

Building a National Counterterrorism Capability: A Primer for Operators and Policymakers Alike

By James Q. Roberts

This chapter describes the diverse considerations governments should take into account as they seek to build or improve a national counterterrorism capability. For the purposes of this discussion, conducting a successful hostage rescue operation will serve as the benchmark for a competent counterterrorism capability. Although terrorists armed with a weapon of mass destruction and seeking to leverage that weapon (or weapons) to blackmail a government present perhaps the most difficult decision for politicians as they consider the employment of their counterterrorism forces, we can be thankful that such a scenario has not yet occurred.

Rather than address such a theoretical challenge, this chapter will focus on counter terror hostage rescue operations. Recent history is replete with many case studies of both successes and failures in these operations, from which lessons learned may be drawn. These also serve to highlight the key challenges for the three elements involved in any hostage rescue decision; the counterterrorism force, the intelligence structures supporting the rescue, and the politicians who must decide whether or not to launch the operation.

Despite a decrease in the appeal of hostage-taking operations in apparent favor of suicide body, car, and truck bombs, terrorists still can get major mileage out of hostage taking. The most recent example is the attacks on luxury hotels by Lashkar e-Tayyiba-trained Muslim extremists in Mumbai during November 2008.

To have decent odds for the conduct of a successful hostage rescue, there are three components of any government that must come together to form an alliance of shared capabilities, risk analysis, and political resolve. First, the government beset with a hostage-taking situation must possess a trained hostage rescue force—the hammer. Second, an intelligence capability must be able to provide adequate details about the hostage crisis to enable a reasonable chance of a successful rescue—the eyes. Third, political leaders must have confidence in both the rescue force and the intelligence underpinning the operation. Politicians, the brain, must muster the political will to close the crisis by launching an operation—and suffer the consequences, good or bad.

I refer to these three components—hammer, eyes, brain—as the “Iron Triangle” of counterterrorism decision making. In most governments, the three components (where they exist) live in separate worlds, that is, separate ministries, different values, divergent concepts of risk and degrees of risk aversion, different skill sets, different understandings of the political environment.

All too frequently, they come together only at the moment of crisis. However, for a successful rescue they must coalesce into a competent political-military whole—like a skilled carpenter, striking a nail with a hammer, on the first swing, without denting the wood below. This chapter argues that such coordination requires practice, practice, practice.

The Rescue Force—the Hammer

The first component of the Iron Triangle is the rescue force itself. History shows us that successful rescues almost always have been executed by a specialized hostage rescue force. Whether the force is a military, police, or gendarmerie organization is not of critical importance. What is absolutely crucial are the skill sets the force possesses, and its readiness. The key skills combine outstanding physical and mental toughness, an unparalleled sense of mission and duty,

and a set of lethal and nonlethal capabilities, which is ever evolving and can be brought to bear with speed, force, and surgical precision.

To find the “right cut of cloth” for their operators almost all hostage rescue units begin with an assessment and selection process. In this phase the unit is building its initial cadre or looking for new members to fill losses or make the force more robust. An initial records screening is conducted to establish that the candidate possesses the requisite intellect, performance record, and physical abilities, and can obtain the necessary security clearances. Next, a typical assessment and selection process involves a series of physical, mental, and psychological tests, usually putting the candidates under significant and unexpected stress in an effort to weed out the weak of heart, or mind, or will. This process is usually several days to several weeks in length and is often conducted in an isolated and uncomfortable environment.

The stress period allows the unit to observe behaviors such as individual performance, teamwork, competition among candidates, ethical decision making under stress, and the effects of fatigue, weather extremes, and sleep deprivation on candidates’ physical and mental capabilities. Some units also test for preexisting skills such as photography, martial arts, marksmanship, demonstrated leadership, mountaineering, or experience in urban operations. Almost all conduct basic and advanced physical fitness tests, and swimming examinations in difficult conditions. A few also test for irrational fears such as claustrophobia or acrophobia.

A detailed physical examination and some degree of psychological assessment frequently round out the assessment phase. Finally, many units conduct some type of interview with the candidate during which leaders try to get a final measure of the candidate. If he or she is deemed to possess “what it takes,” an offer to join the unit may be extended on the spot or in a follow-up contact.

The training phase is next. Operators habitually undergo extensive training regimens to further develop their individual and team skills. Honing physical conditioning and exercising mental toughness are standard fare. So are martial arts and other one-on-one, and team-on-team, hand-to-hand combat exercises. Marksmanship forms the cornerstone of most individual and unit skills, with many units firing thousands of rounds per member per month in both range and shooting house environments.

