



Strategic Intelligence Report

Australia 2013: Bomb Statistics



Date of Report: 5 June 2014

PROMIS Document ID 8056067

This report is designed to convey strategic intelligence to clients in a timely fashion.

Summary

- From 1 January to 31 December 2013, Technical and Forensic Intelligence (TFI) received 567 incident reports from the Australian policing jurisdictions. Of these, 38 were deemed to be significant¹, of which 25 were recorded as 'bombings'. (U)
- Of the 567 incidents, 144 are recorded as bombings. (U)
- Reported casualties for the 2013 year were 17 people injured and 2 fatalities (U)
- Queensland reported the highest number of incidents with 293, followed by Western Australia with 101 incidents. (U)
- A significant drop in reported incidents from NSW (from 859 in 2012 to 21 in 2013) is due to a procedural change in their data collection process, rather than a genuine decrease in incidents. (U)
- There were 275 incidents recorded as having an 'unknown' target. The second most commonly identifiable target/location of explosive-related incidents is private residences. Of these, approximately half targeted letterboxes specifically. (U)
- The most common improvised explosive devices (IEDs) used in Australia are of a simple design (e.g. soda siphon bulbs, sparkler fuse, aluminium foil) or are small commercial fireworks. (U)

¹ 'Significant' incident: Damage in excess of \$5000; the target is deemed important or sensitive; the device itself or component/s are significant in design, construction or placement; the device is delivered through the mail system; the incident is confirmed to be linked to a known terrorist group; someone is killed or injured as a result of the device functioning

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2013 National Incidents

A total of 567 national incidents involving explosives were reported by state and territory police services to Technical and Forensic Intelligence (TFI) in 2013. This brief presents statistical information pertaining to the reported incidents². (U)

The incident types are categorised below

Incident type	Definition	Total incidents
Recovery	An incident involving the recovery of an explosive device or material.	212
Bombing	An incident involving the functioning of an explosive device.	144
Threat	The threatened use of an explosive device at a certain time and place (written or verbal by any medium).	93
Suspect item	An item considered to be suspicious by response personnel, requiring specialist inspection, but found to be innocuous.	72
Attempted bombing	An incident involving the use of an explosive device that has failed to function (e.g. through design or assembly defect, component failure or render-safe procedure).	23
Other	Incident not described by other categories.	9
Hoax	An item that is placed, designed or manufactured in a manner intended to appear or otherwise cause one to believe that the item is an explosive device.	8
Theft	The illicit acquisition of an explosive device or material.	6

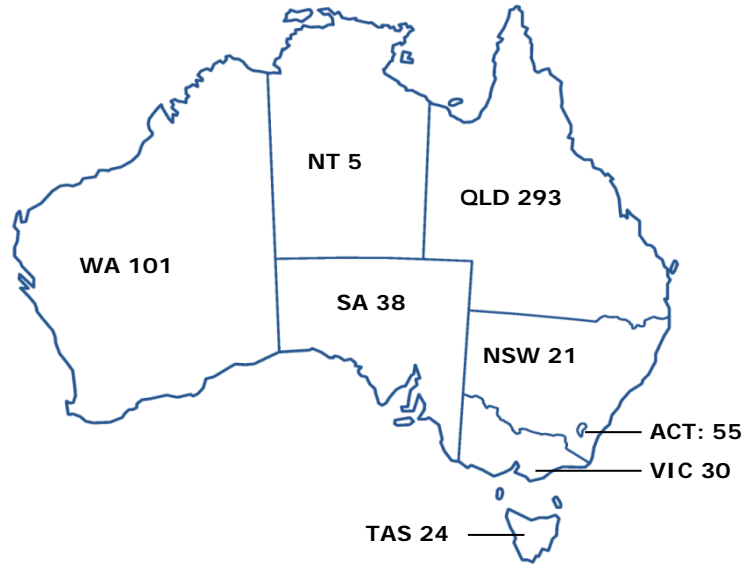
Incidents defined as 'significant' meet some or all of the following criteria:

