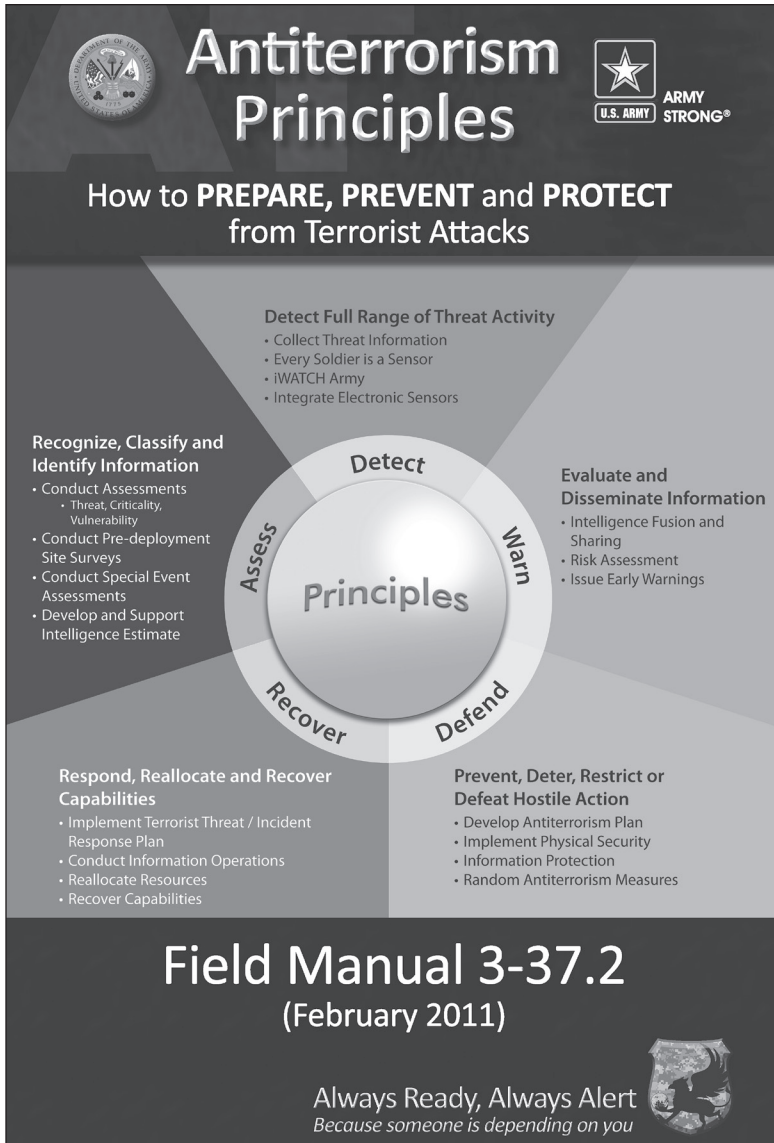
In an effort to reinforce the new Army AT doctrine, the AT Branch, Headquarters, Department of the Army (DA), established a supporting AT strategic communication theme and products. The goal is to encourage Army forces to embrace the new doctrine, initially focusing on AT principles, planning, exercises, assessments, and supporting AT strategic communication plans. The theme received Army-wide attention during the 4th quarter, fiscal year 2011, and AT



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Awareness Month in August 2011. The products and tools that are used to support AT doctrinal manual education include a series of posters advertising the release of FM 3-37; AT principles, planning, exercises, and assessments; and a “how to” primer for developing AT strategic communication plans. These products and other AT information are available on the Army Knowledge Online (AKO) Web site at <<https://www.us.army.mil/suite/page/605757>>.

The integration of doctrinal AT principles with constant AT awareness should ensure the safety and security of the Army community while performing the mission. AT Awareness Month and the implementation of an AT strategic communication theme have allowed Army forces to focus on, and dedicate efforts toward, understanding a critical element



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of doctrine that impacts full spectrum operations. Leaders and units should pause to consider how well they have embraced the new doctrine and what more they can do.

As the Army institutionalizes FM 3-37.2, we must capture lessons learned and best practices to allow for continuous improvement. The legendary basketball coach John Wooden summarized his concept of success in his memoirs, stating, “There is perhaps no stronger steel than well-founded self-belief: the knowledge that your preparation is complete . . .”<sup>8</sup> By analyzing the peculiarities of a situation, applying AT doctrine, and developing resourceful solutions, the Army can build a “steel foundation” and complete the necessary preparations to prevent future terrorist attacks.

*Always ready, always alert—because someone is depending on you.*

**Endnotes:**

<sup>1</sup>FM 1, *The Army*, 14 June 2005.

<sup>2</sup>Charles Wells Russell, ed., *The Memoirs of Colonel John S. Mosby*, Little, Brown, and Company, Boston, Massachusetts, 1917.

<sup>3</sup>AR 525-13, *Antiterrorism*, 11 September 2008.

<sup>4</sup>FM 3-37.2, *Antiterrorism*, 18 February 2011.

<sup>5</sup>John Mack Faragher, *Daniel Boone: The Life and Legend of an American Pioneer*, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1992.

<sup>6</sup>Theodore Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt: Letters and Speeches*, Library of America, 7 October 2004.

<sup>7</sup>FM 3-37.2, 18 February 2011.

<sup>8</sup>John Wooden and Steve Jamison, *Wooden on Leadership*, McGraw-Hill, 2005.



*Colonel Vanderlinden (Retired) is a principal military analyst with the AT Branch, Office of the Provost Marshal General. He holds a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Northern Michigan University and master's degrees in criminal justice from Michigan State University and strategic studies from the U.S. Army War College. He is also a graduate of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) National Academy.*

*Lieutenant Colonel Benedict (Retired) is a senior military analyst with the AT Branch, Office of the Provost Marshal General. He holds a bachelor's degree in history from Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas. He is also a graduate of the Command and General Staff College and Armed Forces Staff College.*

