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The global challenge of the new terrorism

William L. Waugh, Jr., PhD

INTRODUCTION

On September 11, 2001, and the days that followed, television brought terrorism into the homes of billions of people around the world. The images of the aircraft striking the World Trade Center towers were frequently described as "unreal" and "movielike." The collapse of the World Trade Center towers defied comprehension, particularly among those who had some familiarity with their size. The heroic lifesaving efforts were both frightening and awe-inspiring. Without a doubt, the tragedies in New York, as well as those in Washington and Pennsylvania, have had tremendous impact upon the psyches of Americans and others around the world. As a consequence, the events have taken on a global significance. To varying degrees, governments around the world have felt the imperative to invest hundreds of billions of dollars, Euros, yen, pesos, and other currencies in preventing similar attacks. The investments in security have fundamentally changed policy priorities in the United States and many other countries, and future investments promise to further affect social and economic policies. However, not all nations perceive the threat in the same way. Some have experienced their own terrorist nightmares, and their responses have been colored by that experience. Some have been subject to longstanding terrorist threats, and the so-called new terrorism simply broadens their perspective on the risk. Some, to be sure, feel that the attacks are directed against the United States and Europe and, therefore, they need not concern themselves greatly.

The perpetrators of the September 11 attack, operatives of Al Qaeda and its supporters, were branded "evil doers" and "terrorists" of the worst sort. Words failed to capture the emotion, and the image became something of a caricature in official speeches

and the media. Al Qaeda represents a relatively new manifestation of terrorism—the "new terrorism." A report by the RAND Corporation for the US Air Force¹ provides a succinct description of the "new terrorism." The "new terrorists" are organized in relatively small and autonomous "cells" with "amateurs" being trained and lead by a few experts.² The small size of the groups, the insulation of each cell from the main organization, the use of high-technology communication linkages, reliance upon "amateurs" likely to be unknown by authorities and indistinguishable from other visitors, and substantial financial resources make such groups very difficult to detect and apprehend. Relatively open borders, large numbers of foreign visitors and students, and little monitoring by government agencies makes nations such as the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and other democratic nations vulnerable to infiltration. The new terrorists are in contrast to the more centralized terrorist groups that are better known and have better understood motivations.

As compelling as the global threat of terrorism is today, it is important to put the risk into proper perspective. First, terrorism is certainly not a new phenomenon. The threats posed by the Al Qaeda networks, as well as the threats posed by other domestic and international terrorist organizations and by terrorist states, have precedence. Indeed, terrorism has tended to be cyclic, and one should expect to see current threats dissipate and new threats emerge. In short, the new terrorists of today will eventually be supplanted by terrorists with different motivations, weaponry, and targets. Second, as tragic as it was to lose almost 3,000 wives, husbands, children, friends, and coworkers, the losses have less import for nations that have lost tens of thousands, even hundreds of thousands, of

people in natural disasters. Earthquakes, cyclones, droughts, and floods have caused death and devastation and left nations in social and economic ruin and in political collapse. While terrorist-spawned disasters tend to strike a nerve in the sense that they are manmade, purposive, and presumed preventable, natural and technological disasters on a catastrophic scale are all too common in the world and are the greater threat to life and property. Indeed, it is certain that major earthquakes will strike the West Coast and other parts of the United States. It is certain that Force 5 hurricanes will make landfall in heavily populated areas of Florida, Louisiana, Texas, and other East and Gulf Coast states. It is less certain that a terrorist organization will use a large nuclear device or a virulent and lethal biological agent in the United States or another nation. Millions of people are at risk from natural and technological hazards around the world, and terrorism is not the most immediate concern for them.

