

Canada Will Join US, Britain in Terror Drill

OTTAWA - Canada will join the United States and Britain this spring in a major terrorism response exercise aimed at testing each country's ability to react to the real thing.

The five-day drill, dubbed Triple Play in Canada, will involve "a complex terrorist campaign," including a biological attack in Jersey and a chemical assault in Connecticut, prompting national and international response.

During the exercise, fire personnel will conduct search-rescue duties, hospitals will treat injured people played by actors, and experts will analyse the effects on public health.

In Canada, 19 federal departments and agencies will be involved April 4-8, along with the provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

"Triple Play will assess our ability to put the National Emergency Response System into effect to act quickly, decisively and effectively in concert with international partners in the event of a terrorist attack or other emergency," Public Security Minister Anne McLellan said Thursday.

She announced the exercise with Michael Chertoff, the newly appointed U.S. Homeland Security secretary, who was visiting Ottawa.

The U.S. portion of the drill is called Topoff 3. Britain calls

Anger And Anguish in Aftermath

VANCOUVER - Canada shook with anguish on Thursday following the acquittal of two Sikh activists charged in the 1985 Air India bombings, one of the world's deadliest acts of aviation sabotage.

Wednesday's not guilty verdict stunned many, including relatives of the 329 people killed on Air India Flight 182, and prompted a newspaper in Vancouver — where the bombing conspiracy was alleged to be based — to ask in a front page headline: "So who did it?"

Canada's two national newspapers printed all of the victims' names. On its front page, the Globe and Mail included their ages, beginning with the youngest.

The 20-year probe into the Flight 182 attack, and a related bombing that killed two workers at Tokyo's Narita airport, cost an estimated C\$130 million (\$108 million) but the judge ruled evidence against Ripudaman Singh Malik and Ajaib Singh Bagri had "fallen markedly short."

The victims' families have demanded an inquiry into long-standing charges that Canada's spy agency, as well as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, ignored warnings before the bombings and later destroyed evidence that could have led to earlier arrests and convictions.

"I'm getting e-mails from people who did not lose anybody (in the bombings) who believe themselves there needs to be an inquiry," said Susheel Gupta of the Air India 182 Victims Families Association.

"How safe can they feel with all of these facts being hidden," said Gupta, who was 12 years old when his mother was killed on Flight 182.

Public Safety Minister Anne McLellan offered to meet with the

families, but gave no new hope of a public inquiry.

"I was struck was fact that in the families' comments, they said one of the key things we want to do is make sure that things have changed so no one else has to live through this pain and this hurt," McLellan said.

Investigators allege the bombings were the work of Vancouver-based Sikh separatists who wanted revenge for the Indian Army's bloody 1984 storming of Sikhism's Golden Temple in the city of Amritsar.

The June 23, 1985, bombing of Flight 182 off the Irish coast was the worst act of aviation sabotage before the Sept 11, 2001, attacks on the United States, and remains history's deadliest bombing of an airliner.

Police said for years they had at least six suspects in the bombings, but blamed their lack of arrests on a refusal by the Sikh community to co-operate. Bagri, 55, and Malik, 58, were not arrested until 2000.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police posted a C\$1 million reward for information in 1995, but prosecutors said late in the trial that it had been withdrawn, unclaimed.

A third man arrested in the case, Inderjit Singh Reyat, pleaded guilty to a reduced charge in 2003. A fourth suspect, Talwinder Singh Parmar, was killed by police in India in 1992.

The judge said in his Wednesday verdict that the evidence pointed to Parmar being the mastermind of the Air India bombings. Parmar was a founder of the Sikh militant separatists group the Babbar Khalsa.

Police say their investigation continues despite the verdicts.



Rattan Singh Kalsi holds up a photo of his daughter during a news conference in Vancouver, March 16, 2005, following the not guilty verdict on Sikh activists Ripudaman Singh Malik and Ajaib Singh Bagri in the bombing of an Air India flight in 1985.

Prosecutors have not decided if they will appeal.

Malik's and Bagri's supporters said the acquittals proved the justice system worked, and one of Malik's lawyers cautioned against holding an inquiry.

"The mistakes that were made 20 years ago won't be repeated. It is a different world now. Police agencies are much more sensitive about terrorism," William Smart told a radio interviewer.

McLellan said a government review in 1991 cleared the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, the national spy agency, of wrongdoing in the destruction of wiretaps in the Air India case.

But critics of that investigation complain the final report was heavily censored, so the full truth was not made public.

Not Guilty

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any doubt of the defendants' guilt.

More than 70 relatives of the bombing victims came from around the world to hear the verdict, delivered in a specially built C\$7.4 million (\$6.2 million) high-security court.

"I cannot believe the verdict. All those witnesses would not have come forward and risked their lives. All those poor families. Not in a million years did I think this could happen," said Jeanne Bakermans, a former Canadian Pacific Airlines ticket agent and a witness in the case.