- Damage in excess of \$5000;
- The target was deemed important or sensitive;
- The device itself or component(s) were significant in design, construction or placement;
- The device was delivered through the mail system;
- The incident was confirmed to be linked to a known terrorist group;
- Someone was killed or injured as a result of the device functioning. (U)

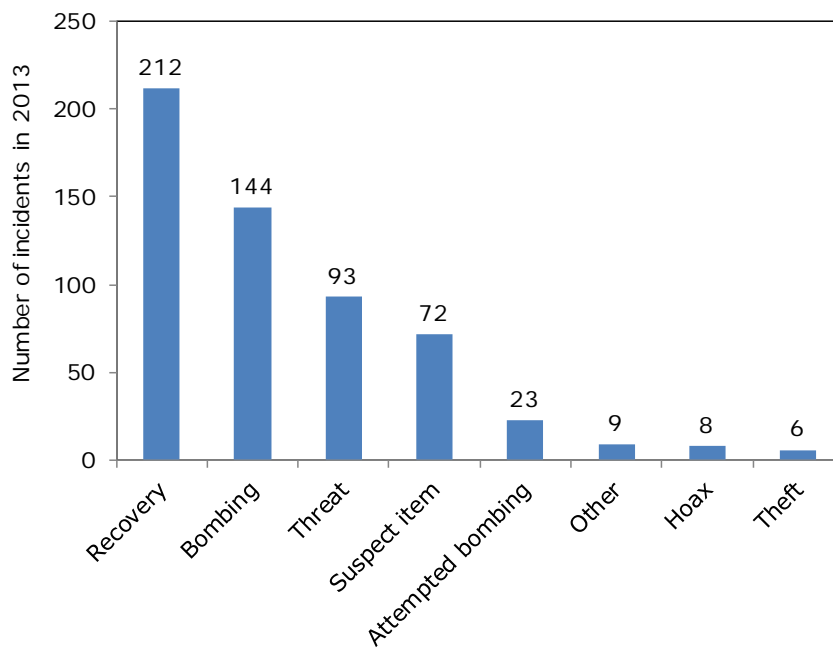
² Disclaimer: This brief pertains only to incidents reported to TFI; it is possible that there have been incidents that were not reported and therefore not incorporated into the present paper.

