

Mission Ready

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Let Security Speak For Itself

Once again, the Department of Homeland Security is preparing Americans for a terrorist attack. Although we'd rather see the President warning the terrorist-sponsoring nations of an impending attack, from the American Air Force, should there be a terrorist event in the U.S., we suppose Tom Ridge had no choice but to warn us of the very great probability of another attack. One thing is clear to us: security is definitely coming out of the closet.

For decades, security has always been a touchy subject with American businesses. Reluctant to even raise the issue, for fear of causing the customer anxiety, security has traditionally been a covert undertaking—heavily influenced by the Las Vegas and Disneyland security models, Hidden cameras relayed images to hidden guards, sequestered in command centers far from the public eye. Floor security officers were often broad shouldered types, stuffed into blue blazers in an attempt to appear more like customers. Should there be an incident, such as a shoplifter caught in the act, every effort was made to escort the culprit away as quietly as possible, so that the surrounding customers remain blissfully unaware of the unpleasantness. Even the Hollywood movie versions of crime on the street always show the detective hero in a three piece suit, melding into crowds, being as inconspicuous as possible; the uniformed “Sergeant O’Malley” charac-

ters are only called in after the fact, to protect the crime scene. Only recently, after the attacks on 9/11, has the American public seen their police force on the street, armed with automatic rifles, protecting the cities during an especially high terror alert level. And, generally speaking, the public has been gratified.

After 9/11, security has come out of the closet. Should there be more terror in America, it won't be long before our companies will reassure its customers “the Israeli way.” In Israel, there is no attempt to conceal security procedures. Guards are everywhere, for all to see. It is common knowledge that diners in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem will choose the restaurant with the guard at the front, over one without. Security is ostentatious, for the very good reason that a traumatized public craves to see it. And when obvious security procedures are established, the word gets around. How else has El Al, which does not even indirectly refer to its customer safety programs in its advertising, become a synonym for “security?” All El Al has to do is remind the passenger to be at the terminal three hours before the flight. The implications are clear: there will be a lot of security checkpoints for the passenger to go through. Israeli businesses do not have to advertise the precautions they have taken; over there, security speaks for itself.