

BALKAN-MEDITERRANEAN INTELLIGENCE-SHARING COOPERATION AND COUNTERTERRORISM POLICY IN GREECE

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based in Athens, Greece. (Publication Date: 10 March 2014).**

John M Nomikos participated in the Counter-Terrorism Challenges in the Region of South Eastern Europe Conference and he delivers a paper on “Balkan-Mediterranean Intelligence-Sharing Cooperation and Counterterrorism Policy in Greece.” The Conference took place in the Slovene Armed Forces Military Schools Center (3-7 March 2014) in Maribor, Slovenia.

RIEAS presents a summary of the article written by John M Nomikos and statements by Mr. Boris Mohar (Director of Government Office for the Protection of Classified Information, Republic of Slovenia, and Mr. Gilles de Kerchove (EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator).

Summary of the Article

The end of the Cold War more than a decade ago created a world in which the relative stability between the two superpowers has disappeared. During the Cold War, a country’s every action was conducted in the light of the adversary relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union. On 11th September 2001, the international community was introduced to a new type of terrorism, one that was truly global in its organization and its impact. In both the European Union and the United States, it was immediately clear that an effective response would require new levels of intelligence cooperation in order to confront terrorism, Islamic networks, illegal immigration and transnational organized crime in the Balkan and Mediterranean region. The article highlights on the sense of urgency generated by the terrorist acts in New York (2001), in Madrid (2004), London (2005) and Burgas (2012) in Bulgaria, which is accelerating measures that will have important consequences for the Balkan-Mediterranean intelligence-sharing cooperation. It looks into the challenges that the Greek police counter-terrorist unit (EKAM) in coordination with the Greek intelligence community has to face domestically as well as in the Balkan-Mediterranean peninsula.

John M. Nomikos

Countering terrorism is one of the main tasks of almost all states in the world; the significance of the intelligence environment, including international cooperation and intelligence data and its exchange constitutes a basic tool in this effort. The authors of all the articles in the book titled “Intelligence and Combating Terrorism – New Paradigm and Future Challenges” agree on the importance of this field from different points of view. ***But recently the increasing actions of whistle-blowers and others who use information without authorization (particularly in the cyber field) strengthen our firm belief that protecting data and interconnectivity are equally important as the data itself.***

Mr. Boris Mohar

Director of Government Office for the Protection of Classified Information, Republic of Slovenia.

It is no surprise that the struggles at the end of the last century have left deep marks in the Western-Balkans. A still-developing state structure, economic problems and fragmented education systems in combination with outside influences by extremist ideology have created an environment that can be conducive to radicalization, violent extremism and ultimately terrorism. As in the European Union and other parts of the western world, the Western-Balkans has a significant number of foreign fighters. Many of their citizens are travelling to Syria and other areas of conflict and are joining terrorist groups. Returnees could radicalize others, or conduct attacks in the Western-Balkan or elsewhere. This is exacerbated by the availability of weapons, including high explosives, and possible links to organized crime groups.

It is the highest importance to develop an adequate response to these foreign fighters and returnees. Although the issue of counter-terrorism is high on the agenda for the governments in the Western-Balkans, they are also cognizant of the work that remains to be done. For example in terms of setting up and maintaining an adequate legal framework. Another area of importance is cooperation and information-sharing between the countries in the Western-Balkans and between the Western-Balkans and the European Union. ***By sharing information we will be better able to analyze, understand and respond to terrorism, which is in itself of a fundamentally cross-border nature.*** Additionally, the approach to counter-terrorism is at this moment largely focused on intelligence and law-enforcement. *I would therefore like to promote a more comprehensive approach to counterterrorism and increase the focus on prevention of violent and radicalization in the region.*

Mr. Giles de Kerchove

EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator

