

PREPARING TO MINIMIZE THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF TERRORISM

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ABSTRACT: *The EXXON VALDEZ grounding in 1989 served the response community with an abrupt reminder of the importance of preparedness for maritime incidents. As a result, such incidents would no longer be viewed as simply human or economic tragedies but also as environmental catastrophes. The October 12, 2000 attack on the USS COLE at its berth in Aden, Yemen and the attack on the French tanker LIMBURG off the coast of Yemen two years later made it clear that terrorists are aware of the vulnerability of ships and port targets and are capable of operating in the marine environment. Finally, the attacks on September 11, 2001 erased any notion that terrorism was limited to developing nations, Europe or the Middle East. In addition to their horrific toll on human life and property, terrorism-spawned events have environmental impacts that must be addressed in our response plans. These impacts may be the primary or secondary goal of the perpetrators, particularly where environmental attributes like marine resources are readily accessible, highly valued, and serve as a symbol of a nation's culture and prosperity. This paper is intended to suggest the concept of environmental response preparedness as a means of minimizing the impact of terrorism when the best laid plans and protective measures have been compromised. The authors also suggest that preparedness is, in itself, a form of deterrent to terrorist acts. Equally important, the paper promotes the use of terrorism scenarios in preparedness exercises and proposes a balanced approach to readiness that can be sustained for the long haul. The paper not only recognizes the value and applicability of "all event" response agencies and management systems but also illustrates some of the important differences and challenges the subject events introduce. Among the differences cited are: stakeholder composition; attention to crime scene investigations; secondary attack hazards; and the need for adherence to established safety procedures in the midst of high op-tempo and emotionally charged national emergencies. The topic is timely. It is special due to the magnitude and international significance of the consequences it discusses and the impetus it presents toward actively deterring terrorism's impact, effectiveness and likelihood. It is unique because it calls attention to the need for a change in focus through the established lens of interdisciplinary coordination among agencies and stakeholders that have mature and well-practiced response systems.*

Discussion

Background. There is some confusion over the use of the terms Environmental Terrorism and Eco-Terrorism. A search on those keywords will yield a wide array of articles primarily about vandalism and terrorist activities perpetrated by persons who claim to be dedicated to protection of the natural environment - an intent, ironically in opposition to that of political terrorists. Included in these articles however will be commentaries on the type of events we are discussing today. The most infamous of these are probably Saddam Hussein's destruction of 700 Kuwaiti oil production facilities in 1991 and the repeated sabotage of oil pipelines in South American and African nations experiencing internal political conflicts. Whether these events were intended primarily to damage the environment, or if the destruction of ecosystems was secondary to the intent to cause personal and financial injury, frustration, and emotional manipulation, doesn't matter much. The facts are that severe and predictable impacts were sustained, and that response to the environmental impacts of terrorism must be conducted.

Terrorist are aware of marine targets and their significance, and as demonstrated with the siege of the ACHILLE LAURO and the bombing of the USS COLE and the supertanker LIMBURG, they are capable of operating on and around ships and waterfront facilities. These targets meet terrorists' objectives of impact, visibility, and damage to life and property. Similar assets and critical waterfront infrastructure abound in North America and around the globe. Their relative accessibility is endemic in a world of expanding free and open societies and prospering economies.

Today the notion of being prepared to respond to an oil spill, as an act of not only corporate environmentalism but also national security, is a new and challenging concept.

Preparedness is a form of deterrence. In the more conventional (pre-9/11) sense, prevention was one thing and preparedness for response, another. When dealing with intentional disasters however there is good reason to think of the two efforts as overlapping. It is critical to do what we can to protect and harden potential terrorist targets, but it is equally important to have well-planned and practiced response mechanisms and procedures in place. Keeping in mind the

terrorist's goal of impact, its obvious that the ability to minimize such makes the target less inviting. If you wanted to make an impression, would you pick a fight with your neighbor at a professional football game where a legion of security officers would swarm and quickly remove you, or wage your scuffle at the opera where the well dressed usher would probably add to your intended commotion by going into coronary arrest? Failing to incorporate the effects of terrorist activities into our environmental response plans and exercise scenarios prevents us from fully developing a deterring level of preparedness, is irresponsible in today's world, and invites costly failure.

