**Why has risk modeling become pervasive in the security management professions?  Why do you believe that MSRAM has become a favored Risk Management tool?  Support your answer with the readings.**

On to week 7!  From the reading, I believe a significant driver for risk modeling in security management professions is the threat of terrorism.  In his opinion piece, Daniel Benjamin claims ‘terrorism is a problem of small numbers and large consequences.’  He argues that despite statistical analysis showing a sharp decline in terrorism deaths since 2001, we’re a long ways away from eliminating the threat overall.  This is because going off number of deaths alone doesn’t account for the numerous other factors that contribute to the overall threat of terrorism.  This includes recruiting, and non-qualitative factors such geopolitics and long term strategies (Benjamin, 2008).  Now…go ahead throw in a now more than ever persistent cyber threat.  Terrorist groups such as ISIS not only exploit information and messaging through cyber-attacks, but they even have Twitter accounts for recruitment!

In the FEMA risk assessment guide, terrorist activity is a consistent threat considered across the board for infrastructure and people, as well as the vulnerability ratings of weaknesses that could be exploited by terrorism.  Factors such as known existence, capability, history, intentions, and targets are all considered, which I believe makes sense.  Different terrorist groups have different targets e.g. ISIS compared to Boko Haram.  Mix in the cyber threat, which according to FEMA’s risk assessment guide should be something to strongly consider, like in a site functional pre-assessment screening matrix.  In last week’s assignment, the Multi-Criterion excel sheet brought merit to evaluating and comparing the risk for multiple threat attack vectors to critical assets.  Risk modeling is helpful, not just for government agencies responsible for the security and safety of critical infrastructure and people, but for businesses and corporation with assets of value that may be at risk.  Over the past few weeks, we’ve reiterated that common theme across risk modeling, which is more or less a continuous loop and review of identifying assets of value, analyzing the threats and vulnerabilities to those assets, prioritizing actions, and measuring effectiveness.  Just as the government/military utilizes risk modeling to protect classified information in the name of national security, rest assured big corporations do the same to protect sensitive proprietary and trade information.

The Maritime Security Risk Analysis Model (MSRAM) has been utilized by the Coast Guard throughout its operational and strategic levels, initially designed to better understand and mitigate risk of terrorist attacks to ports and waterways.  As we saw in last week’s assignment, MSRAM through multi-criterion assessment defines risk as threat x consequence x vulnerability.  I’m glad to see that the Coast Guard actively sought input from leadership from all levels of command to help determine their overall value system.  I believe the MSRAM has been viewed as a favorable tool for a number of reason.  First is the backing by the DHS and DHS oversight.  Conveniently, the Coast Guard is a component of the DHS and leads the country in our maritime border security.  Second is that the Government Accountability Office found that the MSRAM generally aligns with DHS risk assessment criteria, as well as the National Infrastructure Protection Plan.  With DHS taking lead on overseeing the protection of the sixteen critical infrastructure sectors, it’s no surprise that MSRAM is a favorite risk management tool.  MSRAM is incredibly detailed, and a good mix of quantitative and qualitative analysis.  The Government Accountability Office’s report in 2011 essentially praises the program, but recommends more documentation, and a stronger review of assumptions and other sources of uncertainty.  It makes sense – a powerful risk management tool such as MSRAM can only benefit security professionals more with more historical and relative information to draw from.

Thanks for reading!

Vince

References

Benjamin, Daniel. (2008). What statistics don’t tell us about terrorism. Brookings. Retrieved from https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/what-statistics-dont-tell-us-about-terrorism/

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