

Conflict Studies Research Centre



**Combating International Terrorism
& Cross-Border
Organized Crime.
Strengthening the FIS'
International Partnerships**

Dr Gheorghe Fulga

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(Director of the Romanian Foreign Intelligence Service)

Key Points

- * The impact of 9/11 terrorist attacks against the international security system; the necessity of reconfiguring the strategic approaches to asymmetric threats
- * The maintenance and aggravation of the risks generated by terrorism to the security of the Euro-Atlantic area
- * The approach to terrorism cannot exclude its existing relations with organised crime and the proliferation of WMD
- * The fight against asymmetric threats demands joint national, regional and international efforts, where intelligence should always have a primary role
- * Romania's involvement, as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council and active participant in peace-keeping operations (Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq), in the fight against asymmetric threats
- * Legislative measures adopted by Romania to enhance coherence and efficiency in institutions safeguarding international security
- * An improved liaison framework between the Romanian special services and similar NATO and EU States' structures
- * The activity of the Romanian Foreign Intelligence Service (FIS) in combating international terrorism and organised crime

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The 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks have completely changed the perception of terrorism worldwide and imposed the reconsideration of a long list of concerns regarding national security. They have also prompted political decision-makers and competent analysts to state that “the world has changed”, that a long-term strategy should be established and that huge human, material and financial resources should be garnered to ensure our future security.

Certain threats that four or five years ago were quasi-unanimously labelled as improper speculations or analytical assumptions unlikely to materialize have now turned into facts. The civilized world has declared war on international terror and has tried to find the most appropriate answers to questions such as: how shall we define our enemy, what is the purpose of war, and what strategy should we adopt?

Although the world has to some extent got over the shock caused by the tragedy of 9/11, images still hazy have started to take shape: our civilization is now facing a non-traditional enemy, a widespread network of terrorist organizations supported by state and non-state sponsors and whose whereabouts are hard to pinpoint, benefiting from unaccountable financial sources, up-to-date weapons and communication systems and, particularly, a highly indoctrinated human potential able to make the ultimate sacrifice for the sake of punishing the “infidels”.

The past three years have shown that the risk of international terror has not diminished, and that the main threat comes from radical Islamic fundamentalist groups such as Al Qaeda and its subsidiaries. Actually, all the continents and regions of the world have been faced with devastating attacks, so that there is no exaggeration at all if we say that terrorism has truly become a global issue.¹

American experts² have reached the conclusion that ending state sponsorship for terrorist organizations will be more effective if it is done by an offensive strategy, with the terrorist organizations having to be struck abroad, in the very places they recruit, train, and plan. Such a decision was also reached by the authorities of the Russian Federation, in the wake of the tragedy in Beslan. As a matter of fact, the war on terror is also included, as a priority, in the agenda of the Russia-NATO Council.³

The list of state sponsors of terrorism actually coincides with the list of countries seeking to attain the capability of manufacturing weapons of mass destruction. We can state, without fear of being mistaken, that the most explosive “cocktail” has come out: terrorist organizations, their state sponsors, organized crime, and

weapons of mass destruction. Terrorists and narcotics are indissolubly linked up, which means, as President George W Bush stated, that narcotrafficking finances terrorism, supporting the terrorists who invest their drug profits into their cells to enable their criminal acts.

It is a challenge worth taking up, so much the more as modern terrorism is polymorphous, seeking to use the advantages of modern civilization as tools for its very destruction and this terrorism has few – if any - moral or ethical dilemmas. The war on terror is an asymmetric challenge, in which traditional deterrence has failed. That is why we support those experts who deem it necessary to establish a new matrix of intervention, which should provide for detecting, defining, monitoring and controlling asymmetric risk factors, while diminishing the emphasis on response, and focusing on predictiveness.⁴

A need for coordinating domestic and international moves in intelligence collection and operational spheres has led to enhanced cooperation at the national, regional, and global levels, by establishing some enlarged task forces or specific committees in the counter-terrorist field. Moreover, NATO has continued its process of internal transformation so that it may respond to all major security menaces: the lethal threats of terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.⁵

The unprecedented soaring of terrorism and its resort to new *modus operandi* – from car-bombs to suicide bombers - require enhanced cooperation between the special services and security agencies sharing responsibilities in counter-terrorism, seen as the most appropriate response, in the long run, by the international community to asymmetric challenges and risks.