The game of playing "what if...?" has taken on a whole new and harsh reality since the tragic events of September 11, 2001. The consequences of not being prepared tomorrow for today's events could put us all in a position far more uncomfortable and more demanding of our resources than ever before. Given not only the renewed concerns about anti-terrorism and force protection, but also the traditional concerns for ship's and crew's safety and protection of the marine environment, what can be done to enhance not only our readiness to respond, but also the appropriateness of response and incident management?

This paper is intended to highlight the issues and discuss concerns as we see them. Our goal is to heighten the awareness of the reader toward the necessity to not only consider the potential environmental risk(s) of terrorism within their own context, but to encourage the development of a proactive plan to protect valuable economic, environmental and human assets after an attack is perpetrated. It will not be easy, but it is doable and vitally important.

Achieving the balance. The key to success can be found in identifying a sustainable and adjustable balance between meeting operational requirements (i.e. meeting customers needs) and environmental protection (i.e. pollution preparedness). Keeping in mind the term's "new reality" and "new normalcy" the success of any preparedness program hinges largely on its long-term sustainability, and sustainability depends on operational balance and resource impact. To enhance our readiness in a balanced and sustainable fashion, we have to look at not just mission accomplishment (the what), but the methods and cost (the how). We have the tools today, already in our arsenal of weapons against disaster. We should not write new stand-alone plans. In some cases we may not need to ask for more people, money or time to be any better prepared against the possibilities. We may simply need to expand our creative thinking and planning for preparedness to incorporate the newly emerging potential root causes of an old nemesis - an oil spill, or chemical release, of overwhelming magnitude resulting in dire environmental and economic consequences - into our strategic planning. Readiness, while being sustained for the long haul, also needs to be adjustable or scaleable to meet varying threat conditions. In this sense, the big picture response posture is kept at an appropriate level with regards to core personnel, response assistance arrangements (i.e. mutual aid agreements and contracts), training and equipment, but mobilization, overtime, pre-staging and just-in-time exercises and refresher training can be ratcheted in response to national, regional or local risk assessments or established threat conditions. These conditions or readiness states include U. S. Force Protection Conditions (FPCONS - Normal, Alpha, Bravo, Charlie and Delta), Coast Guard Maritime Security conditions (MARSECs - I, II and III), Homeland Security Advisory System conditions (Green, Blue, Yellow and Red), other formalized national and international assessment schemes, and Interpol regional crime and threat assessments.

Planning. Having well understood written plans for incident response, which are exercised on a regular basis, is an integral and key element in the preparedness formula. In the U.S., the

Federal Response Plan, National Contingency Plan (NCP) and the hierarchy of plans under the NCP including Area Contingency Plans, Facility and Vessel Response Plans are the right mechanisms. Similarly, in other nations, existing public and corporate plans have the right stuff from which to respond to terrorist incidents. The challenge today is to be keenly aware of the new threats to our critical infrastructure and mission capability, and equally important, to be an active player in the exchange of information about those threats. Many key players in the pollution response equation may not be routinely included in the highest level of threat intelligence. This makes two things very necessary. First, on the local level, planners need to brainstorm for scenarios that meet terrorists' objectives and prepare to respond in a fashion that will minimize imminent impacts and prevent those impacts that can be avoided in the post-event timeframe. Secondly, state and federal agencies that have ties to both intelligence and marine industry communities need to be keenly aware of specific threat intelligence and pass such information - in a form that does not violate classified information rules - to those in a position to heighten both their prevention and response postures. Equally important is their participation in terrorism-scenario based exercises.

The current National Preparedness for Response Exercise Program (NPREP) and PREP-like exercises are an ideal forum to address the new concerns surrounding potential terrorist activity. The format and the concepts to be considered and tested are familiar. The process(es) is tried and true. The players are (or should be) familiar with each other. We now simply must add new elements to the mix. Though there is a degree of urgency to be newly prepared, a period of patience is also required. To reduce the potential confusion from the necessary increase in complexity to our preparedness efforts we must streamline and integrate our preparedness process. As we develop new plans, establish new criteria, and involve additional players we must be innovative in our efforts to bring them all together. This must be done at all levels of activity, from the national to the local level. Reluctance, worse resistance, to do so at this juncture, for whatever reason(s), courts disaster of a much larger magnitude than ever before and would be instantly perceived as unconscionable by any and all constituencies.

