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"Business Travel and Criminal Victimization"

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## Introduction

Travelling overseas on business is an ordinary responsibility for many executives. Aside from the stresses caused by operating in a foreign culture, there is another concern which some might expect would have been left at home: fear of crime. Although terrorism is a major concern for those travelling abroad, there is almost as much apprehension about being victimized by other types of crime.

One study of business executives' concerns in relation to terrorism discovered that most travelling executives were about equally worried about becoming the victims of not only terrorism, but also, other serious crimes (Cook 1991). About 20 percent of the executives sampled for that study reported that they had been victimized (e.g., theft or assault) while on business trips in foreign countries. Clearly, executives have reason to be anxious about becoming crime victims while travelling in foreign lands.

One might also wonder about the risks to executives travelling domestically. Danto points out that, "By no means is terrorism the only danger... for the most part, domestic crime is a far more important problem for most citizens" (1990:5).

There are no official statistics (including FBI Uniform Crime Report data) on the criminal victimization of business executives in North America. Apparently, what is known is carefully guarded by the corporation which may fear that the public reaction to such disclosures would be overwhelmingly negative (Mason 1992:63). Not suprisingly, there is even less

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information available on the criminal victimization of business executives who travel internationally. There appears to be plenty of anecdotal evidence. For example, Iwao Matsuda, the President of a Japanese University, was shot to death inside his room at the Weston Hotel in Boston last February (Nickerson 1992A).

Although most corporations are not anxious to disclose their company policies and their attempts to deal with the threat of criminal victimization, there is some evidence that the threat is serious and pervasive. For example, a New Hampshire Insurance Company has a program called "Worldwide" which offers up to eight different insurance coverages for American companies that engage in business abroad. One of the coverages is for crime including robbery and burglary, and another provides for kidnap and ransom/extortion coverage (Dauer 1991:26).

Census Bureau data demonstrate that the frequency of business and pleasure travel is increasing. In 1980, Americans took 97.1 million business and pleasure trips. By contrast, in 1989, Americans embarked on more than 169,000,000 business and pleasure trips defined as 100 miles or more from home (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1991:244). On average, these trips were for slightly longer than three days duration. Most of the travelers were males (72 percent) who stayed in hotels (65 percent) and automobiles (57 percent) and airplanes (39 percent) were primarily used for transportation (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1991:244). These data indicate that a significant increase in

American travel might be closely associated with an increased risk in criminal victimization.

Additionally, about 40 percent of all business travellers today are women. Most of their concerns relate to the security of the hotels in which they stay. Recent accounts of crime at budget lodging establishments like Motel 6 have further exacerbated their fear of becoming the victims of violent crimes (Helliker 1991:A1). These professional women tend to be concerned about the effectiveness of locks, security guards and key-control at hotels (McDowell 1992:A18).

Traditionally, crimes like extortion, hijacking, terrorism, bombings, sabotage and destruction of company property have been the purview of corporate security officers. Protecting corporate aircraft and facilities is one such area which security procedures are often provided (Blank and Gallagher 1982). Although these concerns are serious, they do not address the victimization that may occur when an employee travels domestically or internationally. His or her victimization may be totally unrelated to sabotage, corporate competition, or political activities. Yet, the long term consequences for the employee and the corporation could be devastating.

Still, the question remains, "What are the crimes committed against executives who travel and how frequently do they occur?" The goal of the present study was to attempt to profile the actual incidence of executive victimization while travelling both domestically and abroad. Thus, it was an attempt to measure both

the types and frequency of occurrence of crime against executives.

## Methodology

In order to assess the nature and extent of criminal victimization of business people a questionnaire was developed. The survey was mailed to a non-random purposive sample of 500 corporate and business executives. The sampling frame was the 1991 Membership Directory for the American Society of Industrial Security. Surveys were sent to the Vice President of Corporate Security or to an individual with a similar designation based upon how the name and title appeared in the Directory.

An individually addressed cover letter accompanied the survey. The authors used the letter to explain the rationale for the research, to solicit the cooperation and support of the business executive, to stress the anonymous nature of the research, and to offer to provide a copy of the results once the project was completed. A stamped self-addressed envelope was provided to encourage the respondents' reply.

