

By Raffaele Di Giorgio

Distrust and Caution: The Parents of Security

“Distrust and caution are the parents of security.” Benjamin Franklin said this, and by the utterance of these simple 8 words, Mr. Franklin, one of the premier American renaissance men, may have set a record, for the shortest “security protocol/guide” ever devised.

Let’s discuss what some would like to consider the less “glamorous” side of executive protection work, the residents watch, the halls & walls detail, the overnight watch, as well as the business office detail. Places that are static in nature, but can become dynamic very quickly.

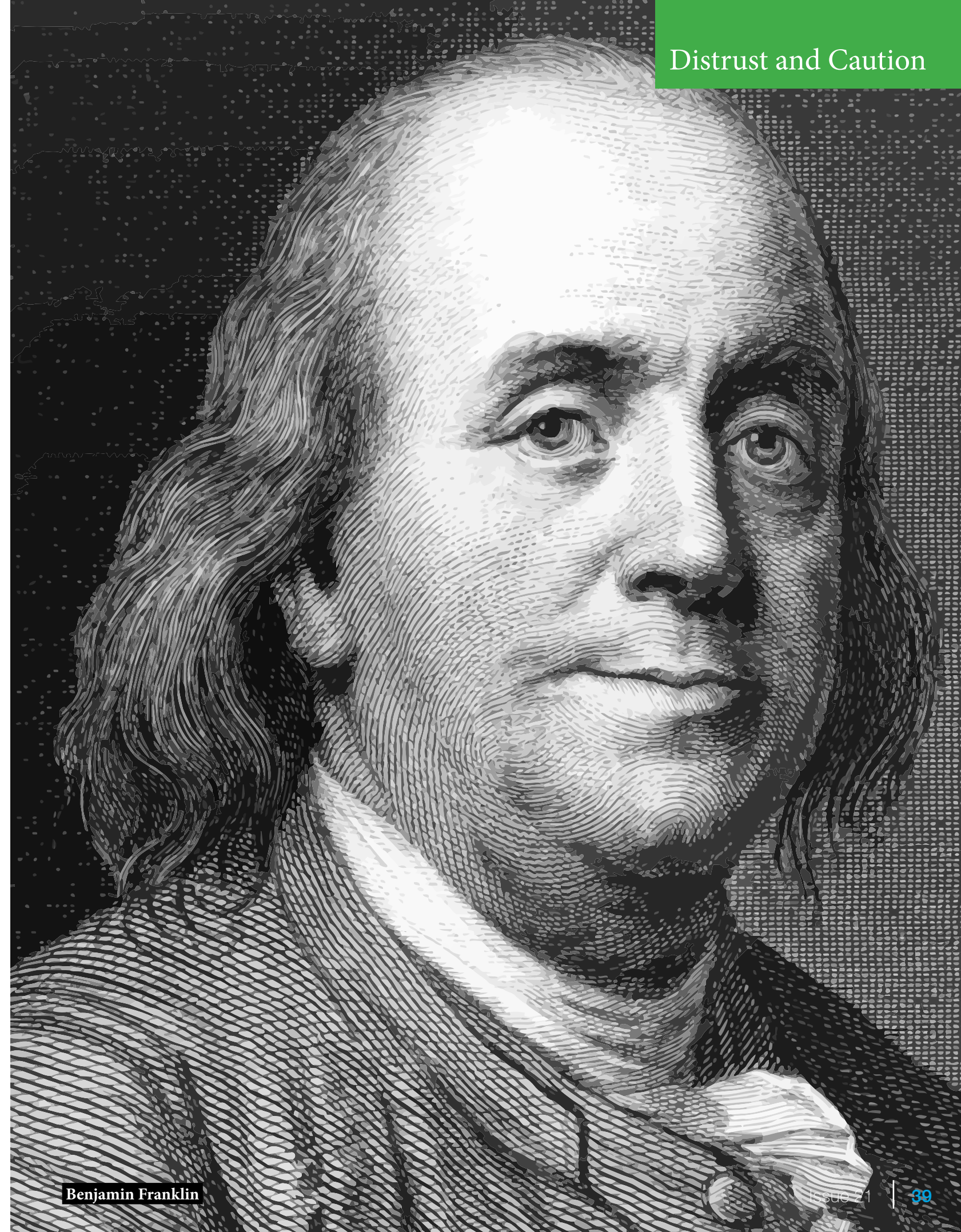
As professionals, keeping abreast of and studying the latest trends in criminal activities, terrorist operations, as well as crimes of opportunity. You will notice an alarming increase in multiple assailant attacks on the aforementioned locations. Add to this the current “SWATting” phenomenon that seems to be gaining in popularity in the US and suddenly the safety and sanctity of our historically safe havens has now come into question.

