

**TRAVEL ADVICE: GETTING INFORMATION
TO THOSE WHO NEED IT**

By Rachel Briggs

ABOUT RACHEL BRIGGS

Rachel Briggs runs the Risk and Security Research Programme at The Foreign Policy Centre. Her work focuses on how the changing security environment impacts on personal and corporate safety and security. Her report, *The Kidnapping Business* puts forward a practical policy agenda for all the major groups affected – the Foreign Office, business and NGOs. The report received considerable attention among these policy groups. As a result of the report, the Foreign Office has changed the way it organises its travel advice for those visiting hot-spot countries, and the report is used as a training tool for NGOs exposed to the risk. Rachel's work has been covered in newspapers, such as the Sunday Telegraph, the Financial Times, the Times, and the Sunday Express; and in specialist publications, such as Energy Day, Insurance Day and Foreign Policy magazine. Rachel regularly broadcasts and writes on kidnapping and other aspects of criminal economies.

ABOUT THE FOREIGN POLICY CENTRE

The Foreign Policy Centre is an independent think tank committed to developing innovative thinking and effective solutions for our increasingly interdependent world. We aim to broaden perceptions of what foreign policy is, revitalise public debate around foreign policy goals, and find new ways of getting people involved.

For more information about the Centre's Risk and Security Research Programme, please contact Rachel Briggs, Risk and Security Programme Manager, on 020 7401 5356 or by email at rachel@fpc.org.uk.

First published in 2002 by The Foreign Policy Centre, The Mezzanine, Elizabeth House, 39 York Road, London SE1 7NQ, www.fpc.org.uk, info@fpc.org.uk

© The Foreign Policy Centre 2002

All Rights Reserved

ISBN 1 903558 16 6

CONTENTS

Introduction.....	4
Chapter One: How and Where are Britons Falling into Trouble Overseas?	7
Chapter Two: Can Travel Advice Make a Difference?	11
Chapter Three: What are the Barriers to Getting Travel Advice to Those Who Need It?	14
Chapter Four: How can the Current Travel Advice Providers Better Deliver for British Travellers?.....	23
Chapter Five: Recommendations for Change.....	32
Appendix One: Examples of Travel Advice Providers.....	34
Government Travel Advice Services	34
Non-government Dedicated Travel Advice Providers	35
Non-government Non-Dedicated Travel Advice Providers	36

INTRODUCTION

The nearest most people get to Foreign Office travel advice is hearing about it on the news. When Pakistan and India threaten nuclear holocaust, when Central Europe floods, when a new wave of suicide bombings erupts in the Middle East, changes to Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) travel advice become a news story. Travel advice is always linked in the public mind to hurried evacuations and imminent threats to life and limb. Of course, the news stories are always lopsided – we hear about advice when it becomes more stringent but never when it is relaxed. And this, perhaps, is part of the problem. People do not see travel advice as something that applies to them when they go on their package holiday to Ibiza or Silver anniversary cruise on the Nile. The ordinary, common risks that result in the most harm and place greatest strain on British consulates world-wide – muggings through being in the wrong part of town after nightfall, diseases after drinking contaminated water – lose out to the “Briton kidnapped” or “Briton on death row” stories.

Travel Advice is an attempt to redress this by looking at how the Foreign Office can give all travellers a proportionate and informed sense of the risks they might face.

The first chapter shows that more Britons are getting in trouble abroad. The number of Britons imprisoned, hospitalised, dying or in need of an emergency passport has risen over the last five years. Perhaps not surprisingly, as chapter two shows, Britons are more likely to get into trouble in less commonly visited countries. With the predicted 10 per cent growth in travel – and in particular the increase in adventure tourism and the growing investment and operations of British companies and their personnel in emerging markets – these trends are likely to continue. Though some risks – natural disasters and political turmoil – are in the lap of the gods, many hazards can be avoided with sound advice.

This publication does not intend to signal a crisis in the safety of Britons: the steady growth in overseas travel has been an overwhelmingly healthy phenomenon. Naturally, only a tiny proportion of Britons end up in trouble, and there is no evidence to suggest that they are any more prone to danger than other Westerners. It is not even necessarily true that the world is becoming more dangerous – the rising living standards and development of infrastructure that can accompany globalisation has made many places less forbidding. The fact that more people are travelling abroad is a sign that we've sloughed off layers of superstition and ignorance about the rest of the world. But while the increased familiarity with the rest of the world can leave people better informed, it can also breed complacency. The comforting sight

of McDonalds and BP in remote locations and the nonchalant ease of modern travel can lull travellers into a false sense of security.

Chapter three looks at the different risks faced by those on package holidays, independent travellers and those travelling for work. It argues that there is widespread ambiguity about who is responsible for the safety of these individuals abroad: evidence shows that conventional holidaymakers tend to feel that their tour operator cocoons them from danger. Business travellers assume that the company wouldn't send them to dangerous places. Meanwhile, there is an assumption amongst many humanitarian and aid workers that the support for their work amongst local communities will buy them immunity from harm.

The schema adopted is also far from comprehensive. *Travel Advice* divides according to the type of travel rather than the type of traveller. Though socio-economic factors – gender, age, income bracket, ethnicity – are important in targeting travel advice, and worthy of further research, I judge that risks are largely determined by reasons for travel rather than identity. There are, of course, exceptions, as illustrated by the recent FCO advice that “visibly Western” – meaning White – Britons faced greater and different risks in Pakistan.

The fourth chapter, a survey of existing travel advice provision, argues that information is not getting through to those who need it. A tiny proportion of travellers consult Foreign Office travel advice, and the uniform format in which advice is offered cannot meet the needs of different travelling groups. Chapter five concludes with a menu of policy-options showing how Government partnerships with Business, the Travel Industry and the Aid Community might improve the dissemination of advice. Though the remedies outlined in *Travel Advice* will require a lot of institutional energy and co-ordination, the goal is simple. Checking Foreign Office travel advice should become as natural as checking that you have your passport, tickets and foreign currency before travelling abroad.

Travel Advice is not intended to be an exhaustive study of the risks faced by people travelling abroad, nor a guide to the information available to different groups of travellers. Though this report does not create a hierarchy of risk, clearly the theft of a wallet in Ibiza is less significant than a kidnapping in Bogota. Neither is it a discussion of the content of Foreign Office travel advice or the extent of personal responsibility. When travellers have ignored official advice and ended up in trouble, should diplomatic resources be spent trying to get them out? When Britons smuggle drugs into Malaysia or Thailand should the Government spend political capital trying to ameliorate their conditions of detention? In an increasingly individualistic age is it appropriate that the Man from the Ministry is responsible for making sure that

you don't go swimming in the dark? These are interesting questions, but beyond the scope of this report. Thousands of hours of consular time are spent picking up the pieces after easily avoidable accidents. *Travel Advice* argues that if the Foreign Office is to continue with its current responsibilities to Britons overseas, prevention is better than cure.

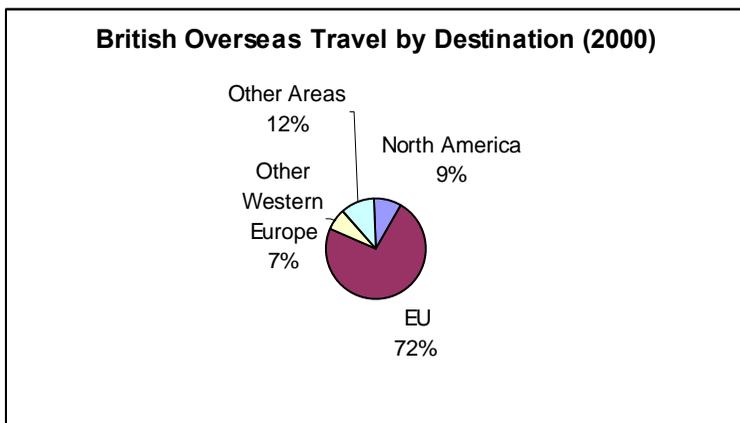
CHAPTER ONE: HOW AND WHERE ARE BRITONS FALLING INTO TROUBLE OVERSEAS?

This chapter will show that:

- More Britons are getting into trouble overseas and there are signs that the FCO will struggle to keep pace with growing demands
- Britons are more likely to fall into difficulties outside Europe or North America, in areas which are experiencing some of the fastest growth rates for British travellers

Where Britons are Travelling – and where they are getting into trouble

It is estimated that Britons will make 60 million trips abroad in 2002.¹ As the chart below shows, the majority of overseas trips are to countries within Europe and North America. In fact, three quarters of all overseas visits in 2000 were to just ten countries – France, Spain, the USA, Republic of Ireland, Greece, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Portugal.



