



MYTH AND REALITY OF SECURITY

An interview with Patrick Estebe By Bill Curry

As a guest on a few mega yachts, I was accustomed to the sight of highly visible guards with Armani suites and obvious military attitudes. It felt a bit like being in the center of a potential firestorm. Quite insecure actually as on one cruise, I was not able to enjoy the views of the Adriatic. Then in Jamaica on another vessel, a very high profile man joined us for a day outing to a secluded beach. The "security" for him, by proxy for us, was some guys that I did not notice for half a day. There were may be eighteen of us and the few of them blended in with the group. By the time I noticed them they would appear and reappear at different sites on the beach, looking completely relaxed and enjoying themselves. I felt

completely "at ease" knowing that they were out there doing what they do without drawing undue attention to us. I thought, now these guys are the real deal.

I was then introduced to Patrick Estebe who aside from being one of the authorities in maritime security, a family man, an avid sailor and of course a fervent martial artist.

Following are the extracts of our latest interview regarding maritime security.

Bill Curry: Many of the security people I met have this condescending attitude saying: "don't argue, I am the expert, I know". What is it that they think they know? Is security a science?



Patrick Estebe: Well, whoever has done any air travel lately and observed the blank face in the security guard who has found say your dive computer in your carry-on has a deep feeling that surely security is not a science. In fact, just because of this association, it has become much less glamorous to claim that security is one's occupation. However the flock of security specialists of all feathers that has appeared in every aspect of life is definitely trying to pass it as a science. The immediate innuendo of this attitude is that it would be too long to explain their reasons to the uneducated clients who just have to accept their recommendations.

I suspect some even envision security like an occult science, of which they would be the all mighty priests, establishing dogmatic procedures that the non-initiated has to follow. The truth is if it were a science, then like all sciences there should be a measurable progress, such as the one we see in medicine. It does not appear to me that crime is anywhere close to eradication, nor terrorism about extinct.

B.C: Yet there is a lot of technology involved. When one thinks about security, security systems come to mind along with the tough guys. That

technology is sometimes quite advanced. That aspect does appear like a science.

P.E: There is as much difference between security and the technology of security as there is between music and the technology associated with it. Would you rather have the technician who conceived the heart valve replacement to install it on you or the surgeon? Surprisingly many major yachts' security systems are left to the electronic security specialists. I am not sure the owner would like to listen to the piano maker instead of the virtuoso.

B.C: Still this technology is scientific and is based, I suppose, on all available data about intrusions, and updated every time counter measures are developed. These security systems appear quite effective and are generally accepted.

P.E: They may appear effective and look good in movies, yet because their foundation is based on a virtual opponent born from statistics and computations, they are bound to fail.

Look at the Antwerp recent security disaster. Just walking in the streets of the diamond world capital, one is impressed by all the security cameras and the



guards everywhere. The most up-to-date security systems on the planet overlap each other. They have depth, redundancy, and they are monitored and doubled with the physical presence of well-trained security guards. Yet it did not prevent the biggest heist in history. To add insult to injury the heist was only discovered after the opening on Monday morning.

"It is impossible and yet it happened" a merchant was quoted. He had just learned the hard way that music is not the instrument.

While most security experts would cover this kind of failure, stating that there is "no magic bullet", the Antwerp heist illustrates dramatically the limits of the technology approach.

B.C: Ok, so much for technology. Still in the world of security you have the psychologists, negotiators, profilers, and the lie detectors technicians.

P.E: Instead of starting a metaphysical argument stating that there is no way the scientific mind, a part of the human mind, could encompass the whole of the human mind, I would rather point to you the fiasco of the profilers in the Maryland snipers' case. Similarly psychopaths cut through a polygraph test like a

hot knife through butter. And security is precisely about psychopaths and other terrorists.

B.C: So my first impression is confirmed. Security is not a science?

P.E: Of course, it is not a science. The only true science in the world of security is forensic by nature. Science starts with the failure of security.

Security deals with the infinitely complex nature of the human mind. How could science and its evolution catch up with the dynamism of the human mind?

