

POLITIETS EFTERRETNINGSTJENESTE  
DANISH SECURITY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE



# Terrorism – Challenges and Possible Consequences

Copenhagen

3-4 November 2003

S U M M A R Y

In cooperation  
with



Danish Institute for  
International Studies



Dear participants at the Conference “Terrorism – Challenges and Possible Consequences”

As promised at the end of the conference, PET has prepared a summary of the contributions given at the conference. The summary is an attempt to maintain the essence of some of the thoughts, ideas and reflections expressed during the two days of gathering in November 2003. It should therefore not be considered an exact or exclusive account of the contributions and discussions presented at the conference.

Once again, I would like to thank you for your participation in and contributions to this conference and I look forward to hosting the next conference to be held by PET in 2005.

Lars Findsen  
Director

#### **SUMMARY**

On Monday 3 November 2003, PET hosted the conference “Terrorism – Challenges and Possible Consequences” with the participation of politicians, police officials, scholars, officials, Danish and foreign intelligence and security officers as well as journalists. The idea behind this conference was to gather a number of people from countries that, directly or indirectly, join efforts to fight international terrorism and therefore possess a high degree of expertise in this field. The objective was to contribute to increasing the level of knowledge and information in the field of international terrorism and its consequences in Denmark as well as abroad, at the same time contributing towards establishing and developing contacts between individual persons and authorities. It was the main impression that the above objectives were achieved.

The onset of this conference was the terrorist attack in the United States on 11 September 2001 and the following terrorist actions in other parts of the world having the effect that we are now facing a world order dominated by new security issues. Focus has, therefore, shifted away from the traditional balance of power-mindset as manifested during the Cold War era. Today, focus is rather directed towards the threat from al-Qaida and radical Islamic terrorism in general. Our society thus has to learn to deal with a new type of threat, and consequently our concepts of the understanding of as well as the handling of security are being redefined these years – as said by one of the speakers at the conference.

During the Cold War it was – rather simplified – possible to measure the threat in e.g. the number of tanks, soldiers, or disarmament agreements. Today, the threat has become more complex and intangible. When attempting to handle the type of threats that the world is facing today, we must deal with the handling of risks. At the conference it was pointed out that a comprehensive picture of the threat as well as total security are pipe dreams in a globalised world filled with risks. As globalisation does not provide us with an opportunity to understand and handle all risks thoroughly and in depth, risk handling plays a rather decisive role in the fight against terrorism. Actions must, therefore, be taken in areas that experts consider high risk. At the same time, it must also be kept in mind that any given way of handling certain risks may cause new problems and have an effect, positive or negative, on other problems which demand attention and some course of action. At the conference this was described as a boomerang effect.



The speakers at the conference generally agreed that the challenge in connection with today's fight against terrorism contains several dilemmas. One of these dilemmas involves the protection of human rights as shed light upon by one of the speakers who said: "... *they that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither*" (Benjamin Franklin, 1759). In other words, the fight against terrorism must not have the effect that basic human rights and rights of freedom are being trampled. The risk may be that a security threat in itself legitimises the use of excessive means or interventions as a counter-measure. At the conference it was pointed out that this area poses a major challenge in the years to come if the present and coming security political risks are to be fought in a proportional and balanced manner.

Another subject discussed at the conference was the nature of the threats that we are confronted with today.

There seemed to be consensus that although al-Qaida has been impaired by the international community's efforts against terrorism during the last few years, the organisation still poses a serious threat against international security. On the other hand, several of the speakers emphasised that the threat we are facing cannot be attributed solely to al-Qaida. There are a number of regionally oriented terrorist groups that are co-operating, both formally and informally, with al-Qaida and which have the same ideological background, wholly or partially, as al-Qaida. A great deal of empirical knowledge is traded between the various radical Islamic terrorist groups and this goes to show that al-Qaida is merely one element of the overall security threat constituted by radical Islamic terrorism. In co-operation with and inspired by al-Qaida, the Algerian terrorist group "Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat" (GSPC) has, in particular, drawn attention during the last couple of years, and it must be expected that this group will pose a considerable threat in the years to come. Another group like "Jemaah Islamia" in Asia has also proved to be efficient and has copied the al-Qaida-line in using methods such as hijackings and suicide terrorism. Thus, al-Qaida inspired groups have shown that they are capable of carrying out terrorist attacks with great precision, both on their own initiative and at the request of al-Qaida, evidenced by several attacks in 2003.

