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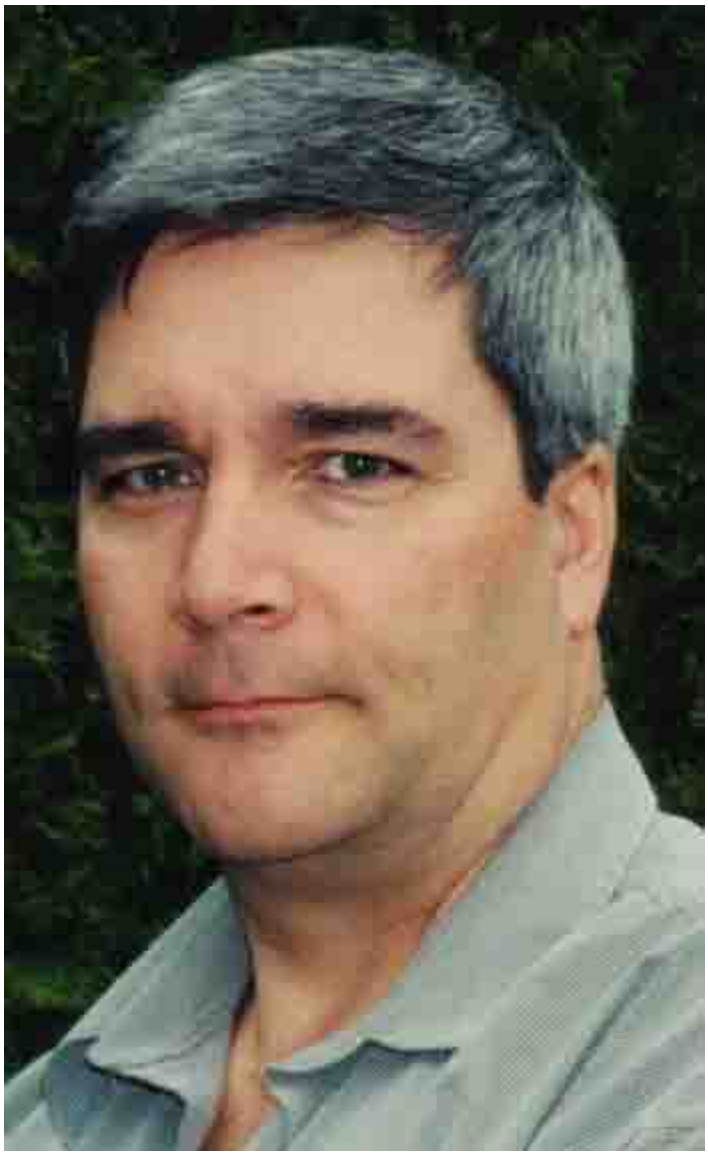
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Heard around the world!!

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Richard Munroe



Be it a shot, an explosion or plane crash, the sudden loss of tranquility and safety in any population is a cause for alarm. In today's world, the self professed agents for change inflict their will on unsuspecting domestic populations. Gone are the days of diplomatic action and meaningful discussion. Those with political and religious agendas have escalated the sensibility of the world into graphic sound and visual bites. Knowing that by inflicting terror in some previously sedate environment a group can gain a platform to spew its dogma is a license to kill.

The world media continues to broadcast and print the messages from the groups who have done nothing more than inflict themselves into people's lives. This escalation of personal agenda is seriously damaging the resistance fabric of society to ward off the effects. Populations become numbed to the violence and the reaction to an event becomes lethargic. The subsequent acts of terror must always be escalated just to be considered news. This also affects the governmental agencies that are mandated to combat such incidents.

They obtain their mandate and moral authority from the people they are sworn to protect. The rules of engagement to any specific threat are laid out in the respective criminal code and ethical standard for treatment of accused persons. However in today's world of near instant communication and analysis, outside countries tend to judge other societies by their own standard.

The threat analysis is not complete in the reporting and the factors leading up to, during and after the incident are not properly analyzed by the world media.

...A western viewer of a violent international incident cannot properly understand the mindset of the villains or the directly affected population. If there is a long standing strife between nations, that friction may be discussed but cannot be fully appreciated by the outside viewer. Desperation and long term stress fatigue of a population simply cannot be captured in the evening news...

A western viewer of a violent international incident cannot properly understand the mindset of the villains or the directly affected population. If there is a long standing strife between nations, that friction may be discussed but cannot be fully appreciated by the outside viewer. Desperation and long term stress fatigue of a population simply cannot be captured in the evening news. As a result, the elements leading to violent incidents are usually grossly under reported and the world media can only report the current conflict resolution process in their respective eyes. In a society with strong ethnic and religious rules the punishment phases for crimes are usually harsher. In more liberal societies, the police reaction to an incident and the subsequent prosecution of the case is generally seen through their own eyes and with liberal sensibilities.

This is probably one of the main touch points for critical reviews of responses to an event. Outside viewers are immediately judged by that response or worse, the lack of response they would expect in their own jurisdiction. The methods of jurisprudence and police restraint are the only factors that can be seen by the media and it is the reaction to the incident that becomes the focus of the problem. Questions are asked as to why the police response did not meet the "accepted Western standard". It is generally due to the fact that the processes are indeed different and the levels of warrantable intrusion into homes and accepted places of safety are simply not the same.

