

Terrorism and Civil Aviation Security: Problems and Trends

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General Trends in Present-Day Terrorism

The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 marked the start of a new period in modern history. This period is one characterized by instability, unpredictability, and the re-shaping of complex systems, including both traditional and new types of challenges and threats. Of particular significance in the last and most dangerous category is, beyond any doubt, the emergence of terrorism as a truly global threat.

It has to be kept in mind that terrorism, as an independent and self-reproducing socio-political phenomenon of violence, can be seen throughout the history of human civilization. However, in the twenty-first century, terrorism has evolved into a major geopolitical factor, capable of causing a systemic crisis at the global level. Some of the distinctive (albeit not unique) characteristics of modern terrorism—also labeled “international terrorism,” “new wave terrorism,” “mega-terrorism,” “fourth-generation terrorism”—are as follows ¹:

- Qualitative change of content;
- Shift to a strategic approach and a particular type of warfare;
- Perpetual reproduction and build-up;
- Transformation into mass movements;
- Permanent dynamics;
- Fluid, mutable nature—convergence;
- Increasing importance of non-state actors;
- Growing professionalization;
- Escalation of technological sophistication;
- Weapons of mass effect, techno-terrorism;
- Increasing reliance on information technologies and networks;
- Cyber-terrorism, psycho-terrorism.

The above-mentioned elements make it possible to identify the overall scope of a modern global process that some politicians and experts in terrorism are referring to as

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¹ Jangir Arasly, paper presented to a meeting of the Combating Terrorism Working Group of the Pfp Consortium, Sarajevo, February 2004.

“World War Four.”² Among the basic players in this process—along with nation-states—are non-state actors, including terrorist structures, networks, and movements.

It should be noted that the conflict outlined above is closely connected to another, no less significant and all-encompassing phenomenon – the process of globalization. Its most crucial aspect—even more than the revolution in information technologies—is the spread of the “transportation revolution” around the world, which paves the way for the rapid and free movement of people, commodities, and services on a global scale. Recognizing this, civil aviation is the aspect of this revolution that has wrought the greatest change. Nowadays, air transport is in position to convey people and cargo to the remotest corners of the Earth, from anywhere else, in a journey of slightly over twenty-four hours. It is important to note that aviation is today’s most dynamic, fastest developing area of transportation. An eloquent testimony to its importance and pace of development are the following quantitative indices: there are approximately 10,000 air transport companies presently operating in the world, using more than 15,500 passenger airliners (ignoring cargo planes and light aircraft) and landing at over 5,000 airports.

Regretfully, this positive tendency also has a negative side. By virtue of its functional significance and vulnerability, civil aviation is increasingly becoming the focus of the operational activity of different terrorist structures as a subject (rather than an implement) of their actions. This, in turn, makes it critical to take practical steps toward tightening the level of security in the area of civil aviation.

Genesis and Operational Chronology of Terrorism in Transport Aviation

It should be noted that the appearance of terrorism has practically concurred with the rise of aviation as a mode of transportation. The first registered incident of aviation terrorism goes back to 1930, when Peruvian insurgents seized an airplane to scatter propaganda leaflets.³ But this practice did not become customary in the subsequent four decades, primarily owing to the effect of global factors (World War Two, etc.).

The starting date of modern aviation terrorism, as we see it now, is 22 July 1968, when three gunmen from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) hijacked a passenger airliner of the Israeli airline El Al on a flight from Rome to Tel-Aviv, and demanded to exchange hostages for their comrades-in-arms who were imprisoned in Israel.⁴ This operation, although it was the twelfth case of civilian aircraft seizure in 1968, was qualitatively different in its content and ultimate aim. It was the first time that an aircraft had ever been hijacked not out of criminal motivation or for personal reasons, but with the specific goal of *politically pressuring* an opponent and using the incident as a *propaganda message* to bring a political cause to the world’s notice. It was a deliberate creation of a crisis situation and an immediate threat to the

² J. Aras, *World War Four. The Handbook on Non-government Paramilitary Systems* (Baku: Sada publishing house, 2002), 6.

³ O. Gubarev, *Secrets of Air Terrorism* (Moscow: Veche, 2002), 11.

⁴ Bruce Hoffman, *Terrorism. The Insight* (Moscow: 2003), 77.

lives of hostages that contributed to shaping a favorable political and psychological context for coercing an opponent into direct talks (which is a *de facto* form of recognition) and complying with demands. It is no mere coincidence that late 1960s and the early 1970s were marked by explosive growth in the number of terrorist acts directed at air transport, most of which followed a typical pattern: armed seizure of an airliner; hijacking to a safe airport; and issuing demands of a political nature under the threat of execution of hostages.

Later, in the 1980s, the dangerous tendency toward the further spread of aviation terrorism as a tool of political pressure and propaganda came to an end. Contributing to this were various factors, including:

- Deployment and rapid improvement of the technical means of airport security, which made it difficult for terrorists to covertly carry arms and ammunition on board airliners;
- Creation and effective use of special anti-terrorist teams (as deployed in the rescue of hostages in Mogadishu, Entebbe, etc.);
- Implementation of countermeasures by some states against leaders of terrorist structures as retribution and reprisals for already committed acts of aviation terrorism;
- Changes in public awareness, namely the perception of hijacking as an explicitly terrorist act, rather than as an “act of struggle for freedom.”

Although the trend toward aviation terrorism had stalled, the tendency toward the politically motivated hijacking of airliners did not disappear. Starting in the mid-1980s, a qualitatively different form of terrorism appeared in the realm of aviation. This new phenomenon was also shaped and supported by shifts in the media sector, which accelerated the growth of its significance.

The hijacking by Lebanese Hezbollah terrorists of a TWA Boeing 727 airliner in July 1985—followed by a two-week-long hostage drama, the transfer of the seized plane between different airports in the Middle East, the murder of one of the passengers, and interviews with released hostages—was uninterruptedly broadcast by the major television networks in the United States. As a direct result, following the broadcasts of the episode, over 850,000 Americans declined going abroad for fear of an act of terror; another 200,000 decided to spend their holidays in the homeland. In a ripple effect, 50 percent of previously reserved American tours to Italy and 30 percent of tours to Greece were canceled, which essentially damaged the economies of these countries as well.⁵ This example is illustrative of changes in the dynamics of aviation terrorism, since it extended beyond an attack on a single branch of transportation and took on two new dimensions: economic and psychological warfare.

⁵ Hoffman, *Terrorism*, 182.

Current Dynamics of Aviation Terrorism

In considering the examples discussed above, it is no mere chance that the largest terrorist attacks the world has ever seen—the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington—were committed by hijacking civil airliners. For the first time, the airplanes were steered by suicide pilots. Instead of being employed as leverage for negotiations or as a platform for putting forward demands, the airliners were used as *weapons* (in effect, manned cruise missiles) designed for defeating specific targets. The replacement of an unavailable class of weapons with other, available means is one of the fundamental principles of *asymmetric warfare*. In the meanwhile, to refuse talks or to elaborate demands against the backdrop of combat operations is an eloquent summation of the state of *total war*. This fact gave many experts cause to consider September 11, 2001 as the starting date of World War Four.

Present-day terrorism, when viewed as a particular type of war, increasingly assumes new forms, attributable to the military, economic, financial, and cultural-civilization asymmetries that arise when post-industrial and traditional societies are engaged in global conflict. It is the practical inability to endure direct confrontation with the regular military forces of developed countries that pushes non-state actors in the direction of non-conventional (i.e., terrorist) operational approaches.

The following examples may be cited. Two terrorist attacks in October 2002—the bombing of two night clubs on Bali, Indonesia, and the attempt to shoot down an Israeli passenger aircraft in Kenya with a portable SAM—resulted in substantial decrease in the number of Western tourists, who traditionally spend their vacations in warm locales, in these parts of the world. Note that these synchronous operations, mounted at an interval of two weeks, not only caused damage to the tourist and entertainment sectors (which account for no less than 10 percent of spending in Western economies). The most affected sector at first proved to be air companies, which work as transport operators for tourist agencies. The same month's attack against a French supertanker off the coast of Yemen led to a temporary hike in prices in the oil markets worldwide, which also damaged the airlines, because they had to purchase jet fuel at higher rates.⁶ Thus, it is entirely safe to argue that terrorism is a highly effective instrument of economic warfare.