And, third, despite the number of deaths in New York City, Pennsylvania, and Washington, the use of aircraft to attack symbols of world capitalism and American military might was not a high-tech form of terrorism. There is a real potential for high-tech terrorism, but the Al Qaeda terrorists and, indeed, almost all terrorists with whom we have had experience, have chosen low-tech weapons. Fertilizer bombs were used in the 1993 attack on the World Trade Center and the 1995 attack on the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. Even the 1994 sarin gas attack by Aum Shinrikyo in the Tokyo subway was not a particularly high-tech event. So-called weapons of mass destruction (WMD) can range from very unsophisticated uses of chemical and nuclear materials that harm people, animals, or objects to very sophisticated uses of nuclear, biological, or chemical material that might kill thousands or even millions of people. Fortunately, we have not had to deal with the more lethal nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons yet; and for the most part, more conventional weaponry still poses the greatest threat. Indeed, WMD is an overused and much misunderstood term, and it is useful only when it is applied to weapons or events that involve mass casualties or mass destruction of property.

"Mass casualty weapons" might be a less ambiguous term and certainly would accommodate the variety of weapons, such as conventional military small arms and homemade explosive devices, that are more commonly used by terrorist organizations.

What does all this mean? In large measure, the frantic efforts to reduce vulnerabilities to terrorist attack are defined by the events of September 11 and related failed and actual attacks in Europe, Asia, and Africa. The efforts are not designed to address the broader threat of terrorism. The United States and other nations are preparing to deal with a terrorism risk that will be transitory, a threat that will likely be far less damaging and less certain than natural and technical disasters, and specific forms of terrorism (WMD) that may not include the more likely forms of violence that societies will face in the near future.

These criticisms are not new. Some appeared in the Stimson Institute report, *Ataxia*.³ Some appeared in recent articles on the importance of not letting the war on terrorism jeopardize the national emergency management network that deals with the more certain threats of natural and technological disaster.^{4,5} And some appeared in criticisms levied in the US Senate as it debated the proposed Department of Homeland Security in the summer and fall of 2002. To the extent that the United States and other nations are institutionalizing their anti- and counterterrorism efforts, the arguments to follow have added currency. To the extent that the new counterterrorism efforts will drain attention and resources from more certain risks, the arguments have more immediacy.

MODERN TERRORISM AND THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY

Terrorism is an ambiguous term that carries a tremendous amount of emotional baggage. Terrorism is a particular kind of violent threat that is designed to create fear among those who feel directly or indirectly targeted. Terrorism is a range of violent acts that not only kill or injure living things or damage symbolic objects, such as buildings, but also have a psychological impact on those not directly targeted. Terrorism also has ideological baggage. The cliché that "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter" is critically important. One's friends are not

terrorists; one's enemies can be. The nature of the violence would seem less important than the motivations of its perpetrators. For example, for a time in the United States, violent attacks on women's clinics and their patients and staffs were not viewed as terrorism by federal law enforcement authorities. In fact, some nations have long histories of providing sanctuary to rebels and revolutionaries who were certainly branded "terrorists" by their own governments. Even in the United States, there are periodic debates about the status of foreign visitors and prospective citizens who are labeled "terrorists" at home. Taliban support for Al Qaeda fighters who assisted during the Russian occupation should not be difficult to understand. Continued support after Al Qaeda operatives based in Afghanistan attacked American embassies and other Western targets may be less easily understood, however.

What is generally common among terrorism definitions is that (1) terrorism is the use or threat of extraordinary violence, (2) terrorism is purposive behavior, (3) victims are chosen for their symbolic rather than their instrumental value, and (4) terrorism is intended to have a psychological impact beyond the immediate victims.^{6,7} There is a real or implied threat of violence directed against symbolic victims to induce fear in a target audience—that is, it is violence for effect. It is rational behavior, although the rationality may not be readily apparent. Terrorism is generally considered somewhat less directed toward the strongest pillars of a regime or an elite than guerrilla warfare or civil war, although the distinction between terrorism and guerrilla warfare is a fuzzy one. And for our purposes here, the motivations are political rather than simply criminal. These attributes are important if authorities are to understand the violence and to identify terrorists, terrorist groups, and their likely targets.

