

## The New Terrorists

**Unanticipated threats have taken the place of the Cold War. In an unpublished and disturbing report, the center for the Advanced Study of Weapons tries to unravel them.**

Paris, August 1995. A bomb goes off at the Etoile, wounding 17 people, 3 of them seriously. Paris, again, July 1995. A bomb explodes at the RER's [suburban commuter rail] Saint-Michel Station, killing 7 people and seriously wounding another 20. And New York, too, February 1993. A car bomb explodes underneath the World Trade Center (WTC), carving out a 50-meter crater, killing 7 people, wounding around a thousand, and causing \$550 million in damage. The investigation in New York revealed, as the one in Paris strongly suggests, the work of mobile, fanatical cells, practitioners of a bargain-basement terrorism where a diabolic device like the one used in the WTC attack can be assembled from parts purchased for under F15,000 at the hardware store around the corner.

But where have all the "partisan-guerrilla" terrorist groups gone, those tough, tightly structured, high-tech miniature armies, like the ETA or Ahmad Jibril's PFLP-General Command? Down the drain. The end of the Cold War often proved to be their undoing. Taking their place is a brand-new kind of terrorism, unstructured and "low-tech," part of a broader, fast-spreading trend of unprecedented threats that have the governments of the major countries extremely worried.

It very soon fell to the Center for the Advanced Study of Weapons (CHEAr) to begin investigating the existence and seriousness of these new dangers so that work could then begin on crafting the expert systems capable of outwitting or overpowering them by the turn of the century. This prompted them to look into the danger of the chaotic post-Cold War world. An 88-page document, based on the work of a CHEAr analysis team, will thus be distributed in early September to various high-ranking defense and security officials. It is able to reveal the contents of this document.

### Disturbing Trends

"Défense et sécurité à l'horizon 2000, nouveaux défis, nouveaux moyens" [Defense and Security Towards the Year 2000; New Challenges, New Tactics] begins with an overview of the disturbing trends that show just how serious this worldwide chaos really is.

Explosion in trafficking : in nuclear materials, naturally, but also in illegal immigrants and, above all, in narcotics. Last month, amidst all the hullabaloo about the dismantling of the Cali Cartel, the US. Navy intercepted a Panamanian trawler off the coast of Peru carrying 12 tons of cocaine, which sells for F 1.5 billion wholesale.

Appearance of violent, irrational entities: like the Japanese Aum Shinri-kyo (Aum Supreme Truth] sect that committed the Tokyo Subway attack last March, leaving 12 people dead and more than 5,000 wounded. Or like the militiamen of the American heartland who, for obscure reasons, reduced a Federal office building in Oklahoma City to rubble, killing 167 innocent people in cold blood last April.

Appearance of environmental issues--on the strategic agenda: Countries and supranational organizations are witnessing a vicious cycle take hold in which Third World population growth triggers sectarian conflicts, then chaotic migrations, ultimately leading to a very real threat of war. Such a scenario is not something out of science fiction, and the military staffs of the world's major powers are already designing operations in ecologically critical zones.

## New Threats

On January 9, 1993, just off Cyprus, several frogmen and three frigates from the Turkish Navy intercepted a Panamanian freighter chartered by two Istanbul mafia dons. In its hold were 14 tons of Afghan heroin, valued at \$12.5 billion wholesale. Monitored from Karachi by US satellites, the freighter Lucky S. was supposed to deliver its heroin in Turkey, Cyprus, Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands. Twenty years ago, at the time of the first French Connection, anyone who had said that counternarcotics work would one day require a spy satellite, frogmen, and warships would have been called a crank.

In April 1995, the Oklahoma City massacre revealed the vulnerability of the very heart of America. Against the blind violence of irrational sects or militias, what good are aircraft carriers, battleships star wars paraphernalia, air forces, or even spy satellites, for that matter?

The two episodes are symbolic of the fact that, below the nuclear threshold, the real threats have changed, and have nothing to do with those of the Cold War era. Trafficking in narcotics, nuclear materials, human beings (either whole, in the form of illegal immigrants, or in parts, in the form of organ-selling), sensitive electronic components, weapons; fanatical religious, ethnic, or tribal confrontations; civil war or famine; piracy at sea or in the air, these are the real threats now to international peace and security. One noteworthy point is that fewer and fewer countries are playing by the international ground rules, and the well-defined geostrategic space in which the French national defense program has operated over the last 40 years has, in fact, now ceased to exist.