Incidents by State

Total incidents in 2013

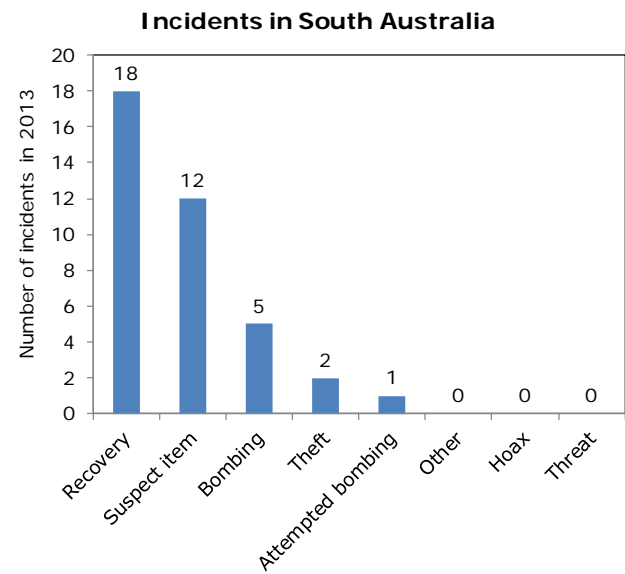
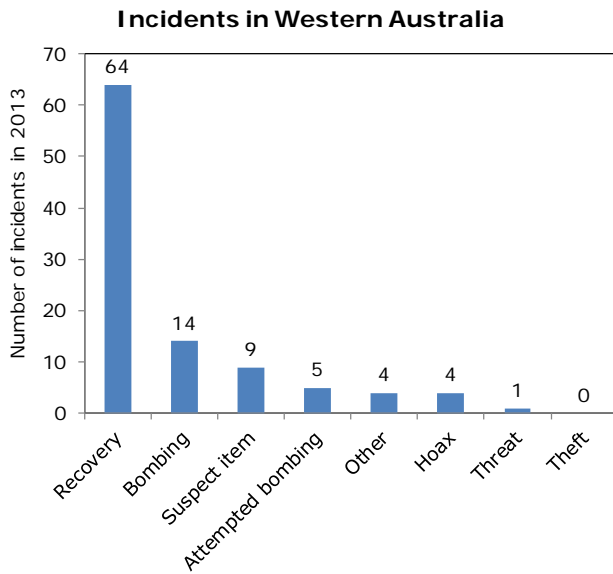
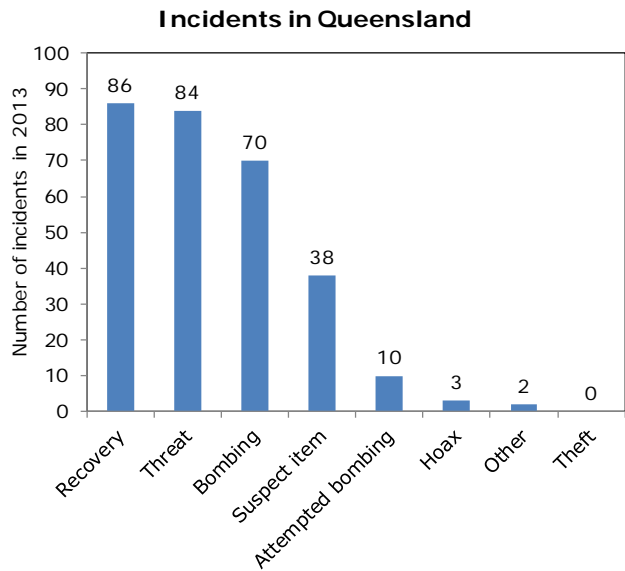
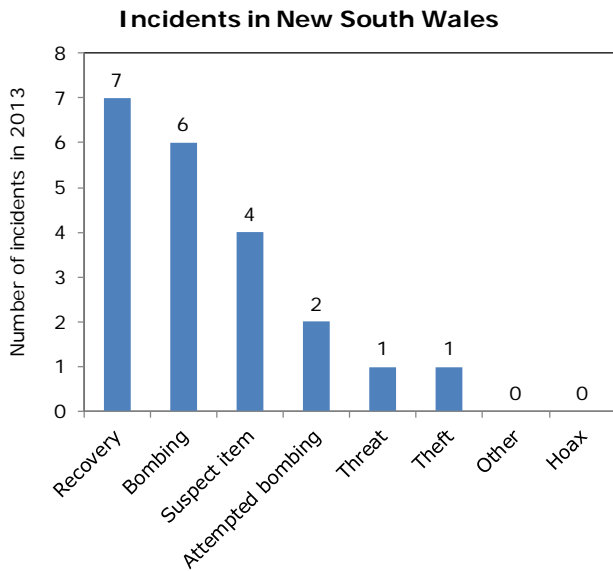


National Incidents Reported to TFI in 2013



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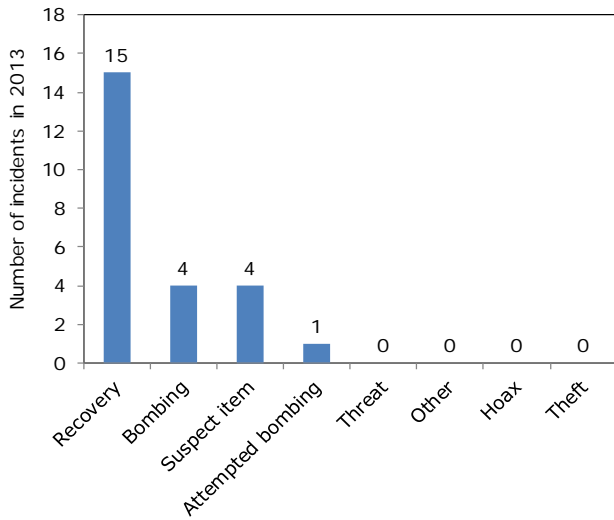
Total incidents in 2013 by state and territory



