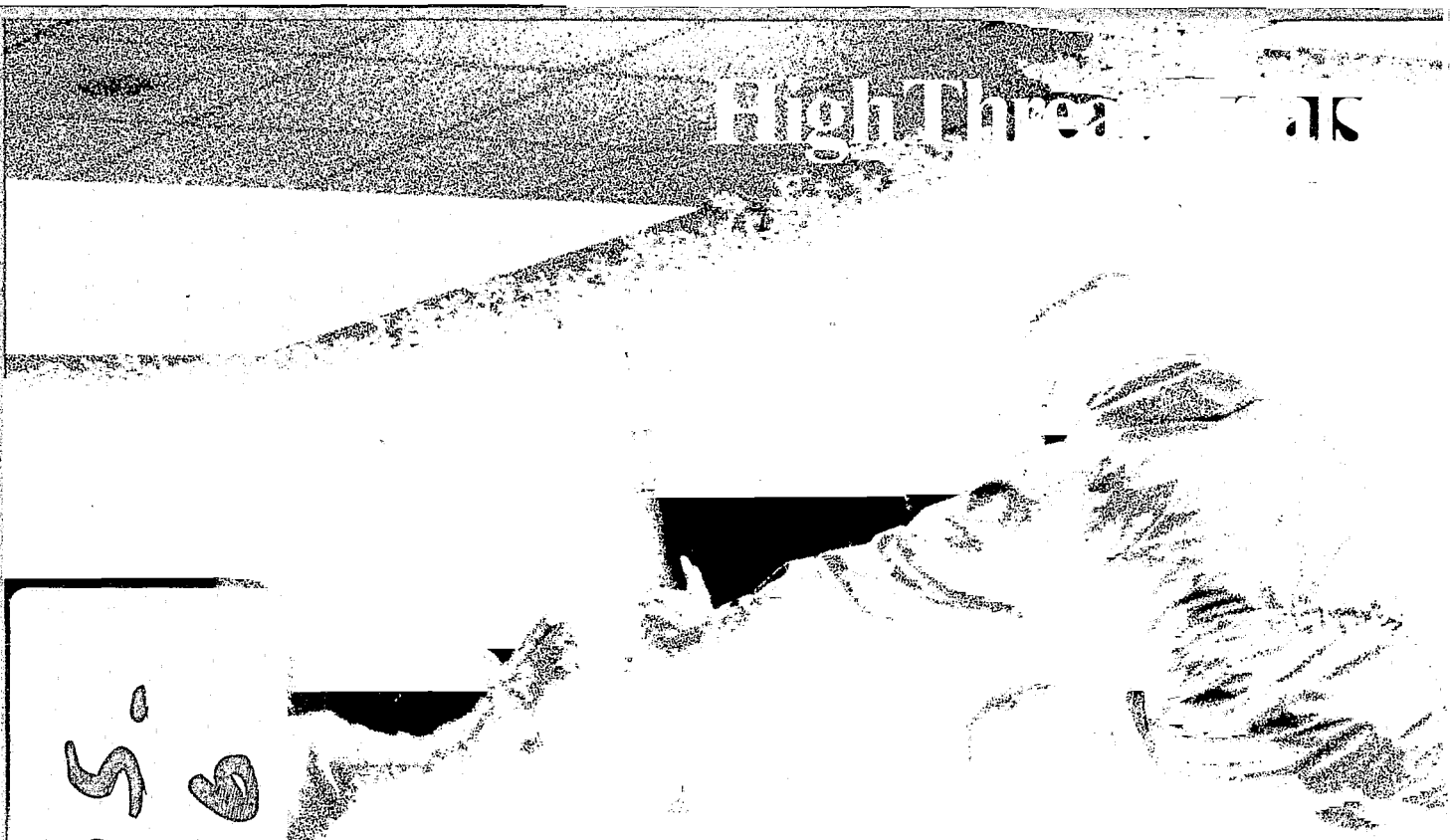

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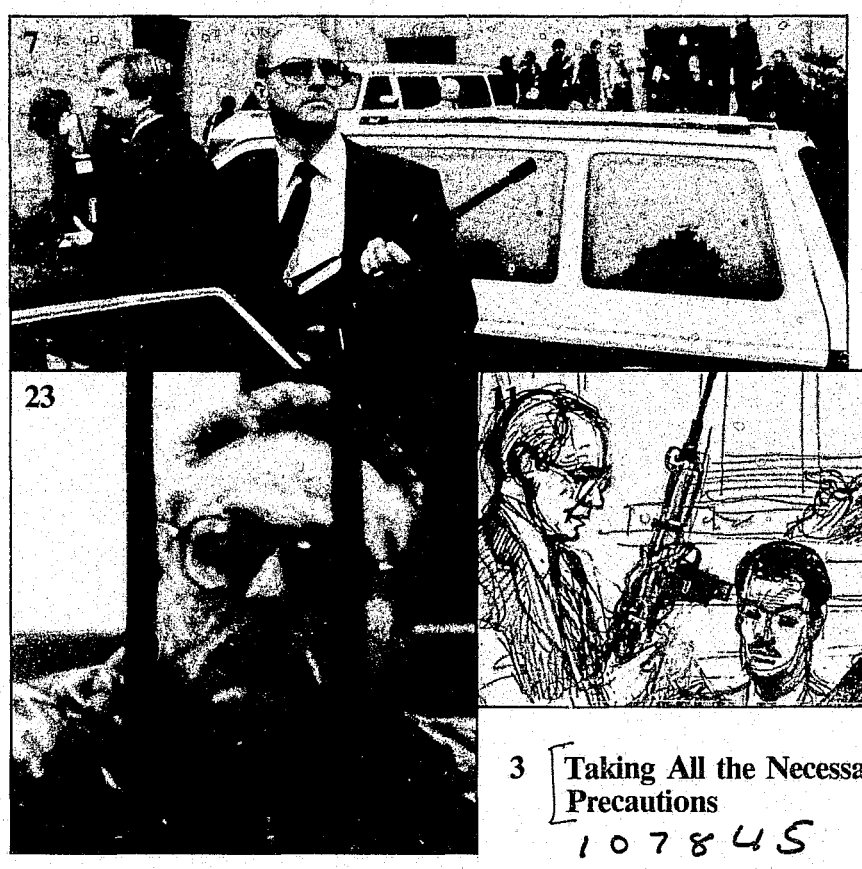
On the cover:
Dramatization of a high threat trial incident staged by Deputy Marshals from the District of Minnesota. RANDY GERBER



Features

Departments

International Court Security

by Howard Safir, Associate Director for Operations

A TWA airliner is hijacked by Shiite gunmen over Athens, Greece; one American sailor is murdered and 39 hostages are taken and later released.

The Achille Lauro cruise ship is seajacked; an American is killed and thrown overboard...

Terrorists storm into airports in Rome and Vienna, shooting and killing travelers, including an 11-year-old American girl...

A terrorist bomb explodes in a West German discotheque, killing two American soldiers...

These were terrorist attacks on Americans and others by people with seemingly no regard for human life and no limits on the methods or extremes they will go to in order to prove their point. If terrorists are arrested abroad and extradited to the United States for these attacks on Americans overseas, they will stand trial in Washington, D.C., and the U.S. Marshals Service will be responsible for security at the trial and for custody of the prisoners.

What extraordinary security measures will be required? Will we need a special courtroom? Special training? New kinds of technical equipment? Is the Service up to dealing with the likes of Abu Nidal, leader of an Arab guerrilla group said to be responsible for the Vienna and Rome airport attacks? What would we face if members of the militant Shiite sect Hizballah or the Palestine Liberation Organization were in our custody? It was precisely the answers to these questions that Stanley E. Morris, the Director of the Marshals Service, and I had in mind as we traveled to Europe to meet with our French and Italian counterparts to discuss high threat trials involving both terrorist and organized crime cases.

We began on June 24th in Hamburg, West Germany, at the Fourth Annual European Executive Policing Seminar. There we presented a paper on the Witness Security Program. The terrorist problem has caused a great deal of interest throughout the European Policing community on the handling of endangered witnesses. Representatives of 14 countries listened attentively to our presentation, and afterwards commented that the Marshals Service is definitely the world expert in this area.

On June 26th, with our USMS Interpol Representative Roger Arechiga, we traveled to Paris, France, to meet with our French colleagues. The French and, specifically, the City of Paris have been plagued with terrorist bombings and assassinations over the last several years. Recently, George Abdullah, an Arab terrorist, and his accomplices, were tried and convicted in the Palace of Justice in Paris. Abdullah was accused of complicity in attacks on American and Israeli diplomats in France. A series of meetings had been set up for us with the authorities who were responsible for security at this important trial.