The roots of terrorist violence are long and deep. They can be traced to the internecine conflicts among early family and community groupings. Eugene V. Walter illustrated those early uses of terror in his 1969 study of African communities in which village leaders used threats and acts of violence to maintain their authority.⁸ But by no means was the violence

confined to primitive communities. Terrorism became a common and useful tool in the conventional warfare of the day. For example, in terms of bioterrorism, diseased bodies were thrown over city walls and dropped down community wells to poison water supplies. The distinction between violence used for effect—to elicit terror and thereby discourage opposition or encourage capitulation—and violence used for more instrumental purposes—to kill opponents—is important. In the first case, the threat is used to achieve political and military purposes without actually having to kill or maim opponents. In the second, the nature of the violence itself magnifies its effect on those who seem to be or who feel vulnerable to such violence, as well as eliminating an opponent.

Modern terrorism is generally traced from World War II. The Allies and the Axis used terrorism to demoralize enemy populations. The bombing of London by the Nazis and the bombing of Dresden by the Allies were designed to demoralize. The Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings were even more clearly designed to demoralize the enemy and encourage capitulation. Terrorism has been a common aspect of virtually all the military conflicts over the past half century, from Vietnam and Algeria to Bosnia and Afghanistan. Terrorism was a useful tool of national liberation struggles, colonial oppression, and civil wars (see, for example, Barker⁹ on terrorism in the Cyprus conflict and Crozier¹⁰ on terrorism in the post-WWII anticolonial wars). Terrorism was also a useful tool for those defending regimes from challenge, including challenge by those whose causes were certainly more democratic and laudable than those of incumbent elites.^{6,11}

The choice of "innocent" people or noncombatants as targets is not a distinguishing characteristic of terrorism. The Cold War was a stalemate because of the threat of "mutually assured destruction," particularly when both sides targeted civilian populations. The devastating instruments of modern warfare increased the potential costs in human lives and property to virtually an extinction level. As the criticism of the nuclear balance was often framed, both sides held so many nuclear weapons that at some point all their use might accomplish would be to "make the rubble

bounce." Civilians were the targets, and destruction of culture and economy was the threat. In those respects, both sides used terrorism during the Cold War.

Terrorism as a tactic of groups and governments during the 1960s evolved from ideological and nihilistic motives to ethnic autonomy and separatist motivations in the 1970s and 1980s, to religion in the 1990s. There are certainly ideologically motivated terrorist organizations operating still, such as the November 118 organization that has recently been apprehended by Greek authorities, and ethnically based organizations, such as the Basque organization, ETA, in Spain. However, the trend toward religious motivation has caused concern, because such groups tend to be more willing to kill large numbers of people in order to bring the world closer to Armageddon or to restore cultures rooted in value systems long rejected. At the same time, the weaponry of war has become more lethal, the technologies to support war have expanded, and the availability of military capabilities to non-military groups and individuals has grown.

What is different about today's new terrorism? It is less centralized. Small groups operating largely autonomously are difficult to identify and apprehend. Two or three or four individuals traveling or living together in a diverse community, such as a large city or university town, are not conspicuous unless they betray their plans. The Internet and cell phones permit groups to communicate clandestinely. Money can be transferred electronically. Weaponry can be found locally or manufactured (e.g., fertilizer and pipe bombs). In short, such organizations lack the command and control structures, logistical support structures, and explicit objectives that characterized traditional terrorist organizations,² and therefore, they are more difficult to counter. Asymmetrical conflicts pose serious problems for the application of military force.

Terrorism is not new, nor is it necessarily more threatening than it has been in the past. The potential for nuclear, biological, and chemical holocausts has been around for at least half a century. What is new is the motivations of terrorists, the capacities of individuals and small groups to wreak havoc on humankind. The collapse of the Soviet empire and

the rise of so-called rogue states with the means to create nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons should be cause for concern; but producing, storing, transporting, and delivering such weapons are still not as easy as using more conventional military and homemade weapons.³ Military technologies are accessible to nonmilitary and nongovernmental groups. Military explosives and weapons ranging from pistols to mortars to handheld rocket launchers have been lost, stolen, and sold. There is more potential for mass casualty attacks with non-WMD weaponry. Modern society is becoming more fragile as well. Relatively small bombs, unsophisticated chemical agents, and computer sabotage could disrupt social and economic life and cause many casualties. The point is that it does not take WMD to accomplish what most terrorist organizations want to accomplish.

