

Xavier Raufer

Center for the study of the contemporary criminal menace

Université Panthéon-Assas - Paris II, France

november, 1998

New world disorder, new terrorisms : new threats for the corporate, computer and national security

February 1995: for the first time, the he FBI arrests a dangerous hacker who for years had been breaking into and robbing "sensitive" data bases. Experts say that in the future, such criminals will make way for a new breed of "cybernetic guerrilla fighters" who will strike the critically important computerized networks of the developed world, this time to destroy them. These strategic networks are widely scattered and therefore vulnerable : computer management of social security information, financial flows, and, soon, information superhighways. Actors in this new form of warfare : nations embargoed by the United Nations, or even degenerate guerrillas (meaning former ideological guerillas having turned to crime to finance themselves).

1 - New Wars : Where Are the Battlefields ?

First, of course, the electronic flow of information and of money, the cybernetic networks specialising in financial transfers, or the "information superhighway". According to the latest official American information, between 300 and 500 billion "criminal dollars" went through the US banking system in 1995. This in the country with the world's most severe anti-laundering laws - which gives an idea of what must be happening elsewhere...

But major battlefield in the decades to come will also be the gaps in space and time :

- Battling in Uncontrolled Spaces :
- The gray areas from which the nation-state has disappeared for good and where the real power is exercised by coalitions between guerrillas or militia and the drug-traffickers, with their millions of dollars from heroin and cocaine,

- More preoccupying for business: the lawless suburbs of the major third world megalopolises - or even those of certain cities in the developed world - which have completely escaped from any police or local armed forces control (Karachi, Rio, Lagos, Lima, Mexico etc.). There, you find the joint presence of gangsters, terrorists and drug-traffickers, trading in human beings, arms and illegal substances. Actually, by the year 2000, 414 cities in the world will have populations of over one million, 264 of them 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 quicker is the growth of unplanned neighborhoods--squatter villages and shantytowns--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, CNN's cameras. Witness that giant shanty town, the Gaza Strip, from which the Israeli Army, despite its 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 practicing tribal warfare, politico-military activism, or trafficking of one kind or another, with full impunity. These suburban sanctuaries offer the ideal backdrop for such illicit activities: squalor; overcrowding; hordes of unskilled young people providing a steady supply of hoodlums; proximity :

- . to the establishment's economic hub and to the airports (for the drug traffickers),
- . to the political and media hub (for the guerrillas and terrorists).

- Areas that fall between the cracks of competing agency jurisdictions, or competing sectors in which these agencies operate, each from its own special perspective (narcotics, trafficking in human beings, terrorism, smuggling, etc.). For instance : does anyone in Europe truly see the big picture regarding the threat from a group such as the PKK ?

- Race Against Time

Dangerous, aggressive, lightning-quick groups wielding high-tech equipment have a tremendous time advantage over slow, hulking states, paralyzed by administrative inertia and legalistic nit-picking.

2 - Funding the New Wars

To begin with, criminals and terrorists - now frequently working hand in hand, have more money than ever in history. By 2004, the Financial Action Task Force experts believe that the value of drug money, by way of its compound growth, will reach 1500 billion US Dollars (today's value of the world's stock of gold), and by 2014, will top the current annual Gross Domestic Product of the United States. Each year, the profit of narcobusiness and other criminal activities amounts roughly to 500 billion dollars, 2% of the world's GNP. Politically, economically too, this criminal money carries a lot of weight - but is also physically extremely heavy: in 1996, the street value of cocaine sold in the United States reached 30 billion dollars. Add another 18 billion for heroin: In 5, 10 and 20 dollars bills, these 48 billion dollars weigh 6200 metric tons.

3 - Since the end of the Cold war, a totally disrupted geo-strategical landscape: a major challenge for nation-states as well as the business sector

Fanatical religious, ethnic, or tribal confrontations; civil war or famine; piracy at sea or in the air, these are now some of the worst threats to international peace and security, and to the business sector as well. Behind this chaos, threatening entities that are non-governmental, transnational, even global. Fierce and inaccessible, these cartels, mafias, and militia are implacable enemies. The days of exchanges between gentlemen-spies in the mist of a Berlin dawn are over. A bullet in the head has taken the place of diplomatic niceties. And in the chaotic areas of the world, there are few embassies and no friendly cocktail bars; instead there are huge, anarchic cities, slums, the jungle - a setting for terrorism and warfare.