Source: International Passenger Survey 2000

Britons are less likely, though, to fall into trouble in these top ten countries. While countries outside the top ten accounted for just 25 per cent of trips, they were the site of all kidnaps and abductions, two-thirds of all serious robberies and nearly half of all rapes that took place overseas in 2001. British prisoners and detainees overseas also follow this trend. For example, one-third are held outside Europe or North America, although these countries account for just one-eighth of all trips.

Location of major incidents – 2001

	Robbery %	Assault %	Rape %	Homicide %	Abduction/ Kidnap %	Terrorist Action %
Top ten destinations	35.8	58	51.1	42	0	12.5
Rest of world	64.2	42	48.9	58	100	87.5

Source: Foreign and Commonwealth Office Consular Division statistics

It is notable then, that the countries outside Europe, where travellers seem to be more likely to fall into trouble, are experiencing some of the fastest growth rates for British travellers. The table below compares the number of visits made by Britons in 1986 and 2000 to North America, the EU, Other Western European countries and other areas of the world (see footnote for information on the countries included in each group).² European countries are experiencing the lowest growth rates, while North America and 'other' areas are well above average, rising by 333.6 per cent and 259.9 per cent respectively. Between 1998 and 2000, travel to the Middle East rose by just over 20 per cent and British visitors to Africa increased by almost as much. This trend is likely to continue as the appetite for long haul or adventure travel continues and as British companies increase their investment in emerging markets.

Visits Abroad by UK residents, 1986 and 2000

Year	North Am	EU	Other W Europe	Other Areas	Total
1986	4.68% (1,167,000)*	76.64% (19,120,000)	11.1% (2,757,000)	7.64% (1,905,000)	24,949,000
2000	8.90% (5,060,000)	72.38% (41,140,000)	6.65% (3,780,000)	12.06% (6,856,000)	56,837,000
% change 1986-2000	+333.6%	+115.2%	+37.1%	+259.9%	+127.8%
	ABOVE AVERAGE	BELOW AVERAGE	BELOW AVERAGE	ABOVE AVERAGE	(AVERAGE)

Source: International Passenger Survey 2000³

*() – total numbers

Britons face a number of dangers when travelling overseas – from serious problems, such as being raped, assaulted, or kidnapped or falling victim to a terrorist act, to less serious incidents, such as having passports, money or other valuables stolen or suffering from mild stomach bugs brought on by drinking tap water. The table below shows the types of incidents travellers are experiencing. It should be noted, though, that these figures represent only the most serious incidents where London had to be involved in some way in resolving the cases. It is, in fact, difficult to get a proper sense of the scale of the problem. Many more incidents are handled by embassies on their own and don't appear in these statistics, and even more problems aren't reported to the embassy at all, but handled by the individual traveller, their

insurance company, tour operator or employer. The FCO is planning to introduce a new database shortly that will make it easier to get hold of this information, and this is to be welcomed.

There is also evidence to show that the total number of travel incidents is growing. Over the last five years, the number of emergency passports issued rose by over a quarter, with just under ten thousand issued in 2000. The number of Britons involved in deaths, accidents or who were hospitalised overseas rose by 10 per cent during the same period, and there were almost 50 per cent more Britons in prison or detained overseas in 1999-2000 than there were in 1995-96.⁴ On 1st June 2001 there were 3,297 British nationals in prisons overseas, and in 2000-2001 consular staff made 6,254 prison visits. There is also evidence of a growth between 2000 and 2001. As the table below shows, during this period the number of serious assaults rose by over 80 per cent, there were 20 per cent more homicides, 10 per cent more abductions and the number of Britons caught up in terrorist action has doubled.

Serious Crimes	Cases involving London * - 2000	Cases involving London * - 2001
Robbery	190	125
Assault	120	219
Rape	117	90
Homicide	35	43
Abduction/Kidnap	29	32
Terrorist Action	4	8

Source: Foreign and Commonwealth Office Consular Division statistics

* London is only involved in the most serious of cases.

As the appetite for overseas travel continues to grow, particularly to countries where Britons have a higher chance of falling into danger, it is important that the FCO is able to keep pace with demand, both for advice and assistance when things go wrong. While the FCO predicts a 10 per cent growth over the next two years,⁵ it is not able to guarantee its funding will rise in line with this. This should give cause for concern, as one-fifth of travellers are uninsured; half believe British consulates can get them out of prison if they are arrested; one-third believe they can offer loans if you run out of money and one-fifth assume they can get you better treatment in hospital than that given to locals. As the case study below shows, when travellers fail to seek out or follow advice, the impacts are not just felt by the individual traveller. In many cases, especially where the traveller is uninsured, the FCO or organisations such as tour operators and employers end up picking up the pieces, or at least committing staff resources to help resolve the problem.

Luke, a young British back-packer travelling in Australia without travel insurance, was bitten by a mosquito and contracted Murray Valley Encephalitis. This left him a quadriplegic. Without travel insurance, the cost of getting him back to the UK would have run into tens of thousands of pounds because he would need a full medical team and ventilators. Although the FCO were not able to pay, they committed a considerable number of staff hours convincing the airlines to discount their fees and the Northern Territory Hospital to make a substantial contribution to the costs.

Source: The Consular Division's 2001 Annual Review

It is important that this situation is addressed. While the system has not reached a critical point, if the trends outlined in this chapter continue into the long-term the pressure on the FCO may outstrip its ability to deliver effectively. It is far more sensible to address this situation now rather than wait until it becomes a serious problem.

CHAPTER TWO: CAN TRAVEL ADVICE MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

This chapter will show that:

- Travellers face different sorts of risks in different countries – from relatively low and familiar risks in Europe and North America, to higher and less familiar risks in some countries outside these areas. The content of advice should therefore be largely dependent on the country or region being visited.
- Even seasoned travellers can be taken off-guard in a new country, and fail to recognise the signs that would normally allow them to avoid trouble. Travel advice can give travellers the information they need to create ‘sense-maps’ for their new environment.

Europe and North America – low risk countries

The majority of overseas travel is within Europe and North America. In these countries, while travellers can face higher risks in some places, most are largely similar to or on the same scale as those faced at home in the UK, such as petty street crime and assaults, and so the need for travel advice is low. In most cases, common sense is enough to keep travellers out of harm. The table below shows some of the main risks identified by the FCO for those visiting some of the most popular destinations.

Risks Facing Travellers

Country	Specific Risks
France	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Theft from cars with foreign number plates ▪ Theft of valuables left unattended on the beach ▪ Pick pockets in main cities
Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Street crime ▪ Car crime, including other motorists signalling there is a problem and for you to pull over and stop ▪ Continuing terrorist threat from ETA, main targets of which are Spanish politicians, members of the security forces, judges and journalists
USA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Risk of robbery while inside hotel room ▪ Wearing ostentatious jewellery can make travellers stand out as victims for criminals ▪ Attacks and robbery more likely in obviously run-down areas
Greece	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Theft ▪ Incidence of rape low, but lone women advised to take sensible precautions and avoid accepting lifts from strangers or passing acquaintances
Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mugging, pick pocketing and bag snatching ▪ Need to carry passports as a form of ID
Italy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pick pockets and bag snatchers in crowded areas ▪ Robberies from cars at rest stops and petrol stations on motorways
The Netherlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pick pockets working in gangs, especially in Amsterdam ▪ Heavy speeding fines

Outside Europe and North America – higher risk countries

As we have seen, Britons travelling outside Europe and North America are more likely to fall into trouble. While some problems, such as unpredictable natural disasters or sudden political turmoil, are unavoidable, most risks can be avoided with sound advice. Researching the effects of the social and physical environment on expatriates in West Africa, Wicker and August showed that recognition of cultural differences is one of the key defences to staying safe. They call this an individual's 'sense-making' cycles, "...people as they go about their daily lives are exposed to a vast array of events...the particular environmental events that they notice depend on their existing 'cause-map', their prior understandings about the world." This explains why even employees who live in cities with higher crime rates in the UK than their posting can fall victim to local street crimes because they are unable to read the signs as they would have done at home.⁶ Travel advice can help by providing information that allows individuals to create their new sense-making cycles. As the case study below shows, even simple pieces of information can make a significant difference.

Tom Hargrove was an agricultural scientist working in Colombia when he was kidnapped by the guerrilla group the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Driving to work he was met by a crossroads and a choice: he could either drive through the busy, congested streets of Cali in the rush-hour or take the scenic route through the countryside on the outskirts of the city. He took the scenic route and, as he says, "This was the last decision I made for the next 12 months." His car was stopped shortly down the road at a roadblock and he was taken away by the guerrillas at gunpoint. The risk of kidnapping in Colombia is clear in travel advice about the country, especially the fact that kidnappings usually take place, not in Colombia's violent cities, but in the countryside around them. If Tom had known this, his decision that morning might have been different.⁷

As the table below shows for a number of countries across Asia, South America, Africa and Eastern Europe, each country brings its own specific risks that travellers will not be able to predict without prior knowledge. Simple advice about these common criminal scams, health risks or political risks can enable individuals to significantly reduce their chances of falling into danger. For example, while it is common practice in Europe for hotel visitors to leave their passports with reception staff, in Thailand there is a healthy trade in stolen passports and visitors are advised not to hand them over.

