



## DRIVER TRAINING FOR A HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT

The increased threat from terrorism as well as growing levels of organised crime across the world means that more people are now either directly or indirectly exposed to a wider range of risks both at home and abroad. This is a particular issue for the hundreds of British business executives, NGO workers and public sector employees travelling and working in less stable parts of the globe.

Organisations which send employees into a potentially hostile environment have a 'duty of care' to ensure that they are provided with adequate training and the necessary insurance should the worst happen. Failure to offer adequate preparatory training or suitable insurance cover can be regarded as a failure in an organisation's duty of care and can leave them open to potentially damaging law suits. However, in many instances organisations are failing to provide even the most basic pre-deployment training - a core element of which should be driver training.

Those most likely to require hostile environment driver training are security professionals, government officials, corporate executives and their families. The range of driving ability varies from advanced official drivers to people who have recently passed their UK driving test but are being posted abroad. These courses will take levels of experience into consideration.

In our experience, vehicles play a major part in a significant proportion of hostile or dangerous incidents concerning UK workers both at home and overseas. In many cases employees are hurt or killed in road traffic accidents caused either by other road users, poor road conditions or just plain careless driving. As a result, hostile environment driver training courses normally include a mixture of advanced driving skills combined with hazard awareness and crash avoidance techniques.

In recent years there has been an increase in car-jackings around the world, but particularly in South Africa and across South America. In all these instances, it has been proven that the chance of those travelling in the vehicle surviving rises dramatically if the driver has undergone specialist training. Annually around 7,000 people undertake ArmorGroup's training courses but this still leaves thousands of people potentially unprepared when they are sent abroad.

Sadly there are numerous examples of cases when executives, VIPs or their drivers have not been adequately trained and have paid the ultimate price. Conversely, a number of high profile individuals have benefited from good training. One notable example is President Musharaff of Pakistan who has evaded several attempts on his life, two of which were thwarted by the quick thinking of his driver who drove through ambushes in spite of significant damage to the vehicle. A core element to hostile environment driver training is to make the response to potentially hazardous situations instinctive. We believe that the only way to do this is have extensive practical experience of 'live' situations.

Not everybody needs the skills of President Musharaff's driver but, for instance, advanced tactical driver training courses can offer essential driving skills to executives, their families and their close protection officers. These can include everything from instinctive driving techniques, defensive and evasive driving skills, situation awareness training and close protection tactical driving. Instinctive driving covers vehicle dynamics and emergency driving skills, whilst defensive driving focuses on vehicle security and vehicle control systems. Evasive driving includes showing students how they can best escape from an incident using their vehicle and includes hard reverse turns, surgical removal of other vehicles and forced ramming. These techniques not only allow students how to remove themselves from danger but also to understand better the limits of what their vehicles can do – as opposed to what their drivers think they can do.

The concept of advanced driver training is not new but most of those benefiting from specialist hostile environment courses have until fairly recently worked for the Government. ArmorGroup has been offering specialist driving courses as a mainstay of its training programme for over 15 years. Its courses are primarily for 'high risk' individuals, such as senior management or their drivers deployed to and driving in high risk or hostile environments. Other clients included as high risk are commercial drivers as well as younger drivers, in the US and the UK.

The best courses available offer students a wide range of training vehicles to allow them to become familiar with different types ranging from unmodified Vauxhall Omegas to up-armoured and sports utility vehicles. Participants are taught different vehicle dynamics, the different characteristics of ABS and non-ABS braking and have an opportunity to test the performance of each type of vehicle. ArmorGroup courses are often taught by highly experienced former Special Forces instructors, while many others are taught by former police drivers, and participants are given every opportunity to turn theory into practice.

Courses are often combined with hostile environment awareness training courses which prepare clients going to hazardous environments to recognise and avoid potential threats and equip them, if necessary, to respond to any type of incident. Lessons will usually include the importance of travel pattern analysis (how not to be predictable while travelling to and from work), surveillance detection (how to check whether you are being followed) and attack recognition all of which are key to mitigating potential threats faced by executives. Instructors put students through a number of role play situations, which are as lifelike as possible, to allow them to experience and overcome the sensory shock they would experience in a real incident.

ArmorGroup International Training conducts its UK driving training courses at Pershore, a former Vulcan airfield based in Worcestershire. The two main hostile environment driving courses offered are Specialist Driving and Advanced Tactical Driving, although ArmorGroup also offers a non-hostile, Hazard Awareness and Crash Avoidance course to corporate drivers and young people which is designed to reduce avoidable, everyday accidents in the UK and overseas.

The Specialist Driver training course is designed to train students, through hands-on-experience, in the principles of instinctive driving from the basics of car control systems and vehicle dynamics to crash avoidance and defensive driving techniques. Advanced driver education allows students to learn practical manoeuvres in realistic emergency situations with lessons including effective braking and use of vision to anticipate and avoid accidents. Some of the practical exercises cover emergency braking, vehicle control at high speeds, off-road recoveries as well as instinctive reactive measures to highway emergencies in wet and dry road conditions.

The second part of the course covers evasive and defensive driving such as the instinctive reactionary process associated with accident avoidance. Based on analytical studies of past attacks on government and corporate personnel, the practical exercises include modulated, ABS and transitional braking; vehicle dynamics; high speed tactical driving; attack recognition; and surprise, tactical evasive and attack scenarios. Amongst other techniques taught, this last section teaches drivers how to reverse at speed and how to force their way out of trouble using their car as a weapon.

The final session covers off-road and specialist vehicle training where students are familiarised with the mechanics of 4X4's and armoured vehicles. They learn traction demands, shift points and proper gear selection as well as carrying out exercises in correct off-road braking; effective acceleration; obstacle avoidance; emergency reaction drills and recovery techniques.

For people who are about to be deployed to hostile or hazardous environments as Close Protection (CP) officers, ArmorGroup provides an Advanced Tactical Driving course which allows students to operate more effectively in protecting themselves and their passengers. The three day course is principally aimed at CP professionals and uses ArmorGroup's wide range of training facilities and vehicles to allow students to become familiarised with many of the vehicle types as well as crash vehicles for defensive driver training.

Students are taught the principles of instinctive driving such as threat analysis, hazard awareness, crash avoidance drills and progressive driving at high speeds. The close protection tactical driving element covers team positioning and formations, convoy manoeuvres, team

evasive driving and cross-over drills (or the safe movement of a client from one vehicle to another at speed and under attack). The final stage is defensive and evasive driving such as RTA medical response, vehicle security and situation awareness, single vehicle evasive driving, off-road driving and vehicle recovery scenarios. All modules of the course are preceded by class based theory lessons followed by intensive practical sessions.

At the end of each commercial course students have a mobile team practical assessment and final exercise conducted by the training staff followed by a comprehensive de-brief and assessment. Any students who fail to attain the necessary levels are informed, as are their employees, so that remedial or further training can be undertaken before deployment.

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