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NEWSLETTER **TERRORISM**

E-Journal for CBRNE-CT First Responders

Editor's adventures in the US



EDITOR'S CORNER

**Humanity defeated ...
Does it matter
who released them?**



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	▶ United States (US)	1,806
	▶ Greece (GR)	1,015
	▶ United Kingdom (GB)	876
	▶ Italy (IT)	285
	▶ Canada (CA)	239
	▶ Netherlands (NL)	234
	▶ France (FR)	208
	▶ Germany (DE)	189
	▶ India (IN)	141
	▶ Switzerland (CH)	94
	▶ China (CN)	93
	▶ Spain (ES)	89
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Editor's Corner



Editorial

BG (ret'd) Ioannis Galatas, MD, MA, MC

Editor-in-Chief

CBRNE-Terrorism Newsletter

INSTEAD OF EDITORIAL

Who dares, does not always win!

Editor's adventure in the Unites States of America

Throughout our lives as professionals we might find ourselves in the position of looking for a new job or career shift. There are many reasons for doing so – to name a few: downsizing of a company, firing, national financial crisis, government shutdown, low salary, bigger expectations, improvement of quality of life, unexpected life situations requiring higher family budgets etc.

The process of doing so could be either by word of mouth, advertisements/postings on mass media/press (public and specialized), companies' websites, online professional networks (e.g. LinkedIn) and social networks (e.g. Facebook or Twitter), or professional headhunting firms (generic or specialized).

Some postings offer direct communication with future employers while others require an intermediate step of a recruiter. In almost all cases – due to supposed high volumes of applications – the applicant is contacted only if selected for the final stage. Although this is not very pleasant for the applicant this is a procedure that is logical especially for job openings related to jobs with high pay scale.

It is almost impossible to accurately evaluate the level of professionalism of companies or individuals offering job opportunities. Some are doing that to expand their clientele usually without response following contact via the email provided; others reply only once to inform that they have received applicant's resume and other documents or credentials required without follow-up; a third category might go a step further requiring some clarifications and then either disappear or keep on providing totally unrelated job offers. A fourth category relates to recruiters that use online professional networks usually via specialized groups (e.g. "jobs for specialized X professionals"). In these groups members provide extended details of their resume and activity that might provide better information regarding a future collaboration. But on the Internet one can write anything he/she likes without any penalty or prosecution or other corrective measures. Basically you are who you say you are!

Finally a way of approaching a potential employer is to ask directly one or more of your "contacts" if they have a job opening – although "good jobs" usually circulate in very close circles and between persons who know each other or worked together or in parallel.

A common motive replicated in many of the online job offering websites is the emphasis on "we care" or "we will answer all applications" or "we do not do what others do" – exactly the opposite that is happening in real life. Even those that require a fee for services – usually affordable – behave the same way. Most probably because international applicants will not have the time or the money to demand their money back or proceed to legal actions. Who will do that for 50 or 80 Euro deposited to a company located thousands of miles away? Of course if you multiply this small amount of money by 100 or 1000 then recruiting is quite profitable – but not for the applicant.

Based on the above one realizes that looking for a job or a career shift is as difficult to find as there are limited reliable professionals to ask for these. If applicant does not have the luxury of time or if life decided to play one of its usual unpleasant games then he or she might be involved in awkward adventures. Life is not shed with rose petals – we all know that! But the damage caused if involved in a situation of this kind is multilevel and beyond anticipated financial gains.



Case study

For the last two years I have been looking for a job abroad. My key reasoning for this was the fact that I recently resigned from the military after 35 years in service in order to do something on my own and replace “a good job” with a “a job I would like to do” – no further explanation if you cannot recognize the difference.

Back in 2010 this was a good idea (risk assessment based on medical profession, medical specialization, CBRNE and intelligence asymmetric threat's analysis backgrounds) but life had (as usual) a different opinion! An urban wildfire attack against our property and ongoing financial crisis in Greece proved mighty opponents to fight against and the only solution was to look for a new job abroad in combination with a career shift. In that respect I tried almost everything described above without luck. Basically I was European (EU) and a slightly UAE/Qatar oriented due to the proximity of these countries to Greece and I had an ability to work there with no restrictions (i.e. “green card”).

Then one day in July 2013, I got an email from one of my LinkedIn contacts – a company with a name referring to a Greek mythology goddess based in Houston, TX, USA. It was a nice surprise since until then the USA was out of my searching range for the reasons mentioned above. The woman CEO and Board Member of this company was offering me a very attractive (for my needs) three digit contract, the position of Executive Director, the ability to relocate to USA and possibility to become a partner if I wanted to (for \$100.000). She studied my profile in LinkedIn, visited my Newsletter's website and my web resume with all my activities, presentations, videos etc. and decided that I was the one that her company was looking for. My duties in the new company were mostly CBRNE related – risk and vulnerability assessment, gap analysis and risk mitigation.

I accepted the proposal, I got the draft of the contract and although I did not get all the answers to my repeated questioning on certain issues (contract details, partnership, legal status for alien employees) I started “working” online for the company providing a number of specialized presentations for certain “big contracts” in three Latin America countries that were in the last stages of finalization and some local projects (on schools' and church's risk assessment). My future employer was also kind enough to provide hospitality in her big house during my acclimatization period and assistance with my immigration issues in cooperation with company's lawyers.

I did my own research online but little info was available – rather common regarding risk mitigation and assessment companies and confidentiality accompanying their activities, projects and clients. I found the company was in good standing; I studied her resume and other websites presented in her LinkedIn profile; I located company's offices in a very central area of the town's center (North of Houston) via Google Maps and Google Earth; with a similar methodology I located her residence in a nice suburb very close to offices and I got connected with other employees of the company in LinkedIn.

Another reasoning besides my financial cornering was the fact that in September I was about to travel to Brazil as a keynote speaker to the 8th Bio-Safety Congress organized in Salvador. My approach was kind of simplistic: Houston was only a few hours fly from Brazil, why not? Besides that, the US was the key absolute ground to which I was unable to do in Greece (a country where the famous quote “it will not happen to us!” prevails) or even in Europe or the Gulf Area.

In that respect I decided to “dare” in order to “win”! On September 26th I arrived at George Bush International Airport in Houston, TX and met my future employer waiting for me in person.

I always say and write that the “unexpected always happens!” Only that this time the “unexpected happened to me!” I stayed in Houston for 19 days full of unpleasant surprises on a daily basis.

To make a long story short: the company was virtual; there were no offices; there were no employees; her beautiful house was empty of furniture (I was sleeping in an inflatable mattress on the floor); no Internet but a hot-spot that was closed down five days earlier due to a lack of money; no promised laptop to work in my spare time (certain computer parts were kindly provided by one of her “major partners”); my ticket from Brazil to Houston was paid from another person unrelated to the supposed company; no money in the pocket for daily expenses (totally dependent from separated husband); no contracts in final stage (as



verified by the people I met under the title of major “partners” or “investors”); no ability for me to legally work in the US (missed the deadline for H1B Visa for 2013; had to apply in April 2014 for October 2014 given the defined number of that kind of visas; had to pay \$7000 for application for National Interest Waiver program); no ability for her to travel abroad and come back in the US due to her own status/visa (gained via a family relocation national lottery some decades ago issued in a nearby island) while the big conference in which I was about to participate at as keynote speaker on Sept 27th was “transferred” to Nov 11th to help attract more participants. Finally the last surprise was that we had to move to a new house because the Greek owner was a man who had no tolerance towards a single minority woman with two little children (the fact that she was also two rents behind was not considered as serious) and he went to court that upheld a decision in his favor to state that we had to move out by Oct 14th. Jobless already with imminent danger to become homeless as well in a foreign country a couple thousand miles away from Athens! The latter problem was drastically solved – instead of paying rent to a new (small) apartment able to support she bought two (2) houses. One for her parents living in another state and one (in final stage of construction) for her own family! This action miraculously cured my own Stockholm syndrome and on Oct 14th I “escaped” Houston with the help of a new friend (the one that paid my ticket from Brazil and gave me the computer parts) and I took the first flight available to Athens (with his expenses). At least here I will face my own asymmetry instead of dealing with totally unknown new emerging threats (professionals’ trafficking)!

We have all read related fraud cases and modus operandi of those involved. Her method was simple – a repeated pattern enriched with a cataract of skills, names, key-words and collaborations adapted to the background of the person she was connected to. But this simple method was working very well as I was about to find out after introducing me to various people she was about to get funded from or do business with – lawyers, business planners, entrepreneurs, church pastors and school officials.

I do not intend to press charges against that woman – although I would love that very much; simply I cannot afford it. I just hope that one day Texas’ authorities will do that and remove this ungrateful individual from their environment.

Most of you that you take the time to read this adventure of mine most probably will forget all about it in a few days. **But** if you are in the security business – especially in Houston area – please take a note in case you are approached by this phantom company in the near future. It happened to me; it might happen to you as well – because “the unexpected always happens”!

Recommendations

Although I failed in my personal risk assessment I would like to recommend the following addressing colleagues that might be tempted to follow in my shoes:

- Even if you are desperate and cornered take “dare” decisions only for jobs located very close to your current residency!
- Abort the (human) habit to give easy answers to all your future job’s related questions. Your desire might overcome logic!
- Always have your escape Plan B (maps, taxis/buses, hotels, airports, car rental, national embassy/consulate etc) printed and at hand. Too much dependence on the Internet might get you into trouble!
- Do not be curious about how far the fraud will go. This might put you into troubles as well!
- Do not be afraid to let others know about your case. Your “face” towards your own family, parents, friends and colleagues has already been lost; regaining it might take time and there is no reassurance that outcome would be successful. But you might help others to be more careful – both job seekers but also employers that might be trapped or lose money by doing business with these people.
- Companies providing jobs: isolate those in your profession who are indifferent to the sacred value of work; create black lists and communicate findings to others in the same line of work; adopt a more human approach towards those who ask your assistance; refine your spectrum of expertise. Keep in mind that your profession is more important than an ordinary job. You help others to keep on working!

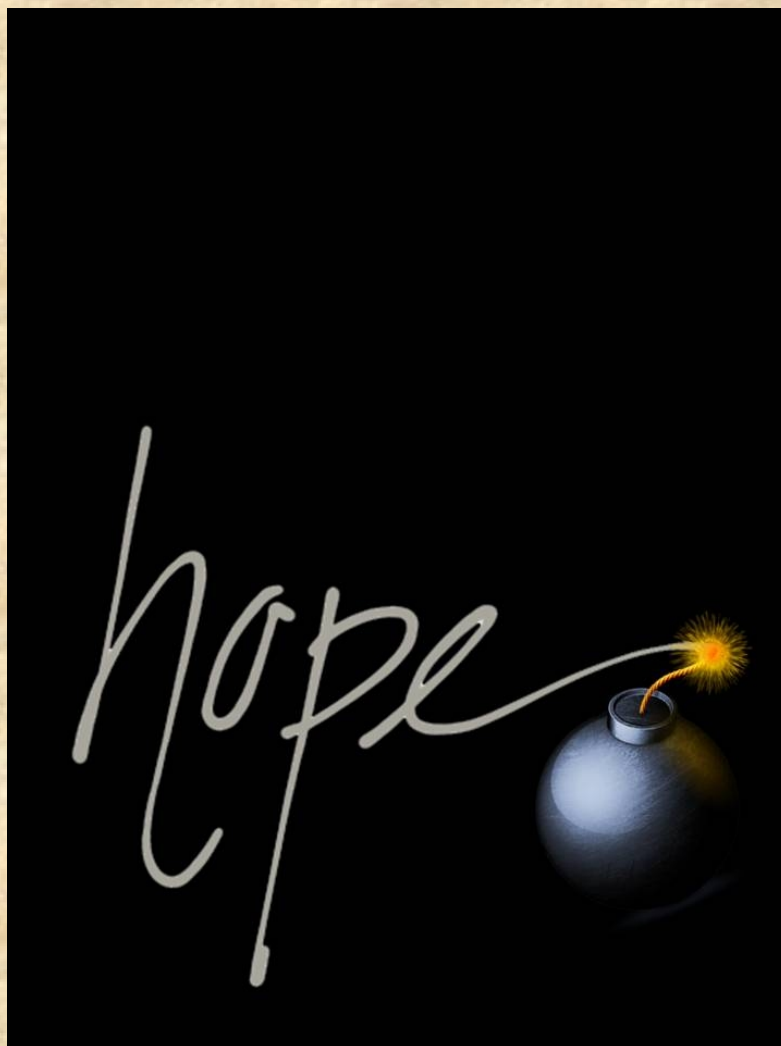


- There are a lot of you who are either out of work or on the verge or at risk etc. It's time to clean up our industry and look for all employers in the niche industry of Risk, Compliance, Resilience, Security, CBRN etc to self regulate and for portals such as DRJ, Continuity Central etc to show BIOs and qualify the people who want to advertise in here. What we do not want to see anymore is these companies getting the chance to post "phantom job" that do not exist and are used to build up contact lists, to make postings with no definition of salary. Some list page after page of what they want from you (10 years exp, MBA, industry qualifications etc etc etc) and then fail to list what they are offering in reward for successful candidates. It's time for all people wanting to benefit from payment from these people advertising on the USA and UK job portals like those listed above to self regulate and come up with a professional process that respects the professionalism and integrity of our industries membership.

Acknowledgements

Deep from my heart I would like to thank all the good people I met during my stay in the US. In fact all the people I met were good except the one that initially invited me into this great country. They supported me any way they could; special thanks to one of them that I dearly thank him for helping me to return back home – very few people should have done what he did for a total stranger! I sincerely hope one day to be able to pay them all back in any way I can. ■

If case study rang a bell to some of you (especially those in Houston, TX), you can contact me directly (igalatas@yahoo.com) for the name and contact details of the company indirectly described herein and/or a full timeline and photos of my adventure in the US.



Specialized conferences and experts

By Editor-in-Chief

Most of us have participated as expert speakers in international CBRNE conferences, congresses and workshops.

Conferences are organized either by national entities (e.g. Ministry of Defense, Department of Homeland Security) and academia or by private companies specialized in certain areas of global security. The first category usually invites speakers to address specific topic in a given thematic agenda and usually cover all expenses (transportation and accommodation) including a small or bigger payment for the services provided by the expert. For the expert this is a good opportunity to spread both knowledge and experience and have a small profit.

The second category works in a different way. They explore the market and identify topics of global interest that might attract audience from various sectors. Then they circulate a draft agenda with certain topics under a certain overall title defining the content of the conference. Usually after they either communicate with experts that have a significant presence in the international mass media and on the Internet or accept proposals by experts to be included in the program proposing a specific topic related to their line of work. In parallel with this process, organizers look for vendors that are willing to participate in the conference and exhibit their products and services. Organizers believe that if they have many speakers from many different countries they will attract more people to their events. In such conferences major companies are given time to lecture and advertise their products with presentations



incorporated in the main program.

The main problem is who is covering the expenses for participation in such conferences. Defense companies use their experts both in the exhibition as promoters and in the program as speakers and have their expenses covered. Big organizations usually cover (in full or partially) the expenses of their representatives (e.g. NATO, EU). But what happens with the independent experts that are usually retired officers with a lot of experience and ability to speak more “freely” than those belonging to an organization with certain policies? Usually they pay their own expenses and in the best of cases they are given travel expenses usually after tuff negotiations and after they lecture in the conference. In rare occasions accommodation (usually B&B) is provided for two days. In certain occasions refunding of the money spend to book air travelling is a laborious process and takes time to compensate participants. I participated in a workshop (as Masterclass’ moderator and speaker) and a conference (as chairperson and speaker) held in London in July 2013 and until know (end of October), I haven’t received the money spend for travelling despite the many emails sent and the various languages used. And this was not the only time that happened (by coincidence from the same company).



A second problem is the content of the conferences themselves. Usually they use many speakers; topics are chosen or modified by the speakers to fit their needs, expertise and goals and time allocated ranges between 15 to 30 minutes including Q&As. This results in a conference that touches only the surface of a given topic and usually provide no new information to those attending or does not generate the right environment for exchange of ideas or discuss issues of common interest. Private companies do not really care about the quality of the program; they do care about the quantity of their product (conference) and the gain anticipated by large audiences. That gain are unwilling to share with invited or self-invited speakers (in many occasions I study the draft program; spot the missing topic related to my expertise and propose myself to organizers to be included – this is a quite successful process if you do it in the very early stages of building up a conference both national and international) and their main excuse is that they have expenses, they have a business to run, they cannot provide e-tickets in advance in case speaker does not appear and that networking equals opportunities and perhaps a better job in the future. I can reassure you that the latter argument is rather imaginary. First of all you must participate in many conferences around the globe in order to establish strong connections and hope for some personal gains. How can you do that if you need a small fortune that will allow you to travel from Singapore to Los Angeles and from Cape Town to Oslo or Moscow?

On the other hand: what if the conference organizers cannot attract a basic number of speakers? For sure the conference will be cancelled or change dates or year. Speakers are the core of the conference. And speakers are experts who spent their lives working on a specific subject that allowed them to be called experts. And this requires a fair compensation. Because it is their expertise that attracts a bigger audience not the name of the firm organizing a certain conference!