Close quarters combat experts and snipers evolve into their own specialty worlds, yet regularly interact in coordinated training scenarios to ensure both skills can be orchestrated to produce the desired results. Many units conduct street craft training to ensure that members can operate unobtrusively in diverse urban environments. Military hostage rescue units also train in a wide variety of natural terrain environments—mountains, deserts, and jungles are the norm. Both civilian and military units usually have parachute and water/underwater capabilities as well.

Individual training gives way to team training as the new operators develop. Team training leverages the individual skills and brings them to bear in a variety of situations. Most units train for hostage rescue operations in urban static (building) scenarios, land mobile scenarios (cars, busses, trains), water environments (ships and oil platforms), and aircraft scenarios. Each of these requires different skills, equipment, tactics, techniques, and procedures. Command and control for each may also require adaptation or special communications equipment.

Counterterrorism units often serve as test beds for developmental equipment or emerging technologies—body armor, scopes and other targeting devices, specialized team communications gear, long-range observation and photography equipment and techniques, explosives and shaped charges, medical advances, robotics, and others.

Finally, readiness, alert status, and emergency transportation arrangements round out the force requirements. Most units maintain some portion of their force in a high readiness state, usually expressed in the number of hours required to assemble an initial force and have it ready for transport. Many ensure they possess or have access to vehicles, boats, or aircraft to ensure quick deployment, either throughout their country or for the more global powers around the world.

The most common practice is to divide the entire force into three subordinate units, each “on watch” for a period of a few weeks. Of the two elements not on stand-by, one is usually in a team training phase, preparing for its “watch period” while the third has just finished its “watch” and is conducting leaves, training, or developing individual skills. After a year or two of training and development these units begin to exhibit a personality all of their own. The unit’s traits most often include a spirit of independence, a certain degree of secrecy, a sense of invulnerability or invincibility, and an elite mentality that sets them apart from peers. Operators and their commanders tend to be tough, uncompromising, competent, brusque, and edgy.

Long hours of training and standing ready also result in a collective impatience for operational opportunities in “the real world.” These attributes form both the strength and the weakness of counterterrorism units around the globe. As one senior commander of such units was fond of saying, “We must not confuse enthusiasm with capability.”

The Intelligence and Investigative Unit—the Eyes

The second component of the Iron Triangle is the intelligence and investigative capability that a nation can bring to bear on the hostage crisis. These scenarios typically present a multifaceted intelligence and investigative challenge. At what one might call the strategic level, of key concern from the outset are the identity and agenda of the hostage-takers. Are the hostages being held for political reasons? Or is this a kidnapping-for-ransom scenario? Do the hostage-takers represent a domestic or foreign terrorist organization? Does the organization have a track record? Do they rely on internal or external support? Are they state supported, or state sponsored? Are the local media sympathetic to their cause? If this is not their first adventure at hostage taking, what is the previous track record? How lethal have their actions been in the past? And what are their tactical and/or strategic demands in the current crisis?

As a general consideration, if the terrorists are foreigners, national intelligence organizations may have the lead; if they represent a domestic group, then law enforcement and other domestic agencies may be better suited to develop the strategic intelligence picture for both the counterterrorist force and the political leadership. If the terrorists are threatening to kill the hostages in the near term, then the pressure to develop this strategic picture must run in parallel with the development of the tactical intelligence picture. A quick rudimentary tactical picture is always required to enable an emergency assault by the hostage rescue force, should that become the only option to save the remaining hostages.

If the terrorists are foreign, another key intelligence question is whether this represents a state-sponsored attack. If state sponsorship is suspected, or can be proven, then national responses can be structured very differently than if the group is a foreign non-state actor without known or discernible links to any foreign government. In the event of the former, all tools of state power can be used to pressure the sponsor. However, in the latter, the tool box is far more constrained and must more directly address the hostage-takers and their (often shadowy) non-state actor organization.

Nevertheless, for a successful rescue, detailed intelligence and information about the tactical situation are essential. At the top of the list is the number of hostages. Within the hostage group are there women, children, elderly, or others who might be released on humanitarian grounds? What are the nationalities of the hostages? If the terrorists make no initial demands, can some intent be determined based on these biographical aspects of the pool of hostages? Can negotiators gain the release of some of the hostages based on knowledge of the hostage population?