## Danger Spots

By contrast, the uncontrolled areas have proliferated. Fifty years ago, one of the great minds of the century, Paul Valéry, celebrated the new, orderly world with the words "The era of the finished world has begun..." It would last half a century. While there are indeed trouble spots and gray areas (see V-E, April 23, 1992, and, below, the pictorial diagram on the Amazon Basin), there are also, more importantly, concrete jungles circling the vast urban centers of the Third World.

Actually, by the year 2000, there will be 414 cities in the world with populations of over one million, and 264 of them will be in the Third World. For example, in 1950, Africa had 6 cities with population over one million, 19 in 1980, and by the year 2000 will have more than 50. Even more rapid is the growth of unplanned neighborhoods--squatter villages and shanty towns--in the megalopolises of the Third World. These settlements are mushrooming at twice the rate of the more conventional urban sprawl, which is already quite fast.

These urban jungles are extremely volatile. As Mao Zedong used to say, it takes only a second for "a spark to set the whole plain on fire." This explains why it is so hard to step in and put down an insurrection there, or even to wipe out local drug trafficking, all a mere stone's throw from international airports, and, therefore, the cameras of CNN. witness that giant shanty town the Gaza Strip, from which the Israeli Army, despite its efficiency and lack of inhibitions, was forced to withdraw.

Interspersed amidst the populace of unplanned outlying neighborhoods that either abet or tolerate them, the guerrillas and drug traffickers are taking care of business, be it tribal warfare, politico-military activism, or trafficking of one kind or another, with full impunity. These outer-city sanctuaries offer the ideal backdrop for such illicit activities: squalor; overcrowding; hordes of unskilled young people who have nowhere to go and hence provide a steady supply of hoodlums; proximity to the establishment's economic hub and to the airports (for the drug traffickers); and proximity to the political and media hub (for the guerrillas and terrorists).

Karachi is a perfect example. The Pakistani megalopolis is inundated with weapons and heroin from Afghanistan and ravaged by ethnic warfare, kidnappings, and murders. The Army, which was deployed in Karachi in 1902, ultimately withdrew after it was unable to maintain even a semblance of order in a city where, in June 1992, 23 secret torture chambers were discovered, run by local gangs to service, so to speak, their enemies and turlicots.

## Dangerous Players

Dangerous players in the new global disorder are legion. Warlord-sponsored private armies, guerrillas who only yesterday peddled politics but who are now on the payroll of drug traffickers, violent irrational movements, and hazy clusters of fanatical terrorists. But among all these dangerous players, the transnational criminal organizations (TCOs), or mafias, currently pose the greatest threat.

As INTERPOL Secretary General Raymond Kendall stated in April 1994: "Drug trafficking is in the hands of organized crime... INTERPOL has a file of 250,000 major criminals, 200,000 of whom are tied to drug trafficking." In fact, the groups that control the bulk of drug production and trafficking are well known and relatively few in number: the Colombian cartels for cocaine, the Triads (Hongkong, Taiwan, and the PRC) for the heroin from the Golden Triangle, and the Italian and Turkish/ Kurdish mafias for the heroin from the Golden Crescent. These TCOs are vital to worldwide drug trafficking because they connect the agricultural sector, controlled by the guerrillas and the tribal warlords, and the final distribution operations, handled by the urban gangs of the metropolises of the developed world.

With no compunction about killing or corrupting, the TCOs turn over \$30-50 billion (F 165- 275 billion) each year, recycling perhaps as much at half in the world economy. They are currently working to merge illicit trafficking in narcotics, weapons, and illegal immigrants. By joining and bolstering their profit bases, the TCOs will be even more powerful in the future.

### Strategic Flows in Peril

The CHEAr Report goes on to emphasize the extent to which the strategic flows so vital to human society are in peril.

The major developed countries are, in fact, not really aware of the extreme fragility, of the virtual world that computers collectively represent, a world of scattered, and thus vulnerable, networks. Some day soon, the antics of amateur hackers will be replaced by terrorist attacks by cyberguerrillas working for embargoed pariah countries, or even guerrilla groups turned criminal. What makes such a scenario all the more likely is the fact that most of the world's insurgent groups, from the Mexican Zapatistas to the anti-Arafat Palestinians, are on the Internet- The cyber-terrorists have already set their sights on the central computers of the social service agencies, the computers that support important economic or financial data bases, and even the computerized systems of massive power plant complexes. Hackers are already dreaming about triggering artificial stock market crashes, thereby plunging the global economy into chaos. Or about commandeering (by electronic means, naturally) a telecommunications satellite to control for a moment, or to sabotage, one of the currently emerging information highways.