It should be noted that the air transportation sector is on the front lines of the war against terror. An indication of this fact is the large-scale systemic crisis that has affected the world's leading airlines following September 11, whose consequences have not yet been resolved. A number of well-known companies (Sabena, Swissair, etc.) failed to survive under *force majeure* circumstances, while other companies had to go to incredible lengths to survive. For instance, several major passenger carriers in the United States have filed for bankruptcy protection and, on the other side of the Atlantic, according to a special decision of the government, British Airways was declared exempt from paying basic taxes. Without this provision, the operation of the leading

⁶ J. Aras, interview with the *Echo* newspaper, 15 July 2003; available at: <http://www2.echo-az.com/archive2/623/foreign.shtml>.

national airline of Great Britain would be unprofitable and, hence, senseless from an economic point of view. According to forecasts for 2004, this year British Airways is projected to lose another \$900 million, and 13,000 jobs (out of 45,000) will need to be cut.

An eloquent testimony to the scope of the terrorist threat to the functioning of the world's air traffic system proved to be the events that occurred between 24 December 2003 and 5 January 2004 (the Christmas and New Year holidays, when the size of the passenger flow sharply rises). A starting point of the crisis was "reliable" information from "unidentified" sources within intelligence services about a high alert level concerning potential hijacking of airliners by Al Qaeda operatives. As a result, numerous flights of various airlines were canceled, several airports closed, readiness in air forces was heightened (jet fighters made repeated sorties to accompany suspicious airplanes), an elevated level of preparedness for acts of terror—Code Orange—was imposed on the entire territory of the United States.⁷ In particular, flights from the U.S. to London, Mexico, and Paris were canceled or delayed. No less than six flights from Paris to Los Angeles were canceled as well. A backward wave of threats, according to unidentified information channels, was registered just a month later, in early February. As a consequence, British Airways flights to Washington and Air France flights to Los Angeles were postponed again.⁸

The immediate consequences of this crisis in civil aviation were the complication of registration and examination procedures for passengers and the institution of armed air marshals to escort commercial flights (this measure resulted in political tensions between the U.S. and some other states).⁹ The direct damage caused by the disruption of flight schedules and heightened security measures amounted to several tens of millions of USD; the secondary consequences (psychological depression and panic among potential passengers) are subject to no material calculation. In analyzing this incident, scores of counter-terrorism experts have assumed that this crisis in world air traffic was provoked not by real factors but rather by deliberate misinformation spread by terrorist structures through the exchange of false operational plans via e-mail in imitation of an actual threat.

Bearing further witness of the power of rumor to disrupt the world aviation system is a recurrent series of hoax threats that took place in September–October 2004. Following anonymous telephone calls regarding alleged explosives onboard, seven flights operated by Olympic Airways, Singapore Airways, El Al, and Lufthansa were either suspended or canceled. Air force jet fighters were alerted again, anti-terrorist units, police, rescue, and medical structures were mobilized, and the result was damage in the millions of USD. Thus, immediate actions are not necessary to disrupt the aviation system; rather, the mere threat of actions under the rubric of international terrorism imposes an effective combined formula of direct economic and psychological pressure on opponent.

⁷ *Arab News*, 3 January 2004. [a periodical daily newspaper, London]

⁸ *Fox News*; story available at: <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,110006,00.html>.

⁹ *Arab News*, 7 January 2004.

Classification of Threats

Analyses of the modern dynamics and tendencies of international terrorism as a whole, and its numerous particular aspects, make it possible to single out the following categories of the existing threat framework as they relate to civil aviation:

- Aircraft hijacking for retention/exchange of hostages;
- Aircraft hijacking for movement/transfer;
- Aircraft hijacking for annihilation/destruction;
- Direct action against aircraft from outside;
- Direct action against civil aviation ground infrastructure;
- Peripheral categories of actions.

Category of actions	Object of actions	Aim of actions
Hijacking for retention	Passengers	Attaining political, propaganda, and psychological results; not connected to causing direct damage
Hijacking for movement	Aircraft	Transferring of terrorists from one geographic point to another
Hijacking for annihilation	Aircraft + passengers	Inflicting material, political, and psychological damage
Direct action against aircraft	Aircraft + passengers	Inflicting material, political, and psychological damage
Direct action against ground infrastructure	Ground infrastructure (and, more rarely, aircraft or passengers)	Inflicting material, political, and psychological damage
Peripheral categories	Aircraft (and, more rarely, passengers, crew, ground infrastructure)	Various

Hijacking for Retention. Passengers on board of an airplane are the primary objects of this category of actions. The aim is to achieve political, propaganda, and psychological effect (show of force and presence; pressuring state structures and public opinion; attraction of maximum attention; compliance with conditions and demands). A classical act of terror in the form of the forcible seizure of hostages on board of an aircraft and a demonstrative threat to their lives poses a practically unsolvable political and moral-psychological dilemma for the state, which is faced with the necessities of suppressing terrorism and saving the lives of hostages as diametrically opposite tasks.

As effective means of pressure, this form of terror provides terrorists with an ample “window of opportunity,” following which they are in a position to attain their goals.¹⁰ There are tens of episodes where the hijacking of passenger airliners has been committed for the above-mentioned considerations. One example took place in November 1991, when a group headed by Shamil Basayev seized an Aeroflot Tupolev-154 airliner at the Mineralniye Vody airport and hijacked it to Turkey, establishing as a precondition for the release of the hostages the cancellation of the state of emergency that had been imposed by the Russian government in the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic.

Hijacking for Movement. The airplane as a means of transportation is the primary target of this category of actions, with passengers acting as an additional factor enhancing safety guarantees for terrorists. The aim is to ensure the movement of terrorists from a territory that they are restricted or prohibited from exiting for some reason to another geographical point. In this category, seven acts of seizure of passenger airliners were committed in the USSR in 1990 alone in an effort to leave the country on the grounds of personal, political, or economic motivation. In some countries, this category of terror acts remains a marginal method of the migration of individuals, taken separately, or of small groups of persons with identical ideas. In particular, thirteen cases of hijacking of passenger airliners to Taiwan were registered in China from 1993–98.¹¹ In March–April 2003, two Antonov-24 passenger planes were hijacked from Cuba to Florida. In some cases, acts of terror of this sort end with grave consequences that were unexpected by the organizers. In particular, the seizure and hijacking of an Ethiopian Airlines Boeing 767 in November 1996 by a group of separatists, owing to the inadequate training of the terrorists, ended with a crash-landing into the Indian Ocean off of the Comoros Islands, and the subsequent death of 125 passengers and crew members.

Hijacking for Annihilation/Destruction. Using an aircraft itself as a weapon for hitting a previously selected target is a primary object of this category of actions; passengers act as a factor, ensuring that an additional level of overall damage will ultimately result from the attack. The aim is to incur direct material damage to an adversary, in combination with collateral political and psychological damage. This category of actions is directly attributable to the parameters of asymmetrical warfare. The first operational precedent occurred in December 1994, when gunmen from the Algerian terrorist organization Armed Islamic Group (GIA) captured an Air France Airbus A-300 with 240 people on board in an attempt to explode it over Paris. It was a rescue operation at the intermediate landing point in Marcel mounted by a SWAT team that helped avoid potentially grave consequences.¹²

¹⁰ J. Aras, *Terrorism: Yesterday, Today and Forever* (Baku: Sada publishing house, 2003), 108–109.

¹¹ Aras, *World War Four*, 585.

¹² E. Kozhushko, *Modern Terrorism: An Analysis of Modern Trends* (Moscow: Harvest, 2000), 330.

