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THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TERRORIST TARGETS IDENTIFICATION PROCESS

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Abstract: *In contemporary realities of a multipolar world dominated by dynamism, in which uncertainty follows an ascending path, the management of risks associated to terrorist actions compels deciding factors to concentrate efforts in managing relevant data (geopolitical context; favoring factors; opportunities; vulnerabilities, threats, challenges and risks; religious conflicts, inter-civilization conflicts, interests, political-ideological; activities, illegal manifestations and actions, hostile, deviant, destabilizing or other perturbative factors). An analysis of the history of the combat of the terrorism confirms the fact that the best method to defeat terrorism is to locate and isolate terrorist activities, monitor and destroy them through "surgical actions" using the most efficient assets, avoiding unnecessary losses or extension / amplification of the effects. Given the wide variation of the ways of display, difficulty of anticipation of location and release moment of terrorist acts, as well as the impossibility of outlining a standard profile of terrorism, the activity of terrorist target identification represents a complex process which involves a thoughtful analysis of terrorist threats areas, the study of the specific threats spectrum, and an efficient management of the data.*

Keywords: *terrorist targets, targeting, stability*

1. INTRODUCTION

Terrorism has been perceived as being an isolated phenomenon, with a limited area of manifestation that transformed to a global threat able to continually improve the adjustment capacity to contemporary security environment, without respecting any rule, speculating vulnerabilities or human or judicial weaknesses.

With the Cold War ending and the last years accelerating trend of the globalization, terrorist networks have adapted the organizational structure as well as the command-execution relations, thus witnessing to an organized destructing process, with dispersed groups and cells coordinated by a core that sets general

guidelines, provides resources and synchronizes the actions. For the purpose of covering operational needs the terrorist organizations retain departments specialized in recruiting, propaganda, funding, and related logistics. The admin headquarters where operations are designed and planned or where the terrorists train themselves are generally conspiratorial, in private areas uncontrollable by authorities, but there are countless examples in which have been used religious edifices, buildings of charity/beneficence organizations or spaces/ lands belonging to firms/consorts with unclearly stated object of activity.

Critical infrastructures targeted by terrorists represent those targets that are material (real or virtual), informational or

organizational that have a symbolic value or are essential/vital to representative community, and their engagement have a major and immediate impact at the public viewpoint level. Given the major risk of being the target of terrorist actions and the implications/effects/consequences, the importance of providing protection and prevention of attacks on these targets represents a major goal of all the structures with responsibilities in the field of security and maintaining public order.

Preferred locations of terrorist attacks remain crowded areas in big cities with minimum security possibilities (train stations, markets, sports facilities, cinemas, schools, theaters, bars and intensive circulation streets), and the trigger moment is so called "rush hour" specific to every particular target (depending on: number of victims, possibility of an audience or large live broadcast).

The main challenge in prevention and direct confrontation of terrorism is represents the globalization and the unpredictability of terrorist threat both by widening of manifestation area and the intensification of media coverage and by the continuous improvement of modus operandi and the action speed. Actual potential of terrorism demonstrates that the prevention of this phenomenon is vital to ensuring international stability and security, but also to defending the interests and national values, regional, individual etc.

Combating risks generated by terrorist threats consists of terrorist targets identification, removal of critical vulnerabilities that can be exploited by terrorists and applying of measures in order to counterattack the impact/destructive effects (physical, systemic, ideological, informational etc.) adapted to respective circumstances, on the bases of directives/plans or security strategies, protection and direct or indirect action/ intervention.