How does this new world disorder affect business ? An example: march 1993, Bombay, India: car-bombs, motorcycle and suitcase-bombs explode at noon in the business district. An unprecedented massacre, worldwide: 320 dead, 1200 injured within an hour. The perpetrators of the carnage are not "conventional" terrorists, but local gangsters recruited by Pakistani agents to avenge the massacres of muslims in Kashmir. In a world where the line between terrorism and gangsterism is increasingly blurred, this is a striking proof of the existence of new hybrid entities, midway between crime and terror.

Beyond terrorism, what are the new dangerous developments in the domain of international security, affecting nation-states as well as the business sector ?

- Explosion in trafficking: in nuclear materials, but also in illegal immigrants and, above all, in narcotics. In january 1993, just off Cyprus, several frogmen and three frigates from the Turkish navy intercept a panamanian freighter chartered by two Istanbul mafia dons. In its hold were 14 metric tons of Afghan heroin, valued at \$ 25 billion wholesale. Monitored from Karachi by US satellites, the freighter "Lucky S" was due to deliver its heroin in Turkey, Cyprus, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands. Twenty years ago, at the

time of the first “French connection”, anyone predicting that counternarcotics would one day require a spy satellite, frogmen and warships would have been called a crank.

- Appearance of violent, irrational entities: like the Japanese Aum Shinri-kyo (Aum Supreme Truth] sect that committed the Tokyo Subway attack in March 1995, 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 in April 95.
- Appearance of environmental issues on the strategic agenda: late January 1995 and again in april 1996, on the Hamburg-Hanover line, a german train transporting nuclear fuel was derailed by an explosion. This attack by the "Kollektiv Gorleben" confirms the existence of cells of ecological extremists who have resorted to direct action to "save the planet." In the United States, such fanatics have already tried to poison water reservoirs and building ventilation systems. Others have been caught spying on nuclear power plants, offshore oil rigs, and fuel storage areas.

4 - Radically different hybrid terrorist movements

As we approach the XXIst century, terrorism is no longer a marginal, localised, problem for our governments - and for the business sector as well, but has become a major security priority. Terrorism today is all-invasive - every day, throughout the world, bombs are set off for a thousand different reasons; it has also dramatically changed.

Let's start with the good news. The cold war's state terrorism, essentially ideological, has virtually disappeared as such. All those tough, tightly structured, high-tech miniature armies, like Abou Nidal's Fatah-Revolutionary Council or Ahmad Jibril's PFLP-General Command are down the drain. The end of the Cold War proved to be their undoing.

Now the bad news. Taking their place is a brand-new kind of terrorism, unstructured and “low-tech”. Also, many non-ideological entities are making a widespread use of terrorist methods - millenarians, criminals - even environment or animal “liberation” fanatics. Let us look briefly at some general distinguishing features of these neo-terrorist groupings. Diverse they may be, but they have nonetheless some common characteristics:

- De-territorialisation, or location in inaccessible areas,
- Absence of state sponsorship, which makes them more unpredictable and uncontrollable,
- A hybrid character, partly “political” partly criminal,
- The ability to change configuration rapidly as a function of the now almighty dollar,

- Enormous killing power, compared with a cold-war terrorism which was usually symbolic. The Aum sect wanted to kill 40,000 in the Tokyo Metro in april 1995, but only failed to do so because an aerosol blocked ...

5 - Trans-national criminal organisations and narco-terrorists

As a threat, terrorism is not alone. Dangerous players in the new global disorder are legion. But among all these, the transnational criminal organizations (TCOs), or mafias, currently pose the greatest threat.

Today, Italian, Turkish, and Russian mafias, Colombian and Mexican cartels, Japanese yakuza and chinese triads control financial and "military" assets of a clearly strategic nature. Some of them have already engaged in the most murderous forms of terrorism. Capable of lightning-quick changes - today trafficking in narcotics, tomorrow in computer chips, human beings or toxic wastes - these mafias are now entrenched in chaotic areas of the sprawling cities in the third world and in the dangerous suburbs of the major metropolises of Europe.

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 Golden Triangle heroin, and the Italian and Turkish/ Kurdish mafias for the Golden Crescent heroin. 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 developed world's metropolises. With no compunction about killing or corrupting, the TCOs control a large part of the yearly \$ 500 billion in criminal profits, recycling perhaps as much at half in the world economy. These TCOs 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. ■