B.C: You are talking a lot about the mind. Are you a new age security guru?

P.E: I just observe the failures of these security experts and come to the conclusion that their approach is flawed because they miss the point that they are not dealing with an imaginary opponent but a very real one. More precisely they are dealing with the mind of that opponent. In that field most fall short of even matching their opponent's mind, let alone intuit it and prevent the next move.

On one hand you have the security specialist whose mind is awfully conditioned by his



training and experience, by authority (which is fear), and all his attachments. In brief, you have someone who has much to lose.

On the other hand you have a psychopath or a terrorist, whose mind is utterly free of all conditioning save for hatred or anger.

As mistaken as he may be, a free spirit knowing neither attachments nor fear, not caring for his own life. In brief, you have someone who has nothing to lose.

B.C: We can guess who has the advantage!

P.E: Conscious of their shortcomings security experts are deluding themselves by trying to think "out of the box", unable to see that "thinking unconventionally" is impossible. One's thinking is absolutely based on one's memory and experience.

While on the other hand, the opponent whose mind is constantly sharpened by the life outside the system, untethered by any consideration can reinvent terrorism every other day.

B.C: Are your bets on the bad guys?

P.E: Not at all! I am just saying that tethered minds

cannot catch a free mind. One must have an extraordinary alert mind to be swift enough to follow the threat, and importantly, to be able to get ahead of the next strike.

One's mind must be more free than the terrorist mind somewhat tethered by his anger, hatred, and his goals. What I am saying is that the Pit bulls/bodyguards cannot outwit the jackals/terrorists no more than the Antwerp German Shepherds could outwit the diamond foxes. **Against the jackals and the foxes, one should rather bring in untethered wolves.**

B.C: Got it! Quite amazing when one considers the size of the security business.

P.E: Yes, to make it a business is the ultimate barrier for being effective.

The business mind by nature is a compromising mind, focused on profit.

In essence a mind further tethered by profit, and crippled by compromise. Interestingly many missing that point would have their security selected through a bidding process. Knowing that "it is not important what you know but who you know", one can see how far we are getting from security.



The last thing security could be is a commodity!

How would you feel when the shrapnel starts flying, when you can see the death glare in your opponents' eyes, knowing that you purchased your security as a commodity? Buying the Stradivarius is one thing, finding the fiddler able to perform in Carnegie Hall is another.

Business is meant to expand. Look at the case the industry is making of the concept of threat assessment. While it is an important tool for the professional, it should not be used in ways that limit the owner's freedom. Yet just the opposite is done, owners are presented with threat assessment stating in short: "Forget the Red Sea, don't even think about Asia, Africa is out of the question, South America is unstable, and the Med very questionable." I am sorry for the Captains left with Maine, Alaska, and if they insist the Caribbean and the Bahamas.

Shouldn't security provide instead more freedom to owners and charterers? While business would dictate: "How scared you should be", genuine security instead should bring peace of mind and invite you to cruise the world in peace.

B.C: I feel helpless now. I understand that security is not a science, and now you are telling

me that I cannot buy it. Instead of telling me what security is not, could you explain instead what it is and how we can get about to being secured?

P.E: Let us start then with the nature of security, the way to get it will be easy to understand. Security is an art form. It may be difficult to grasp at first because we are so used to see security as a business or a would-be science. Even most of the martial arts have become martial sports. Yet like all matters pertaining to the soul or the mind, like music, painting, or acting, it is an art form. However, while the pianist who fails to perform knows only shame, the sanction in security is death.

Now, I have never seen any second-rate "hotel" painting on any mega yacht, nor have I heard the "pianist of the mall" for the party. Only real art will do... Except too often for security. Of course the difference is not obvious for everyone, and that is until the shrapnel starts flying.

B.C: Could you be more specific?

P.E: The trained warriors default predictably to their training and engage in whatever action they see fit. It remains a



confrontation and that confrontation can turn either way. The artist on the other hand will have perceived the intent and thus will have the initiative at all times.

B.C: Would you have examples to illustrate what you try to convey?

