Tourism & Terrorism

By Dr. Richard Kelley

Terrorism struck again this week. This time, the target was Brussels, Belgium, the unofficial “capital” of Europe, owing to the location there of the headquarters of both the European Union (EU) and NATO. Powerful explosions ripped through the city’s airport terminal and a metro station during rush hour, killing at least 34 and seriously injuring over 150 others. Once again terrorism is at the top of the list of people’s concerns around the world, particularly of those involved in any of the wide-ranging activities that comprise the Travel & Tourism industry, since hotels, restaurants and public transportation are often targeted.

Looking over past editions of Saturday Briefing, it is apparent that terrorism was not a topic of any of my weekly articles until as recently as 2001. Like many others, I did not wake up to the problem in February 1993 when terrorists detonated a 1,336-pound truck bomb under the North Tower of the World Trade Center in New York City, killing six and injuring over a thousand.

On the morning of September 11, 2001, I was scheduled to join a number of other members of the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) at the offices of American Express, located across the street from the World Trade Center’s Twin Towers, to discuss pressing Travel & Tourism issues. I had planned to fly to New York the day before and had booked a room for the night of September 10 at the 22-story World Trade Center Marriott Hotel, located right between the Twin Towers, which would crash down on it the next day.

Around Labor Day, September 3, 2001, my wife, Linda, said she felt uneasy and was quite concerned about my upcoming trip to New York. I had been traveling a great deal and had the beginnings of a chest cold. She had a premonition that something bad might happen if I went ahead with my trip. We had been married 22 years at that point, and experience had taught me to respect her uncanny ability to sense future trouble. Accordingly, I cancelled my trip and thus avoided possible death or serious injury when the Twin Towers collapsed onto the hotel.

Since that terrible event, I have written at least 12 articles about terrorism and how it is affecting international commerce – and particularly Travel & Tourism. The possibility of being injured or killed by an act of terrorism must certainly come to the minds of many people planning travel for business or pleasure. Several years ago, Linda
and I passed up an opportunity to visit the spectacular ancient desert city of Petra, Jordan, for that reason. An attack did take place there in 2005, but tourists still visit that fascinating UNESCO World Heritage site, one of a recently updated listing of the Seven Wonders of the World, and hotels nearby are doing well.

Every year, Aon Insurance publishes a booklet on global terrorism risks. Included are Terrorism & Political Violence Risk Maps. In the 2016 edition, many European countries are shown in light yellow, the code for “low risk.” The countries included in that category are the UK, Germany, Austria, Norway, Denmark and Belgium! France is colored a darker yellow but not red or orange, which indicates “significant risk.” With the recent major terrorist attacks on Paris and Brussels, I predict Aon will change some of the color codes on the next edition of its Terrorism Risk Map.

What I wrote for *Saturday Briefing* on July 30, 2005, remains valid. “Many different motives have been attributed to those behind the current rash of bombings, and we are just beginning to understand the mentality of those who resort to terror. As noted by international affairs expert, author and columnist Michael Ledeen in *National Review Online*, ‘[Terrorists] are people who find it fulfilling to kill us and destroy our society. As time passes, we will meet more and more of them. And, in the fullness of time, we will remember that Machiavelli warned us half a millennium ago that “man is more inclined to do evil than to do good,” and that the primary role of statesmen and other leaders is to contain the dark forces of human nature. [As we found out with Hitler and Mussolini, evil] cannot be “fixed” by some social program or suitable energetic public-affairs strategy, or by “reaching out” to our misguided comrades. It must be dominated. Otherwise it will dominate us.’ ”

Until that day comes, everyone in the hospitality industry, no matter what their job, must be vigilant and prepared.

1 [www.riskmaps.aon.co.uk](http://www.riskmaps.aon.co.uk)