

New Battlefields

by Richard Allan

With a growing concern voiced by law enforcement authorities, being excessively inflamed by media frenzy, claiming that home-grown terrorism is becoming a more dangerous, immediate threat to the safety of American interests, it may be time to stop the hyperbole that every act of violence is some form of "terrorism"; symbolized by 9/11, and any violence with "some" connection with the United States is "domestic" terrorism. As Steve Emerson has written regarding media reporting: "Balance isn't always the same as accuracy."

If we merely string together with one wide brush all acts of violence without analytical self control to reach a predetermined conclusion — namely that a substantial increase in "domestic terrorism" has occurred — then not only are we being misled but we become unconsciously encouraged to seek a magic bullet to overcome what has become largely an unsupported scenario. First, it appears that what is sought by the public is an absolute solution. And second, in the words of Henry Kissinger, "There is almost no solution that you could achieve in one blow. You could only achieve it in a series of steps."

Do we have American, home-grown terrorists who act within the United States? Do we have Americans who travel abroad and operate violently against our interests abroad? Do we have foreign persons who travel to the United States to commit terrorist acts? The answer to each of these questions is "yes," but to combine them all as "domestic terrorism" is not only disingenuous, misguided, and confusing but confounds how we should respond both strategically and tactically to each variety. As the first quarter of the New Year came to a close, we were increasingly bombarded with stories of Americans with connections to terrorist organizations that are operating abroad. One size doesn't fit all occasions. As with the discredited Homeland color coding of events, we only increase fear and hysteria with misleading reporting that, in turn, inaccurately fuels the public discussion of "domestic terrorism" without increasing our security at home.

At the start of drafting this opinion, on the eve of a new year, the alarm bells of "domestic terrorism" were ringing ever more loudly, because unless Congress acted, law enforcement officials would have lost the ability to conduct three types of domestic surveillance: "roving" wiretapping, collecting business documents from third parties, and the surveillance of "lone wolves" — suspects who have no demonstrated connections to foreign governments but could still be terrorist threats. It was claimed that these broad powers were utilized and abused by law enforcement officials who misappropriated their authority, intended to fight terrorists, and were being employed to investigate ordinary crimes such as drug dealers and ordinary common criminals. Our civil rights, it was claimed, are not in balance, but the President extended the term of the statute in late February of this year. In addition, although we are sending 30,000 more American troops to Afghanistan, as the multiple concerns for that battle area has grown, and that the hunt for Al Qaeda and the Taliban in Pakistan intensifies, others complicate the entire picture by assuming that the increase in armed forces focus has a direct connection to increased violence within the United States. The one is causing the other. Oversimplifying the problem, it is claimed we have an increase in domestic violence because the Afghanistan/Pakistan conflict is fueling radicalization at home. And last, the Christmas Eve attempt to blow up a domestic airline, as it was about to land in the United States, has created during the first weeks of the new year multiple scenarios as to cause and blame. We have an increasingly complex picture of mounting claims seeking our

attention being intertwined in the hope of finding one solution.

First, mass domestic violence that may cause extraordinary fear within a large segment of a population and can be described as terror is not necessarily an act of terrorists. What immediacy comes to mind is Theodore John Kaczynski also known as the Unabomber (“University and Airline Bomber”), an American mathematician, social critic, and a murderer who carried out a campaign of mail bombings until he was identified by his brother and arrested. He was not a terrorist. The serial killers, the young Lee Malvo and John Muhammad who “terrorized” the DC suburbs with their random violence resulting in more than a dozen deaths, were not terrorists. And I submit that the murderous rampage at Fort Hood by Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan's was not a terrorist act, notwithstanding his ethnicity, his ethnic ranting, the persons he allegedly associated with, and the persons who were the target of his rage. With regard to other events that are continually cited as examples of “domestic terrorists,” it helps to examine the facts. First, the arrest of Najibullah Zazi, born in Afghanistan, who at the time of his arrest appeared to be a well-adjusted, productive, immigrant but only in the States for 10 years. He is accused of going to Pakistan for explosives training with the intention of attacking the United States interests. Where those attacks were to occur we will never know. There was David Coleman Headley, who prosecutors say is a Pakistani living in Chicago. He is accused of helping plan the 2008 killings in Mumbai, India, and who has been charged with planning an attack on a Danish newspaper after it ran cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed. It is alleged he had attended training camps in Pakistan earlier this decade which were run by the militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba, which specializes in violence against India – not the United States. Living in the United States does not make him a “domestic” terrorist. And when we look deeper do we find that his true name is Daood Gilani, and he is charged with attempting to launch terrorist attacks in India. Prosecutors said Headley changed his name in 2006 so that he could pass in India for an American who was neither Muslim nor Pakistani. There is Bryant Neal Vinas, (also known as Ibrahim, Bashir al-Ameriki and Ben Yameen al-Kanadeeis), an American born in the United States and lived in Patchogue, Long Island, and accused and convicted of participating in or supporting Al-Qaeda plots in Afghanistan and the United States. He worked as a truck driver and at a car wash, sporadically attended technical college, and joined the military in 2002, although he was discharged after just three weeks of basic training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. He then converted to Islam in 2004, when law enforcement officials believed him to have been “self-radicalized.” He then agreed to become a suicide bomber, although his handlers in Pakistan eventually decided that he needed more indoctrination and training. He did participate in rocket attacks against US forces in Afghanistan, after which he was captured and only then talked about wanting to blow up a train in Penn Station in New York. Last, there were the Somali-Americans from Minnesota who had traveled to Somalia to join a violent Islamist movement.