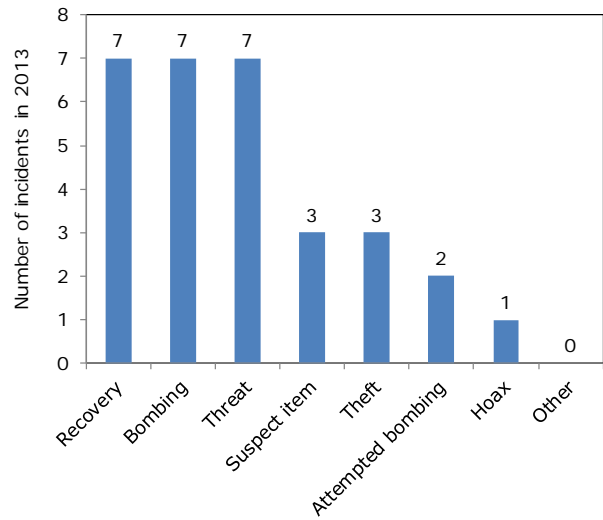
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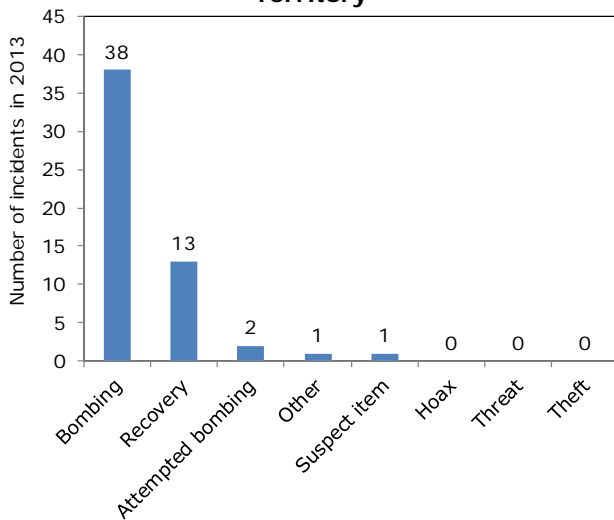
Incidents in Tasmania



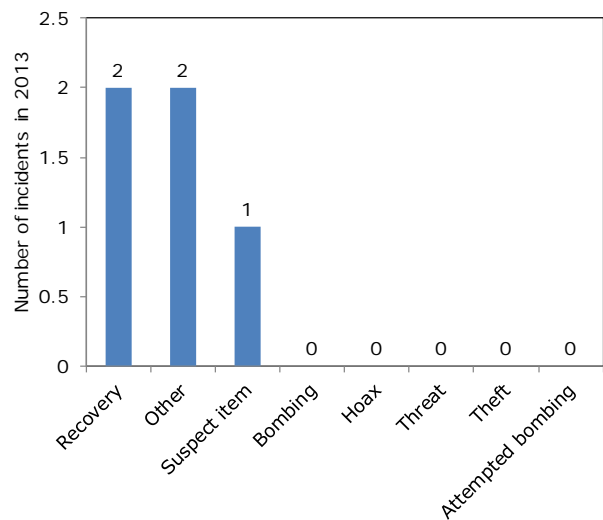
Incidents in Victoria



Incidents in the Australian Capital Territory



Incidents in the Northern Territory



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Incident Targets

Targets for all incidents

As illustrated by the figure below, the majority of incident locations were not explicitly specified in reporting; this normally corresponds to an open area of land or water where there is no clear identifiable target or premises. (U)