The Madrid bombings (11 March 2004) have triggered a similar response by experts in the European Union. Gijs de Vries, EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, has argued that the EU counter-terrorist policy needs to be articulated on the new threats so that “our entire panoply of intelligence and security services, our police forces and our judicial authorities should be able to work together (*coherence*); agreements reached in Brussels should be implemented in our Member States (*implementation*); our capacity to analyze and share intelligence should be enhanced (*intelligence*)”.⁶

Romania, in its capacity as an elected member of the UN Security Council and acting chairman of the Committee of Sanctions on Iraq, is directly involved in stabilizing some conflict-torn areas (Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan) as well as in securing NATO’s eastern borders and, starting in 2007, the EU's eastern borders too.

Proceeding from a unified outlook on the action needed nationwide in order to deter and combat terrorism, Romania has laid down the necessary normative instruments for lawful and cohesive performance by the relevant institutions in the field of counter-terrorism. Shortly after the tragedy of 11 September 2001, the chambers of the Parliament in Bucharest adopted, in a joint session (18 December 2001), the National Security Strategy of Romania, a document identifying international terrorism, cross-border crime and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction as the main factors of risk abroad.

To the same end, in 2002, the Country’s Defence Supreme Council (CSAT) endorsed the National Strategy on Preventing and Combating Terrorism, a basic document for

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articulating the work of the bodies in charge of Romania's security and safety. In order to implement this Strategy, a National System on Preventing and Combating Terrorism has been established to include the agencies sharing duties in the field, which interact in both intelligence and operational spheres for a clear and well defined purpose: preventing and combating terrorist threats to national security.

In this context, in March 2004 a Centre of Counter-Terrorist Operational Coordination became operational, to ensure continued, synergetic action of the agencies making up the National System on Preventing and Combating Terrorism. Its main task is that of a technical coordinator of those interacting agencies which preserve their distinctive identities.

The passing of the Act on preventing and combating terrorism and the setting up of the "National System of Terrorist Alert" (in five colours, in keeping with NATO standards) are to cement the legal and operational adjustment of counter-terrorism in Romania to European standards.

International cooperation with the intelligence agencies of the NATO and EU member states as well as other intelligence services has been recently sized up and had a separate chapter devoted to it in the National Doctrine on Security Intelligence, endorsed by the CSAT on 23 June 2004. Setting out from the complex and varying circumstances of the security environment, the document warns that pinpointing, monitoring and countering threats to national and world security exceed the capabilities of national intelligence structures. They require joined up efforts and shared expertise with similar Allied structures or with other partner intelligence agencies.⁷

The actions of the Foreign Intelligence Service (FIS) aimed at predicting and diminishing the risks entailed by international terrorism and organized crime are prevalingly grounded on the Service's own operations, as well as on efficient co-operation with other intelligence agencies sharing a similar interest. The FIS' priorities in combating international terrorism focus on identifying and countering the threats incurred both due to Romania's presence on the battlefields against terrorism and its geo-strategic location in the proximity of some latent conflicts which may flare up again at any time (Transdnistria, Kosovo, etc). These have close connections with criminal phenomena (arms, drugs, and people trafficking) which provide a large part of their supporting funds.

By developing co-operation with partner special services, mainly with those belonging to the NATO and EU member-states, the FIS has aimed at turning to better account the relations already existing in the field of counter-terrorism, as well as shifting the focus from the exchange of general information onto co-operation on specific cases and targeted operations meant to facilitate the spotting and analysis of the asymmetric cross-border factors of risk.