The survey instrument sought to ascertain specific criminal victimization data from the respondent as well as his/her perception of the problem and recommendations to address it. For example in the first section of the survey, the respondent was asked to provide the percentage of the total number of business executives at his/her corporation or company that reported being victimized while on domestic travel in 1991. Later questions

addressed domestic and international travel regarding the specific crime(s) most frequently reported, whether the vicitmization occurred on domestic or international travel, when and where it occurred, and to whom it was reported. These were also a series of open-ended items included in the questionnaire.

The respondent had the opportunity to provide his/her personal observations to questions exploring the greatest threat to travelers domestically and internationally, and the company's response to executives who are victims. The last section of the instrument focused on prevention strategies. The respondent was asked to describe the company's existing procedures, his/her recommendation for policies, and any additional comments.

## Results

Some 34 usable replies were received of the 500 questionnaires which were originally mailed out; nine (9) were returned because the addressee had moved to another company. Thus, the response rate was only 6.8%.

The first set of questions related to the crime victimization of executives who travel for business domestically (Table 1). Of the 34 respondents, 21 (62 percent) reported that executives from their companies had been victimized during the past twelve months while travelling for business. The most frquently reported crime was theft (53 percent), specifically theft from hotel rooms or airports (i.e., luggage). The second most frequently reported crime against executives was assault.

Additionally, there were two respondents who reported robbery incidents. The remaining subjects (38 percent) indicated that there were either no crimes against travelling executives which were reported to them or that no crimes had occurred.

When thefts did occur, they generally happened in the evenings or at night (56 percent); in only one case was it reported to have occurred in the morning; in another case, the information was unavailable.

The most frequent location for victimization was at a hotel or motel (26 percent). Another group of respondents indicated that executives from their companies had been victimized on the street (15 percent) or in a public place such as a rest area (15 percent). Another individual reported victimization as having occurred at the airport.

Most of the victims (71 percent) reported the incident to the police; in a small number of cases (6 percent), the hotel management was also notified.

The actual number of executives who were reported as being victimized during travel was, proportionately speaking, rather small. Approximately 38 percent of the respondents stated that one percent, or less, of their companies' total cadre of executives had been victimized during the past year. Another 15 percent of the subjects indicated that less than 5 percent of their companies' executive᠎ ᠎ d become victims of crime.

The next set of questions related to the victimization of executives who travel overseas on business (Table 2). Of the 34

questionnaires which were received, only 25 of the subjects served with organizations whose executives were required to travel internationally.

For executives who travel overseas, the most commonly reported crime was theft (42 percent). When asked about the location of these thefts, respondents gave more geographically-oriented answers than they had for reports about domestic travellers. Europe was mentioned most frequently (18 percent), followed by South America (12 percent), with Asia and Africa tied (at 3 percent). Judging from the context of these responses, one might assume that the hotel room was still the most likely location for victimization.

The time of victimization for overseas travellers seems to be the same as for domestic travellers: in most of the cases reported in this study, 24 percent of the executives were victimized in the evening.

Victims reported their losses most often to the police (24 percent); but some (15 percent) reported the victimization to both the police and the hotel management.

As was the case with executives who travel domestically, only a fraction of the number of the managers who travel overseas were reported as having been victimized during the past year. Approximately 36 percent of the respondents indicated that less than one percent of their companies' executives had been victimized; the remaining responses indicated that less than five percent of their companies' managers became victims.

The last set of questions requires the respondents, who are security executives, to describe their perceptions about employee victimization. They were also asked to outline their companies' responses to it (Table 3).

Subjects were asked to specify what they believed to be the greatest threat to executives who travel domestically. A large number (50 percent) of the respondents suggested that the greatest threat is theft; the most frequent types of thefts included items from hotel rooms or luggage at the airport. The next most common threat (15 percent) was believed to be "street" crime. "Street" crime appeared to mean either robbery or assault while in public places such as at a rest area, in the street, or in "places you wouldn't tell your wife about," as one subject described it.

