

crime & justice

INTERNATIONAL

January/February 2006 · Volume 22 · Number 90

Worldwide News and Trends

Restorative Justice in South Africa

Sex Offenders and Restorative Justice in Canada

Russian and American Attitudes Toward Euthanasia



The Swiss Guard Celebrates 500 Years

SECURITY AT HOME

Rising to the Challenge

by Kathleen Kiernan
Special to CJJ

What happens when the “W” in weapons of mass destruction stands for water? The world witnessed the catastrophic impact of nature’s fury and the seams in society it exposed in the wash. Using sophisticated technological or human means to smuggle in a weapon across borders and through various levels of security may have been potentially obviated by the breaching of infrastructure – heretofore hidden in plain sight in terms of targeting. Laid bare was a host of social justice issues mostly related to poverty and the lack of access to mainstream society when it was most important. Also exposed, however, were myriad possibilities for the opportunistic, ranging from looting to homicide with all the milestones in between the two extremes: fraud, theft, assault, arms and drug trafficking, and rape.

Law enforcement agencies were confronted with an event which tested their training, response capability, persistence, and even their resolve yet they performed their duties to serve and protect with great selflessness – fueled by that instinctual com-



mitment to never give up. There were physical injuries, although the greater burden emanated from a loss of control – both over the once familiar and now hostile environment – and of that critical knowledge that families were safe and accounted for that has historically allowed law enforcement and firefighters to focus on their dangerous work.

Dr. Kathleen L. Kiernan, a 29-year veteran of federal law enforcement, served as the Assistant Director for the Office of Strategic Intelligence and Information for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). She is currently CEO of Kiernan Consulting Group and adjunct professor at Sam Houston State University.



The convergence of disaster and personal loss, coupled with the absence of infrastructure, communications, medical assistance, re-supply of uniforms, ammunition, even back-up, not to mention nourishment and sanitation, would challenge the abilities of the gods. Navigable roadways where they once existed were occluded with debris which immediately punctured tires on the patrol cars and reduced emergency response to foot patrol, yet men and women still answered the call to duty. They answered the call to duty despite being in some cases outgunned and subjected to fire and ambush, and they answered the call to duty when no one answered back – doing their jobs to the best of their abilities. That is what law enforcement officers do, and what we do as a society is often fail to thank them. We grieve for those in the profession who lost hope and made unpopular choices, but many of those who sought to condemn have never walked in their shoes. Any criticism leveled from afar at these professional men and women should be tempered with an effort to enhance training and improve the nation’s ability to support the front line. We grieve more for the few who in despair took their own lives in the age-old way of law enforcement officers when no other options seem available.

What did the criminal and the terrorist learn in the series of events predicated not by a man-made act but one of nature? This street-level classroom illustrated a number of lessons. They include the raw vulnerabilities exposed in the absence of a redundant communications infrastructure for first responders. There were impacts which resonated through every layer of the criminal justice system: enforcement, corrections, judicial systems, probation and parole, databases which track criminal and sexual predators, and provide prosecutorial and evidential relevance.

They learned of the opportunities to exploit access when the national identification system is ruptured – allowing criminal histories to be literally washed away and new identities to be established. Opportunities for fraud were readily available and as readily exploited by the criminal element. They learned that it is not really that difficult to begin the erosion process of credibility in governance and they learned lessons as well from the focus on fixing the blame instead of fixing the problems.

The next question is What did we learn and how do we prevent the same results from predictable disasters? 🌐