In October 2002, terrorists attempted to hijack a Saudi Airlines Airbus A-320 with the purpose of crashing it into a U.S. air base at Al-Udeid in Qatar. The culminating mega-terrorist attack within this category was the capture of four passenger airliners on 11 September 2001 and their subsequent use as cruise missiles against targets in Washington, D.C. and New York City. It should be noted that, despite heightened safety measures at airports and the introduction of appropriate technologies, the threat of this absolute use of aviation terrorism does not decrease, but rather increases. An eloquent testimony to this fact is the information that has been gathered about Al Qaeda operatives' testing of innovative techniques of seizing and hijacking airplanes, aiming to realize in practice a form of kamikaze (airplane as a delivery vehicle, suicide pilot as guidance unit).¹³ That is why it is not surprising today to see SAM firing units and radar arrays in capitals around the world, from Washington to Colombo, to thus protect key government facilities against "uninvited guests."

Direct Actions against Aircraft. Both airliners and passengers/crew on board are targets of this category of attack, whose aim is to destroy an aircraft in the air and annihilate people in order to incur material, political, and psychological damage. In practice, terrorists prefer to use improvised explosive devices (IED) and man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS), such as shoulder rocket-propelled grenade launchers (RPG), anti-tank guided missiles (ATGM), heavy and light machine-guns, anti-material sniper rifles, and assault rifles.

Improved explosive devices with timers or barometric-work mechanisms of detonation proved to be effective means of destroying airliners in the 1980s. A requirement, however, was to place the explosives inside the target before departure, usually by putting them into unaccompanied luggage or transferring them to third persons without notifying them. As a result of the use of such explosives in particular, terrorists succeeded in destroying the airliners and passengers/crews of Pan American Flight 103 (Lockerbie, Scotland, December 1988, 271 casualties) and French UTA Flight 722 (Niger, July 1989, 170 casualties). There was also an attempt of this sort of terror act on board an Israeli Boeing-747 (London, 1986), where an explosive was deliberately placed by terrorist Nizar al-Hindawi in the luggage of his bride without his notifying her. With the improvement of technical and administrative measures of control of baggage and passengers, the threat of such acts of terror diminished in the early 1990s, although it has not been fully removed, especially since adversary parties have sought to find new, non-traditional forms of carrying and placing IEDs on airliners. In particular, an innovative step of this kind was the attempt at destroying an American Airlines aircraft bound from Paris for Miami in November 2001 by the terrorist John Reid, who placed a plastic explosive charge in heels of his own shoes.

Nowadays, the difficulty of placing the means of destruction directly on board of an airliner due to the intensification of technical security measures has been circumvented by a fundamentally new factor, in the form of such weapons as man-portable air de-

¹³ Rohan Gunaratna, "Al-Qaeda Adapts to Disruption," *Jane's Intelligence Review* (February 2004).

fense systems. Used from outside an aircraft rather than from inside, MANPADS are presently one of the most serious threats to civil aviation. Contributing to this are the characteristics of this type of weapons:

- *Utility*: MANPADS constructively combine the functions of missile launch and guidance inside the same device.
- *Small size*: These weapons are easy to covertly move and store. The Soviet-made Strela-2 SAM (weight 13.6 kg, length 1.5 m) can easily be placed in a bag for golf clubs. A two-man team is required to transport most MANPADS and put them into combat readiness.
- *Simplicity*: The average time of high-level training for a MANPADS operator is five weeks (this includes practice launches; if a simulator is available, the term of training is three weeks).
- *Reaction time*: To bring the equipment into combat readiness for subsequent application against air targets, only several minutes are required.
- *Technical specifications*: MANPADS guidance systems (optical, infra-red/thermal, radar) are designed to ensure high probability of hitting a target at heights up to approximately 3000 m. Impact on a jet engine by a missile from an SA-18 Iгла (weight of warhead is 1.18 kg) during take-off or landing offers a 100 percent guarantee of the airliner's being disabled, and subsequent disaster.¹⁴
- *Tactical specifications*: Makes it possible to employ weapons using the protective features of a locality in the area of attack. Launch may be carried out from wooded areas, building roofs and windows, moving cars, etc.
- *Low cost*: Their relatively low price and wide distribution ensure that MANPADS are available on international arms black market to any interested player. Depending on market conditions, prices for these weapons range from \$5,000 for a Strela-2 to \$20,000 for a U.S.-made Stinger.

According to Pentagon estimates, there are 750,000 missiles and thousands of firing units currently in existence in the world, with a considerable portion being sold on the black market, deployed in armed conflict zones, and supervised by non-state actors, including insurgent and terrorist groups. In particular, the whereabouts and status of more than 1,000 Stinger SAMs, delivered through CIA channels to the Afghan *mujahedeen* in the 1980s to fight Soviet troops, remains unknown. According to indirect information, not less than 200 of the above-mentioned MANPADS are currently owned by various NSA groupings, ranging from Al Qaeda to the Kurdish Workers' Party. A portion of the 200 firing units and 2000 Strela-2M and Iгла missiles that were left after the collapse of Marxist regime in Nicaragua are at the disposal of the narco-terrorist insurgent organization Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC). It should also be noted that no more than 1,000 out of 5,000 missiles for the said weapon that were deployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the armed conflict of 1992–95, have

¹⁴ A. Karpenko, *Russian missiles: 1943–1993* (St. Petersburg: 1993), 85.

been used, withdrawn, bought out, or destroyed; the status of others remains uncertain. In general, no less than twenty-seven terrorist groups presently possess either U.S.-made Stingers, Soviet/Russian-made Strelas and Iglas of various modifications, British-made Blowpipes, French Mistrals, Swedish RBS-70s, Chinese HN-5s, or Pakistani Anzas, etc.¹⁵

A steady tendency toward the use or threatened use of MANPADS against civil aviation finds its parallel in an operational chronology of related incidents:

- On 28 October 2002, two missiles (supposedly Strela-2) were fired from a car at an Israeli El Al Boeing-757-300 on take-off from the airport in Mombasa, Kenya; due to missile malfunction and premature explosion, the aircraft was not practically damaged and kept on flying.
- In August 2003, three men from the Middle East were detained by FBI officers when trying to bring Iгла-M SAM (NATO codename SA-18) missiles into the United States; a presumable aim of the delivery was to mount a terrorist attack against a civil aircraft.
- On 24 October 2003, an El Al Boeing-767, bound from Tel-Aviv to Los Angeles with 193 passengers on board, was diverted to a secondary airport due to urgent intelligence information about a prepared attack against the airliner using a portable SAM to be launched from a previously selected position in the area of the intermediate landing airport in Toronto.¹⁶

A clear illustration of the seriousness of this issue is a statement of the commander of the U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM), Lieutenant General John Handy: “In the course of global war against terrorism, the MANPAD threat is the greatest threat we have ever been faced with.”¹⁷

It is necessary to add that terrorists are constantly seeking new, technically innovative and deadly methods to destroy aircraft from the ground. A striking confirmation of this effort was an attempt by an unknown (presumably domestic) terrorist to use a laser beam to affect the sight of an airliner’s pilot during a landing in Salt Lake City in September 2004.

Direct Actions Against Ground Infrastructure. The target of this category of terrorist attacks is the supporting ground infrastructure of civil aviation. The aim is to incur material, political, and psychological damage and reaffirm the fact of war. Static technical infrastructure (passenger and cargo terminals, hangars, fuel tanks, air traffic radar, and other facilities), as well as aircraft on the ground remain vulnerable targets for assault with the purpose of takeover or destruction. This element of the terrorist threat framework is widespread. Confirmation can be found in two selective operational episodes in the context of the current civil wars in Sri Lanka and Colombia.

¹⁵ J. Aras, *Terrorism*, 119; Thomas B. Hanter, “The Proliferation of MANPADS,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review* (September 2001).

¹⁶ *Izvestia*, 27 October 2003.

¹⁷ USNI Military Databases; available at www.periscope.com. Quote from 20 November 2003.

On 24 July 2001, a group of suicide combatants from the insurgent/terrorist organization Liberation Tigers of Tamil-Eelam (LTTE) conducted a surprise attack under cover of darkness on the international airport and an adjacent military airfield in the Sri Lankan capital Colombo. As a result of a fierce seven-hour battle, three Airbus passenger aircraft (2 A-330 and 1 A-340) belonging to Sri Lanka Airlines, as well as six aircraft and two helicopters of the Sri Lankan air force, were destroyed, and another three Airbus airliners were damaged. In addition, a building of the passenger terminal was destroyed, and an electricity power station and two aviation fuel storage tanks were burnt. The cost of the destroyed aviation equipment alone amounted to \$400 million.¹⁸ Note that the entire operation was carried out by just one raiding party, made up of twelve to fifteen gunmen, armed with automatic weapons, grenade launchers, and explosive charges.