2. TERRORIST TARGETS

On the background of some dissatisfactions and beliefs that cannot be

easily shaken, human terrorist targets can be ideologically indoctrinated, blackmailed, corrupted, used or forced to take steps to violent actions that lead to committing terrorists attacks. The recruitment of the terrorists has its bases into identification of human vulnerabilities and sensibilities, finally leading to persuasion of these individuals to committing reprehensible acts. Usually, are sought persons that consider themselves oppressed/disadvantaged (ethnic or religious minorities; young individuals with extremist views; anti-system young individuals or who want to revenge the death of someone close or an idol; people that feel unjust; people that want to feel important, willing for adventurous/ dangerous sensations, are easy to influence or have deviant/ abnormal psycho-behavioral issues etc.) who, under different methods (money, promises, lies, threats, blackmail etc.) are convinced, up to fanaticism, to commit atrocities on followers without having any remorse, even with the risk of their own lives.

For instance the Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham (ISIS) generates and issues brochures (guidance books, handbooks etc.) wherein they portray behavioral models of raising children in the spirit of the Islamic radicalness, as a future generation of jihadist fighters, able to revive the Islamic flame after they are capable of wielding a weapon.

Lately, as a part of the irrational actions of terrorist organizations can be observed that, increasingly more often, the woman is used both as a tool to fulfill terrorist goals and as well as a target of their attacks. Suicide bombers aim women as targets, together with other categories of victims, acknowledged as being helpless and pacifists in the collective mental (children, elders, persons with disabilities/handicaps etc.), most of all from the perspective of mass media impact, proving once more that there are no rules in terrorist actions.

The death of one or more close (husband, father, son, relative etc.), out of belief or simply the wish to overcome given classical condition (the symbol of the family, of life and of love; inequality in rights with men in



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some areas or cultures etc.), women are more often and more efficiently used for terrorist actions, networks recruiting and involving them on the basis of the following considerations:

- mass media/public opinion impact, in particular the suicide attacks;
- achievement of surprise through the unforeseen of the situation;
- avoiding personal body checks or detention enforcement by the authorities;
- the possibility of easily hiding weapons, ammunitions, and explosives under clothing items.

Terrorist targets may be of human nature, material or ideological, real or virtual, as follows:

- isolated individuals or human collectives who plan, execute, promote or support terrorist acts;
- institutions, sects/ cultures, organizations (political, military, non-governmental, religious, ethnic etc.) that facilitate, support, commit or promote the conduct of terrorist actions;
- propaganda-making entities (media/ virtual space) promoting ideologies, terrorist activities or carry out actions in their benefit;
- physically bounded areas (infrastructure elements/ constructions) or fixed/ mobile means occupied by terrorists or that harbor them or their facilities;
- financial systems and resources used by terrorist or in support of the actions executed by them.

Terrorists' targets are selected in relation to the assumed objectives and ideology, so that their employment in violent actions produce the planned effect both through the symbol that they represent, and damages and victims produced as well as through amplification of the consequences (panic broadening, compromising accountable

authorities, advertising organizational power on a large scale, promoting objectives and purposes to public opinion, winning new adepts or supporters etc.). The selection of the targets, in the first place, aims to influence an audience (readers, listeners, spectators etc.) wider than the intended target, and also to disturb some activities or discredit state authorities.

Along time counteraction strategies have been designed, but the optimal solution that would strike a balance between enforcement tools and the power to persuade is yet to be found, most of the times unsatisfactory, inconclusive and ineffective.

As a conclusion, understanding and multi-factorial analysis of terrorist entities, of their targets and of favorable conditions of executing attacks represents the basis in the research of the terrorist phenomenon, as well as of the identifying the most efficient methods and means to prevent and counter the risks, threats and terrorist actions.

3. PREVENTION OF TERRORIST EVENTS

The main strategic form of preventing terrorism is considered, unanimously, by the specialists of this domain, intelligence acquisition. In this sense, the intelligence structures must offer, as soon as possible, information on real and potential threat that terrorist organizations represent. All information gathered will traverse the stages of evaluation and processing, so that they can be disseminated to deciding factors as soon as possible in a usable form, in order to be able to preemptively intervene with the goal of thwart terrorist elements' foreseen actions.