P.E: Yes, I do! The subtlest example, because there was actually not even intent, is about an intuition I had one time while escorting a yacht owner at 2am on a narrow and treacherous road. While I am driving, an ominous feeling comes to me, and I become extremely alert, scanning all my senses. As the feeling keeps rising, I slow the car to 3mph, and stay as close as I can to the cliff. There is a sharp turn to the left and I really do not feel like going any further. The car is almost stopped off the road when a huge dumper truck loaded with boulders storms through the night taking the whole width of the road. The feeling goes by and, as I resume my driving, a voice in the back asks: "How did you get that one, Patrick?". There is indeed more to defensive driving than skills and procedures! Another example can illustrate how an artist can become a terrorist's terrorist.

This gentleman happened to be on a published list of people to be assassinated. He was number 3 on the list. Number 2 had just been gunned down with more than 40 bullets, and number 1 had been killed as soon as the list appeared. Now assassination is the worse case for security. Kidnapping is much easier to prevent, and of course this was in a place and at a time where everyone in the streets had at least one firearm. Needless to say that we were applying all security measures since the client had to stay for another week before he could leave. We were driving on a major road, Karl next to me and on the ready, the principal behind, hidden. There was another car 50 yards ahead, yet another 250 yards ahead, and another one behind. The U.N were holding the road, and the first car gave us a "clear" message. Right after we got on that road the mob routed the U.N! It went fast because the unit leader had orders to avoid confrontation. In an instant our car was isolated in the midst of a crowd, with the man they wanted to kill inside the car. Quite a situation! The .50 caliber machine guns were disappearing quickly, the crowd started pummeling on the hood, and there was no way I could force the car through the crowd. We were outnumbered one



thousand to one, outgunned in the same proportion, with no way out. It was time to get to a different level and turn the tables on them. Of course the priority was to protect the principal. When ordered to do so, Karl stepped out of the car with absolute peace of mind quietly returning the crowd's death glare with his own, only deeper, quieter, more frightening. Karl's mute message was received loud and clear and the crowd thinned around him.

B.C: It does not look like sheer luck. How would you explain what happened with the crowd?

P.E: A crowd is one mind with thousand of bodies. Instead of fighting the bodies, I would rather defeat the mind.

B.C: The artist has the mean to intuit the situation, avoid confrontation or summon all kinds of powers to turn the tables on the aggressor.

P.E: Exactly, and we will do our best to preserve peace. Only when cornered we become the terrorist's terrorist. Thus, we become totally unpredictable to the dismay and bewilderment of the opposition used to conventional security.

B.C: How did you get to this approach? Or as we prefer to ask as journalists, what makes you think that you know better?

P.E: I simply had different teachers. While most of us have learned in schools or at best in the field fighting the opposition, I had the opportunity to add to my academic training and field expertise the invaluable experience to infiltrate this opposition for an extended period of time. As I could fathom the limitations of the systems huge paradigm shifts occurred and definitely changed my perspective. Later extensive travel on my ketch was an opportunity to further study different aspects of criminality. While many sailboats would typically anchor next to the local Club Med, my professional curiosity would put me in the commercial harbor bars with the scoundrels and other colorful characters. Sun Tzu said: "Know thy enemy", so while more experts are reading everything printed on the subject, and specialists are training endlessly, I chose to live with them. It gives me the advantage to offer a much lighter yet more effective protection for discriminating yacht Captains or owners. Quite a few Captains know they can count on us, and report that



their owners and guests feel safer whenever we are around.

Bill Curry is a freelance writer and photojournalist living on Florida's nature coast. He is an adventurer and seasoned world traveler. His passions include scuba diving, martial arts, and equestrian events. Clients include Ralph Lauren, Peterson Aviation, Amnesty International, Microsoft, Excel sport management, The Platinum group, Ambrose hotel, and numerous celebrities.

Although trained as a Police Lieutenant, Captain in the French Infanterie de Marine (Marines) and martial arts, it is the 25 years of real field experiences in the world's worst hot spots and the oceans travels beyond civilization, that showed Patrick Estebe the superiority of a soft approach to security.