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## Greece: Threat of Terrorism and Security at the Olympics

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### Summary

The summer 2004 Olympic Games will take place in Athens, Greece. The Greek government is planning unprecedented security measures to deal with possible terrorist threats. Athens is preparing mainly for external threats, although anarchists and anti-globalization groups may be disruptive as well. The Greek Ministry of Public Order is in charge of security and Greece requested assistance from NATO and others, including the United States. The U.S. Administration is taking its own steps to protect the U.S. Olympic team. This report will be updated if developments warrant. See also CRS Report RS21529, *Al Qaeda after the Iraq Conflict*, May 23, 2003, by (name redacted), and CRS Electronic Briefing Book, *Terrorism*, page on “Al Qaeda,” updated regularly by (name redacted), [<http://www.congress.gov/brbk/html/ebter131.html>].

### Introduction

The summer 2004 Olympic Games will take place in Athens, Greece on August 13-29, with 10,500 athletes from 202 countries participating and more than one million spectators expected. The first Olympic games took place in Greece in 776 B.C. and the first modern games were held in Athens in 1896. Thus, as a point of national pride, hosting a successful Olympics is the highest priority of the Greek government. Underscoring its importance, Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis assumed the post of Minister of Culture to be directly responsible for the Olympics when he took office in March 2004, promising “the best and safest Olympic Games there have ever been.”<sup>1</sup>

Greece is the smallest country to host the Olympics since Finland in 1952, and questions have arisen about its ability to cope with the many facets of the task. This report deals only with possible terrorist threats and security. Although problems with traffic and electrical capacity could affect security, they are not addressed below.

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<sup>1</sup> “PM Issues Global Invitation to ‘The Best and Safest Olympics,’” *Athens News Agency*, March 25, 2004.

## Potential Terrorist Threats

Terrorism and violence are not new to the Olympics. Palestinian terrorists kidnaped and murdered Israeli athletes at the 1972 Olympics in Munich, and an American was charged with a bombing near the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta. Terrorists reportedly planned to attack other Olympics, but did not succeed.<sup>2</sup> Since 9/11, international awareness of terrorism has heightened, and Greek security planners face a variety of challenges.

**Domestic Threats.** Until recently, Greece's record in combating domestic terrorism was widely regarded as deficient. A group called the Revolutionary Organization 17 November (17N) had acted with impunity since 1975, claiming responsibility for assassinating four U.S. officials and many others. Following the fortuitous arrest of a 17N terrorist in June 2002 after a bomb exploded in his hands prematurely, Greek authorities captured and successfully prosecuted suspected leaders and members of the group. No new acts of terrorism have been attributed to 17N since the 2002 arrests. Although the Greek Police Chief claimed, "17N does not exist anymore," Minister of Public Order George Voulgarakis has admitted that "questions remain that continue to keep the file open."<sup>3</sup> The U.S. State Department has kept 17N on its list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations in *Patterns of Global Terrorism, 2003*, quoting the Chief "that additional members of the group are at large, and investigations are continuing."<sup>4</sup>

After their success against 17N, Greek authorities focused on the Revolutionary People's Struggle (ELA). ELA also had been active since 1975 and had claimed responsibility for hundreds of bombings and at least two murders. *Patterns of Global Terrorism, 2003* lists Revolutionary Nuclei (RN) as a Foreign Terrorist Organization and refers to it as a probable successor to or an offshoot of ELA, which had not claimed responsibility for any acts since 1995 and is no longer on the State Department list. RN engaged in arson and low-level bombing; it has not claimed an attack since 2000. Five members of ELA captured in January 2003 and accused of crimes including bombing vehicles and facilities used by the U.S. military are now on trial. The Greek government believes that ELA has been effectively dismantled.

Some analysts suggest that if remnants of 17N and ELA were still at large, they would not act during the Olympics because of their professed "patriotism."<sup>5</sup> However, such sentiments may not inhibit anarchist groups that abound mainly in the Athens area and target popular U.S. and allied businesses, for example American Express, Citibank, and McDonald's, usually with low-level weapons such as firebombs when premises are

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<sup>2</sup> Gregory L. Vistica, "For Athens Olympics, A Security Gap," *Washington Post*, September 27, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Ioanna Mandhrou, "The New Counter-Terrorism Prosecutor Assumed his Duties Yesterday," *To Vima*, April 20, 2004, Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) Document GMP20040421000175; "Voulgarakis: Certain Aspects of 'N17' Affair Still Unresolved," *Athens News Agency*, June 22, 2004.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. State Department, *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2003*, released April 2004.

