

“Defending our Nation against its enemies is the first and fundamental commitment of the Federal Government. Today, that task has changed dramatically. Enemies in the past needed great armies and great industrial capabilities to endanger America. Now, shadowy networks of individuals can bring great chaos and suffering to our shores for less than it costs to purchase a single tank. Terrorists are organized to penetrate open societies and to turn the power of modern technologies against us.”

President George W. Bush, 2002 *National Security Strategy*

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War on Terror

Interpol to Deploy Terrorist Tracking Structure

Interpol is stepping up its efforts to launch a global terrorist tracking system aimed at improving its capability to trace suspected terrorists and detect forged passports. In the wake of September 11, Interpol has extended its traditional focus on transnational organized crime, drug smuggling, and terrorism to automated databases and international criminal watch lists, largely driven by the fear of a link between organized crime, drug traffickers, and terrorists. With the increase of similar tactics between terrorist and organized crime groups, it is hard to tell them and their sources of funding apart. Given the high likelihood that their revenues are generated by trafficking in people, drugs, weapons, and money laundering, the UN, Interpol, and various police agencies see the nexus as deserving closer attention.

Interpol envisions integrating the law enforcement agencies of all 181 member nations, some of which are still not interconnected, so that they can access its database within a year. However, it may not happen soon for developing countries that have inadequate communications networks, which make it difficult for police to obtain timely information on the identity of

criminals or falsified documents from Interpol. Another persisting problem is the lack of trust in sharing sensitive information between some countries' police forces.

The United States will clearly benefit from the new tracking system because it will gain direct access to Interpol's list of 6,000 wanted terrorists and estimated 4 million stolen or forged passports. Moreover, the United States and Interpol are discussing the possibility of forming Interpol offices in cities (such as Houston, Texas) with large immigrant communities and in close proximity to transnational borders and seaports. The United States will provide \$32 million a year to Interpol and will channel more funds to needier members of the world's police. (*Combined Dispatches*)

Arms and Drug Trafficking

Illegal Gun Trade in Haiti Puts More Weapons on Jamaican Streets

A flourishing trade in the weapons black market in Haiti has drastically increased the number of high-powered weapons in Jamaica, which directly feeds gang violence and the continuing escalation of homicide rates. Political instability and the series of hurricanes that recently battered the destitute island nation have created a condition of chaos, which has allowed a major weapons smuggling ring to be established, according to the Haitian national security minister, Peter Philips, in a televised address on October 21. "Some of these deadly weapons are now in the hands of the criminal underworld in Jamaica," he added.

After the revolt, which ousted Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, "Many police officers loyal to

Aristide fled their post out of fear of retribution following the rebellion, leaving the country ill-equipped to counter illegal drug and gun trafficking,” U.S. officials say.

Philips has alleged that weapons are smuggled from Central America to the Caribbean. Many of the weapons are sent to Haiti, whence they are smuggled to Jamaica and beyond. These weapons often arm violent Jamaican gangs, which are struggling for control of drug and gun trafficking and extortion rings.

In an effort to combat the criminal and trafficking networks, called “Operation Kingfish,” the Jamaican government has formed a police unit with funding and training from U.S. and British law enforcement groups, to crack down on some 85 criminal gang networks known to be active throughout the island of Jamaica. (*Combined Dispatches*)

Guatemala’s Rising Role as a Drug Route

Guatemala is becoming a key transit point for narcotics trafficking from Colombia to Mexico and the United States. Improved law enforcement in the Caribbean and the Pacific, widely used routes for Colombian smugglers, has left Central America as the popular location for trafficking. This is due to its extensive border with Mexico and the Guatemalan authorities’ lack of resources to fight narcotrafficking. Drug planes, for instance, fly freely through Guatemalan airspace and the country’s air force is unable to intercept them due to lack of adequate aircraft. Guatemala is also short of speedboats, as well as navigation and communications equipment used to fight trafficking. The agility of the traffickers and their use of sophisticated transportation and communication devices greatly surpass those of the Guatemalan military. The problem is compounded by rampant corruption within its law enforcement and judiciary system, which are propped up by cocaine money. This is best illustrated by the dissolution of Guatemala’s elite U.S.-sponsored antidrug unit two years ago after the Guatemalan police stole more than a ton of seized cocaine. Moreover, poverty and a lack of legal employment make it conducive to maintain the drug corridor and, in effect, to compete for the money that trafficking offers. U.S. counternarcotics and immigration officials also recognize the problem, as drugs and illegal migration regularly cross the border.