Next are the details about the terrorists. How many? What ages and sexes? Which ethnic, cultural, religious backgrounds? Armed with what? Is there a suicide bomber's device involved? Are there small arms only? Or do the terrorists have grenades, other explosives, tear gas or other chemicals, rocket-propelled grenades, or other heavy weapons? What other equipment did they bring to the crisis, such as body armor, gas masks, or video or audio monitoring equipment? What is the chain of command, and who is the commander? Does he or she have a track record from former terrorist operations? What languages are they using? Is chain of command respected among the terrorists? What indications are there of military training? Do they have communications with an outside force or support base? Do they have contact with the media?

Next the hostage rescue force needs details about the specific location and whether the terrorists envisage moving with all or a portion of the hostages. To the extent possible all details about the physical site where the hostages are being held must be obtained to enable planning by the hostage rescue force.

These include details about the construction of the building from top to bottom, with particular emphasis on the floor plans where the hostages are being held; numbers and locations of windows and doors; building support systems such as heating, ventilating, air conditioning, and associated duct work; water and sewerage plans; elevators; internal furnishings; food sources (snack bars, restaurants, kitchens, food storage facilities); parking garages; basements; and the like.

As these tactical details are being collected, the intelligence unit must also develop exact locations for the terrorists and the hostages. Knowing how many, and where, the terrorists are at any given moment is one of the most valuable elements of information that can be provided to the hostage rescue force. It is highly desirable to obtain long duration, constant, concealed observation of the crisis site and to employ multiple audio and video means to augment that observation.

This durable observation task is often initiated by or turned over to the tactical hostage rescue unit preparing the assault. Most such units have skilled sniper/observers who can monitor the crisis site and keep the tactical commander fully informed about activities therein. Bringing the entire intelligence and observation picture together into an all-source real-time view of all aspects of the crisis is perhaps the single most important contribution of the intelligence component.

This picture needs to be provided to the tactical commander of the hostage rescue force in a constant stream for situational awareness. Some political leaders may also want such details about the state of play, in order to better assess their options and the viability of any proposed rescue operation. This situational awareness may also determine the necessity of launching an emergency assault, in particular, should the terrorists begin to systematically kill the hostages.

Investigative and intelligence skills needed to accomplish these tasks are beyond the skill levels of many standard domestic police or civilian or military foreign intelligence units. Nations

must determine how best to develop and maintain such capabilities. In many instances there are legal or constitutional prohibitions against combining investigative and intelligence skills or organizations. Whatever the challenges, obtaining timely intelligence of this specificity is a *sine qua non* for successful hostage rescue operations.

The intelligence and investigative units capable of these tasks, if they exist at all, tend to have some quirks of their own. First, they will be secretive in the extreme. Second, they will likely consistently underplay their capabilities, for fear of not being able to produce when needed. Third, like almost all intelligence organizations, they will likely caveat their information with great care. Fourth, they probably will be comfortable with the uncertainty of the unknown. Fifth, they will shun any media, and often even any political, attention.

These qualities can make a poor mix with the psychological profile of the hostage rescue force and its leaders. The first obstacle to overcome is the issue of trust. The intelligence professionals will tend to see the operators as “a bunch of cowboys,” while the operators will see the intelligence types as timid, evasive, shifty, and potentially unreliable. Since the prestige of the hostage rescue unit, and in fact, the success of the operation, will rely heavily on the accuracy and timeliness of the intelligence, it is essential to close this gap in trust. The question is how? There are two well-proven methods.

The first is to develop a habitual relationship between the operators and the collectors. This typically involves conducting frequent exercises that stress the capabilities of both elements. Over time each begins to learn the strengths and weaknesses of the other, and each becomes more tolerant of the personality quirks of the other. The unit commanders develop an appreciation of “the possible” for each element, and trust can be developed with a concerted, long-term effort. It is clear, however, that the first time the two units encounter each other must not be at the moment of crisis. The exigencies of a real crisis will stress even the best of strong relationships—the teams must know each other well, long before they get to the field of strife.

The second model is to build a tactical intelligence capability inside the hostage rescue unit. Such a solution helps to establish the habitual relationship and to build teamwork among the components. The downsides are that this approach is expensive, and there may be significant legal hurdles to overcome, depending on the charter and authorities of the ministry from which the hostage rescue force comes. Additionally, interagency jealousies may doom the effort as the intelligence and investigative bureaus become aware that the operators are building their own capabilities. In some countries there may be budget authority considerations, especially when it comes to the purchase of particularly sensitive intelligence-related audio or video monitoring gear. Finally, the downside of this approach is that a counterterrorism unit commander is already stretched thin to keep his assault force on razor’s edge—ready and trained to go at a moment’s notice. Keeping these intelligence and investigative types at the top of their game simultaneously may be too much to ask. Success, however, requires that these two components be fully compatible and well trained together, like the eyes and the hands of our carpenter referred to earlier.