Already articles are beginning to appear in various print media and other public forums which express concern about the security of our ports and associated activities. Imagine the incident in Aden, Yemen, involving the USS COLE, and simply substitute that Arleigh Burke-class destroyer with a fully loaded cargo ship or tank vessel. Now place that ship in one of the world's busiest or most militarily sensitive ports, or in a port area that is located near ecologically sensitive or recreational intensive real estate. Are you prepared to protect, defend and respond in an organized, coordinated fashion, to what now will become not only an economic and environmental disaster, but also a potential national security threat and a crime scene, with all the requisite interested parties on-scene and an international press contingent?!

Preparing for such an event could seem daunting at best, and a real nightmare to some, at first. Going back to the fundamentals and using the framework of established incident management systems like the National Interagency Incident Management System (NIIMS) Incident Command System (ICS), and applying basics as exercised in PREPs (with the addition of a few new elements) can bring order from the potential chaos.

Stay focused. First, take time out to think and order your thoughts. Focus on your goal. Often we forget in the midst of tension and pressure to "do something" (i.e. respond), that it is important to take a moment to focus our thoughts and energy. In reacting we lose sight of our interests and ultimately our goals and objectives. Acting in an organized, focused manner is more

effective. This situation brings to mind the popular saying: “When you’re up to your neck in alligators it’s hard to remember your initial goal was to drain the swamp”. Americans performed brilliantly and heroically in response the events of September 11th. Review of those actions however identified isolated examples of losing our focus particularly with regard to rescue worker safety in the highly emotionally charged aftermath of the attacks. Selfless responder engagement, unbridled volunteerism, and an outpouring of logistic and materiel support from outside the normal supply lines should be anticipated - planned for, but not counted on. Plans should incorporate methods to best utilize resources that might not ordinarily be considered appropriate, affordable or obtainable.

In the case of terrorism, not only are the attackers seeking visibility and impact, but they’re also trying to make you react and throw you off balance through the element of surprise. By not stepping back (e.g. recalling pre-planning, identifying your goals and objectives and exercising them) you fall victim to the tendency to react without thinking. You immediately lose your objectivity – a key to your ability to respond effectively. Act; don’t react. Reaction abdicates power and control. It merely feeds the all-consuming and unproductive cycle of action and reaction. How do you avoid the natural tendency to react in the face of an intentionally perpetrated insult? The key is recognizing the “tactic” or “threat” and its potential ahead of time. If necessary, this may be accomplished at the onset of an incident. At this point, however, it’s clear that the line of differentiation action and reaction becomes nearly indistinguishable. By preplanning you are less likely to react and thus remain in control and able to respond appropriately and effectively. While most of the preceding tips on deliberate response are applicable to any contingency, the added elements of an intentional attack or sabotage may require an adjustment in your current operations plans, and response management structure.

Some Differences. Given today’s additional elements of possible terrorist involvement, an increasing number of types of responders will necessarily expand your participant and interested parties lists. Are you prepared to deal with the soon to be Homeland Security Department and it’s various agencies representatives? Are you familiar with Terrorism Incident Annex of the National Response Plan and Presidential Decision Directive 39 (PDD-39)? These documents highlight some of the unique aspects of response to terrorism, differentiate between crisis management and consequence management, and identify which agencies have lead responsibilities for each aspect of any response (DOJ/FBI for the former and FEMA for the latter). *Note the use of the word “aspect” vs. “phase” as both activities may exist concurrently.*

Given the new potential for oil spills resulting from deliberate acts of violence, it is important to recognize terrorism response sites as crime scenes that require special precautions to preserve evidence. Depending on the method of attack, it is also possible that the perpetrators employed diversions or rigged secondary devices specifically to cripple response and recovery personnel and resources. The FBI, local law enforcement, and explosive ordinance specialists (to name but a few interested and contributing parties) will be important players in these situations. Are the people you plan to tap in these situations familiar with waterfront facilities, pier structures, and the interior spaces of commercial ships?

