

International Developments in Extremist Violence Risk Assessment and Management: Professional Development study trip to Canada 13-27 June 2010

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Purpose

A CSNSW Professional Development Grant and additional support from regional staff development funding enabled me to visit Ottawa, Ontario Canada to:

1. Meet and work with internationally acknowledged researchers and practitioners in violence/extremist violence ('terrorist') risk assessment.
2. Review and evaluate current international practice in the 'de-radicalization' of extremist violent offenders.
3. Further my existing collaboration with Dr D Elaine Pressman (Senior Research Fellow, Canadian Centre for Intelligence and Security Studies, Carleton University Ottawa and Adjunct Professor (Research) Politics & Economics, Royal Military College of Canada, Kingston Ontario) on the development of the Violent Extremist Risk Assessment (VERA) which I had been trialing with CSNSW 'AA' inmates detained within the HRMCC.
4. Visit Kingston and Millhaven maximum security and assessment facilities and the Regional Treatment Centre in Kingston

Study Program

On my first day in Ottawa I met with Dr Adelle Forth and faculty members of the Department of Psychology, Criminology and Criminal Justice at Carleton University. I outlined the legal and historical context in which 'terrorist' offenders are dealt with in Australia, as well as the challenges of developing evidence based assessment protocols and 'de-radicalization' programs for convicted extremist violence offenders.

This was followed by an invited discussion paper titled 'Radicalization and Rehabilitation in Australia' I presented to the monthly series of Intelligence and National Security Seminars at the Carleton University Canadian Centre of Intelligence and Security Studies (CCISS). Subsequent

discussion with Mr Paul Harvey (Regional Administrator, Intelligence) and Ms Isabella Bastien (Regional Programs Manager) of Correctional Services Canada in Quebec focused on current classification and segregation strategies used to manage convicted 'terrorist' offenders (Toronto 17) in the Special Handling Unit in Montreal.

Those attending the seminar included representatives from the Australian High Commission in Canada, Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), Canadian Revenue Agency (CRA), Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Communications Security Establishment Canada (CSEC), Public Safety Canada (PSC), Conference Board Canada (CBC), Department of National Defence (DND), Canadian Border Services Agencies (CBSA), Correctional Services Canada

(CSC), and faculty members of the Norma Pattison School of International Affairs.

I met with Dr Jim Bonta (Director Corrections Research) and Dr R. Karl Hanson (Senior Research Officer, Corrections Research) to discuss current developments in structured clinical/professional judgment (SPJ) approaches to violence and sex offender risk assessment with particular reference to the revision of the Violent Extremist Risk Assessment (VERA).

Discussions with Dr Fred Bellemore (Senior Psychologist) and Dr Jeremy Mills (Senior Regional Psychologist) of Correctional Services Canada (CSC) provided information on current assessment and correctional practices in relation to the recent convictions and sentencing of the 'Toronto 17'.

I met with Mr Luciano Bentenuto (Deputy Director, Tactical Intelligence & Operations) who spoke of his experiences in developing a correctional model for organized crime and motor cycle gang offenders, including the security classification and segregation of gang leaders from other gang members/followers and general offenders in the prison system. This proved relevant to both intelligence linked and behavioural risk assessment outlined by Ms Melissa Martineau (Criminologist and Team Leader) from the Behavioural Sciences Risk Assessment Operational Support Unit of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Discussions with Mr Christopher Dean and Ms Monica Lloyd, Principal Psychologists with the Extremist Team, Rehabilitation Services Group, National Offender Management Services in UK provided valuable comment on classification and placement, emerging guidelines for assessment of extremist offenders and the current status and content of 'de-radicalization' programs. The dispersal of high risk extremist

violent offenders in maximum security facilities within the UK correctional system rather than collective segregation was discussed, as was initial evaluation of 'disengagement' strategies with less radicalized and community placed offenders on release.

A two day visit to Kingston provided discussion with senior correctional management and psychology and programs staff at both Kingston Penitentiary and Millhaven maximum security and reception institutions. Current extremist violence risk and admission assessment protocols and practices were considered with reference to the recent convictions and sentencing of the 'Toronto 17' and their subsequent security classification and placement.

The visit to the Regional Treatment Centre within Kingston Penitentiary allowed an insight into a different model of custody based mental health services which are part of Correctional Services Canada. Dr Jan Looman, Director, outlined assessment and treatment practices within the intensive custody based sex offender program.

Outcomes

It is envisaged that the following outcomes from my study visit to Canada will contribute to the further development of custodial management and program options for convicted extremist violence offenders:

1. An appreciation that the current status and prediction of extremist violence reoffending risk arising from both custody and community disengagement/de-radicalization programs is uncertain, and that the measurement of success remains a major challenge. What works in one jurisdiction can prove to be counter-productive in another.

