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MEDIA ADVISORY

Research reports on rail attacks can help media formulate stories on Canadian attempt

Mineta Transportation Institute's terrorism expert Brian Michael Jenkins authored relevant reports

San Jose, Calif., April 22, 2013 – The arrest by Canadian authorities of two al Qaeda-connected terrorists planning to derail a passenger train calls attention to the Mineta Transportation Institute's (MTI) previous research on terrorist attacks targeting passenger trains. These three recent MTI reports address this issue. All were authored by international terrorism expert Brian Michael Jenkins, director of MTI's National Transportation Safety and Security Center. He is available for media interviews. MTI is affiliated with San Jose State University.

[The 1995 Attempted Derailing of the French TGV \(High-Speed Train\) and a Quantitative Analysis of 181 Rail Sabotage Attempts](#)

On August 26, 1995, the Saturday of the final and busiest weekend of France's summer holiday season, terrorists attempted to derail the TGV (Train à Grande Vitesse) between Lyon and Paris by planting a bomb. Fortunately, their crude triggering mechanism failed to detonate the bomb, and subsequent analysis indicates that even had the bomb gone off, the explosion would not have derailed the train.

The TGV episode, one of a continuing series of case studies by the Mineta Transportation Institute, points to a continuing problem: Since 1995, terrorists have attempted to derail trains on at least 144 occasions.

Because of the expansion of high-speed rail systems in Europe, Asia, and North America, where 13 high-speed rail projects are in preparation or under way in the United States alone, this case study has been expanded to include a chronology and statistical analysis of attempted derailments worldwide. This analysis examines the geographic distribution of the attempts, the methods used by the saboteurs, and the outcomes. Although based on a small universe of events, it underscores both the attractiveness to terrorists of attacking transportation systems—a successful attack can result in high body counts, significant disruption, dramatic images, and enormous publicity, all things sought by terrorists—and the difficulties of achieving success.

[Carnage Interrupted: An Analysis of Fifteen Terrorist Plots against Public Surface Transportation](#)

This report examines 13 terrorist plots against public surface transportation that were uncovered and foiled by authorities between 1997 and 2010 and two failed attempts to carry out attacks. Certainly, this is not the total universe of foiled or failed terrorist plots in these years, but they were selected on the basis of what is known about them and the accessibility of information.

The report focuses on terrorist plots in the West. Seven of the 15 plots took place in the United States, and four occurred in the United Kingdom. These two countries figure prominently as targets of terrorism, and in addition, American and British officials have dealt with terrorist plots through publicized arrests and trials, which provide additional information.

Although motive was not a criterion in the selection of the plots, all but one involve individuals or groups inspired by al Qaeda's ideology of violent global jihad against the West. The exception is the 1997 Flatbush plot, in which two terrorists, both of whom had connections with Hamas, angered by events in Palestine, simply wanted to kill as many Jews as possible to express their opposition to U.S. support for Israel. Other sources suggest that the Flatbush plotters wanted to force the release of jailed Islamist terrorists in the United States, including Ramzi Yousef, who participated in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, and Sheik Omar Abdul-Rahman, who was convicted for his involvement in a plot to carry out additional bombings in New York.

Formulating a Strategy for Securing High-Speed Rail in the United States

This report presents an analysis of information relating to attacks, attempted attacks, and plots against high-speed rail (HSR) systems. It draws upon empirical data from MTI's Database of Terrorist and Serious Criminal Attacks Against Public Surface Transportation and from reviews of selected HSR systems, including onsite observations. The report also examines the history of safety accidents and other HSR incidents that resulted in fatalities, injuries, or extensive asset damage to examine the inherent vulnerabilities (and strengths) of HSR systems and how these might affect the consequences of terrorist attacks. The study is divided into three parts: (1) an examination of security principles and measures; (2) an empirical examination of 33 attacks against HSR targets and a comparison of attacks against HSR targets with those against non-HSR targets; and (3) an examination of 73 safety incidents on 12 HRS systems. The purpose of this study is to develop an overall strategy for HSR security and to identify measures that could be applied to HSR systems currently under development in the United States. It is hoped that the report will provide useful guidance to both governmental authorities and transportation operators of current and future HSR systems.

ABOUT BRIAN MICHAEL JENKINS

Brian Michael Jenkins is an international authority on terrorism and sophisticated crime. He directs the Mineta Transportation Institute's (MTI) National Transportation Safety and Security Center, which focuses on research into protecting surface transportation against terrorist attacks. He is also a senior advisor to the president of RAND. From 1989-98, Mr. Jenkins was deputy chairman of Kroll Associates, an international investigative and consulting firm. Before that, he was chairman of RAND's Political Science Department, where he also directed research on political violence. He has authored several books, chapters, and articles on counterterrorism, including *International Terrorism: A New Mode of Conflict* and *Will Terrorists Go Nuclear?* Most recently, he published *When Armies Divide*, a discussion about nuclear arms in the hands of rebelling armies. He also has been principal investigator for many peer-reviewed security-focused research reports for MTI.

ABOUT THE MINETA TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE (MTI):

MTI conducts research, education, and information transfer programs focusing on surface transportation policy and management issues, especially related to transit. MTI was established by Congress in 1991 as part of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act and won national re-designation competitions in 2002, 2006 and 2011. The Institute is funded by Congress through the US DOT Research and Innovative Technology Administration, by the California Legislature through Caltrans, and public and private grants. In 2006 the US Department of Homeland Security selected MTI as a National Transportation Security Center of Excellence. The internationally respected members of the MTI Board of Trustees represent all major surface transportation modes. Visit transweb.sjsu.edu