Identifying your potential risks, problem areas, weaknesses and areas of greatest need for improvement ahead of time is the greatest deterrent to surprise. Acknowledging that a potential problem exists and simply being alert in a positive sense, therefore for the consequences, is a far different and more productive mindset than being merely suspicious of potential

threats. Neutralize your threats by stepping back, refocusing, searching for additional information, and remembering, in the world of terrorism, terrorists rarely limit themselves to single tactics, thus building confusion into the response equation.

Put yourself in the terrorist’s shoes. Try to imagine motivations, goal(s) and objectives and thus the possible tactics for which you can prepare to prevent, disarm or respond to the situation. Ask yourself, “If I wanted to create havoc and demonstrate vulnerability and my ability to exploit it, where or how would I go about my mission?” Now develop scenarios to prevent and respond to such an event. Add the notion of enhancing your knowledge about terrorism and its many facets to your training program. There are a number of courses and books to help you understand the terrorist mentality. The accessibility of certain courses and documents will depend on agency affiliation and security clearance, but valuable insights can be gained through unclassified sources. Research these aids through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA); its U.S. Fire Administration; the National Infrastructure Protection Center (NIPC); the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI); or the Center for Strategic and International Studies at www.fema.gov; www.fema.gov/dhtml/fireservice/c-terror.cfm; www.nipc.gov; or www.csic.org respectively.

Change the game. If those responsible for contingency planning and ultimately exercising existing scenarios merely maintain the status quo, you will certainly face an uncertain future of certain surprise - your greatest threat. Remember, if you think of a possibility, so have the terrorists. By being public in your preparedness you not only demonstrate your readiness, but also plant the seed of awareness and thus potential involvement by the community at large, in all aspects, in being ready to prevent and respond. Finally, you put the terrorist on notice to look elsewhere, that you’re not an easy target, that you are prepared. You’ve reduced the size of the dance floor and have made it easier for everyone to do their job.

Revisit your existing contingency plan. Give a whole new meaning to Resource Damage Assessment, include methods of ingress and egress to harbors, ports, piers and facilities and by whom. What is the relative proximity of critical functional units? Should they be relocated? Better protected? During this evaluative process is there any way to draw in the various new players with new and legitimate concerns to help identify and address new risks? Change the process by which you now operate. In doing so, redirect the tendency to maintain your unique, corporate or agency-centric positions and interests. Strive to invent creative options and develop fair standards for selecting options to incorporate into new plans to ultimately test through exercising. Consider positions taken by participants as informative contributions to the discussion and illicit reasons for why the concern and perspective exists.

Given the new set of additional elements to incorporate into your contingency plans, success is much less likely to depend on the intended outcome (remember, you’ve already established your focus) than on the process by which the expanded group of players satisfy their interests. In other words, your success in contingency planning will depend most heavily upon how you reach your goals, not what the goal is in itself.

Finally, with the renewed power of an open and participatory preparedness process, you can educate not only your company and the community, but also the potential terrorist to the notion that there’s more to be gained by not continuing to engage in the action – reaction cycle and, thereby, enhancing the possibility of averting a disaster. Certainly our preparedness to respond will be improved in the process.

Conclusions

Preparedness can be a deterrent to terrorism. But, to be truly prepared we need to have a sustainable prevention and readiness posture in mind, and must change the way we think about the threats and the response process. How do you see your operations? Through your eyes or those of the terrorist? Remember that unconventional events (intentional attacks and spills) require unconventional thinking and planning.

As a result of September 11th, certainly the American public has a more personal perspective about terrorism. Along with all citizens of the free world, they now better understand the necessity for preparedness, and are beginning to understand terrorism and the true the cost of the readiness commitment. Terrorism is a real threat, when combined with an existing vulnerability - which we know abound in free societies - it poses a real risk. Therefore, combating its impact on the environment it is a challenge we share around the globe. If we begin by acknowledging the element of terrorism belongs in our preparedness plans, it is a major step forward toward greater 'response-ability'. We can meet the challenge of change if we revisit our existing plans to identify and neutralize our potential threats and, in so doing, change the process by which we operate. We must be more creative in our understanding and planning for future events. We must work toward sustainable readiness and a

restructured, all-encompassing, process of response which will likely change our way of doing business. By doing these things we can preserve our freedoms, and much of our way of life, while achieving the necessary balance between fulfilling our customers' needs and protecting the environment.

Biographies

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