Respondents were asked about their companies' usual response to the victimization of an executive who is travelling domestically. Approximately 6 percent stated that the response is limited to filing a police report. A large portion (29 percent) did not report the incident to the police, but did provide what could be termed "support" for the victim. Examples of support included meeting with the victim to discuss the incident and to find ways of preventing it, being sympathetic, instituting protective strategies, providing assistance in cancelling credit cards, or offering compensation from the company. An equally-sized group (29 percent) indicated that their companies both filed police reports and provided support, though

here support might also mean accompanying the victim to court.

The greatest threat to executives travelling overseas is thought to be theft; as with domestic theft, the losses occur through thefts from hotel rooms or luggage at the airport. Some (9 percent) believed that "street" crime posed the greatest problem for managers who travel in foreign lands; to the respondents, street crime overseas referred to kidnap, assault, robbery, or pick-pocketing in public places.

A small number (6 percent) indicated that they believed terorism to be the major threat. Interestingly, others (6 percent) stated that they thought that espionage was the threat to be concerned about while travelling. One respondent suggested that actual espionage might be masked as another crime such as theft. This could happen, for example, if the executive's briefcase were stolen; though it might appear to be ordinary theft, the actual purpose of the theft was to gain access to proprietary information.

The respondents were also asked about their corporations' usual responses to victimization of executives who are travelling abroad. The most frequently reported response (21 percent) was to offer support to the victim. Included in the support provided was a debriefing so that the company could determine what precautions could be instituted for the future. About equal numbers (9 percent) either limited involvement to filing police reports or to providing both support and filing police reports.

The last set of questions related to the various companies' crime prevention strategies. Many companies (29 percent) offer their executives briefings prior to travel. These briefings include information about potential threats which they will face while travelling. Included in these briefings is intelligence provided by the Department of State through its travel advisory service. Some companies simply provide the advisories themselves.

Other respondents (26 percent) stated that their companies had some form of formal security education program in place. These programs are intended to cultivate an employee's awareness of the need for taking security precautions. The education programs may develop company-issued handbooks, bulletins, newsletters, or brochures which discuss crime prevention tactics.

Some companies (21 percent) do not have structured programs in place to prevent the victimization of executives. Nevertheless, the need for protecting executives is handled informally. Usually, this occurs through the security director's providing "practical advice" to executives as needed. Security directors may also take action to protect executives. For example, one respondent reported "screening hotels and insuring that travellers' checks are taken."

The subjects were asked to mention what crime prevention strategies they would recommend to protect executives who travel internationally. Most (44 percent) suggested that a security education program should be installed; they recommend ongoing

training for company employees.  Other respondents (12 percent) believe that issuing briefings or State Department advisories to employees is sufficient. A last group (18 percent) suggested that security directors should provide practical advice.  Generally speaking, the recommendations of the respondents paralleled their companies' current practices.

## Conclusion

The results of this study suggest that victimization while travelling is indeed a problem for executives.  Nevertheless, the conclusions one might draw from the study are extremely limited because of the low response rate.  One possible explanation for the low response rate might be the methodology utilized.  Perhaps the rate would have been higher if the authors had re-contacted the sample with postcards and phone calls and encouraged them to respond.  However, another explanation is also plausible.  Using a similar technique in a study of attitudes about terrorism, one of the authors of the current study had a response rate in excess of 20 percent.  It may be that the low response rate is an indicator of just how unwilling corporate security executives may be to publicize the victimization of their executives.

Although only 6.8 percent (N = 34) of the sample returned the survey, a number of important preliminary findings emerge. These initial data suggest that business travelers who are victimized while travelling domestically or internationally are most likely to experience theft.  Most of the reported victimization occurred in a hotel or motel in the evening.  The

second most common victimization is "street crime" like muggings and assault.

Of the corporate security officers who responded, 50 percent viewed theft as the greatest threat to the traveler. Despite the fact that 44 percent of the respondents suggested that a security education program should be installed including ongoing training for employees, 21 percent of the respondents indicated that their corporations do not have structured programs in place to prevent victimization.

Although Americans who plan to travel overseas can contact the State Department and the Centers for Disease Control to obtain recent information on political unrest, crime, or health problems, there appears to be very little interest in formally gathering data on criminal victimization and developing and disseminating strategies to prevent it on a corporate level (Nation's Business 1991:50).

