

**NEW AGE OF  
COUNTER - TERRORISM  
BACK TO REALITY**

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## David Rubens Associates

David Rubens Associates is a specialist corporate security consultancy offering strategic security services to individuals and organisations across the world.

DRA has worked with government agencies, NGO's, international conglomerates and major global events, and brings a mixture of strategic vision, operational experience and academic research to all of its projects, however large or small.

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## The New Age of Counter-Terrorism – Back to Reality



There is a well-known story about Chou en-Lai, the Chinese leader who had spent his youth in Paris. When he was asked by a French journalist, on the occasion of his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday, whether he thought that the French revolution had been a positive move or not, he thought for a moment and then quietly replied 'Too early to tell'.

It has only been ten years since the epoch-defining events of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, and yet already it seems that history has passed judgement on the Global War on Terror that was the US-led response to that attack. Since the election of Barak Obama to the US presidency, all of the main planks of the Bush-era (or what would more accurately be called the Cheney/Rumsfeld-era) policies at the heart of the GWOT campaign have been quietly rolled back – in rhetoric, if not yet completely in fact.

For those of you who follow events in London and Washington, there have been a number of incidents recently that have indicated that the world that we have been living in for the last ten years is truly changing. Firstly, the White House Office announced that there was no longer any official recognition of the phrase 'Islamic Terrorism'. From now on, it was purely a matter of identifying the bad guys, and going out and getting them. In London, Home Secretary Theresa May announced a range of policies that meant that the balance between security and personal freedom was once again swinging back to the rights of the individual, and that many of the tools of counter-terrorism that had been seen to be introduced at the cost of basic legal principles - such as the right to have freedom from arbitrary arrest, the right to not be held without a trial, etc - were now being reviewed and would be amended or dropped.

It is no coincidence that these moves coincide with new administrations in the US and the UK, and that we have seen the development of a completely new language and rhetoric to describe terrorism since Bush, Cheney and Rumsfeld have left office. Although the closing of Guantanamo Bay was the headline-grabbing announcement that characterised the new regime when Obama took office, the change in attitude towards the whole issue of national security and the international terrorist threat goes deeper than that, and has become what I have called 'The Post-GWOT Counter Terrorism Period'. If we look back over the last ten years, it has been clear that from the very first moments after the attack on the Twin Towers in 2001, the response to those attacks have been defined, developed and delivered by military strategists - as can be seen in the very title 'Global War on Terror'. And not only has the rhetoric and methodology of the GWOT been military-based, but even more so on Special Forces doctrine. SF operations, in their simplest form, can be seen as identifying key personnel or locations in the enemy's operation, putting together a small team that is specifically prepared to deliver a surgical strike, insert them into the heart of the enemy's operation, deliver the attack, and then withdraw. And at this they are extremely effective. However,

what SF operational planning does not take into account is, the mess that they leave behind. SF operations, by definition, take place outside the normal framework of legal or operational restrictions, are delivered a long way from the overview of the public, and (perhaps most importantly, as far as the authorities are concerned) have a high level of deniability. (It is no surprise that the political and military leaders of the last administrations in both US and UK are fighting to their last breath to prevent the release of secret information concerning the decisions made during their tenure). It is hardly surprising that in very real ways we are all dealing with the mess that has been created by the SF approach to counter-terrorism.

The new doctrine of CT as developed by Obama has brought Counter-Terrorism back to its natural place, which is at the centre of national policing frameworks. The role of the new CT capability is not to destroy training camps in Waziristan or Somalia, but rather, as in traditional policing work, to identify potential transgressors, and to prevent them from carrying out their acts.

If you want an example of how the use of paramilitary-style policing to control local unrest can escalate tensions and conflict to a level where there is the need to introduce martial law, you only need look at the resurgence of the situation in Kashmir, where Indian paramilitary teams that have been sent in in place of local police teams have created a genuine national crisis situation.

The whole argument underlying the Bush-regime CT doctrine was that the level of threat to national security was so unique and severe that it justified the introduction of tools and methods that would be unthinkable in normal situations – but without which it would have been impossible to face up to the terrorist threat in an effective manner. That argument has been consistently defeated in the highest courts in both UK and America, but it is only now that the political leaders have accepted that the way to defeat terrorism is not to destroy our own national frameworks, but to work within them in order to deliver security, safety and, just as importantly, justice.

It is always hard to know how history will judge us, but it is quite possible that in a hundred years time the Bush-era 'Age of Terrorism' will be seen as much as a historical aberration as the 'Reign of Terror' that spread across France over two hundred years ago.



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