

First, media guidelines prepared or imposed by someone other than the media themselves could expect stiff opposition from most journalists. Second, in view of the relatively few terrorist incidents that have occurred in Canada and the lack of any evidence that the media have had an impact on them one way or the other, journalists question the need for guidelines at all. Third, how can guidelines foresee every eventuality in future terrorist incidents in which the media, intentionally or unintentionally, might have an impact? Finally, media witnesses expressed concern that any significant degree of restraint in withholding information relating to a terrorist incident, regardless of the reasons, could damage the media's credibility and their perceived objectivity and neutrality. As one witness stated, "The public would say: If they (the media) are not publishing this for whatever reason, what else are they holding back?"

Testimony before the Committee indicated clearly that media coverage and police actions during at least two terrorist incidents in Canada could very easily have endangered lives or prejudiced resolution of the incidents. Effective guidelines could well have helped the journalists and police involved avoid some of the pitfalls. The Committee also notes that the media has guidelines in other areas such as the coverage of natural disasters or civil disorders. With relatively minor modifications, these guidelines could be adapted to terrorist situations. Finally, the Committee notes that the media has engaged and continues to engage in some restraint in reporting on terrorist and other incidents. The names of traffic accident victims are not usually disclosed until next of kin have been notified. During the TWA 847 hijacking, the international media knew, but did not report, that a member of the National Security Agency was on board the aircraft. There are other examples of media restraint in Canada, some of which will be discussed below.

One of the most difficult questions facing the Committee was whether media restraint would result in terrorists resorting to increasingly horrendous atrocities to compel media coverage. The Committee believes that there are limits to the violence terrorists can mount, either because of resources and capabilities, or because of the impact increasing violence would have on the terrorists' ability to achieve their aims. Ian Smart points out that the terrorist

... can seldom afford to push his wider popular audience beyond the limits of terror and pity into a mood of outraged revulsion. . . . He fails if his actions and their effects are so repellant that his audience . . . becomes intent on abetting the government in an effort to eradicate terrorism at any cost. And he fails most disastrously when revulsion reaches his natural supporters or the mass of the community in whose interests he claims to act.*

* Ian Smart, "International Terrorism", in *Behind the Headlines*, Volume 44, No. 3, February, 1987. Canadian Institute of International Affairs, p. 10.