The history of modern terrorism is important, because how states respond to the threat of terrorism reflects their prior experience.^{7,12} Many nations were affected directly by the September 11 attacks, as well as prior and subsequent attacks and threats by Al Qaeda. However, many nations today are threatened more by domestic terrorism, the use of terror by those wishing to overthrow or change the government, or those wishing to defend the government and the prerogatives of favored groups. A number of groups have voiced concerns that some nations are using the external threat of terrorism to justify internal programs to suppress opposition and deal more harshly with those who use violence for political purposes. With international attention focused on the war on terrorism, it is relatively easy for officials to link their campaigns against internal enemies with that international effort to legitimize suppression of internal dissent.

To give some perspective on the threat of international terrorism over the past 23 years, the US State Department¹³ estimates that there have been 273 to 666 such attacks each year (Table 1). In fact, the number of attacks decreased in the late 1990s from a high in the late 1980s. Of course, the statistics are for the number of attacks and not the number of casualties or the economic cost of the attacks. The decrease in incidents in the late 1980s was due to the attacks on Israelis by Palestinians being redefined as domestic

terrorism rather than international terrorism, not a significant reduction in the number of incidences worldwide.

The number of international attacks within a particular region can also be cyclic (Table 2). The cyclic nature of the violence is easy to understand. It is difficult for small organizations to maintain campaigns of violence. Terrorist organizations frequently have to reduce the number of attacks while they replace the personnel who are lost, weapons that are lost, ammunition that is expended, and so on.¹⁴ Groups also may have to hide to avoid capture, particularly when intense campaigns encourage increased efforts by authorities to reduce the violence. The point is simply that campaigns of violence are seldom sustained over long periods of time, even though some conflicts may last for generations as has happened in Palestine, Northern Ireland, Spain, and parts of Africa, South America, and Asia.

Although it is difficult to generalize on the basis of only a few years, the data in Table 2 show that the number of international terrorist attacks in Asia, Eurasia, Africa, and Latin America increased in the late 1990s, and the number of attacks in the Middle East and Western Europe have declined since the early 1990s. The number of international terrorist attacks in the Middle East was relatively low in 1997 (numbering 37), but the statistic includes a suicide bombing in a Jerusalem market that killed 16 (including an American) and wounded 178 and another suicide bombing in a pedestrian mall that killed seven (including another American).¹⁵ The 1997 statistics also include an attack in Luxor, Egypt, in which 58 foreign tourists, three Egyptian police officers, an Egyptian tour guide, and all six terrorists were killed and an attack on a tour bus outside the Egyptian National Antiquities Museum in which nine German tourists and their bus driver were killed.¹⁵ Many more incidents of terrorism occurred in Latin America than elsewhere in the world.

Most of the international terrorist attacks during the 1993-2001 period were directed against businesses (Table 3), including the World Trade Center attacks in 1993 and 2001. Few military facilities were attacked for the obvious reason that they are more

Table 1. Total international terrorist attacks, 1979 - 2001

Year	Number of attacks
1979	434
1980	499
1981	489
1982	467
1983	497
1984	565
1985	635
1986	612
1987	666
1988	605
1989	375
1990	437
1991	565
1992	363
1993	431
1994	322
1995	440
1996	296
1997	304
1998	273
1999	392
2000	426
2001	348

secure, and the costs to attackers would likely be much dearer than the costs in attacking unsecured facilities or individuals. However, though diplomatic facilities are guarded and often fortified, they tend to be in the middle of urban areas that afford terrorists more opportunities to overcome their defenses. The bombings of the US embassies in Tanzania and Kenya in 1998 are cases in point. Trucks were driven close enough to the facilities so that the bombs they carried could cause considerable damage. Diplomatic facilities

Table 2. Total international attacks by region, 1993 – 2001

Region	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Africa	6	25	10	11	11	21	53	55	33
Asia	37	24	16	11	21	49	72	98	68
Eurasia	5	11	5	24	42	14	35	31	3
Latin America	97	58	92	84	128	110	121	192	194
Middle East	100	116	45	45	37	31	26	20	29
North America	1	0	0	0	13	0	2	0	4
Western Europe	185	85	277	121	52	48	85	30	17

are typically located in downtown areas and have to be accessible to the public. That access greatly complicates security.