We have to demand full coverage of our travelling expenses and a logic compensation in order to participate in a conference. In this world nothing is free! And brain assets have to be equally paid for. We do understand that conference companies are not charity organizations but without us, a conference site is just an empty room. International recognition and public relations are highly desirable by all of us but in order to gain and maintain them we need the means to be able to do this. In my conference life I was paid to speak only once (a pleasant surprise by a European University) and I can reassure you that my presentation was not intentionally better than those given in other conferences. CBRN is a passion and love to share it with colleagues in the audience! But in order to do so we must change the rules of engagement and demand to be treated as professionals providing expertise and knowledge.

Finding Great Jobs that Nobody Else is Applying For

By Ken Sundheim

Source: http://www.recruiter.com/finding-great-jobs-that-nobody-else-is-applying-for/?goback=.gde_5083527_member_5798157195816230915#!

Often, it's not your resume that's hurting you. It's not that your LinkedIn profile is preventing you from job search success. It's not where you went to college, either. Rather, it's the number of other applicants going for the same openings. For instance, if you're applying to the same positions as 1,000 other qualified applicants, you have a 0.1 percent chance of getting that job. As an intelligent job seeker, you should automatically recognize that when you utilize the mainstream avenues such as LinkedIn and Monster, you're often competing with the masses. As a result, you have less options, more rejection and lowered confidence from non-responsive hiring managers.

Diversifying Your Job Search

Instead, the most successful diversify their approach. While they may utilize mainstream sources, they locate the hidden gems.

By hidden gems, I am referring to the 10,000's of open jobs that pay well, are with strong companies and that offer significant career growth. Most importantly, they aren't advertised on Monster and LinkedIn.

The lack of advertising could be for a myriad of reasons but, typically has no bearing on the quality of position or the firm's competitiveness in their industry.

3 Benefits of hidden gems:



1. Higher Odds - The lack of advertisement means there is less competition for the job. Sometimes, the position currently has less than five active candidates. All things being equal, this bumps you up from a 0.1 percent to a 20 percent chance of getting the job.

2. Flexible salary negotiation - The employer needs you as much as you need them. When you apply to a position on LinkedIn, you are a commodity with little leverage. With hidden gems, you are a rare asset who can command additional compensation. This is especially true when you find a firm that is about to pay a recruiter \$15,000 for doing the search.

3. Person vs. Piece of Paper - Less emphasis on resume content and college major, more emphasis on *you* as a person. Hiring managers who are not flooded with resumes don't have the luxury of judging applicants strictly by resume content. Instead, they gauge you by your intelligence, interpersonal skills, work ethic and ability to fit within the corporate culture of the firm.

Once Defined, We Need to Know Where to Look

Now that you know something better exists, it's time to begin hunting. Here are five great ways to find hidden gems:

Publications - Decision makers like to write for reputable mainstream or industry publications. Every day, on sites like Forbes, *New York Times*, AOL, Business Insider, Harvard Business Review, *Wall St. Journal* and the *LA Times*, business owners and higher-ups are blogging over 1,000 articles. More often than not, at the end of the article, it allows the reader to email them directly (a.k.a. no more landing in the "mass resume" inbox). An honest compliment on their piece and brief introduction as to who you are should peak their interest. Plus, you can weed out potential employers based on their business theories. Apply to the writers whom you agree with; pass on the ones you don't.

Niche Job Boards - Niche job boards are a great resource for a few reasons. They lessen the number of competitors, and since they are more targeted, the employer is likely to look at each resume. On very broad job sites, hiring managers will get an abundance of impertinent submissions and often give up on looking each CV over.

Google Alerts on Related Firms - There is nothing more valuable to a firm than a resume submission from someone who already knows their industry. This doesn't mean that you have to apply to a direct competitor, though the further you stray from your knowledge, the less chance of you being considered. Compile a list of organizations that are related to your field of expertise and set a Google Alert to email you every time that organization is in the news. Unless it's a replacement position, companies love to distribute press releases when hiring. Be the first to know and the first to apply.

Yahoo! Finance to Company Websites - Get a feel for which industries are hiring by following the stock market. Yahoo! Finance makes it easy to get a feel for which verticals are hot and desperately need people vs. which are stagnant and probably best to avoid pursuing a career with. Once you get the industries that are "hot", find the leaders in that field via a quick Google search. Then, find the employment sections on the company websites and applicable listings. Another benefit is that these openings typically contain the direct contact for the person responsible for hiring as well.

Venture Capital Firms - If a single organization owns 100 different companies, why not send your resume into the firm? VC companies are consistently growing their portfolio companies and by applying directly to these organizations, you kill up to 100 birds with 1 stone. When doing so, make sure that you make it clear that you are applying to their portfolio companies who are in need of people with x, y and z skills.

In the End

In job seeking, the name of the game is to find the openings that nobody else is looking for. It's simple math. The less applicants interviewing for a position, the better chances you have of getting an interview and, a quick offer.

Remember, anything worthwhile takes work. Though, try to enjoy the journey of applying for jobs as much as getting the offer.



When Liberian Child Soldiers Grow Up

By Clair MacDougall

Source: <http://newsweekpakistan.com/when-liberian-child-soldiers-grow-up/>



A generation of girls fought in Liberia's brutal wars. What they tell their own children about the past will inform the country's future.

Mary Goll is asleep in a white plastic chair. Around her, in the modest bar by the sea that she owns, the sandy ground is flecked with cigarette butts and shiny cracker wrappers glinting in the dull morning light. Plastic bags that once held white rice have been stitched up to cover parts of the shambolic structure, made from odd, corrugated zinc plates and bits of chicken wire. Farther up the beach a cluster of canoes lie facedown by the water as if asleep. Mary's bar—known as Ma Mary—resembles a makeshift vessel that, carrying a motley crew and cargo, has crashed onto the shoreline and is slowly falling apart.

The morning light sharpens the contours of the bar. Mary, now awake, languidly gets up from her chair. She is dressed in a loose white tank-top that accentuates her broad shoulders and thick arms. A yellow piece of fabric with blue stars is wrapped around her waist. Her short hair is braided in cornrows.

A bare-chested young man comes into the bar, orders a shot of *gana gana*, a bitter cane juice known as "African whisky," swallows it without saying a word, then resumes his walk toward Cape Montserrado, where the first black

immigrants from America landed in 1822, the vanguard of a settlement that eventually became the Republic of Liberia, its capital, Monrovia, named after U.S. President James Monroe.

This desolate stretch of land, where echoes of Liberia's past still play out, is known as Poto Corner in the local Liberian-English vernacular, meaning a place for those without use. It is situated within Monrovia's largest slum, West Point, on a peninsula home to migrants, fishermen, crack addicts, street kids, and many Liberians who, like Mary, fought and were displaced by the successive and complex civil wars that ravaged the country during most of the 1990s, pitting Charles Taylor and his militia, known as the National Patriotic Front of Liberia, against the repressive government of Samuel Doe. Taylor eventually gained control of most of the country and, following Doe's execution and a subsequent peace deal, became president in 1997. Two years later, though, the country slid back into civil war. The fighting lasted another four years.



Mary was 13 when she joined up on the side of the pro-Taylor government militias, and her scars tell the story of a girl who saw close combat. A bullet grazed her right knee during a fierce battle in northeastern Liberia near the border with Guinea. Puckered skin between

2003, she disarmed but peace did not follow. Like many of her generation, Mary has been unable to quiet the battles that still rage in her mind.

Neighboring Sierra Leone went through its own civil war when forces supported by Taylor



her shoulders bears witness to a bullet that came dangerously close to her spine. And then there are the self-made markings of war: crude, roughly drawn tattoos that serve as totemic reminders of her deeds. An octopus spreads its tentacles across her lower back; another covers her right knee. The octopus is a "wicked animal," Mary says, and "I was wicked."

For three years, Mary fought in a civil war that became known around the world for its atrocities, often involving children and teenagers as both perpetrators and victims. Mary commanded about 30 boys and girls, women and men, attaining the status of women's artillery commander before being captured and forced to fight on the rebel side. She was 16 when the war ended.

When a Comprehensive Peace Agreement finally brought an end to the fighting in August

sought to overthrow the government in 1991. That war ended in 2002. Last year a U.N.-backed tribunal for Sierra Leone sentenced Taylor to 50 years in prison for murder, rape, sexual slavery, the use of child soldiers, and other war crimes. The court is expected to make a ruling on his appeal in September.

A separate war-crimes trial has not taken place in Liberia, where Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has governed since 2006. Johnson Sirleaf has received international acclaim as the first elected female African head of state, but she was also an early supporter of Taylor during the civil war, and her government has proven disappointing to those who had hoped for a meaningful healing process. A 2009 report from the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission included Johnson



Sirleaf among those who should be barred from holding office for 30 years on account of her association with Taylor. But she refused to step down. Instead she apologized to the Liberian people for having been “fooled” by Taylor early on.

In a statement, Gbowee referred to “differences in opinion on the pathway for national healing and reconciliation” as her reason for stepping down.

This June, the government launched a new roadmap that lays out an 18-year plan for



One of the most famous fighters in Liberia's civil war was a woman known as Black Diamond. Raped by forces loyal to Charles Taylor, who was later convicted of war crimes, she joined the other side.

Over 38,000 children took part in the war as fighters, porters, ammo carriers, cooks, and sex slaves.

The country's reconciliation process was further damaged in the fall, when the Nobel Peace Prize-winning activist Leymah Gbowee resigned as head of the separate Reconciliation Initiative after sharply criticizing Johnson Sirleaf for nepotism and her failure to address present-day issues such as corruption.

reconciliation. But to date, only one of the many recommendations of the 2009 TRC report has been implemented, and though almost 10 years have passed since the end of the fighting that left more than a quarter million people dead, Liberia has yet to fully reckon with its history.

When I go to see Gbowee at a farm just outside Monrovia, where she is hosting a camp for disadvantaged youth, she says that if the country is to move forward, Liberians must not only focus on the injustices of the past but also look to the present. “We can't talk reconciliation from 1990 if we don't look at some of the issues of social justice now,”



she argues. “If you look around Monrovia, we have a very angry population. How do we start to address some of these things that are making people angry before we start to address some of the issues of the war? How do we address these issues simultaneously?”

A big part of the challenge is that many Liberians are former child soldiers. More than 38,000 children are estimated to have taken part in the war as fighters, porters, ammunition carriers, cooks, and sex slaves. What they saw and did—and what was done to them—is an unredeemable reality. But the future is still open. In fact, this is a crucial moment: Liberia’s generation of child soldiers is now coming of age. And how they deal with their history is going to have major consequences for their



country.

Mary tells me her story in a fragmented fashion over the course of several weeks, but ultimately weaves a narrative of overcoming great adversity: she chose to be a fighter, she was disarmed, and now her life has turned around.

Yet her actions tell a different story. Like many former child soldiers, she is trapped between the past and the future, still unwilling or unable to let go of her wartime identity as a fighter, which, if nothing else, offered a sense of purpose and direction. She has a boyfriend and two children but has never married. The war taught her independence. “I’m the man for the family,” she says. “I’m the man because I fought.”

While she surrendered her arms years ago, Mary still has the swagger of a commander fiercely guarding her corner of the world. Homeless, crack-smoking teenagers and men

known as *gronna* boys hang out near the bar, and Mary sometimes orders them to settle things “the *gronna* way”—to dole out beatings to customers who don’t behave.

On this morning, a tall middle-aged man with bloodshot eyes walks in. Scrunching his face in pain, he asks for *gana gana* on credit. He has been here before. “Move your stink self from here,” she yells in her Liberian-English, chin cocked out. The man walks away before she can push him out. “You have to have sharp mouth because the people, they love fighting [and are] quick to take weapon,” she says. “You have to be careful.”

Many of the women who went to war are shunned now and live in slums.

Mary runs her bar with a 10-year-old girl whom she refers to as “the manager.” Tiny with a dark, pretty, wide face, the girl works at the bar day and night, throwing shots of liquor into grubby tumblers. She also does most of the household chores and cares for Mary’s 1-year-old daughter, Desire.

Mary says she adopted the young girl when she found her toward the end of the war—a baby, abandoned in an empty house. She calls the girl her daughter and claims to care for her, but one night, when the girl breaks a bottle of whisky while handling the wires to turn on the lights in the bar, Mary beats her to the ground and kicks her in the stomach as customers sit in silence, continuing to drink. “That little girl thinks she knows everything!” she yells. When I ask her about her violent outburst later, she defends herself, saying she was only trying to teach her a lesson and that she feared the girl would electrocute herself by fumbling with the wires.

But violence is clearly visceral, Mary’s first response. At one point, walking through a market, she attacks a man, believing he has called her a beggar. Over and over again, she smashes his head with a motorbike helmet while



threatening to cut him up and drag him out to her beach where they can settle it “the *gronna* way.” After bystanders break up the fight, Mary calls the police and, greasing the palm of a policeman with 100 Liberian dollars, gets the man locked up. “He can’t fight, he can only scratch,” she says later. When I ask her why she got into the fight in the first place, she says that because of her past serving as a commander in the war she is “his superior.” “People like that, during the war, they stay hiding,” she says.

In the aftermath of the wars, the government and Western aid agencies created programs to help former child soldiers reenter society, but many have been unable to build normal lives—especially the girls and women whose soldier past is seen by Liberian society as more of a transgression.

While many male commanders negotiated government positions after the war, female combatants were largely excluded from the process. Today many of the women who went to war are shunned and live in slums, scraping by for survival, often by prostituting themselves for a few dollars. Leena Kotilainen from the University of Turku in Finland, who is conducting a study on the reintegration of former girl soldiers, found that almost half of those she interviewed were involved in prostitution, most of them in ghettos throughout Monrovia. “Some of them are so destitute and disempowered that they don’t believe they are human beings anymore,” she says.

Former female combatants find it more difficult to get married, have families, and reintegrate back into society because they are seen as unfeminine, tainted, and depraved, says Irma Specht, an anthropologist who has studied the issue since the end of the war. “Girls who [fought] alongside boys in the bush are not regarded as decent. They have crossed the line of femininity, the norms in society on how women should behave. They are generally not regarded as potential candidates for marriage, and most employers are reluctant to hire them,” says Specht. As a result, “they live in ghettos and hide their past.”

Mary will half-brag about her own cruelty and then, moments later, appear tormented by the horror of what she did. Her sense of guilt isn’t fully formed; it appears only partially realized.

The third in a family of seven, Mary was just 2 years old when Taylor’s militia set off the first civil war. Born in the rural town of White Plains

just outside Monrovia, Mary was a child of conflict: she knew how to drop to the ground during crossfire and how to wait out violence in the surrounding scrub. Her mother, Patricia, sold grilled fish and ran a small video club to make ends meet. She had split from Mary’s father, Amos, because of “girlfriend business,” as Patricia puts it, and 9-year-old Mary was sent to live with her father and his new wife to ease the financial burden on her.

Mary says her stepmother abused her and took her out of school to sell chicken on the streets. She was also made to do most household chores, fetching water and pressing clothes with a coal iron before school. When she was disobedient, she says, her father and stepmother would tie her elbows together and rub hot pepper in her eyes, leaving her in the sun to suffer.

“Mary from her birth has been a bad kind of li’l girl,” her father tells me one day at a bodega near his home. He is ashamed of his daughter, he says, and wants her to reform. She should leave her beach bar, sew herself some nice dresses, and come with him to church, he says. (When asked about her father, Mary simply says he is “useless” and “insincere”—a sentiment echoed by her sister.)

Effectively orphaned, Mary went to stay with her grandmother in a quaint little housing community of brightly-colored worker cottages just outside Monrovia. But to Mary, who had grown accustomed to fending for herself and who supported herself by sometimes turning tricks, her grandmother’s way was far too strict. At 13, Mary became pregnant. The father was a handsome man she had watched play basketball in the moldy concrete ruins of the local community center. He was 25 and not prepared to be a father. (Today he lives in Boston and has some contact with her family, though Mary refuses to speak to him.)

Mary named her newborn Courage to help her find courage in God, but her mother took the baby girl away two weeks after she was born. Mary says she didn’t mind. She knew she was too young for “baby business.” And she had other plans.

In 2000, Mary’s mother decided that she and her children would escape the war by going to Ghana. But Mary was having none of it—and hid until they departed. Having just given birth to her daughter and seen her taken away, she wanted to



escape her family. "I thought it better I go to the bush and fight," she says. She also joined for "advantage," she says, for protection and benefits. She had observed the power the soldiers enjoyed—and how they abused it, beating the men and harassing the women. She wanted their power, their air of being inviolate and untouchable.

As a younger child, Mary had seen a tall, strong-looking woman in fatigues standing outside the training barracks in downtown Monrovia, and her air of strength, control, and discipline left an indelible impression. She began to imagine herself a soldier in a national army or volunteering to become a U.S. Marine, marching along in a neat uniform.

