

Issues in Health, Safety and Security

by

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The tourism industry is the world's largest peacetime industry and by far the Caribbean's largest industry. Tourism is also the Caribbean's number one export item. Tourism safety and security issues need to be a concern for anyone interested in the economic and social wellbeing of this region. Tourism sites have also often been successful targets for terrorists. It is interesting to note that there does not seem to be a relationship between the population sizes and acts of terrorism. Terrorism has occurred in both rural and urban settings and has impacted nations despite their political or foreign policies.

Here is a partial list of places where terrorism has been launched against the tourism industry.

- Bali and Indonesia
- England
- France
- Israel
- Jordan
- Kenya
- Los Angeles
- Mexico
- Morocco
- Peru
- The Philippines

These locals 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 data base 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 3 out of these 4 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 all together. 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, reputation, and economic viability meet. Another example of this interfacing between safety and security is in the issue of health related matters. Visitors are capable of carrying diseases from one part of the world to another. Visitors are also subjects of poor health standards in food preparation and the transferal of health problems from local tourism employees to visitors. Terrorists are also very much aware of this fact.

The current discussion on avian flu raises the possibility of the need to quarantine whole nations and could have disaster- impacts much greater than that of the SARS panic this took place just a few years ago. Perhaps the first question that may need to be asked is: are international media, public health officials, and science writers causing undue panic over the bird flu question, just as they did with the West Nile fever, Swine flu, Ebola, SARS, dengue and any rabies outbreak? The media may create such a scare about avian flu that it may become a self-fulfilling prophecy due to the lowering of natural immunity systems by stress.

Recently the United States experienced a "scare" when it was discovered that people were not given the proper flu vaccine. Questions soon were raised if someone could use vaccine distribution as a form of silent or clandestine terrorism.

While we use terms such as tourism safety, security or surety, in reality there is no such thing as total travel (tourism) security/safety. No person or agency can ever guarantee one hundred percent security. This is another reason why the term "surety" (a term borrowed from the insurance industry) is now used. Surety refers to a lowering of the probability that a negative event will occur. Surety does not promise perfection, but rather improvement and takes into account that to live is to risk. Because few industry people work according to strict academic guidelines, this paper will use the terms: surety, security and safety interchangeably.

Many communities have established special police units to aid in the tourism industry. The most common term to describe these units is "TOPs". TOPs stands for *tourism oriented policing services*.

Students of tourism surety divide the field into six component parts or challenges. These challenges are:

- **Visitor Protection.** Tourism surety assumes that security professionals and police will need to know how to protect visitors from locals who might seek to do them harm, from other visitors who may be in transit for the purpose of committing crime, and less than honest staff members. Finally, tourism surety seeks to protect the visitor from tourism professionals who may be willing to commit fraud or sell them a product that is defective.
- **Protection of Staff.** A tourism industry that does not care about its staff (workers) cannot long survive. The second aspect of a tourism surety program is to find ways to assure that honest staff members

can work in an environment that is crime free and not hostile. Tourism is a high-pressured industry and it is all too easily for staff members to be abused or for tempers to flare leading to a hostile work situation.

- **Site Protection.** It is the responsibility of tourism surety specialists to protect tourism sites. The term site can mean anything from a place of lodging to an attraction site. While in an age of terrorism there are people whose purpose it is to destroy or harm a specific site; site protection must also take into account the careless traveler. Often, vacationers simply forget to care for furniture, appliances or equipment. Tourism surety then also takes into account the needs of cleaning staffs and hotel engineers and seeks to assure that site environment is both attractive and as secure/safe as possible.

- **Ecological and Health Management.** Closely related to and yet distinct from site security is the protection of the area's ecology. No tourism entity lives in a vacuum. The care of a locale's streets, lawns, and internal environment has a major impact on tourism surety. Ecology, however, should not only be restricted to the physical; it also involves the cultural ecology. It behooves specialists in tourism surety to protect the cultural ecology of an area. Strong cultures tend to produce safe places. On the other hand, when cultures tend to die, crime levels may tend to rise. Protecting the cultural ecology along with the physical ecology of a locale is a major preventative step that tourism surety professionals can do to lower crime rates and to assure a safer and more secure environment.
- **Economic Protection.** Tourism is a major generator of income on both national and local levels. As such it is open to attack from various sources. For example, terrorists may see a tourism site as an ideal opportunity to create economic havoc. Criminals do not wish to destroy a tourism locale, but rather view that locale as an ideal "fishing" ground from which to harvest an abundance of riches. Tourists and visitors do not distinguish between the treatment they are afforded by the local travel and tourism industry and by people living and working in the community. As such, law enforcement agents and tourism security professionals have a special role in protecting the economic viability of a locale. How security professionals act and the methods that they use can reinforce the marketing department's message or undercut it.
- **Reputation Protection.** You only need to read the newspaper to note that crimes and acts of terrorism against tourism entities receive a great deal of media attention. The classical method of simply denying that there is a problem is no longer valid and is counter-productive to a tourism locale's best promotional efforts. When there is a lapse in tourism security, the effect is long term. Some of the consequences to a local's reputation include the locale's moving from

upper to lower class clientele, the need to drop prices, the general deterioration of the site, and the need for a major marketing effort to counteract the negative reputation.

A good tourism security program then is much more than simply hiring a few extra guards. While tourism surety programs do not promise that nothing can or will happen, they do lessen the risk of negative events and prepare a locale to minimize negative effects should an incident occur.

Caribbean tourism is open to both acts of terrorism and acts of crime. The recent attack of the cruise ship, the Spirit, off the coast of Somalia may have been either an act of piracy (crime) or of terrorism. In either case, the attack on that cruise ship should serve as a wake-up call to the Caribbean which is highly dependent on the cruise industry.

