

A THREAT ALWAYS PRESENT

By Claude MONIQUET, President of ESISC

London, Copenhagen then Frankfurt: three times, in a little more than two months, Islamist terrorism has come back as a reminder. The absence of a major attack in Europe since those of London, on 7 July 2005, could have given a false impression that the threat had disappeared or, at least, that its level had decreased. It is nothing of that sort.

28 June, two booby trapped vehicles, which could have resulted in the death of hundreds, were defused in the center of London. Two days later, two *kamikazes* tried to explode another car in the departure lounge of the Glasgow airport. Yesterday, in Copenhagen, eight Islamists suspected of “*preparing a terrorist act involving explosives*” were questioned, just a few hours before the opening of the trial of four other suspects, prosecuted for a thwarted attack in the autumn of 2006. In Germany, this morning, finally, three men belonging to “*an organization with Islamist leanings*” were stopped whereas they were at an “*advanced stage of preparation*” of attacks against the Frankfurt airport and the American base of Ramstein, which occupies a central place in American logistics for the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. In the three cases, we are clearly confronted with suspects belonging to the “*Al-Qaïda movement*”.

We can think that these attacks are related to the presence of the British, the Danes and the Germans in Iraq but also in Afghanistan. Because Iraq is not any more the only motive of the terrorists - it was never their sole motive besides, with due respect to those who complacently call “*the American adventure*” in Mesopotamia as the single source of all the evils. Afghanistan occupies its entire place in the complex gamut of reasons which “*justify*” the actions of the Islamists.

The European Commissioner of Justice and Internal Affairs, Mr. Franco Frattini, stated in front of the European Parliament, this morning that “*the threat of new terrorist attacks continues to be high*”. Mr Frattini mentioned Spain, Italy, Belgium and Great Britain as potential targets. However, he could have added Denmark and Germany to this list. Or even France, which has been indicated on several occasions, during the few last months, as a likely target.

One cannot thus be mistaken here: beyond the Iraqi and Afghan crises, in fact the United States but also the whole of Europe is at the mercy of the terrorists. In the same way, of course, the Muslim countries which try to oppose extremism, such as, Morocco, Tunisia or Jordan are also targeted. The pretexts are not lacking, since our presence in areas of open conflict right up to the support for stabilization in Iraq, traversing the crisis of the caricature of the Prophet (new very specific threats have been issued in this context these last few days) or, simply, the secular model of society which exists in many of the European States and which is unacceptable to the Islamists. Ultimately, the Islamists seek to attack us as much for what we do, as for what we are: societies open, democratic, humanistic and in which all the citizens are equal in front of the law. A nightmare for the believers of the Caliphate.

So, we should not be mistaken, if there is no blood letting in Europe since the summer of 2005, it is not because the adversary has given up his intentions. It is because the police force and the intelligence services are doing a remarkable job which shows up in frequent arrests. But it is necessary to prepare for the worst case because if chance is essential to those who ensure our safety, it can get reversed any moment. And on this day, horror will return back on to the old continent.

© ESISC 2007