

# Nevada Too

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## THWARTING TERRORISM

# Expert: Alertness key to security

## *Awareness in hotel parking garages stressed*

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In the months following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, visitors to every Strip property parking garage were greeted by security officers who studied the driver's license and checked over the vehicle prior to entry.

Over time, hotel-casinos discontinued the procedures, but that doesn't mean property owners have become lax in their efforts to thwart a terrorist attack. Jeff Beatty, a terrorist expert and special adviser to President Barack Obama, said parking security technology has improved significantly since 2001.

Properties won't discuss the specifics of their security programs, but vehicles

entering garages are monitored, and suspicious behavior is caught by cameras and other methods that are less intrusive than security officers questioning motorists at entryways, he said. In Las Vegas, that is especially important.

It's vital to business not to offend tourists coming to the Strip to spend money, Beatty said, "but we have a responsibility to public safety. I think we have the right balance."

Beatty, who was part of the team that investigated Faisal Shahzad's failed bombing attempt in Times Square earlier this month, spoke Tuesday to members of the International Parking Institute, a trade organization of parking professionals.

Beatty emphasized that parking at-

tendants and security should be aware of out-of-the-ordinary situations such as a motorist asking unusual questions, a strange odor seeping from a car or even the contents of a vehicle.

"If someone has four or five propane tanks in the back of their car, is that illegal? No," Beatty said. "But you have to ask why someone is driving around with four to five propane tanks in the back of their car."

Members of the parking institute took part in First Observer training. First Observer is a program that teaches the public "if you see something, say something."

After Timothy McVeigh's 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, residents told authorities of suspicious activities they witnessed. McVeigh had pulled his Ryder moving van loaded with 55-gallon drums up to a local lake. No one bothered

to report the incident though it probably appeared he was prepared to dump toxins into the lake. As it turns out, he was assembling the explosives.

The day before the bombing, McVeigh parked a car at the federal building and walked several blocks to an alleyway where another car was parked with a note saying the vehicle had broken down and was awaiting parts. He did that four times in a day. Beatty said McVeigh was determining how long it would take him to reach the getaway vehicle.

Beatty told the parking institute crowd that they cannot determine whether a motorist entering a parking garage is plotting a terrorist attack based on their appearances.

"If you're out there looking for Osama bin Laden, you're not looking for Timothy McVeigh," he said. "We don't care about nationality or color, we care about suspicious activity."