Crime and terrorism are different from each other. The chart below will provide some of the differences between these two negative social events.

Some Terrorism Basics

	Crime	Terrorism
Goal	Usually economic or social gain	To gain publicity and sometimes sympathy for a cause.
Usual type of victim	Person may be known to the perpetrator or selected because he/she may yield economic gain	Killing is a random act and appears to be more in line with a stochastic model. Numbers may or may not be important
Defenses in use	Often reactive, reports taken	Some pro-active devices such as radar detectors
Political ideology	Usually none	Robin Hood model
Publicity	Usually local and rarely makes the international news	Almost always is broadcast around the world

<p>Most common forms in tourism industry are:</p>	<p>Crimes of distraction Robbery Sexual Assault</p>	<p>Domestic terrorism International terrorism Bombings Potential for bio-chemical warfare</p>
<p>Statistical accuracy</p>	<p>Often very low, in many cases the travel and tourism industry does everything possible to hide the information</p>	<p>Almost impossible to hide. Numbers are reported with great accuracy and repeated often</p>
<p>Length of negative effects on the local tourism industry</p>	<p>In most cases, it is short term</p>	<p>In most cases, it is long term unless replaced by new positive image</p>
<p>Recovery strategies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New marketing plans, assumes short-term memory of traveling public. • Probability ideals: “Odds are it will not happen to you.” • Hide information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing of compassion • Need to admit the situation and demonstrate control • Higher levels of observed security • Highly trained (in

	as best as one can	tourism, terrorism, and customer service) security personnel
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Hurricanes and Natural Disasters

While each disaster has its own special characteristics, there are certain patterns that are already beginning to emerge from this major crisis.

While none of us can turn the clock back to the days before a hurricane such as Katrina which devastated New Orleans, along with Mississippi's and Alabama's Gulf coasts, prudent thought can provide vital lessons for the tourism industry and can provide Caribbean nations with vital lessons.

Here are a few lessons we all need to relearn:

-Tourism is an industry that depends on the well being of the total community. The current crisis is not just about tourism but about the total community. The breaking of the New Orleans' levees touched everyone. As such this crisis ought to remind the entire tourism industry that it is only as safe as weakest part of its community's infrastructure. No amount of marketing can compensate for the suffering and economic loss now felt by the region's peoples.

-Make sure that you have a good risk management plan in effect. Some of the worst damage occurred in hotels. That ought to serve as a wake-up call to many in the tourism industry. Have you asked yourself questions such as: Do you have evacuation plans? How will guests communicate to loved ones that they are safe? If you are in the US, what connections are there between Homeland Security, FEMA and your CVB? If you are outside of the USA, is your national tourism office connected with your specific government agencies?

-The New Orleans experience ought to serve to remind people in the first world just how dependent they are on services such as power plants, electricity and air conditioning. Tourism scholars and experts may want to review how big is too big concerning infrastructure. When thousands of people are housed in a hotel that has lost electricity, air conditioning and potable water it become all too clear how dependent the tourism industry is on these basic infrastructures. As an industry, we will need to review how hotels and attractions are built so there is a new balance developed between economic scales of efficiency and responsible tourism security

-Remember that All crises have a human element. The locations that suffered from the hurricane Katrina need to review what they should have done differently. While the Mississippi and Alabama Coasts are mainly sun 'n surf destinations, New Orleans is a major city, which functions not only around tourism but also around businesses, commerce and transportation. This crisis ought to teach us all how interrelated tourism is with these other industries.

-Tourism security is as much about developing plans to deal with both natural disasters as it is about developing plans to stop human-made disasters.

-The tourism industry needs to recognize that tourism surety is about both security and safety. Hurricane Katrina once again ought to have taught us that acceptable risk when it comes to human life is nothing more than gambling with people's lives and the very life of the tourism industry. Any tourism community that does not have a well-trained tourism security unit ought not to be shocked when it loses its industry.

-There is a high priority for risk management techniques to be looked at from every angle. All too often, tourism surety is seen as adding

nothing to the bottom line and plays second fiddle to marketing. This is a major mistake. Without tourism surety there is no bottom line!

-The tourism world must recognize that crisis management is often a manifestation of poor risk management. Much of the world's tourism industry is located in close proximity to the world's oceans, and another large portion of the world's tourism industry is located in seismic areas or areas that are prone to other natural disasters. That means that tourism conferences and leaders ought to be discussing preventative measures before a crisis occurs rather than after the crisis has taken place.

-The tourism community needs to develop a cadre of experts who can help communities help themselves. For example, New Orleans and the US Gulf Coast cannot recover without outside assistance. Once the initial shock wave has worn off, as an international caring industry, tourism specialists should be working with the people of this region to help them not only rebuild, but to rebuild in a responsible and sustainable fashion.

To help, here is a checklist of things we all need to review:

-Make sure the media tell the truth and provides accurate information

-Avoid media speculation

-Do not simply rebuild, but rebuild in a responsible and sustainable manner.

-Understand that we are working for "recovering " (a dynamic state) rather than "recovery" (a static state)

-Pay attention to the total recovery on both the micro level (individuals) and on the macro level (communities, countries). Work toward their physical, mental, psychological and economic recovering

-Be kind; remember that the people in these regions scared on some level will be for life

Just as in the case of last year's tsunami, there are no words that can properly express the sympathies of the world to the people who have suffered from this major disaster. We, however, can learn from these tragedies and work so that in the future as an industry we can assure ourselves that we have done everything possible to provide a safe, secure and hassle free tourism experience.