<sup>5</sup> See e.g., comments by Mary Bossis, a Greek terrorism expert, on Athens NET Television Network, December 10, 2003, FBIS Document GMP10031210000095.

unoccupied.<sup>6</sup> There is some concern that Greek anarchists may ally with like-minded anti-globalization groups both in Greece and from elsewhere in Europe during the Olympics to carry out demonstrations or more violent acts.<sup>7</sup> They have the potential to wreak havoc when an unusually large number of foreign tourists flood the city. As if to presage this possibility, on May 5, 2004, 100 days before the start of the Olympics, three bombs were set off outside an Athens police station, causing property damage, minor injuries, and worldwide anxiety. The Prime Minister and other officials quickly labeled the attack an isolated incident unrelated to the Olympics. However, a group called Revolutionary Struggle claimed responsibility for the attack, which resembled those perpetrated by ELA and RN, and denounced foreign involvement in Olympic security and “affluent Western Olympic tourists.”<sup>8</sup> There also have been attacks foiled and hoaxes near U.S.- and Olympic-related sites. Domestic terrorist groups have not been tied to international terror networks, but media reports have alleged that ELA trained in Palestinian camps in Lebanon, suggesting that international links are possible.<sup>9</sup>

Greece has an indigenous Muslim population and a large number of residents from Muslim and Arab countries. The police have increased surveillance of Muslims in major cities in anticipation of the Olympics.<sup>10</sup> Some local Muslim preachers are considered radical. Although there have been no reports of Islamist terrorist groups operating in Greece, the country is probably a transit route for terrorists heading elsewhere.

**International Threats.** The Athens Olympics are the first summer games to be held since Al Qaeda attacked the United States on September 11, 2001. Alleged Al Qaeda links to the November 2003 bombings in nearby Istanbul and the March 2004 bombing of a train in Madrid have heightened the Greek government’s already keen awareness of a possible international terrorist threat to the Olympics. Al Qaeda has made no specific or known threat against the Olympics. On April 15, 2004, however, Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden offered Europeans a “peace treaty” if they withdrew their troops from Muslim countries. His message said that “the door of peace will remain open” for three months. The Olympics will occur just weeks after Bin Laden’s deadline expires, intensifying concerns that the Games might be a symbolic European target of high value for Al Qaeda. On April 19, Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge included the Olympics on a list of possible terrorist targets.

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<sup>6</sup> One newspaper listed about 100 such groups. Aryiro K. Morou, “The Gas Canister Arsonists of Athens,” *Elevtheroptipia*, September 9, 2003, FBIS Document GMP20030915000208.

<sup>7</sup> “EL.AS. (Greek Police) Confirms the Existence of an Anarchist ‘Axis,’” *To Vima*, January 21, 2004, FBIS Document GMP20040121000090.

<sup>8</sup> “The Hide-Out of the ‘Revolutionary Nuclei,’” *To Vima*, May 8, 2003, FBIS Document GMP20040509000020, “Responsibility Claimed by the ‘Revolutionary Struggle,’” *To Pondiki*, May 13, 2004, FBIS Document GMP10040513000040.

<sup>9</sup> A. Telloğlu, “A War between Intelligence Agencies,” *To Vima tis Kiriakis*, September 2, 2002, FBIS Document GMP20020916000013.

<sup>10</sup> Jason Athanasidis, “Muslims Living in Greece Come Under Intelligence Spotlight Ahead of Olympics,” *International Herald Tribune*, April 7, 2004; Las, “Islamists under Discreet Surveillance,” *Elevtherotipia*, June 8, 2004, FBIS Document GMP20040610000127.