The National Political Leadership—the Brains

The national political leadership is the ultimate authority that must decide whether or not to launch a hostage rescue operation. Those authorities are charged, first and foremost, with the protection of their populations. The taking of hostages is a direct and irrefutable challenge to the security of their citizens. Policymakers cannot avoid coming to grips with their responsibilities when confronted with the stark choices terrorist hostage scenarios present. The lives of the

hostages swing in the balance, based on the outcomes of their decisions. Successful rescues reinforce the moral authority of political leaders, while failed ones, particularly in democratic regimes, have caused governments to fall.

I refer to these leaders as the “brain” of the Iron Triangle, not out of deference to any (possible?) superior intellect, but because it is they who are charged with this decision, as is the brain of the carpenter, using the “eyes” to guide the “hammer” to strike the nail with precision and finesse. But this “brain” operates in a very different world from the other two components of the Iron Triangle.

Politicians are products of an entirely different culture than either the hostage rescue force operators, or the intelligence collection and analysis experts we have addressed so far. For politicians, decisions are best delayed for as long as possible, and when one must be made, a compromise or trade-off is usually the preferred course of action. This is why hostage taking creates such political pressure. It places politicians between three bad choices, each of which they would prefer to avoid.

Essentially, political leadership is faced with three options in a hostage situation: (1) acquiesce to the demands of the terrorists in hopes the hostages will be released, their lives spared; (2) refuse to meet the terrorists’ demands and perhaps see the hostages killed either one by one, or as a group; or (3) launch a hostage rescue attempt in the hopes of rescuing the hostages while killing or arresting the terrorists. Because for most politicians the decision “not to decide now” is considered a legitimate decision, launching a hostage rescue effort is usually their last choice, often by default. But waiting too long can create risks for the possible success of any rescue operation, and it places the initiative in the hands of the terrorists.

Given their culture of “deal making,” many politicians would prefer to meet, or partially meet, the demands of the terrorists, and hope for the release of the hostages. There are many cases where this tactic has resulted in short-term gains, particularly in kidnapping for ransom cases, where hostage-takers have been paid off. But true terrorist attacks present additional pressures on the government—first, their political demands are unlikely to be able to be met, and second, the political dimension of capitulating to their threat of violence will undermine the legitimacy of that government in the eyes of its population. Third, the terrorists may go back on their promises, either increasing their demands or killing some or all of the hostages anyway. Capitulating to demands will also likely result in future terrorists trying the same tactic for similar or different causes.

In the long run, giving in to terrorists’ demands only serves to strengthen the terrorists’ hand, while weakening the government’s. This essential equation should be reviewed with policymakers in advance, so that, should a crisis occur, the “brains” will understand the challenge their propensity for “deal making” presents in their role as protectors of their populations. In many nations the tendency for deal making is countered by policy pronouncements such as “we don’t negotiate with terrorists” or other such political edicts. These pronouncements notwithstanding, most nations do negotiate with terrorists, especially hostage-takers. There are two legitimate reasons for this, both tactical.

First, skilled negotiators may be able to gain the release of some number of the hostages. Most frequent are agreements to release women and children. There may be other groups in the hostage population (based on race, religion, or other factors) that negotiators may be able to convince the terrorists to release. Every hostage freed by negotiations is one less requiring to be rescued, and one less potential hostage casualty. These freed hostages can also provide key information about conditions inside the crisis site and can answer many of the key questions to

which the rescue force requires answers. Negotiators may also be able to develop a sense of rapport with the hostage-takers, which can come in useful later on. Sometimes this sense of rapport coupled with time to wear down the terrorists' resolve can result in the hostage-takers "giving up."

But should a rescue attempt become inevitable, a relationship between negotiators and the terrorists can be played to excellent advantage by the rescue force. This is the second reason why it is important to negotiate during the crisis. Negotiations can be used to modify the terrorists' behavior or their disposition, adjust the fidelity of the crisis intelligence, and optimize the timing of any eventual operation.