The French system of justice is quite different from ours. Since the French Revolution (1789), France has lived under the Civil Code, also known as the Code Napoleon. Unlike United States law, the accused has the burden of proving his innocence rather than the court proving his guilt.

Trials of terrorists are conducted before a panel of three Magistrates, without a jury. The security for French courts is a complicated three-agency system. The French National Police Force is responsible for security of the exterior and perimeter of the court buildings. The Criminal Investigation Division (CID) is responsible for personal protection of the Judiciary, while the French Gendarmerie (policemen) are responsible for custody and transport of prisoners and the interior security of the court facility. As you can imagine, having three independent organizations responsible for court security requires extensive planning, coordination and cooperation.

French security forces check buildings surrounding the Palais de Justice in Paris during the trial of Lebanese Guerilla leader George Ibrahim Abdullah.

REUTERS/BETTMANN NEWSPHOTOS

We had our first meeting with Pierre Jean Camborde, Director of Public Security for the French Police in Paris. Camborde is the commander of 11,000 uniformed officers in the City of Paris. He described the organization of the French police and arranged for us to meet with the two officers who were responsible for the coordination of the Abdullah trial.

French national policeman checks identity paper of two judges dressed in courtroom robes in front of the Palais de Justice in Paris as the Abdullah trial begins. Abdullah was accused of complicity in attacks on American and Israeli diplomats in France.

French policemen check cars going into the Palais de Justice in Paris, hours before the opening of the trial of Lebanese terrorist Abdullah. Security forces deployed thousands of men around the French capital for the duration of the trial.

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We met Inspectors Boure and Lafaie at the French National Court. We got a true sense of history as we entered this 600-year-old structure adjacent to Sante Chappelle Cathedral. It is a magnificent, ornate building of stone, marble, and stained glass. In an atmosphere punctuated by French attorneys and judges, all in styles of robes that haven't changed in hundreds of years, Inspectors Boure and Lafaie escorted us to the courtroom where the Abdullah trial had taken place. At home, we often complain about the lack of consideration for security needs when new courthouses are built. You can imagine the security challenges in a building from the 15th century.

Our escort began by informing us that only the most competent and best-trained Gendarmes are assigned court security duties in French courts. It is considered a privilege and a sought-after assignment by Gendarmerie officers. Lafaie explained that during the trial, the French police closed the streets around the courthouse to traffic, and the surrounding apartment buildings were carefully watched. All residents were notified that, if necessary, they would have to evacuate their homes on a moment's notice. Special counter-sniper squads were placed on strategic rooftops, and remained there throughout the trial. One of the interesting points made by Lafaie, was that during the trial there were at all times between 1,000 and 1,500 officers providing the security for this *one* trial.

We then entered the courtroom where a rape trial was in progress. French courtrooms are considerably different than those in the United States. As we entered the courtroom, we noted that this was indeed a jury trial. The defendant was in a dock, with two Gendarmes directly behind him. His defense counsel sat below him and across from the prosecutors. On a raised bench, in front of the court, sat three magistrates, and with them on the bench (a strange sight to an American) were nine jurors seated alongside the judges. The Inspector pointed out that none of the participants are permitted to move around the courtroom during the trial.

Police convoy, transporting Abdullah, leaves the Palais de Justice in Paris.

French security surround the Palais de Justice during the trial of Abdullah. The Lebanese guerrilla was sentenced to life imprisonment.

After exiting the courtroom, we carefully went over how the Abdullah trial had been conducted. We had many questions. What kind of screening was conducted? Were X-rays and magnetometers used for everyone including court personnel and defense counsel? How was the press handled? Lafaie replied that four separate checkpoints were established from the street to the courtroom. Each member of the public and the press had to produce two separate I.D.'s. They were patted down and gone over with a hand-held magnetometer. (No walk-through metal detectors were used.) If anything suspicious was observed, the individual would be taken to a private room and strip-searched. The court permitted only 30 people in the gallery. Each had to be specifically approved by the President of the Court. All other members of the public had to stand in an open area at the back of the courtroom. Only those members of the press who regularly covered the courts were permitted to be present. They did not screen court personnel or defense counsel. (Perhaps this is not a problem for France, but it sure would make me nervous in the United States.) We asked: Do you allow weapons in Court? How many Gendarmes in Court during the Abdullah trial? Is the Judge's bench armored? Do they have duress alarms? How about video monitoring? Lafaie said that weapons were always used by Gendarmes in Court. He stated that during the Abdullah trial between 40-50 armed Gendarmes formed a ring around the perimeters of the courtroom. Those directly behind the magistrates were armed with submachine guns. The benches were not armored; nor do the judges have duress alarms. Video cameras are not used, although the CID did have agents among the gallery and took photographs of anyone who looked suspicious. Lafaie also said that when transporting Abdullah, they did not use armored vehicles but a convoy of six or seven identical vans, so that no one would know which one the defendants were in.

We then visited a civil trial in progress. It was noted with interest that in France, for civil trials, and criminal trials in which the defendant is not in custody, *no* Gendarmes are present. All court

Reporters show identification to policemen as they enter the "bunker" courtroom in Palermo, Sicily.

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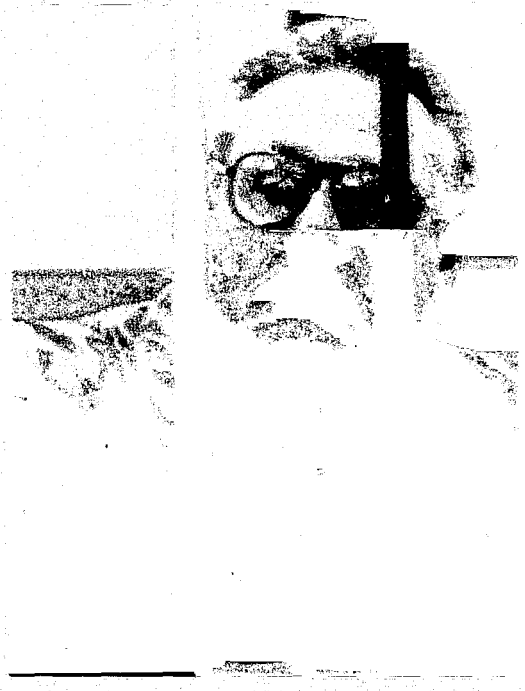


Luciano Liggio, accused of being a leader of the group of Mafia families that won a four-year Mafia "war" for control of drug trafficking, inside steel bars in the "bunker" courtroom.

REUTERS/BETTMANN NEWSPHOTOS

requirements are performed by the judge's clerks and assistants.

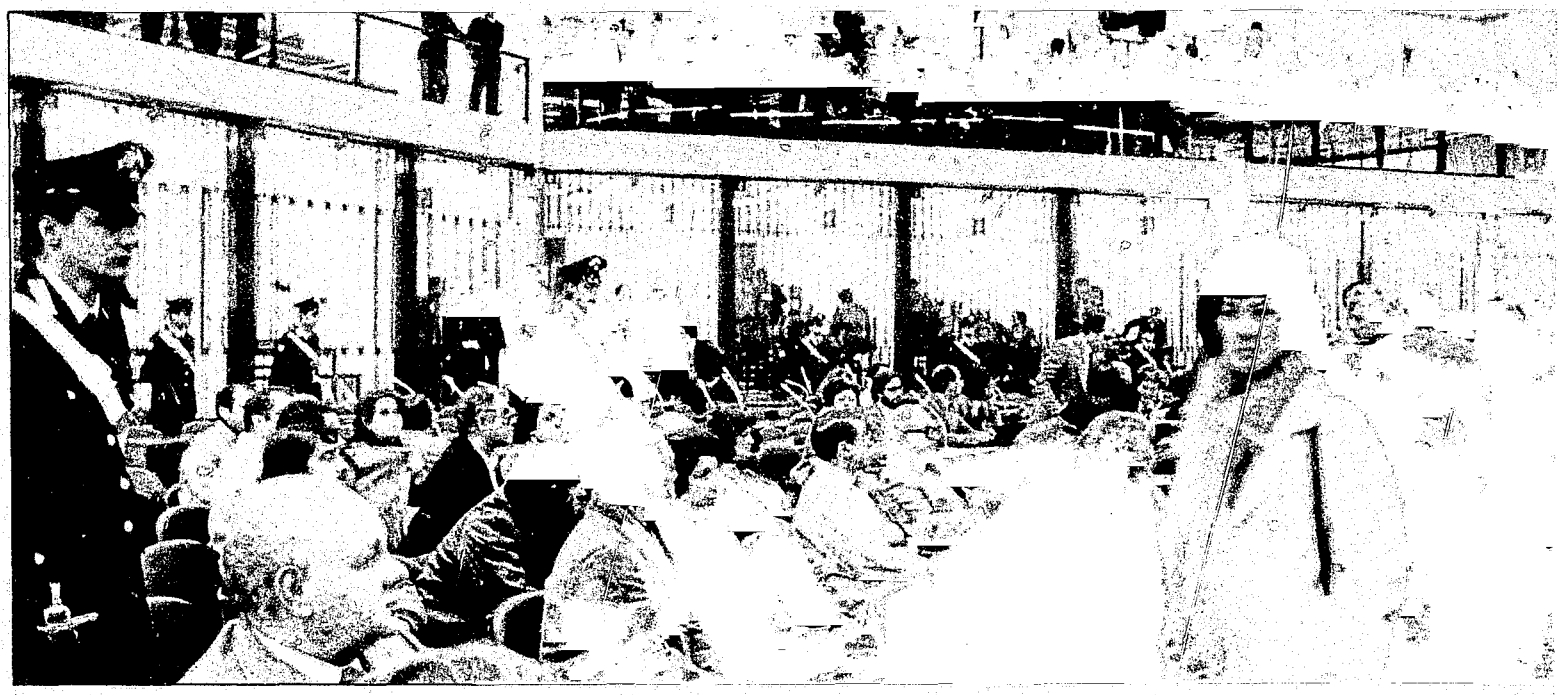
Our observation of France's judicial process was enlightening and helpful. It's clear that the French believe that manpower can overcome any security requirement. Obviously, people resources are not the problem for them that they are for us. Their lack of technical equipment and systems is overcome by use of large numbers of officers. Unfortunately, we just don't have that luxury. Systems combined with highly trained, dedicated Deputies are what keeps us going.