One afternoon, she set off to meet Larry Mulvey, a local commander who was headquartered in a house on Somalia Drive, a dusty road lined with sad-looking palm trees. When the small girl, dressed in a yellow tank-top and a short black skirt, told him she wanted to join the government Army, he readily agreed. Without saying goodbye to her grandmother, she left a week later on the back of a green pickup truck. She was taken to Camp Jackson in Naama, where she was taught basic target training and how to handle firearms. Discipline was a problem, though, and Mulvey named her "Disgruntled" because she was rude and wouldn't take orders.

During her first foray to the front lines, she served under the command of another woman, nicknamed Tina Girl, who eventually became her friend. At first, the crackle of gunfire and pounding of rocket-propelled grenades made Mary tremble, but she says her fears subsided as she watched Tina Girl fight. "She was brave," she says, "and I was [following in] her footsteps." (After the war, Tina Girl died of an overdose in a derelict cemetery in downtown Monrovia where many former combatants slept in old graves.)

People were forced to cut, cook, eat, and serve their own parents and infants.

For three years—her most formative teenage years—she fought in a war so brutal it almost defies belief. One study of the mental-health effects of the intertwined wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone found that atrocities included "intentional hacking off of limbs, carving the initials of rebel factions into victims' skin, slaughtering pregnant women to bet on the gender of the unborn child, and use of young girls as human sacrifices. Numerous people

have reported that they were forced to cut, cook, eat, and serve human flesh and internal organs, including those of their own parents and infants. Countless numbers of children and teenagers were forced to watch the torture, rape, and brutal murders of their parents and siblings. In many cases, family members—including children—were forced to rape, murder, and mutilate each other. During these acts, victims were forbidden to show any emotion, or, in many cases, were commanded to laugh. In some instances, people who shed tears in response to these atrocities were punished by being permanently blinded." Violence against women was so endemic during the civil war that some surveys suggest that between 60 percent and 90 percent of Liberia's girls and women were raped.

In a study on child soldiers in neighboring Sierra Leone, Theresa Betancourt, an associate professor at the Harvard School of Public Health, found that girl soldiers, while often also victims themselves of sexual abuse, were as likely as the boys to have been involved in the injury and killing of others. But Betancourt found that the psychological toll was greater on girls, who had significantly higher levels of depression and anxiety than boys did.

Yet little attention has been paid to the experience of these girls. As Rosana Schaack, who heads one of the few programs aimed at former female child soldiers, puts it, after the war "when you said child soldiers, everybody looked at the boys."

Mary recalls that she would cut off ears and fingers of those her unit captured. She and her soldiers even skinned a prisoner. But it is not these atrocities that appear to keep her awake at night. What troubles her is the recollection of an order she gave her soldiers to gang-rape a woman who had been caught, seemingly spying on their position.

Mary can't quite explain why this is worse than flaying someone, but she identified with the woman. And perhaps her prisoner's helplessness reminded Mary of her own.

One day in 2003, her unit came under heavy fire from LURD (Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy) rebels and began to retreat but was caught in an ambush. Three girls were killed when they tried to fight their way out. Along with two men, Mary surrendered. For days, they were



beaten, humiliated, and jailed. Eventually they were forced to join the rebels.

For several months, Mary fought for the other side—a fact that doesn't seem to trouble her much today. Identification with any political cause was never the point. And when the rebels advanced on Monrovia for a final push, she recounts a celebratory mood. "The looting was too much, so the enjoyment was sweet,"



she says. In the final days of the war, during the last battle for the capital, she managed to escape and run home to West Point.

After handing over her AK-47 and her RPG launcher during a disarmament drive, Mary returned to what she had known before the war: life on the streets, drugs, and prostitution.

When Schaack, a soft-spoken Liberian social worker with the evangelical humanitarian group Samaritan's Purse, approached her in late 2003, just months after the ceasefire, Mary told her: "Move from here that shit. The whole day you passing around and lying to people." But after a while, Schaack managed to persuade Mary and eight other girls to live for nine months at a Christian mission where they received counseling as well as courses in pastry making and tie dying.

The stay at the mission helped Mary kick her habit of smoking marijuana, and these days she doesn't hustle for money. "I've moved my life forward," she says. Schaack believes it's an upward trajectory that will continue if Mary can just leave West Point. She has faith in the

young woman and has nicknamed her "Bright Future."

But Mary is less certain of her prospects. She says the bar is an anchor—it earns her about \$45 a month, a princely sum in the slum—and she feels safe here, among her own people. "When I around them, no one can do nothing to me," she says. "So for me to leave from this area would be too hard."

And while Mary speaks about Schaack with affection, she says neither aid groups nor the government has done much for her or the other women who fought alongside her.

Mary's daughter Courage is graduating from elementary school. At 13, she is the same age her mother was when she got pregnant, left her family, and went into the bush to fight. Mary was reunited with her younger daughter, Desire, when Patricia, her mother, returned from Ghana in 2008, but Patricia will not allow Courage to live with Mary in West Point. "I don't feel it is a good place for children to grow up," Patricia tells me as we sit under a tree outside her home in Barnesville. "Even the little girl that is there, I want to take her ... That place is too full of former combatants ... That is why I took Courage, and I can't give her back to her."

In Liberia, graduations are big, noisy affairs, with food, alcohol, and dancing—an important ritual because school so often in the past was interrupted by fighting—and Mary has been saving for months for the occasion. "I want for her to be proud of me," she says. "I don't want to be like my father."

On the evening of her graduation, Courage is strutting around in a bobbed wig and a backless pink-and-blue-striped halter-top, short denim skirt, and shiny black shoes. Children dance while adults, reclining in their plastic chairs, chat and enjoy their drinks.

Though she has paid for the party, Mary is not there. She is having her own party a few miles away at Ma Mary's. She doesn't want her *gronna* friends embarrassing her daughter with their bad manners, smoking, and cursing.

Having retreated to Ma Mary's, where she feels safe, she surveys the remains of the party: the food is gone, and the bar is almost dry. A lone fluorescent lightbulb shines starkly, defining the silhouettes in



the bar. Mary notices a jumble of empty bottles on the table and starts to curse. It is her daughter's graduation, and she has only a

bottle of Club beer to toast with. She throws her head back for a swill. The music is still playing as night falls on Poto Corner.

Clair MacDougall is a journalist who reports on West Africa and is currently based in Monrovia, Liberia.

Malala Yousafzai: Pakistani teen shot by Taliban opens new library in Birmingham

Source: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/malala-yousafzai-pakistani-teen-shot-by-taliban-opens-new-library-in-birmingham-8796359.html>

A teenager who was shot by the Taliban after campaigning for women's rights declared herself an honorary Brummie today as she officially opened a new £188 million civic library.



"The doctors and nurses of this town worked hard to help me recover.

"The teachers of this town strived to rehabilitate my educational career, and the great people of this city gave me great moral support."

Malala, who unveiled a stainless steel plaque marking the library's official opening, informed the crowd that she had challenged herself to read thousands of books.

The teenager added: "Pens and books are the weapons that defeat terrorism.

"I truly believe the only way we can create global peace is through educating not only our minds, but our hearts and our souls."

Malala, who was given a library membership card after finishing her speech, was targeted by the Taliban

Malala Yousafzai was warmly applauded by a 1,000-strong crowd outside the Library of Birmingham as she thanked the people of the city for their support during her ordeal.

The 16-year-old schoolgirl was flown from Pakistan to the UK for emergency treatment last October after being shot in the head by a Taliban gunman.

Hailing pens and books as "weapons" that can defeat terrorism, Malala began a speech outside the library by addressing the crowd as her "fellow Brummies".

Speaking clearly and loudly, the teenager, who now attends a school in Birmingham, said: "It is an honour for me to be here in Birmingham, the beating heart of England.

"Birmingham is very special for me because it is here that I found myself alive, seven days after I was shot.

"It is now my second home, after my beloved Pakistan.



after campaigning for girls' right to attend school.

Surgeons who treated Malala said she came within inches of death when a bullet grazed her brain.



Malala, who is also due to receive the International Children's Peace Prize later this week in recognition of her dedication to children's rights, used her seven-minute speech to call for peace and development in Nigeria, Syria and Somalia.

"We must speak up for the children of Pakistan, India and Afghanistan who are suffering from terrorism, poverty, child labour and child trafficking," she said.

"Let us help them through our voice, action and charity. Let us help them to read books and go to school.

"And let us not forget that even one book, one pen, one child and one teacher can change the world."

The Library of Birmingham, located in Centenary Square, has a distinctive skin of metal hoops and replaces the city's nearby Brutalist Central Library, which opened in 1974. Culture Minister Ed Vaizey also attended the ceremony to take the wraps off the 333,000 sq ft library, which is covered in interlocking metal circles.

More than three million people are expected to use the library - designed by Dutch firm Mecanoo Architecten - in its first year.

Speaking shortly before Malala addressed the crowd gathered outside the library's main entrance, Mr Vaizey described the new building

as an "ode" to the book, the 21st century, and Birmingham itself.

The Deputy Leader of Birmingham City Council, Ian Ward, said the structure, which has a 3,000-tonne steel frame, represented the UK's largest public sector cultural project.

"With his building we have a new iconic image," he said. "This is a very special moment for Birmingham and its people."

The library's architect, Francine Houben, regards it as a "People's Palace" which will stimulate knowledge and support self-development.

"Birmingham is the youngest city in Europe, it has a rich history and many identities," she said. "This building is inspired by these qualities."

Housing Birmingham's civic archives and more than a million books, including 128 volumes printed before 1501, the library is encased in a metal filigree facade.

The 10-level library also links up with the adjoining Birmingham Repertory Theatre and has an outdoor amphitheatre providing a performance space for music, drama and poetry readings.

Other unusual features include two garden terraces on the third and seventh floors designed to provide visitors with space to unwind, socialize and learn.

Robotic device inserts intravenous line needles

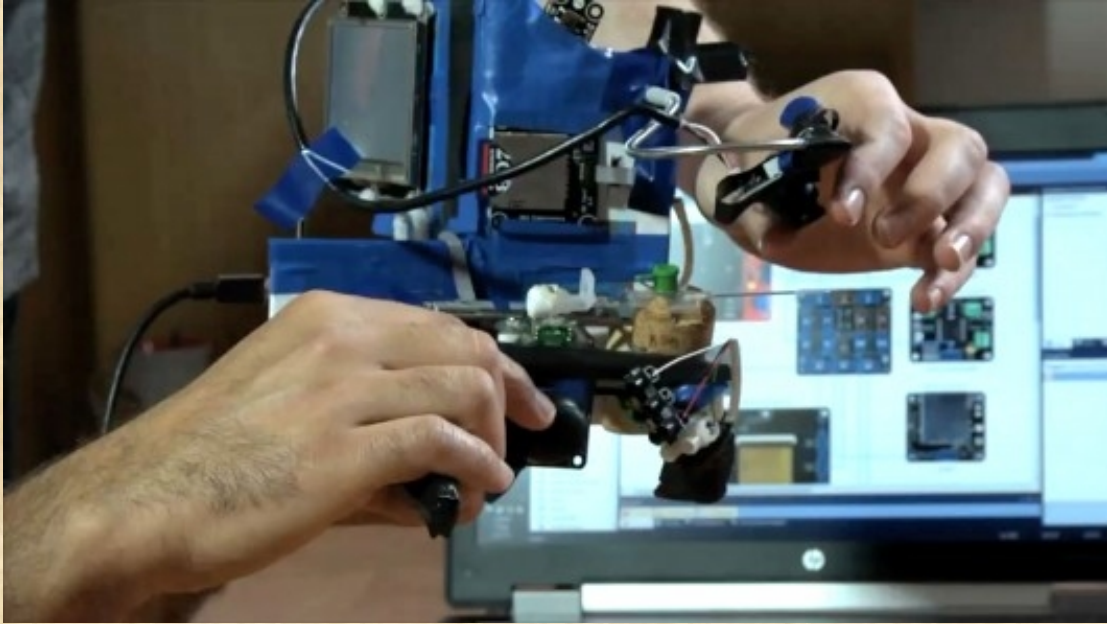
By Ben Coxworth

Source: <http://www.gizmag.com/sagiv-robotic-iv-needle/28925/>



Although the administering of fluids to patients via an intravenous (IV) line may be commonplace, what many people may not realize is that getting the needle into a vein can be quite a tricky process – often several failed attempts are required before success is achieved. That's why a group of students and staff from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem have created a robotic gadget to do the job.





The handheld device, known as SAGIV, uses infrared light and electrical sensing to detect the presence of veins beneath the patient's skin. A display on a linked computer shows those veins, along with the tip of the needle. The user just lines the one up with the other, then SAGIV quickly and accurately inserts the needle to which the IV line is subsequently attached.

The technology is being developed with children strongly in mind, as they can be particularly upset by the discomfort of getting needles. Already, SAGIV has been successfully tested in the pediatric ward of Jerusalem's Hadassah Medical Center. According to the team's clinical expert, Dr. Yotam Almagor, "Children that used to be pricked numerous times in every visit can now be connected in a single attempt."

In its current prototype form, which can be seen in the video below, SAGIV is still rather bulky. Down the road, however, it may be developed into a much smaller, sleeker device that has its own built-in screen.

Ben Coxworth is an experienced freelance writer, videographer and television producer, Ben's interest in all forms of innovation is particularly fanatical when it comes to human-powered transportation, film-making gear, environmentally-friendly technologies and anything that's designed to go underwater. He lives in Edmonton, Alberta, where he spends a lot of time going over the handlebars of his mountain bike, hanging out in off-leash parks, and wishing the Pacific Ocean wasn't so far away.

Mitigating Risk: Protecting & Defending Critical Infrastructure

By Natalie Lehr

Source: http://www.domesticpreparedness.com/Industry/Private_Sector/Mitigating_Risk:_Protecting_&_Defending_Critical_Infrastructure/

Leaders of various critical infrastructure sectors – such as energy, telecommunications, electricity generation, gas production, water supply, and waste disposal – must be able to effectively manage the vulnerabilities associated with providing high-quality services to the public while at the same time securing those sectors from physical and intellectual harm. Unlike companies that provide tangible products and traditional services, the owners

and operators of critical infrastructure do not have the luxury of sequestering their assets.

In fact, simply by supplying important services that are essential for society to function properly and without interruption, these firms are both physically and virtually exposed. Moreover, because the same companies fill a critical role in managing business operations and facilitating economic recovery, they must also carefully balance: (a)



pursuing new investments that take advantage of global sourcing; and (b) mitigating problems related to and/or caused by geopolitical volatility and competitive risk. For example, a dramatic increase in demand for mobile Internet, smartphones, and PDAs (personal digital assistants) has caused several U.S. telecommunications companies to shift a significant share of their capital investments to capture increasingly higher revenue streams. Developing a flexible and robust infrastructure that meets the increasing demands of a globally interconnected community becomes essential in the short term as well as in the long term because of the anticipated growth in service revenue desired by customers. To satisfy this demand and to best position themselves for a continuing evolution, telecommunications firms must leverage international vendors and supply chains while at the same time defending their own infrastructures from risks that overseas collaboration ventures inevitably create. In addition, after initial investment decisions are made, the next steps – required maintenance, installation, and training – will almost always extend the risk timeline into the lifecycle of the equipment used as well as the overall operating network.

Two Notorious Examples: Google and WikiLeaks

In 2010, revelations of network intrusions at Google – preceded by the massive WikiLeaks exposure of countless sensitive government documents – vividly illustrate how the blurring of politically and financially entangled circumstances poses major risks for business and government alike. In the WikiLeaks exposure, Bradley Manning, a 22-year-old intelligence analyst, was able to download and disclose/distribute literally hundreds of thousands of classified documents before he was detected – and later sentenced to 35 years in prison.

The Google incident was considerably different, but nonetheless harmful to U.S. interests. It started when the company experienced a six-month advanced persistent threat (APT) attack, dubbed “Operation Aurora,” that apparently originated in China. The lesson provided by both situations was much the same: Regardless of origin and/or intent – and whether state or criminally sponsored – such threats dramatically illustrate

the myriad of challenges that the private sector now faces in seeking to protect essential information.

Such events may seriously impair operations, financially harm any company involved, and/or damage the value of the brand. U.S. government agencies have the ability to retreat and segregate their most sensitive material in ultra-secure facilities, at a cost unknown to U.S. taxpayers. But private-sector companies do not have this same privilege, so must operate their geographically distributed personnel, facilities, and networks as securely as possible, even when: (a) engaging an ever growing number of partners; (b) outsourcing additional elements of the business (to further enhance the bottom line); and (c) meeting the profit expectations of their ever vigilant shareholders.

The same two examples illustrate an increasingly difficult problem – namely, that numerous foreign and domestic malefactors are now profiting from, disrupting, and/or otherwise harming the nation’s critical infrastructure. Experience shows, though, that the best defense against such activities is a vigorous and proactive offense. Not in the sense of a competitive espionage program but, rather, in the active and unified management of unwanted exposure within the public sphere.