Another aspect as to the nature of the threats that we are facing today was advanced by one of the speakers: the threat from chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons (CBRN). Traditionally, CBRN weapons are referred to as weapons of mass destruction, but it was pointed out that this term is misleading and inaccurate in a terror-related context. The worldwide number of CBRN attacks carried out by terrorists is very limited, and using CBRN weapons in an effective manner is rather difficult. On the contrary, it was made clear that it is the psychological effect on people in the form of fear that makes CBRN weapons attractive to terrorists rather than the lethal and destructive effect they have – although the latter effect must not be ignored either.

It is now known that al-Qaida has been experimenting with CBRN weapons in Afghanistan, and the fear is that the organisation will not hesitate to use these weapons in the future if a striking use can be found. The ruthlessness has become more pronounced, and the desire to acquire and use CBRN weapons for terrorist attacks exists. This is precisely one of the new aspects of the threat we are facing.



As previously mentioned it was emphasised at the conference that it is not a question of fighting one clearly defined terrorist organisation; on the contrary, it is a fight against an international network of individuals and groups. What characterises them is that – at an overall level – they share an extreme but vaguely defined ideology which legitimises the use of terror in order to achieve their respective religious/political objectives.

However, in terms of fighting terrorism, it is a central issue to know how to fight Islamic terrorists, carrying out their actions in the name of Allah, without turning it into a religious war. Islam as a religion is not to be blamed for terrorists carrying out their activities in the name of the religion. Several of the speakers at the conference referred to this subject, but the solutions to the problem were not clear-cut.

Furthermore, it was pointed out that the motives and objectives of radical Islamic terrorists seem to differ from those of the separatist movements also having used terror as a weapon. The very reason for this is that the radical Islamic terrorists use religion as a means of communication and motivation. These terrorists legitimise the use of violence by calling it an order of Allah and by accusing those under attack of being infidels who are preventing the believers from finding the true path. The rationale behind the arguments and actions, therefore, differ considerably from what has been seen in the past in terms of terror.

The solidarity among the various radical Islamic terrorist groups is not only supported by the fact that they all have the same extreme interpretation of Islam. Just as important, these groups agree to fight what is considered to be their common enemies. The Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 was seen as a victory for the Islamic movements. The fight against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan during the 1980s was instrumental in bringing together individuals and groups whose basic religious values were the same, and who were willing to fight. Following the removal of Iraq's Saddam Hussein by the international coalition, Iraq has become a common denominator for many of these individuals and groups. Radical Islamists now see Iraq as an arena in which the fight against the international principal enemy, the United States, can be carried out.

Focusing on the possible targets of terrorist attacks, carried out by radical Islamic groups, the issue was raised as to whether there are areas of the world which have every probability of not becoming the target of terrorist attacks, initiated by al-Qaida or similar Islamic groups. The response of one of the speakers was a resounding no. Even the countries, which are used by the terrorists as "safe havens", may become the target of an attack carried out by the very same terrorists. Indonesia was mentioned as an example of this. Traditionally, the Indonesian government has been of the opinion that as long as the country showed leniency and refrained from banning terrorist organisations, Islamic movements etc., Indonesia would not become the target of a terrorist attack. However, the terrorist attack in Bali in the autumn of 2002 made it more than obvious that terrorists will strike when the opportunity is there and not hold back just because a government takes a more lenient approach to fighting terrorist activities.

Among the proposals for how to fight radical Islamic terrorism, the conclusion was that it is absolutely essential to maintain a dialogue with moderate Islamists, and that support is given to moderate and democratic forces in regimes



which are considered to be more or less totalitarian. When discussing this issue, one of the speakers advanced that the argumentation of the Islamists should not be dismissed as irrational solely on grounds of their religious reasoning, but rather recognised that, obviously, all arguments are ultimately based on subjective values of a religious and/or political nature.

However, several of the speakers emphasised that, in the short term, it is necessary to take a consistent stance to radical Islamists who are willing to use violence in order to reach their religious/political objectives. Dialogue and negotiation are often perceived as signs of weakness and lack of efficiency by these individuals and groups and this confirms how they conceive the enemy.