The United States provides aid on a limited scale, for example, providing intelligence to the Guatemalan military and donating fuel and police equipment. However, this is deemed insufficient by the Guatemalan authorities considering the vastness of the problem. Furthermore, the 14-year-old congressional ban on military aid to Guatemala due to human rights abuses committed during the counterinsurgency war, remains intact. Guatemala, and Central America in general, take a back seat to Washington’s priorities, which are dominated by drug-producing countries like Colombia. (*Combined Dispatches*)

Increased Drug Production is a Threat to Afghan Democracy

National and international leaders are concerned that Afghanistan’s nascent democracy, evidenced by its first democratic elections this October, would be derailed by the endemic problem of the drug trade, which remains an unchallenged threat on the country’s path to democracy and stability. The country’s opium crop has reached a record high this year—estimated at 3,500 tons—revenues from which continue to feed one-third of its economy. It also feeds corruption in the government and sponsors warlords and rogue groups such as the Taliban, who support opium cultivation and seek protection funds from traffickers. Poppy cultivation has spread from 28 to all 32 provinces this year, employing about 2 million Afghans. There are also signs of greater sophistication in the processing of drugs, which is increasingly done within Afghanistan rather than in neighboring countries. Afghan authorities believe that international investment in Afghanistan will be affected in the next 6 to 12 months if drug production grows uninhibitedly.

The threat largely stems from destitute villages where subsistence farmers have been encouraged by rogue elements to grow poppies. For each kilogram of raw harvested opium, farmers are paid \$225 to \$250. Eradication attempts have not been very successful. For example, in 2002, British efforts to destroy poppy fields and to compensate farmers failed because such measures encouraged other farmers seeking government reward to grow more poppies. Even with U.S. and British support, the new central government has not succeeded in its eradication efforts this year. A U.S.-trained special task force was recently created to address the problem of corruption and to crack down on drug dealers. It consists of an Afghan group of 10 prosecutors, 10 police

investigators, and 5 judges to prosecute major drug smugglers. This initiative will cost the United States \$300 to \$400 million in the next few years. The unit is planned to come into effect in March 2005. (*Combined Dispatches*)

Organized Crime

Russian Mafia Gaining Ground in Australia

Australian criminologists are concerned about the increased presence of Russian organized crime in Australia, evidenced by new networks appearing along the country's eastern seaboard. Police dossiers identify about 60 Russian mafia figures presently in eastern Australia. According to a Russian defense expert, mafia members are mainly concentrated in Sydney and Melbourne. Russian mobsters are taking advantage of the thriving real estate industry in Australia to carry out their money laundering activities. Some of them operate legitimate businesses, which usually mask their criminal endeavors. Other crimes that the Russian mafia is involved in within Australia include gang activity, fraud, extortion, and immigration scams. However, an Australian criminology analyst argues that the threat to Australia stems mainly from cyber crime.

Russian organized crime in Australia has not yet reached the violent intensity it did in the United States. But Russian mobsters, endowed with huge amounts of money as well as their ability to acquire wealth in a short period of time, their numerous global ties, and their extensive travel capability, appear to be a looming threat to the country. One of the problems for Australian authorities is putting a label on a specific criminal group or an individual as part of the "Russian mafia," since they tend to operate from several countries.