The Growing Danger Posed by Insider Threats

In various ways similar to those common in other knowledge-intensive industries, U.S. critical infrastructure companies are particularly vulnerable to insider threats. Individual employees as well as subcontractors have access to and understand the market value of the materials, systems, and operations entrusted to them. Even properly sanctioned work may be vulnerable to information spills and/or inadvertent disclosures that not only create and expand vulnerabilities but also result in regulatory or compliance liabilities.

Much more threatening, however, are the deliberate and calculated efforts of persons with access, capability, and intent to harm a company. As the 2010 WikiLeaks’ case demonstrated, the financial cost and physical resources needed to cause incalculable harm to any given company, and/or to the federal government, are nominal – even to individual “lone wolf” attackers.



But the damage caused by just one angry or disgruntled employee of a gas or power company, for example, could be devastating to an entire community, and could disrupt normal operations for an extended period of time.

To guard against such threats, the nation's entire critical infrastructure industry now manages a veritable mountain of custodial data and regulatory compliance information. The protection of such custodial and personal information is obviously growing in importance, particularly given the increasing liabilities associated with the disclosure of custodial data – as was vividly demonstrated by the aggressive Massachusetts Data Breach Law of 2008.

A Comprehensive Approach & Proactive Plan of Action

With no sign that such dangers are abating, and with limited resources dedicated to “security,” critical infrastructure managers must ensure they are positioned to protect their companies from not only a broad range of liabilities (fines, lawsuits, adverse publicity) resulting from the spillage of toxic data but also from the loss or pilferage of valuable corporate secrets (financials, partnerships, technologies).

As critical infrastructure companies assess opportunities to transfer, reduce, or accept risks in the operation of their various businesses, they also must position themselves to optimize their options based on a unified organizational examination that is both broad and deep. Only through the unified management of a company's capital assets and business relationships can it optimize future selections from the broad range of actions that simultaneously mitigate risks and proactively layer the legal and structural defenses.

Although the costs created by and arising from compliance activities are more readily measured, the long-term losses associated with the exposure of valuable corporate secrets are, in fact, far more extensive and expensive. Those responsible for ensuring the security of critical infrastructure assets – from an economic point of view as well as from public health and safety perspectives – cannot afford to provide more protection for one asset than another. The time has come for a truly comprehensive approach to protect and defend critical infrastructure organizations.

Natalie Lehr is a co-founder and director of analytics at Tailored Solutions and Consulting (TSC), an enterprise risk consultancy based in Washington, D.C., specializing in intellectual asset protection. With more than 15 years of experience as an intelligence professional, her expertise spans both the government and commercial sectors. Her work for the U.S. government includes extensive experience in the identification, acquisition, and development of critical information, supporting high-value national security interests. In the commercial arena, she led the development of innovative methods to acquire and analyze critical information to protect specific interests and high-value intellectual assets. She holds a master's degree in International Relations from Yale University.

Finland says extremism not a problem

Source: <http://www.icenews.is/2013/09/05/finland-says-extremism-not-a-problem/>



The Finnish Interior Ministry has said that it doesn't view extremism as an issue in the country at present. The ministry said that 20 people have gone to join the conflict in Syria and that, although fighters who return to the Scandinavian country may be more likely to engage in acts of violence in the future, it doesn't consider violent extremism as a major threat.

It said in a statement regarding violent extremism in Finland that, according to a press release, one Finn and another person who resided in Finland have been killed while fighting in Syria.

The press release followed an article by Finnish publication Turun Sanomat last week that claimed hundreds of extremist jihadists are currently living in Turku. That report was followed by a provocative blog by a Finns party MP stating that the Koran teaches Muslims to kill Jews and non-believers.



However, the ministry noted that in the first seven months of 2013, police had arrested about 30 people for extremism-related crimes, adding that most of them were connected to far-right groups. The ministry believes people from across Europe have travelled to Syria to join the conflict, and that around 20 people, maybe more, have headed to the Middle Eastern country from Finland.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Typical case of someone belonging to the "it will not happen to us" tribe...

Mexico Drug War Fast Facts

By CNN Library

Source: <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/09/02/world/americas/mexico-drug-war-fast-facts/index.html>

Here's a look at what you need to know about the Mexican Drug War. The Mexican government has been fighting a war with drug traffickers since December 2006. At the same time, drug cartels have fought each other for control of territory. More than 60,000 people have been killed.

Facts

There are approximated 6,700 licensed firearms dealers in the U.S. along the U.S.-Mexico border. There is only one legal firearms retailer in Mexico.

Nearly 70% of guns recovered from Mexican criminal activity from 2007 to 2011, and traced by the U.S.



government, originated from sales in the United States.

90% of the cocaine that enters the U.S. transits through Mexico. Mexico is also a main supplier of marijuana and meth in the U.S.

Mexican drug cartels take in between \$19 and \$29 billion annually from U.S. drug sales.

Major Cartels

Beltran Leyva - Founded by the four Beltran Leyva brothers, Arturo, Carlos, Alfredo and Hector. Formerly aligned with the Sinaloa cartel, now aligned with Los Zetas against the Sinaloa, Gulf and La Familia Michoacana cartels. .

Gulf Cartel - Based in Matamoros, Tamaulipas. Formerly one of the most powerful cartels.



Juarez Cartel - Formerly aligned with the Sinaloa Cartel, now fighting it for control of Ciudad Juarez and the state of Chihuahua.

La Familia Michoacana - Based in the Michoacan state. Possibly defunct as of 2011.

Los Zetas Cartel - Comprised of former elite members of the Mexican military. Initially they worked as hit men for the Gulf Cartel, before becoming independent. They now battle the Gulf cartel for control of Tamaulipas and Nuevo Leon.

Sinaloa Cartel - Considered to be the dominant drug trafficking organization in Mexico. Led by Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman.

Tijuana/Arellano Felix Cartel - Based in Tijuana. Most of the Arellano Felix brothers have been apprehended or killed.

Timeline

August 16, 2006 - Javier Arellano Felix, alleged head of the Tijuana cartel, is arrested on a fishing boat off the Baja peninsula.

December 11, 2006 - Newly elected Mexican president Felipe Calderon deploys more than 6,500



Mexican soldiers to the state of Michoacán to battle drug traffickers.

2006 - In the first few weeks of the government crackdown on drug trafficking, 62 people are killed. (Mexican government, April 2010)

January 2007 - Captured drug lord Osiel Cardena Guillen, alleged former head of the Gulf cartel, is extradited to the United States.

February 2007 - More than 20,000 Mexican soldiers and federal police are spread out across Mexico as part of President Calderon's drug war.

June 25, 2007 - Mexican president Felipe Calderon fires 284 federal police commanders to weed out corruption.

2007 - In the first full year of the drug war, 2,837 people are killed. (Mexican government, April 2010)

January 2008 - Alfredo Beltran Leyva, of the Beltran Leyva Cartel, is arrested by Mexican police in Culiacan, Sinaloa, Mexico.

May 1, 2008 - Roberto Velasco Bravo, Mexico's director of investigation for organized crime, is killed in Mexico City.

May 8, 2008 - Edgar Eusebio Millan Gomez, Mexico's federal police chief, and two bodyguards are killed in Mexico City.



May 9, 2008 - The commander of Mexico City's investigative police force, Esteban Roble Espinosa, is killed outside his home.

September 15, 2008 - During an independence day celebration in Morelia's town square, grenades are thrown into the crowd, killing eight people. The incident has been described as the first terrorist-style attack on innocent bystanders in Mexico's drug war.

November 1, 2008 - The acting head of Mexico's Federal Police, Victor Gerardo Garay, resigns under suspicion of corruption.

2008 - 6,844 people are killed in 2008 in Mexico's drug war. (Mexican government, April 2010)

November 3, 2009 - The reported head of the Los Zetas drug cartel, Braulio Arellano Dominguez, is killed in a gun battle with Mexican forces in Soledad de Doblado.

December 16, 2009 - Arturo Beltran Leyva, head of the Beltran Leyva cartel, is killed in a shootout with Mexican forces in Cuernavaca.

2009 - The Mexican government reports 9,635 deaths in 2009 in the drug war. (Mexican government, April 2010)



January 2010 - Carlos Beltran Leyva is arrested by Mexican authorities in Sinaloa. He is the third Beltran Leyva cartel brother to be captured or killed in two years.

February 25, 2010 - Osiel Cardenas Guillen, head of the Gulf Cartel until his capture in 2003, is sentenced in Texas to 25 years in prison. He also is forced to turn over \$50 million to the United States.

May 26, 2010 - Pedro Roberto Velazquez Amador, allegedly the leader of the Beltran Leyva cartel in San Pedro, is killed in a shootout with federal forces in northern Mexico.



June 11, 2010 - Edgar Valdez Villarreal, "La Barbie", an American citizen, is charged with trafficking thousands of kilograms of cocaine into the United States. between 2004 and 2006. He remains a fugitive with a \$2 million reward for information leading to his capture.

June 25, 2010 - A leader in the Sinaloa cartel, Manuel Garibay Espinoza, is arrested in Mexicali, by Mexican police.

July 29, 2010 - Ignacio "Nacho" Coronel Villarreal, one of the leaders of the Sinaloa drug cartel, is killed in a military raid in Guadalajara's suburbs.

August 25, 2010 - The bodies of 72 migrants from South and Central America are discovered on a ranch in Tamaulipas state. It is believed the 58 men and 14 women were kidnapped by the Los Zetas cartel and killed for refusing to traffic drugs.

August 30, 2010 - Mexican authorities announce that they have captured alleged drug lord Edgar Valdez Villarreal, alleged head of the Beltran Leyva cartel. The American-born Valdez is known as "La Barbie" because of his blue eyes and light complexion.

September 10, 2010 - Mexican President Felipe Calderon tells CNN en Español, "We live next to the world's largest drug consumer, and all the world wants to sell them drugs through our door and our window. And we live next to the world's largest arms seller, which is supplying the criminals."

September 12, 2010 - A top leader in the Beltran Leyva cartel, Sergio Villarreal, is arrested in city of Puebla.

November 5, 2010 - Antonio Ezequiel Cardenas Guillen, aka Tony Tormenta, allegedly the head of the Gulf cartel, is killed in a shootout with Mexican forces in Matamoros.

December 10, 2010 - Nazario Moreno-Gonzalez, also known as "El Chayo," "El Doctor" and "El Mas Loco," The Craziest One," is killed as part of an operation in the Mexican southwestern state of Michoacan. Moreno-Gonzalez is one of the leaders and main founders of La Familia Michoacana cartel.

December 2010 - Mexico's Attorney General Arturo Chavez Chavez announces a death toll of 30,100 people in Mexico's four-year drug war.

January 2011 - The Mexican government releases a revised death toll of 34,612 citizens killed during the four-year drug war.

January 17, 2011 - Flavio Mendez Santiago, one of the original founders of Los Zetas, is captured near Oaxaca.

February 15, 2011 - U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents Jaime Zapata and Victor Avila, Jr. are run off the road in Mexico and attacked by a group of armed men who open fire. Zapata dies and Avila survives a gunshot wound to his leg. The Los Zetas drug cartel is suspected.

February 23, 2011 - Mexican soldiers arrest six members of the Los Zetas drug cartel, including Julian Zapata Espinoza, who is allegedly responsible for the death of U.S. ICE Agent Jaime Zapata.

March 5, 2011 - Alleged Los Zetas drug cartel member, Mario Jimenez Perez, is arrested in connection with Jamie Zapata's murder.

March 7, 2011 - Alleged Los Zetas drug cartel leader, Marcos Carmona Hernandez, is arrested.

March 31, 2011 - Mexico's Attorney General Arturo Chavez Chavez resigns, for personal reasons.

April 2011 - Several mass graves holding 177 bodies are discovered in Tamaulipas, the same area where the bodies of 72 migrants were discovered in 2010.

April 16, 2011 - Mexican authorities announce the arrest of Martin Omar Estrada Luna -- nicknamed "El Kilo", a presumed leader of the Los Zetas drug cartel in San Fernando. Estrada Luna has been identified by authorities as one of three prime suspects behind the mass graves discovered earlier in April 2011.

April 29, 2011 - Former drug cartel leader Benjamin Arellano Felix is extradited to the United States.

May 8, 2011 - Twelve suspected members of the Los Zetas drug cartel and a member of Mexico's Navy are killed in a shootout on a Falcon Lake island, after troops patrolling the area spot a camping area on the island. The suspected drug traffickers were storing marijuana on the island to be transported by boat to the U.S., authorities said in a statement.

May 29, 2011 - In Hidalgo, ten police officers, including a police chief, are arrested on charges of protecting the Los Zetas drug cartel.

June 14, 2011 - A congressional report shows that more than 70% of firearms seized by Mexican authorities, and submitted to the ATF for tracing, are shown to have originated in the United States. The report covers 29,284 firearms submitted in 2009 and 2010.



June 21, 2011 - Mexican federal police capture Jose de Jesus Mendez Vargas, also known as "The Monkey", the alleged head of La Familia Michoacana cartel in Augascalientes.

July 3, 2011 - Mexican authorities arrest Jesus Enrique Rejon Aguilar, known as "El Mamito," a reported founding member of the Los Zetas Cartel and allegedly connected to ICE Agent Jaime Zapata's death.

July 11, 2011 - The U.S. government announces a plan to require gun dealers in California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas to report the sales of semiautomatic rifles under certain conditions in an effort to stem the flow of guns to Mexican drug cartels.

July 27, 2011 - Edgar Jimenez Lugo, known as "El Ponchis" or "The Cloak", a 14-year-old American citizen with suspected drug cartel ties, is found guilty of beheading at least four people and sentenced to the maximum for a juvenile, three years in a Mexican correctional facility.

July 30, 2011 - Mexican authorities announce they have Jose Antonio Acosta Hernandez, or "El Diego," in custody. He is the purported leader of La Linea, the suspected armed branch of the Juarez drug cartel, and considered responsible for the death of U.S. Consulate employee Lesley Enriquez and her husband Arthur Redelfs.

August 1, 2011 - Mexican federal police arrest Moises Montero Alvarez, known as "The Korean," a suspected leader of the Independent Cartel of Acapulco (CIDA) and allegedly connected with the murders of 20 Mexican tourists in 2010.

August 25, 2011 - At least 52 people are killed in an attack on the Casino Royale in Monterrey, Mexico. Witnesses told investigators that up to six people entered the Casino Royale and demanded money from the manager, according to Adrian de la Garza, the state attorney general for Nuevo Leon. When the manager refused to pay they set the building on fire, he said.

August 30, 2011 - Mexican officials allege that the five suspects arrested in connection with the Mexico casino fire are members of the Los Zetas drug cartel and had targeted the owners of the casino for not complying with extortion demands. The suspects were identified as Luis Carlos Carrasco Espinosa; Javier Alonso Martinez Morales, alias "el Javo"; Jonathan Jahir Reyna Gutierrez; Juan Angel Leal Flores; and Julio Tadeo Berrones, alias "El Julio Rayas."

September 1, 2011 - A Nuevo Leon state police officer, Miguel Angel Barraza Escamilla, is arrested in connection with the casino fire that killed 52 people in Monterrey.

September 13, 2011 - A murdered man and woman are found hanging from a bridge in Nuevo Laredo. Near their mutilated bodies is a sign saying they were killed for denouncing drug cartel activities on a social media site. The sign also threatens to kill others who post "funny things on the internet."

September 20, 2011 - At least 35 bodies are dumped in a roadway in the coastal state of Veracruz, during rush-hour.

September 23, 2011 - Mexican authorities find another 11 bodies in locations throughout Veracruz.

September 27, 2011 - Five severed heads are found in a sack near an elementary school in Acapulco.

October 4, 2011 - The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) estimates that almost 43,000 people have died in Mexico's drug war since Mexican president Felipe Calderon took office in December 2006.

October 6, 2011 - In an online video purporting to be from the Anonymous hacking group, a masked man threatens to release information about the Los Zetas drug cartel for allegedly kidnapping an Anonymous member.

October 7, 2011 - The Mexican navy announces that it has arrested eight people suspected of involvement in the deaths of 67 people in Veracruz in recent weeks.

October 12, 2011 - A suspected top Los Zetas drug cartel leader, Carlos Oliva Castillo, alias "La rana," or frog, is arrested for allegedly ordering the attack and arson at the casino that killed 52.

November 24, 2011 - Mexican authorities find 26 bodies inside three abandoned vehicles in Guadalajara, Mexico, one day after authorities in Sinaloa state found 16 charred bodies inside two trucks that had been set ablaze.

January 4, 2012 - Benjamin Arellano Felix, a former leader of Mexico's Tijuana drug cartel, pleads guilty to charges of racketeering and conspiracy to launder money. The plea deal calls for the forfeiture of \$100 million to the U.S. and a maximum of 25 years in prison.



January 11, 2012 - The office of Mexico's Attorney General releases a statement saying that nearly 13,000 people were killed in drug violence between January and September 2011. This pushes the death toll from December 2006 to September 2011 to a minimum of 47,000 people killed.

April 2, 2012 - Former Tijuana cartel leader Benjamin Arellano Felix is sentenced to 25 years in prison and ordered to forfeit \$100 million after pleading guilty to racketeering and conspiracy to launder money.



