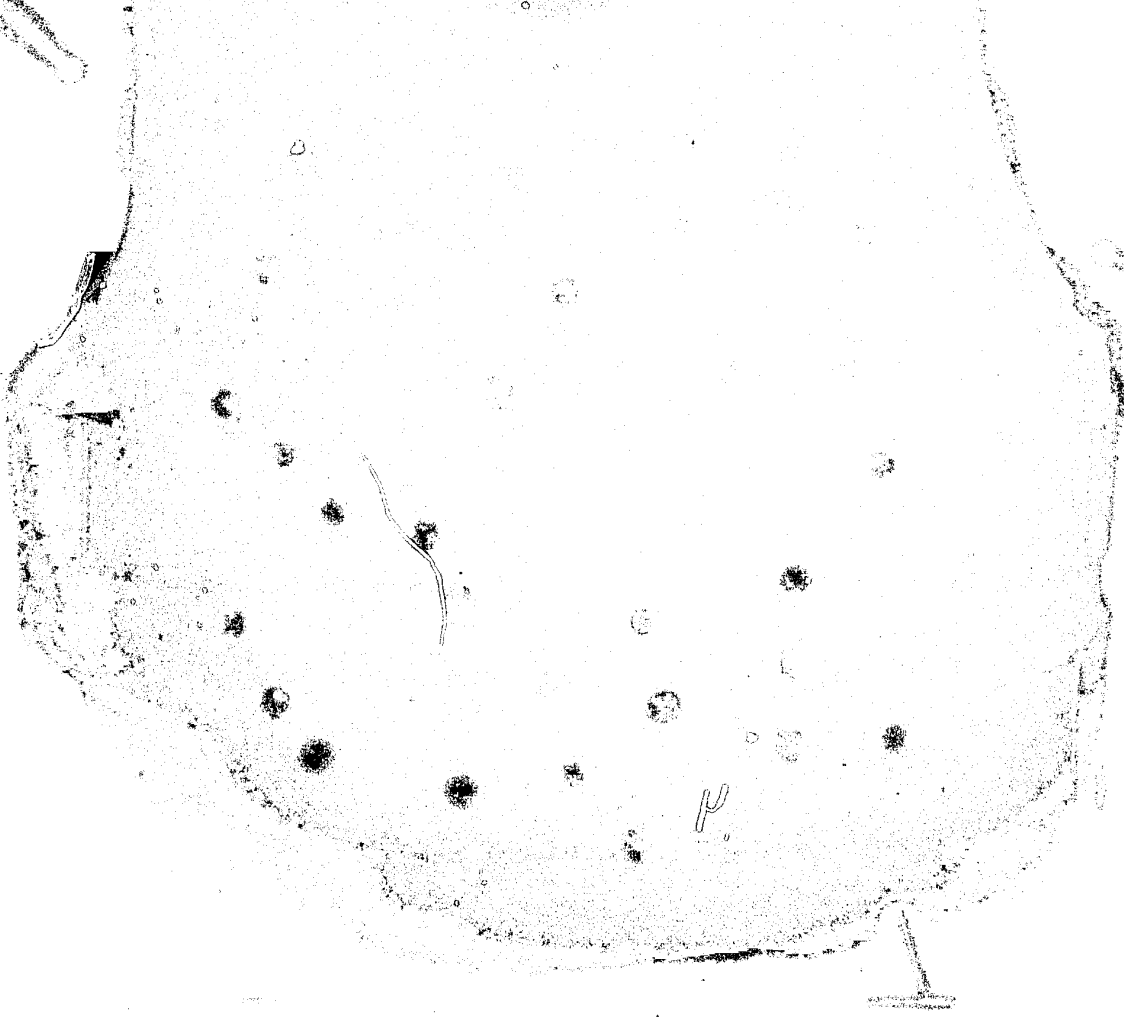




Investigation

Law Enforcement

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March 1995
Volume 64
Number 3

United States
Department of Justice
Federal Bureau of
Investigation
Washington, DC 20535

Louis J. Freeh
Director

Contributors' opinions and statements should not be considered as an endorsement for any policy, program, or service by the FBI.

The Attorney General has determined that the publication of this periodical is necessary in the transaction of the public business required by law. Use of funds for printing this periodical has been approved by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

The *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin* (ISSN-0014-5688) is published monthly by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, 10th and Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20535. Second-Class postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, Federal Bureau of Investigation, FBI Academy, Quantico, VA 22135.

Editor

Dr. Stephen D. Gladis

Managing Editor

Kathryn E. Sulewski

Art Director

John E. Ott

Associate Editors

Andrew DiRosa

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Kimberly J. Waggoner

Staff Assistant

Stephanie L. Lowe

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FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin

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The Central Texas Counterterrorism Working Group

By
BYRON A. SAGE, M.S.,
MACK WALLACE, J.D.,
and CAROLYN WIER

Public interest in terrorism tends to ebb and flow with the tide of outrageous acts committed by terrorists. In the early 1970s, masked international hijackers represented the worst fear of air travelers worldwide. In the mid-1980s, these fears resurfaced as a new wave of terrorists sought to intimidate governments through blackmail and alter public opinion by manipulating the mass media. Particularly barbaric acts, such as the 1988 downing of Pan Am Flight 103 or the bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993, demonstrate the terrorist penchant for destruction and the indiscriminate killing of innocent victims. Interspersed among these sensational acts of international terrorism are the equally desperate and senseless acts of domestic terrorists.

