

Perhaps the defining word of our post September 11th era is *uncertainty*:

“No one can possibly imagine in advance all the novel opportunities for terrorism provided by our technological and economic systems. We’ve made these critical systems so complex that they are replete with vulnerabilities that are very hard to anticipate, because we don’t even know how to ask the right questions. [...] Terrorists can make connections between components of complex systems—such as between passenger airliners and skyscrapers—that few, if any, people have anticipated.”⁵

And uncertainty has its costs. These will be borne partially by the private sector, in the form of higher costs for security,⁶

nesses and government agencies with segments of computer codes that are able to penetrate highly-securitized entities. Because it does not take much, or many, to trigger a breakdown, the potential for human loss and the destruction of critical facilities linked to everyday life is huge.

⁴ Paul Wilkinson in *The New Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought*, eds. Alan Bullock and Stephen Trombley, 3rd ed (London: Harpercollins, 1998), 862.

⁵ Thomas Homer-Dixon, “The Rise of Complex Terrorism”, *Foreign Policy* (January/February 2002): 61. The very act of insulating one component of a system from attack forces attention of would-be attackers to shift towards weaker areas – a never-ending game.

⁶ For the merchant ship owners of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries threatened by piracy, it was “better to increase security by having a larger crew and a lot of gunports than to risk disaster.” Pomaranz and Topik, *The World That Trade Created*, 160. Similarly members of today’s trading community are taking steps to protect their cargo from being exploited by terrorists. For example, Canada, China, the UK, Japan, the Netherlands, Spain, Singapore and other countries with major seaports have signed onto the Container Security Initiative which was conceived by the United States as a “pre-emptive strike against the smuggling of a weapon of mass destruction” on one of the approximately 200 million sea cargo containers moving across the world’s waterways (16 million enter U.S. ports every year). Scott Miller, “U.S. Customs Chief Cites Importance of Container Security Initiative,” United States Mission to the European Union document, Internet: <http://www.useu.be/Categories/Justice%20and%20Home%20Affairs/Aug2602BonnerContainerSecurity.html>; Accessed February 26th, 2003.