None of these men, except for Bryant Vinas, are Americans either by birth, or raised or educated in the United States. On April 19, 1995, Timothy McVeigh with his accomplice, Terry Nichols, two people born, raised, and educated in America, became American domestic terrorists when they destroyed a federal office building killing 168 men, women, and children and injuring hundreds more.

Lest we forget a terrorist attack within the United States is not limited to the Islamic forces we generally associate with terrorism but can originate from non-jhard multiple origins, hate groups in the United States have reached a record number: anti-immigration groups have grown by 80% within the last year; militia and patriot organizations who view the government as evil have mushroomed 244%. When we separate, as we must do for tactical and strategic reasons, the origins of a particular act, the key in determining if an act of violence is one that could be defined as terrorism becomes the motivation or incentive for the attack.

The question then becomes, Has the battlefield changed? I suggest that the terrorists have not shifted their focal point, but that one element of terrorism has been added, incrementally, to extend the battle in the 48 States. The battlefield has not changed; it is becoming splintered and enlarged.

Separating those attacks that involve the invoking of Islam and those totally unrelated to that rallying cry, the answer to defining a battlefield is in part revealed if we examine the events in France and Sweden. In the latter there are liberal immigration laws and in the former a large indigenous Muslim population created by historical colonialization. In both, the Muslim populace has increased dramatically with the arrival of additional family members coupled with increased local birth rates. In both France and Sweden, because of deteriorating economic conditions within the Muslim communities, two factors emerge: first, economic segregation. Economic segregation, along with its natural component social segregation, produces the seeds for energizing the political/social base against the more viable, immediate surrounding communities. The political energizing then morphs, one of its tentacles producing a second phenomenon that we can label “The evolution of violence.”

We are beginning to find the second phenomena in the United States. Violence can evolve within any community when an individual or group of persons believes, for any reason, that it is the object of oppressive social, religious, or economic forces and concludes that is being discriminated against. The never-ending conflict, real or perceived, not only invites new participants to battle the perceived discrimination but creates opportunities for those who suddenly seek meaning in their lives or aggrandizement for their existence. In either occurrence, those affected can surface within any society which believes their lives are being marginalized. In France, it is within the economically and socially isolated and depressed; in England, within the professional class of a racial minority. In the United States, the issues become more complex because of its immense physical size, the extreme diversity of the population, wide ranges and types of employment, regional idiosyncrasies, cultural isolation and, by European standards, the unusual federal and state split in civil and criminal governance and legislating. All this leads to multiple motivational forces that create many different ingredients for the violence.

The consequences of all this is that the word “terrorism” becomes meaningless unless defined. And this too has become an almost impossible task. The anti-abortionists, those seeking ecological control, animal rights, anti-tax

proponents, and others, are in the midst of those claiming free speech and civil rights with voices from the left and right. When we then interject the term "domestic" into terrorism do we mean "all of the above", do we mean those acts connect with a jihad against American interest? Do we mean any violence on domestic soil or do we mean terrorism initiated by Americans or those integrated within our society who initiates violence within the country whose motivation is clearly defined?

The time has come to define clearly, without feeling intimidated by the complexity of the task, the battlefield of terrorism so that we can plainly and unmistakably identify and classify what is at stake and what must be employed in its proactive defense. After all this is a democracy and as Churchill aptly wrote: "Democracy is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried."