



DEVELOPMENT AND SPECIFICS OF TERRORIST ATTACKS TARGETING EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

University of Maryland's Global Terrorism Database clearly shows that there has been a sharp increase in terrorist attacks targeting educational institutions since the 2004 massacre at a school in Beslan, southern Russia. Tactics, used means, preferred targets differ depending on context and location. Various motives behind these attacks are reported, such as the desire to destroy symbols of government control or to demonstrate control over an area, to disrupt educational process, to abduct students for military operations, and so on. Crisis scenarios represent a crisis management instrument that is capable of providing practical knowledge to define a security system which is able to effectively respond to terrorist attacks at educational institutions and to mitigate the negative consequences.

Key words:

Terrorist attacks, educational institutions, security system, crisis scenarios

ABSTRAKT

Databáza globálneho terorizmu Marylandskej univerzity poukazuje, že od masakra v beslanskej škole, južné Rusko, ktorý sa uskutočnil v roku 2004, významne vzrástol počet teroristických útokov na vzdelávacie inštitúcie. Taktika, použité prostriedky, uprednostňované ciele sa líšia v závislosti od kontextu a miesta. Týmto útokom sú prisudzované viaceré motívy, ku ktorým patrí napr. túžba zničiť symboly vládnych predstaviteľov, alebo demonštrácia kontroly nad územím, narušenie vzdelávacieho procesu, únos študentov na vojenské operácie, a pod. Krízové scenáre predstavujú nástroj krízového manažmentu, ktorý je schopný poskytnúť praktické vedomosti za účelom definovania takého bezpečnostného systému, ktorý dokáže účinne reagovať na teroristické útoky na vzdelávacie inštitúcie a zmierniť negatívne dôsledky.

Kľúčové slová:

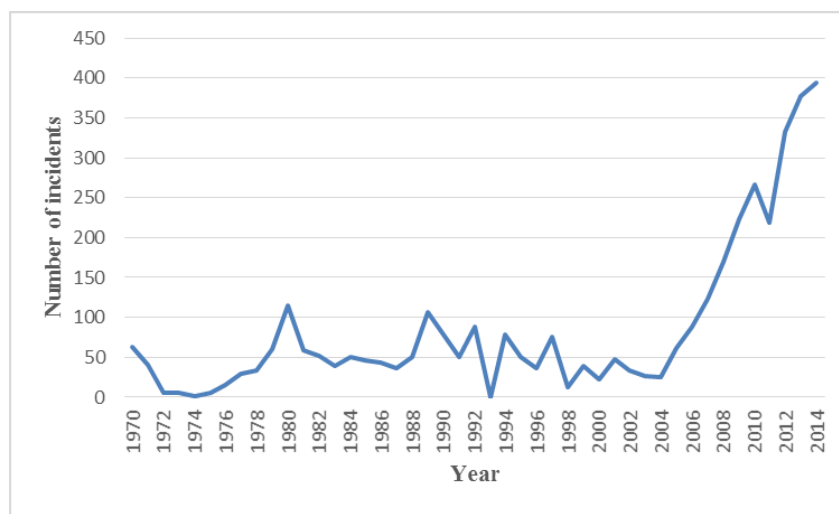
Teroristické útoky, vzdelávacie inštitúcie, bezpečnostný systém, krízové scenáre

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1 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND CHARACTERISTICS

1.1 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

University of Maryland’s Global Terrorism Database clearly shows that there has been a sharp increase in terrorist attacks targeting educational institutions since the 2004 massacre at a school in Beslan, southern Russia, where approximately 344 people had been killed and 727 people had been injured. Between 1970 and 2014 more than 3,700 terrorist attacks targeting educational institutions took place, while between 1970 and 2003 almost 40% (1,496) of these attacks took place and between 2004 and 2014 60% (2,277) of these attacks were reported. Of all terrorist attacks recorded by the Global Terrorism Database between 1970 and 2014, 2.58% were against educational targets.