After a terrorist event, the public generally returns to a business-as-usual attitude following an initial

period of revulsion. The law enforcement community, however, cannot afford to take a similar attitude. Those charged with ensuring public security must explore every option to safeguard against terrorist activity.

A number of agencies in the central Texas region have joined together in a cooperative effort to address this priority area of concern. The Central Texas Counterterrorism Working Group (CTCWG) represents a proactive effort to respond to the threat of terrorism in an area of the United States

brimming with strategic commercial sites and important military installations.

DOMESTIC TERRORISTS

Past terrorist activity in the central Texas region demonstrates the need for a coordinated approach to counterterrorism. For years, the region served as the base of operation and support for several domestic terrorism groups. These ranged from right-wing, white supremacist groups to left-wing cells, such as the May 19 Communist Organization (M19CO).



Several cases illustrate the belief among terrorists that the central Texas region represents a safe haven from apprehension. One such case involved Richard Joseph Scutari, head of security for the white supremacist group, the Order, and one of the FBI's Top Ten Most Wanted fugitives for his part in the June 1983 murder of a talk show host in Denver, Colorado. After the slaying, Scutari fled Colorado for central Texas, where fellow white supremacists provided him refuge. His subsequent capture in San Antonio, Texas, demonstrated the attraction of the area to domestic terrorists.

Meanwhile, members of the violent May 19 Communist Organization continue to maintain an active presence in the area. The group's affiliation with the central Texas region dates back to the turbulent 1960s, when it operated freely among the less organized elements of the antiwar, antiestablishment movement. While these movements

declined as the Vietnam War drew to a close, M19CO diversified into domestic terrorism and directly assisted in staging a series of criminal acts, ranging from armored car robbery and murder to the November 1983 bombing of the U.S. Capitol Building in Washington, DC.

Of the seven individuals subsequently indicted for the Capitol bombing, three were from Austin, Texas, with documented ties to M19CO. Six suspects were prosecuted and convicted. The seventh, Elizabeth Anna Duke (also known as Betty Ann Duke), fled while on bond and currently is being sought by Federal authorities.

Investigation into the Capitol bombing revealed that Duke and other members of M19CO's Austin Cell played a key role in this and other terrorist acts. The cell was responsible for thefts of high explosives from the central Texas region. These explosives ultimately were used in bombings in Washington, DC, New York City, and sites

throughout the Nation's northeast. A number of M19CO members continue to live in the central Texas region and conceivably could provide support for Elizabeth Anna Duke.

These and other examples clearly demonstrate the presence of a broad-based terrorist threat in central Texas. They also underscore the need for a multijurisdictional approach on the part of the public safety community in response to this menace.

CONFRONTING THE TERRORIST THREAT

What eventually became the Central Texas Counterterrorism Working Group (CTCWG) initially formed in 1987 as a joint project by the San Antonio Office of the FBI, the Texas Department of Public Safety, and the Texas Railroad Commission to identify terrorist groups, activities, and potential targets of opportunity in the central region of Texas. Through previous



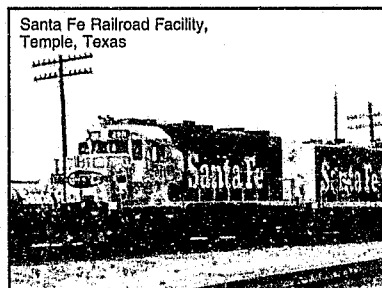
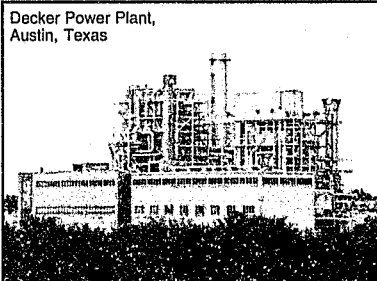
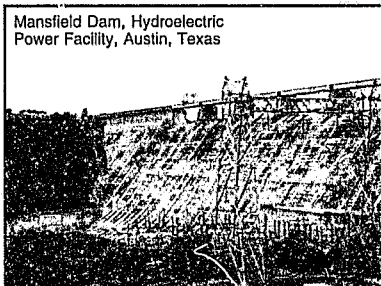
Special Agent Sage is assigned to the Austin, Texas, Resident Agency of the FBI's San Antonio Division.



Mr. Wallace is the former commissioner of the Texas Railroad Commission.



Mrs. Wier is a senior criminal analyst with the Texas Department of Public Safety.



The CTCWG works with the internal security departments of many local facilities to develop threat assessments and to evaluate their level of preparedness.

and ongoing investigations, it readily became apparent that the region could draw the attention of both domestic and international terrorists due to the presence of numerous potential areas of interest. These areas include several key assets, ranging from vital State government facilities in and around the capital city of Austin to major utilities, hydroelectric power plants, and a nuclear power facility.