Deciding who should be the negotiators, and how to integrate them into the three structures we have discussed, is another key decision governments must make. In some instances, the negotiators are an integral part of the hostage rescue force—sometimes even the force commander takes on this role. In other models, negotiators come from the investigative or intelligence units. Some nations may rely on "profilers" or psychologists to perform these tasks. Finally, some political leaders may want to control the negotiations and frame the discussions with the terrorists at their level. Whichever model is selected, practicing negotiations as an integral part of the government's hostage rescue capability is another key relationship that must be developed over time and on a basis of trust, by all parties—hammer, eyes, and brain. Negotiators could be considered as the other hand of the carpenter, placing the nail in just the right spot, fully coordinated by the eyes and the brain, and thus optimizing the effectiveness of the strike by the hammer.

Building a Governmental Counterterrorism Team

This next section provides some advice to policymakers on how to assemble and exercise the components of a national counterterrorism hostage rescue capability. A sense of trust and shared values, or at least a cognizance of the key differences between the components, is a basic starting point. Setting out national rules of the road is another. Finally, exercising the components under a variety of scenarios is also necessary.

First, establish a national policy framework. Governments should develop an agreed national policy on combating terrorism. One element of that policy should be on handling hostage crises. The policy should be an interagency consensus document, well known to the rescue force, the intelligence apparatus, and the political leadership. It should be an enduring document that reflects the core values of the society, and it must differentiate between terrorism and other forms of political violence. It should also establish a balance between the responsibility of the government for combating terrorism and its responsibility to ensure the basic freedoms of its citizens. This is particularly important when it comes to subjects such as domestic intelligence and surveillance and the collection and retention of personal data on citizens, immigrants, and visitors.

Second, develop a national strategy for combating terrorism. Such a document would assign roles and missions to agencies involved in the many facets of a full-spectrum campaign, with timelines and coordinating instructions. Key components might include:

Diplomacy	Border control	Health
Intelligence	Finance	Emergency services
Law enforcement	Information	Military
Customs	Agriculture	Others, as appropriate

Third, create a national-level interagency combating terrorism working group. Depending on the structure of the government involved, this group can be chaired either by a representative of the office of the chief executive—president, National Security Council, prime minister—or by a lead agency such as the Ministry of Interior for domestic terrorist events, or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for events involving foreign or international terrorists. This working group should assemble all of the ministries involved in the nation’s combating terrorism strategy and meet regularly to address threats and assess vulnerabilities.

The group should develop plans to defend critical infrastructure and other national resources against terrorist attacks, respond to terrorist events with force when appropriate, and manage the consequences of a terrorist attack. Particular attention should be given to events involving attacks at multiple locations, attacks on critical infrastructure nodes or capabilities, and attacks involving weapons of mass destruction. It may be appropriate to create a subgroup devoted to disrupting terrorist financing, another focused on countering the informational or ideological aspects of terrorism, and other subgroups as necessary. Both functional and regional structures should be considered. Another concept might be to organize around key terrorist groups active in the nation or region concerned.

The combating terrorism working group should meet regularly, ideally once a week or once every two weeks. The intent of the group is to ensure that all agencies concerned are kept abreast of threats and capabilities, and to build a sense of teamwork and shared responsibility over time. Furthermore, the group must be ready to provide focused expert advice to the government, in the event of a crisis. The requirement for the national foreign intelligence and domestic law enforcement communities to provide a consolidated, complete, and current threat picture to the group, and the agencies involved, is an absolute necessity for the development of coherent responses.

Fourth, exercise the team at multiple levels. The top level is the head of state or head of government, and the ministers represented in the combating terrorism working group. Since the top political authorities will be making the ultimate decisions to launch a counterterrorism operation, it is essential that they become exposed to, and ideally familiar with, both the rules of this game and the capabilities of their players.

Since their time is precious, an optimal way to engage them is to conduct “tabletop games.” These typically propose a scenario, with a series of “moves”—by both the terrorists and the government. As the players work through the moves, they are exposed to the tactical, strategic, and political risks and results of their decisions—both good and bad. Such learning can take place over a short period, three to five hours—but can be invaluable in exposing the most senior members of the government to the challenges they would face in a real situation. The key is to develop a scenario that is seen as feasible by the players, which involves “moves” that highlight the choices to be made, and to have a facilitator who can gain the respect of all. To avoid embarrassment of any players, individuals should be briefed in advance on the design of the game, their general roles, and the roles, capabilities, and limitations of their ministry, so they can be comfortable during the play.

