

A GLOBAL RESPONSE TO GLOBAL TERRORISM

Understanding the root causes of terrorism is complex. Developing operational strategies to address these causes is more complex still. After New York, Riyadh, London and others have become the victims of terrorist atrocities it is clear that a global strategy, receptive to local nuances but reflecting international cooperation and consultation, is necessary.

A two day conference 'Transnational Terrorism: A Global Approach', at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) in January sponsored by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, addressed the international community's response to the challenge of terrorism. It drew together and explored antiterrorism strategies and approaches from Asia, the Middle East, Europe and North America, presented by both academics and practitioners from these regions.

'Transnational Terrorism: A Global Approach' is the second public conference of the RUSI Transnational Terrorism Project. The project, launched in May 2005, includes three public conferences spread over the course of a year. The first conference, held in May 2005, explored the basic conceptual issues affecting terrorism.

Jack Straw, UK Foreign Secretary and HRH Prince Saud Al Faisal, Saudi Foreign Minister, both spoke at the conference:

Jack Straw

May I thank the Royal United Services Institute for organising today's conference and the government of Saudi Arabia for their sponsorship. The fact that this is a joint conference serves to highlight the global nature of the threat we face.

I would also like to express a personal welcome to His Royal Highness Prince Saud. I have had the pleasure of working with him for nearly five years; he brings a rare combination of intellect and good humour to the diplomatic world.

Of course, the United Kingdom shares much with Saudi Arabia; above all it is the spiritual and religious home for the UK's near two million British citizens of the Muslim faith. Tragically, this year's Hajj has been

marked by the death of over 350 pilgrims. The Saudi authorities have been working tirelessly to help those affected by the tragedy. The UK is the only Western country to send an officially sponsored and officially funded delegation to support its Hajj pilgrims – we expect more than 25,000 British people to go on the Hajj this year. This delegation, headed by Lord Patel of Blackburn, was on the ground quickly to do all it could to help British victims of the disaster. Our thoughts and prayers are with all those affected by this horrible accident.

In recent years, the people of Saudi Arabia have faced the horrors of terrorism repeatedly; they have done so with steadfastness and good sense. And today, the Saudi people and their government play a vital role in the global response to that terrorist threat. Their counter-terrorism achievements over the last two years have been striking – not just the disruption of Al Qaeda networks, but crucially also the winning of hearts and minds and the mobilisation of Saudi society against the extremists.

We have much to learn from the many and skilful ways in which Saudi Arabia has - on its own initiative and in its own interests – faced down the perversion of religion which is the seedbed of terrorism. They have also used their leadership in the Muslim world to encourage others to adopt a similarly comprehensive approach. We value highly our close partnership with them. And you can actually see – not least because of the efforts of the Saudi government – a sea-change in the region. For example, something which was not widely reported here in the UK was the Euro-Med summit held in November. It issued a communiqué which included a comprehensive statement on terrorism. Whenever you have Arab and Israeli delegations in the same room there are bound to be difficulties. In the past these difficulties have stopped us getting agreement on any such statement. So agreement on this communiqué was a significant step.

Terrorism is not new; nor is it new to Britain. In the great medieval chamber of Westminster Hall, they have just taken down the exhibition marking the 400th anniversary of the Gunpowder plot. Read the Hansard records of 1853 and you will find my predecessor as Foreign Secretary and Home Secretary, Lord Palmerston, defending the seizure of a stockpile of 'war rockets' from a warehouse in Southwark – allegedly intended for use against the Austro-Hungarian imperial family. And no-one in this country will forget the decades of terrorist attacks carried