

August 15, 2006

International Terrorism Risk

New developments dictate need for continued and increased vigilance

During August 2006 the newly organized terrorism risk assessment index, maintained by MI5 and the Home Office in the United Kingdom, alerted British citizens that the risk of terrorism was "severe" and the chances of a terrorism attack were "highly likely." Meanwhile in the United States the Simon Wiesenthal Center, which monitors terrorism issues, revealed the existence of Hezbollah cells in Latin America calling for jihad in an area unscathed by Islamist terror since the 1994 bombing of a Jewish community center in Buenos Aires that killed 85 people and caused about 300 injuries. Hezbollah is also suspected of blowing up the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires in 1992, leaving 29 people dead. These horrendous crimes have gone unsolved leaving the Hezbollah infrastructure in Argentina undisturbed. Sadly, a distraught individual recently attacked a Jewish community center in Seattle leaving one dead and several wounded, reportedly as a reaction to the current war in the Middle East. In Germany a massive manhunt is underway to identify and track down an individual who planted a substantial bomb in a suitcase and left it on a train, though the bomb failed to explode. This event alone recalls the horror and carnage that eventuated in Madrid (2004), London (2005), and most recently Mumbai, India.

The aforementioned events are tragic but portentous reminders of the state of the world in this post Cold War period. The daily recount of atrocities throughout the world from the Middle East, Africa, the Asian sub-continent and the Asia Pacific region emphasize the necessity for awareness and intelligence regarding the international scene that is froth with unexpected dangers. This issue of the Lipman Report will examine some of the less publicized dangers challenging American businessmen and tourists when traveling and doing business abroad.

Attacks in India

Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) is an Islamist terrorist group operating in India. This militant group is believed to be responsible for the July 11th attacks against the Mumbai commuter rail system that killed almost two hundred people. The scale and coordination of the

July 11 attacks suggest that at least one sleeper cell made up of fewer than a dozen local people and probably directed and financed by militants in Pakistan carried out the bombings. Indian authorities are holding two brothers suspected of planning the attacks after traveling to Pakistan via Iran to receive training for the operation. One brother is believed to be a leading member of the Lashkar-e-Taiba militant group's western India operations. However, the other brother could have been considered a more dangerous threat because he worked for a multinational corporation in Bangalore. Had the brothers belonged to a different extremist group, the multinational company could have been the target. However subsequent investigation has revealed the Lashkar-e-Taiba group hatched a plan to destabilize India by bombing scientific and economic installations in Bangalore. A significant amount of foreign investment has been flowing into Bangalore, a city located in south central India, to develop scientific and technical centers. A similar event occurred in Saudi Arabia during 2004 when a Swiss firm conducting business there was attacked by gunmen. This attack was carried out with the cooperation of an employee with ties to Saudi jihadists. This development illustrates the danger confronting multinational corporations in many countries where terrorism cells are extant. In many parts of the world, due diligence and professional vetting of individuals is very difficult to conduct. In many countries, the infrastructure for conducting thorough background checks on prospective employees is substandard or nonexistent, necessitating a great deal of effort by a human resources staff to establish an individual's bona fides. Here cutting corners or outsourcing to poorly vetted vendors can lead to catastrophic consequences.

"States within states"

During the 1980s, a great deal of concern was raised regarding "Rogue States," defined as states that supported terrorism. Iran, Syria, Libya, and North Korea fell into this category, among others. Now the concern has moved to terrorist groups active in states with weak governments. The Taliban in Afghanistan,

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Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Palestine and Lashkar-e-Taiba in Pakistan are primary examples. Intelligence experts conclude this is one of the most difficult issues facing the United States and several other countries. From the Middle East to Asia to the Horn of Africa, the United States and its allies are increasingly forced to deal with such “states within states” that defy central authority, carry out terrorist activities in neighboring countries and threaten to draw outside nations into major regional conflicts. These periods of open conflict and continuing violence weaken the moderates and strengthen the radicals. The terrorist groups active in these regions do not recognize the rule of law, nationally or internationally, and disregard the laws of the United Nations. They attempt and too often succeed in overriding national laws and establishing *sharia*, or Islamic law. A vivid and recent example of a non-state actor is the aforementioned Lashkar-e-Taiba group reportedly responsible for the Mumbai bombings. This terrorist group is linked to al Qaeda and based in Pakistan. This group acts independently but has caused a great deal of consternation between India and Pakistan. The unintended consequences are unlimited when nuclear weapons are factored into the scenario. Unfortunately weak states are becoming breeding grounds for transnational terrorists. Ayman al-Zawahiri, al Qaeda’s number two leader, announced in early August that an Egyptian militant group joined the terror network. The Egyptian group, Gamaa Islamiya, is apparently a revised version of a militant group that waged a campaign of violence in Egypt during the 1990s.

