



Family Security: Home Invasion and Burglary In Gated Communities and Affluent Neighborhoods

Protecting Your Family

One of the more frightening and potentially dangerous crimes that can occur to a family is a home invasion. It is particularly terrifying because it occurs in the place we should feel the most secure; at home. While home invasions are still considered statistically rare as compared to simple theft, they do occur in all geographic areas across the United States including gated communities, elite neighborhoods which have private security guards and in homes which have monitored alarm systems and cameras. A recent high profile home invasion that occurred in Washington D.C. received significant media attention which prompted Mindstar Security & Profiling analysts to take a closer look at some of the available data and media coverage of home invasions, particularly those that have targeted high end homes.

The major question that is asked of gated communities is "Do they really keep crime rates down?" The answer seems to be yes, but only by very little. According to preliminary research, crimes such as burglary drop in the first year or so after gating, but then rise back up after the neighborhood is established. The walls and fences that surround elite communities primarily protect these neighborhoods, but many other security measures are available as well. Check to see if your homeowners' association has sponsored surveillance cameras, infrared sensors, motion detectors, license plate readers or private security guards.

What is a Home Invasion?

Home invasion has been used broadly to describe any crime committed by one or more persons unlawfully entering a residence while someone is home. More narrowly, home invasion has been used to describe a situation where an offender or offenders forcibly enter an occupied residence with the specific intent of robbing or violently harming those inside. Statistics on the frequency of home invasions occurring in the United States are difficult to locate. Legal and law enforcement sources provide varied data due to inconsistent definitions of the crime. For instance, some states include the use of weapons as part of the definition of the crime, while others do not. Many states still have not made home invasion a specific crime. In these states, police agencies do not track home invasions as a stand-alone crime but will instead statistically record the crime as a residential burglary, robbery, assault, and/or kidnapping. Without the ability to track the specific crime of a home invasion, little can be done to alert the public as to the frequency of occurrence in their community or devise a law enforcement plan of action to help deter it.

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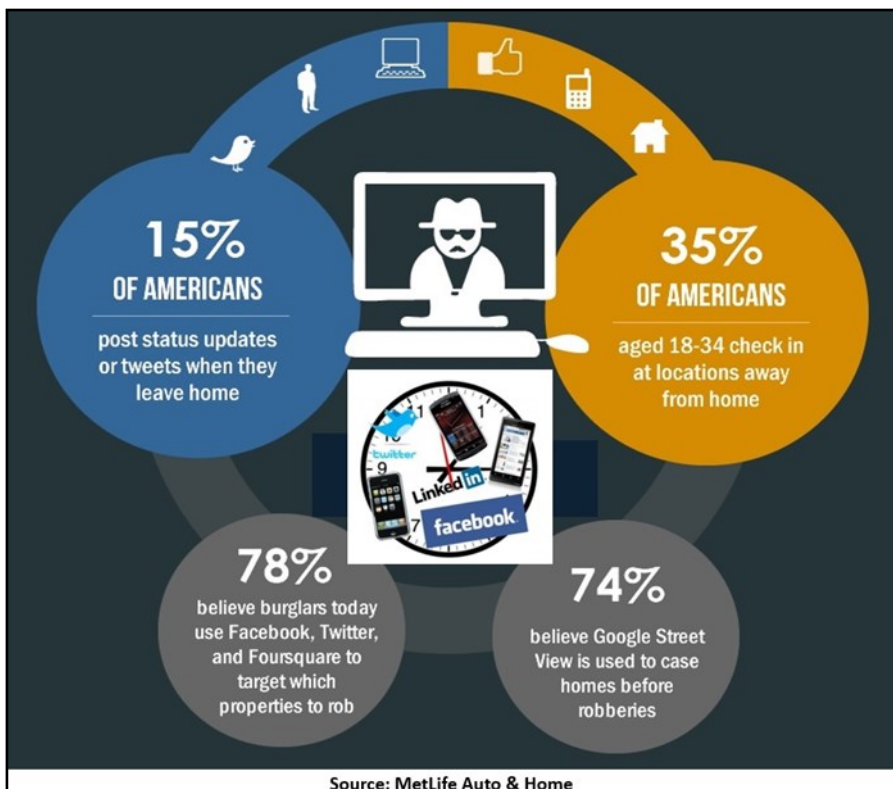
New Scam in Florida

Florida May 2015: Sarasota County Sheriff's Office is warning citizens about a new burglary scam.

In this new scheme, well-dressed women are going into gated communities driving luxury rental cars. They wait for residents to leave and often ring the doorbell to confirm no one is home. They then break in and steal jewelry and other valuable items.

Burglary and Auto Theft

According to the latest US Census, nearly ten percent of all U.S homeowners live within gated communities. Living in a gated community might give you peace of mind, but can also create a false sense of security, as burglaries and vehicle thefts are on the rise in these communities. Always lock and secure your vehicle, even if you are returning to your car within a few minutes.