In February 2004, Colombian security forces detected and defused four gas balloons laden with explosives and a remote control device, which were covertly deployed by a subversive group of the insurgent/terrorist organization Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC) from a road alongside a runway at the airport in Valdupar. Terrorists planned to launch their devices pending the arrival of Alvaro Uribe, the President of Colombia.

Incurring damage to civil aviation on the ground is not solely a method at the disposal of large armed groups, and may be applied not only to the infrastructure, but to passengers and personnel as well. In particular, groups of terrorists—numbering only three gunmen each—from the Japanese Red Army (JRA) and the Armenian Secret Army for Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) conducted armed attacks on passengers at airports in Tel-Aviv and Paris in 1968 and 1983, killing twenty-six and five people, respectively. In July 2002, a U.S. citizen named Hisham Hidayat, acting absolutely independently, on the grounds of national enmity and religious fanaticism, committed an armed assault on passengers being registered at an El Al counter at Los Angeles International Airport, killing two passengers and wounding three. This last case was possible due to the negligence of the airport security service, in spite of the fact that this service has been acting under the heightened state of alert imposed in U.S. airports after 9/11.

Peripheral Categories. This category does not pertain to acts that are specifically terroristic in nature, but to acts that, by their parameters (criminal character), or their immediate and long-term consequences, are compatible with terrorism. Targets of this category of actions are largely aircraft, and more rarely passengers, crew, and the supporting ground infrastructure of civil aviation. Its aims are different from posing a direct or indirect threat on board of an airliner, and are differently motivated. These include:

- Use of civil aviation by figures of international terrorism for transportation (that is, for indirect support of terrorist activity);

¹⁸ Jane's Information Group; see http://www.janes.com/security/international_security/news/misc/janes010724.

- Use of civil aviation by figures of transnational organized crime as means of carrying out illegal activities;
- Forcible actions on board airliners on the basis of deviant social or psychic behavior of individual passengers or groups of passengers.

Participants in international terrorism at all levels often use civil aviation for its intended purpose: transportation. Civil aviation is the fastest and most convenient means of concealed transit on the basis of legal or forged travel documents, especially when one wants to cover considerable distances in a short time. Note that airliners and passengers are subject to no danger in this case; the danger is realized on the territories of the destination (or other) countries, which are targets of terrorist operations. There is also a probability that civil aviation is used as a means to transport operational documents, propaganda materials, and—to a lesser degree—weapons, ammunition, explosives, and radioactive and poisonous substances (although the latter are more likely transported via cargo aviation). Another aspect, although less widespread and yet likely, is the use of civil aircraft as a means of bringing terrorists and hostages to a certain geographical point following the commission of an act of terror *beyond the sphere* of civil aviation (example: the episode of taking secondary school pupils as hostages in the North-Ossetian Autonomous Republic of Russia by a gang led by Paul Yakshiyants in 1988).

The current active convergence of international terrorism and transnational organized crime is a relatively new factor in the sphere of indirect threats to aviation security. It should be noted that civil aviation is objectively sphere of interest to criminal entities, who are engaged in such activities as illegal migration, drug trafficking, money laundering, and smuggling weapons, ammunition, works of art, etc. A certain portion of the operations and movements of criminal organizations are carried out using regular passenger flights within the framework of normal passenger and cargo flows under the cover of both legal and forged documents. The threat posed by organized crime may be regarded as indirect, in consideration of the fact that a basic task of organized criminal networks is the movement of subjects and items of criminal activity (people, drugs, cash, etc.) between remote geographical points as covertly and rapidly as possible. Owing to the fact that transnational criminal organizations have joined forces with international terrorists and are part of their financial resource base, the involvement of these criminal groups cannot be ignored in the light of the struggle against terrorism.

Deviant social behavior on the part of individuals or groups on board airliners may under certain circumstances create conditions that can either cause an aviation disaster or threaten the life of passengers. These are primarily acts of hooliganism caused or aggravated by alcoholic or narcotic intoxication. Specific categories of passengers—fans of soccer teams or and music groups, youth tourism groups, crews of fishing boats, etc.—represent a source of heightened danger. The combination of the sedative effect of alcohol and the feeling of impunity often displayed by members of such groups is frequently a trigger for increased aggression. This is confirmed, for example, by a virtual riot that took place between tourists on board of an Aeroflot flight from

Hurghada (Egypt) to Moscow in 1996. The numbers bear out the point: 300 cases of hooliganism were reported on British Airways flights in 2003, and 126 cases on Aeroflot flights.¹⁹ Whereas 1994 saw 1,132 reported cases of the violation of airline behavior rules worldwide, the figure had risen to 5,416 by 1997 (as recorded by the International Aviation Transport Association).

Actions on board of an aircraft carried out by passengers with mental illness pose a particular danger to the lives of passengers. In one instance, a mentally-ill Italian national, Stefano Sabarini, having proclaimed himself the founder of a new religion, was captured in March 1999 on an Air France Airbus A-320 bound for Paris from Marcel, and again in November 2002 on an Alitalia Airbus A-320 bound for Paris from Bologna.²⁰ This is a striking illustration of the ineffective work of European security services in the area of civil aviation, as they failed to prevent a person who was widely known to be dangerous from boarding the flights. In November 2002, a mentally-ill Israeli citizen, Taufik Al-Furka, tried to hijack an El Al flight bound from Tel Aviv for Istanbul, but his attempt was prevented by security agents on board. In March 2003, Ozgur Gekaslan, from Turkey, seized and hijacked a Turkish Airlines aircraft to Athens. The investigation and medical examination identified in both cases evidence of mental disorders, aggravated by an array of social and personal problems. In considering the particularly dangerous character of the above-mentioned actions, which were fraught with potentially grave consequences both for civil aviation and a wider scale, there is good reason to classify these peripheral threats as actions that fall under an enlarged definition of terrorism.

Difficulties in Air Transport Security in Azerbaijan

Arising from the general tendencies outlined above are threat parameters in the realm of air transportation that are of particular importance for Azerbaijan, due to the country's unique position in the global system of terrorist threats. Of critical importance is the fact that Azerbaijan is situated at the junction of several unstable geopolitical areas (Caucasus, Caspian basin, Black Sea basin, Central Asia, Middle East, the Persian Gulf). In addition, it possesses considerable energy resources (oil and natural gas) and is a participant in several international geo-economic projects.²¹ Such a concurrence of factors is, beyond any doubt, reflective of the country's growing importance in terms of incipient global trends of the twenty-first century in the spheres of economics and security. At the same time, the nation's position has its seamy side, particularly a growing threat that Azerbaijan is increasingly near to the focus of operational activity of different terrorist entities, particularly participants in the global conflict whose structural format has been altered in the wake of 9/11.

¹⁹ *Izvestia*, 27 April 2004.

²⁰ Aras, *World War Four*, 556.

²¹ J. Arasly, presentation at a meeting of the PfP Consortium's Combating Terrorism Working Group, West Point, September 2003.

This is true in the area of civil aviation security as well. Azerbaijan's geographical location primarily accounts for its significance in the flow of international traffic, including air transportation. It was dynamics that resulted from the continuing conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the development of oil resources in the Caspian Sea, that provided the initial impetus to reorient additional passenger and cargo air routes through Azerbaijan. On the other hand, the above-mentioned factors also contribute to an unstable military-political background in the region as a whole. Further complicating the issue is the as yet unsettled conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and the aggravation both of regional (Chechnya, Abkhazia, the Kurdish question) and global problems (international terrorism, transnational organized crime, migration). The point is that Azerbaijan runs the risk of being pulled into the political and operational vortex of several transnational and local terrorist groups that are operating on the regional stage. Those groups that offer the greatest danger are:

- A conglomeration of Armenian terrorist groups, previously operating under the banner of the Armenian Secret Army for Liberation of Armenia;
- Regional structures of the transnational Al Qaeda network;
- Structures of the separatist Kurdish Worker's Party (PKK) and the Congress of Democracy and Freedom of Kurdistan (KADEK) and its local branches;
- Internal factions of the Iranian opposition group Mojahedin-e-Khalk, which are currently operating independently from the central group;
- Structures of the Iraqi religious-political group Ansar al Islam;
- Various structural elements of the Chechen separatist movement.