Areas of South America, particularly the tri-border region of Paraguay, Brazil and Argentina, serve as a safe haven for a growing number of individuals and groups connected to Hezbollah and al Qaeda. Members of the American military have charged that the region harbors radical Islamic terrorists, and that the area is a growing threat to U.S. security interests due to the local and regional governments that do little to curtail illegal activity. According to

U.S. and Israeli intelligence, this tri-border region served as the launch pad for the 1992 car-bombing attacks on the Israeli embassy in Argentina, attributed to Hezbollah, as well as the attacks on the Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires in 1994. Over the last decade, this area increasingly has grown into a prime hiding place for terrorists.

Regions of Africa exhibit similar “safe haven” characteristics, particularly in countries with the weakest governments. Over recent years, West Africa has become known as a sanctuary for al Qaeda and other terrorist groups. Weak and corrupt governments, a thriving market for weapons trade, and impoverished, largely Muslim populations make the region ideal for al Qaeda and Hezbollah activity, such as the attacks on U.S. embassies in Africa in 1998. Evidence strongly suggests that al Qaeda-affiliated groups are active in Mauritania, Mali, Chad and Niger. Both the FBI and the U.N.-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone have corroborated information that al Qaeda may have ties to former Liberian president Charles Taylor. Hezbollah has been using diamonds from West Africa to finance its activities since its inception, embedding its finances in the diamond trade. The use of these weak states as havens illustrates terrorist groups’ sophistication in exploiting areas where corruption is rampant and the rule of law is nonexistent.

Islamist Terrorism in Asia

Americans usually assess Islamist terrorism by following events in the Middle East while in fact more and more Islamic extremists are surfacing on the Asian Subcontinent and in the Asia Pacific Region. The largest countries in this region with overwhelming Muslim majorities are Indonesia, Malaysia, Bangladesh and Pakistan. While Muslims are not a majority in India, over 140 million reside there. A significant amount of money from the Middle East has been poured into this region to fund numerous madrassahs, traditional Islam religious schools, to control the schools’ curriculums and teach a more radical form of Islamic theology and often hatred for the West. Recently Muslim leaders from 17

nations met in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia to discuss events in the Middle East. They warned that the current fighting could spawn more acts of terrorism and further radicalize the Muslim world, and “from there, it will be just one step away from the ultimate nightmare: a clash of civilizations.” Subsequently, a Southeast Asia-based Islamist terrorist group claims it is preparing to launch suicide terrorist attacks against the United States, the United Kingdom and other western countries because of their support of Israel. The targets could include western businesses located abroad. The ASEAN Muslim Youth Movement, based in Jakarta, claims to have sent 217 suicide bombers overseas to attack these countries.

These terrorists purportedly hail from Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines, and many of them have experience fighting the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. The ASEAN leadership singled out Australia as a possible target and claims more than 3,000 people have registered to join suicide bombing missions. Although Indonesian terrorist groups have a history of overstating their capabilities, the aforementioned statements are ominous precursors for Americans doing business or traveling abroad. Additionally, Ayman al-Zawahiri, al Qaeda’s second in command, recently called the fighting in the Middle East a new inspiration for the global jihad. This jihad calls for the liberation of every land that used to be a territory of Islam from Spain to Iraq, called the *caliphate*. This globalization of terrorism has led to a deepening of cooperation among militant groups worldwide. Networks stretch across Europe, the Middle East, and South and East Asia that are able to provide training, financial support, resources and ideological motivation. The Asia-Pacific region is a key center for these activities.

