

Current Threat

Tue. May 4, 2004

Simulation Gives Glimpse of Nuclear Terror

BRUSSELS, Belgium – European officials conducted a simulation showing how al-Qaida could kill 40,000 people and plunge the continent into chaos if a crude nuclear device were detonated outside NATO headquarters.

"We are in a race between cooperation and catastrophe," said former Sen. Sam Nunn, who helped organize the exercise, dubbed Black Dawn. "To win this race, we have to achieve cooperation on a scale we've never seen or attempted before."

Nunn spoke to reporters Tuesday, a day after the closed-door war . . .

Mon. May 3, 2004

NY on Alert for Suitcases, Missing Tanker

New York City police are worried that five empty suitcases at Penn Station and the FBI's headquarters could be a dry run for a terrorist attack.

The New York Post reported this weekend that the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's counterterrorism task force has put out a bulletin asking police to be on the lookout for similar packages.

"It was determined that it was unusual in that that many empty bags would be found throughout the city," MTA spokesman Tom Kelly told Newsday. "It may be coincidence, but in this day and age, you can't take a chance."

Kelly told Newsday that the bags were discovered during a week-long stretch in late March and early April, Kelly said.

The empty suitcases have law enforcement officials worried because al-Qaeda terrorists used luggage to hold explosives used in the recent Spanish bombing.

U.S. warning LAPD about potential threat
Mason Stockstill
Associated Press

! Thursday, April 29, 2004 - Federal officials have warned the LAPD about an unspecified potential threat to a Los Angeles area mall and said an attack may have been planned for today.

"As of now, the information is uncorroborated and the credibility of the source is unknown," the Police Department said in a statement.

No specific shopping mall was named, but the warning indicated a mall near the Federal Building in West Los Angeles could be targeted.

The LAPD will increase patrols at shopping malls in the city and asked mall operators to beef up their security while a joint terrorism task force investigates. The department said it would have no further comment beyond the statement issued late Wednesday.

Mayor James Hahn also received the information Wednesday.

"... It's uncorroborated, but we are asking all Los Angeles residents to go on with their daily lives while remaining vigilant and alert," Hahn spokeswoman Shannon Murphy said.

FBI spokesman Matt McLaughlin said the source of the information was of "undetermined reliability."

"This particular threat, just because of the nature of it, had a little more information in it, albeit unsubstantiated information. ... That doesn't necessarily make it really distinctly different from some of these other threats we've heard," he said.

He said authorities are obligated to aggressively investigate all threats they can't immediately dismiss.

"You have to make the public aware of certain dates, locations, threats that you're aware of," he said.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has been apprised of the warning, spokeswoman Terri Carbaugh said.

Several areas in and around Los Angeles have been said to be potential targets for terrorists, including movie studios, bridges, the ports and Los Angeles International Airport.

Russia a Nuclear Threat to U.S.

Jon E. Dougherty, NewsMax.com

Tuesday, Apr. 27, 2004

ARTICLE ABBREVIATED

The threat of devastating nuclear attack by Russia against the United States has not diminished, warns former Sec. of Defense Robert McNamara Writing in Monday, s Los Angeles Times, McNamara and co-author Helen Caldicott claim that the threat of anuclear catastrophe remains real, „whether by accident, human fallibility or malfeasance.‰ Missiles Still Pointed at New York, Cities Nevertheless, the threat remains serious, McNamara andCaldicott argue, because, despite the end of the Cold War in the early 1990's, thousands of Russian nuclear warheads are still pointed at the U.S. targeting many civilian population centers. A report commissioned in the 1980s by the U.S. Office of Technology Assessment is still as relevant today. It said Soviet nuclear war plans called for aiming twoone-megaton bombs at each of the following: The three airports serving NYC; Wall Street; each major bridge; all major rail centers; all power stations; four NYC-area oil refineries; and the NYC port facilities.

It predicted millions of people would instantly perish, while most survivors would die shortly thereafter from radiation burns and exposure.

Russia, Leading Nuclear Superpower: Russia, despite press reports to the contrary, remains a nuclear superpower, arguably the greatest nuclear superpower. Between Moscow and Washington, the two governments can lay claim to 96 percent of the world's 30,000 nuclear weapons.

Russia continues to lead the U.S. in smaller tactical nuclear warheads. The U.S. destroyed most of its tactical nuclear arsenal during the 1990s. Of the 7,000 warheads in the U.S. arsenal, 2,500 are maintained on a 24-hour ready alert status, and can be launched within moments. The commander of the Strategic Air Command has only about three minutes to decide if a nuclear attack warning is real or not. Then he has 10 minutes to find the president and give him a 30-second attack briefing, including options. After that, the president has three minutes to decide whether or not to retaliate and if so, which targets will be hit. Once they were launched, U.S. missiles would reach their Russian targets in about 15 to 30 minutes.

The situation is relatively similar in Russia, with the exception that Moscow's early warning system is rapidly aging. According to the McNamara and Caldicott, the systems of both countries sound alarms daily, in response to wildfires, satellite launchings and solar reflections off clouds or oceans. But as the Russian system continues to decay, it may be more difficult for Moscow to determine whether alerts are real or not. That's dangerous, argue

experts, because it may mean in the future, Russian commanders and leaders may have to rely more on human judgment~a concept much less reliable than computerized early warning systems that operate without emotion.

Russia Continues Missile Build-up: Perhaps worse, as Russia's overall military structure continues to suffer from a lack of funding and crumbles, Moscow continues to pour scarce military funding into more nuclear weapons.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov told reporters Monday Moscow will test its mobile version of the Topol-M intercontinental ballistic missile once more before it is put into service. The missile, which will form the backbone of Russia's nuclear defenses, is 47 tons, will carry one warhead, and has an estimated range of 6,900 miles. Ground-based Topol-M rockets are already in use; the mobile version could be operational by 2006. The last test of the mobile missile came earlier this month, Ivanov said. It traveled its maximum distance before hitting a target on the Kamchatka peninsula.

Give Them Up

The liberal leaning McNamara and Caldicott say the best strategy now is to simply abandon nuclear weapons altogether. They say Russia and the U.S. are now allied in the global fight against terrorism. As such, "their first duty in this effort should be immediate and rapid bilateral nuclear disarmament, accompanied by the other six nuclear nations (France, Britain, China, India, Pakistan and Israel)," followed by U.N. Security Council action "to ensure no other nations, particularly Iran and North Korea, acquire nuclear weapons."

"Time is not on our side," they wrote.

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