At the conference there was a general consensus that the short-term combat against terrorism always has to be followed by long-term political, economic, and cultural initiatives in order to make way for more permanent solutions to the problem. In other words, none of the two above approaches can stand alone but must be pursued in a parallel manner.

It was made clear at the conference that the specific operational work in terms of preventing terrorist actions is an extremely extensive task which involves many different sectors of society, the reason being that countless potential targets for terrorists exist within our society, e.g. areas of great symbolic value, particular sectors which are important to an efficient infrastructure, places with many people gathered in a relatively small space etc.

It is, therefore, crucial that a high degree of awareness is created in society in general and, particularly, in the authorities which play an active role in the fight against terrorism or the authorities that protect resources used in connection with the execution of terrorist attacks. By increasing society's overall resistance to terrorism, it becomes more difficult for terrorists to plan their attacks, thus making it more likely that their plans will be uncovered during the planning stages.

As far as the co-operation between police and intelligence services is concerned it is important that the police officers on the street also benefit from the knowledge held by the national intelligence services in their everyday work. This will, again, create an increased awareness concerning matters that are directly or indirectly related to terrorism.

The two days spent in the company of expert speakers within the area of terrorism lead to several conclusions. Although 11 September 2001 showed that the Western societies have a high degree of vulnerability, it is important to focus on the fact that the probability of a new terrorist attack is relatively small after all. Consequently, one of the more general conclusions was that it is necessary to focus on the risk rather than the vulnerability in order to protect the values of our democratic societies and, at the same time, to continue fighting the threat. There was a consensus at the conference that being part of and continuing to strengthen an international and interdisciplinary co-operation is a must in the fight against international Islamic terrorism. It is therefore necessary to co-operate at intelligence and expert level as well as between the various sectors of society. Furthermore, the dialogue with moderate Islamists and democratic forces within totalitarian states and in our own societies must be strengthened and, at the same time, we must continue to be consistent in our actions towards groups which are planning and carrying out terrorist actions.



## PRESENTATION OF SPEAKERS

LENE ESPERSEN

Minister of Justice.

LARS FINDSEN

Director, Danish Security Intelligence Service.

PER CARLSEN

is the Director of the Danish Institute of International Studies (DIIS) in Copenhagen. He has been working as secretary at the Danish Embassy in Moscow, and as Deputy Head of the Danish Mission to NATO. From 1993-1997 he was the Deputy Permanent Undersecretary of State for Defence, International Affairs. From 1997-2001 he served as Ambassador to Lithuania before taking over the position as Director of DIIS.

DR. ROHAN GUNARATNA

has authored eight books, including “Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror”, an international bestseller, and he was called to address the United Nations, the U.S. Congress and the Australian Parliament in the wake of September 11, 2001. He is Professor and Head of Terrorism Research, Institute for Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore. He has served as a consultant on terrorism to several governments and corporations. He has lectured widely in Europe, Latin America, North America, the Middle East and Asia on terrorism.

DR. MAGNUS RANSTORP

is the Director of the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence at the University of St Andrews, Scotland. He is the author of numerous articles and monographs on terrorism and counter-terrorism. He holds many other high-ranking positions and is internationally recognized as a leading expert on Hizballah, Hamas, al-Qaida and other militant Islamic movements. He has briefed many senior government and security officials from around the world and he is currently directing a CSTPV/CNN project on al-Qaida’s network around the world.

DR. MIKKEL VEDBY  
RASMUSSEN

is a Senior Research Fellow at the Danish Institute of International Studies where he also holds the position as Project Director of ‘the Security and Defence Studies’. His research is based on sociological theory, especially theories of ‘risk society’. He is a member of the board of the Nordic International Studies Association and teaches at the University of Copenhagen and the Royal Danish Staff College. In 2003, Dr. Rasmussen participated in the working group that produced the Danish government’s white paper on defence. He frequently comments on security and defence issues in the Danish media.

TØGER SEIDENFADEN

is the Editor-in-Chief of the Danish newspaper Politiken. He is also a member of the Institute of Strategic Studies in London, member of the board of the Danish Foreign Policy Society and member of the Bilderberg Steering Committee since 1994.