The next level of exercises or games should involve the members of the national interministerial working group. The group’s exercises should be similar to the tabletop exercises discussed earlier, but conducted in more detail, with more moves, and over a longer period of time—perhaps twelve to twenty-four hours. These games should be conducted in two formats. First, the game should be played only within the working group. This will familiarize the players

with their roles and responsibilities, and with each other. Once the inter-ministerial process has been “debugged,” then the group should move on to the second format.

This format should bring the tactical players—operators, collectors, and negotiators—together with the working group policymakers. They also should participate in two types of exercises. The first would be what the military would call a “command post exercise.” This would exercise roles and missions, inter-ministerial coordination, and decision making, based on a tactical scenario in which the leaders of the intelligence and operational units would play roles, but no troops would be deployed. Such an exercise might last from one to several days. One goal should be to demonstrate the effects fatigue will have on both the government officials and the terrorists, as the crisis drags on.

The second level of exercise would be a “field training exercise” in military parlance. This would be similar to the foregoing “command post exercise” but would involve the deployment and employment of all the forces involved. It will also require the fielding of a group of “terrorists” and a group of “hostages.” The terrorist role players often come from within the operational and/or intelligence units involved. Before the exercise they are pulled aside, sworn to secrecy, and prepared for their roles in the game. For hostage role players it is usually best to choose government personnel with no experience in the counterterrorism business. Not knowing what to expect is an integral part of the hostage experience, and neither the terrorists nor the government forces are sure what the hostages may do next. This unpredictability is a key wild card in each of these games, but it adds a degree of reality and free play that is invaluable.

The full “field training exercise” should unfold over several days to a week, and may involve all aspects of the operation, testing the deployment, intelligence picture development, emergency and deliberate assault capabilities, hostage-handling techniques, and post-operations forensics aspects of a counterterrorism mission. Such an exercise requires a detailed scenario, experienced exercise controllers, an appropriate venue, and a good process to conduct debriefings of all involved in order to capture “lessons learned.”

Although such a series of games and exercises is an expensive and time-consuming endeavor, it will pay big dividends when it comes time to execute an operation “for real.” These exercises and games provide all involved with a sense of purpose. They highlight capabilities and vulnerabilities across all forces involved and can be used to allocate resources for investment in areas needing improvement. They also develop familiarity between the many components—hammer, eyes, brain—and thereby increase trust and confidence among these key players.

The intent of all of these preparations is to bring the elements of the Iron Triangle together at multiple levels, in multiple scenarios, in advance of any actual operation. Bringing them together will forge bonds of friendship and trust. These will be critically important if and when a real rescue operation is needed.

For the senior policymakers such a regimen can serve two purposes. The first is to bring the Iron Triangle together to enhance the chances for a successful rescue operation. On a more political level, the preparations can be used to demonstrate to a skeptical parliament (or public) that the government is taking terrorism seriously, and has taken appropriate steps to ensure all ministries are as prepared as can be, in the event of an actual terrorist hostage crisis. More skeptically, in the event a crisis occurs and an assault fails, these preparations can serve as a form of “political insurance” to counter the inevitable charges of unpreparedness, clumsiness, or intelligence failure from national or international political opponents.

The final ingredient for a successful operation is one over which we have no control. A rescue force that is only marginally capable, but enjoys a large dose of luck, will likely achieve

results far superior to one with outstanding skills, but bad luck. It may seem fickle or inappropriate to speak of luck in such a context, but long years of experience demonstrate the crucial role played by this uncontrollable variable. Operators and policymakers alike must recognize that once they cast the dice by launching an operation, skill will only take them so far. Although any operational commander worthy of the title will seek to convince the policymaker he or she can prevail, in all likelihood, Lady Luck will have the last word. Pray that she will be on your side.

Conclusion

This chapter has described the ingredients for a competent counterterrorism force and a governmental structure to support the employment of that force. It is intended to serve as a “cookbook” for operators, intelligence personnel, negotiators, and policymakers at several levels of government. Developing such a set of capabilities is an expensive and time-consuming enterprise. It will require a long-term political commitment at many levels of government, development of an inter-ministerial approach, allocation of resources to all components of the team, and constant exercising and adaptation, particularly in light of the rapidly evolving terrorist threat.

Nevertheless, building such a national capability should be near the top of every government’s agenda. Given the breadth and scope of terrorist acts in today’s world, to be without such tools when terrorists do attack is to fail to uphold one of the most basic bargains between governments and their citizens—the requirement to provide an environment safe and secure from terrorists—to the extent practicable.

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