

Canada Needs a Counter-Terror Strategy Now

by Joe Varner

In the aftermath of this past summer's July 7th Al Qaeda terrorist attacks in London, Canada must move rapidly to adopt an integrated counter-terrorism strategy before it is too late.



Canada has a National Security Policy, we have Anti-Terrorism legislation, and we have a government-wide counter-terrorism plan. What we do not have is a clear, all-encompassing and well-understood strategy to fight terrorism. Without such a grand strategy, Canada will remain dangerously slow to react to the threat and acts of global terrorism, encouraging terrorists to attack.

Like most G8 countries, Canada responded with sympathy for the victims of the September 11, 2001 attacks on Washington and New York. It then joined fellow NATO members under US coalition indirect action in Afghanistan focused upon the terrorists themselves in the aftermath of the attack.

The Canadian government moved forward with a number of counter-terrorism priorities including: the dispatch of special operations and conventional forces to Afghanistan; improved technical systems at entry points and border crossings; stricter legislation and travel regulations; and, importantly, some monies to accomplish these tasks.

Canada's Anti-Terrorism Act, Bill C-36, was the centre-piece of the government's legislative framework to counter-terror. Bill C-36 created measures to deter, disable, identify, and prosecute those engaged in or supporting terrorist activities. Canada's National Security Policy, entitled Securing an Open Society, defines three key Canadian national security interests: protecting Canada and the safety and security of Canadians at home and abroad; ensuring that Canada is not a base for threats to our allies; and contributing to international security.

Within these broad objectives for Canada's national security, government departments and agencies have attempted to produce a cohesive approach to counter the increasing

threat of terrorism. Indeed, the RCMP, Military, CSIS, and the Department of Foreign Affairs each have their own anti-terror strategies.

But our government has yet to set out the grand national strategic vision needed for a modern democracy confronting this scourge of the 21st Century. Canada's counter-terrorism efforts will never achieve their intended results without a comprehensive strategy to focus its national response.

Clausewitz wrote in *On War* that: "Strategy is the use of the engagement for the purposes of the war." Wars, campaigns, battles, and emergencies are only won when a strategy is effectively prosecuted in the face of an enemy.

Luckily, there is much to learn from Britain's approach after years of counter-terror operations against the IRA, Europe's other Cold War-era terror groups, and now Al Qaeda. The United Kingdom developed an integrated national strategy for counter-terrorism based upon decades of experience. It is called the "four Ps": Prevention, Pursuit, Protection, and Preparation.

- Prevention is a long-term campaign aimed at preventing the radicalization, at home and abroad, of future generations of terrorists regardless of motivation.
- Pursuit is a shorter termed campaign using law enforcement agencies, the courts and intelligence services to pursue and prosecute terrorists and their supporters at home and abroad and to try and disrupt and break apart all terrorist organizations.
- Protection and Preparation is the campaign driven by the need to mitigate the effects of the threat and attack, through strengthening and protecting critical infrastructure, displaying through exercises the readiness to respond, to reassure citizens, and to deter potential terrorists.

All four integrated campaigns are dependent upon: the exploitation of sound and timely intelligence gathered in advance of attack; the rapid communication of information to the public and first responders; international cooperation; and lastly, national will. Such a strategy will not completely end the terrorist threat, but it will set the basis for effective counter-terrorism measures and improve the state's ability to recover in the aftermath of any attack. It allows citizens to go about their daily lives with a comfort level that put Britons back on the mass transit system within days of the deadly July 2005 attacks.

Canada recognized the virtue of the Preventative approach both at home and abroad through the Department of Public Safety's cross-cultural round table on security and by directing the Departments of Foreign Affairs and International Trade to address the issues of democratization, development and human rights around the globe. The hope is that these measures will change the climate where radical views flourish and lead to terrorist acts. Other government departments have also been encouraged to engage in 'out-reach' activities with communities that have been disenfranchised.

In the area of Pursuit, Canada has been less assertive. In this area, the Canadian government has great strides to make before it can hope to execute an effective campaign. Though our laws have been strengthened in the face of the terror threat, the RCMP, intelligence services and military are viewed by experts and the average Canadian citizen as being under-strength, under-equipped, and under-funded. Canada has very limited ability at present to gather intelligence abroad in a forceful manner.

Canada is reportedly 1000 RCMP officers short. The military by any measure requires at least another 5000 regular troops. Canada Border Services Officers are unarmed (also mentioned in Scott Newark's article elsewhere in this issue) and their crossing inspection points are not all linked to a central computerized information system. Canada's intelligence apparatus is still ramping up and reorienting to the "human intelligence"-directed requirements of today.

As to Protection and Preparation, we are a long way from achieving a "comfort level." Five years after September 11, 2001, few buildings even in the nation's capital have protective barriers, and key sites remain vulnerable and unguarded. Port facilities are without a dedicated Ports Police and remain a matter of concern as highlighted by several Senate reports. Mass transit also remains vulnerable. In fact, there are few detailed plans for the protection of mass transit or even key government facilities. Detailed plans, when they do exist, tend to be local and there have been few exercises to test their effectiveness.

The federal government's unfocused approach to the blackout that affected both the United States and Ontario in 2003 remains a matter of scrutiny and criticism. It might be argued that Canada has reached out with other nations to engage in liaison and cooperative international measures to fight terrorism, but we are still being asked by our allies to do more. Do we intend to?

Does our "national will" to do so exist? This is very serious in the face of another upheaval in the federal government, the February dispatch of more Canadian troops to Southern Afghanistan, and the reality of potential added casualties.

Canada needs an integrated counter-terrorism strategy before it becomes terrorism's most inviting target. On March 7, 2005 testimony before the Senate Special Committee on the Anti-terrorism Act, Jim Judd, Director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) warned that terrorism had become a "global movement," that it had developed a permanency in the strategic environment, and that it posed a "very real threat" to Canadian security. He said that terrorist supporters and the terrorists themselves had a global presence that spanned cultures, political systems and socio-economic backgrounds. Terrorist groups, he said, were composed of both highly educated elites and more humble foot soldiers, and that adherents are recruited in Canada.

The threat to Canada and Canadians is real. That is why Canada must adopt an integrated strategy to counter terror based upon Prevention, Pursuit, Protection and Preparation. It is

only when you attempt to implement a strategy that you find the 'gaps' in your plans. Better we find them than suffer from terrorists doing so.

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Professor Joe Varner is the chairman of the National Security Committee of the Federation of Military and United Services Institutes of Canada. Currently, he is serving as Senior Advisor on national security matters to the Deputy Chairman of The Senate Standing Committee on National Security and Defence and the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate of Canada. He also teaches courses in homeland security and intelligence studies at American Military University.