On to Italy

We then departed for Italy to observe how the Italian police, in Sicily, are handling the largest, and most important, Mafia trial in history; a trial with 475 defendants. We arrived in Rome and were met by Inspector Josefina Lombardo of the Italian National Police (Polizia Di Stato). Lombardo was to be our guide and interpreter on our trip to Palermo, on the island of Sicily, to observe the trial in progress and to have a close look at a new reinforced courtroom built especially for this trial, at a cost in excess of $100 million.

After a short flight from Rome, we arrived in Palermo and met Mr. D'Antone, Chief of the Criminal Police of Palermo. Chief D'Antone explained to us that the Italian government was committed to wiping out the Mafia and that this trial and the construction of the reinforced courtroom were evidence of that commitment.

He also explained the Italian law enforcement structure. In Italy, there are three primary national police forces. The Polizia Di Stato, who are responsible for policing and investigations in major urban areas and some rural places; the Carabinieri, a semimilitary force which is responsible for policing mainly rural areas with some overlapping responsibility in the cities; and the Guardia Di Finanza which are the Treasury Police and are primarily responsible for the investigation of narcotics trafficking, white collar crime and other economic



A view of the "bunker" courtroom built for the Mafia trial in Palermo, Sicily.

REUTERS/BETTMANN NEWSPHOTOS

crimes. D'Antone explained that all three forces had some jurisdiction in the security of this trial and, therefore, coordinated their activities very closely. He explained that the Carabinieri were primarily responsible for security inside the courtroom, while the police were responsible for perimeter security outside the courtroom, and that the police and the Guarda Di Finanza provide escort duty for protection details on court personnel, prosecutors, and jurors. The Police Chief explained that about 1,000 officers were involved in the trial and security details: approximately 60 percent Police, 30 percent Carabinieri, and 10 percent Guardia Di Finanza.

We were taken to the reinforced courtroom, which the Italians call "the Bunker." The first thing we noticed was a 15-foot high, reinforced steel fence around the entire complex. The fence is constructed of tall, steel pickets, each one alternately facing the opposite direction, for strength. Sandwiched between the pickets, and reaching up 12 feet, are the largest sheets of bulletproof glass I've ever seen. This is even more impressive when you realize there are hundreds of feet of fence. Around the outside of the fence, were large numbers of officers, armed with automatic weapons, flak jackets and even an armored personnel carrier.