DR. BRUCE HOFFMAN

is Vice President for External Affairs, Director, RAND Washington D.C. Office. He is an expert on global security environment, domestic and international terrorism and the Middle East. He is an internationally recognized expert on terrorism, who has written extensively on terrorism in both academic and popular journals. He has also testified extensively on terrorism before Congress. His latest book, *Inside Terrorism*, has been published in nine countries. He is Editor-in-Chief of the leading scholarly journal in the field; *Studies in*

*Conflict and Terrorism*, and he is a member of the advisory boards of both *Terrorism and Political Violence* and *Global Networks: A Journal of Transnational Affairs*. Not least he was the founding Director of the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence at the University of St Andrews in Scotland. He also received the U.S. Intelligence Community Award Medallion in 1994, the highest level of award presented to a non-government employee.

**DR. MEHDI MOZAFFARI**

is Professor at the Institute of Political Science, University of Aarhus. Cand.scient.pol. 1966. PhD 1967. Dr. d'Etat en Science Politique (Sorbonne) 1971. Visiting Professor at Geneva University and MGIMO (Moscow). Associate Professor at Université Paris I. Autumn 1999: Senior Fellow at Harvard University. He has throughout the years published extensively on civilizations, world order, the Middle East and Islam. His most recent book is *Globalization and Civilizations* (ed.), London & New York, Routledge, 2002.

**DR. OLE WÆVER**

is Professor of International Relations at the Department of Political Science, University of Copenhagen. He teaches theories of International Relations, international security and conceptual history in international affairs and publishes widely on these areas. He was a member of the board of the Danish Government's Commission on Security and Disarmament Affairs (1993-1995) and its replacement the Danish Institute of International Affairs (1995-2002) and of the Defence Commission of 1997 (1997-1998). Member of the editorial board for European Journal of International Relations, International Studies Review, and several other international journals and book series. His most recent book is (with Barry Buzan), *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*, Cambridge University Press, November 2003.

**NIELS BRINCH**

senior reporter, has since 1976 worked as a journalist specialized in covering legal affairs, defence- and foreign policy. Since 1980 he has also focused on covering national and international terrorism. As a journalist he has covered wars and conflicts in the Middle East and the Balkans. From 1988 till present he has worked for the Danish national TV-channel TV2.

**CHRIS BAIN**

Security Adviser, Metropolitan Police, Specialist Operations.





## MONDAY, 3 NOVEMBER

### PROGRAMME

- 1055 h Departure from Square Hotel by coach.  
1100 h Registration/buffet lunch.  
1230 h Introduction by Lene Espersen, Minister of Justice.  
1245 h Welcome and introduction by Lars Findsen, Director of PET.  
1310 h “Terrorism and Research” – Per Carlsen, Director of the Danish Institute for International Studies.  
1325 h “What do we know about al-Qaida?” – Rohan Gunaratna, St. Andrews University.

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1425 h Coffee break.

- 1440 h “What will come next – is the threat from CBRN real?” – Bruce Hoffman, RAND.  
1540 h “The risk society” – Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, the Danish Institute for International Studies.

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1640 h Coffee break.

- 1655 h Panel debate, Moderator, Niels Brinch.  
1750 h Conclusion.

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- 1800 h Departure from the Headquarter of the Danish Security Intelligence Service by coach.  
1945 h Departure from Square Hotel by coach.  
2000 h Dinner.  
During dinner: “Terrorism in context” – Tøger Seidenfaden, editor-in-chief of “Politiken”.

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Return to the hotel by coach.

## TUESDAY, 4 NOVEMBER

- 0845 h Departure from Square Hotel by coach.  
0930 h “The protection of human rights versus practical combating of terrorism” – Magnus Ranstorp, St. Andrews University.

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1030 h Coffee break

- 1045 h “How do we prevent terrorism? – from a European perspective” – Chris Bain, Metropolitan Police, Specialist Operations.  
1145 h “How to Combat Islamist Terrorism Without Combating Islam?”, – Mehdi Mozaffari, Institute of Political Science, Aarhus University.

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1245 h Lunch

- 1400 h “Is the combat against terrorism worth our freedom?” – Ole Wæver, Institute of Political Science, Copenhagen University.  
1500 h Panel debate, Moderator, Niels Brinch.  
1600 h Conclusion of the conference by Lars Findsen.