Recently, Russian authorities have been upset that Australia has not been more forthcoming in assisting Russia with tackling organized crime problems, especially after the latter refused to detain and possibly extradite several Russian criminals who may have applied for permanent residency in Australia. The Russian embassy in Australia says nothing could be done due to the lack of an extradition treaty with Russia, which the Russian ambassador claims he has

tried to conclude many times before. He has also sought to press Russia to improve bilateral intelligence sharing to track down criminals and mafia members. However, according to the Australian Attorney-General's Department, the Russian government has made neither an extradition request nor initiated any bilateral extradition agreement. (*Combined Dispatches*)

Albania's New Institutional Reforms to Fight Organized Crime and Terrorism

Albanian authorities announced their efforts to revamp their weak and corrupt law enforcement agencies. Such measures are needed to deal more effectively with Albanian organized crime, which, along with international crime networks, makes the country a favored site for trafficking in people, drugs, and weapons. The situation has worsened due to the collusion between police and criminals. Albanian gangsters dominate the sex trade in the UK, and many enter the country under the pretense of being refugees from the Kosovo war of the late 1990s. Albania is also one of the major producers of marijuana and a key smuggling point for heroin that usually ends up in Western Europe. The European Union and NATO continue to stipulate that the country's prospects of joining either one of these institutions would depend on its crackdown on these problems.

As part of the latest reform effort, Albanian State Police director general Bajram Ibraj introduced a newly reorganized police structure on October 1, 2004. It will be made up of a smaller number of units, which will conform to European legal standards and address security issues of high priority. The reform also envisions the formation of new structures that would tackle organized crime. Albanian justice minister Fatmir Xhafaj announced on October 16 that, among other important measures, the penal code against organized crime and all forms of trafficking has been revised and finalized, and a new law on fighting terrorist financing meets international standards. Additionally, the country's parliament passed a law that enables authorities to seize assets of convicted mobsters if they fail to provide details of their origin. The success of these measures will largely depend on a judiciary system that has remained ineffective up to this point. (*Combined Dispatches*)

A New Russian-Armenian Organized Crime Problem in the United States

Violence caused by Russian-Armenian gangs is increasingly alarming the San Fernando Valley in California. An estimated 14 murders, 100 attempted killings, and seven kidnappings have been blamed on Russian-Armenian gangsters active across the San Fernando Valley region since 2000. These groups are not strict followers of rules like past mobs and they tend to be more violent. These gangs are engaged in violent activities that are not only limited to rivalry-related score settling, but they are also involved in a range of more serious crimes such as credit card fraud, immigration and auto insurance scams, cigarette tax evasion, identity theft, welfare and health care fraud, extortion, kidnapping, assaults, shootings, and distribution of heroin and other controlled substances. A recently uncovered Armenian criminal group in Glendale is also implicated in drug trafficking.

According to police estimates, there are about 500 Armenian criminals tied to organized crime in Glendale, where about one-third of the 204,000 residents are Armenian. Russian-Armenian groups are said to be part of large international crime networks, evidently supported by infinite resources and escape routes to countries with no extradition treaties, which facilitates this rise in criminal activity. Police have been unable to crack down on the criminal rings because of limited resources, lack of cultural knowledge, and fear among the victims to report the crimes. Moreover, the presence of organized crime in the area is not widely acknowledged, which makes it difficult for San Fernando law enforcement to lobby for more manpower. (*Combined Dispatches*)

Maritime Security

The United States and India Complete Naval Antiterrorism Exercise

More than 1,000 U.S. and Indian navy personnel took part in a five-day exercise entitled "Malabar 2004" off the western coast of India. The exercise included interdicting contraband vessels, conducting searches and arrests at sea, carrying out air defense exercises, naval gunfire, complex antisubmarine warfare, destroying crafts laden with explosives, using

advanced digital communication, and refueling at sea by day and by night. The goal of the exercise, which is the sixth in a series of similar joint U.S.-Indian training that began in the early 1990s, is to enable the Indian military to better address terrorism-related problems, to protect the country from external threats, as well as to learn from the experience of the Indian navy.