April 24, 2012 - Using Calderón's strategy, the Mexican government has killed more than 40 major cartel members. The Economist points out that between 2007 and 2008, the number of drug-related killings in Mexico rose by 29 percent. In the next two years, it rose by 22 percent, then by 28 percent. Last year, however, there were signs of a plateau with only an 8 percent rise. A Pew poll conducted last spring shows that 45 percent of Mexicans believe the government is making progress against the cartels; 83 percent support Calderón's strategy of using the army to fight the cartels.

May 13, 2012 - Mexican authorities find at least 49 decapitated and dismembered bodies along a highway in Nuevo Leon state, between the cities of Monterrey and Reynosa.

July 7, 2012 - In an interview with CNN, Mexico's president-elect Enrique Peña Nieto calls for a new debate on the drug war and says the U.S. must play a prominent role.

July 12, 2012 - A U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee report concludes Mexico's frontal assault against drug cartels has been "largely ineffective" and in some instances counterproductive to reducing violence. The report recommends the focal point of Mexico's anti-drug cooperation should be training and institution building in police forces and judiciary.

August 31, 2012 - Eduardo Arellano-Felix, an alleged senior member of a Tijuana-based drug cartel, is extradited from Mexico to the United States. Arellano-Felix was arrested on October 25, 2008, after a gun battle with Mexican forces.

September 3, 2012 - In his final state of the nation address, Mexican President Felipe Calderon defends his government's approach to combating crime and drugs and criticizes the United States for providing criminals with almost "unlimited access" to weapons.

September 4, 2012 - Mexican authorities announce the capture of Mario Cardenas Guillen, also known as "M1" and "The Fat One," a suspected leader of the Gulf cartel.

September 27, 2012 - Mexican marines capture and arrest a man claiming to be Ivan Velazquez Caballero, alias "El Taliban." Velazquez Caballero is one of the top leaders of Los Zetas.

October 9, 2012 - Mexican authorities confirm that Mexican marines killed Heriberto Lazcano Lazcano, leader of the Zetas cartel, in a shootout on October 7. Lazcano's body



was stolen from a funeral home on October 8, but authorities had already taken fingerprints and photographs to confirm his identity.

December 1, 2012 - Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto takes office.

February 21, 2013 - A report published by Human Rights Watch criticizes Mexican security forces and estimates more than 60,000 people were killed in drug-related violence from 2006 to 2012.

July 15, 2013 - Los Zetas cartel leader Miguel Angel Trevino Morales, known as Z-40, is detained by Mexican authorities in an operation in the Mexican border state of Tamaulipas, state media reports.

August 20, 2013 - Mario Armando Ramirez, ranking member of the Gulf cartel and also known as X-20, is captured in Reynosa, near Texas.

August 20, 2013 - Eduardo Arellano-Felix is sentenced to 15 years in U.S. federal prison for his role as CFO in the drug cartel organization.

BROOKINGS

IRAN SURPRISES ITSELF AND THE WORLD

A new president may take his country in a new direction



Suzanne Maloney is an expert on Iranian politics, energy and economic reform in the Middle East, and U.S. policy toward the region. Prior to her position as a senior fellow with the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at

Brookings, she was a member of the State Department's policy planning staff; a Middle East advisor at ExxonMobil Corporation; and director of a Council on Foreign Relations task force on America's Iran policy. Author of *Iran's Long Reach* and contributor to such works as *Which Path to Persia? Options for a New American Strategy toward Iran*, she is also founder and editor of Iran@Saban, an insightful blog about politics in and policy concerning Iran.

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► Source: <http://www.brookings.edu/series/the-brookings-essay>



CLINICIANS' BIOSECURITY NEWS

ANALYSIS OF ADVANCES AND CHALLENGES IN CLINICAL BIOSECURITY

Violent Attacks on Healthcare Workers a Growing Problem

By Matt Watson

Source: http://www.upmc-cbn.org/report_archive/2013/cbnreport_09132013.html

The Geneva Convention of 1864 declared for the first time that hospitals, ambulances, and medical staffs of opposing militaries are neutral and protected from direct aggression during armed conflict.¹ The Geneva Conventions currently in force were negotiated in 1949 and have since been updated with Additional Protocols to account for the emergence of new types of conflict. In particular, Articles 7, 9, and 11 of the 1977 Additional Protocols address protection of the sick and wounded, medical personnel, and medical facilities and vehicles, respectively.² It has thus long been held that medical care providers and their patients and places of practice should be held safe, and that norm is a core tenet of international humanitarian law, which seeks to protect civilians and other noncombatants from the harms of violent conflict. However, recent reports of violence targeting healthcare workers provide evidence that the prohibition of violence against healthcare workers has degraded and requires strengthening and enforcement.

Documenting the Problem

In 2008, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) began to document incidents of violence against healthcare workers and patients in the 16 nations where it was conducting operations. In July 2011, ICRC released *Health Care in Danger: A Sixteen-Country Study*, which aimed to catalogue discrete incidents and better describe the scope of the problem.³ Before the ICRC began this project, characterizing the magnitude of the threat was difficult because of a paucity of data and the lack of a central reporting agency or data repository. The ICRC's first report documented 655 violent incidents between July 1, 2008, and December 2010, 33% of which were perpetrated by state security forces and 36.9% by violent nonstate actors. In concluding the report, the authors asserted that "the right

of the wounded and the sick to health care is not respected in the contexts studied," and that this problem cannot be solved by medical and humanitarian advocacy alone. Engaging a broader coalition, including practitioners in the legal, political, and national security realms, is necessary to make meaningful progress.

On May 15, 2013, the ICRC released *Violent Incidents Affecting Health Care*, which documented "921 violent incidents affecting health-care during armed conflict and other emergencies in 22 countries" that occurred in 2012. Their research indicates that local healthcare providers are most often the victims and state security forces are the most frequent perpetrators (38%). The report describes the following types and instances of violence against healthcare workers: killing (150), wounding (114), beating (92), kidnapping (73), threatening (266), arresting (92), denying passage (160), and robbing (85). The 2013 report also documented the rise of 2 dangerous trends: follow-up attacks directed against first responders and the violent disruption of vaccination campaigns.⁴

Recent Events Illustrate the Threat

Pakistan: Between December 2012 and February 2013, 16 members of polio vaccination teams operating in Pakistan and 1 law enforcement officer were killed by militants linked to the Taliban. To some degree, these attacks were motivated by the Taliban's mistrust of medical personnel, which has been linked to the alleged involvement of a Pakistani physician in the lead-up to the raid that killed Osama bin Laden. The Taliban also attempted to leverage their assent to polio vaccination to bring about a cessation of US drone strikes.^{5,6} On June 15, 2013, violent extremists in Pakistan's Balochistan province detonated an improvised explosive device on a university bus, killing 14



female students. Injured patients were transported to Bolan Medical Complex for further care. That facility was subsequently targeted by militants, who killed 4 nurses and a deputy commissioner and held 35 people hostage—including healthcare workers and patients—until security forces regained control of the facility.⁷ In Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas, which are adjacent to the Pakistan-Afghan border, the Taliban has reportedly damaged or destroyed 128 health facilities since 2008, forcing the population of 6 million to seek medical care in the relative safety of nearby Peshawer.⁸

Syria and surroundings: Healthcare workers were the targets of violence, repression, and intimidation during the multiple uprisings now collectively referred to as the Arab Spring, as documented by Amnesty International in its 2011 report, *Health Crisis: Syrian Government Targets the Wounded and Health Workers*.⁹ On 4 occasions, physicians and nurses were arrested, interrogated, and detained by Syrian security forces for suspicion of providing support to the opposition. More recently, Al Jazeera reported the death of Dr. Muhammad Abyad, a Syrian surgeon who was working with Médecins sans Frontières (MSF, aka Doctors Without Borders) in Aleppo. Dr. Abyad had reportedly been kidnapped from his home by Islamic extremists on September 2.¹⁰

More broadly, the ongoing conflict has had a significant impact on Syria's healthcare infrastructure. The WHO regional office recently reported that 20% of the nation's public hospitals have been damaged and 37% rendered out of service. Emergency response capacity has been degraded, with 78% of ambulances damaged and 52% completely out of service.¹¹

Elsewhere in the region, Turkey,¹² Bahrain,¹³ and Egypt¹⁴ have all reported instances of violence, intimidation, detention, and persecution of medical providers.

Somalia: On August 14, 2013, Médecins sans Frontières announced that, after 22 years of service in Somalia, it was suspending operations as “a direct result of extreme attacks on our staff.” The effects are expected to be devastating: As reported by the *New York Times* in 2012, MSF provided outpatient care to more than 600,000 Somalis, admitted an additional 41,100 people for inpatient care, and performed 2,750 surgeries.¹⁵ Long regarded for bravery, dedication, and an exceptionally high

tolerance for risk, MSF's healthcare workers provide medical care in the most dangerous locations. The organization's withdrawal from Somalia demands the attention of the international humanitarian and security communities.

Effects of Violence Against Healthcare Workers

The consequences of the growing violence against healthcare workers include not just the harm to the workers and their families, but also what the ICRC refers to as “knock-on effects.” When healthcare workers and healthcare facilities cannot be kept safe, health care cannot be delivered, and people suffer.³

Another direct consequence of violence against the health sector is the interruption of national and international infectious disease control. Most notably, the ongoing effort to eradicate polio is predicated on broad vaccine coverage in nations where polio remains endemic, including Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Nigeria. By limiting vaccinator access to a large, vulnerable population, ongoing violence contributes to the persistence of disease transmission.

Action Is Needed

As healthcare delivery in conflict zones grows more dangerous, decisive action is needed to protect healthcare workers and facilities. National and international governments should secure facilities and workers and provide emergency response when necessary. At the national level, enacting and enforcing laws that safeguard the rights of the sick and injured to access health care and that prohibit violence against or intimidation of healthcare workers is needed to advance the principles articulated in the Geneva Conventions and elsewhere.

ICRC's Health Care in Danger initiative is an important first step in generating the data needed to describe the scale and complexity of the problem and to raise global awareness. The 2015 final analysis will provide additional data and offer practical guidance to organizations providing medical services in unstable regions.

The US Congress took action in May of this year when the House introduced the Medical Neutrality Protection Act of 2013. The bill states that the US considers medical neutrality “an integral part of the



defense of recognized international human rights law and international humanitarian law” and confirms that the US government will work to support and defend that principle.¹⁶ Among other provisions, the bill would require the Secretary of State to identify and deny US foreign assistance to nations that have violated medical neutrality. The passage of this bill

would create an additional incentive for states that receive US foreign assistance to safeguard their healthcare systems to the greatest possible extent. Now that momentum is growing, it is important to keep attention focused on addressing this threat to global health and security.

► **NOTE:** References are available at URL source

How five countries in the Middle East could become fourteen?

By Raber Y Aziz

Source: <http://www.ekurd.net/mismas/articles/misc2013/9/state7355.htm>

The New York Times has published a potential new map of the Middle East which looks good to me as a Kurd. But it looks more like wishful thinking than a real evaluation because I think it is far more complicated than this simply put

country" than seeing the country be divided into smaller countries or regions.

Americans suggested that Iraq be divided into three federal regions, Sunni, Shite, Kurdish, in order to overcome disputes but it was rejected by Sunnis and many Shites alike, other than Kurds. Sunnis who are now minorities in Iraq are the most ferocious opposers of this division into three regions or possible states. They never stop complaining about the powers of the central Shiite held government yet they stress on one central government.

The issue here is that each one claims that they want a unified country, but one which gives them the power to rule. Shites want a unified country ruled by Shiites, Sunnis consider different federal regions and division a blasphemy and they want a unified country, looking back on it with nostalgia how great Iraq was under Sunni rule. The same thing applies to Syria as well. Sunnis Arabs who form the majority see the opportunity to rule the whole country as the Shiites did in Iraq after the 2003 fall of Saddam so



by the New York Times.

I think the person who drew this map was thinking about the issues in the Middle East more like "I think this is the best solution for all the issues" rather than "I think this is what is going to happen because of this and that". The issue here is that other than Kurds in the Middle East, everybody else wants a "unified

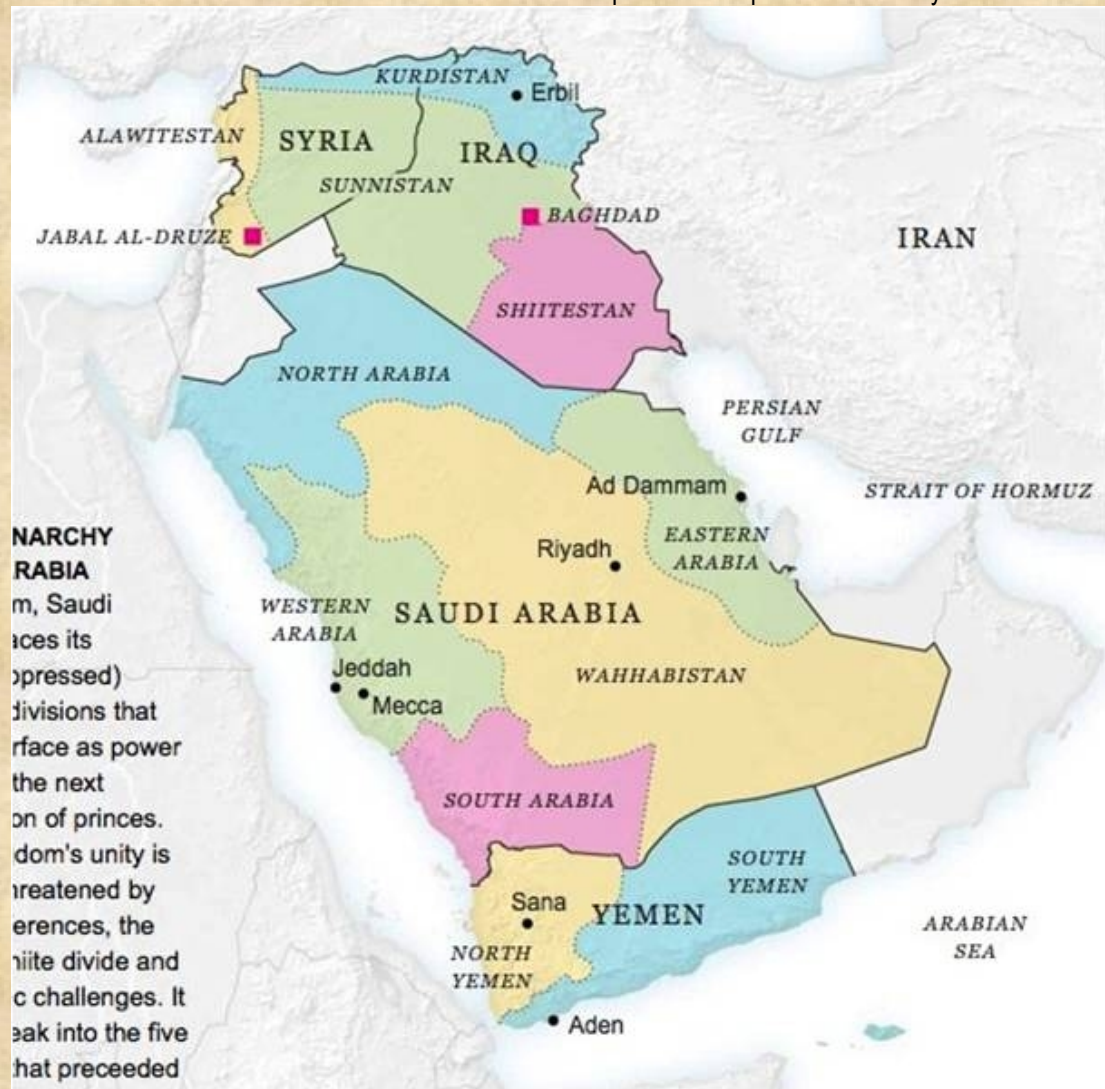
they will never give up on a unified Syria. Kurds want at least autonomy, or a Kurdish region government by a Kurdish government within Syria just like in Iraq, but Sunni Arabs vehemently oppose it.

Other than that, if this could be accepted by all, I do believe [like the editor might have thought



than evaluated the issues] that it is a good solution to the turmoil in the Middle East.

As a result of powerful tribal and regional rivalries, Libya could break into its two historic parts — Tripolitania and Cyrenaica — and



SYRIA: THE TRIGGER?

Sectarian and ethnic rivalries could break it into at least three pieces:

1. Alawites, a minority that has controlled Syria for decades, dominate a coastal corridor.
2. A Syrian Kurdistan could break off and eventually merge with the Kurds of Iraq.
3. The Sunni heartland secedes and then may combine with provinces in Iraq to form Sunnistan.

SPILLOVER TO IRAQ

In the simplest of several possibilities, northern Kurds join Syrian Kurds. Many central areas, dominated by Sunnis, join Syria's Sunnis. And the south becomes Shiitistan. It's not likely to be so clean.

LIBYA UNGLUED

possibly a third Fezzan state in the southwest.

