

At day's end, Canada must be there for the Americans

By GORDON SMITH

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The awful events of Tuesday have changed the world, and these changes will have a direct impact on Canada. While there is rightly a focus on helping those who may be rescued and those who have been injured and on grieving for those who have died, it is time to start thinking seriously about what Canada should do.

CNN is using the headline "America under attack." For millions of Americans, this conditions public perceptions. George W. Bush says the United States is now at war -- albeit a new kind of war against shadowy enemies, but war no less.

Terrorism is clearly a global threat that requires a global response. And friends and allies of the U.S. ought to be in the forefront of those co-operating with our neighbour. Yesterday, NATO invoked Article 5 of its charter, declaring that "an attack on one is an attack on all." This requires each member to take "such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area."

What is done in the immediate future by Canada will colour the perceptions of our country by Americans. Remember how Canadians "were there" for the U.S. during the hostage crisis in Iran?

The United States needs to improve its human intelligence capability -- the capacity to infiltrate spies into terrorist groups and hostile governments. There are now restrictions, self-imposed by the U.S. government, that were put in place to prevent direct association by those in its intelligence community with nasty people around the world who are prepared to kill and maim; it is safe to assume those restrictions will be lifted.

Canada already has extensive intelligence co-operation with the U.S., although our budgets are very limited. Now we ought to be ready to establish our own foreign intelligence-gathering capability, including that for human intelligence. We must put aside our previous reservations. We must also commit the necessary resources.

Despite intelligence failures, the U.S. is proud of its intelligence community. We should be of ours, rather than being somewhat embarrassed by it.

We need to ensure that our borders are truly secure. We know terrorists try to get into the U.S. via Canada. If we do not provide exemplary security at our border, the consequence for Canadians will be clear. The tight security will begin at the U.S. border. And it will be really tight.

We also need to deal with the problem of people arriving in our country as "refugees," then using the Charter of Rights to try to stay here. This is a loophole of significant proportions.

Fundraising for terrorism in Canada must be stopped. As with immigration and the treatment of visitors, this raises difficult political issues for a country that has benefited from such a diversity of immigrants. But these issues must be put in their proper perspective.

It is important to listen to what Mr. Bush is saying very carefully. There will be retaliation against not only the perpetrators but those who "harbour" them. This means foreign governments. Canada should support action against those who harbour or back terrorists.

It is likely that "proof" of who carried out Tuesday's attacks and with what support will never be what is needed in a Canadian court of law. The most sensitive intelligence will be used, and all the evidence will not be made available publicly to avoid compromising methods and techniques. We should be prepared to trust what the U.S. tells our leaders.

Even Osama bin Laden, if he is the culprit, does not have airports and aircraft at his disposal in the mountains of Afghanistan. Somewhere, somehow, these terrorists learned how to fly advanced Boeing aircraft. A government with an airline was almost certainly involved. That government should be the target of appropriate retaliation. We should be supportive.

This is a full and heavy agenda. But Canada's actions must not result in an increase in racial tensions in this country or an *undue* diminution of the rights of Canadians. Indeed, an action plan of this kind would contribute a sense among Canadians that the perpetrators and their friends were being selectively targeted and that the rest of us should bind together as closely as possible. As to the rights of Canadians and non-Canadians in Canada, to protect their security in the longer term, we must be prepared to trust in those responsible for our security in Ottawa.

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