...When armed militants choose to make a stand in a religious building the police are forced to meet that threat and end that conflict incident. The media response can sometimes be very harsh as certain sensibilities are attacked. The same can be said for incidents such as the recent attacks in Mumbai where the police are forced to do battle with the terrorists in the midst of hostages and others vulnerable to collateral damage...

When armed militants choose to make a stand in a religious building the police are forced to meet that threat and end that conflict incident. The media response can sometimes be very harsh as certain sensibilities are attacked. The same can be said for incidents such as the recent **attacks in Mumbai** where the police are forced to do battle with the terrorists in the midst of hostages and others vulnerable to collateral damage. The reporting is fast, constant and very graphic. Body count tallies are the buzz words and a timely resolution to the conflict is demanded. The clock of public opinion starts the moment the media begins its coverage. Pundits are interviewed and asked for "play by play "analysis of an unfolding incident from the comfort and security of a studio.

When the conflict takes "too long" to resolve criticisms begin to emerge and editorial sniping begins. Off base questions begin to be asked and the focus turns to the police agency that seems to be unable to police its people and provide them with the protection they require. Everyone starts to second guess the incident controls and the investigation by media begins even before the shooting is finished. A case in point was the discovery of the rubber zodiacs on the **shoreline of Mumbai** used to ferry the terrorists from the hijacked fishing boat. The calls began to be made as to why this was not picked up by the police and how did they allow these heavily armed persons to simply walk into public places in a robust over crowded city core at night and open fire.

...Watching the coverage and hearing media outlets suggesting that the police were asleep at the switch to allow this was difficult to endure. The simple fact is that similar attacks can and probably will occur in several places around the world in the future. These are nearly indefensible acts and police agencies can only respond to them once advised of the threat...

Watching the coverage and hearing media outlets suggesting that the police were asleep at the switch to allow this was difficult to endure. The simple fact is that similar attacks can and probably will occur in several places around the world in the future. These are nearly indefensible acts and police agencies can only respond to them once advised of the threat. In addition, having to take an extended time frame to neutralize the incident should not be the subject of any negative media reporting. These incidents take as long as they take to resolve and the outcomes cannot be predicted. However, there will always be the eventual re-writing of history to meet someone's agenda. This aspect is the one element that can be augmented by the forensic community prior to an event.

Trying to compile a list of assistance agencies and personnel to work on the forensic analysis of an incident during its commission simply does not work in some situations. It would be more prudent to have a "ready list" or "callout list" of persons familiar with the agency and its processes in place at all times. There will always be rumors and innuendo of police mistreatment and investigational failures in high profile cases. Certain parties always look for failure points to keep the discussion current and the police agencies usually bear the brunt of any suspicion, warranted or not. The fact that their only involvement was the resolution of a threat that was inflicted upon them is sometimes lost. The police did not start the terrorist act they only responded to it and met it with the tools and forces available to them at that time.

...It is therefore important for governments to have a group of forensic specialists in a "ready state" to be called upon to assist in such matters. The independent forensic specialists would lend an immediate credibility to the investigation as they would be on scene relatively quickly and would have in place operating procedures that were already understood by and agreed to by the host country...

It is therefore important for governments to have a group of forensic specialists in a "ready state" to be called upon to assist in such matters. The independent forensic specialists would lend an immediate credibility to the investigation as they would be on scene relatively quickly and would have in place operating procedures that were already understood by and agreed to by the host country. Having western based or at least trained specialists on ground at the beginning stages to assist the local police authority would greatly assist in removing media criticisms. Forensic specialties such as trajectory analysis, blood spatter, post blast examination, pathology/ autopsy assistance to name a few are all required in such situations.

If the police are able to report to any media agency, that such independent specialists are involved in the investigation at the outset can only assist in the successful prosecution of the case. To achieve this goal, in place travel/work visas, funding support and call out processes must be in place long before an incident occurs. Training seminars can also be developed by the specialist teams to allow for a working dialogue relationship building between agencies. If all parties know that the specialist group is only present to ensure the forensic history of the case is properly documented, the common re-writing cannot occur. The public concerns should always be focused on the

perpetrators of an incident not on criticism of the police agency forced to meet their evil threat.
Contact Richard by clicking here

*(**Editor's Note:**Richard Munroe is a retired 22 year veteran police officer. As a fully cross trained forensic specialist and professional geologist he is allowed to provide expert testimony in court the fields of fingerprints, photography, and forensic geology with opinion evidence in tool marks, ballistics and trajectory analysis. As a trained pathology assistant he provides a interface training to pathologists in ensuring proper forensic protocols are met for court standards in autopsy. Richard is an inveterate crusader of issues like the ones raised here. One of the most widely read pieces in this journal is his earlier editorial **Passing the torch**, which readers may access by clicking here. Richard is available to provide case work services and training to law enforcement around the world. He may be contacted by clicking here.*

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