This essay does not aim to examine the operational parameters, ideologies, or political motivations of these organizations. Still, it is appropriate to note that all of them have previously been known to employ terrorism against civil aviation. Also, one cannot ignore the global fact that Azerbaijan is located in a region that has become an operational-transit zone for transnational organized crime.

Conclusion

While making no claims to offer a comprehensive and thoroughly expert analysis, the author dares to consider matters relating to the struggle against terrorism from the perspective of civil aviation, and to make some recommendations for actions that should be taken. Below are the functional categories into which these actions may be sorted:

1. *Improvement of the air transport security system.* This would include toughening procedures relating to the purchase of airline tickets and to the registration and examination of passengers and cargo to rule out bringing individuals and articles on board that could pose even the slightest threat to passengers' safety. It would also involve increasing technical standards of control and security, forming exclusive security zones around airports, and improving the all-around training of security service employees.

2. *Improvement and introduction of technical protection measures for aircraft.* Provides for the use of electronic means of protection against MANPADS launches.
3. *Introduction of preventive measures aimed at averting acts of terror.* This would include the creation of databases on potentially dangerous passengers; more stringent pre-screening for members of radical political organizations, religious sects, criminal groups, those who are already or likely to become intoxicated, those skilled in hand-to-hand combat, etc.; and more thorough vetting of flight crews and technical personnel employed by the airlines.
4. *Coordination of efforts and expansion of interaction between civil aviation bodies and state security services.* This would involve forging closer ties between airlines and civil aviation authorities and the armed forces, special and secret services, law enforcement, immigration, and customs agencies within the framework of combating international terrorism and organized crime.
5. *Improvement of the international legal mechanism of counteracting aviation terrorism.* Current conventions are not enough to properly coordinate the actions of states to combat terrorist threats on civil aviation.
6. *Expansion and deepening of the interaction between relevant professional structures at the regional and international levels.* This includes rendering organizational, financial, and technical assistance to separate states that are located in areas of heightened risk in terms of air transport and traffic operations.

I am aware that putting these suggestions into effect is difficult not only from the organizational and financial standpoint, but also on political, moral, and ethical grounds as well. Taking fingerprints and scanning retinas of airline passengers, and using armed air marshals on flights are all adverse to the principles of democracy and individual freedom. This can simply be added to the list of the numerous negative consequences of the phenomenon of international terrorism. To sum up, I must ultimately arrive at pessimistic conclusion: terrorism will exist as long as humanity does. Even worse, its trajectory is currently on the ascent. Hence, the problem of air transport security is more critical than ever before.

Narcoterrorism in Southeastern Europe

*Lucia Ovidia Vreja **

The dramatic attack against the United States on September 11, 2001, besides its tragic consequences in terms of the loss of human lives and material damage, constituted a wake-up call for the international community regarding the spectacular dimension and the new form that international terrorism had assumed. After that event, huge efforts on the part of national and international actors were directed towards defeating this global peril. Yet one aspect of the fight against terrorism seems to be overlooked: the connection between terrorism and organized crime.

The magnitude of the organized crime phenomenon in southeastern Europe, the presence of well-established networks, and the huge profits obtained through organized criminal activities—especially drug trafficking, the financial backbone of most criminal organizations—all make organized crime and narcotics dealing very attractive activities for terrorists and terrorist groups. Given the efforts of the international community after September 11th to freeze the funds and assets of Al Qaeda or Al Qaeda-related terrorist groups, it is very likely that we will witness an increase of these groups' involvement in organized crime activities in order to raise new funds. However, raising money for mounting new attacks, or for maintaining their infrastructure, recruiting and training new members, etc., although very important, are not the only reasons for terrorist groups' participation in organized crime. Equally important are the well-organized networks that are already in use by criminal groups, which could be exploited by terrorist individuals or organizations for extending their infrastructure; recruiting new members; moving people, equipment, and funds without being detected; and establishing new instruction bases.

Southeastern Europe is characterized by a high level of organized criminal activity, especially drug trafficking, along with some presence of terrorist groups, including Al Qaeda (mainly in the Western Balkans). In this context, it is hard to believe—and it would be a mistake to consider—that terrorist groups would not make use of the networks of criminal activity that already exist in the region. Therefore, this analysis will offer a brief assessment of the dimension of drug trafficking activity in southeastern Europe and an examination of the possible connections between this criminal activity and its networks and terrorism, based on the imperative that the region, mainly the Western Balkans, should not be allowed to become a “safe haven” for terrorists.

Defining the Problem

Transnational organized crime is a major problem in southeastern Europe, and one that is a very complex phenomenon, “overlapping and linked with warlordism and terrorism,” meaning that any attempt to deal effectively with any one of these problems re-

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quires “dealing with the others as well—either at the same time or sequentially—because each one feeds off the other.”¹ Organized crime takes many forms and involves a wide variety of criminal activities,² yet I will focus here on one crime market that is considered to be one of the major threats in most European countries; drug trafficking.

Even though organized crime—including drug trafficking—and terrorism are often seen as separate phenomena, raising disputes over the best methods of countering them, the link between the two is undeniable. It is true that terrorists and drug traffickers have different long-term objectives (e.g., political goals for terrorists, and economic ones for drug traffickers),³ yet they often share some short-term goals; nearly every terrorist group raises some money from the drug trade. The present study starts from the definition of “narcoterrorism” as referring—according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration⁴—to terrorist acts carried out by groups that are directly or indirectly involved in cultivating, manufacturing, transporting, or distributing illicit drugs. Therefore, the term refers to groups that use drug trafficking to fund terrorist activities. Usually, this cooperation between terrorist groups or networks and organized crime networks will assure the former the financial and logistical support. Moreover, the terrorist groups and the illegal criminal networks provide support for each other, so it can be said that it is useless to discuss terrorism separate from organized crime.

As illicit drug trafficking is extremely profitable, it is “also linked to international terrorist organizations that need money to finance their activities. By forging advantageous relationships with drug traffickers or becoming actively involved in the drug trade themselves, terrorist groups such as Hezbollah or Al Qaeda use money from drug sales to further their political agendas.”⁵

According to institutions that deal with this issue, it is certain that organized crime, and especially drug trafficking, represents the most important source of financing for

¹ Dennis J. D. Sandole, “Combating Crime in Southeastern Europe: An Integrated, Coordinated, Multi-level Approach,” paper presented at the 4th Reichenau Workshop of the PfP Consortium Working Group on Regional Stability in South East Europe, on *Crushing Crime in South East Europe: A Struggle of Domestic, Regional and European Dimensions*, Reichenau, Austria, 16–19 May, 2003.

² *Summary of the Organized Crime Situation Report 2004. Focus on the Threat of Cyber-crime*, Provisional Report (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, Octopus Program, 6 September 2004), 4.

³ *Terrorism: Q & A/ Narcoterrorism*, available at: <http://www.cfrterrorism.org/terrorism/narcoterrorism.html>.

⁴ Asa Hutchinson, *Congressional Testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee’s Subcommittee on Technology, Terrorism and Government Information about Narco-Terror: The World Connection Between Drugs and Terror*, 13 March 2002; available at: www.usdoj.gov/dea/pubs/cngrtest/ct031302.html.

