

9/11: THE DAY THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

Terror Since 9/11

Bali — On October 12, 2002, 13 months after the Al Qaeda attacks of 9/11, terrorists struck the tourist town Kuta on the Indonesian island of Bali. The terrorists targeted a nightclub district frequented by tourists with two deadly explosions, one involving a suicide bomber who detonated his bomb-laden backpack inside a crowded nightclub and the other a car bomb detonated as wounded patrons fled the nightclub where the first bomb exploded. A third bomb was detonated outside the U.S. Consulate, resulting in relatively minor damage. The death toll reached 202, with 209 people injured. Some of the more seriously injured were flown to the Australian cities of Perth and Darwin for treatment. Australians regard this as their 9/11 since almost half of the dead came from their country. Eventually, members of an extreme Islamist group called Jemmah Islamiyah were arrested, with three group members sentenced to death, one to life in prison, and the leader of the group, Abu Bakar Bashir, sentenced to two years in prison.

Madrid — During the morning rush hour on March 11, 2004, 10 explosions aboard four trains rocked the Madrid commuter train system, killing 191 people and injuring close to 2 000 others. The bombs were hidden in backpacks and were detonated with cell phones. All 10 of the bombs exploded within two minutes of each other as trains made their way along one of Madrid's main train lines. Initially authorities suspected an organization called ETA (*Euskadi ta Askatasuna*, which means "Basque Fatherland and Liberty"), a terrorist group identified as

Basque nationalists. However, suspicion eventually came to rest on a group of 29 Al Qaeda-inspired Islamic extremists. There were actually seven other suspects who police believe blew themselves up rather than face arrest when the investigation of Spanish authorities narrowed in on them.

London — On July 7, 2005, commuters on London's subway system were travelling to their intended destinations when three bombs on three separate trains were detonated by suicide bombers. Less than an hour later, another suicide bomber detonated his deadly payload aboard a double-decker bus in Tavistock Square. In all, 56 people were killed and hundreds of others were wounded. Three weeks later another four bombs were placed on three subway trains and a bus. Fortunately, these bombs failed to detonate and the four intended suicide bombers were eventually captured. Authorities believe that the suicide bombers of July 7 and the suspects in the July 21 bombing attempts were inspired by Muslim extremists in organizations like Al Qaeda.

Terror Thwarted

Toronto — In early June 2006, police used close to 400 personnel from a variety of forces to arrest 17 people they believed were conspiring to stage terrorist attacks against a number of targets in Canada. The targets included CSIS headquarters and the CBC building in Toronto and Parliament Hill in Ottawa. The police had apparently been monitoring the group's activities for six months prior to their arrest. Red flags went up when the RCMP intercepted an order for three tonnes of ammonium

nitrate destined to be mixed with fuel oil and used in the construction of a bomb that was more powerful than the one used in the bombing of a U.S. government building in Oklahoma City in 1995. Police describe the suspects as “adherents of a violent ideology inspired by Al Qaeda” (www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2006/06/03/suspects060603.html). Eventually an 18th person was arrested in connection with the terrorist plot.

London — In August 2006, police in Britain arrested 11 people in connection with a conspiracy to blow up transatlantic jets in mid-air using liquid explosives. The public learned of the plot when London’s Heathrow Airport was suddenly closed, and travellers in other jurisdictions were told they could not bring liquids like bottles of water and toothpaste aboard flights. Eventually, 10 people were charged in the conspiracy.

The www.cbc.ca Web site identifies a number of other Al Qaeda-linked terrorists acts besides the ones mentioned above. They are:

December 2004 — Jeddah, Saudi Arabia: An attack on the American Consulate kills five staff members and leaves four militants dead. The Saudi

wing of Al Qaeda claims responsibility.

April 2004 — Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Attacks in downtown Riyadh kill 10 people.

December 2003 — Istanbul, Turkey: Attacks on the British Consulate and HSBC bank offices in Istanbul kill 27 people.

December 2003 — Istanbul, Turkey: At least 23 people die in two suicide attacks on synagogues.

November 2003 — Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: A bombing kills at least 17 people at a housing complex a few kilometres from Riyadh’s diplomatic quarter.

August 2003: Jakarta, Indonesia: A suicide bomber kills 12 people at the J.W. Marriott hotel.

May 2003 — Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and Casablanca, Morocco: At least 75 people are killed in one week in suicide attacks in the two cities.

November 2002 — Mombassa, Kenya: Sixteen people die at an Israeli-owned hotel.

April 2002 - Djerba, Tunisia: A blast outside a Tunisian synagogue kills at least 17 people.

Source: www.cbc.ca/news/background/london_bombing/Alq_bombing.html

To Consider

1. What does this list of terror events suggest about the ongoing “war on terror”?
2. Nearly all of the incidents cited above are referred to as Al Qaeda-inspired or Al Qaeda-linked. How might referring to incidents as “inspired by” or “linked to” Al Qaeda be misleading? Explain fully.
3. In your opinion, how can this series of terror episodes be best brought to an end? Be specific.
4. What should Canada’s role be in the “war on terror”?