Risks in Countries outside Europe and North America

Country	Specific Risks
Algeria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bomb explosions, especially around train stations ▪ Typhoid
Bangladesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Threat of violence at public gathering ▪ Armed robbery, pick-pocketing and purse-snatching, often by pairs on motorcycles or 3-wheel "baby taxis" ▪ Banditry on trains
Colombia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Kidnapping, especially in rural areas and outside main cities⁸
Latvia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Drink spiking in casinos and clubs ▪ Car theft
Mexico	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased risk of attack and robbery from unauthorised taxis ▪ Short-term kidnappings from cash points⁹
South Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rape ▪ Generally high levels of crime in townships and isolated areas
Thailand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Theft of credit cards and passports, especially from third parties, such as hotel owners or care hire companies ▪ High penalties for even small drug possession. Imprisonment can be up to 50 years, or even the death penalty

*Source: Foreign and Commonwealth Office web site
(www.fco.gov.uk/travel)*

This chapter does not seek to paint a simplified picture about risk around the world. There are parts of Europe and North America where travellers face unpredictable risks, and there are many countries outside this area where the problems are similar to those at home, for example Australia and the Caribbean islands. Indeed, many travellers return without incident from all corners of the world. These tables are instead intended to highlight the fact that some countries bring unfamiliar risks and others do not, and that travel advice can help to better prepare travellers to overcome the dangers they face by aiding the creation of sense-making cycles and cause-maps. While many risks in a particular country will apply to all travellers, some will be specific to an individual group. For example, women, certain ethnic backgrounds, visibly wealthy businessmen, and so forth. The point this chapter seeks to show is that travel advice *can* make a difference, but as we will see in more detail in the next chapter, the identity of the traveller will influence their likelihood of finding or using it.

CHAPTER THREE: WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS TO GETTING TRAVEL ADVICE TO THOSE WHO NEED IT?

This chapter will show that:

- Travel advice is not getting to the people who need it. Britons have a poor understanding of the risks they face when they travel and where to go for information
- Travellers may not follow advice, either because it does not get to them or because they assume they don't need it
- Package holiday-makers assume they are not at risk, or that tour operators will take responsibility for their safety
- Independent travellers are more aware of their responsibility for their own safety, but might expect embassies to pick up the pieces if something goes wrong
- Business travellers assume their employer will take responsibility for their safety (or that they would not be sent somewhere where there are risks), and changing travel trends are reducing the time for preparation
- Aid and humanitarian workers assume their status within local communities will give them immunity from security threats

Britons seem to have a very poor appreciation of the risks they face when travelling overseas. In a recent piece of research commissioned by the FCO, just nine per cent of respondents were able to name a potential risk they may have been exposed to on their last overseas trip. This is not surprising, given that awareness of the potential sources of travel advice is low. Of this group, over half of all respondents had relied on word of mouth, while just 2 per cent had consulted the FCO or a consulate overseas. Travel advice doesn't seem to be getting through.¹⁰

Britons traveling overseas are doing so for a wide variety of reasons – from holidays to independent travel, corporate travel to aid workers. For each of these broad groups there are a number of barriers to getting advice through to the people who need it. There can be confusion about whether or not the individual is responsible for seeking out advice; many underestimate the risks they face, and some of the groups are better-served by organizations, such as tour operators or employers, that have an interest in their safety and so make an effort to deliver advice to their customers and employees. There are also a number of second-order factors such as gender, age or experience of travel that can determine the most effective methods of communication. For example, young people may respond more positively to non-official sources, gay and lesbian travellers may be best reached through specific publications and web sites, and ethnic minorities may be effectively reached through local groups rather than through official government channels.

This chapter will focus mainly on the four reasons for travel, and the main conclusions are summarised in the table below:

Travel Groups – Factors Affecting their Travel Advice Needs

Travel Group	Factors
Holiday-makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Most common travel group ▪ Generally low risk exposure (Europe and North America) ▪ Basic advice needs – ‘common sense’ and risks are similar to those faced at home ▪ Individuals assume tour operators will take responsibility for their safety
Independent Travellers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Potentially high exposure (depending on destination) ▪ Well-served by a series of travel advice providers ▪ With the absence of tour operators or employers, independent travellers are more aware of their own responsibilities for their safety – although not necessarily when things go wrong
Business Travellers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Majority of trips within Europe and North America ▪ Rising risk exposure due to growth of investment and business travel in less familiar/higher-risk countries ▪ Individuals assume employers will take responsibility for their safety ▪ Capacity to cope varies between companies – from large multi-national companies (MNCs) to small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs)
Aid/ Development workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Highest risk exposure of all travel groups ▪ Previous protective strategies around ‘immunity’ are less effective as status of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) changes ▪ Need to overcome assumptions within this community about role of travel advice in delivering safety and security

Holiday-Makers

In 2000, holidays accounted for two-thirds of all overseas trips made by Britons.¹¹ Of these, half were package holidays (one-third of all trips), with the remainder being independent travel or trips to visit family and friends.

Package holiday-makers

Package holiday-makers tend to be exposed to the lowest risks of all groups of travellers. Ninety per cent of all holidays in 2000 (including independent travel and trips to see friends and family) were taken within Europe or North America, where the risks are usually low and the dangers faced tend to be similar to those at home. As Bob Boyce, Head of Programme Delivery for Thomas Cook Tour Operations, commented, “We find that the types of problems faced by our customers [in relation to travel advice] can be divided into four categories. Firstly, illness, which is usually caused by poor hygiene. Secondly, accidents, which are usually caused by driving, falling from balconies or drowning. Thirdly, personal attacks, muggings and rapes. And finally, death in the resort, which may be due to a prior condition or be caused by any one of the other three types of problems.”¹²

Travel advice providers therefore often struggle to convince holiday-makers of the need to seek out advice. As James Alvarez of Clarity Advisors Group explains, “You need to answer the question – what does it mean to me? Why do I care about this? The problem is that these are people who are going on *holiday*. You’re trying to give them information that essentially is a *dampener* in their eyes and they don’t understand why.”¹³ It is not surprising, then, that awareness about potential risks is so low. Alan Flook from the Federation of Tour Operators (FTO) commented, “There is still an amazing amount of ignorance among the travelling public, even about the most popular destinations and the most common problems.”¹⁴ The poll carried out for the FCO showed that the greatest number of people travelling without travel insurance is within the package and independent travel groups.¹⁵

The very nature of the organised package holiday, where travellers simply chose where, when and how much and then leave the rest to their tour operator or travel agent creates an assumption among holiday-makers that they do not need to seek out advice beyond that explicitly given to them. Bob Boyce of Thomas Cook Tour Operations comments on the relationship between the traveller and the tour operator: “Thomas Cook customers don’t need to consider the difficulties of travelling to a country on their own. The majority buy packages, they are met by our reps, they are hand-delivered to the hotel, and the reps are there for any problems they might have during their holiday.”¹⁶ As a result, many tour operators, travel agents and other travel industry organisations have begun offering travel advice to their customers, usually re-packaging the FCO’s advice in brochures, on their web sites, and at welcome meetings in the resort. (See Appendix 1).

There is no formal requirement for them to offer this advice, but these organisations have an interest in ensuring their customers remain safe. Tour operators and travel agents want their customers to enjoy their holiday and come back again next year, and are keen to avoid any financial or reputational damage that might arise if customers fall into significant danger. If they do, customers may hold their tour operator responsible and seek legal redress. By offering advice about potential risks, tour operators are able to illustrate they have taken reasonable steps to keep their customers away from danger. Some insurers are beginning to offer travel advice to policy-holders. There are incentives for them to do this, although many package holiday-makers may not realize that their insurance may become void if they are found to have contributed to the problem they have encountered. (See Appendix 1).

These organisations are in regular contact with package holiday-makers and are therefore well placed to deliver travel advice. In particular, tour operators are present on the ground during the holiday, when travellers are likely to be

most receptive to information about their trip (see section below on business travellers for more information on this point).

Independent travellers

Independent travellers are potentially at high risk of falling into danger when they travel overseas. Figures have not been available about which are the most popular destinations, but flights operate to almost every country in the world, and the massive range of Lonely Planet and other guide books is testament to the appetite for travel to far flung corners of the world. Like the other groups of travellers, the level and type of risk faced by an individual will depend on their itinerary and appetite for adventure.