The new configuration of contemporary threats originating in some of the non-state actors, undetectable, diffuse and specially the

unprecedented amplification of terrorism constitute the coagulant of international cooperation in intelligence domain. The prevention of a terrorist event is unquestionably more efficient than its countering, being mainly conditioned by the predictive- anticipatory efficiency of Intelligence structures, by the possibilities of protecting the vulnerabilities/weak points, by the volitional-reactive capabilities of deciding factors, and also by the context/existing situation of the investigated potential risk.

Early warning represents a proactive process of organizing and directing of the joint effort in order to prevent some risks associated to terrorist phenomena or management and minimization of their impact on planned targets to be engaged by terrorists.

Within the early warning process I have identified 5 *phases*:

- detection of incipient elements of a potential terrorist crisis;
- gathering, sorting and analysis of the information;
- forecast of the evolution and impact of the event;
- commencing of the warning;
- monitoring of the specific elements that lead to the terrorist action.

Prevention of surprise in case of a terrorist violence is achieved through provision of some warning intelligence products over terrorist intentions in order to protect the intended targets and to dispose or reduce the planned destructive effects. Establishing the needs and requests for information as well as gathering them both from open and covered sources demands attention, skillfulness, discretion, patience, and professionalism.

Efficient managing of information regarding terrorists represents a complex and mandatory process for countering them. Opportune delivery of information (time, moment, relevance, accuracy etc.) in conjunction with analysis, prediction, and dissemination capabilities are essential requests in countering terrorist actions.

Intelligence analysis of areas presenting terrorist risk constitute a process of judgment, logical, and structured able to ensure development possibilities/trends of events, hypotheses, strong/vulnerable point, capabilities and probable courses of action of terrorists. Anticipation and diminish of the risk generated by terrorist actions is a desideratum of all intelligence organizations belonging to forces that aim to combat terrorist manifestations.

Shaping actions for combating terrorism presumes an analytic typology based on the need to locate fragmented entities, which relate to each other and of whose actions do not fit within standard operating model, in a complex environment dominated by unknown and ambiguities.

The unique and relevant image of battle space achieved at force nominated for counter must lead to profound understanding of local, regional, and international issues of untraditional enemy in order to be able to establish the most appropriate ways and means to influence his will and the factors that can affect both our own actions and those of the enemy. Surveillance, detection and identification assets of the targets must allow founding of centers of gravity, identification of decisive points and key possibilities of terrorist entities, an aspect that can permit enhancement of own capabilities and the successful completion of the mission.

Following study of the documents that investigate terrorist phenomenon we estimate as being relevant/key factors in identifying person suspect of extremist manifestations or potential terrorists, the following analytic elements/ components:

- familial environment (specific relationships, number of members, shortcomings, status/social position, religion, ethnicity, influences, habits/ customs, rivalries/ adversaries, closed ones etc.);
- relational environment (family/ friends, work/school, collectivity, entourages, membership and status in various foundations/organizations/circles, intensely lived experiences within elitist/usual/ decaying environments);



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- level of education (institutions, specialization, locations, performance, skills)
- information sources (written media, internet, radio/television, presentations/speeches, circles/institutions);
- the occupation (performance/attitude towards work/ perception within the institution etc);
- hobbies/preferences/ambitions/goals;
- strong points (intelligence, character, courage etc.) an weaknesses (alcohol, drugs, gambling women/men, luxury/money, and physical/mental deficiencies addictions);
- behavior (normal/ maladaptive/incoherent, constant/ adapted)/ temper;
- financial situation (debts, unjustified money, lack of control etc.);
- miscellaneous (religion, age, ethnicity, marital status/children, health etc.).