2. A general consensus that 'de-radicalization' refers to the cognitive change in beliefs, ideology and desistance, while 'disengagement' refers to a verifiable change in behaviour evidenced by a shift from violent to non-violent (e.g. political) activity. There is evidence that many former 'terrorists' have been disengaged while remaining radicalized to what remains for them a worthwhile cause.

3. Clearly identified operational and behavioural objectives need to be established as part of the disengagement process. These can include reduced involvement in extremist violent activity and associations, participation in offence related assessment and intervention programs, and commitment to relevant education and training.

4. An acceptance that the prison environment can provide opportunities for disengagement and contribute to other efforts to reduce 'terrorism' and violent radicalization

5. The most promising and effective programs appear to take into account multiple factors including the structure and norms of the society and culture from which the offender originates. Identified individual 'push' and/or 'pull' factors and collective needs including ideological/faith based motivations and affiliations need also to be considered.

6. Custody based disengagement strategies are likely to be more effective when complemented and informed by intelligence linked and behavioural risk assessment.

7. International correctional models for managing 'radicalization/conversion' and security risk have considered the most effective means of distributing extremist violent offenders within the prison population including concentration in one unit, separation

from the mainstream offenders or isolation from each other.

8. Canada currently practices collective concentration/separation of convicted high risk and committed ideologues/leaders from less 'engaged' and other mainstream offenders in a Special Handling Unit (SHU), while violent extremists in UK and USA are dispersed within a limited number of maximum security facilities.

'Most of the countries...practice a policy of dispersal and (partial) concentration which distributes terrorists among a small number of high security prisons. Even with such mixed regimes, however, it rarely seems to be a good idea to bring together leaders with followers and mix ideologues with hangers-on" (Prisons and Terrorism – Radicalization and De-radicalization in 15 Countries, International Centre for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence, UK, July 2010)

9. Disengagement and progression appear to be most effective when including a combination of counter ideological/religious training, assisting offenders with the transition into non-violent family, community and religious networks, and eventual facilitation into mainstream society.

10. Evidence based offence specific assessment needs to be the cornerstone of determining extremist violence, radicalized conversion and re-offending risk and informing individual disengagement strategies. The revision with Dr Elaine Pressman of the Violent Extremist Risk Assessment (VERA – Version 2) made possible by this study visit is now under consideration by Canadian, United States and United Kingdom intelligence and law enforcement agencies to complement

intelligence linked and behavioural risk assessment.

11. I have since visited Indonesia (March 2011) to assist in the joint CSNSW/Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) prison reform project, specifically to advise, develop and train local corrections, intelligence and law enforcement officers in administration of the VERA-2 as part of multi-modal 'terrorist' risk assessment.

12. International practice has not been able to establish whether religious re-education or employment/skills training, or any mix thereof, is likely to be most effective. The best outcome has been found when disengagement programming has been at least in part informed by assessment of individual risks/needs and appreciation of the nature of the offender population.

13. It is unreasonable and unrealistic to expect prison Imams and religious clerics to be spiritual advisers, welfare officers and terrorism experts all at the

same time. A core component of the most promising disengagement programs remains credible 'interlocutors' who can establish respectful relationships with inmates and relate to their individual personal and psychological needs.

14. Material or financial inducements for individual de-radicalization/disengagement have not proven to be effective on their own.

15. Appropriate training and education of staff to assist in identifying known behavioural and operational risk indicators has been shown to be a critical factor in reducing opportunities for prison based violent radicalization.

16. Well resourced, appropriately staffed, safe and secure prison environments in which offenders are humanely managed are believed to minimize the 'space' for prison based violent radicalization and can assist the process of disengagement.



John Flockton with Dr Jeremy Littlewood, Director, Canadian Centre for Intelligence & Security Studies following the presentation to the Intelligence & National Security Seminar series at Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada



Dr D Elaine Pressman, study visit host, and Ms Jessica Sarazin International Programs Co-coordinator, Correctional Services Canada on route to Kingston Penitentiary, Millhaven Institution and the Ontario Regional Treatment Centre in Kingston



Meeting with Ms Julie Heckscher, Deputy Commissioner, Australian High Commission in Canada during which national and transnational issues relating to extremist violence risk and management were discussed



Presentation of a gift from the Nura Warra Umer Work Centre at Goulburn Correctional Centre on behalf of Mr John Dunthorne Assistant Commissioner South West Region CSNSW to Mr Marty Maltby, International Programs Director, Correctional Services Canada