Unlike package holiday-makers, whose holiday needs are almost exclusively delivered to them by their tour operator, there is no single organisation that takes responsibility for the safety of independent travellers. The absence of such an organisation creates a barrier to getting information through to independent travellers and they are left to seek it out for themselves. Guides, such as The Lonely Planet and Rough Guide, include information about safety and security alongside practical guidance about accommodation and places to see. They are in contact with a number of actors – including airlines and insurers – but few have a direct interest in ensuring individuals return home safely.

While this means there is less ambiguity about who is responsible for the safety of independent travellers – they are – this is not necessarily the case when something goes wrong. As the case of the backpacker in Australia in chapter one showed, in the event of an emergency – especially when travellers are not covered by insurance – independent travellers may find themselves unable to solve their problem on their own and will therefore rely on organisations like the FCO to help. And even when they do have insurance, some companies may not pay out if the policy-holder is found to be in some part responsible for their predicament, such as if they were under the influence of alcohol or ignored advice that was offered. However, independent travellers are one of the most likely of all groups to take out travel insurance. In a study carried out on behalf of the FCO in 2001, three-quarters of independent travellers claimed they always take out travel insurance, with just 15 per cent never taking it out, below average for all travellers.

Business Travellers

The level of risk faced by business travellers largely depends on the country or region they are visiting. The majority of business trips, like holidays, are to countries within Europe or North America, but business travellers are more likely to venture further afield than their holidaying counterparts. In 2000, almost one quarter of business trips were outside Western Europe as opposed to one fifth of holidays, and this trend could increase as investment by UK companies in emerging markets continues to rise. Many business travellers will have limited contact with the local culture. They fly in, are met by pre-arranged drivers, stay at international hotels and fly out straight after the meeting. But those who stay longer or do not have the luxuries of a large multi-national may come into greater contact with the local population than holiday-makers, who tend to be situated within self-contained resorts. In these cases, business travellers require guidance about local cultural norms. For example, it is vital for visitors to some countries to be aware of formal and informal codes of dress and behaviour, particularly with regard to sexual relations, alcohol and drugs. One western businessman was detained for two years in Iran on charges of 'being a non-Muslim and having knowledge of a Muslim woman'.¹⁷ It is important that travellers are able to adjust their 'sense-making' cycles and 'cause-maps' to avoid getting into trouble unnecessarily.

Emerging trends in business travel raise important challenges for advice providers. For example, it is often difficult to schedule sufficient time for preparation as trips are now made at increasingly short notice. Adrian Gorham, Security Manager for O2, comments on one of the impacts this can have, "The health of our people is key to the business – people are our key asset. But business travel is often arranged at short notice, which can make injections difficult. We therefore try to inoculate our frequent flyers, but it is often difficult to predict who will need to travel."¹⁸ Also, while the number of trips is rising, the length of each trip is falling. In 1999, the British spent 45.6 million nights away on business – nearly a fifth more than five years earlier; the number of expatriate and international assignments and placements is growing rapidly; but the typical assignment length is falling – old-style 'expats' are a dying breed.¹⁹ There is a danger that travellers will mistake shorter trips for lower risks, and become complacent about seeking out advice. Conversely, one should not assume that being overseas for an extended length of time would necessarily lower risks. Many may become cavalier and relaxed about the risks and make mistakes. There is also evidence to show that travellers suffer from stress brought about by a lack of understanding of their new environment. This can cause them to avoid contact with the local culture and means they remain inexperienced of the cultural differences, even into the long-term.²⁰

There are a number of organisations with a direct interest in ensuring business travellers are well advised and remain safe when travelling

overseas. Most notably, their employers have an interest in keeping them safe as they face the prospect of litigation should something go wrong. The reach of the employer's responsibility for the safety of their employees is far from clear. While companies have a 'duty of care', there are no agreed standards of best practice outlining how exactly they should deliver their 'due care', and it is less clear who is responsible for sub-contractors.²¹ Regardless, many seek advice from a number of sources – both government and non-government – and re-package this for their staff through intranets, and other communication channels. These providers themselves have an interest in making sure their clients don't fall into difficulty, as they sell their services on reputation. Some do also provide crisis response services for when something goes wrong at an additional cost. The FCO also has an interest in ensuring that British citizens travelling on business have safe journeys and that companies continue to feel confident about investing overseas.

The business community is not homogeneous. There are, for instance, important distinctions to be made between large multi-nationals (MNCs) and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). MNCs are likely to have greater experience of investing overseas, and many have well-developed systems to manage the provision of travel advice to staff. Economies of scale mean they are more likely to be able to commit sufficient budgets for external advice and service providers, and they are often able to attract the most experienced security managers because of the benefits they can offer. In fact, some SMEs don't even have security managers, with this role being managed elsewhere within the company, by, for example, the personnel manager, the risk manager or local managers on the ground. While it is important that the business community as a whole is well served by travel advice providers, it is critical that the needs of SMEs are being met.

There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that the presence of so many organisations with an interest in the safety of individual business travellers leads many to assume someone else is taking care of their safety. Many may assume that their employer would either not send them to a country where they will face risks significantly higher than those at home, or will explicitly warn them prior to travel if the risks are higher or different. As one former kidnap victim in Colombia commented, "I didn't know how big the risk of kidnapping was there. Of course, I knew Colombia wasn't the safest country in the world, but I assumed that my company would be able to keep me away from harm."²² A recent study by Paul Barker, Regional Security Advisor at Chevron Texaco, shows that many employees underestimate the risks they face. Surveying employees of his then employer, BG, in Sao Paulo and Cairo on their attitudes to risk, his study showed that, with the exception of those accompanied by dependants or those who had previously experienced a security incident, most employees consistently underestimated the level of

risk they were exposed to. The study describes one respondent in Cairo who felt the restriction imposed by BG on internal travel to Luxor was unnecessary, with thousands of tourists travelling there each week. He was unaware of the risks to passengers from ordinary crime on the train and the history of attacks by small terrorist groups from the trackside. The FCO and US State Department both had a warning on this risk, but the advice hadn't got through.²³

Even when companies provide their staff with information and advice, many do not read it. Joe Hana of ChevronTexaco commented, "When our people travel we hit them everyday with security up-dates via email – but they don't read them. They call you the next day when something has gone wrong and wonder why you didn't warn them." The same study as above backs up this assertion, showing that many incidents are caused by employees not following basic safety advice, "Interviews conducted post-incident by local management...suggest more and more of these incidents are 'self-inflicted'. ...Other examples to support this assessment are the abduction of a female dependent driving a car at 11pm with the windows wound down, doors unlocked, with no driver in a deserted part of a residential estate [Trinidad]. A robbery following the hailing of a taxi in the wrong part of town [Sao Paulo], and an assault and robbery as a couple was the last to leave a beach after sunset [Sao Paulo]. One occurrence even followed a security management briefing on staying safe in Sao Paulo attended by the victim."²⁴ In each of these cases, the victims had been warned about these specific dangers and how to avoid them, but they had chosen to ignore the advisories.

Aid and Humanitarian Workers

Aid workers and company employees share many of the same issues around duty of care in relation to travel advice. However, because aid, humanitarian and development workers are in the business of working in the most remote and unstable areas of the world, and face some of the highest travel risks of all groups, they have developed distinct approaches to travel security and have much higher risk thresholds. As the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) states: "Danger is inherent in the working conditions of ICRC staff and eliminating it completely would mean withdrawing all personnel from their working environment."²⁵ It is therefore important to set them apart as a separate group with different needs to the business community.

Between January 1992 and February 2000, 184 UN staff died, 98 of whom were murdered, and countless others have been injured. In 1998, for the first time the number of civilian UN staff killed in the line of duty exceeded their military counterparts.²⁶ This is a chilling statistic, which highlights the level of risk they face. Their exposure to risk is increasing for two reasons. Firstly, more and more agencies are now working in high-risk danger zones, which were previously the exclusive preserve of the ICRC. Secondly, while aid

agencies used to be able to rely on their status within local communities to buy them immunity from harm, this position has been eroded over recent years. As Koenrad Van Brabant comments, “Overall respect for aid agencies and therefore for the ‘immunity’ of their staff has significantly decreased in recent years, and [that] on a number of occasions aid agencies have been targeted for political reasons or because they are a ‘soft and wealthy’ target.”²⁷

There are a number of organisations with an interest in maintaining the safety and security of aid and humanitarian workers, and many maintain regular contact. These include aid organisations, the FCO, the Department for International Development (DFID) and the United Nations (UN), to name just a few. However, few have the responsibility for delivering travel advice to this community, although some new organisations, such as RedR are beginning to offer valuable information, advice and training.