SAUDI ARABIA

Long term, Saudi Arabia faces its own (suppressed) internal divisions that could surface as power shifts to the next generation of princes. The kingdom's unity is further threatened by tribal differences, the Sunni-Shiite divide and economic challenges. It could break into the five regions that preceded the modern state.

YEMEN SPLITS

The poorest Arab country could break (again) into two pieces following a potential referendum in South Yemen on independence.

In a more powerful twist, all or part of South Yemen could then



become part of Saudi Arabia. Nearly all Saudi commerce is via sea, and direct access to the Arabian Sea would diminish dependence on

the Persian Gulf — and fears of Iran's ability to cut off the Strait of Hormuz.

Raber Y Aziz is a Kurdish Observer, journalist, blogger and translator from Erbil, the capital of Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish region. His works have appeared on various Kurdish print and online media outlets among them AKnews, Hawlati Newspaper, Aso Newspaper, and others. He is currently an English Studies and Communication (ESC) MA student at Valparaiso University, Indiana, US. He can be reached at raber.aziz@gmail.com, or follow him on his blog Kurdishobserver.blogspot.com. A contributing writer and columnist for for Ekurd.net.



A state of disrepair: Thousands of U.S. aging bridges risk collapse

Source: <http://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20131004-a-state-of-disrepair-thousands-of-u-s-aging-bridges-risk-collapse>

The AP has reported that of 607,380 bridges listed in the recent U.S. National Bridge Inventory, 65,605 bridges were classified as “structurally deficient” and 20,808 as “fracture critical,” with 7,795 of those bridges designated both structurally deficient and fracture critical. Experts say this indicates significant disrepair and a risk of collapse.

Engineers and officials, however, say bridges are safe despite their classifications as structurally deficient or fracture critical.

A fracture-critical bridge does not have redundant protections and is at risk of collapse if a vital component fails. A structurally deficient bridge is in need of rehabilitation or replacement because at least one major component of the span has advanced deterioration, or other problems that lead inspectors to deem the bridge as unfit.

One example of a bridge which is designated as both structurally deficient and fracture-critical is the Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge in Washington, D.C. Bridges across the United States which are considered both structurally deficient and fracture critical together carry more than twenty-nine million drivers a day. Many of the bridges were built more than sixty years ago, including the

Brooklyn Bridge in New York and the Main Avenue Bridge in Cleveland.

Many fracture critical bridges were built between the 1950s and 1970s during the construction of the interstate highway system. These bridges have now exceeded their life expectancy but are still operational, often carrying more cars and trucks than originally planned.

Thousands of inspectors across the country monitor the safety of bridges, and “If a bridge is found to be unsafe, immediate action is taken” says Victor Mendez, head of the Federal Highway Administration. Cities and states have little funding to replace aging and vulnerable bridges so they resort to juggling repairs in an effort to stay ahead of deterioration.

The Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge was designed to last fifty years, so now it operates thirteen years past its life expectancy. Local transportation officials have inserted catcher beams underneath the bridge's main horizontal beams to keep the bridge from falling into the river in case a main component fails.

Engineers note that all it takes for a fracture-critical bridge to collapse is a single unanticipated event that damages a critical portion of the structure. “It's kind



of like trying to predict where an earthquake is going to hit or where a tornado is going to touch down,” Kelley Rehm, bridges program manager for the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), told the AP.



The Washington Monument stands behind the Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge which spans the Anacostia River in Washington on Wednesday, Sept. 4, 2013

Peter Vanderzee, CEO of Lifespan Technologies of Alpharetta, Georgia, an engineering firm which uses special sensors to monitor bridges for stress, said steel fatigue is a problem in the older bridges.

“Bridges aren’t built to last forever,” he told the AP. He compared steel bridges to a paper clip that’s opened and bent back and forth until it breaks.

“That’s a fatigue failure,” he said. “In a bridge system, it may take millions of cycles before it breaks. But many of these bridges have seen millions of cycles of loading and unloading.” Many of the bridges included in the

AP analysis have sufficiency ratings. A bridge with a score less than 50 on a 100-point scale may be eligible for federal funds to help restore some components. The latest federal inventory shows that more than 400 bridges which are fracture-critical and structurally deficient have a score of less than 10. The Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge has a sufficiency rating of 60. The bridge has been rehabilitated since its previous sufficiency rating of 49. Ronaldo Nicholson, the chief bridge engineer for the Washington, D.C. area notes that a new retractable bridge which allows ships to travel the Anacostia River would cost \$450 million, yet the cost could be as low as \$300 million for a non-retractable bridge. Officials are extending

the bridge’s life for another five years while a replacement bridge is to be built. Inspections of the bridge have been shifted to every six months instead of the regular 2-year intervals for most bridges.

In the end, keeping bridges healthy and safe, and preventing them from reaching the point of being designated as structurally deficient or fracture-critical, is a question of money. Congress showed some interest in fixing bridges after the 2007 bridge collapse in Minneapolis, but efforts to allocated billions of federal dollars to repair and replace deficient and obsolete bridges have so far failed.

“Do we have the funding to replace 18,000 fracture critical bridges right now?” AASHTO’s Rehm asked. “No. Would we like to? Of course.”

Olympics Security Won’t Feel Like Concentration Camp

Source: <http://stream.wsj.com/story/latest-headlines/SS-2-63399/SS-2-344236/>

Russia’s Federal Security Service assured that its plans for safeguarding the 2014 Olympic Games won’t make the host city of Sochi feel “like a concentration camp,” a promise coming a few days after the International Olympic Committee praised the country’s readiness for the winter sports competition.

Alexei Lavrishchev, a senior official at the Federal Security Service known as the FSB, said Russia will avoid some of the stricter

safety measures taken in London ahead of the 2012 Olympic Games, such as placement of surface-to-air missiles on buildings, army patrols on city streets and cameras in public conveniences.

“The city in no way will look like a concentration camp,” Mr. Lavrishchev said during a Moscow news conference Wednesday. “The security measures will be aimed at



creating comfortable conditions for guests and participants of the Olympics.” He said the measures would be “fairly modest” and “unnoticeable.”

Mr. Lavrishchev also denied that an August security decree signed by Russian President Vladimir Putin that bans demonstrations for the duration of the games was designed to prevent

Mr. Lavrishchev didn't comment on that threat at Wednesday's news conference, where organizers chose only representatives from state-controlled media and a reporter from the publication "Soviet Sport" to ask questions. At a meeting of Russia's Security Council last month, Mr. Putin said the security situation in the North Caucasus is improving, but not



protests against Russia's new so-called gay propaganda law that prohibits actions condoning same-sex lifestyles in front of minors. "The preparation of that order started more than two years ago, when there were no intentions, let alone announcements, about holding protests in support of the LGBT movement," he said. "There was no talk of that" at the time, Mr. Lavrishchev said.

The decree sets out a range of security measures, including "forbidden" and "controlled" zones around the Olympic Park, as well as restrictions on private cars entering Sochi from other cities without special permits.

The 2014 Olympics will be held Feb. 7-23 and are among the first to be held close to a region of considerable unrest. Sochi is situated just west of areas in Russia's North Caucasus that for years have grappled with an Islamist insurgency and terrorist attacks. Doku Umarov, self-proclaimed leader of an Islamist terrorist group in the region, called on followers in July to use maximum force to disrupt the Olympics in Sochi, which he said were being held on the "bones of many, many dead Muslims."

quickly enough, and called on officials to redouble their efforts to control the extremist threat in the region ahead of the Olympic Games.

Anton Gusev, the first deputy chief of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs unit that handles security for large international sporting events, said at Wednesday's news conference that security officials are undergoing language training to deal with issues that may arise regarding foreign citizens. Sochi is also planning to open a call center where police officers can ring up to get on-the-spot translation, he said.

Mr. Gusev said the Ministry of Internal Affairs has plans to conduct joint operations with Russia's Federal Migration Service to crack down on illegal migrants in the city ahead of the games. He said Sochi has attracted a large number of migrant workers due to the construction of the Olympic Park and that "consequently where the number of migrants increases, so too does the number of violations in that sphere." He said the



violations were on the part of both employers and the migrants themselves.

In a lengthy February report, Human Rights Watch criticized what it described as the exploitation of migrant workers employed to construct some of the Olympic venues. At the

time, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Kozak, who is in charge of organizing the games, told reporters that while some violations are inevitable in such a large construction project, they are not occurring on a mass scale.

Martial Law and the Economy: Is Homeland Security Preparing for the Next Wall Street Collapse?

By Ellen Brown

Source: <http://www.globalresearch.ca/martial-law-and-the-economy-is-homeland-security-preparing-for-the-next-wall-street-collapse/5353267>

Reports are that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is engaged in a massive, covert military buildup. An article in the Associated Press in February confirmed an open purchase order by DHS for 1.6 billion rounds of ammunition. According to an op-ed in Forbes, that's enough to sustain an Iraq-sized war for over twenty years. DHS has also acquired heavily armored tanks, which have been seen roaming the streets. Evidently somebody in government is expecting some serious civil unrest. The question is, why?

Recently revealed statements by former UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown at the height of the banking crisis in October 2008 could give some insights into that question. An article on BBC News on September 21, 2013, drew from an explosive autobiography called *Power Trip* by Brown's spin doctor Damian McBride, who said the prime minister was worried that law and order could collapse during the financial crisis. McBride quoted Brown as saying:

If the banks are shutting their doors, and the cash points aren't working, and people go to Tesco [a grocery chain] and their cards aren't being accepted, the whole thing will just explode.

If you can't buy food or petrol or medicine for your kids, people will just start breaking the windows and helping themselves.

And as soon as people see that on TV, that's the end, because everyone will think that's OK now, that's just what we all have to do. It'll be anarchy. That's what could happen tomorrow. How to deal with that threat? Brown said, "We'd have to think: do we have curfews, do we put the Army on the streets, how do we get order back?"

McBride wrote in his book *Power Trip*, "It was extraordinary to see Gordon so totally gripped by the danger of what he was about to do, but

equally convinced that decisive action had to be taken immediately." He compared the threat to the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Fear of this threat was echoed in September 2008 by US Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson, who reportedly warned that the US government might have to resort to martial law if Wall Street were not bailed out from the credit collapse.

In both countries, martial law was avoided when their legislatures succumbed to pressure and bailed out the banks. But many pundits are saying that another collapse is imminent; and this time, governments may not be so willing to step up to the plate.

The Next Time WILL Be Different

What triggered the 2008 crisis was a run, not in the conventional banking system, but in the "shadow" banking system, a collection of non-bank financial intermediaries that provide services similar to traditional commercial banks but are unregulated. They include hedge funds, money market funds, credit investment funds, exchange-traded funds, private equity funds, securities broker dealers, securitization and finance companies. Investment banks and commercial banks may also conduct much of their business in the shadows of this unregulated system.

The shadow financial casino has only grown larger since 2008; and in the next Lehman-style collapse, government bailouts may not be available. According to President Obama in his remarks on the Dodd-Frank Act on July 15, 2010, "Because of this reform, . . . there will be no more taxpayer funded bailouts – period."

Governments in Europe are also shying away from further bailouts. The Financial Stability Board (FSB) in Switzerland has therefore required the systemically risky



banks to devise “living wills” setting forth what they will do in the event of insolvency. The template established by the FSB requires them to “bail in” their creditors; and depositors, it turns out, are the largest class of bank creditor. When depositors cannot access their bank accounts to get money for food for the kids, they could well start breaking store windows and helping themselves. Worse, they might plot to overthrow the financier-controlled government. Witness Greece, where increasing disillusionment with the ability of the government to rescue the citizens from the worst depression since 1929 has precipitated riots and threats of violent overthrow.

Fear of that result could explain the massive, government-authorized spying on American citizens, the domestic use of drones, and the elimination of due process and of “posse comitatus” (the federal law prohibiting the military from enforcing “law and order” on non-federal property). Constitutional protections are being thrown out the window in favor of protecting the elite class in power.

The Looming Debt Ceiling Crisis

The next crisis on the agenda appears to be the October 17th deadline for agreeing on a federal budget or risking default on the government’s loans. It may only be a coincidence, but two large-scale drills are scheduled to take place the same day, the “Great ShakeOut Earthquake Drill” and the “Quantum Dawn 2 Cyber Attack Bank Drill.” According to a Bloomberg news clip on the bank drill, the attacks being prepared for are from hackers, state-sponsored espionage, and organized crime (financial fraud). One interviewee stated, “You might experience that your online banking is down You might experience that you can’t log in.” It sounds like a dress rehearsal for the Great American Bail-in.

Ominous as all this is, it has a bright side. Bail-ins and martial law can be seen as the last desperate thrashings of a dinosaur. The exploitative financial scheme responsible for turning millions out of their jobs and their homes has reached the end of the line. Crisis in the current scheme means opportunity for those more sustainable solutions waiting in the wings.

Other countries faced with a collapse in their debt-based borrowed currencies have survived and thrived by issuing their own. When the

dollar-pegged currency collapsed in Argentina in 2001, the national government returned to issuing its own pesos; municipal governments paid with “debt-canceling bonds” that circulated as currency; and neighborhoods traded with community currencies. After the German currency collapsed in the 1920s, the government turned the economy around in the 1930s by issuing “MEFO” bills that circulated as currency. When England ran out of gold in 1914, the government issued “Bradbury pounds” similar to the Greenbacks issued by Abraham Lincoln during the US Civil War.

Today our government could avoid the debt ceiling crisis by doing something similar: it could simply mint some trillion dollar coins and deposit them in an account. That alternative could be pursued by the Administration immediately, without going to Congress or changing the law, as discussed in an earlier article of mine. It need not be inflationary, since Congress could still spend only what it passed in its budget. And if Congress did expand its budget for infrastructure and job creation, that would actually be good for the economy, since hoarding cash and paying down loans have significantly shrunk the circulating money supply.

Peer-to-peer Trading and Public Banks

At the local level, we need to set up an alternative system that provides safety for depositors, funds small and medium-sized businesses, and serves the needs of the community.

Much progress has already been made on that front in the peer-to-peer economy. In a September 27th article titled “Peer-to-Peer Economy Thrives as Activists Vacate the System,” Eric Blair reports that the Occupy Movement is engaged in a peaceful revolution in which people are abandoning the established system in favor of a “sharing economy.” Trading occurs between individuals, without taxes, regulations or licenses, and in some cases without government-issued currency.

Peer-to-peer trading happens largely on the Internet, where customer reviews rather than regulation keep sellers honest. It started with eBay and Craigslist and has grown exponentially since. Bitcoin is a private currency outside the prying eyes of regulators. Software is being devised that



circumvents NSA spying. Bank loans are being shunned in favor of crowdfunding. Local food co-ops are also a form of opting out of the corporate-government system.

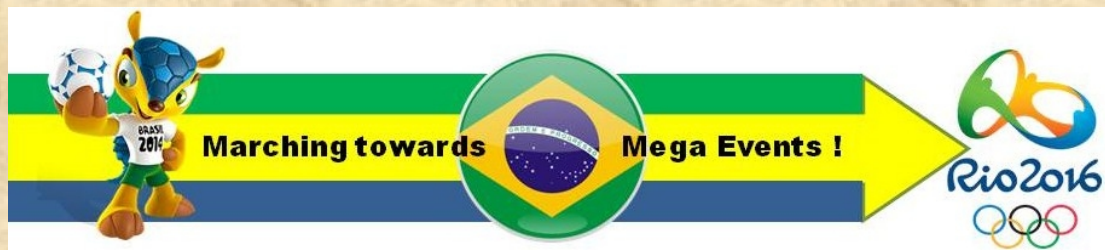
Peer-to-peer trading works for local exchange, but we also need a way to protect our dollars, both public and private. We need dollars to pay at least some of our bills, and businesses need them to acquire raw materials. We also need a way to protect our public revenues, which are currently deposited and invested in Wall Street banks that have heavy derivatives exposure.

To meet those needs, we can set up publicly-owned banks on the model of the Bank of

North Dakota, currently our only state-owned depository bank. The BND is mandated by law to receive all the state's deposits and to serve the public interest. Ideally, every state would have one of these "mini-Feds." Counties and cities could have them as well.

Preparations for martial law have been reported for decades, and it hasn't happened yet. Hopefully, we can sidestep that danger by moving into a saner, more sustainable system that makes military action against American citizens unnecessary.

*Ellen Brown is an attorney, president of the Public Banking Institute, and author of twelve books, including the best-selling *Web of Debt*. In *The Public Bank Solution*, her latest book, she explores successful public banking models historically and globally. Her 200-plus blog articles are at EllenBrown.com.*



Read all the latest news regarding coming mega sports events in the special page of CBRNE-Terrorism Newsletter!

The Most Dangerous Continent

Source: <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/10/the-most-dangerous-continent/280528/>
Wikimedia Commons

Some problems travel well. Sometimes too well. Financial crashes have taught us that in



some cases what starts as a very local economic problem quickly escalates and becomes a global crisis. Think Greece—or more recently Cyprus. And we know that terrorism also has a way of going global in unpredictable and dangerous ways.