⁵ The National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, *Drugs and Terror: Just the Facts. The Links Between the Drug Trade, Drug Traffickers and Terrorists*, available at: http://www.drugstory.net/pdfs/DandT_Fact_Sheet.pdf.

terrorist groups, providing up to 30–40 percent of their funds.⁶ It is even accepted that the main threat to national security is not terrorism sponsored by certain states anymore, but from terrorist acts carried out by “unregimented networks,” groups or individuals increasingly motivated by the money obtained through organized criminal activity, mainly the traffic in illegal drugs.⁷ The forms of terrorist groups’ involvement in the drug trade vary from selling drugs as such; to collecting taxes from people who cultivate or process illicit drugs on lands that terrorists control; to support from states funded by the drug trade (such as Afghanistan – whose former Taliban rulers earned an estimated \$40–50 million per year from taxes related to opium, Albania in past years, Syria, or Lebanon).⁸

Although terrorists do not need much money to mount an attack, they do need large sums of money for maintaining their infrastructure and expanding their operations. As Phil Williams of the University of Pittsburgh explained, profits are only a means for terrorists, and “not an end in themselves. Money is raised for both macro (strategic) and micro (operational) levels. The macro level is expensive and includes terrorist infrastructure, terrorist training, and terrorist’s efforts to acquire WMD and to buy government support. The micro level is where cells engage in drug trafficking, credit card fraud and robberies in order to fund operations.”⁹

For terrorists, drug trafficking is quite an easy way to earn substantial sums of money, as well as to gather or distribute large sums of cash without being detected by authorities, given the well-organized and hard-to-detect financial networks of the narcotics trade. According to the UN, the traffic in illegal drugs represents a \$400-500 billion annual business, equal to 8 percent of the world’s total trade.¹⁰ Given the fact that after September 11th, many steps were taken to block terrorist funding and put pressure on the state sponsors of terrorism, the conclusion could be drawn that the level of drug trafficking related to terrorist groups’ financing has increased, or at least is likely to increase.

The relation between terrorist organizations and drug-trafficking groups is a “mutually beneficial one that allows exchanges of drugs for weapons, use of the same smuggling routes, use of similar methods to conceal profits and fund-raising.” Moreover, almost all of the terrorist groups “identified as being involved in narcotics trafficking

⁶ *Combating the Financing of Terrorist Organizations* (in Romanian), Romanian Intelligence Service, available at: www.sri.ro/biblioteca_art_cfot.html.

⁷ *Romania and International Terrorist Groupings* (in Romanian), Romanian Intelligence Service, available at: www.sri.ro/biblioteca_art_rgti.html.

⁸ *Terrorism: Q & A/ Narcoterrorism*, available at: <http://www.cfrterrorism.org/terrorism/narcoterrorism.html>.

⁹ Phil Williams, “Organized Crime and the State: A Framework for Analysis,” paper presented at the conference on *Organized Crime and the Corruption of State Institutions*, organized by The Center for International and Security Studies at University of Maryland, College Park, MD (18 November 2002).

¹⁰ Peter Reuter and Victoria Greenfield, “Measuring Global Drug Markets,” *World Economics* 2:4 (October-December 2001), 160.

also reportedly have had contacts with Al Qaeda, which is known to be actively engaged in drug-trafficking activities.”¹¹ In this context, the issue of the drug trade and its networks is a very serious one, raising many questions regarding future steps that can be taken to prevent this phenomenon.

The Drug Trade in Southeastern Europe

According to experts, drug traffickers and terrorists tend to flourish in failed states with ineffective governments that have been destabilized by war and internal conflicts.¹² Nevertheless, even transitional countries are used as traffic routes for illegal drugs, and once they are established, these networks tend to become increasingly well organized and hard to detect.

Southeastern Europe is a very complex region that has experienced conflict and political instability since the beginning of 1990s, which created the necessary conditions for the establishment of criminal networks as well as for the development of criminal activities, including drug trafficking. Although the involvement of the international community has helped the region to become more closely integrated with the rest of Europe and resolve most of its ethnic conflicts, the threats for regional security coming from this area are now mainly related to organized crime. Yet, in spite of the fact that southeast European countries have proven in the recent past a substantial willingness to cooperate in stabilizing the area, the fight against organized crime remains one of the key challenges the countries in the region face today. The Western Balkans (including Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Albania and, to a certain degree, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) is still considered “the gateway of organized crime to Europe,”¹³ which raises the specter of the potential of terrorist activities in, or emanating from, the area. Aside from the scope of organized crime—especially drug trafficking—in southeastern Europe, there are many voices concerned about the presence in Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Albania of individuals and groups linked to terrorist networks, including Al Qaeda.¹⁴ Moreover, organized crime activities in the entire region are assumed to support terrorist groups, especially via financial assistance.

It is obvious that the greatest peril directly or indirectly connected with terrorism in the region is to be found in organized crime, which represents not only a funding source for terrorism but also a basis for recruitment of new people and support for its existence. The strategic position of the region, between Western Europe and the Middle East, adds a new dimension to the link with terrorism.

¹¹ Rex A. Hudson (Project Manager), “A Global Overview of Narcotics-funded Terrorist and Other Extremist Groups,” Report Prepared by the Federal Research Division, May 2002, 1.

¹² *Terrorism: Q & A/ Narcoterrorism*.

¹³ “EUHR Javier Solana’s Intervention on Organized Crime in South-Eastern Europe,” London Conference on Organized Crime in South Eastern Europe, London, 25 November 2002.

¹⁴ International Crisis Group, *Bin Laden and the Balkans: The Politics of Anti-Terrorism*, ICG Balkans Report No. 119 (9 November 2001); available at: www.crisisweb.org.

Drug trafficking has become so crucial to the cause of Albanian separatism that certain towns populated by Albanians (such as Veliki Trnovac and Blastica in Serbia, Vratnica and Gostivar in FYRO Macedonia, and Shkoder and Durres in Albania) have become known as the “new Medellins” of the Balkans.¹⁵ The so-called “Albanian Mafia,” consisting largely of ethnic Albanians from Kosovo, “have for several years been a feature of the criminal underworld in a number of cities in Europe and North America, being particularly prominent in the trade in illegal narcotics.”¹⁶ Since the mid 1990s, “Albanian nationalists in ethnically tense Macedonia and the Serbian province of Kosovo have built a vast heroin network, leading from the opium fields of Pakistan to black-market arms dealers in Switzerland, which used to transport up to \$2 billion worth of the drug annually into the heart of Europe.” In 1995, more than 500 Kosovar or Macedonian Albanians were in prison in Switzerland for drug or arms trafficking offenses, and more than 1,000 others were under indictment.¹⁷

At the same time, the profits gained through illegal activities are often used for financing terrorism; most often, financing for both local conflicts and terrorist activities draws on illicit activities as one of its main sources, especially the drug trade. For instance, according to the Center for Peace in the Balkans, it has been confirmed that terrorism in the Balkans has been primarily financed through narcotics trafficking. Heroin is the most profitable commodity on the Western market, as a kilogram of heroin, worth \$1000 in Thailand, wholesales for \$110,000 in Canada, with a retail street value of \$800,000.¹⁸

Thus, southeastern Europe is a bridge between the Middle Eastern and Central Asian drug producers and the Western European drug consumer market. Via the Balkan route, heroin travels through Turkey, FYRO Macedonia, Kosovo, and Albania to the Western European markets. The Albanian drug dealers, for example, ship heroin from Asia’s Golden Crescent, frequently from Afghanistan, which is still a huge producer of opium poppies, as it produces over 70 percent of the global supply of heroin and 80 to 90 percent of the heroin found in western and eastern European markets.¹⁹ From there, the heroin passes through Iran to Turkey, where it is refined, and then transported by the Balkan/Albanian drug dealers. According to the U.S. State Department, anywhere from four to six tons of heroin move through Turkey every month.²⁰

¹⁵ *Balkan – Albania – Kosovo – Heroin – Jihad*, Research Analysis (Toronto: The Center for Peace in the Balkans, May 2000), available at: www.balkanpeace.org/our/our3.shtml.

¹⁶ “The Kosovo Liberation Army: Does Clinton Policy Support Group with Terror, Drug Ties? From ‘Terrorists’ to ‘Partners,’” U.S. Senate Republican Policy Committee, 31 March 1999. Ibid.

¹⁸ *Balkan – Albania – Kosovo – Heroin – Jihad*.

¹⁹ Michel Chossudovsky, “The Spoils of War: Afghanistan’s Multibillion Dollar Heroin Trade,” 5 April 2004; Center for Research on Globalization, available at: www.globalresearch.ca/articles/CHO404A.html.