As the dangers facing aid workers increase, and their previous immunity continues to fall, the sector has faced up to the need to professionalise its security arrangements, of which issuing travel advice is an important part. As Koenrad Van Brabant stresses, “...the direct experience of working in acutely dangerous situations, and particularly the direct experience of dramatic, fatal or potentially fatal incidents acts as a major stimulus for the strengthening of security management...Examples of this are Somalia in the early 1990s; the Great Lakes since 1994; Chechnya in 1996 – 1997, and in 1999 the (contemplated) return to the northern Caucasus; Sierra Leone since the mid-1990s; and most recently, the murder of three UN staff members in West Timor.”²⁸ These management systems provide some of the infrastructure vital in ensuring travel advice reaches those who need it.

Advice providers face critical challenges in communicating with aid and humanitarian workers. Assumptions about immunity still persist across the sector, and this influences the extent to which individuals and their employers believe they are at risk. Until changes are made on a wider scale to how agencies manage security – including the delivery of travel advice – confusion will persist among staff about what they can and cannot expect from their employers and where reasonable boundaries of responsibility should lie between the two.

This chapter has shown some of the difficulties in ensuring that travel advice gets to the people who need it. In many cases, individuals assume that someone else will take care of their safety and so effectively relinquish their own responsibilities. But it has shown that for each type of traveller there are a number of organisations with a direct or indirect interest in keeping them

safe. Many are in frequent contact with the individual traveller, and this raises opportunities for the effective communication of travel advice.

Ultimately, though, even travel advice gets through to those who need it most, its value in preventing travellers from falling into trouble rests on whether or not individuals act on it. If they choose not to, it may be because they don't understand the implications of not following the advice given, or because they understand the risks but decide to gamble and hope the odds are on their side. This raises important challenges for the organisations that end up picking up the pieces when something goes wrong.

CHAPTER FOUR – HOW CAN THE CURRENT TRAVEL ADVICE PROVIDERS BETTER DELIVER FOR BRITISH TRAVELLERS?

This chapter will show that:

- Despite there being a growing number of organisations offering travel advice to Britons travelling overseas, more are getting into trouble each year
- Travel advice providers need to utilise as many appropriate mediums for dissemination as possible, particularly new technologies. This is especially important for the FCO, because of its authoritative status and being one of the few services free at the point of delivery
- The increasingly complex and diverse travel advice needs of the British public and the growing strain on Consular resources make co-operation and collaboration ever more important
- More work is need to deliver travel advice on the ground
- While travel advice can help to prevent many risks, Britons will continue to fall into difficulty so it is vital that effective incident management systems are in place. With a growing number of organisations involved in responding when something goes wrong, it is important to make sure that their efforts are well co-ordinated and that valuable lessons learned can be centrally recorded and acted upon

The Main Players

There are two different types of organisations that offer travel advice to Britons: **dedicated advice providers** – organisations for whom travel advice is their main line of activity – and those organisations that **offer advice on top of other products and services**. Below is a brief description of who they are and what they do, but there is more detail given in the case studies in Appendix 1.

Dedicated travel advice providers

Within the first category, there are **government sources** and **non-government sources**. The UK government's travel advice is delivered by the **Consular Division in the FCO**, in collaboration with embassies and high commissions around the world. The government has been publishing official travel advice since 1990, and the services on offer have grown consistently over this period. As well as Britons travelling overseas from the UK, their services also cover the 14.2 million Britons resident overseas. There are a vast number of non-government dedicated service providers, all of which charge for access to their information and tend to serve just one type of traveller. Companies such as Control Risks Group, Kroll and The Risk Advisory Group offer **travel advice aimed at the needs of the business**

community. Companies generally pay a subscription rate to have access to the information, or receive specialist advice tailored to their individual needs. This sector is well established and new companies are starting up every month. There are a growing number of organisations offering **travel advice aimed at independent travellers.** Publications, such as Lonely Planet and the Rough Guide, include travel advice in the guides they publish for those wishing to travel without the support of a tour operator, and there are a growing number of websites that offer advice, too. There are very few dedicated travel advice providers for **aid and humanitarian workers** or **holiday-makers**, although both receive information from non-dedicated sources, such as aid agencies and tour operators.

Non-dedicated travel advice providers

Other organisations offer travel advice on top of their core products and services. As we saw in the last section, many **holiday-makers** receive information from their **tour operators** and **travel agents**; **business travellers** often receive information from their **employers**; and **aid agencies** often pass on information to **aid workers.**

Dissemination

Despite the large and growing number of travel advice providers, Britons continue to fall into trouble overseas in increasing numbers. In order to be effective in reversing this trend, travel advice must not only be available, it must manage to reach the people who need it and convince them of the need to act on it. As James Alvarez of Clarity Advisors commented, "...I think we can probably take our lead from advertisers who recognised a long time ago that the best way to give people a message and make sure it sticks is to give it to them a lot, give it to them through different mediums, and make sure that you make the same consistent message. But most importantly, you need to make sure you answer the question – what does it mean to me? Why do I care about this?"²⁹ Travel advice providers must address the key challenges raised in the last chapter.

The Internet

The Consular Division at the FCO has developed what is arguably a world class government travel advice site. Launched in 1995, it was voted the best for travel information in a *Sunday Times* poll.³⁰ Indeed many of those interviewed during the course of this research commented on how useful the site is. Bob Boyce of Thomas Cook Tour Operations commented, "We are extremely pleased that the Foreign Office provides the information and services it does in relation to travel advice, and there have been real changes for the better in recent years, especially the on-going development of the site." The Internet offers enormous opportunities for disseminating information directly to individual travellers, most notably e-connected business travellers, the growing number of people booking holidays, flights

and insurance on-line, and those accessing email via the Internet cafes that are a regular feature of high streets the world over. It is therefore vital that the FCO has a strong on-line marketing strategy.

The FCO estimates that its travel pages generate approximately 540,000 unique users per month, or 6.5 million each year. If each unique user equated to one overseas trip it would mean that the site was being accessed in just 10 per cent of trips. While the number of unique users is almost certainly higher than 6.5 million per year – because of the way these numbers are obtained – a good proportion of those visiting the site are not individual travellers, but tour operators, travel agents, and companies sending staff around the world.

While the Internet offers enormous potential for mass-communication, a site will fail to generate traffic if it doesn't actively pull the audience in. This is particularly important for travel advice, where the target audience doesn't believe it needs to be reached. The FCO needs to strengthen its dedicated on-line marketing strategy to ensure that the site is routinely found not just by those searching for the FCO directly or travel advice more broadly, but also by those looking for other related items, such as 'holidays', 'flights', 'insurance' and 'travel' on-line. The table below shows the results of searches for the FCO's travel site against each of the top ten destination countries for British travellers in 2000 on the search engine *google.co.uk* (specifically searching for 'pages from the UK' rather than the world wide web as a whole). Firstly, the term '*country*' was entered for each of the top ten countries to test whether the FCO's travel advice web site appeared within the top 50 matches. Secondly, the term '*Travel Advice to plus country*' was searched against each of the countries to test whether the FCO's site appeared within the top 50 matches. And thirdly, the term '*Travel safety plus country*' was tested against the same criteria. As the table shows, the site's performance is mixed – it is not found when searching for information about an individual country, it does not appear in the top 50 searches for travel safety information and has a mixed performance when searching specifically for travel advice.

The site does fare better when searching for higher risk countries. Colombia, Nigeria, Thailand, Mexico, Algeria and Kenya were searched using the same criteria as above. Results remained poor for 'country' and 'travel safety', with the FCO only being found for Nigeria and Algeria respectively. However, when searching for 'travel advice', all countries were found, with the site coming up first for Colombia, Nigeria and Algeria; 15th for Mexico; 31st for Thailand; and 34th for Kenya. The FCO should build on this.

FCO Search Engine Results

Country	Country	Travel Safety	Travel Advice
France	No	No	No
Spain	No	No	34
USA	No	No	No
Republic of Ireland	No	No	38
Greece	No	No	10
Germany	No	No	20
Italy	No	No	23
The Netherlands	No	No	9
Belgium	No	No	9
Portugal	No	No	14

Source: Google search engine (www.google.co.uk)

Other Mediums

The FCO rightly seeks to disseminate its information and advice through a variety of mediums. Consular staff regularly give interviews for magazines and newspapers on the risks facing Britons travelling overseas, and the FCO estimates its web site address is mentioned in at least two newspaper or magazine articles each month. Television is an obvious medium for disseminating its work, but the cost of advertising is likely to be beyond the reach of the Consular Division. The FCO is working to make its travel advice a permanent feature on UK Online iDTV from September 2002, which would help the FCO to reach a much broader audience.