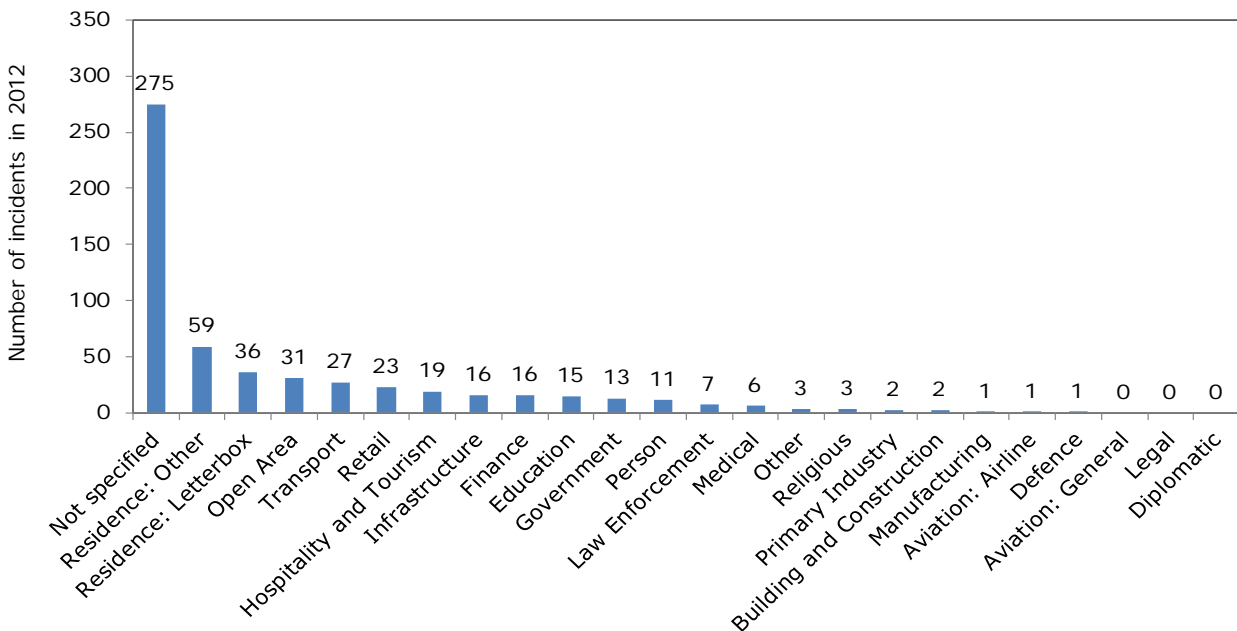
In terms of targets, private residences constituted 17% of the total number of incidents in 2013. More than half of these involved specific targeting of letterboxes, and were classed as criminal vandalism. (U)

Approximately 5% of incidents were reported as occurring in 'open areas', which typically refer to public parks, and generally involve nuisance acts or experimentation with explosives. A similar fraction of incidents involved retail locations, most of which were classed as nuisance activities but also included deliberate vandalism, domestic disputes, robbery and extortion. (U)

Transport, hospitality/tourism and education locations constituted about 11% of the total amount of incidents, the motivations for many of which are unknown, but include vandalism and nuisance. (U)

While fewer incidents occurred at various other locations, motivations were similar, as discussed in the following section of this document. (U)