Major Terrorist Networks

The major terrorist networks that operate in the Asia-Pacific region are located in Southeast and South Asia. Jemaah Islamiyah operates primarily in Indonesia. Their objective is to establish a unified Islamic State extending from southern Thailand

through the Malay Peninsula, including Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines. This group is responsible for the bombings in Bali and Jakarta. The Philippine group Abu Sayyaf was founded in the 1990s by Afghan trained Muslims and its goal is to establish an independent Islamic state in the Philippines. Lashkar-e-Taiba is a Pakistan-based group dedicated to uniting the Muslim states of India, such as Kashmir, into Pakistan. Communist rebels from the New People’s Army pose the largest threat to the Philippines. This group has killed around 40,000 since the beginning of its insurgency in the 1980s. Peace talks between the Communists and Manila have stalled since the 1980s. Meanwhile the Liberation Tigers of Tamil (Tamil Tigers) continue to fight a bitter insurgency with the Sri Lankan Government with suicide bombings and other terrorist acts.

Terrorism also manifests itself in Western Asia. Recently two bombs exploded within minutes of each other in the southern Turkish city of Adana, injuring 13 people. The fighting in Lebanon prompted concerns that Hezbollah was responsible, however the attack was likely the work of Kurdish militants who are escalating their campaign against the Turkish government. Nevertheless, Turkey has also witnessed terrorist acts carried out by Islamist fanatics. There is hardly a place in Asia that is free of religious and ethnic strife and unfortunately significant numbers of these people have turned to terrorism to address their grievances.

Terrorism Counter Tactics

Because of the difficulty of identification and neutralization of its practitioners, modern terrorism requires at least four counter tactics: 1) vigilance of each citizen to report suspicious behavior, 2) serious security measures to protect against all threats in a timely manner, to include those threats not yet identified, 3) comprehensive techniques to identify patterns of activity leading to the individuals involved in the terrorist activities and 4) international cooperation. The basic security measures could be described

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as strict egress identification and searches conducted by security professionals. Although a great deal of sophisticated equipment is utilized in this endeavor, one cannot underestimate the necessity of the superior level of a thoroughly vetted security team. Comprehensive techniques include the professional profiling of suspects at checkpoints based on accurate intelligence, data mining of multiple databases and the monitoring of communication traffic. Since terrorism is a transnational problem, international cooperation is absolutely necessary. Institutes like the Southeast Asia Regional Center for Counter Terrorism (SEARCCT) in Malaysia and the U.S.-Thailand Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in Bangkok continue to expand their activities to provide effective counterterrorism training to law enforcement officers throughout the region. The Australian-Indonesian Jakarta Center for Law Enforcement Cooperation (JCLEC), the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) are key organizations for regional and transnational counterterrorism cooperation. Although international organizations are very helpful, especially in the training of direct nation-to-nation liaison by police, intelligence and military agencies is absolutely necessary. One only has to recall that 9/11 was planned in Hamburg, Germany by a group of Arabs, primarily from Saudi Arabia, who had been trained in Afghanistan to understand the necessity for cooperation. The 9/11 plan was a highly organized effort with remarkable mission discipline but even then the behavior of some of the participants gave clues that could have been coordinated among the American, German and Saudi authorities. An international problem needs an international solution.

The Time for Urgency is Now®

Prior to traveling in this region for tourism or business, necessary precautions should be implemented. Coordination with your embassies and company security department are essential. Risk assessments

and security consulting regarding the region and specific destinations should be considered. Health issues and a medical evacuation plan should be identified. Crime patterns and the level of security at hotels should be researched. In many ways the world is a much smaller but much more dangerous place in view of transnational terrorism. Correspondingly the need for security awareness has never been greater.

The previously mentioned British risk assessment index was unfortunately accurate. On August 10th the British authorities arrested more than twenty individuals involved in a plot to destroy at least ten airplanes traveling from the United Kingdom to the United States. This diabolical threat to detonate improvised explosive devices, made of ingredients that would evade airport detection equipment and would be assembled on board by suicide bombers, was thwarted by excellent police work. To date, initial information reveals that the conspirators are natural born British citizens of Pakistani ethnicity. The authorities suspect as many as fifty individuals are involved and the investigation is ongoing. This terrorist operation is reminiscent of the 1994 Operation Bojinka planned by Ramzi Yousef, who was also involved in the 1993 attack on the World Trade Center. Had this most recent plot succeeded the catastrophic consequences would have been as traumatic as the events of 9/11. The British authorities believe additional cells with at least two dozen members are still operating in the United Kingdom. The terrorism risk assessment index still reads "severe." This conspiracy confirms suspicions that Hezbollah and militant Islamists, whether identifying themselves as Sunni/Wahhabi, Shiite, or members of al Qaeda, are incessantly planning to wreck havoc on the West with greater and more devastating effect.



The Lipman Report Editors