More than 75% of the invaded homes were selected and “cased” by using online and social media sources, according to former burglars who were interviewed.

Data and Analysis

Following the tragic home invasion in Washington D.C. that targeted a \$4.5m mansion and ended in the murder of a family and their housekeeper, analysts at Mindstar Security & Profiling decided to take a look at home invasions that have targeted high end homes in wealthy neighborhoods in order to identify any trends or patterns that may shed some light on what occurs during a “typical” home invasion.

Mindstar analysts gathered information relating to twenty five different home invasions that have occurred over the last five years that specifically targeted high end homes in wealthy neighborhoods. The following data is the product of the analysis of the twenty five home invasion incidents in an attempt to better understand what generally takes place during a high end home invasion, as well as any other patterns or trends that may surface within the data set.

Home invasions are almost always committed by multiple perpetrators. In 21 of the 25 incidents more than one perpetrator was involved, in 2 of the incidents an “unknown number” of perpetrators were involved, and in only 1 incident was there believed to be only a single suspect. The vast majority of the incidents collected involved 2 to 4 suspects.

Perpetrators are almost always armed before entry. In 24 out of the 25 incidents examined, those committing the invasion were armed before entering the home. In only one incident did the assailants arm themselves after entering (grabbed knives from kitchen). By far the most popular weapon used was handguns, followed by knives.

Daytime attacks are almost as common as nighttime attacks. This finding was surprising to our analysts, as several crime and victimology sources suggest burglaries are most commonly committed during the day, while robberies are far most common between 6pm and 6am. The data identified by Mindstar Security showed that home invasions occurred during the day (6am to 6pm) in just under half of the incidents examined (12 of 25). A secondary observation regarding the daytime home invasions suggests that over half of those victims were sixty years old or older.

May 2015 Washington, DC

The perpetrator, a welder with a criminal record of assaults who once worked for the mansion's owner, has been charged with murder. The homeowner, his wife, his 10 year old son and their housekeeper were bound and held captive for over 18 hours.

Court records confirm that \$40K dollars were delivered to the mansion before it was set on fire. Once the money was delivered, the family and their housekeeper were killed, one of their luxury vehicles was stolen and the home was set on fire. The crimes, described in the court affidavit, required the presence and assistance of more than one person.

Text messages and voicemails from the captive family to their confused and frightened household and company staff suggested something was amiss in the house many hours before the home was burned.

Social Media Safety

Location Sharing: Be careful of using social media and “check-in” apps that broadcast locations. These locations can be tracked.

Photo Data: Each time a photo is made available online it may be digitally tagged with GPS data, a time/date stamp, and information about the device. Do not post photos in “real time.”

Disclosive Postings: Even posting information about vacations after the fact can provide information about overall travel patterns and repeated trips. Be careful about over-sharing.

Data and Analysis, continued

The front door is the most popular point of entry. Criminals planning home invasions intend to enter the home while the victims are home. With the exception of instances where the criminal's primary goal is a sexual attack or kidnapping, the perpetrator typically intends to leverage the victims in order to locate or otherwise obtain money and valuables. Because victims are home at the time of the attack, the front door is often unlocked and the security alarms are not set. The majority of the front door breaches appear to have occurred by the assailants simply walking into the home through the front door. The other form of front door entry was when the assailants would knock on the door (sometimes using a female decoy) and force their way into the home after the victim answered the door.

Victims are often bound after assailants make entry. In 18 of the 25 incidents collected, the victims were bound with duct tape, rope, handcuffs, or zip ties. By having the victims bound the assailants are able to take their time ransacking and searching the home for valuables.

Victims are often used by assailants in the search for cash and valuables. More than half of the incidents identified included assailants forcing victims to help them retrieve cash and identify valuable like electronics and jewelry. This is one of the reasons home invasions are planned for when the inhabitants are home.



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Home invasions often include some level of violence. In order to terrify victims and make them less likely to resist, assailants often commit violence at the onset of the attack. Within the incidents that included some level of violence (almost half), the degree of violence ranged from simply roughing the victims up to stabbing or shooting the victim(s).

Gated communities are not immune to home invasions. A repeating theme among the news media articles Mindstar Security collected on the 25 home invasion incidents was the inclusion of an interview with a neighbor that said something along the lines of “it’s just inconceivable that something like this has happened here”. Many of the invasions targeting high end homes took place in gated communities, several of which even had private security officers and/or patrol cars within the community. This suggests that simply living in a gated community is not enough of a deterrent against home invasions and burglaries. Residents should always remain vigilant and improve their security posture, regardless of how safe they feel their neighborhood may be.