Proactive attitude and civic education can represent key to terrorist prevention. All we need to promote is creating a collective group against terrorism without ignoring, neglecting or refusing the existence of this phenomenon, but, more than that, to involve, contribute and participate to its counter even through the simple provision of some information to competent institutions. In this sense, every citizen can easily observe cues of *indicators* that can generate terrorist risks, as follows:

- prolonged and unjustified stationing of some individuals in the proximity of areas with great importance (foreign diplomatic missions; headquarters of national and international institutions; military facilities/installations; scientific laboratories and research centers etc.) who take pictures or videos of these objectives such activities are forbidden;
- persons that persistently study crowded places (train or subway stations; highways or heavy traffic routes; ports or airports; big

commercial centers or industrial sites; educational institutions; touristic, cultural, and sports sites etc.) or airways, naval, railway, road, and underground access points, without having plausible reasons for doing that;

- persons interested in procuring substances (explosive, chemical, biological, radioactive etc.) or who manufactures, poses, transport or manipulate illegal weapons, ammunitions, substances and other ensembles/parts that could be used with terrorist purposes;

- suspect individuals who ask baseless questions regarding the program of institutions and daily important moments in their schedule that implies diminish of vigilance or moments of maximum agglomeration (shifts of guards, beginning/ending of the working hours, assemblies/meetings etc.);

- actions, of any nature, through which they try to paralyze or disturb the running of institutions/strategic objectives of high importance, with major repercussions for humane collectivities.

In order to provide these information civil population must know to whom they need to address and, especially, to trust the contacted authority. This participatory attitude of the civil environment can be developed only through education/training that leads to profound understanding of the phenomenon and to acknowledgement of the role of the citizens for terrorism prevention, as well as to encouraging an adequate civic behavior and to removal of the potential factors/fears that can affect combative spirit.

Reality demonstrates that terrorists originate from all social environments, have no age or gender and do not belong exclusively to an ethnic group or religion, thus design, anticipation, identification and

clear defining of a target or terrorist action in time and space represents the biggest challenge for the action of countering terrorism. Thus any information that can prevent, anticipate or alleviate a terrorist attack is valuable and must be managed professionally and timely opportune.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Terrorist threats are characterized by ambiguity through the nature of locations, means, operating procedures and attackers' profile, and training for countering them consist of scenarios based on statistics, active intuitive models, contextual equations, likely targets and a variety of information more or less processed, truthful and important for a specific situation.

An efficient and coherent process of intelligence can lead to removal of uncertainty, to acknowledge and understanding of the potential environmental risk, to anticipate future terrorist nature events or to substantiate decisional support which is the basis for the lethal or non-lethal active reactions that will lead to prevention/defusing a terrorist crisis or to capture/destroy the terrorists.

The best method to defeat terrorism through preventive means constitutes localize, monitor and isolate them as well as preparing to counter, through the conduct of the following activities:

- preparation of the legal framework adequate for handling terrorist crisis and doctrinaire concepts to prepare and act regarding countering the terrorist phenomenon, the projection of specialized forces and training of the personnel and identification of needed equipment and means;

- continuous surveillance of key/critical areas exposed to threats and risks, as well as analysis of terrorists' trends in order to identify any clue that can reveal future or under preparations actions;

- informing and training of the population, pointing out risks that they are exposed to, size of the threat and operating

procedures to undergo, but also the active involvement in protecting targets (including security of activities and objectives of national importance that can be potential targets of terrorist attacks);

- listening to and encouraging persons that consider themselves, justified or not, the object of a recruitment by the terrorist entities and warranting discretion and protection for interlocutors;

- real-time monitoring of all available information pertaining to past or ongoing actions, with analyses and interpretations made by specialists;

- centralization and formulation of proposals, suggestions and variants or courses of action proportionate to threat level that are tangible, argued and feasible will be made available to deciding factors.

Therefore we can conclude that terrorist attacks may take part in developed as well as in underdeveloped countries, both in democratic or dictatorial regimes, the condition of manifestation being division of public opinion in pros and cons, or the generated effect to produce even more chaos, instability, uncertainty etc., so that terrorist entities say their name, demonstrate their aggressiveness, various power dispersed capabilities, but without "showing their face" as a palpable whole, well defined and delimited.

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