



**PATRICK CREWDSON**

## The other side of terrorism – a grim rise in media coverage

the Pentagon, the number of attacks dropped to 355.

Over the following two years incidents dropped to a 20-year low: 205 in 2002, 208 the next year. Admittedly, the 9/11 attacks killed an extraordinary number of people, but 2001 still wasn't the most fatal year in recent memory. There were 5799 victims of terrorism that year—895 fewer than in 1998.

As the *Weekend Herald* went on to note, provided you don't live in Iraq, the world is actually a little safer today than it was five years ago.

The State Department's figures beg two questions. Firstly, does the decline in the number of terrorist attacks mean the "War on Terror" is being won? Secondly, if there are actually fewer terrorist attacks, why does it feel as if we're living in "a new and grim age"?

To answer the first question as unequivocally as possible: no, not really. In fact, late last month, US President George W. Bush told an NBC interviewer he didn't think the War on Terror could be won.

A White House spokesman leapt to "clarify" the remark, saying Bush was just talking about winning the war "in the conventional sense", but the point was made: not even the Commander in Chief thinks he's ahead.

The US can claim some successes, such as the capture of high-ranking Al Qaeda officials and the freezing of terrorists' financial assets. But with botched military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq they have also planted the seeds of a thousand more Osama bin Ladens.

So if the decline in the number of terror strikes isn't due to the War on Terror, we're onto the second question: why does it feel like we're living in "a new and grim age"?

The headlines tell the story: "Terror in Beslan" ... "Al Qaeda Links To Jakarta Bombing" ... "Massacre in Madri" ... "Bali Victims Didn't Stand A Chance".

Are terrorist attacks worse these days? Are they striking new targets?

September 11 was in a class of its own, but—believe it or not—there have been worse attacks than Beslan or Bali. The 1980s were something of a Golden Age for terrorism. In 1983 in Beirut, Lebanon, simultaneous truck bomb attacks killed 242 Americans and 58 French troops.

In 1985, a bomb killed 329 people onboard an Air India flight. In the infamous Lockerbie disaster of 1988, a Pan American Airlines plane exploded over Scotland, killing its 259 passengers.

As a Canadian study showed in 1986, terrorist incidents that victimised Western targets and were designed to

attract the attention of the Western media significantly increased between 1968 and 1980. Yet other studies in the 1980s showed only a third of international terrorist incidents were reported by media. That trend continued. This year, the report of the official US commission investigating September 11 criticised the American media for containing insufficient material that would "heighten anyone's concern about terrorism" prior to 9/11.

From 1998-2000 the *New Zealand Herald* printed 44,836 articles that contained the word "terrorism". That's an average of 14,945 per year. For the following three years—a period of fewer terrorist incidents, remember—that average increased by 110%, to 31,410 a year. Essentially then, what has changed dramatically since 9/11 is not the frequency of terrorist attacks, the target, or even the severity, but the coverage.

Are we living in "a new and grim age"? Are we "fated to live with the constant threat of violent death"?

Like I said: the answer is No.

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The answer to the question is No. Most people would say it's Yes, but it's No. The question? It's about terrorism. In the words the *Weekend Herald* used recently: are we living in "a new and grim age, fated to live with the constant threat of violent death?"

And like I said: the answer is No. Each year, the US State Department releases a report called Patterns of Global Terrorism. If anyone could be expected to overstate the danger of terrorism it's the US State Department.

Yet, as the figures in the latest report show, the number of terrorist attacks annually is actually—wait for it—falling. Between 1982 and 2000, there was an average of 459 terrorist attacks worldwide each year. The most deadly year was 1987, with 665. In 2001, the year of the September 11 attacks on New York and

## When a famous 'Fijian' isn't a Fijian, but is an icon for Fiji

A tiny South Pacific nation soared to the pinnacle of world golf this month. Fijian golfer Vijay Singh has done the unthinkable, ending Tiger Woods' 264-week reign as the number one player in golf.

If that wasn't enough, Singh broke the heart of millions of Canadians by defeating their own Mike Weir at the Canadian Open last week. He has earned \$US8.7 million this year alone and is poised to break Woods' prize money record (\$US9.1 million set in 2000).

In Fiji, Singh's win has been greeted with great joy. However, it has also raised a controversial issue dogging Fiji—the use of the term Fijian.

Fiji has a population of about 826,000 of which almost 54% are indigenous Fijians, 40% Indo-Fijians (descendants of Indian migrants who came to work on sugarcane farms) and 6% other races (including descendants of European settlers known in Fiji as part-Europeans).

