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Reflective Epilogue: Concerns in Tourism Safety

Peter Tarlow
Texas A&M University, Ptarlow@tourismandmore.com

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Texas A&M University, USA
ptarlow@tourismandmore.com

Crime and violence are cancers that eat away at the tourism industry. Yet for too long too much of the tourism industry has ignored this issue. Today the tourism industry must face challenges which it never imagined.

Religion and terrorism have both merged and mutated. Only a few years ago the treat of radical Islam seemed far away. Yet recent events, such as acts of terrorism in Ottawa, Canada and New York City, and attempted but unsuccessful attacks in England and Australia underline the fact that often the tourism industry of the developed world may be living in a fool's paradise. In an interrelated world, no locale is safe from multiple forms of terror.

In a like manner the Ebola disease may pose more of a threat to passenger perceptions of safety than the disease itself. The lesson then of these papers is that while perceptions may not always be true, their consequences are true and often produce economic after-lives that can threaten a tourism industry's viability long after the actual threat has passed.

If locales are to continue to be successful tourism destinations, then tourism officials must join with law enforcement agencies in a 'partnership-for-safety.' Applied research runs the gamut of tourism safety and security issues and recognizes the fact that the tourism industry is the world's largest peacetime industry. For example, the US tourism industry brings in hundreds of millions of dollars and is one of the nation's major job providers. The same can be said for many other nations around the world, from Europe to Asia, from the Caribbean to the South Pacific. Tourism is also a major battleground for acts of crime and terrorism. Tourism sites have often been successful targets for terrorists. It is interesting to note that there does not seem to be a relationship between population size and acts of terrorism. Terrorism has occurred in both rural and urban settings. Here is a partial list of places where terrorism has been launched against the tourism industry:

- Bali
- Casablanca
- Israel
- Kenya
- Los Angeles
- The Philippines
- Morocco
- Peru
- Mexico

These locales have nothing more in common than a successful tourism industry. Students of tourism and its professionals have wondered what attracts terrorism to tourism. Below are some of the reasons for this interaction.

- Tourism is interconnected with transportation centers
- Tourism is big business and terrorism seeks to destroy economies
- Tourism is interrelated with multiple other industries; thus an attack out the tourism industry may also wipe out a number of secondary industries.
- Tourism is highly media oriented and terrorism seeks publicity
- Tourism must deal with people who have no history, thus there is often no database and it is easy for terrorists simply to blend into the crowd
- Tourism must deal with a constant flow of new people, thus terrorists are rarely suspected.
- Tourism is a nation's parlor that it is the keeper of a nation's self image, icons and history. Tourism centers are the living museum of a nation's cultural riches.
- Terrorists tend to seek targets that offer at least three out of the following four possibilities and these same possibilities often exist in the world of tourism.
1. Potential for mass casualties
2. Potential for mass publicity (good images)
3. Potential to do great economic damage
4. Potential to destroy an icon.

Traditionally, many tourism professionals have avoided addressing issues of tourism security and tourism safety. There has been a common feeling among these professionals that visitors will wonder if too much security indicates that they should be afraid and that even speaking about these subjects will frighten customers. Thus, especially in the years prior to 2001, the industry often took the position that the less said about tourism security and safety the better. In reality, nothing could be further from the truth. Today's travelers and tourists, for the most part, seek out places where there is a sense of security and safety. Although there is a small minority of travelers who seek out the dangerous, most visitors want to know what the industry is doing to protect them, and how well

prepared a local industry is in case a security or safety issue should occur. Although many disciplines make a clear distinction between security and safety, tourism scientists and professionals do not. Security is often seen as protection against a person or thing that seeks to do another harm. Safety is often defined as protecting people against unintended consequences of an involuntary nature. For example, a case of arson is a security issue while a spontaneous fire is a safety issue. In the case of the travel and tourism industry, both a safety and a security mishap can destroy not only a vacation but also the industry. It is for this reason that the two are combined into the term 'tourism surety'. Tourism surety is the point where safety, security, and economic viability meet.

Since the 1980s when the state of Florida received a great deal of negative publicity due to the unfortunate murders of and assaults on foreign tourists, the United States has become aware that its tourism industry requires a safe and secure environment in which to thrive. Prior to that, few US police departments were aware of their responsibilities toward the tourism industry. In fact, when early studies of US police departments' involvement with tourism were written, most police departments stated that they took pride in the fact that they treated tourists just like anyone else. The idea that tourists were at high risk of crime, that local police might need special training in working with a location's out-of-town guests, or that the industry needed special protection were simply either unknown by most US police departments or had not entered their realm of consciousness. The following provides a glimpse at the history of what is now known as: *Tourism Oriented Policing and Protection Services* (TOPPs), providing overview of some of the major changes that have taken place during the last decade. In 1994 Tarlow and Muehsam presented some of their original research at the Travel and Tourism Research Association held that year in BAL Harbour, Florida. While in the academic world there were a few pioneer researchers such as Abe Pizzam, for the most part, the field was unknown to people in the applied world of policing. The idea that tourism security was important and required a partnership with other security professionals such as hotel security departments, had only recently entered into the psyche. Tourism textbooks treated the subject in a superficial manner, criminology texts ignored the topic completely, and there was little separate theory to support or guide police as to why they should even be concerned with another facet of their profession.