The FCO should also ensure it keeps pace with technological changes to ensure that its information is available in formats that allow it to be disseminated by partners through as many different mediums as possible. This not only includes traditional means of communication, such as telephone, fax and Internet, but new and emerging technologies, such as mobile phones, text messaging and Palm Pilot organisers. The FCO could recruit technology companies as partners to help with this.

Partnerships for Dissemination

There are a number of factors that will determine the most effective way of disseminating travel advice to an individual traveller. Age, experience of travel, gender, sexuality, and reason for travel will influence an individual's perceptions of risk, whether or not they are likely to seek out advice, the most common channels they will use to access it, and so forth. And, of course, some of these factors will work in conjunction. The groupings we saw in the last chapter, which were based on reason for travel – package holiday-makers, independent travellers, business travellers and aid and humanitarian workers – are particularly useful. These individuals are in contact with a number of organisations that have both direct and indirect interests in keeping them safe, and these points of contact offer opportunities to deliver travel advice.

One of the key differences between the FCO and other travel advice providers is the breadth of its target audience. While non-government providers tend to work with one particular group, the FCO's audience is the whole of the travelling British public, as well as Britons living overseas. This puts a lot of pressure on the stretched resources of the Consular Division and consular staff in missions around the world. For information to get to the people who need it, it must be communicated via the most appropriate channels for each group and it may need to be presented in different formats. While niche providers are able to structure their entire operations to best suit the needs of one group, the FCO is faced with the challenge of being all things to all travellers.

In 2001, the FCO launched the *Know Before You Go* campaign, which seeks to communicate two key messages to travellers: no-one should travel without travel insurance and no-one should travel far without checking the FCO's travel advice. While the FCO takes responsibility for maintaining a central information source and developing useful products, such as travellers' tips for individual travellers and brief summaries for holiday-makers not willing to read through a long advisory, the campaign also utilises the types of organisations described above. Campaign partners sign a 'Campaign Charter', which is a formal commitment to spread the key messages of the campaign and publicise the FCO's travel advice. They commit to do whatever they can to provide travellers with FCO travel advice, ensure travellers get adequate travel insurance, and inform travellers of the preparations they need to make before travelling. Specifically, partners promise to promote the travel advice through links on their websites, display campaign logos on their marketing and sales literature, sponsor or joint-fund the production of campaign items/material, and contribute prizes and/or offers that will be used for jointly covered competitions in the media or via in-store promotions. As well as the basic travel advisories, the FCO also develops any additional tools to aid effective dissemination, such as its travellers' tips and the campaign literature described above.

These partner organisations are well-placed to deliver advice to their niche travel groups: they maintain regular contact, have a detailed understanding of the needs of the group they serve, and they are able to package travel advice alongside other information, increasing the likelihood of it reaching the people who underestimate their risks. As we have seen, they also have a certain amount of self-interest in ensuring their customers and employees travel safely, and by agreeing a formal commitment with the FCO many of the ambiguities about where responsibilities lie are clarified.

The campaign has been well received within the travel industry, and the number of partners has risen threefold in the past year, from 40-50 in 2001 to almost 150 today. Manny Fontenla-Novoa, Managing Director of Thomas

Cook Tour Operations commented, "We are extremely pleased that the Foreign Office provides the information and services it does in relation to travel advice. Because of the nature of the source, the information has enormous strength and credibility with our customers, and this makes our job a lot easier. We also welcome the opportunity to work in partnership with them to make sure our customers are safe."³¹

As part of this campaign, the FCO has developed mini campaigns aimed at particular groups or problems. For example, at the beginning of 2002, it launched a campaign to educate travelers on the pitfalls of being involved with drugs while overseas. Working alongside Prisoners Abroad, it sought to communicate the typical prison sentences that can follow in certain countries, what the Foreign Office can and cannot do for Britons if they are found in possession of drugs, and ways to avoid falling victim to someone planting drugs on you or your luggage. The campaign was publicized on the FCO's travel website, as well as on the radio and television, and in newspapers and magazines. It has just launched a campaign aimed at gay and lesbian travellers, and in Spring 2003, it plans to launch a campaign aimed at clubbers in the 18-30 age group.

While the *Know Before You Go* campaign is aimed at all Britons travelling overseas, the identity of the current partner organisations suggests that the FCO is concentrating its efforts on holiday-makers and independent travellers. Partners are predominantly drawn from these groups, and include travel agents, tour operators, airlines, banks, and insurers. The FCO should expand these partnerships and develop mini campaigns aimed at the specific needs of both business travellers and aid and humanitarian workers. This is not only vital in ensuring that the FCO is meeting a broader range of its audience's needs, but is particularly important given that these two groups have been identified as having some of the highest exposure levels of all Britons travelling overseas because they are more likely to travel outside Europe and North America.

The FCO should expand its partnerships to include organisations linked to the business and aid communities. This will include – but shouldn't be limited to – corporate employers and aid agencies, risk and security consultancies, security delivery companies, and a broader range of specialist insurers. These organisations should also be expected to fulfil their responsibilities to travellers by signing up to the 'Campaign Charter'. In return, the FCO should develop literature and products appropriate for each type of traveller, such as tips for safe business travel in emerging markets, perhaps in association with the CBI; safe business travel for SMEs; or travel advice for aid and development workers in conflict zones, perhaps in association with the Department for International Development (DFID) or the UN.

Dissemination on the Ground

While it is important that as many travellers as possible receive information and advice prior to departure, during the visit is often the most effective time to get across key messages about safety and security. In Paul Barker's study, many of the respondents described the briefings they received on the ground as some of the most useful. He states, "In-country security briefing and the sharing of security information between colleagues and friends outside the company were rated high by the respondents as effective sources of information."³²

Many companies, tour operators and aid agencies organise regular briefing sessions for customers and staff. But they are not currently obliged to do so, and as we saw in the last section, some smaller companies and aid agencies may be lacking the experience or the resources to initiate such systems. The FCO should encourage all *Know Before You Go* campaign partners to co-ordinate such briefings, which would be helped by the production of the suggested information sources described above. These materials could also be disseminated outside formal briefings, by both the FCO itself and by campaign partners. The FCO could, for example, work with airlines and airports to distribute information for business travellers within executive departure lounges, or ask tour operators to distribute information about the dangers of drink and drugs to clubbers in major clubbing resorts, such as Ibiza. On a larger scale it could consider making it obligatory for a printed copy of the latest FCO travel advisory to be sent out with all airline tickets or travel documents. This would help to get information to those travelling independently.

The embassy itself is a natural point of focus on the ground. While there are numerous reports of the high standard of service offered by embassy staff when a Briton falls into trouble overseas, they seem to fare less well in working with partners on the ground to spread advice or prevent problems arising. Alan Flook of the Federation of Tour Operators comments, "We don't have much contact with embassies, perhaps a total of three contacts per year around the world, and this is driven largely by personalities." In Paul Barker's study, respondents in Cairo were on average 'fairly dissatisfied' with the UK embassy, while they were 'fairly satisfied' with the US embassy. This may be explained by the fact that in Cairo, the US Regional Security Officer had been actively targeting expatriate communities with security awareness presentations, both at the embassy and at other external functions. The US embassy also manages a 'warden scheme' for Americans in Egypt. In Sao Paulo information sources were rated as very poor, with nine out of ten respondents scoring all official sources as 'very dissatisfied' or 'don't know'. Several of this group did not realise the embassy actually provides information for its citizens.

The FCO should consider two specific suggestions to improve the dissemination and other services offered by missions to Britons overseas. Firstly, the major tour operators in the main 50-60 resorts around the world organise joint monthly meetings for their resort managers to discuss issues of common concern. At present, embassy staff are not invited to these events, but it would be advantageous for them to attend. While it may not be useful or practical for them to attend each month, it would be helpful for them to meet at the start of each season. This would give tour reps an understanding the services that can and cannot be offered by the embassy, it would also be a good platform from which to establish joint crisis response procedures and to forge lines of communication for day-to-day incidents.

Secondly, US embassies contain a named member of staff with responsibility for liaising with the American business community overseas, specifically about issues concerning security, and the FCO should consider adopting this model. The Regional Security Officer (RSO) post is well known to the US business community, which can seek out the RSO to obtain information and advice about travel safety and security. As the Cairo example above shows, the RSO also organises regular events for companies and their staff to discuss these issues and share experiences. While British embassies may already contain staff that are often capable of fulfilling this role, as responses in Sao Paulo showed, Britons do not always know what services are available to them. UK missions should be required by London to hold regular meetings with the business community and to report back on progress in order to carry out an ongoing assessment aimed at improving the system. While this happens in some embassies on an ad hoc basis, without a formal system this is likely to be underused, and is unlikely to become a regular part of doing business overseas. Similar initiatives could be useful for the aid community.

