

06 Recognizing Surveillance

Look for the pattern, not the instance

BOTTOM LINE UP FRONT

Surveillance detection is patience and pattern, not nerves. One coincidence means nothing; repetition across time, place, and route is the signal. Confirm a suspicion without revealing you have noticed, the worst response is to telegraph awareness.

The Lesson

AS BEAULIEU TAUGHT IT

Agents thought in terms of time, place, and route. The same face is meaningless once; the same face in a different part of the city, at a different time, on an unpredictable route, is data. The cardinal rule: never reveal you have noticed, because that hands the watcher your only advantage.

YOUR THREAT MODEL

The transferable tool is the rule of three. One occurrence is coincidence, two is worth noting, three, the same person, vehicle, or anomaly across three different contexts, is a pattern worth a calm response. It prevents both anxious over-reaction and dangerous under-reaction. The digital version is the same: the recurring login alert, the device that repeatedly misbehaves.

CASE STUDY

The rule of three in practice

A person notices a vehicle behind them on the drive to work, meaningless alone. They see what appears to be the same vehicle two days later on an evening errand across town, and again on a rarely-taken weekend route. Three contexts, separated in time, place, and an unadvertised route. They do not panic or dismiss it; they note it without reacting, vary their routine, head to a populated public place rather than home, and confirm before deciding it is real.

Common Mistakes

- Reacting to a single coincidence, which breeds anxiety and false alarms.
- Telegraphing awareness, staring, an obvious evasive move, visible alarm.
- Dismissing a genuine pattern because no single instance felt alarming.
- Heading home to confirm a suspicion, leading a possible follower to where you live.

The Field Exercise: Train the rule of three

1. Internalize the heuristic: one is coincidence, two is attention, three across contexts is a pattern.
2. If you reach three, do not react visibly; note it calmly and continue.
3. Vary your routine and route, and move toward a populated, well-monitored place, never home.
4. Confirm the pattern before deciding it is real, with your response decided in advance.

Work it here:

Operator's Checklist

- I look for patterns across time, place, and route, not single events.
- I do not react visibly when I notice possible surveillance.
- I vary my routine and move toward populated, monitored places.
- I never head home to confirm a suspicion.
- I have my response, who to call, where to go, decided in advance.