Graph no. 1: Terrorist Attacks on Educational Institutions between 1970 and 2014
(Source: Global Terrorism Database, [https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/\[1\]](https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/[1]))¹

Due to high concentration of people within one institution these terrorist attacks are normally expected to be highly lethal, but in fact this is rather atypical. Many attacks against primary, secondary schools and universities took place when the buildings were unoccupied. More than 70% of all terrorist attacks on educational institutions between 1970 and 2003 caused no fatalities. Between 2004 and 2014 the number of non-lethal attacks even increased to almost 73%. However, the percentage of attacks causing more than 25 deaths has increased more than 8-fold, from 0.07% (1 attack) between 1970 and 2003 to 0.61% (14 attacks) between 2004 and 2014. The significant increase in highly lethal terrorist attacks on education institutions reflects the general trend in terrorism.

¹ The Global Terrorism Database defines terrorism as “the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation.” Attacks on schools, including mass-shootings, that are not carried out in pursuit of a broader goal and intended to send a message to a broader audience beyond the immediate victims do not satisfy the GTD inclusion criteria.

Country	Number of Terrorist Attacks	Country	Fatalities in Attacks
Pakistan	724	Russia	351
Thailand	213	Iraq	339
Afghanistan	205	Nigeria	289
Iraq	184	Pakistan	179
India	143	Syria	138
Nigeria	92	Afghanistan	126
Philippines	56	Thailand	113
Nepal	35	Kenya	50
Turkey	33	India	45
Bangladesh	31	Sri Lanka	21

Table no. 1: 10 Countries with Most Terrorism on Educational Institutions, 2004-2013 [2]

The most lethal attacks on educational institutions between 2004 and 2014 happened in Russia (344 fatalities; 2004), Pakistan (157 fatalities; 2014), Nigeria (75 fatalities; 2009).

1.2 CHARACTERISTICS

Terrorist attacks on educational institutions include attacks against educational facility/infrastructure, students, teachers, and other personnel. Tactics, used means, preferred targets differ depending on context and location. For example, the vast majority of the attacks on educational institutions in Pakistan were non-lethal, typically using explosives, arson or other incendiary devices, targeting primary, middle and secondary schools that were unoccupied at the time of the attack. The objective appears to be disruption of educational process, rather than loss of life.

Tactics of terrorist attacks on educational targets include bombing/explosion, armed assaults, assassinations, hostage taking (barricade or kidnapping), and facility/infrastructure attack. In some locations attacks on educational institutions are part of a coordinated event of multiple attacks which are linked together based on timing, location, objective, and perpetrator.

Main terrorist groups focusing on educational institutions include Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (Pakistan), Boko Haram (Nigeria), Al Shahab (Somalia), and Taliban (Afghanistan).

Study *Education under Attack* [3], published by the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack in 2014, presents the following reported motives behind terrorist attacks targeting educational institutions:

- Desire to destroy symbols of government control or demonstrate control over an area by an anti-government group;
- Desire to block the education of female students, or any type of education perceived to teach or impose alien religious or cultural values, biased history or an unfamiliar language of instruction;

- Desire to restrict teacher trade union activities and academic freedom;
- Desire to abduct children in order to use them as combatants, sex slaves or logistical support in military operations, or abduct students and teachers for ransom; or
- Desire to seize schools and universities for use as barracks and bases or firing positions, or attack schools because they are being used for these purposes by opposing forces.

In addition to the above-listed motives, the objectives can include the following:

- Desire to attract a lot of attention and publicity, particularly in case of demonstrative terrorism. Brian Jenkins explains the essence of demonstrative terrorism: “*terrorists want a lot of people watching, not a lot of people dead.*” [4] By avoiding serious harm, yet still attacking innocent targets, terrorists can gain a lot of attention while not undermining sympathy for their political cause.
- Desire to revenge for the loss of relatives, ideological leaders, or for conduction of military operations against the terrorist groups. These attacks are most likely to choose concrete educational institutions, for example army-run schools, international schools attended by children of diplomats, military and government officials, etc.