Incident Targets



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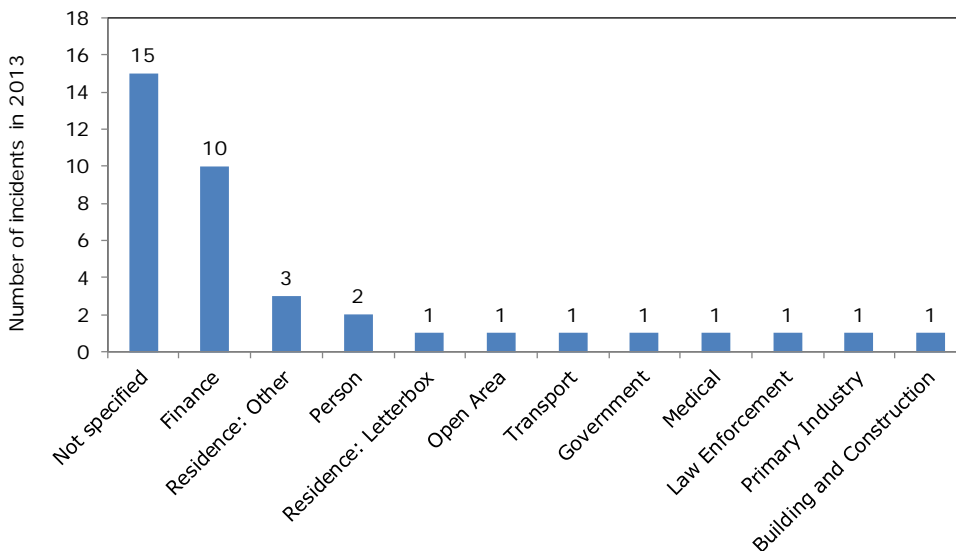
Targets associated with significant incidents

In 2013, there were 38 incidents classified as significant. Of these, 16 incidents were recorded as having an unknown target, followed by financial institutions with 10 incidents. (U)

The incidents targeting financial institutions were mostly for the purposes of robbery (the targeting of automatic teller machines in particular is not uncommon). Significant incidents targeting persons included disputes and suicide. Other incidents involved experimentation, vandalism and nuisance acts, but may be classed as significant due to the sophistication or rarity of the methodology employed, or the amount of damage inflicted. (U)



