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Explosives: comprehending the threat

It's February 3rd and the Winter Olympics are just a week away, and once again the Olympic movements ideals are tarnished by terrorism.

Japan's Nagano airport is the target of a rocket attack, possibly carried out by environmentalists opposed to the airport's expansion. What better time to strike than when the athletes of the world and the accompanying media

tional attention. Consequently much ink was wasted predicting doom and gloom and ETA had achieved their publicity without even getting out of bed.

And, Atlanta. Any attack in the United States was bound to generate significant media coverage and the Centennial Park bombing did just that - right in the centre of CNN's home town. Of course speculation that TWA 800 was

and still have time for more appeals in the minutes before she was to die - was far more gripping. And, of course, President Clinton's sexual activities with Monica Lewinsky (amongst others) and the British rampage on post offices selling stamps commemorating Princess Diana were far more newsworthy. Admittedly I was in Oklahoma on the day in question and was only exposed to the American perspective.

The long term implications of the Nagano attack, however insignificant it might have appeared at the time, are potentially enormous. The Olympics were once again utilised to promote a cause; it might have been terrorism in

Olympics, Terrorism & The Press

by **Philip Baum**

entourage are arriving in their masses. Yet this time the media reaction was rather muted and many would have been totally unaware that the attack ever took place.

Terrorism became associated with the Olympic Games in 1972 following the kidnapping and subsequent massacre of 11 Israeli athletes in Munich. The nature of the attack, with hostages being held and the media already on location to record every development, let alone the political fallout, made the incident big news. The surviving terrorists were freed following the subsequent hijacking of a Lufthansa jet a month after the Games; many readers will recall their press conference in Tripoli where they justified their actions.

Then, in 1987, in the run up to the Seoul Olympics, Korean Airlines flight 858 was destroyed by a state-sponsored terrorist bomb. The intention had been to dissuade visitors from attending the Games, yet much of the media story was as a result of the arrest of the bombers and how the North Korean government had managed to brainwash its operatives into carrying out the act, rather than focusing on the act itself.

The media feared ETA would use the Barcelona Games, which thankfully passed off peacefully, to gain interna-

destroyed by a terrorist bomb was only enhanced by the tragedy occurring just before the commencement of the Games. Yet, the discovery of a pipe bomb on the runway at Chicago's O'Hare within a week was brushed under the carpet; for some reason it's not even recorded as being an attack against aviation.

From a media perspective, the implication would be that unless there are deaths there is little to report. So,

"radicals have learned that they can exploit the Games for their own purposes"

the 1970's and 1980's, but as the millennium draws to its close other radicals have learned that they can exploit the Games for their own purposes. Australia might have few enemies in the world but it knows from its own recent experience in Port Arthur, Tasmania that

"ETA had achieved their publicity without even getting out of bed"

a night time attack on cargo facilities in Nagano was hardly likely to whet the appetites of the international press corps. After all there were three other far more stimulating events in progress. The media circus surrounding the execution of Karla Faye Tucker in Texas - a circus, I might add, created by an American legal system that allows appeals against a death sentence to go on for 14 years

crazies, extremists and those claiming their rights have been suppressed can be equally deadly; a fact that will not have escaped the notice of the organisers of Sydney 2000.