As we entered the complex, we passed through four screening points, each deposited us into a secure sally port where security personnel could isolate us, if necessary. Chief D'Antone explained that *everyone* entering the building was screened by magnetometers and X-ray machines, including journalists *and defense counsel.* We then proceeded to the courtroom and entered the public gallery which is a balcony overlooking the courtroom. I have been in many courtrooms all over the world but have never been as impressed as I was in "the Bunker." From the Gallery I could see a huge semicircular courtroom that could easily accommodate 700 to 1,000 people. At the front was the Judges' bench. The Italians also operate under the Civil Code, and for this trial there was one judge called the President of the Court, and 13 "public judges," citizens

who serve as judges. Also, just to the right of the bench, is the public prosecutor who in Italy is both Prosecutor and Judicial Officer. The courtroom is divided by aisles into sections; to the far right was the area for witnesses; next, an area for complainants; across from that an area for defense counsel; and, at the other end of the courtroom, an area for defendants not in custody. At the rear of the semi-circle, and the most striking feature of the courtroom, are 30 open cells facing the courtroom. Defendants in custody view the trials from these cells, and can address the court via microphones in each cell. Each cell also has bullet-proof glass partitions on either side.

One of the most interesting things we noticed in this courtroom was the striking contrast in methodology between the French and the Italians. Where the French use little, if any, technology, the Italians have the latest state-of-the-art equipment. A bulletproof control room, off to the side of the courtroom, controls the 35 cameras, 300 microphones and all other aspects of courtroom electronics. All proceedings are videotaped and recorded by a computerized recording system, which allows easy retrieval of any portion of the proceedings. I counted 40 security personnel in the courtroom, three defendants in custody, and four on bond, for that day's proceedings. This trial has been going on for 13 months and we were told that it was expected to continue for another year, at least. The Italians, who have been the victims of various Mafia ambushes over the years, have built this courtroom adjacent to Ucciardone Prison where all in-custody defendants are housed. All defendants are easily moved, via tunnel, from prison to court.

After the proceedings were adjourned for the day, the Director and I met with the President of the Court and then were given a tour of the courtroom, the holding cell area and the Italian version of a Prisoner Witness Safe Site, which very much resembled the "Valachi" suite at La Tuna. It had a bedroom, living room and exercise area, and was where Tommaso Buscetta of "Pizza Connection" fame was housed while he testified for this Mafia trial. We asked D'Antone how personal security for judges, jurors and prosecutors was handled. He explained that all escort officers were trained at a special Protective Service Course given at the Abbasanta Police School in Sardinia. The

. . .no individual law enforcement agency can function effectively without professional cooperation.

course, lasting three months, concentrates on movements, vehicle and foot, and anti-ambush tactics. Chief D'Antone stated that, at the present time, there were 600 officers providing protective details to judges, jurors and prosecutors in this case alone. He said that extensive use was made of armored vehicles, both for the principals and escorts.

As we left Sicily to return to Rome, I reflected on what we had seen in Paris and Palermo. First, I compared the limited budget for courthouse construction and renovation for all of the U.S. to the more than $100 million spent on the courthouse in Palermo alone. (There are three other "bunker" courtrooms in other parts of Italy.) After seeing this impressive security arrangement, I think that we need to explore, with the judiciary, the idea of building a series of court facilities at strategic locations around the country designed specifically for high threat trials. As our security requirements continue to grow, we may find that these kinds of courthouses are essential if we are to ensure the safety of the participants and ensure that the judicial process remains unintimidated.

I also thought about the overlapping jurisdictions of agencies involved in the court security efforts in both France and Italy. Three or more law enforcement agencies were responsible for various aspects of the operation. Extensive coordination between the various groups is essential if their system is to work. It also reminded me how much we rely on other agencies—Federal, state, and local—for our own court security operations. As we in the Marshals Service know, no individual law enforcement agency can function effectively without professional cooperation.

The overriding impression was the contrast between the very limited manpower we have available compared to our counterparts in Italy and France. Thankfully, we can compensate with extensive and innovative planning, sophisticated equipment, and very hard-working and dedicated people. I'm proud of the way we handle our court security mission, and I'm sure nobody does it better than the men and women of the Marshals Service.

We had learned a great deal on this trip, impressed by both the French and the Italians. We should never be too proud to learn from others who have experienced and overcome the kind of high profile court security problems that we face today and will certainly face with increasing frequency in the future. ★