### The Realization

It was not long before it dawned on soldiers stationed in the Third World, intelligence officers immersed in world chaos, police assigned to drug squads or to the (dicer neighborhoods, and terrorist-prosecuting magistrates that the enemy was no longer the opposing bloc, behaving itself behind its wall, and that the menacing bustle of mafias and militias, of sects and drug traffickers, was ill-suited to the passive watching and waiting approach, à la *Deserto dei Tartari* [1940 novel by Italian writer Dino Buzzati about an army unit stationed for years in a desert fortress waiting for a fearsome enemy who never materializes]. These men in the trenches have had a hard time, to put it mildly, alerting their superiors, for whom these new dangers appeared abstract, distant, and hard to take seriously. Tracking the Triads from a Paris office? Why not Fu Manchu ?

Things were no easier at the political level, although there it was less a matter of disbelief than indifference. If the cold war was over, the thought was that the lion's share of the defense budget could go to social programs. The rest would be for humanitarian activities, and then, if need be, for the police. Once the political landscape has shifted, other ideas won out. Proponents of the free market, convinced that money needs to circulate, always and everywhere, have a hard time swallowing the crucial role of drug money in all political and criminal activities in the Chaotic world. Just how does one get a moment's attention from leaders focused, and rightly so, on their crusade against unemployment?

At least in France the cause is now understood, The European union, more interested in business than security problems, still has to be convinced of the need to combat these new dangers.

#### What Should Be Done?

First of all, the political authorities should deal with these new threats primarily through the defense and security communities. Then they should make some choices, which can only mean throwing in the towel on other fronts, since the intelligence agencies are currently saturated. The government must then devise a general outline of the missions to be tackled, i.e., develop a doctrine.

Once this has been done, discreetly, military experts stress that special weapons could play a key role in the campaign against these newfangled dangers, particularly those non-lethal weapons that gum Up, blind, paralyze, isolate, deafen, stun, corrode, sabotage, in short:, neutralize, without killing, at least not on purpose.

But the first step in making sense of these worldwide structural upheavals, particularly in the environmental, economic, demographic, and social realms, in confronting the welter of threatening entities, protoplasmic and ever-evolving, and exploring "unknown lands," is for the defense and security agencies to design and implement an automated intelligence and response network, a vast computerized structure along the lines of an Internet. Equipped with extremely rapid response capabilities, this information and command system (ICS) would bring satellites, listening devices, and ground sensors into play. Like an orchestra conductor, it would instantly select, process, divide up, and distribute information gathered in dangerous or inaccessible areas.

#### Observation and monitoring of the Earth's Gray Areas

Is this a utopian idea? Quite the contrary. one such ICS is already being assembled in Brazil, where the government has now decided to monitor the Amazon Basin, ten times the size of France.

For a decade, its immense rain forest, home to half the world's plant and animal species, has faced constant plunder and assault by illegal mining and drilling (for gold and precious ores), fires and illegal trafficking in rare woods, the capture of protected animal species, border violations, and massacres by drug traffickers.

Consequently, Brazil is about to outfit itself with an enormous computerized telecommunications network, SIVAM, which will place the Amazon Basin under electronic surveillance, a \$1.5 billion contract (see pictorial diagram below).

By the year 2000, from Brasilia and from coordinating centers in Belem, Manaus, and Porto Velho, SIVAM will provide coverage of air traffic in Amazonia, in addition to continuous surveillance of the environment and drug trafficking by air, sea, or land in the region. The data gathered will be transmitted to satellites, and from there to computerized processing centers, via a telecommunications network. The Army or police will then be able to intervene rapidly at the very scene of a crime.

The first Earth and airspace observation project for security purposes, SIVAM marks the debut of continuous surveillance of the world's gray areas. In the future, on other continents, similar or even more ambitious projects will simultaneously handle remote surveillance of the in inaccessible places, the preservation of natural resources, counternarcotics efforts, and, in broader terms, the economic development of the Third World.