The United States recognizes the significance of India's territorial and maritime security as the country is strategically situated along key trade routes that pass through the Indian Ocean. One of the joint activities that has been extensively conducted, the so-called Visual Boarding Search and Seize (VBSS), which focuses on intercepting vessels at sea, is geared toward averting a possible disturbance of economic sea routes. The United States feels that the Indian navy could learn from the U.S. experience in carrying out VBSS, gained from enforcing UN sanctions against Iraq. There is greater confidence upon completion of the exercises that both navies are now better equipped to act in a complex and multithreat environment with the presence of combatants. (*Combined Dispatches*)

United States, Japan, and Australia Hold Asia's First Naval Drill Against WMD; Signal to North Korea

In a U.S.-led drill on October 25, Asia held its first naval exercise aimed at blocking and intercepting a shipment of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Japan formed the bulk of the forces, sending 580 military and coast guard forces, as well as five coast guard ships and a destroyer, while the United States, France, and Australia sent 100 military personnel and a ship each. Eighteen countries sent observers including the UK, Canada, and Russia. China and South Korea were invited to participate but declined in the face of intense North Korean opposition.

Known as the Proliferation Security Initiative, the part training and part theater exercise, code-named "Team Samurai," revolved around a 'pirate' ship carrying sarin poison gas. This drill was part of the larger initiative to improve global abilities to track and intercept WMD being smuggled by land, sea, and air, whether by terrorist groups or states.

The training has been seen as mostly aimed at North Korea and Iran and has been held 10 times before, yet this was the first held in Asia. U.S. secretary of state

Colin Powell, while visiting Tokyo said, “This is not hostile to any nation that is acting in an appropriate manner...The only thing North Korea should be concerned about is whether or not they are going to be caught in the act of participating in this kind of illicit traffic.”

Though official documents released to the public did not expressly mention North Korea as the potential perpetrator, John Bolton, U.S. undersecretary of state for arms control and international security, who was in attendance, went further than Powell, charging that, “There is no doubt that North Korea is the pre-eminent proliferator of ballistic missile technology...The currency it earns from weapons and drug sales globally goes to financing of their nuclear weapons program.”

The “Team Samurai” exercise appears to signify the makings of a more hard-line U.S. foreign policy toward North Korea and the potential for sanctions against Pyongyang. With North Korea threatening that it would “double its nuclear deterrent force if the United States persists in challenging its nuclear weapons program,” it was prudent for the United States and its allies to send a signal that time could be running out for the rogue state before sanctions or more drastic measures are taken.

North Korea’s angry reaction was pointed at Japan for hosting the drill, and they viewed the drill as a precursor to economic sanctions, which the regime is desperately trying to fight off. The Pyongyang official news agency said Monday, October 25, “It is quite clear that the exercise is designed to lay a siege to the D.P.R.K. and stifle it...This is a serious infringement upon the sovereignty of the D.P.R.K. and an intolerable military provocation to it.” (*Combined Dispatches*)

Terrorism

Morocco Ripe for Islamic Militancy and Serious Threat to Europe

There have been many signs that Moroccans—both at home and abroad—are playing a larger role in global Islamic militant groups. Authorities in European countries such as Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and France have all reportedly broken up terror cells

primarily composed of Moroccan immigrants. “The terrorist threat in Morocco and the Moroccan community in Europe is real,” said Claude Moniquet, a terrorism researcher and president of the European Strategic Intelligence and Security Center in Brussels.

Two Moroccans are facing trial in Germany on charges of aiding the September 11 attacks in the United States, and two additional warrants have been issued against Moroccan immigrants. Saudi Arabia’s list of most-wanted terrorist suspects includes the names of two Moroccans, the only names of individuals from outside the Arabian Peninsula.

In July, Judge Baltazar Garzon, the Spanish magistrate who has presided over many of Spain’s terrorism cases, issued serious warnings that intelligence collected indicates that 100 or more Al Qaeda cells have established themselves in Morocco. He called these Moroccan groups “the gravest problem Europe faces today with this kind of terrorism.” Judge Garzon issued his comments as part of his investigation into the March 11 commuter train bombings in Madrid, in which 190 people were killed and over 1,800 injured. Almost all of the suspects in the case are Moroccans.