Other themes which emerged in just less than half of the cases reviewed included that the attackers of high end homes:

- Cut phone lines and/or electrical lines
- Took hard drives of camera systems or other evidence
- Targeted the same home more than once



Upcoming Issues

- Home Safety & Fire Prevention
- Cyber Security - Home/Work Networks, Personal Devices & Apps
- Insider Threat - Fraud & Embezzlement
- Vehicle Security – Luxury Autos, Yachts, & Jets
- Overseas Travel Planning & Safety
- Personal/Physical Safety & Awareness
- Security Systems - What's New
- Cyber Security - Online, Internet & Social Media
- Groups Targeting High Net Worth & High Profile Persons - Who & Why
- Identity Theft and Identity Protection
- Handling Direct Threats - Stalking, Extortion, Kidnapping & Harassment

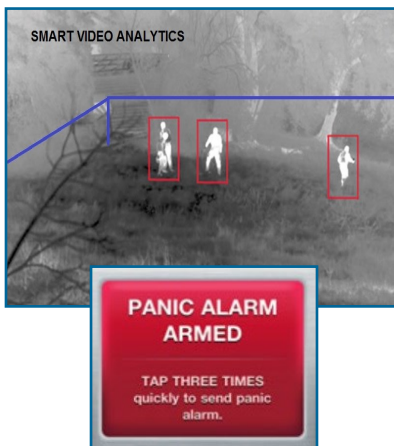
Recommendations: 10 Tips for Prevention

1) Lock doors and windows. This may seem the most obvious but it needs to be emphasized due to the large number of invasions that involve an unlocked door. Criminals will sometimes canvas potential targets posing as a salesperson or other profession in order to find an unlocked door. Simply making sure all doors are locked, even when people are home, is the most important stop in avoiding being a victim of a home invasion.

2) Invest in strong doors and deadbolts. Simply locking the door will not be enough if the door is easily breach-able. A common tactic of burglary is a “smash and grab” during which the assailant will simply kick a door in to make entry into a home. A strong door and door frame, as well as a quality double cylinder deadbolt (that has been “kick-tested”), can better prevent this type of invasion. Look for locks that are pick-proof. Locks are available in manual and Bluetooth varieties to fit the style and architecture of the home.

3) Alarm systems work. While alarm systems are often not engaged during the day when residents are home, they provide a strong deterrent to would-be invaders by alerting homeowners of a breach, notifying authorities quickly, and even provide a psychological barrier when criminals see the security sign/sticker.

4) Shades and curtains can help deter break-ins. When canvassing high end homes, the less criminals can see the better. By using shades and curtains to limit visibility into the home (especially at night), homeowners are more able to keep criminals from viewing both valuable that they may be tempted to steal and the layout of the home. The use of binoculars, cameras and night vision lenses are used by burglars to watch homes from a distance.



5) Light is your friend. Perimeter and up lighting can be used to make your home a less attractive target to would-be burglars. Having a well-lit property, especially around entry points to the home, can dissuade a robbery attempt and convince criminals to look elsewhere. The use of motion detecting lights can also be a strong deterrent, as they add another layer of security that may dissuade a would-be burglar.

6) Dogs are excellent security measures. A survey conducted by Jack MacLean (Secrets of a SuperThief) asked over 300 prison inmates who had been convicted of burglary and other property crimes whether or not a dog would scare them away from a home. 65% of respondents said that dogs of good size and unfriendly persuasion would indeed scare them away. Even a smaller dog can help alert homeowners when someone is approaching the home.

7) Be mindful of landscaping near windows. Keep bushes and trees near first floor windows trimmed in order to limit the privacy a potential intruder has while attempting to breach the home. You may also consider planting thorny bushes around these windows. Not only are these shrubs aesthetically pleasing, they can also collect DNA from intruders. Torn clothing can also be used as evidence and doesn't require the use of law enforcement labs to analyze.

8) Choose and train your support staff carefully. Housekeepers, pool cleaners, maintenance staff, and even people sent to the home to install internet/cable should be properly vetted before being allowed access to the home. There have been several documented instances where support staff has either inadvertently or purposefully disclosed the presence of valuables to friends who have then committed robberies or burglaries at the home. Train your staff to be aware of unusual occurrences and how to report them.

9) Monitor the Internet. Homeowners should make sure older online real estate listings for the property have been taken down. Social media use by everyone living in the home or supporting the home (i.e., housekeepers, au pairs, personal chefs) should be monitored in order to prevent sharing information that can tip criminals off to the layout of the home, existence of valuables, or planned vacations/times.

10) Consider adding a panic button or creating a safe room. A safe room can be a valuable tool in the event of a home invasion. The room should have a satellite phone, a flashlight, and adequate ventilation. It is a good idea to mount doors on hinges that swing out, as these are harder to breach than those that swing in. Security alarm systems can be expanded to include WiFi or wired panic buttons and systems. Some panic alarms are as small as key chains and can be activated from anywhere.

Mindstar Security & Profiling

Mindstar Security & Profiling specializes in security solutions for family offices, high profile/high net worth executives, and their families. Our customized focus includes the security trifecta of Internet/Social Media Safety, Physical Security Risk and IT security.

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