Relatively few Americans are killed each year in international terrorist attacks (Table 4), except for the attacks of September 11, 2001. Although there have been years in which there have been mass casualty attacks, such as the bombings of the World Trade Center in 1993 and the USS Cole in South Yemen in 2000, the numbers have been relatively low. The major question since September 11, 2001, is whether the attacks portend further mass casualty violence or are simply a unique set of events, an outlier in statistical terms. Formal, quantitative risk assessment requires more data points to identify trends.

American diplomatic personnel and facilities have been frequent targets of foreign terrorists. The bombings of the US embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on August 7, 1998, encouraged an analysis of the attacks on diplomatic facilities. The Accountability Review Boards examined the attacks on US facilities from 1987 to 1997 and found a broad pattern of attacks that included firebombing and other attacks on US embassies, US Information Service

cultural centers, and other facilities in Europe, particularly Spain, in the late 1980s. The largest numbers of attacks, however, were in Latin America and South Korea. During 1987 and 1988, there were attacks on US embassy buildings (including residences) in Spain, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Italy, Peru, Greece, Ecuador, Venezuela, Singapore, Yemen, South Korea, Philippines, Honduras, El Salvador, Colombia, and Chile. Some facilities were attacked many times. For example, the USIS Cultural Center in Kwangju, South Korea, was the target of an attempted firebombing on February 26, 1988. The facility was then firebombed on May 23, August 6, October 14, November 6, and November 7 in 1988; January 1, January 31, February 3, and February 16 in 1989; June 12 and September 27 in 1990; March 20 and November 29 in 1991; and November 2 in 1993. It was taken over once, on June 28, 1991. USIS facilities in Seoul and Taegu, South Korea, also suffered multiple attacks.

US facilities in Peru, including Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) base camps, suffered 37 attacks between 1987 and 1997. DEA efforts to help Peruvian authorities stop the drug trade were the principal reasons for the

Table 3. Total facilities struck by international attacks, 1993 – 2001

Type of facility	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Business	280	130	338	235	327	282	276	383	397
Diplomatic	42	24	2	24	30	35	59	31	18
Government	20	27	20	12	11	10	27	17	13
Military	15	5	4	6	4	4	17	13	4
Other	109	126	126	90	80	67	96	115	99

attacks. There were hundreds of attacks on US facilities in Latin America during the period, often attacks in different nations or in different cities in the same nation on the same day. Increased attacks on US facilities in Serbia reflected the growing tensions between the two nations in the 1990s. In short, Americans and US diplomatic facilities are frequent targets of terrorist violence, even in those nations that might be considered staunch allies. Bombings were the most common forms of attacks.

In terms of terrorist attacks within the United States (Table 5), the FBI estimates that there were 239 domestic and 88 international terrorist incidents and suspected incidents in the United States from 1980 to 1999.¹⁶ As a result of the incidents, 205 people were killed, and 2,037 people were injured. In comparison with the number of attacks outside the United States, domestic terrorism would appear to be a much less frequent and serious problem—notwithstanding the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City in 1995. Many of the incidents simply involved property damage. The categories of domestic terrorist groups were right wing, left wing, and “special interest,” with the latter including environmental and animal rights extremists. The categories of international terrorist groups were state sponsored, formal or autonomous (mostly transnational), and loosely affiliated. Perhaps because the FBI considers all acts of terrorism to be criminal, and political motivations are

presumably not a determining factor in the classification, the data are more difficult to interpret. Organizations such as the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) and Animal Liberation Front (ALF) offer clearer objectives and are more likely to claim responsibility; therefore, the FBI report seems to focus more on their activities than the more ambiguous activities of right-wing extremists that have attacked forest ranger stations, tax offices, and other symbols of the US government. The latter frequently operate as individuals or in small groups, as well—much like the new terrorists—and are more difficult to detect and apprehend.