Some experts believe that Al Qaeda will be attracted to the Greek Olympics in order to communicate its message to an audience of billions, to strike in the cradle of Western democracy, and to attack Western citizens and interests.<sup>11</sup> Countries whose nationals are considered to be at high risk include the United States, Britain, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Russia. A dissenting view is heard from those who suggest that anxiety about Al Qaeda terrorism at the Olympics may be exaggerated or maintain that Greek security measures (see below) will accomplish their purpose of effectively hardening otherwise “soft” tourism-related targets.<sup>12</sup>

Concern about Greece’s vulnerability to penetration by international terrorist groups is partly due to the existence of countless points of entry and to its arguably defective or lax border and passport controls. Greece has thousands of islands in the Aegean, Ionian and Mediterranean Seas, and is close to Middle Eastern and Balkan hot spots. Albania, Bulgaria, and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia will be closely monitoring Greece’s northern borders prior to and during the Olympics. However, Greece already has many illegal residents from the Balkans and the Middle East. Moreover, it has not yet fully implemented a plan for central control over issuing passports, which remains the prerogative of local prefects. Nor has it begun to issue more secure passport documents.

## Security Planning

**Domestic Planning.**<sup>13</sup> The combined Greek and NATO security budget for the Olympics is \$1.2 billion and rising. Greece plans to deploy 70,000 security personnel, 200 of whom have been trained to deal with nuclear, chemical, and biological attacks. The Public Order Ministry is the lead agency for Olympic security and, because it believes that there is no domestic threat, it is primarily focusing on external threats. Given the nature of the Greek government, where ministers usually operate autonomously and are responsible solely to the Prime Minister, coordination is considered both a possible weakness and a priority for Olympic preparations. The government has created a special Coordinating Council for Olympic Security, consisting of 10 ministers and chaired by the Minister of Public Order. Coordination was a problem in early security exercises, but it has not received much attention since then and may have improved.

The Greek government contracted with the U.S.-based Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) to provide components of the security infrastructure for

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<sup>11</sup> Al Qaeda struck at tourists or other Western targets and interests in the United States, Indonesia, Morocco, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, and attempted to strike Israeli tourists in Kenya.

<sup>12</sup> One local skeptic suggested that Greece may not be facing a great terrorist threat because 1) it hosts only “small, peaceful communities” of Arabs who are monitored by police; 2) there are no local extremist groups to take assignments from Al Qaeda; 3) Greece enjoys friendly relations with Arab countries; and 4) Greece’s security forces are prepared. Yeoryios Karaivaz, “The Greek Police Scenarios on Security,” *Elevtheros Tipos*, March 15, 2004, FBIS Document GMP20040315000136.

<sup>13</sup> Greek media have reported on security copiously, critically, and in detail. See e.g., Andonios Bosnakoudhis, “Olympic Games’ Security,” *Amina & Dhiplomatia*, February 1, 2004, 39 pages, FBIS Document GMP 20040211000086.

the Olympics at a cost of about \$250 million, since reportedly increased to \$320 million.<sup>14</sup> SAIC heads an international consortium providing elements for security at sporting venues, the Olympic Village where athletes will live, and ports where cruise ships housing visitors will be docked. It also is building a command center for the government to connect the police, the national first aid center, fire department, coast guard, and armed forces, and creating security systems, mainly surveillance equipment and management. SAIC missed its May 28 deadline for completing the command center, prompting doubts whether fully-tested systems will be in place on time.<sup>15</sup> Plans also call for about 1,400 security cameras at Olympic facilities and at central points in Attica (a large prefecture that includes Athens), for a no-fly zone over Olympic sites, and for a security blimp. Competitors from high-risk countries will have Greek security escorts.

Greece has conducted many security exercises. From March 10-23, 2004, for example, foreign forces, including 400 U.S. special operations forces, joined Greeks in dealing with multiple terrorism scenarios for suicide bombings, chemical and biological attacks, and plane hijackings. It revealed problems with coordination and communication, but Greek officials said that the exercise had served the purpose of identifying areas needing improvements and adjustments in security plans.<sup>16</sup>

Delays in constructing some event venues reportedly may detrimentally affect plans to secure them.<sup>17</sup> Security plans began to be implemented on July 1, with security checks and patrols of Olympic facilities, coordinated visits by police, fire, and other services, and other measures, but some measures will not be operational until mid-July. The Olympic stadium will not be ready until August 10, three days before the Olympics begin.

**International Assistance.** Greeks are extremely sensitive about their national sovereignty, so requests for international assistance with security for the Olympics were viewed as potentially politically explosive. Nonetheless, in 2000, the Greek government established a seven-nation Olympic Advisory Group from the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Israel, Australia, France, and Spain. Governments not in the Advisory Group, such as Russia, also have advised Greek counterparts.