²⁰ *Balkan – Albania – Kosovo – Heroin – Jihad*.

Terrorism Connections in Southeastern Europe/Western Balkans

After September 11th, the question of the potential for terrorist activity in (or emanating from) the Balkans was raised, based on the presence of a large Muslim population in Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Albania. And such a potential terrorist threat could be significant.

Although the activity of terrorist groups in the Balkans is hard to uncover, and the connections between these groups and drug lords are difficult to prove, the evidence must not be ignored. Moreover, the common factors that exist for all the Balkan countries—e.g. inefficient governance, poor public security, weak rule of law, pervasive economic backwardness, institutional corruption, and organized crime—are catalysts for producing an environment where international terrorist networks can easily conceal personnel and money.²¹

Yet, since September 11th, terrorist attacks were also carried out or thwarted in Macedonia and Bosnia, indicating that Al Qaeda is present in the Balkans.²² Moreover, Albania, Bosnia, and Kosovo are considered to have become “European hotbeds of Iranian-backed Islamic terrorism and Al Qaeda in particular.”²³ And this is not surprising, given the large Muslim population living in these countries and the trend of terrorists today “to move from Islamic countries where they have traditionally assimilated and found employment, to the long-established Islamic diasporas in other countries where they can network through religious and social systems.”²⁴

Some have even suggested that, “starting in the mid-August 2003, radical Islamist leaders elevated the role of the terrorism infrastructure in the Balkans as a key facilitator of a proposed escalation of conflict into the heart of Europe, Israel and the United States.” For recruiting new cadres and strengthening their infrastructure in the Balkans, Al Qaeda leaders even nominated Shahid Emir Musaa Azyi, a veteran of the war in Afghanistan who is close to the Al Qaeda elite and the Taliban leadership, to coordinate and run special recruitment operations in the Balkans, especially in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania, Kosovo, and Macedonia.²⁵ People connected to Al Qaeda have even

²¹ International Crisis Group, “Bin Laden and the Balkans: The Politics of Anti-terrorism,” ICG Balkans Report No. 119 (9 November 2001), 2.

²² Brian Michael Jenkins, “Countering Al Qaeda,” in *Defeating Terrorism: Shaping the New Security Environment*, ed. Russel D. Howard and Reid L. Sawyer (Guilford, CT: McGraw-Hill, 2004), 133.

²³ “Europe May Face a New Wave of Domestic Terrorism,” Richard Bennett Media - AFI Research, 7 April 2002; available at: www.btinternet.com/~nnjv/tereur070402.htm.

²⁴ Wayne A. Downing, “The Global War on Terrorism,” in *Defeating Terrorism*, ed. Howard and Sawyer, 151.

²⁵ Yossef Bodansky, “Osama Bin Laden Focuses on the Balkans,” in *Defense and Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy*, 19 September 2003, available at: www.balkanpeace.org/rs/archive/sep03/rs230.shtml.

tried to penetrate Romania, although they have reportedly been expelled before their efforts could take root.²⁶

What is even more terrifying is that, due to lax institutional control and corruption practices, the countries of the Balkans are becoming points of “attraction to terror groups’ interests.”²⁷ This is especially the case with Al Qaeda, which is spreading its roots easily in the region, while this potential danger is “inadmissibly neglected” by the international coalition against terrorism.²⁸

Despite their limited resources, since late 2001 the countries of southeastern Europe have actively supported the international coalition against terrorism. Albania, Serbia-Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Bulgaria, and Romania cooperated to combat organized crime and various forms of trafficking, enhance border security, and improve training for border security personnel.²⁹ Moreover, they have taken measures to arrest suspects, close and investigate NGOs suspected of financing terrorism, and freeze bank accounts of terrorist organizations. Yet the level of organized crime and corruption, the lapses in border security, and the institutional weaknesses in these countries still make them an attractive target for exploitation by terrorist and Islamic extremist groups.

Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), recently remarked that “the revenue generated by organized crime offers terrorist groups a steady flow of funding, making the effort to eliminate drug trafficking and to reduce drug abuse critical strategies in the global fight against terrorism.”³⁰ According to Costa, “terrorists and warlords in Afghanistan, as well as insurgents in Central Asia, the Russian Federation, and along the trafficking routes on the former Soviet Union’s southern rim all the way to the Balkans, share part of the es-

²⁶ Radu Timofte, Director of Romanian Intelligence Service, according to “Al Qaeda Made Its Way to Romania,” *Novinite*, 30 March 2004; available at: www.novinite.com/newsletter/print.php?id=32808.

²⁷ “Al Qaeda ‘Roots Easily’ in the Balkans,” *Novinite*, 28 April 2004; available at: www.novinite.com/newsletter/print.php?id=33960.

²⁸ “Danger of Islamic Terrorism in the Balkans,” “Terrorism/Counter-terrorism,” *Tuzla Night Owl*, 14 November 2003; available at: http://www.tfeagle.army.mil/tfeno/Feature_Story.asp?Article=72243.

²⁹ *Patterns of Global Terrorism-2003, Europe Overview*, Released by the Office of the Coordinator for Counter-terrorism, 29 April 2004; and *Patterns of Global Terrorism-2002, Europe Overview*, Released by the Office of the Coordinator for Counter-terrorism, U.S. Department of States, 21 May 2002.

³⁰ “UN Warns about Nexus between Drugs, Crime and Terrorism,” *M2 Presswire*, 1 October 2004; The International Association for the Study of Organized Crime, available at: www.iasoc.net/news.htm.

estimated \$30 billion world heroin market.”³¹ As it has become increasingly difficult to “distinguish clearly between terrorist groups and organized crime units, since their tactics overlap,” we are now witnessing “the birth of a new hybrid of ‘organized crime/terrorist organizations,’ which requires cutting off the connection between crime, drugs, and terrorism.”³²

The states of southeastern Europe still “demonstrate characteristics that make them inviting targets for transnational criminal groups seeking favorable territory from which to operate,” with drug trafficking representing the most profitable business for criminal groups.³³ Despite the democratic reforms in those countries, they are still considered to be hospitable to transnational crime and terrorism, very often due to corruption and the ease of penetration into state institutions.

For example, since the beginning of the 1990s, ethnic Albanian organized crime groups took advantage of the instability and war in the Balkans to become “the fastest growing ethnic criminal presence in Europe, with operations reaching as far as Australia and the United States, and becoming the direct distributors of an estimated 40 percent of heroin in West European markets.”³⁴ Given the extent of this reach, it is clear that the local/regional criminal groups were closely cooperating with international crime organizations, even being suspected of connections with Arab groups and markets in the Middle East, which are often “protected” by the authorities responsible for combating such criminal activities. Even in Romania, the main anti-narcotics agency, the Directorate for Combating Organized Crime and Anti-Drug Operations, has itself been implicated in the drug trade.³⁵

Accordingly, a substantial amount of terrorist activity has also occurred in parts of the former Yugoslavia. Since the beginning of the conflicts in the former Yugoslav territory, the most senior leaders of Al Qaeda have visited the Balkans, including Osama Bin Laden himself on three occasions between 1994 and 1996, and the Egyptian terrorist leader Ayman Al-Zawahiri has operated terrorist training camps, weapons of

³¹ The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimates the total annual turnover of international trade in Afghan opiates at \$25-30 billion. United Nations for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (UNDCPP), “Afghanistan: Opium Survey 2002 – Executive Summary,” October 2002, 2 ; also “Area Under Opium Poppy Cultivation in Afghanistan Has Increased by Eight Percent, UN Says,” 29 October 2003; United Nations Information Service, Vienna International Center, available at: http://unodc.org/unodc/press_release_2003-10-29_1.html.

³² “UN Warns about Nexus between Drugs, Crime and Terrorism.”