THE NEW TERRORISM AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

Statistically, terrorism is not as serious a problem as other natural and technological hazards. Most Americans are still more likely to be hit by lightning or suffer grievous injury from a fall in the bathtub than be killed or injured in a terrorist incident. Global warming, El Nino spawned droughts and floods, major hurricanes, and major earthquakes are still a bigger threat to American communities. Public health officials are still more worried about the next deadly outbreak of influenza that might rival the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918 that killed roughly 500,000 to 600,000 Americans and 30 million people in the world. Pandemics, earthquakes, and cyclones are certain risks. Mass casualty terrorist incidents on the scale of

Table 4. Total US citizen casualties caused by international attacks, 1993 – 2001

Year	Dead	Wounded	Major incidents
1993	7	1,004	World Trade Center bombing
1994	6	5	
1995	10	60	
1996	25	510	Dhahran barracks bombing
1997	6	21	
1998	12	11	Embassy bombings
1999	5	6	
2000	23	4	USS Cole attack
2001	3,041*	**	September 11 attacks

Data on casualties from the World Trade Center attacks were not available when the report was published.

* 3,041 is the number of deaths arrived at by the Associated Press in June, 2002.

** The number of injured in the attacks is unknown.

such natural disasters are not a certain risk. Does that mean that terrorism is unimportant and should not consume as many resources as it apparently is now? Maybe. Until we know whether there will be more attacks like the World Trade Center attack, vigilance is necessary. However, to put the new counterterrorism effort in perspective, the US federal government was spending roughly \$12 billion a year on counterterrorism programs in fiscal year 2001, and that amount has increased at least tenfold since the September attacks. The principal argument for expenditures on that scale is that terrorists have the wherewithal to kill tens of thousands or even millions of people, cause tremendous economic devastation, and create social and political upheaval. Much the same argument, in terms of impact, could be made for programs to address the dangers of asteroid strikes, earthquakes, hurricanes, pandemics, and other hazards.

A problem with our current methods of dealing with terrorism is that groups such as Al Qaeda are not the only threats. The threat of international terrorism can be separated into many different policy problems. First, there is the threat posed by Al Qaeda and other transnational terrorist organizations to nations or groups—the hazard for which we are now preparing. Second, there is the threat

posed by so-called rogue nations such as Iraq, Iran, Libya, North Korea, and (sometimes on official lists) Cuba. The threats posed by transnational organizations and rogue nations may also be exacerbated by the potential acquisition or development of chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons or agents. Third, there is the threat posed by political violence that spills over from other nations, such as the Palestinian violence that has occurred outside Palestine and the IRA activities that have taken place outside the United Kingdom. Fourth, there is the threat posed by domestic terrorists operating outside a country. Foreign nationals have been killed in the United States by terrorists from their home nations. Fifth, there is the threat posed by oppressive states that pursue their domestic opponents into other nations. Sixth, there is the threat of regimes using terrorist organizations as surrogates to attack other nations. Quite apart from the use of terrorism by rogue states, governments may choose to use terrorists because they are far less expensive than conventional forces, require less logistical support, and offer more surgical precision in attack than the use of more conventional military air, land, or sea power. Sending “soldiers” to battle on commercial aircraft is certainly easier than contending with border defenses. Seventh, there is the threat from domestic terrorists

Table 5. Terrorism within the United States, 1980 – 1999

Year	Number of incidents	Number of suspected incidents	Casualties	
			Killed	Injured
1980	20	30	1	9
1981	42	46	4	6
1982	51	55	8	41
1983	31	39	6	4
1984	13	25	1	0
1985	7	36	2	13
1986	25	36	1	19
1987	9	22	0	1
1988	9	17	0	0
1989	4	27	0	2
1990	7	13	0	0
1991	5	11	0	0
1992	4	4	0	0
1993	12	21	6	1,042
1994	1	2	1	3
1995	1	4	169	734
1996	3	8	2	112
1997	4	12	0	5
1998	5	17	1	2
1999	10	19	3	15

aided by international terrorists. For example, authorities are concerned about the connections between neo-Nazi groups in the United States and their counterparts in Germany, the increasing evidence of IRA support for terrorist organizations in Latin America, the possible connection between Al Qaeda and Palestinian groups, and so on. Terrorism is global because social, economic, and political relationships are increasingly global.