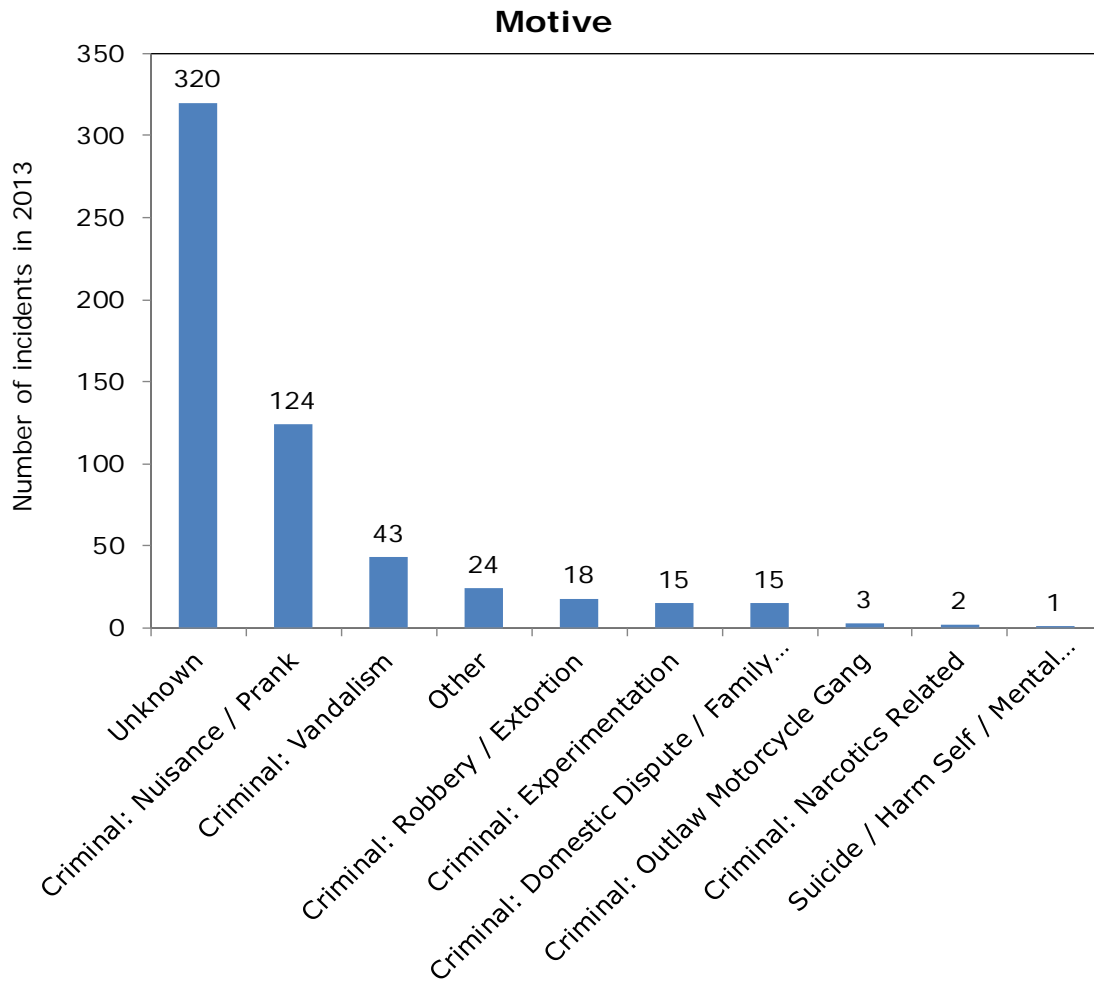
Incident Targets



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Motive

In the vast majority of incidents (over half), the motivation was either unknown or not reported. Of known motives, criminal nuisance was the most prevalent, constituting over 20%, while approximately 8% of incidents were attributable to vandalism. (U)



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IED Componentry

Initiation systems

The majority of initiation systems were found to be improvised time delays. Of these, the majority were made with sparklers³ and/or other pyrotechnic components attached to an improvised main charge. Two recorded incidents made use of a radio controlled device. One reported device incorporated a digital timer into the firing circuit. (U)

Power sources

Of all incidents recorded for 2013, two IEDs incorporated a RC (radio controlled) trigger. The power source for one of the devices included a 36V Battery and three AA batteries. The second incident made use of a mobile phone and battery. These incidents were deemed to be significant by the reporting agencies as the design of the IEDs were unusual and incorporated RC triggers. (U)

Main charge

Of the 144 bombing incidents recorded, a high percentage was reported as small IEDs containing a pyrotechnic composition, constructed from soda siphon bulbs, sparklers, and aluminium foil. Of the significant incidents reported, five incidents involved commercial explosives. One recorded incident incorporated a small amount of commercial explosive as the main charge; this particular device only partially functioned, possibly due to the degradation or age of the explosive or the construction of the device. 2013 also saw two significant incidents involving the use and manufacture of peroxide and acetone based home-made explosive as a main charge. (U)

Containers

Of the 567 incidents recorded, 20 incidents were recorded as being of a pipe bomb configuration (PVC or metal). Very few incidents made use of any sophisticated containers. (U)