But what about regions? Which continents are more prone to infect the rest of the world with their problems? Africa and Latin America's woes, for example, remain mostly insulated. Of course, the mass emigration of Africans to Europe and Latin Americans to the United States is an example of how one continent's problems spill over into another, but this contagion has had much less of an impact than the economic crisis in the U.S. or Europe, for example. Millions of people all over the world, and especially in Europe, are still paying the consequences for that financial earthquake.

The point is that the problems of some continents are more 'systemic' than others. This is to say that the agonies of some regions affect the entire world, no matter how far away they are. The question, then, is: Which of the five continents is



bound to spread more unhappiness in the future?

One way to answer is to think about which threats travel the easiest and with no trouble skirt borders, fortifications, or the public policies that we naïvely believe protect us. An economic crash in China, for example, is bound to be felt everywhere and by everyone.

Nor may we be able to dodge the consequences of the nuclear experiments of a young, inexperienced North Korean tyrant. So, which continent is the most dangerous? Asia. This may surprise those who see the 'Asian economic miracle' as a model for the rest of the world. Or those who think that conditions in the Middle East are ripe for a lengthy and rising wave of armed conflicts, religious radicalization and international terrorism. All this is true.

But the problems that originate in Asia will prove more and more complicated, as their already gigantic economies continue to grow, albeit at a slower pace than in the last several decades.

The main threats to humanity today are: 1) climate change; 2) nuclear proliferation; 3) the outbreak of a disease with no known cure that spreads across the globe claiming a large number of victims; 4) global economic crises and, of course, 5) an armed conflict between two or more military powers, such as China and India, for example. Of course, there are other threats: terrorism, the increased scarcity of water, criminalized governments, structural unemployment, and the proliferation of failed states. But none of these would generate the colossal consequences of the five I list.

Asia is the region with the most countries that have the potential to create and spread these

five problems. The much celebrated economic success of the 'Asian tigers' obscures the fact that this continent is also home to the principal threats to global stability.

According to the Asian Development Bank, Asia is on the path to double its consumption of oil, triple its use of natural gas, and see an 81 percent increase in its use of high polluting coal, speeding up and doubling its carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions by 2035. Asia alone, then, would be emitting the total amount of CO₂ that experts have calculated to be the maximum sustainable level for the entire planet.

Asia is also the continent with the greatest proliferation of nuclear weapons. These capabilities are present in high-risk countries like North Korea and Pakistan, which also happen to be those that have shown no qualms in selling their nuclear technology to the highest bidder.

Many of the world's longest-lasting armed conflicts are found in Asia. From Afghanistan to Sri Lanka and from Kashmir to the unending armed insurgencies in Indonesia and the Philippines, wars are routine. Asia is also marked by the most explosive borders in the world: China and India, Pakistan and India, and between the two Koreas.

From Asia came the avian bird flu pandemic. While the mortalities proved lower than feared, the world was alerted to Asia's potential to rapidly spread disease across the globe.

Are these accidents and Asia-originated problems inevitable? Of course not. But they are unfortunately more important and urgent than issues that more frequently absorb the world's attention.

Why India Is Prone to Stampedes

By Joanna Sugden

Source: <http://blogs.wsj.com/indiarealtime/2013/10/15/why-india-is-prone-to-stampedes/>

A high tolerance for crowds and crowded spaces in India means major events in the country are vulnerable to stampedes, according to an international expert on crowd management.

Teresa Moore, of the International Centre for Crowd Management and Security Studies in the U.K., said that different cultures have varying degrees of forbearance for crowds.

"The higher tolerance for crowded spaces in India allows for people to get closer, because

they don't feel uncomfortable until it is very packed," said Ms. Moore director of education and training at the center, which is part of Bucks New University in Buckinghamshire. At that point the crowd is dangerously large, she added.

"People panic and react. Couple that with a rumor, which can come out of that feeling of panic, that's when you can get a surge or a problem," Ms. Moore said.



On Sunday, 115 people were killed in Madhya Pradesh when those crossing a crowded bridge to a Hindu temple thought it was collapsing.

"There will have been a moment on that bridge when people felt that it was too close, too packed," Ms. Moore said of Sunday's stampede. In countries with a higher tolerance



for crowds she added, "the tipping point between what people can manage and what they feel is dangerous is very fine."

The death toll, which continues to mount, is among the worst since a stampede in 1954 killed 500 during the Kumbh Mela festival in Uttar Pradesh on the banks of the River Ganges.

But deaths from stampedes are relatively frequent at religious events and major gatherings in India. A report by the Press Trust of India in 2011 said that over 1,000 people had lost their lives by being crushed underfoot during temple stampedes in the previous decade.

More mundane events too can turn deadly. Six were killed in 1969 as they rushed for tickets to a cricket game in what was then Calcutta. Three women died in a scramble for free food and cooking utensils in a promotion by Jindal Aluminium Ltd. in Bangalore in 1992.

To be sure, India is not alone in suffering casualties in crowd surges at such events. A Wal-Mart employee in the U.S. was trampled to death during a sale event at one of the companies stores in November 2008.

Almost every year in India, sometimes more than once, during festivals, pilgrimages, and election rallies there are reports of people being trampled to death. And a look at the

timeline of these tragedies shows that the number of dead and injured is growing.

Madhya Pradesh has had a number of such incidents. In 1991, 37 died and 40 were injured when 200,000 people gathered at the Mahakaleshwar temple, in the town of Ujjain.

In July 1993, at least 20 people were killed and 100 injured in a stampede at a Hindu festival also in Madhya Pradesh.

In 1994, around 117 people, 75 of them women, died when a police baton charge aimed at quelling a protest, triggered a crowd surge in the city of Nagpur in Maharashtra in November of that year. In 1995, around 400 people died in a fire at a school north of Delhi, many in the charge to get out of the burning building.

Seventeen people were electrocuted and then trampled to death at a music concert in Calcutta in 1996.

More recently in August 2008, up to 145 pilgrims were killed in a stampede during a religious festival in the northern state of Himachal Pradesh after a railing collapsed under the weight of pilgrims.

At least 168 people were killed and 100 injured when thousands of pilgrims stampeded at a Hindu temple in the town of Jodhpur in western India in September of that same year.

In March 2010, 65 people were killed in a stampede at the Ram Janki temple in Pratapgarh, Uttar Pradesh as crowds pushed to get a free meal.

In January 2011, more than 100 people were killed and 25 injured in a stampede of pilgrims at a Hindu festival in Kochi, Kerala.

Earlier this year in February, at the Kumbh Mela which was this year one of the largest ever religious gatherings on earth, at least 36 people were killed in a stampede at the nearby railway station as they headed to the festival site.

"Crowd management is not particularly established as a discipline in India," Ms. Moore said, adding that the professionalization of managing crowds is a relatively new concept worldwide and has developed as



a response to disasters at events around the world.

In Australia, for instance, after the death of a young woman crushed in a mosh pit at a Big Day Out music festival 12 years ago, new rules were brought in governing the structure of audience areas at gigs. In Victoria, a state in south eastern Australia, the government has passed a Major Events (Crowd Management) Act, setting out legal requirements for big gatherings.

Professor Simon Darcy, a member of the Australian Centre for Event Management at the University of Technology in Sydney, said “legislation is only as good as the way that it is policed and the diligence of those managers involved.”

“If there’s not back up and compliance checking these things will continue to happen,” he added.

So how else to prevent stampedes?

Planning is the key, according to Ms. Moore from the Centre for Crowd Management. “You need to know the size of the crowd, the capacity of the event, not just the size of the

area, the capacity to manage that crowd,” she said.

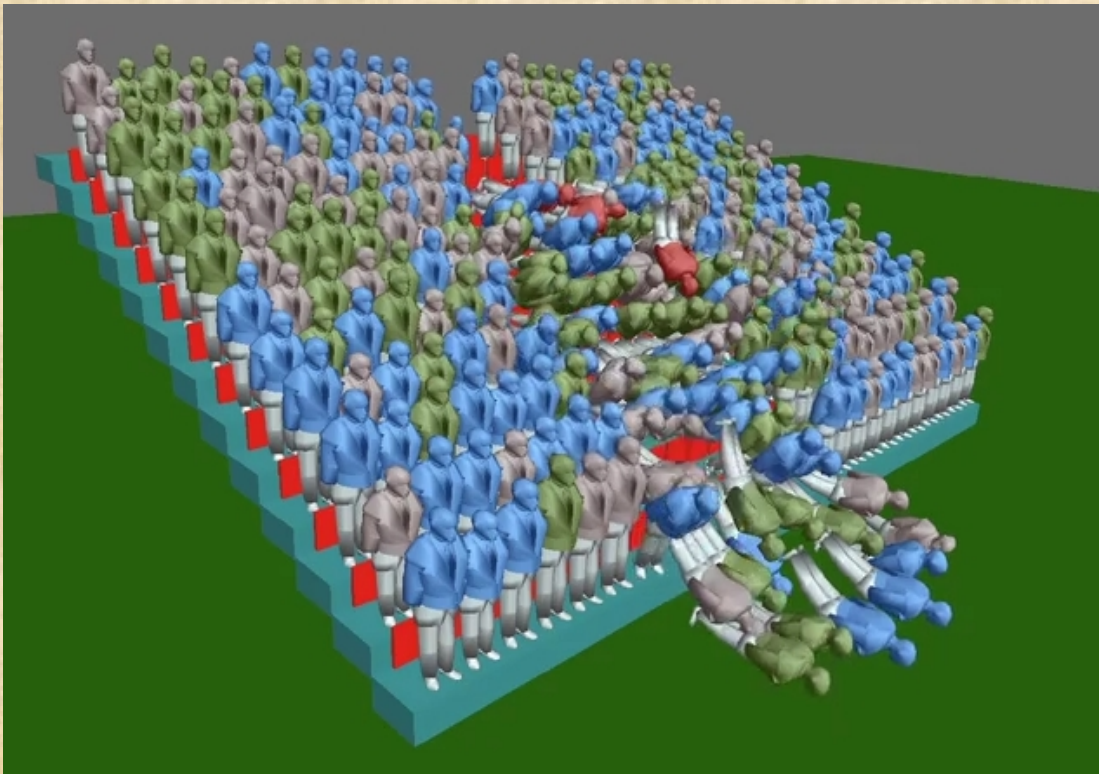
Crowd stewards, monitoring potential changes in crowd behavior, and having sufficient entry and exit points are all crucial to maintaining a safe event, Ms. Moore said.

“A bridge like the one in this event in Madhya Pradesh, we would expect to look at the capacity on that bridge, the flow rates, how many people can get across safely, and how to manage that,” she said.

Worldwide, no crowded event is immune from these tragedies, she said. “You need the wrong combination of events and people not really focusing on planning and it can happen anywhere,” she said.

If you are part of a crowd and things take a turn for the worse, there is little you can do. “If you are caught up in the middle of something you almost have no physical control over your own body your feet are lifted up. The best thing is to be very vigilant about what you’re getting into and do your own risk assessment,” Ms. Moore said.

► **A very interest site to visit:** <http://www.gkstill.com/>



Muslim Russia?

By Daniel Pipes

Source: <http://www.meforum.org/pipes/13531/muslim-russia>

The stabbing murder on Oct. 10 of an ethnic Russian, Yegor Shcherbakov, 25, apparently by a Muslim from Azerbaijan, led to anti-migrant disturbances in Moscow, vandalism and assaults, the arrest of 1,200, and brought a major tension in Russian life to the fore.

Not only do ethnic Muslims account for 21-23 million of Russia's total population of 144 million, or 15 percent, but their proportion is fast growing. Alcoholism-plagued ethnic Russians are said to have European birth rates and African death rates, with the former just 1.4 per woman and the latter 60 years for men. In Moscow, ethnic Christian women have 1.1 child.



Eid al-Fitr prayers in Moscow on Oct. 15, demonstrating the Muslim numbers and solidarity in that city.

In contrast, Muslim women bear 2.3 children on average and have fewer abortions than their Russian counterparts. In Moscow, Tatar women have 6 children and Chechen and Ingush women have 10. In addition, some 3-4 million Muslims have moved to Russia from ex-republics of the U.S.S.R., mainly from Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan; and some ethnic Russians are converting to Islam.

These trends point to Christians declining in numbers by 0.6 percent a year and Muslims increasing by that same amount, which will have dramatic effects over time. Some analysts foresee Muslims becoming a majority in the twenty-first century – a demographic revolution that would fundamentally change the country's character. Paul Goble, an expert on Russian minorities, concludes that "Russia is going through a religious transformation that will be of even greater consequence for the international community than the collapse of the Soviet Union." A Russian commentator he quotes envisions a mosque on Red Square in Moscow. The facile assumption that Moscow is and will remain Western-oriented "is no longer valid," he argues. In particular, he predicts that the Muslim demographic surge "will have a profound impact on Russian foreign policy."

Within a few years, Muslims will make up half the conscripts in the Russian army. Joseph A. D'Agostino of the Population Research Institute asks: "Will such a military operate effectively given the fury that many domestic Muslims feel toward the Russian military's tactics in the Muslim region of Chechnya? What if other Muslim regions of Russia—some of which contain huge oil reserves—rebel against Moscow? Will Muslim soldiers fight and kill to keep them part of the Russian motherland?"

Russia's increasingly confident Muslims, who constitute a majority of 57 out of the country's 182 ethnic groups, have started to use the term *Muslim Russia* to signal their ambitions. According to Muslim analyst Daniyal Isayev, this term affirms that Islam is "an inalienable part of Russia" and that "Russia as a state and civilization could not exist without Islam and the Muslims." He notes that Muslims preceded ethnic Russians in much of the territory that is now Russia. His sweeping claims for Muslims include the exaggerations that they made critical contributions to Russia's culture and its military victories.



Such talk causes ethnic Russians to shudder about the country's population loss of at least 700,000 people a year, return to their faith, and turn against Muslims. The results include biased media portrayals, attacks on mosques and other crimes, efforts to block Muslim immigration, and the rise of extreme Russian nationalist groups such as Alexander Belov's "Movement against Illegal Immigration."



Ethnic Russians yelling "Russia for the Russians" at an anti-migrant riot following the murder of Yegor Shcherbakov.

The Kremlin has responded to the issue in contradictory ways. Then-president Dmitry Medvedev in 2009 tried appeasement by stressing the importance of Islam to Russia, noting that "Muslim foundations are making an important contribution to promoting peace in society, providing spiritual and moral education for many people, as well as fighting extremism and xenophobia." He also announced that, due to its large Muslim population, "Russia does not need to seek friendship with the Muslim world: Our country is an organic part of this world."



Illustration by Alexander Hunter for *The Washington Times*.



But, as Ilan Berman of the American Foreign Policy Council points out, "the Kremlin has discriminated against its Muslim minority and ignored (even abetted) the rise of corrosive xenophobia among its citizens. This has bred resentment and alienation among Russia's Muslims – sentiments that radical Islamic groups have been all too eager to exploit." Added to existing Islamic supremacist attitudes, this results in an increasingly restive Muslim minority.

Discussions of Islam in Europe tend to focus on places like Britain and Sweden but Russia, the country with the largest Muslim community in both relative and absolute terms, is above all the place to watch. The anti-migrant violence this week will surely be followed by much worse problems.

Mr. Daniel Pipes is president of the Middle East Forum.

Isabel was 'Transformational' for Va. Utilities, Emergency Managers

By Peter Bacqué

Source: <http://www.emergencymgmt.com/disaster/Isabel-Transformational-Virginia-Emergency-Managers.html>



Hurricane Isabel was a watershed for Richmond-based Dominion Virginia Power and state emergency managers.

"It was transformational in every way for all of us," said Rodney Blevins, Dominion Virginia Power's vice president for distribution operations.

In the widespread scope of its impact, the 2003 storm was the worst natural disaster Virginia has ever sustained, said Michael Cline, the state's coordinator of emergency management. Isabel hit Virginia on Sept. 18-19, 2003, and left in its wake more than 2 million electricity customers without power, \$1.6 billion in property damage, 36 storm-related fatalities,

and more than 10,400 damaged or destroyed homes and businesses.

Simply clearing away the debris took 660,000 dump-truck loads.