The dearth of formal business travel prevention programs may be due to a naivete regarding business crime. Most Americans, including business people, might think that as long as they avoid traveling in and touring foreign countries that are political "hot spots", they are relatively immune from crime. Perhaps one of the more surprising findings regarding crime victimization is the unlikely places it occurs. For example, in 1990, the Traveler's Aid Center in Orange County, California reported that 25 percent of the emergency cases they dealt with were crime-related (Englander 1991:165). These victimization statistics

seem to suggest that travelers need to exercise caution whether their destination is Disneyland or Bogota. Some of the advice to travelers is commonsense, and some of it is quite specific. Dunn advises Americans who travel in foreign countries not to "... carry a telltale USA Today" (1990:105).

Some of the corporations have focused their attention on employee vulnerability. For example, the DuPont Company has a personal safety program, including a prevention workshop, which specifically addresses certain crimes like rape for women executives (Martinage 1989). DuPont also offers a workshop for managers which reviews the corporate guidelines and the resources available both in the company and the community (Martinage 1989). Such formalized programs may not be available in every corporation, but there is a growing awareness of the need to take a proactive stance in preventing and confronting business executive victimization.

Toshiba Corporation tracks the location of its company employees wherever they are sent to do business often on a daily or hourly basis. The fact that there are 500 personnel permanently placed abroad and 20,000 employees on temporary foreign assignments each year suggests that the Toshiba Corporation perceives employee victimization a serious problem (Nickerson 1992 b:1).

If the increase in the number of business and pleasure travellers continues throughout the 1990's, corporations may have to assess their crime prevention strategies and implement a more formalized and comprehensive program than most of them currently provide.

TABLE I      DOMESTIC TRAVEL AND CRIME VICTIMIZATION

A.  Most Frequently Reported Crime:

|  | | N | Approximate of Group |
|---|---|---|---|
| Theft | = | 18 | 53 |
| Robbery | = | 2 | 6 |
| Assault | = | 1 | 3 |
| None | = | 13 | 38 |
| TOTAL | = | 34 | 100% |

B.  Second Most Frequently Reported Crime:

|  | | N | Approximate of Group |
|---|---|---|---|
| Assault | = | 6 | 18 |
| Theft | = | 3 | 9 |
| Robbery | = | 1 | 3 |
| None Listed | = | 11 | 32 |
| None Reported | = | 13 | 38 |
| TOTAL = | | 34 | 100% |

C.  Place of Most Frequent Occurrence:

|  | | N | Approximate of Group |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hotel or Motel | = | 9 | 26 |
| Street | = | 5 | 15 |
| Other | = | 5 | 15 |
| Not Specified | = | 2 | 6 |
| None Reported | = | 13 | 38 |
| TOTAL | = | 34 | 100% |

D.  Time of Occurrence:

|  | | N | Approximate of Group |
|---|---|---|---|
| Evenings or Night | = | 19 | 56 |
| Morning or Afternoon | = | 1 | 3 |
| Not Available | = | 1 | 3 |
| None Reported | = | 13 | 38 |
| TOTAL | = | 34 | 100% |

TABLE I cont.

E.   Crime Was Reported To:

|  | | N | Approximate of Group |
|---|---|---|---|
| Police | = | 15 | 44 |
| Hotel Mgmt. | = | 2 | 6 |
| Company Security | · = | 2 | 6 |
| Airport Security | = | 1 | 3 |
| Not Specified | = | 1 | 3 |
| None Reported | = | 13 | 38 |
| TOTAL | = | 34 | 100% |

F.   Percentage of Company Executives Victimized During Past 12 Months:

| Percentage of Executives | Number | Approximate of Group |
|---|---|---|
| 0% | 13 | 38 |
| 1% or Less | 5 | 15 |
| 1% | 8 | 23 |
| 5% or Less | 5 | 15 |
| 10% or Less | 1 | 3 |
| Unknown | 2 | 6 |
| TOTAL | 34 | 100% |

TABLE 2    FOREIGN TRAVEL AND CRIME VICTIMIZATION

A.   Most Frequently Reported Crime:

|  | N | Approximate of Group |
|---|---|---|
| Theft            = | 14 | 41 |
| None Reported = | 11 | 32 |
| Not Applicable = | 9 | 26 |
| TOTAL            = | 34 | 100% |