Fragmentation/enhancements

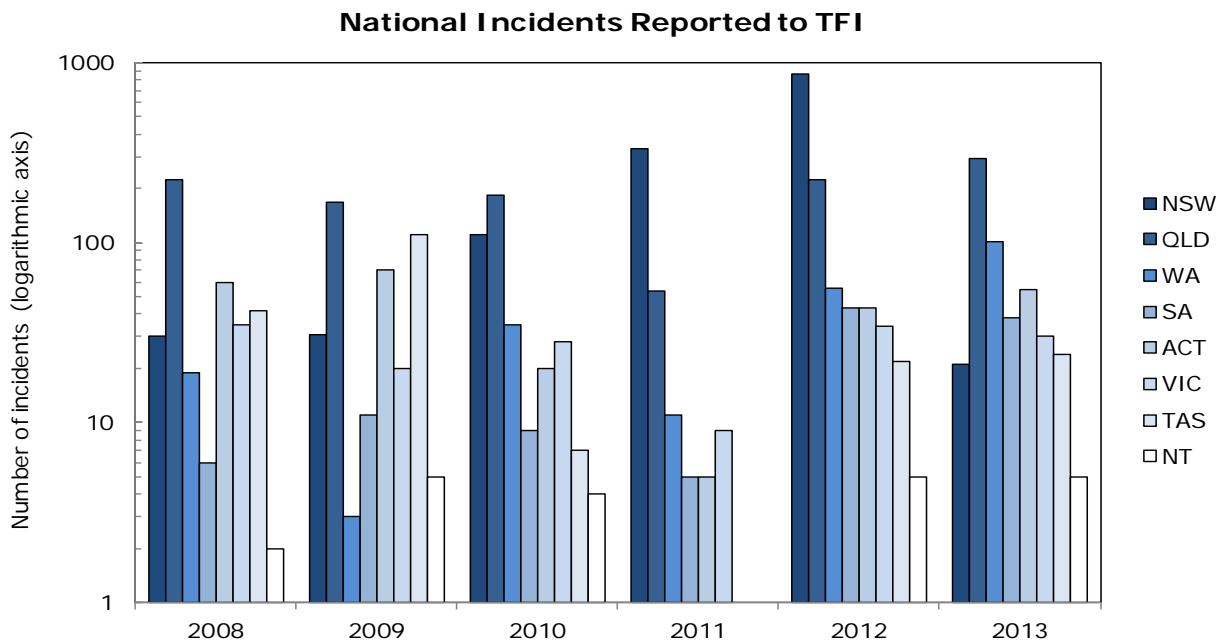
In 2013, only one pipe bomb was found to have additional fragmentation added, this consisted of metal screws packed inside the pipe bomb. Therefore, in other cases any fragmentation from functioned devices has either been primary fragmentation from the destroyed container or secondary fragmentation from proximate materials. (U)

³ 'Sparklers' are essentially hand-held fireworks, comprised of a rigid metal wire of the order of tens of centimetres in length, which have been coated in a slow-burning pyrotechnic composition (of which there are numerous variations) and allowed to dry. (U)

Comparison with Previous Years

Incidents over a five year period are shown graphically below. With comparison to the previous year, the number of incidents reported increased in 2013:

- ACT: 43 in 2012, 55 in 2013,
- SA: 43 in 2012, 38 in 2013,
- NT: 5 in 2012, 5 in 2013,
- WA: 56 in 2012, 101 in 2013,
- QLD: 225 in 2012, 293 in 2013,
- VIC: 34 in 2012, 30 in 2013,
- NSW⁴: 859 in 2012, 21 in 2013,
- TAS: 22 in 2012, 24 in 2013. (U)



⁴ A change in NSWPOL data collection procedures has resulted in this apparent drop in incidents.

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Conclusions

For the 2013 calendar year, the reported incidents indicate that a large number of devices have been used in open spaces and in small scale property damage incidents. Commercial explosive availability and usage in criminal activity is still a viable threat in Australia. 2013 also saw two significant incidents, one in QLD and one in WA, involving peroxide/acetone based explosives being manufactured and utilized within Australia. (U)

The IEDs reported during this period were generally small (sub-kilogram) and technologically unsophisticated. (U)

The statistics here indicate that the IED threat within Australia is significantly lower than many other nations when compared to global statistics. (U)

Upon request, Technical and Forensic Intelligence are able to provide information and assistance with regards to improvised explosive devices. Additionally, the QLD Police Explosive Ordnance Response Team (EORT) produces a monthly intelligence bulletin for dissemination to relevant agencies. (U)

For more information, please contact: TFI@afp.gov.au