In terms of the threat posed by international terrorism, many nations suffer persistent violence from

external sources or from internal sources supported from outside. Violence also tends to spill over from the internal conflicts within neighboring nations. For the United States, American businesses and tourists are frequent targets of violence because of their symbolic value (e.g., the US connections to local economic and political elites).¹⁷ Some tourists are known for carrying large amounts of cash, rather than travelers' checks and other less negotiable forms of money, and are singled out as targets as well. Robbery and ransom money

"Sky Marshal" program experiences turbulence

The Federal Air Marshal program was implemented to defend against hijackings and catastrophic terrorist attacks. However, the breakneck pace of expansion has resulted in a frustrated workforce and major managerial headaches. The total budget for the program increased from \$1 to \$481 million in the first year and may reach \$1 billion by the end of 2003, while the number of officers has grown from 32 in 2001 to nearly 4,000. Yet, despite relatively high pay and promises of advancement, grueling work schedules, lack of leadership and training, and relocation problems have resulted in the resignation of more than 250 officers since the recruitment drive began.

Lack of cooperation from the airline industry has been an ongoing problem. American Airlines, in one highly publicized incident, allegedly refused to seat marshals where they had requested in order to save higher-priced seats for paying passengers. While their role is to remain discreet, marshals' identities have been exposed by passengers 294 times since September 11, 2001. Marshals are prohibited by regulations from dressing casually, a practice some allege makes them stand out. Most seriously, the speed of recruitment, which at its peak reached 800 officers a month, has led to a reduction in training from 12 weeks down to six and a half weeks.

Supporters of the program assert that the host of recent complaints and concerns are merely a result of growing pains in a scheme that has seen its staff and budget grow by a factor of 100 in the space of 16 months. Dissenting voices, including the marshals who have resigned, assert that the scheme's defects could very well endanger public safety.

The reasons for air marshal resignations are numerous. While marshals are supposed to fly in pairs, they are sometimes required to fly solo, significantly increasing the risk of being overpowered and disarmed. New marshals must take whatever seats the airline provides, even if it turns out to be tactically unsound, despite the fact that training instructs them to sit up front to guard the cockpit. Even worse, gate agents insisting on "on-time departures" have refused to let marshals board the planes first to perform their routine inspections.

The quality of recruits themselves has been brought into question. In the zeal to bolster ranks, some new recruits were actually hired and put on planes without first completing rigorous background checks. Some turned up for work smelling of alcohol, accidentally shot off their weapons in hotel rooms, or left their guns in airplane lavatories. Stringent marksmanship requirements have since been eliminated as a means of qualification, along with the one day of training a week originally promised new recruits.

Steps to address these significant concerns have been initiated by members of Congress, the General Accounting Office, and the Department of Transportation Inspector General's office. (Source: Center for Defense Information, February 25, 2003.)

can support terrorist operations. Indeed, attacking tourists can be a popular tactic in nations in which local or foreign elites control the hospitality industry and local residents realize little economic benefit from low-paying service-sector jobs.

ADDRESSING THE ISSUE OF TERRORISM:

A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

The armed attack at the El Al ticket counter in LAX airport in Los Angeles in July 2002 demonstrates the influence of national experience with terrorism on

the management of specific incidences. While American law enforcement authorities were trying to determine the cause for the violent attack, Israeli authorities immediately labeled the attack "terrorism." For Israelis, virtually all such armed attacks are judged terrorism. For Americans, when similar attacks occur, the first thoughts are that they were carried out by disgruntled workers, angry spouses, thieves, or others with nonpolitical motivations. Terrorism is less common than workplace violence in the United States. The important issue is that American and Israeli

authorities are predisposed to respond in certain ways. Such predispositions mean that consensus on the nature of the current threat and how to deal with it is weak. Disagreements are increasing.