After the suicide bombings in Morocco in May 2003, King Mohammed VI, unsure of how to react, visited Casablanca’s huge mass of slum neighborhoods, home of all the 12 suicide bombers who attacked sites across Casablanca, and promised new hopes such as housing for the estimated 150,000 impoverished and homeless people. Roughly a year and a half later, the only difference has been the formation of a new police station amidst the slums as an extension of what appears to be an effort against Islamic militancy, although the extent of this effort remains to be seen. More than 2,100 people have been arrested in the crackdown. Moroccan officials stress that arrests and the absence of more terrorist attacks is clear evidence that the terrorist threat has been eradicated, which stands in contrast to European fears. Moustafa Sahel, the Moroccan interior minister, admitted that Morocco’s security apparatus was too slow to detect and react to the fast-paced growth of these networks. There was “a long maturation process that we witnessed without reacting,” he told Spain’s *El País* newspaper last month. (*Combined Dispatches*)

Spanish Prison System Acts as Pool for Recruits for Radical/Militant Islam

The Spanish prison system has become increasingly filled with Muslim immigrants from North African countries and, according to Spanish authorities, embodies key characteristics that Islamic militant recruiters are seeking.

On October 28, Spanish authorities announced they had taken into custody 13 Moroccans suspected of being members of a terrorist cell made up almost entirely of North African Muslims who were recruited in Spanish prisons. This group, known as Martyrs for Morocco, included 18 other men and began as an assembly of unacquainted men who had been jailed for minor crimes such as robbery, weapons possession, and document fraud.

“In the prisons, one finds people who are young, alienated, with a taste for adventure and for risk-taking, and who feel their lives have been a waste,” Juan Aviles, director of the Institute for Investigation of National Security, based in Madrid, said in a telephone interview. By his estimates, 1 out of every 10 inmates are of Moroccan or Algerian origin out of the entire 60,000 Spanish inmate population.

This issue presents not only Spain, but also much of Europe, with a very real and serious security threat. Spain plans to take several actions such as separating certain prisoners who they already consider Islamic radicals. This, however, could prove incendiary since the plan has sparked opposition from Muslim groups. Mansur Escudero, the secretary general of the Islamic Commission of Spain, has hinted that the new limit may worsen the problem, “It could foster radicalism because they will be in more prisons.” Recruiters may have wider access to a huge population spread throughout Spain’s prisons. Mr. Aviles sought to dismiss criticism of the government’s plan, “There is a risk, but our experience in Spain is that dispersal works,” referring to Spain’s long history of dealing with prisoners from ETA, the Basque separatist group. The separation and dispersal plan seems to have its limits, however, and is only a partial solution since the jails are already inundated with recruiters. (*Combined Dispatches*)

United States Believes Al Qaeda Active in Bosnia

Yossef Bodansky, director of the Task Force on

Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare of the U.S. Congress, reported on October 25 that Osama bin Laden is directly issuing orders to multiple terrorist cells in Bosnia. He accused the bombers of the UN headquarters in Baghdad of training near the Bosnian town of Zenica.

The terrorist cells have been using Bosnia as both a training ground and a bridge to Western Europe since the end of the war in the former Yugoslavia. During the war, there was an influx of foreign Islamic fighters who were invited to fight alongside Bosnian Muslim (Bosniak) forces between 1992 and 1995. These fighters are credited with importing fanatical Islamic militant ideology and terrorist and guerrilla warfare expertise. Though a condition of the 1995 peace deal ordered foreign fighters to leave Bosnia, many remained. Bodansky charged, “Representatives of the international community in Bosnia and (local) authorities are aware of this but they do not work enough to fight international terrorism.”

In a serious divergence of views, however, NATO elements have rejected Bodansky’s claim as unsubstantiated. “As far as SFOR (NATO-led Stabilization Force) is concerned there remains no firm evidence of any terrorist organization either operating or training in this country,” said SFOR spokesman Mark Hope. (*Combined Dispatches*)

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