One of the reasons why terrorist groups choose educational institutions for their attacks is the fact that these institutions appear to be a ‘softer’ target compared to well-guarded and highly monitored military targets, key government institutions, hotels, embassies, and so on. “*These tend to be relatively vulnerable targets with less security than other targets. They may be more easily accessible simply due to the fact that educational institutions are typically open to the public,*” says Erin Miller, who manages the GTD at the national consortium for Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) at the University of Maryland [5].

Within the multi-disciplinary approach of counter-terrorism measures, education plays an important role in order to prevent the recruitment of new terrorists and to avoid greater support of terrorist activities in vulnerable regions. Prof Boaz Ganor, Founder and Executive Director at The International Institute for Counter-Terrorism, Herzliya, Israel, explains: “*Terrorists fully understand that education for peace, human rights, minority and women rights as much as democratic and liberal values are contradictory to their messages and posing the biggest threat to their ongoing radicalization efforts.*” [5] Terrorists seek to impose fear so as their attacks lead to schools closing, worsening of education quality, illiteracy of certain groups of people, etc. The next Chapter outlines the role of crisis scenarios in the process of mitigating the consequences of terrorist attacks, of both immaterial and material nature.

2 ROLE OF CRISIS SCENARIOS

Sharp increase in terrorist attacks on educational institutions triggers the worldwide debate over inadequate security at educational institutions. As mentioned above, educational institutions are often targeted by terrorist attacks due to their low security measures compared to for instance embassies, hotels, government buildings, sport and cultural events. Many educational institutions lack proper security devices, monitoring systems, evacuation plans, information and communication systems for cases of emergency, crisis plans, emergency trainings for teachers and students, etc.

In order to be able to minimize the negative effects of terrorist attacks at educational institutions as serious crisis situations, a country must dispose of quality security system which is capable of analysing the security environment; identifying and classifying security risks and menaces and their development; defining procedures and measures for preventing or eliminating security risks and threats; bringing solutions to crisis situations in line with actual resources and capacities; ensuring the efficient management of forces and resources for prevention activities, preparedness to cope with crisis situation, adequate response to the source of threat during the crisis situation, mitigating and eliminating the consequences and creating conditions for recovery and development [6]. Experiments within the security area are markedly limited and risky in nature. Therefore, countries started to employ crisis scenarios which are not only cost-efficient, but also a great source of knowledge for practical usage.

In the practical area crisis scenarios seek to define the required capabilities of security system; identify shortage in capabilities; model and verify solutions for crisis situations; verify the adequacy of forces; prepare citizens for crisis situations; help with preparation of controlling and executive personnel of security system; provide models of crisis situations and typical sets of activities for impacted people and emergency forces; create prevention tools, optimize response and recovery resources; verify optimizing methods for decision-making and control, etc [6].

The standard crisis scenario structure includes:

- Source of menace, circumstances and reason of crisis situation, negative impacts and consequences, standard space and time development and phases of crisis situation;
- Response and measures of crisis management to threats. Measures and activities until a crisis and threats are under control, basic measures for recovery, reconstruction and minimization of crisis repetition;
- Activities of impacted and endangered systems and people in each phase of crisis situation.

Crisis scenarios can be utilized for making an analysis of the actual level of security within educational institutions and the requirements for updating the security system to better respond to terrorist attacks.

In 2013, Slovakia hosted the biggest exercise of European counter-terrorist forces ‘*Atlas Common Challenge 2013*’. The exercise was based on the simulated terrorist attack at a secondary school with 335 hostages. Terrorist attack at the Beslan school in September 2004 served as a theme for the scenario. 100 police force representatives took part in the exercise accompanied by forces from Hungary, Slovenia, and Romania. This exercise facilitated the verification of capabilities of police forces and provided the base for adjusting the actual security system.

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