Nonetheless, there is increased international cooperation to address the risk of terrorism, particularly terrorism perpetrated by Al Qaeda and similar organizations. The most successful international efforts to reduce the risk of terrorist violence have been in the areas of civil aviation and diplomatic facilities and personnel.⁷ There is much less consensus on the definition of terrorism and the need for international cooperation to address the risk. Historically, for example, the United Nations membership has tended to lump colonialism and imperialism into the terrorism category and to protect violent revolutionary action from such a categorization. Nonetheless, following the September 11 attacks, there has been considerable bilateral and multilateral cooperation to address the problem. As might be expected, aviation security is one area in which there is consensus. Transport ministers from 20 nations condemned hijackings of airliners and pledged to cooperate in January 2002.¹⁸ Britain and the United States are cooperating in a number of areas, including tracking down ships that might be carrying materials for Osama bin Laden.¹⁹ There is also cooperation in terms of sharing intelligence related to Al Qaeda and its operatives. Where the consensus ends and cooperation is strained is the issue of how to deal with Saddam Hussein and Iraq. The use of military force by the United States is attracting strong criticism among even its staunchest allies.

Within many of the nations implementing counterterrorism programs, including the United States, there is growing debate over the financial, social, and political cost. A quarter of a century ago, Paul Wilkinson²⁰ and J. Bowyer Bell²¹ addressed the problems democratic societies faced in dealing with such violence. The tradeoff between security and civil liberties was a difficult choice then, and it is a difficult choice now. The American Civil Liberties Union is closely monitoring proposals that might threaten the civil liberties of US citizens, foreign residents, and transients such as international students and tourists. Ethnic and racial profiling are major concerns, for example.²² Human rights organizations are also

suggesting that regimes are using the threat of Al Qaeda-sponsored terrorism to implement programs to deal with their own domestic and international threats. Amnesty International has expressed strong concerns about the increasing adoption of antiterrorism measures such as detention without trial or charge, discriminatory legislation (i.e., profiling), criminalization of peaceful activities, unfair trials (i.e., without presumption of innocence, right to silence, legal representation), restrictions on right to assembly and association, and increased powers for law enforcement and security forces for search and seizure that might lead to abuse. The increased use of torture is also a major concern with the legislation passed or being considered by nations since September 11.²³

The US government's adoption of a military approach to terrorism, abandoning in some measure the legal approach that dominated federal policy for decades, is a growing concern. The suspected terrorists being held at the Guantanamo Bay naval base and the roughly 1,000 foreign nationals being held in federal custody do not have full rights to challenge their detention in a civilian court. Proposals to amend or suspend the Posse Comitatus Act so that US military personnel can be much more involved in enforcing civil law are seen as a more general threat to civil liberties.

The biggest impact of the September 11 attacks and the attacks that have occurred elsewhere in the world may well be the damage done to democracy and civil liberties. Nations may be increasing the damage done by the terrorists as they rush to implement counter- and antiterrorism programs. If history is a guide, the end results will be actions to reduce the threats to civil aviation and diplomatic facilities (those areas in which there is consensus), the development of mechanisms to share intelligence but only among the most trusted governments and principally among law enforcement agencies, and independent action by those nations most threatened. In effect, the United States may find itself defending its own interpretation of the threat and its policy choices, with a shrinking number of allies and supporters.

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FACTS

in BRIEF

Major emergency declarations: Winter 2003

Date	State	Incident
Major disaster declarations		
2/04	Oklahoma	Severe ice storm
1/08	South Carolina	Severe ice storm
1/06	Arkansas	Severe ice storm
1/06	Micronesia	Typhoon Pongsona
Emergency declarations		
3/11	New Hampshire	Snow storm
3/11	Connecticut	Snow storm
3/11	Massachusetts	Snow storm
3/11	Maine	Snow storm
2/26	New York	Snow storm
2/01	Louisiana	Loss of Space Shuttle Columbia
2/01	Texas	Loss of Space Shuttle Columbia
Fire suppression authorizations		
1/03	California	Pacific fire

Source: FEMA/US Department of Homeland Security, March 13, 2003.