

DIRECT AND CLEAR THREAT

Fred Burton



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■ *In 2010 we saw the emergence of new types of terrorism, such as informational terrorism (Wikileaks), and cyber-terrorism (hackers). Does this mean that terrorism on the whole is changing and becoming more human?*

I think that **the most interesting development has been the rise of grass-roots terrorism**, for example, the attempt to bomb the flight in Detroit last year, as well as some of the other plots that unfolded on US soil, for exam-

ple, the attempts to bomb the Seattle Christmas-tree, or the attempt to blow up the World Bank in Dallas, Texas. The FBI has done a very good job here inside the United States foiling the many instances of grass-roots types of terrorism versus the more traditional Al-Qaida types of large groups of terrorists trying to pull something off.

■ *It is clear that the relationship between the media and terrorism is very important today. Is the media helping to transform terrorism? Is it helping to create a demand for new and original forms of terrorism that might attract the public's eye?*

Media attention is the ultimate goal in many ways with these terrorist organizations, as they want to be able to promote their efforts globally but also on very focused markets such as Afghanistan, Iraq, the Horn of Africa, and so forth. But in essence, **you can't have a free media and not bring to attention what has occurred, including terrorist acts**. And again too, if you think about it from my end as a former counter-terrorism agent, having statements made by various terrorist organizations, having long interviews with terrorist suspects at times is of tremendous value as you assess the overall threat of the group.

■ *Unfortunately terrorism today has become an integral part of our lives. Is this likely to change any-time soon?*

The most interesting development is the rise of grass-roots terrorism

I don't see this threat going away. You can look at the volume of attacks that occurred all over

the globe. It's seems as if no country has been untouched recently. When you look at the EU with open borders and the ability to move back and forth, that poses tremendous intelligence challenges from operational issues, such as: how do you survey all these individuals as they move across borders? Back on my watch there used to be a day when the FSB, the KGB and the American CIA and FBI would never cooperate on terrorism issues. Today there is a very robust cooperation effort along those lines, so if you think of the strides we've taken globally in exchanging data, in information on threats and suspects, I think it's been pretty remarkable to be blunt.

■ *What do you think about Wikileaks and the rise of informational terrorism? From a technical point of view, leaking a large amount of documents to a website has been possible for many years, so why has it only happened now?*

It's a disastrous sort of events for the United States in many ways. Because, although every country knows that their diplomats are reporting information back and forth to their respective capitals, to see that kind of data in black and white is difficult to handle. If you look at why it happened, I think that if you put it in the context of the global war on terror with the huge infrastructure that is in place to monitor the global threat and the desire to

share intelligence – that's the direct result of one of the failure points in the system. Meaning

that you have a disgruntled and relatively junior army analyst with access to an extraordinary amount of data and he is able to do a significant amount of harm. Clearly there was a lack of management and one can also wonder why he had access to such a large amount of data in the first place. So there are many lessons to be learned. And unfortunately, **as a result of something like this we'll see the systems go back to the old days of fairly compartmental data and less information flow between agencies.**

■ *Diplomats all over the world refuse to use the documents that were revealed and there hasn't been any significant change in world affairs. So what was it all about? Was there any revolution that the media is so happy to talk about?*

It's my understanding that **quietly behind the scenes in the diplomatic channels this is being viewed as a relatively significant event.** If you think of it in the context of American diplomats that are stationed around the world, they now have to go back to those meetings knowing that all this very embarrassing information has been published. It becomes very very difficult to do your job. Then if you think about it in context of the human aspect, if you're that foreign service officer in Moscow today or in Oman or in Saudi Arabia or wherever, you're going to think twice about what you put in writing for fear that it potentially could be leaked.

■ *What political problems will the world inherit from the previous decade as we enter into 2011?*

It's going to be interesting to see what happens and unfolds in Afghanistan as we continue to reduce our footprint in the country. I think we have tremendous intelligence gaps on the threat in Sub-Saharan Africa, specifically with Jihadi threat in Sub-Saharan Africa. I think Europe has their hands full with more terror plots or more possible Jihadis than they can physically survey. I would also think that we're going to see a continued effort on the part of grass-roots terrorists to target aviation inside the United States or inbound international flights to the United States. Al-Qaida appears to be fixated on aviation like they have for many many years, so I don't see that threat going away anytime soon. ■

Fred Burton was speaking with Yulia Netesova

MINORITY BLACKMAIL



SERGEI MARKOV

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Terrorism is becoming more subtle and diverse, at the same time as the systems critical for the functioning of human society are becoming more complex and vulnerable. The abundance of new forms of terrorism today is due to the fact that ethnic minorities are growing and becoming more and more radical. Terrorism can be perceived as one form of blackmail on the part of a weak minority against a strong population majority.

This is why the challenge of protecting communications and critical systems to society's functioning against damage by small radical groups, which are trying to push some decision or action in their favour, is likely to become more and more pressing. The State does not foresee any solution to this challenge except for that which is obvious and trite: that is, making terrorists stand trial. I think that we should find other means of achieving this. We should not merely be defending communications systems from terrorists, arresting them and putting them to trial – we also need to adopt a more active stance by penetrating these very subcultures and making sure that radicals do not gain the upper hand within them.

The State possesses a great variety of legal means in terms of the formation of subcultures. For example, TV shows are capable of creating specific subcultures, behavioural stereotypes,

modes of thinking, etc. In addition, there is also the State's administrative resource capacity. Some of the representatives of these cultures can be given access to TV channels and they can be provided with deputy mandates, etc. The state possesses a colossal system comprised of specialists, and it can use its humanitarian experts to analyse the situation with respect to subcultures, for instance, in the following way: 'The subculture of heavy-metal fans seems to be moving in the wrong direction. It should be corrected in this or that way...' **Intellectual superiority is the greatest resource held by the State, which is unfortunately not being used to its full capacity.**

The mass media's stance with respect to terrorism is somewhat ambivalent or even 'trivalent'. On the one hand, the press is interested in reporting on calamities. However, on the other hand, no one wants to be blown to pieces. As citizens, they are all opposed to terrorism. Furthermore, the terrorist community is rather closed. It is more advantageous for the media to see radical Islamists come out of their hidings or, in other words, that there is a certain diversity within the community of radical Islamists, to see some of them abandon their bomb-making practices to participate in TV talk shows, where they would be actively arguing amongst themselves on the screen instead. ■