B.   Place of Occurrence:

|  | N | Approximate of Group |
|---|---|---|
| Europe            = | 6 | 18 |
| South America   = | 4 | 12 |
| Africa             = | 1 | 3 |
| Asia               = | 1 | 3 |
| Not Applicable   = | 9 | 26 |
| None Reported   = | 11 | 32 |
| None Specified   = | 2 | 6 |
| TOTAL            = | 34 | 100% |

C.   Time of Occurrence:

|  | N | Approximate of Group |
|---|---|---|
| Evening            = | 8 | 24 |
| Afternoon         = | 1 | 3 |
| Not Specified    = | 3 | 9 |
| Not Applicable   = | 9 | 26 |
| None Reported   = | 13 | 38 |
| TOTAL            = | 34 | 100% |

TABLE 2 cont.

D. <u>Crime Was Reported To:</u>

|  | | N | Approximate of Group |
|---|---|---|---|
| Police | = | 8 | 24 |
| Police and Hotel Mgmt. | = | 5 | 15 |
| None Reported | = | 11 | 32 |
| Not Applicable | = | 9 | 26 |
| Not Specified | = | 1 | 3 |
| TOTAL | = | 34 | 100% |

E. <u>Percentage of Company Executives Victimized During Past 12 Months</u>

|  | | N | Approximate of Group |
|---|---|---|---|
| 0% | = | 11 | 32 |
| Less than 1% | = | 12 | 36 |
| Less than 5% | = | 2 | 6 |
| Not Applicable | = | 9 | 26 |
| TOTAL | = | 34 | 100% |

**TABLE 3**  Security Executives' Perceptions of and Responses to Victimization

**A.**  The Greatest Threat to Executives Travelling in U.S.:

| | | N | Approximate of Group |
|---|---|---|---|
| Theft | = | 17 | 50 |
| Street Crime | = | 5 | 15 |
| Attitude | = | 2 | 6 |
| Not Answered | = | 10 | 29 |
| TOTAL | | 34 | 100% |

**B.**  The Greatest Threat to Executives Travelling Overseas:

| | | N | Approximate of Group |
|---|---|---|---|
| Theft | = | 14 | 41 |
| Street Crime | = | 3 | 9 |
| Terrorism | = | 2 | 6 |
| Espionage | = | 2 | 6 |
| Not Answered | = | 11 | 38 |
| TOTAL | = | 34 | 100% |

**C.**  Company's Usual Response to Victimization While Travelling in U.S.

| | | N | Approximate of Group |
|---|---|---|---|
| Support | = | 10 | 29 |
| Police Report | = | 2 | 6 |
| Police Report/Support | = | 10 | 29 |
| Nothing | = | 4 | 12 |
| Not Answered | = | 8 | 24 |
| TOTAL | = | 34 | 100% |

TABLE 3 cont.

D. <u>Company's Usual Response to Victimization While Travelling Overseas</u>:

|  | <u>N</u> | <u>Approximate of Group</u> |
|---|---|---|
| Support | = 7 | 21 |
| Police Report | = 3 | 9 |
| Police Report/Support | = 3 | 9 |
| Nothing | = 12 | 35 |
| Not Applicable | = 9 | 26 |
| TOTAL | = 34 | 100% |

E. <u>Company's Crime Prevention Strategies</u>:

|  | <u>N</u> | <u>Approximate of Group</u> |
|---|---|---|
| Advisories or Briefings | = 10 | 29 |
| Security Education | = 9 | 26 |
| Practical Advice | = 7 | 21 |
| Not Answered | = 8 | 24 |
| TOTAL | = 34 | 100% |

F. <u>Recommended Crime Prevention Strategies</u>:

|  | <u>N</u> | <u>Approximate of Group</u> |
|---|---|---|
| Advisories or Briefings | = 4 | 12 |
| Education (Security) | = 15 | 44 |
| Practical Advice | = 6 | 18 |
| Not Answered | = 9 | 26 |
| TOTAL | = 34 | 100% |

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