Anyone born in Fiji carries a passport stating their nationality as Fijian. Singh, undoubtedly the most famous sports person to come out of Fiji, is commonly referred to as Fijian by the world media.

Opinion columns and chat rooms in the local press have been running hot with views on whether Singh should be referred to as a Fijian. While most contributors hail Singh's victory and play down this issue, there are people strongly opposed to the use of Fijian to describe Singh.

Indians are referred to in Fiji media as Indo-Fijians or Fiji Indians. But even the use of Indo-Fijians upsets the nationalists. The 1997 Constitution provided for all people born in Fiji being called Fiji Islanders. But this term lost favour after the George Speight coup.

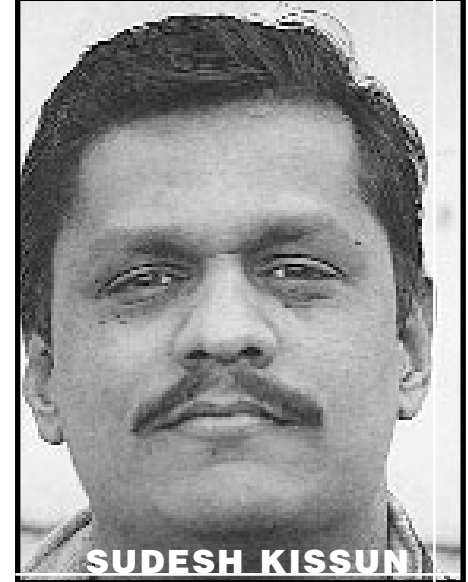
In August, firebrand nationalist and chief Adi Litia Cakobau shocked the nation by telling the Senate that use of the term Indo-Fijian should be crimi-

nalised. She accused the Indian community of usurping the name Fijian and using it to mislead the international community.

No mention of Indo-Fijians or Fiji Indians is made in population figures released by New Zealand Statistics. A spokesperson from New Zealand Statistics says Fiji Indians identify themselves as Indians and are counted together with those from India and the Asia sub-continent. Vijay Singh is too far away (and probably not even interested) in what is said about his win in his home country.

However, can the people of Fiji afford to let this issue ruin a remarkable sporting achievement for the country? When Fiji won the World Cup rugby sevens tournament in 1997, a public holiday was announced to celebrate the victory.

Everyone is waiting on the Government to announce how they plan to honour Singh. The least the



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Government can do in Singh's honour and for the sake of stability is to endorse Fijian as the common name for all Fiji citizens. Such a move will take Fiji to the number one spot in the world as far as racial harmony and reconciliation is concerned.

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### Fiona Webster's Monterrey diary

This week, a subject which is close to my heart – food. I've been in Monterrey, Mexico since 19 June and I've sampled a fair amount of what is on offer as far as food is concerned. So far I've been fairly underwhelmed, which could have something to do with my not eating meat or chicken.

Much of Mexican cuisine sold from street stalls of which there are many, is

## Tacos, tortillas or nachos?

barbequed meat or chicken (carne o pollo). You can get tacos, tortillas or nachos with fried onion, meat or chicken or refried beans (frijoles) all with or without cheese (queso).

Guacamole is served as a side order. Mexicans are not big on salads; lettuce and a slice of tomato are used to garnish. During my first few days here I wandered around the city, which is the only way to really get to know a place, and almost by instinct stumbled across the busy market.

It is very easy to get carried away at the market and soon I was weighed down by bargains. I had enough food for a week including broccoli, that I love, 2 litres of

freshly squeezed orange juice for around NZ \$10.

In restaurants there is more choice for the non meat/chicken eater.

One night Rachel, Tabea and I went to a local low-budget restaurant, which Tabea had been to before. The waiter spoke English well, but just in case I said "por favor sin carne, sin pollo".

"Yes certainly," he nodded, smiling and pointing to items on the menu. "These are vegetarian. Would you like a selection?"

"Muchos gracias," I replied feeling confident that my dinner was not going to be tainted by flesh.

Our meals were presented beautifully. Rachel and Tabea had ordered a selection from the menu to sample a few different dishes. I had the vegetarian version,

which oddly enough, came without guacamole or chillied onions. There were two tacos filled with cheese, two tortillas filled with beans and cheese, and two tamales, beans cooked in corn leaves, quite tasty, but beans again. There was the obligatory handful of lettuce and slice of tomato and what I thought was pasta.

"Don't eat that!" Tabea lunged at my plate to remove the white curly pieces.

"I don't know the English word for it but it's from the cow."

Tripe. Since when has tripe been vegetarian? I remain cautious.

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