The value of these relationships could extend beyond the delivery of advice to improving other key roles, such as responding when something goes wrong. As the number of organisations involved in such operations increases – from tour operators to multi-national companies – incident management is becoming more complex. Most organisations, including the FCO, tour operators, companies and aid agencies, run regular internal scenario exercises to test the ability of their own systems to respond to particular problems, but there are no sessions organised that bring together a variety of actors. While in the majority of cases one organisation will be able to respond effectively on their own to the situation in hand, there are a number of more serious risks where a co-ordinated response is essential, such as a kidnapping, a major assault, a natural disaster or a large-scale accident such as a coach crash. It would therefore be useful for these organisations to be able to take part in joint scenario sessions, and the FCO should investigate the feasibility of co-ordinating such exercises.

Monitoring Effectiveness

The aim of travel advice is the reduction in the number of Britons falling into trouble when they travel overseas. In order to be able to judge its relative success, and continue to improve its delivery, it is vital that lessons are learned on a regular basis. It is crucial that wherever possible information is gathered about the role played by travel advice in individual incidents. Had the person involved seen relevant advice? Had the advisory provided them with sufficient information to act upon? What other factors contributed to the incident? This would allow travel advice providers to work out whether the incident was caused by a breakdown in the system or by negligence on the part of the individual or some other party, and would also provide them with information about how to improve their services. A key member of staff from the Consular Division commented, "We do not know whether people have read advice and ignored it, or not read it at all. It is not something we ask when people are in distress." Given the cost implication for the FCO of picking up the pieces when things go wrong, and the underlying need to strive for improvements, this report argues that this is precisely the type of information that the FCO should prioritise. It is impossible to judge the value of the travel advice services they offer if they do not have information about the proportion of travellers who fall into trouble who have or have not read their advisories.

The aim of this overall strategy is, of course, to generate more awareness within the priority groups about the risks they face and direct them to information that can help them to avoid trouble. If it is to be successful, therefore, it will generate much more work for the FCO as well as the partner organisations. It is therefore vital that the FCO reassess its funding model to ensure the success of its services will not face severe limitations. The Consular Division and consular work within embassies and high commissions are currently funded through a combination of consular fees, passport fees, and a "consular premium" included in the cost of every adult British passport. While the FCO predicts that overseas travel will increase by 10 per cent in the next two years, it cannot guarantee that consular income will keep pace.³³

CHAPTER FIVE: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE

Information Sources

There are now more sources of travel advice than ever before, both from dedicated and non-dedicated providers. It is important that Britons are able to have access to information that is free at the point of use so that ability to pay does not limit safety.

- The FCO should continue to maintain its free information service
- The FCO should ensure its website is well placed in search engines and well linked to as many relevant partner sites as possible to ensure it proactively reaches out to the maximum number of people rather than relying on them being able and willing to find it. Expanding the number and range of *Know Before You Go* partners, as recommended by this report, should help in achieving this.

Networks for Dissemination

For each of the groups of travellers discussed in this report, there are a number of organisations that have a direct or indirect interest in the safety and well being of individual travellers. These organisations have a responsibility to play an active role alongside the FCO in disseminating information to the individuals they are in contact with. In return, the FCO should ensure that appropriate literature is available to get the key messages out effectively to each group.

- The FCO should expand its partners for the *Know Before You Go* campaign to include key organisations in contact with the business and aid communities. These partners might include – but should not be limited to – corporate employers and aid agencies; the CBI, DFID and UN; and risk consultancies, security deliverers and a broader range of specialist insurers. It should continue to develop its partnerships with dedicated advice providers, such as the Lonely Planet and the Rough Guide, and airlines for independent travellers.
- Partner organisations should be expected to formalise their responsibilities by signing a Campaign Charter. They should be expected to disseminate advice, to advertise the FCO's site, ensure travellers have insurance coverage, inform travellers of the preparations they should make, and co-operate in any other way possible.
- The FCO, in collaboration with partners, should produce relevant literature and products for use by its partners in disseminating the FCO's advice. For example, tips on traveling with laptops for business travelers.
- The FCO should investigate the possibility of its travel advisories being sent out to travellers with their airline tickets or travel documents to ensure it reaches all travellers, and at the time when they are most receptive to it.
- The FCO should also ensure that its information is in formats that allow it to be disseminated by partners through as many different mediums as

possible, for example, mobile phones, text messaging and Palm Pilot electronic personal organisers.

Delivering on the Ground

On the ground during a trip is often the most effective time to communicate with travellers about the risks they face.

- The FCO should encourage all *Know Before You Go* campaign partners to organise regular briefing sessions with their staff and customers overseas
- In particular, the FCO should consider working with airlines to distribute information aimed at business travellers within executive departure lounges, or work with tour operators to hand out flyers on the dangers of drugs to clubbers in places such as Ibiza
- British embassies should work hard to improve the work carried out to prevent the occurrence of problems. Specifically, embassy staff should be required to meet with tour reps in the main resorts at the start of each season. The FCO should also consider implementing the US RSO model in British embassies around the world to work with British companies
- The FCO should also require missions to report back on a formal basis about the progress made during these activities in order to improve the system over time
- FCO and campaign partners should investigate other potential benefits of their growing partnerships, such as joint scenario sessions

Monitoring Effectiveness

- The FCO should compile as much information as possible from cases in order to establish the strengths and weaknesses of the travel advice system
- Partner organisations should be responsible for delivering similar information to the FCO about cases they have handled

APPENDIX 1: EXAMPLES OF TRAVEL ADVICE PROVIDERS

Government Travel Advice Services

US State Department (www.travel.state.gov)

- Offers advisories on over 200 countries
- Advisories are very long and very detailed
- Each advisory gives the following information (where necessary): summary, country description, entry/exit requirements, safety/security, crime and criminal violence, health and medical advice, travel within the country, criminal penalties
- It published 2 general brochures with advice for US travellers overseas – but both very long and didactic: ‘Your Trip Abroad’ (14,000 words); ‘A Safe Trip Abroad’ (5,000 words)
- There are also brochures on particular issues, most of which are very long: ‘Trips for Older Americans (5,700 words); ‘Tips for Women Travelling Alone’ (1,200 words); also tips for students
- State Department has dedicated service for US companies: OSAC – Overseas Security Advisory Council. Its services include: travel advisories, dedicated electronic travel database, and Regional Security Officers (RSOs) in each embassy that run country councils from embassies overseas, publications such as ‘Security Guidelines for American Families Living Abroad’, ‘Security Guidelines for American Enterprises Abroad’, ‘Emergency Planning Guidelines for American Businesses Abroad’, ‘Security Awareness Overseas – An Overview’, ‘Personal Security Guidelines for the American Business Traveller Overseas’, ‘Security Guidelines for Children Living Abroad’

Consular Affairs for Canadians Abroad (www.voyage.gc.ca/destinations/menu_e.htm)

- Country advisories on just under 200 countries
- Each summary provides info on (where necessary): general info, health, entry requirements, security and safety
- It publishes a travel checklist – although this is general and not too specific to each country
- Publications include: ‘Travelling abroad? Assistance for Canadians’; ‘Bon Voyage, But’ (very long); ‘Her Own Way – Advice for the woman traveller’ (over 6000 words), ‘Out on a Limb – Advice for the adventure travellers’, ‘Destination: Success – Services for business travellers’. There are also publications on working abroad, retiring abroad and drugs and travel

Australian Department of Foreign Affairs Travel Advice **(www.dfat.gov.au/consular/advice/advices_mnu.html)**

- Travel advisories for just over 100 countries
- Each advisory is very brief – not usually longer than one screen of info
- Each advisory contains the following info (where necessary): brief summary at top, safety and security, health issues, travel and health insurance, consular assistance, entry requirements
- Publications include: ‘Tips for Backpackers’, ‘Tips for Healthy Travel’, ‘Hints for Australian Travellers’ – which includes top ten hints, planning your trip, the hints checklist, while you’re travelling, returning to Australia; there is also information on what the consular service can and cannot do for you

Non-Government Dedicated Travel Advice Providers

Control Risks Group (for business travellers)

- Travel advisories for over 200 countries
- Each advisory is aimed at the specific needs of the business traveller and includes: getting there and away, travelling around, staying safe, business women, cultural and social issues, practicalities, embassy details, and health
- For each country, there is also an archive of information about current and past events that are relevant to travel safety
- For each country there is also a summary of the political, security and travel risks, with each receiving a rating from one to five, with five the highest risk
- The company also offers a range of other services, from political and security risk assessment and security consultancy to crisis response

Lonely Planet (For independent travellers)