More often than not I hear from people entering the profession that, they are willing to “start out” as residents watch or overnight watch, as a “beginning step” or a “foot in the door” to the industry. Somehow, the perception is that this is an entry-level position and one that takes less expertise

than the mobile positions that seem to always be highlighted in our industry.

Unfortunately, the criminal and terrorist elements out there have picked up on this and we are seeing an uptick in the “home invasion” and stronghold assaults by multiple assailants. Add to this that these attackers have increased their capabilities, complexity, sophistication, and violence of action and all of a sudden you start to realize the depth of the problem facing us as protectors.

Let me say that I have personally been involved with the topic from various angles; as a responding uniformed police officer, as an investigator after the fact, as a paramedic and lastly as a protection specialist responsible for dealing with the attack as it unfolds. The one common reality that I have gathered from all of these experiences is that no matter whether it is the house wife, CEO, celebrity, soldier, high net worth individual, LEO, embassy worker or PSD member; once these people have been attacked at “home” they are never >>



Benjamin Franklin

the same. Sometimes living through one of these attacks is a worse fate, then the victims who have died needlessly. I have watched couple's divorce over the "blame", spouses commit suicide over not being able to protect their "house". People sell off million dollar homes at incredible losses, because they "will never feel safe in the house again". Protection specialists overseas walk away from details because they can no longer sleep or handle the stress of not feeling safe "anywhere".

In this day of instant access, the enemy only needs to avail themselves of the internet to acquire all the tools necessary to impersonate most military and/or law enforcement personal. At least long enough to get people to open the door. I have called and spoken to several specialists while writing this article and asked two simple questions.

"At your current location, describe the local police's department badge & uniform."

"What does the agency ID card look like? Is it laminated paper, plastic heat printed, hologram embossed, size, vertical or horizontal orientation?"

Honestly now, as you are reading this article, could you answer the above questions?

I was expecting about a 50/50 split of persons who would be capable of giving a comprehensive and complete response. Out of the 15 specialist I called, I was stunned that only 3 were able to answer with knowledgeable answers. 2 of 3 were in Iraq and Afghanistan, and 1 in the US who has been

with his client in Southern Californian for two years and admitted that he only became aware of and interested in this information after he saw a newscast on SWATting about 6-8 months ago.

Swatting: The tricking of any emergency service (via such as a 9-1-1 dispatcher) into dispatching an emergency response based on the false report of an on-going critical incident. Episodes range from large to small, from the deployment of bomb squads, SWAT units and other police units and the concurrent evacuations of schools and businesses to a single fabricated police report meant to discredit an individual as a prank or personal vendetta.

How about the use of Military and Law Enforcement Tactics by criminals? We currently have some of the highest numbers of LEO's and combat veterans the US and the UK have seen in modern history. Just like the cross section of any population some of these people will turn to criminal behavior. Does your residence watch have the equipment, training and personal to effectively deal with a coordinated attack, by 3 to 7 proficient assaulters?

If you find yourself to be in the same position as 12 out of the 15 specialists that I interviewed and do not know the difference between legitimate law enforcement/military uniforms and credentials and falsified uniforms and credentials in your area of operation, then I have a question for you. How would

you be able to quickly and accurately identified whether your site is about to be the subject of one of three possible scenarios.

Is that group of men at the front door legitimate law enforcement responding to a swatting prank?

Is that same group of men impersonating LEO/military in order to conduct a criminal activity and assault on your property?

Or are they legitimate LEO/military responding to a legitimate call for help on your property?

I have preached and advocated to the single protection specialist as well as to up-and-coming companies to have written protocols and standard operating procedures in place for years. And I am often met with quite a bit of pushback in relation to how much time it takes to write proper procedures and protocols and the fact that no specialist likes to read extensive protocols and then agreed to abide by them. I only mention this because I do believe it is incumbent upon

the agency owner's and those that are established executive protection professionals to start to demand more from the people entering into the field and to raise the bar for those people who are ready establishes the field.

It is beyond the scope of this article to offer the training that is necessary to address the many scenarios and many more responses that can be attributed to the aforementioned problems. Rather, it is my sincere hope that both new and established specialists and companies would revisit their standard operating procedures and possibly evaluate their current manning structure and their reliance on electronic/computerized security measures. The human element must remain, but also be tactically and technically proficient.

So, as I often do, I leave you with the same statement that I began this article with, if we are to believe Mr. Franklin and acknowledge that "Distrust and caution are the parents of security", should one really consider any of the static sites as an entry-level detail and should we as professionals negate the importance of having properly trained individuals in these positions?



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