In combating organized crime a special emphasis has been laid on getting to know, assess and define the trends of cross-border crime and its direct risks for both the national and the Alliance's security, as well as on the timely informing of decision-makers and, if necessary, partner agencies as well. With their help, an "advanced defence line" has been set up in order to prevent any possible transfers into Romania (a NATO border country) of the organized crime activities carried on in its immediate vicinity: the Balkan area, the CIS and the Middle East.

The FIS' endeavour to adjust its structure and missions to the new risks and threats has been a steadily dynamic process, coupled with concerns to build up a European culture of security and integration into the continental intelligence community. Recent developments in the battlefield of terrorism have required stepped-up actions to pinpoint and assess the security risks, which are mainly performed within the already functional partnership with NATO and EU member-states.

An important role in increasing the FIS' capacity to respond to the new challenges of globalization and, at the same time, partaking in international actions against terrorism and organized crime was played by the reorganization of its structures carrying out the missions specific to this field of activity. Consequently, the FIS has worked out a strategy on combating asymmetric threats, simultaneously aiming at upgrading the operational command, control, communication and reporting. The latter processes have undergone a continuous adjustment in compliance with NATO and EU standards, while strengthening cooperation, at both the management and executive levels, with other agencies belonging to the national security system.

Facts have proved that the fight against organized crime and international terrorism requires an active collaboration within the international community by using all the political, economic, diplomatic and military means, and the legal framework, in keeping with international laws. Alongside the other bodies of the national security system, FIS supports, through specific means, the fostering of a secure environment, both regional and continental. FIS projects aim at multiplying efforts to support the international approaches to combating terrorism and organized crime, to achieve enhanced stability as well as to consolidate Romania's status as a security provider.

For the FIS, NATO and the EU's intelligence communities, terrorism still remains a long-term challenge, the solutions being neither rapid nor simple. There will be silent successes, yet setbacks as well.⁸ However, one thing is certain: close international cooperation, the transatlantic one included, becomes crucial. The FIS will be further firmly committed to fight on the invisible front for safeguarding humankind's fundamental values and the right to live freely in peace and dignity.

ENDNOTES

¹ Ronald K Noble, Secretary-General of INTERPOL - Speech at NYU Center on Law and Security, Florence, Italy, 4 June 2004.

² John Mabe, Office of the American Secretary of Defense, "Countering Terrorism: Policy and Trends" - Seminar on WMD, Bucharest, Romania, September 2004.

³ Jaap de Hoop Scheffer - Informal Meeting of the Defence Ministers of NATO and Russia, Poiana Brasov, Romania, 13-14 October 2004.

⁴ Andrew Dolan, "NATO and EU Prospects on Border Security" Seminar on WMD, Bucharest, Romania, September 2004.

⁵ Jaap de Hoop Scheffer - Speech at the Swedish Institute on International Issues, Stockholm, 10 September 2004.

⁶ The OSCE Annual Security Review Conference, Vienna, 23 June 2004.

⁷ The National Doctrine on Security Intelligence, Bucharest, June 2004.

⁸ Gijs de Vries - Speech in the Europe Subcommittee of the Committee for International Relations of the House of Representatives, Washington DC, 14 September 2004.

Dr Gheorghe Fulga is a sociologist by training. He has been active in national and local politics since 1990, and between 1994-96 was Presidential Counsellor and Head of the Domestic Policy Department of Romania's Presidency, with the rank of minister. Between 1999-2000 he was Counselor on issues of banking development in the private system and in 2001 was a founding member and rector of the Romanian-Canadian University.

He has been Director of the Foreign Intelligence Service, with the rank of minister, since 12 February 2001.

Want to Know More ...?

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Haig Road
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Telephone: (44) 1276 412995

Fax: (44) 1276 686880

Email: csrc@da.mod.uk

<http://www.da.mod.uk/csrc>

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