Greece officially requested NATO assistance after the train bombing in Madrid in March 2004, although discussions had taken place earlier. The specific request was for AWACS planes for air policing and for dealing with a possible air attack; the Standing Naval Forces Mediterranean to patrol extraterritorial waters around Greece; and assistance with nuclear and biochemical defenses; and intelligence. No NATO ground forces were requested; the Greek Constitution forbids the presence of foreign troops on Greek soil. NATO ships have conducted enhanced patrols in the Mediterranean since 9/11. The U.N.

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<sup>14</sup> SAIC News Release, May 22, 2003. It was later reported to have increased to \$320 million.

<sup>15</sup> Susan Schmidt, "New Fears About Olympics," *Washington Post*, May 6, 2004.

<sup>16</sup> Clifford J. Levy, "Uneasy Greece Focus on Olympic Security," *New York Times*, April 7, 2004; also see Embassy of Greece in Washington, D. C., Press Office, News Review for March, April 14, 2004, at [<http://www.greekembassy.org>].

<sup>17</sup> Levy, *New York Times*, April 7, 2004, Laura Peek, "Security the Loser in Athens Race," *The Times* (London), April 13, 2004, Raymond Bonner and Anthee Carassava, "Delays in Athens Raise Concern on Olympic Security Readiness," *New York Times*, July 3, 2004.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is providing advice and technical assistance to protect facilities and materials, to detect radiological materials, and to ensure that emergency response forces are effective. The Greek government signed protocols with 32 countries to exchange intelligence and security information, and it is specifically cooperating with other NATO and EU members, and Albania.

**U.S. Measures and Aid.** The official U.S. delegation to the Olympics will be led by former President George H.W. Bush. A U.S. interagency task force with members from the CIA, the FBI, State, and Defense Departments reportedly is focusing on the Olympics.<sup>18</sup> The U.S. State Department Bureau of Diplomatic Security will provide the U.S. Olympic team with a security force of 100-110 agents, analysts, and administrators.<sup>19</sup> The Greek Constitution's prohibition on armed foreign security personnel is requiring ingenuity and considerable U.S. diplomatic activity to ensure that U.S. agents will be capable. The American area in the Olympic Village will have special security arrangements. Aside from the Department of State, Greek officials have consulted with the National Security Council, Departments of Justice (FBI), Homeland Security, Energy, and the CIA. Several agencies are providing equipment and training for Olympics security forces. The Department of Energy is supplying radiation detectors to thwart "dirty bombs" at airports and ports. Greece specifically requested U.S. aid with port security and shipping container issues.<sup>20</sup> The Department of Defense reportedly will position an aircraft carrier, other ships, and rapid reaction forces in international waters off Greece before and during the Olympics.<sup>21</sup> The Acting Director of the U.S. Olympic Committee has said that there is a plan to evacuate the team should an incident arise that would pose a threat to its safety.<sup>22</sup> He did not mention American spectators, for whom Greece and the DOD are responsible.

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<sup>18</sup> Vistica, *Washington Post*, September 27, 2003.

<sup>19</sup> The State Department plans to spend \$2,763,000 for 150 Special Agents to be assigned on temporary duty to Athens and environs prior to and during the Olympic games. See Department of State, *The Budget in Brief - Fiscal Year 2004*. S. 2144, the proposed Foreign Affairs Authorization Act, FY2005, Sec. 205 directs the Secretary of State to seek reimbursement from the U.S. Olympic Committee for security provided to the U.S. Olympic Team by the Diplomatic Security Special Agents. S.Rept. 108-248 was filed on March 12, 2004, and the bill was placed on the Senate legislative calendar on March 18. State Department offices and federal agencies assisting Greece with security are using funds from regular appropriations.

<sup>20</sup> Western Policy Center forum, October 2, 2003.

<sup>21</sup> N. Khasapopoulos, "The Request for NATO Participation has been Tabled," *To Vima*, March 16, 2004, FBIS Document GMP20040402000113.

<sup>22</sup> Philip Hersh and Skip Mysienski, "Security Clouds Darken Games," *Chicago Tribune*, May 6, 2004.

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