

Pinstripe Suits With Kevlar Vests

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THE shooting of a Merrill Lynch stockbroker by a distraught investor during the October market collapse sent shivers throughout corporate America. Fearful that violence could increase if the economy sours, a growing number of companies are hiring "executive protection security personnel," or bodyguards, for top executives.

Today's executive bodyguards, who usually learned their trade with the Secret Service, the F.B.I. or the military, are omnipresent travel companions who may be equipped with miniature walkie-talkies, closed-circuit televisions - and guns if necessary. Such companionship does not come cheap. An escort from Guardsmark, for example, runs \$10,000 to \$15,000 a month, plus expenses. The guard will plan the safest routes to your destination, drive you there and try to blend discreetly into social or professional settings.

More executives are hiring escorts for travel abroad, Mr. Lipman said, out of fear of terrorist attacks. An overseas travel companion costs about \$20,000 a month, in addition to expenses, and at least two are usually required for executives

who log 16-hour days.

To thwart terrorists abroad, Mr. Lipman advises keeping a low profile. Use an assumed name and travel non-stop wherever possible. Similarly, for domestic travel, Mr. Lipman said, more executives are staying low key by "leaving the Mercedes at home" and wearing plainer clothes so they don't become targets for kidnapers and extortionists.

Modest attire does not mean unsafe attire. One complement to a pinstripe suit, for example, could be a matching vest that can withstand a .357-caliber bullet. The vests, made with Du Pont Kevlar, cost between \$300 and \$700, depending on the style and degree of resistance to bullets. If vests seem stuffy, there are stylish bullet-resistant safari jackets, raincoats, undershirts and dress shirts.

Executives who shun security escorts can plant a homing device in their cars. An "automatic vehicle locator" transmitter (\$1,500 to \$3,000) dispatches a long-range radio signal to a receiver (\$8,000 to \$30,000) that can be placed with the corporate security director to speed the rescue in the event of trouble.

Those who tote sensitive documents may want an electrified briefcase, available from CCS Communications Control (\$1,500). The handle of this ordinary-looking leather case dispenses 47,000 painful volts of electricity to an unauthorized hand. CCS also has a complete line of compact bomb-sniffing equipment and an "electronic handkerchief" that disguises

voices, so a woman alone can sound like Rambo on the telephone (\$1,200).

Those who want to travel in near total security can try the "Supercar" from CCS (\$50,000 to \$150,000, depending on the make and options). A fully loaded model comes with anti-bugging equipment for the car phone, bulletproof glass that can withstand a .30-caliber carbine, hidden gun portholes, and tear gas and oil-slick emission systems to stun even the most persistent adversaries.