- Travel guides for around 200 countries
- Each guide includes travel advice for visitors on how to stay safe and is integrated alongside practical advice about getting around
- It also runs a website that has basic information and advice
- Travellers are able to submit messages to other travellers via the website. Many of these messages warn fellow travellers of problems they have encountered, common criminal scams, etc. The site contains a disclaimer
- There are also links from the website to other travel-related links, including the FCO’s travel advice, that of the US State Department, the Department for Consular Affairs for Canadians Abroad, and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Travel Advice. Lonely

Planet is also linked through other sites, such as that of Thomas Cook

Non-Government Non-Dedicated Travel Advice Providers

Thomas Cook Tour Operations (package holiday-makers)

There are a number of points of contact between Thomas Cook and its customers when travel advice is delivered:

- Brochure: contains a high level of resort information
- Booking: when booking directly with Thomas Cook, passengers receive information about the resort and any significant pieces of travel advice
- Travel documents (sent approx. 4 weeks before departure): Thomas Cook sends a booklet about the resort being visited. This includes information about what to do before you go, what to pack, getting to the airport, information about health in the air, information about the resort, safety and security tips, emergencies, useful contact numbers
- In the resort: Thomas Cook, like many other tour operators, runs welcome meetings where reps are able to raise issues about safety and security
- Thomas Cook staff also attend regular meetings of major tour operators in the 50-60 main resorts around the world

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following people who have made useful contributions to this piece of work:

Sarah Dring, Ed Hobart and Moray Angus at the Foreign Office; Alan Flook at the Federation of Tour Operators; David Claridge at Janusian Security Risk Management; Paul Barker and Joe Hana at Chevron Texaco; Alison Crosland at Control Risks Group; James Alvarez at Clarity Advisors; and Tom Griffiths at gapyear.com.

I would also like to thank all my colleagues at The Foreign Policy Centre for their intellectual input and support, notably Mark Leonard, Veena Vasista, Rob Blackhurst, Abi Tyler and Caroline Holmqvist. Special thanks to Tori Holmes.

Finally, I would like to thank the team at Thomas Cook Tour Operations, without whose help and support this publication would not have been possible – Bob Boyce, Mark Fells, Manny Fontenla-Novoa, Sandra Killick, Una Mullan, Nova Roberts and Andrew Windsor.

Rachel Briggs
August 2002

FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS FROM THE RISK AND SECURITY RESEARCH PROGRAMME

The Unlikely Counter-Terrorists

Rachel Briggs (ed.); £19.95 plus £1 p+p (October 2002)

This collection of essays will show how sound preparation can both reduce the impact of successful terrorists attacks and enable UK plc to get back on its feet as quickly as possible after an incident. It includes pieces from David Veness of the Metropolitan Police; Control Risks Group; other business security and terrorist experts; and Richard Sambrook of the BBC. This collection is kindly supported by Control Risks Group and the (RSMF).

Corporate Personnel Security in Emerging Markets – Working Paper One: The Legal and Policy Framework for Duty of Care

Rachel Briggs (November 2002)

This paper will examine what a company's duty of care to their employees in emerging markets actually means in practice, and will explore the extent of personal responsibility of staff. It will outline the current legal and policy framework and will suggest a number of changes to improve safety.

Corporate Personnel Security in Emerging Markets – Working Paper Two: The Role of Third Party Actors

Rachel Briggs (February 2003)

This paper will examine the role of the UK government, corporate security companies, insurance companies and other third party actors, and will put forward a number of suggestions for each of these actors.

Corporate Personnel Security in Emerging Markets – Final Report and Findings

Rachel Briggs (July/August 2003)

The final report will set out a new policy agenda covering the safety of those being employed by companies in emerging markets.

PREVIOUS PUBLICATIONS FROM THE RISK AND SECURITY RESEARCH PROGRAMME

The Kidnapping Business

Rachel Briggs; £14.95 plus £1 p+p (March 2001)

This report sets out a new policy for economic kidnapping. It puts forward recommendations for the UK government, the business community and the aid community aimed at helping them prepare better for the risk of kidnapping.

¹ Consular Division Annual Review 2001, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2002

² The geographical divisions are defined as follows:

North America: Canada (including Greenland and St Pierre et Miquelon), USA (including Puerto Rico and US Virgin Islands)

European Union: Belgium, Denmark, Germany, France (including Monaco), Greece, Irish Republic, Italy (including San Marino and Vatican City), Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Portugal (including Azores and Madeira), Spain (including Canary Islands, Spanish North Africa, Balearic Islands and Andorra). As from 1995, Austria, Sweden and Finland.

Other Western Europe: Austria, Cyprus, Faroe Islands, Finland, Gibraltar, Iceland, Malta, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland (including Liechtenstein), Turkey and states of former Yugoslavia. Austria, Sweden and Finland are included as European Union from 1995.

Other: Middle East, North Africa, Eastern Europe, Latin America and Commonwealth Caribbean

³ International Passenger Survey 2000, MQ6 Transport, Travel and Tourism, National Statistics Office, 2001

⁴ Consular Division Annual Review 2001, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2002

⁵ Foreign and Commonwealth 2001 Departmental Report, The Government's Expenditure Plans 2001-02 to 2003-4 and Main Estimates, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2001

⁶ Wicker and August, "Working Lives in Context: Engaging the views of participant analysts", reproduced in *Person Environment Psychology: New directions and perspectives*, Walsh et al (eds.), 2000

⁷ Rachel Briggs interviewed Tom Hargrove in August 1997 as part of an unpublished study on economic kidnapping in Colombia. More information can be obtained from *The Kidnapping Business* by Rachel Briggs, The Foreign Policy Centre, 2001. Tom's story inspired the film *Proof of Life*.

⁸ For more information about kidnapping, see Rachel Briggs, *The Kidnapping Business*, The Foreign Policy Centre, 2001

⁹ For more information about kidnapping, see Rachel Briggs, *The Kidnapping Business*, The Foreign Policy Centre, 2001

¹⁰ Marilyn Bursil, *Development of a Communications Strategy for FCO Consular Services: Report on Omnibus survey*, for AEA Technology/Consumers' Association, January 2001

¹¹ International Passenger Survey 2000, MQ6 Transport, Travel and Tourism, National Statistics Office, 2001

¹² Phone interview with Bob Boyce, 14th May 2002

¹³ Travel Advice seminar, 4th July 2002, The Foreign Policy Centre, London

¹⁴ Phone interview with Alan Flook, 18th June 2002

¹⁵ Marilyn Bursil, *Development of a Communications Strategy for FCO Consular Services: Report on Omnibus survey*, for AEA Technology/Consumers' Association, January 2001

¹⁶ Phone interview with Bob Boyce, 14th May 2002

¹⁷ www.fco.gov.uk (19/06/2002)

¹⁸ Meeting with Adrian Gorham, 18th June 2002

¹⁹ Judith Doyle and Max Nathan, *Wherever Next? Work in a mobile world*, 2001, The Industrial Society (London)

²⁰ Fukunishi, Berger, Wogan and Kuboki, 'Alexithymic Traits as Predictors of Difficulties with Adjustment in an Outpatient Cohort of Expatriates in Tokyo', in *Psychological Reports*, Volume 85, pp 67-77

²¹ This issue will be followed up in more detail by forthcoming reports and events as part of the research project 'Corporate Personnel Security in Emerging Markets', which is currently being run by Rachel Briggs as part of the Risk and Security Research Programme at The Foreign Policy Centre. For more details about this project, please see www.fpc.org.uk

²² Interview by Rachel Briggs with a former hostage, August 1997

²³ Paul Barker, *Managing Risks to Employees on Overseas Assignments*, unpublished MSc dissertation, Scarman Centre for the Study of Public Order, Leicester University

²⁴ *ibid*

²⁵ Philippe Dind, 'Security in ICRC Field Operations', Forced Migration Review, No 4, April 1999

²⁶ http://www.un.org/geninfo/ir/ch2/ch2_txt.htm

²⁷ Koenrad Van Brabant, *Mainstreaming the Organisational Management of Safety and Security: A review of aid agency practices and a guide for management*, Overseas Development Institute, 2001

²⁸ *ibid*

²⁹ Quoted from Travel Advice seminar, 4th July 2002, The Foreign Policy Centre, London

³⁰ Consular Division Annual Review 2001, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2002

³¹ Interview with Manny Fontenla-Novoa, April 2002

³² Paul Barker, *Managing Risks to Employees on Overseas Assignments*, unpublished MSc dissertation for the Study of Security Management, Scarman Centre for The Study of Public Order, University of Leicester

³³ Foreign and Commonwealth 2001 Departmental Report, The Government's Expenditure Plans 2001-02 to 2003-4 and Main Estimates, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2001