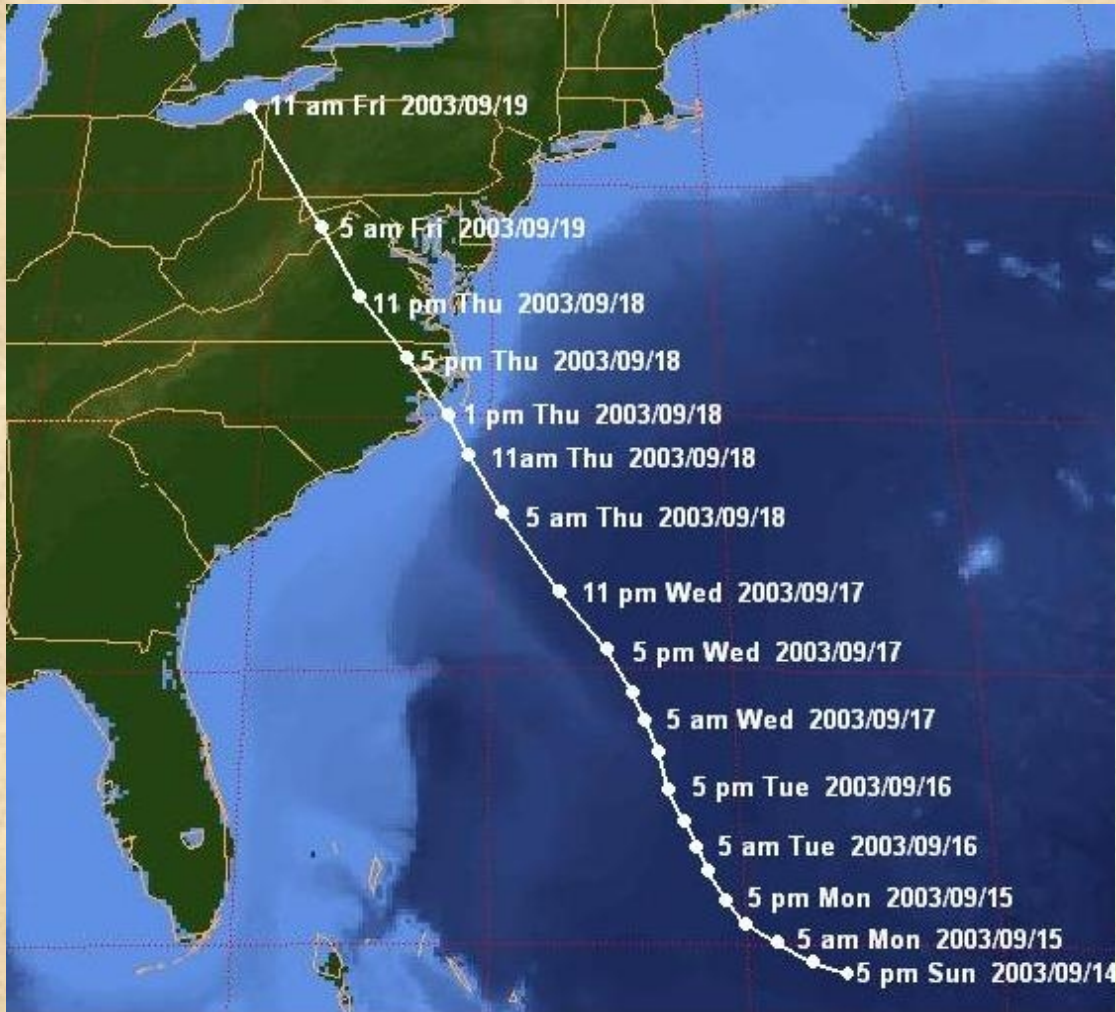
Isabel produced the greatest wind and storm surge in the region since Hurricane Hazel in 1954 and the 1933 Chesapeake-Potomac hurricane, according to the National Weather Service's Wakefield office

"Isabel will also be remembered for the most extensive power outages ever in Virginia," the weather service said, "and permanent change to the landscape from all the fallen trees and storm surge."



For most Virginians -- about 80 percent of the state -- those crippling power outages were Isabel's immediate impact on their lives. For Dominion Virginia Power, the state's

- providing better information on the status of power restoration;
- emphasizing early damage assessment to better target repairs;



largest electric company with 2.3 million subscribers, "the scale of the restoration effort was far greater than anything we'd faced before," said Blevins, who is responsible for the utility's storm response.

Before Isabel's rampage, the company focused storm restoration efforts on getting its own customers back on line. "Our mindset changed after that," Blevins said. "Now it's, 'How can we minimize the effect of severe weather on citizens?'"

Among the steps utility and emergency managers have taken as a result of Isabel are:

- heightening the coordination of public and private responses to natural and man-made catastrophes;
- identifying and prioritizing the critical public and community services in each locality;

and

- improving mutual aid arrangements among utilities and public agencies.

"Even without Isabel, some of it would have happened," Cline said, "but Isabel's been a catalyst for a lot of initiatives that have happened in the last 10 years."

Winds reached 107 mph at Gwynn's Island in Mathews County, the weather service reported. However, Blevins said, "it's not 'that the wind's blowing.' It's 'what the wind's blowing.'" Said Cline, "The big impact was from trees falling and the root balls they created."

While Isabel poured 10.6 inches of rain on Toano in James City County and 6.7 inches on Midlothian in Chesterfield County, the ground in Virginia was already saturated when the storm hit, making thousands of trees easily susceptible to being yanked from

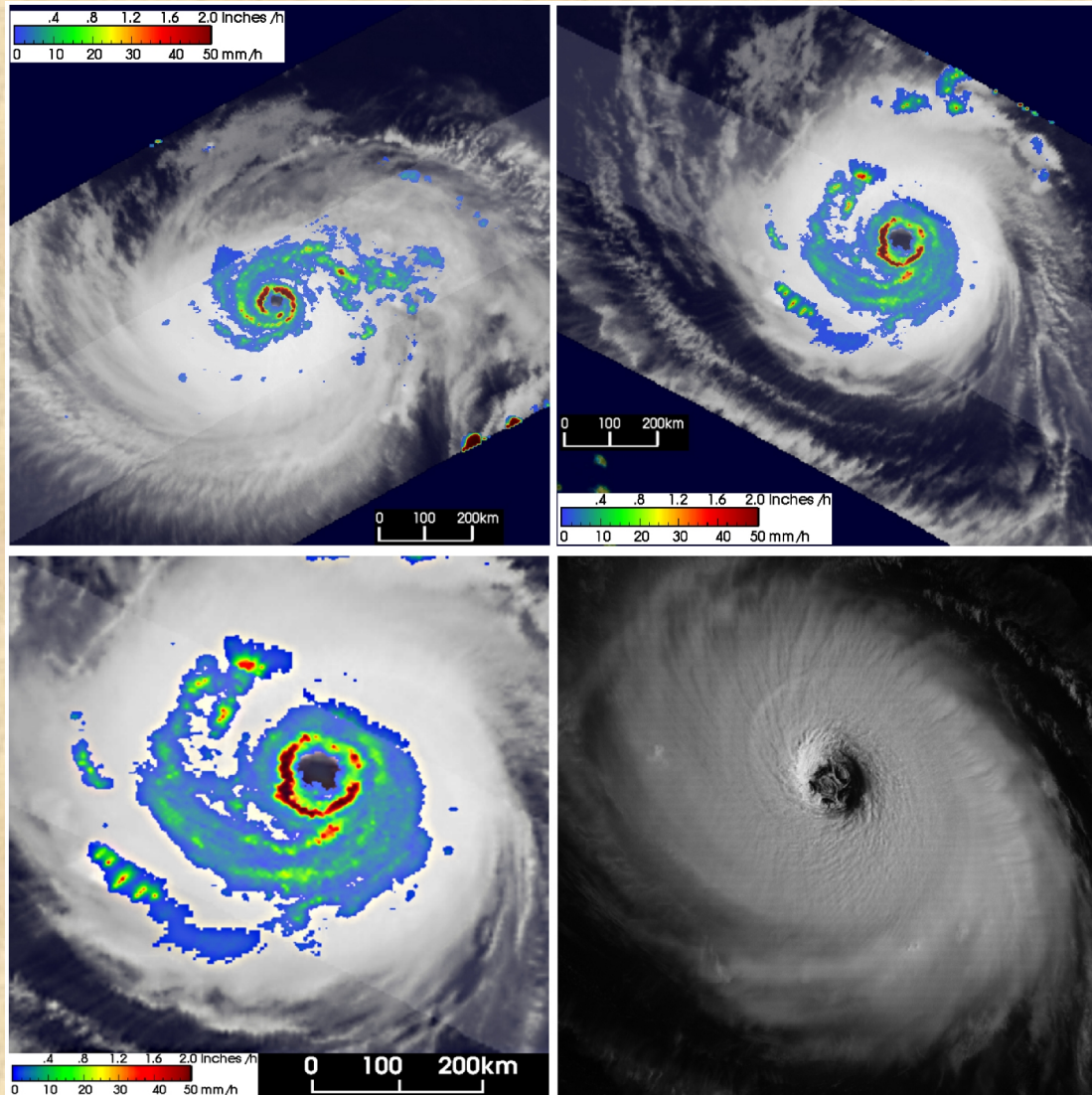


the soft soil by the widespread tropical storm-force winds.

Wind-thrown trees brought down power lines, and their root balls pulled up water lines and ripped up roadbeds, Cline said. Fallen trees and flooding rains blocked hundreds of roads

Today, Dominion Virginia Power can use its customer information system to determine which vital community facilities have lost power, he said, and target crews where they are most needed.

"I can look at it live, 24 hours a day, seven



across the state.

Before Isabel, Dominion Virginia Power knew which of its electric customers were critically important for public life and safety -- such facilities as medical centers, water pumping stations, military and homeland security installations, major telecommunication switching stations, emergency operation centers and gas stations. But the company could not quickly check its outage management system to find out which critical facilities were without power in order to focus repairs on them.

"We were doing it manually during the event," Blevins said.

days a week, and tell what's out and what's online," Blevins said, "whether a crew's been assigned, whether there's a restoration time" set.

Isabel strained relations between state government and Virginia's largest utility. State officials initially distanced themselves from the gargantuan power outage. Though the government does not run the power system, Virginians looked to the governor and state officials for help in the outage.

"What we learned out of that was that our success was interconnected," Blevins said.



"We all had to work at it, and we had to be coordinated."

Dominion Virginia Power, for its part, was not eager to tell the public how long it was going to be until their lights, air conditioners and refrigerators would come on again. More than a week went by after Isabel hit before many Dominion Virginia Power customers had power restored.

Being transparent with its customers and public officials about storm restoration information has become a priority for the utility, even if the company has to say it's going to be an uncomfortably long time, Blevins said.

"The exchange of information in the field is just better now," Cline said.

Isabel tops the list of Dominion Virginia Power's worst storms, with 1.8 million customers out of service. Getting electricity turned back on for all the company's subscribers took 15 days, the longest restoration effort in the utility's history.

Thanks to Isabel, Dominion Virginia Power used up a year's supply of poles, cross arms and transformers in just 10 days, and about four years' worth of other materials, such as wire and insulators: 10,700 power poles, 14,600 pole cross arms, 13,000 spans of wire and 7,900 transformers.

Isabel damaged about 1,000 miles of the company's distribution lines and affected more than 60 percent of its thousands of miles of distribution circuits. The storm spawned more than 57,000 work locations across the utility's 30,000-square-mile service area.

Dominion Virginia Power called on more than 12,000 workers -- including utility crews from 22 states and Canada -- for the service restoration push. Of that number, 7,000 were the utility's own employees, including 2,700 who normally were office workers.

"Isabel was a full-fledged system restoration," Blevins said.

The storm also whacked the state's member-owned electric cooperatives. About 255,000 co-op subscribers lost power because of Isabel, said Mary Howell, manager of member and public relations with the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives. Getting power back to rural co-op members took weeks.

Isabel shut down two of the local power distribution co-ops: Prince George Electric

Cooperative in Waverly and Community Electric Cooperative in Windsor.

"They literally did not have a single member that did not lose power," Howell said.

In 2013 alone, Dominion Virginia Power is spending more than \$180 million for reliability improvements that will help in present-day storms, everything from rebuilding substations and reconditioning electrical circuits to replacing switches and trimming trees and brush.

"After Isabel, there was a major effort, a huge effort, to cut trees back from power lines," Cline said.

"Targeted investment in strategic undergrounding provides the most cost-effective improvements in reliability," Blevins said.



While no decision has been made on the proposal, "undergrounding 20 percent of the worst-performing tap lines could reduce by 63 percent the amount of work required to repair the outage events caused by major storms," Blevins said.

The power company prepares for natural disasters year-round, he said, coordinating with state and local emergency partners and assigning a commander to manage high-profile events.

"We're not just sitting around waiting for the next one," Blevins said. "We're doing things to make sure we're better the next time at executing the restoration plan."

"Disasters will never stop happening," Cline said. But, he said, "in the last 10 years, we've made tremendous progress."



Active Shooter Response Training Manual: A Review

By Frank Borelli

Source: http://www.officer.com/article/11032497/active-shooter-response-training-manual-a-review?goback=,gde_4709642_member_5794738437621821440#!

A couple months back I received a pre-publication copy of “The Active Shooter Response Training Manual,” written by Scott

officers, I had to wonder if we (law enforcement) really wanted to model any of our tactics after the Army’s?

Setting aside that prejudice I began to read/study the manual. In order it covers:

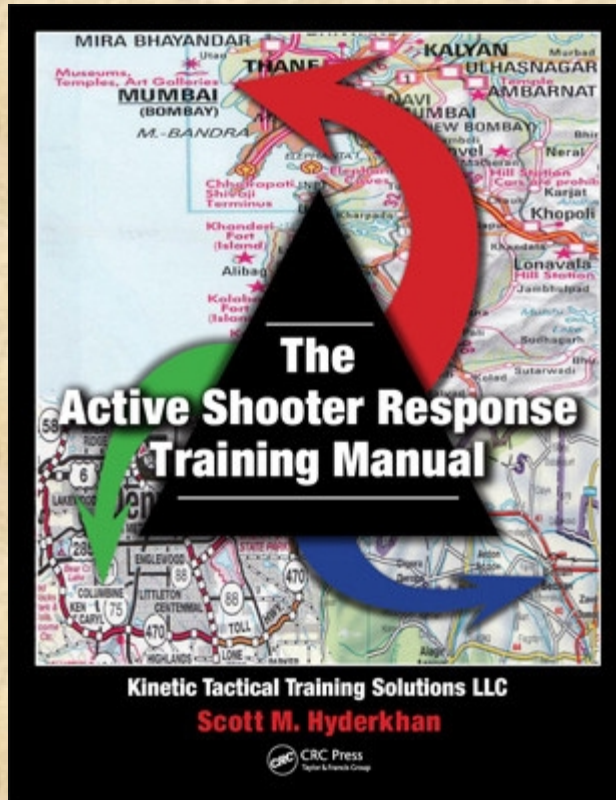
- Active Shooter Response Mission and Operation
- Principles of Training & Developing An Active Shooter Response Training Plan
- Movement and Maneuver
- Close Quarter Battle
- Individual Tasks
- Collective Tasks
- Command Post, Command & Control Considerations
- Task Performance Evaluations
- Active Shooter Response Special Equipment

The general language of the manual is that of a military manual as compared to a contemporary law enforcement training manual. There is nothing wrong with that and I’ve long believed that we in law enforcement all too often ignore the potential resource value of publicly available military manuals. That said, I came to two conclusions that I felt were

important as one considered the value of the training contained.

First, when you consider the tactics used in a high risk scenario, such as Active Shooter Response, there is very little difference between military and law enforcement tactics. Moving toward a threat while under fire is pretty much the same no matter what uniform you wear; however, the allowable tools you use in response are controlled by different protocols.

Second, no matter what resource you’re using, such as this manual, it behooves you – the instructor developing and delivering the training – to use it ONLY as a resource, insuring that what you glean from it you then incorporate into your own curriculum within the boundaries of your agency policies as well as local, state and federal laws. The responsibility for what you teach is on YOU – not the resource material you use.



M. Hyderkhan of Kinetic Tactical Training Solutions LLC. The manual included a DVD with both a training powerpoint and video. The publication date was July 15th via CRC Press (crcpress.com) and I've spent that time in between reading through the manual and comparing a lot of what's in it to what's in the training curriculums I/we currently use.

I have to admit that I had early reservations created when I read some of the promotional material that came with the prepublication manual. It read, in part, “Using established doctrine developed by the U.S. Army...” I sat back and considered that. Given that I know of only one active shooter event that occurred on a military installation, that being Ft. Hood, and knowing that the “alleged” perpetrator, Nidal Hasan, is still in prison and that the neutralization of the threat (Hasan) during the attack itself was not accomplished by military members but instead by contracted police



So, in reviewing this manual as a resource I have to give it props. It takes a structured approach to not only the basic response needs and tactics, but to some of the management / control issues as well. Where a typical response training manual might address only the tactics and equipment, this one adds in some information on how to develop your own training plan. Further, it delineates both individual and collective tasks (group/team tasks) that could be vital to the successful neutralization of an active shooter threat.

The published price of \$89.95 on CRCPress.com may seem a bit steep, but when you consider the cost of text books in general today AND you take into consideration

that you get the powerpoint file and the instructional video with it, that \$89.95 looks much more reasonable. The book is available in electronic format with a published price of \$62.00. It may just be me, but I prefer to have such resource material in hard copy.

If you're looking to build an Active Shooter Response Program OR if you feel you may need to revamp yours, consider this book as a resource to do so. With the advent of active shooter response training about 13 years ago, we've seen tactics and policies evolve greatly. This book/resource helps you to keep track of the basics, which will be required no matter what else may evolve.

Stay safe!

They live among us!



**HUMAN
SNAKES**