³³ Glenn E. Curtis (Project Manager), “Nations Hospitable to Organized Crime and Terrorism,” Report Prepared by the Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, under an Inter-agency Agreement with the United States Government, October 2003, 32. Available at: <http://loc.gov/rr/frd>.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 33.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 46, according to the U.S. Department of State, Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs.

mass destruction factories, and money-laundering and drug-trading networks throughout Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Turkey, and Bosnia.³⁶

Their activities have been hidden under the cover of dozens of “humanitarian” agencies spread throughout Bosnia, Kosovo, and Albania, and their involvement in “heroin trafficking through Kosovo helped also to fund terrorist activity directly associated with Al Qaeda and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard.”³⁷ On October 23, 2001, the imprisonment of operatives of two Al Qaeda-sponsored Islamist cells in Bosnia, who were linked to the heroin trade, called attention to the presence of narcoterrorism in the Balkans.

In 2001, it was estimated that the traffic in illegal drugs in the Balkans was part of the Taliban’s estimated \$8 billion annual income from global drug trafficking, predominantly in heroin, of which Bin Laden is alleged to have administered a substantial portion through Russian Mafia groups for a commission of 10–15 percent, or around \$1 billion annually.³⁸ Moreover, it is estimated that Al Qaeda’s “Balkan-directed funds” from “humanitarian” agencies and local banks, without “explicitly counting the significant drug profits,” reached anywhere from \$500 million to \$700 million between 1992 and 1998.³⁹

Frequently, there were reports that “Osama bin Laden was channeling, in 2001, profits from the sale of narcotics arriving in Western Europe via the Balkan route to local governments and political parties, with the goal of gaining influence in Albania or Macedonia or both,” or that in 2002 “Al Qaeda had acted as a middleman in the movement of heroin from warehouses in Afghanistan via Chechen mafia conduits and into the Balkan narcotics pipeline, taking a percentage of the drug profits for this service.”⁴⁰

Connections between organized crime groups and terrorists are to be found not only in the former Yugoslavia, but also in Bulgaria and Romania. For example, in October 2004, Genica Boierica, a controversial businessman from the city of Craiova, was detained following a spectacular search by prosecutors from the Service for Organized Crime Prevention within the Prosecutor’s Office under the High Court of Cassation and Justice. Boierica is charged with involvement in alcohol smuggling and illegal VAT refunds, and is also suspected of having connections with terrorists, mainly through activities that channel funds to terrorists. According to the prosecutors, Genica Boierica was brought before the court in 2003 together with an Arab citizen, Jamal Sadik Jamal Al Adi, and another two of his employees. These men were charged with having caused damage to the state of over 115 billion lei (over \$3.5 million); be-

³⁶ Marcia Christoff Kurop, “Al Qaeda’s Balkan Links,” *Wall Street Journal Europe*, 1 November 2001.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ According to Yossef Bodansky, the former director of the U.S. House of Representatives’ Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare, quoted in Marcia Christoff Kurop, “Al Qaeda’s Balkan Links.”

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Hudson, “Global Overview.”

tween 1998–2000 Al Adi, under an assumed name, founded several phantom companies through which he manufactured and traded ethyl alcohol.⁴¹ And this is certainly not the only example of connections between organized crime and terrorism in the region.

According to the Director of the Romanian Intelligence Service, there is no clear evidence of the presence of members of Al Qaeda or Islamic Jihad in Romania. Yet there is information on Arab citizens living in Romania who carry out financial activities in support of Al Qaeda or Islamic Jihad, as well as information regarding the involvement of certain terrorist organizations, such as the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK), or Grey Wolves, in the drug trade, using routes that reach Germany and the Netherlands and cadres located in Romania.⁴² On the drug trade in Romania, it is worth noting that in 2001 the seizure of cannabis resin in Eastern Europe reached 17,007 kilos, representing 2 percent of the world total, with the largest quantity being seized in Romania: 13,871 kilos, or approximately 1.53 percent of world total.⁴³ In 2002, in Romania there were also confiscated 202 kilos of heroin, 2 kilos of cocaine, 14,904 kilos of cannabis herb, 38 kilos of cannabis resin, 14,907 kilos of cannabis plants, and a large quantity of synthetic drugs.⁴⁴ These numbers speak volumes about the dimension of the traffic in illegal drugs in Romania, which is both a convenient route for drug dealers going to Western Europe and, increasingly, a consumer country as well.

Conclusions

Drug trafficking, considered separately from all other organized crime activities, has reached a high level in southeastern Europe, and the countries in the region are—however inadvertently—providing nurturing conditions for this activity. Moreover, those involved in the illegal drug trade, as well as in other organized crime activities, are proving to be very resourceful in preserving their networks by any means, including through cooperating with and receiving protection from terrorist groups. On the other side of the equation, terrorists are becoming increasingly involved in drug trafficking, as it proves to be not only a tremendous funding source but also a basis for life support: using illegal routes for recruiting new members, moving people and funds without being detected, establishing new instruction bases, etc.

While their motives may be different, drug traffickers and terrorists provide each other support, and the connections between them are undeniable. Southeastern Europe is one of the many proofs of those connections, with a high level of organized criminal

⁴¹ Adrian Dinu, "Genica Boierica incatusat [Genica Boierica Imprisoned]," *Gazeta de Sud*, 4 October 2004.

⁴² Radu Tudor, "Romanian Anti-terrorist Brigade Extends the Cooperation in the Fight Against Terrorism," *Jane's Intelligence Review* (January 2002).

⁴³ *Global Illicit Drug Trends 2003*, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (New York: United Nations, 2003).

⁴⁴ *2004 World Drug Report*, Volume 2: Statistics, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (New York: United Nations, 2004).

activity—especially drug trafficking—and a not at all negligible active terrorist presence, including Al Qaeda, in the Western Balkans.

In 2005, organized crime, including drug trafficking and corruption, is nevertheless one of the major problems facing the entire southeastern European region. Bulgaria and Romania joined NATO recently, and have concluded the negotiation process with the European Union. Regardless of these major accomplishments, they are still confronted with the threat to their security posed by the high level of all forms of organized crime. The countries of the Western Balkans are in an even worse situation, due to their history over the past decade and their lack of experience in dealing with these problems. In the present context, “nobody can afford the luxury of a fractious Balkans,” and this must be made clear to the United States and Europe, as they “feel compelled to divert political, military and financial resources away from the region and into their struggle against terrorism.”⁴⁵ As the former NATO Secretary General Lord George Robertson put it, “the Balkans must not become another ‘black hole’ of terrorism like Afghanistan.”⁴⁶ Correctly perceiving the importance of helping local actors to deal with this peril, on 2 December 2004 UNMIK appointed a special prosecutor for financial crimes, Andrea Stefano Venegoni, in Kosovo, the appointment being “directed at focusing prosecutorial resources on cases relating to corruption and financial crimes.”⁴⁷

Combating organized crime and drug trafficking should be part and parcel of the set of measures for defeating terrorism. Otherwise the criminal groups will only extend their already established huge networks, which will also work to the benefit of terrorist groups. It is true that organized crime in southeastern Europe—mainly in the Western Balkans—is “first and foremost a problem for the region.”⁴⁸ Yet as long as organized crime constitutes a means of terrorist groups’ penetration and establishment in the countries of the region, and also of obtaining sources of financing for terrorists and terrorist acts, it is also a problem for the international community.

Therefore, any successful strategy of combating organized crime depends on a determined and joint effort of the national governments in the region and the international community. The national governments have the crucial role in the process of drawing up a proper and solid strategy of combating organized crime through passing proper criminal legislation and implementing the laws. However, they should not be left alone in such an important endeavor. International and regional cooperation plays a very important role in drawing up a workable strategy for combating organized crime. As is well known, there is no country that can deal alone with organized crime and terrorist activities. Only through international cooperation could we hope to achieve—if not a complete annihilation of these phenomena—at least a reduction in their scope and effectiveness. Southeastern Europe, especially the Balkans, should not be disregarded in

⁴⁵ Misha Glenny, “Heading off Terrorism in the Balkans,” *New York Times*, 16 October 2001.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ “UNMIK appoints special prosecutor for financial crimes,” ERPKIM Info Service, 2 December 2004; available at: www.kosovo.com/news/archive/ticker/2004/December_02/16.html.

⁴⁸ “EUHR Javier Solana’s Intervention on Organized Crime in Southeastern Europe.”

the international fight against terrorism as a region “hospitable to organized crime and terrorism,” nor should organized crime be allowed to continue as an activity that provides life support to terrorism.