

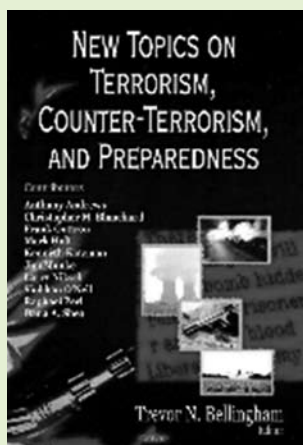
## New Topics on Terrorism, Counter- Terrorism, & Preparedness, Edited By Trevor N Bellingham, Nova Science Publishers - May 2008, 74.5 Pounds Sterling

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### Summary

In the period when cutting-edge science and technology have hardly remained a preserve of states and state-sanctioned institutions or actors, terrorists are posing a great challenge to human security by misusing them. Their unchecked access to science and technology is helping them project every time newer and graver security threat to governments and civilians. Under these circumstances, governments and their allied institutions are compelled to envisage imaginatively about newer forms of possible terrorist threats and put an effective mechanism to forestall them.



*New Topics on Terrorism, Counter-Terrorism, And Preparedness* is an edited volume by Trevor N. Bellingham. As is evident from the title itself, the contributors to this book have contributed new subjects which could be divided on thematic and geographical basis as well. The book has been finalized in a way which not only presents 'leading-edge' analyses on terrorism but also throws light on the measures being adopted by the US government to fight it. It covers traditional terrorism of some already well-known terrorist organisations like Al Qaeda, and Abu Sayyaf in Philippines, and at the same time the book also introduces new subjects of bio and agro terrorism. Of course, nuclear vulnerability in the face of a terrorist attack also gets due space in this book.

*The first chapter The National Bio – and Agro – Defense Facility: Issues for Congress* has highlighted the fact that agricultural and food infrastructure could be a potential target of terrorist attack. The novelty about this chapter is that the author of the chapter brings the fear of terrorist spreading zoonotic diseases in the focus of the discussion on terrorism. This potentially vulnerable aspect of security has been duly taken note of by the US establishment. The Plum Island Animal Disease Center (PIADC) under the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) was set up to conduct 'foreign animal disease research'. The seriousness of this potential risk was recognized and PIADC was transferred Department of Homeland Security (DHS), established in 2003. In fact, "Homeland Security Presidential Directive 9 tasks the Secretaries of Agriculture and Homeland Security to develop a plan to provide safe, secure, and state-of-the-art agriculture biocontainment laboratories for research and development of diagnostic capabilities and medical countermeasures for foreign animal and zoonotic diseases."

As far as nuclear power plants worldwide are concerned, they have been unthreatened by terrorist attacks so far. Precisely this is the reason why international community fighting against terrorism should be alarmed. The next terroristic surprise could come in form of an attack on any nuclear facility.

The way terrorists gave surprise by attacking 'twin-towers' in the US in 2001 makes it amply clear that their dexterity in giving surprises should not be underestimated. The tragedy caused by any nuclear damage inflicted upon by terrorists would be colossal. The chapter Nuclear Power Plants: Vulnerability to Terrorist Attacks dwells upon precisely this frightening proposition. The US Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is mandated to make regulations on nuclear reactor security. Now, it is busy with strengthening them. However, critics charge that nuclear industry is not showing desired alacrity to implement these rules and regulations; and in fact, it is too slow to implant them.

*The subject of Agro-terrorism* as a sub-set of the much broader bioterrorism has been discussed in the chapter Agroterrorism: threats and Preparedness. The chapter informs that agro-terrorism has been increasingly recognized as national security threat in the US. It also informs that the US Congress has held several hearings on this potential threat. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has carried out various studies on this issue. It should be clear that the ultimate purpose of agroterrorism remains to kill only human beings either by contaminating agro products or creating shortage of their supply.

*The Chapter Project Bioshield:* Purposes and Authorities delineates purpose and authority of the Project Bioshield Act which came into force in the US in 2004. This act was brought into force to expedite procedures for chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear related procurement, hiring and award of research grants. Besides, this act further strengthens Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to "temporarily allow the emergency use of countermeasures that lack Food and drug Administration (FDA) approval." Another related chapter Project Bioshield: Appropriations, Acquisitions, and Policy Implementation Issues for Congress critically examines the execution of this law. As this chapter informs the US Congress has also expressed concern about the implementation of project Bioshield. Financial irregularities have been reported in the functioning of HHS.

*Iraq and Al Qaeda* tries to scrutinize the issue of linkages between erstwhile Ba'athist Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq and Al Qaeda. The author of the chapter investigates this issue because the same has been very contended since the commencement of the second gulf war. This has been controversial because this alleged nexus between the Saddam regime and Al Qaeda was presented as a casus belli against Iraq by Bush administration, and the administration could never establish this beyond doubt. Critics have argued that there might be sporadic communication between top leadership; however, no consistent, systematic or institutionalized linkages could be established to substantiate the US argument. It is difficult to prove that Saddam government and Al-Qaeda carried out any terrorist attack jointly. This chapter seems to be incongruent in the overall scheme of the book. However, the purpose of this chapter appears to be exploring whether Al Qaeda in Iraq (Al Qaeda-I) can attack US homeland security, howsoever weak linkages might be there between Al Qaeda (or Al Qaeda-I) and Saddam regime.

*Al Qaeda: Statements and Evolving Ideology* argues that top leadership of Al-Qaeda may have been neutralized and it may have been cornered by the coalition forces, yet it is relentless in its ideological pursuit. It has successfully been manipulating international media in spreading its message. By carefully studying its statements, one would find that it has hardened its ideological commitments. The expulsion of foreign forces and influences from Islamic societies and, ultimately the creation of an Islamic state ruled by Sharia Law remain its unflinching commitments.

*In the chapter* titled Abu Sayyaf: target of Philippine-U.S. Anti-Terrorism Cooperation, the author basically details the Philippine-U.S. cooperation against local Islamic terrorism in Philippines.

*Terrorist precursor Crimes:* Issues and options for Congress discusses as to how to nip terrorist activities in the bud. It argues that whatever ideological motives terrorists may have and howsoever committed they could be, their terrorist activities need basic material support.

That is where governments should strike well before time. The chapter Combating Terrorism: The Challenge of Measuring Effectiveness is basically a report, designed to support 110th Congress to “understand and apply broad based objective criteria when evaluating progress in the nation’s efforts to combat terrorism.”

Finally, this book is a policy-oriented book which has been written for American audience. The organization of the chapters in this book could have been better. Ideally, this book should have been divided into three sections. The first section could have consisted of bio, agro and nuclear terrorism related themes. The second could have Al Qaeda and Abu Sayyaf related material. Then third one could have prescriptive chapters of Terrorist precursor Crimes: Issues and options for Congress and Combating Terrorism: The Challenge of Measuring Effectiveness. Instead, chapters keep coming to and fro unsystematically.