During the 1980s, even major tourism centers such as Las Vegas (Nevada) or Honolulu (Hawaii) had done little to study the problem. To demonstrate how much change has taken place in the United States, one only has to consider the fact that the now internationally known *Las Vegas Tourism Security Conference* did not begin until 1990. Indeed the first such conference was called the *Las Vegas Tourism Safety Seminar* so as not to call too much attention to the issue of tourism safety! Furthermore no police academy provided police officers with any special tourism training, and few police departments were even aware that the topic existed. The Florida incidents were then important, not because a great number of people were injured, but because the negative publicity that Florida received made police departments sensitive to a whole new area of policing and the fact that new methods and units would need to be established. During the early 1990s, several police agencies began to see the need for tourism safety. Among the pioneering departments were the Orange County (Orlando, Florida) Sheriff's office, which developed a tourism task force lead by Detective Ray Wood, Clark County's Metro (Las Vegas, Nevada), whose Sheriff Jerry Kelley asked his detective Curtis Williams to develop a task force, and Honolulu Hawaii whose Captain Karl Godsey worked with local tourism officials to develop the Aloha patrol By the end of the decade other cities such as Miami (Florida), New Orleans (Louisiana), New York City, Detroit (Michigan) and Anaheim (California) had also established some form of special tourism safety unit.

As the importance of tourism spread throughout the United States, the idea of tourism policing also spread. In 1993 Texas A&M's extension program asked Dr. Tarlow to developed a course for Texas communities in tourism safety and noted that tourism policing also aided police departments in such related issues as:

- customer service
- ethnic diversity
- cultural awareness
- community policing

In the latter part of the decade special police courses were also begun in less major tourism oriented areas such as Long Beach (Washington), College Station (Texas), and Charleston (South Carolina). While these latter communities were not major tourism centers, in each of them tourism played a significant part in their local economy. The field also continued to grow when the United States Bureau of Reclamation asked Dr. Tarlow to developed a ground-breaking tourism safety course for all of its facilities.

In both the larger cities and in small communities certain basic components comprise the type of training

that police departments receive. Among the subjects taught are:

- Tourism's economic impact on the community;
- Law enforcement's role in the special needs of specific demographic groups;
- Law Enforcement and Customer Service;
- Crimes of distraction;
- Terrorism;
- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design;
- Media relations;
- English and foreign language skills;
- Anger management;
- Transportation security issues,
- Tourism crowd control issues,

Starting in 1990 a series of tourism safety conferences began. The earliest ones include the aforementioned one held in Las Vegas (Nevada) and one in Orlando (Florida). During the latter half of the decade, under the leadership of Don Ahl of the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors' Authority and Dr. Peter Tarlow, the Las Vegas seminar has turned into a national seminar on tourism safety and it has fostered a number of local spin-off events in such cities as Detroit (Michigan), Honolulu (Hawaii), and Anaheim (California). At the Las Vegas conference some of the themes discussed by the more than 150 delegates from around the United States include: the idea that tourism security is composed of multi-components and is multi-faceted, the need for tourism security officials to take it upon themselves to explain to the industry that every security decision is in the end a business decision. Tourism security is a highly complex profession that requires a tremendous amount of knowledge in such diverse areas as:

- language skills
- intercultural communication skills
- sensitivity training
- gender roles
- listening skills
- anger management,

Tourism security officials are increasingly aware of the level of professionalism exhibited by those who would seek advantage of the tourist and of the industry. There has been a slow development of general principles of tourism safety throughout the US, some of these include:

- local police departments cannot assume that visitors will use the highest level of common sense when it comes to their safety. Police departments and hotel /

attraction security professionals will have to do what the visitor will not;

- crimes committed against visitors cost not only the industry, but also the local community millions of dollars and can ruin a locale's reputation for many years;
- tourism protection requires partnerships. These partnerships include all aspects of the security and safety industries, government, hotel managers, tourism agencies and offices;

The US tourism industry needs the help of US and foreign universities to understand and to find solutions for the problems of visitor safety; tourism security and safety must be handled on a regional, state, and national basis. The need for training can be seen throughout the United States, where, in 1996, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (located in Arlington, Virginia) established its first course in tourism safety. In 1998 George Washington University launched its first course in tourism safety via the internet and in 1999 Orange County Florida attempted to establish a conference of major tourism cities. At that conference were representatives from Orange County, Aneheim Florida, and Las Vegas, Nevada.

Despite the developments outlined in this reflection, recognition that tourism is a significant item on the crime prevention and community safety agenda has been slow to develop in the USA and elsewhere. However, at the turn of the millennium it is now firmly established, providing a model for developments in other countries where crime and insecurity impact not only upon individual tourists but also upon the wider tourist industry.

Tourism demands that its customers not live in fear. Yet, terrorism, be it committed by a single perpetrator or by a group, robs the industry of its very basis: faith in the fact that the visitor is not placing him or herself at risk. Today's tourism industry must not only face the potential of medieval savagery brought into the modern world, but economic ruin from a myriad of potential health risks. These new threats however do not exit in a vacuum. Today, the world is interconnected not only by a twenty-four hour news cycle but also by social media. What happens in one locale is known in all locales. These papers then hopefully serve not only to awaken tourism scholars and practitioners to an ever-changing and more challenging world, but also to remind us that hospitality comes from caring about our visitors and being responsible for one another.