The central Texas region also houses several key military installations, including a major U.S. Army facility at Fort Hood, which is home to two full-armored divisions and specialized airborne and armored units. In addition, several major universities, with related research and development programs, also are located within the central Texas region. The initial member agencies of the CTCWG viewed protection of these sites as a primary focus of the working group.

To address the established, ongoing threat of terrorism in the region, the core group of public safety agencies that organized on a temporary basis in 1987 expanded its mission and scope to encompass the mutual responsibilities of Federal, State, and local law enforcement. The Central Texas Counterterrorism Working Group now is comprised of 46 law enforcement agencies, representing different levels of jurisdiction. These agencies range from local metropolitan police departments and county sheriff's offices to the State's Department of Public Safety, the Texas Ranger Service, and the FBI. In addition, as the group's focus of jurisdictional interest grew, the sphere of CTCWG participation expanded to include military security and intelligence units in the central Texas area.

On a continuing basis, each of the participating law enforcement

agencies and military units is tasked with identifying both individuals or groups who constitute a potential terrorist threat. The CTCWG also serves as a valuable forum to address a case- or agency-specific evaluation of vulnerable targets of opportunity that might interest either domestic or international terrorists. Identified areas have included points of access to major utility systems, perimeter security for key assets, and points of entry and exit of sensitive military installations or mass transportation facilities.

The Private Sector

On a more limited basis, the CTCWG reaches out to the many high-technology firms in the central Texas area. The effort to extend the scope of the CTCWG to these firms opens a valuable channel of communication between the law enforcement community and the private sector in an area of mutual concern.

The working group attempts to address the specific security needs of the private sector by assisting the firms' internal security departments to develop threat assessments and to evaluate their level of preparedness. Perhaps not surprisingly, the areas of concern expressed by these high-technology firms closely mirror those of the military installations, utilities, and mass transportation facilities in the area. These concerns include access and perimeter security issues, as well as the need for greater input from law enforcement agencies regarding employment background investigations at sensitive government contract facilities.

Meetings

The CTCWG meets every 2 months (more frequently as the need arises, as during Operation Desert Shield and the Gulf War). These meetings are hosted on a voluntary basis by one of the member agencies or a high-technology firm. The selection of meeting locations is based on a rotating schedule, which allows all CTCWG participant agencies and interested technology firms to share in shaping the topic material for particular meetings. In addition, site rotation allows each host to showcase its specific area of jurisdiction, territorial makeup, and unique facilities or mission statements. CTCWG participants then review these elements and make assessments regarding any potential areas of vulnerability.

The working group's meetings generally consist of an hour-long closed session followed by an open session of the same length. The closed sessions are restricted to law enforcement officials and military personnel on a need-to-know basis. This restricted access allows for a free exchange of intelligence data, while enabling agencies to adhere to their respective disclosure and dissemination guidelines.

The open sessions generally focus around a briefing by the host agency or firm and conclude, when possible, with a tour of the host's facilities. The open sessions also allow private sector firms to highlight specific areas of concern and request CTCWG members to address issues considered vital to the attendees and their organizations.

During the 8 years of the working group's existence, meetings

have been held at such diverse locations as nuclear power plants, hydroelectric generating facilities, dams, military installations, major university campuses and research facilities, and railroad complexes. The diversity represented by the participating agencies allows the group to establish a vital, proactive network of specific points of contact and communication, while greatly enhancing the area's overall counterterrorism intelligence base.

**“
Adequate preparation
on the part of the
public safety and
high-technology
communities
represents the best
response to the
terrorist threat.
”**

Training

In addition to the bimonthly meetings of the working group, the FBI and Texas Department of Public Safety host joint training seminars under the auspices of the CTCWG. These seminars have focused on such topics as international terrorism, with guest speakers ranging from Israeli government and academic officials to leaders of Islamic mosques.

The working group also hosts training seminars that address domestic terrorism issues, with a primary focus on right-wing, white supremacist groups. So that attendees

can gain a better understanding of allies and adversaries alike, these seminars have included speakers with various and divergent backgrounds, from undercover officers and case agents to the grand dragon of the Texas Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.

Special Events

The Central Texas Counterterrorism Working Group has provided direct support for several major events, ranging from military troop and equipment movements related to the Gulf War to preparing security measures for the 1991 International Economic Summit held in Houston. In conjunction with other agencies, the CTCWG also hosted a briefing seminar for law enforcement and military security units in preparation for World Cup soccer games held in the central Texas region during the summer of 1994.

CONCLUSION

The Central Texas Counterterrorism Working Group grew out of a need to provide proactive counterterrorist security to a particularly vulnerable region of the Nation. The key to its success is the high degree of cooperation that exists among the group's members as they share information and expertise to enhance the security of the entire region. This concept of informed preparedness could form the basis for similar interagency counterterrorism working groups in other regions of the Nation. Adequate preparation on the part of the public safety and high-technology communities represents the best response to the terrorist threat. ♦