

Security predictions indicate a year of living alert

By Roger Clarke, CLA member and Chair of the Australian Privacy Foundation

The Australian National Security Research Centre, National Security Practice Notes for January 2007 contains predictions for 2007 which make interesting reading in the lead-up to an election expected about October this year.

The Notes says we should watch out for more 'mid-life kickers' to keep us 'alert but not alarmed' – the Government has got the message that "There will be increasing complacency and cynicism about the terrorism threat".

One expectation is "growing emphasis on combating home-grown and do-it-yourself terrorism which is undertaken by people with no link to overseas Islamic terrorist groups". Put another way, that means the redefinition of 'any old violence' as 'terrorism'. The weekend newspaper reports (desperately trying to link stolen single-use anti-tank grenades with terrorism when it's pretty clear they were acquired by a mad drug-runner) were a fizzer.

Also, the Notes say, there will be "growing urgency to boost the number of proficient Arabic, Chinese and arc of instability language speakers in the police, military and intelligence communities" - "growing urgency"?? only now?? over 5 years later??

And there's tacit admission that the attempt to pin terrorism charges on the foolish young men currently in jail are rubbish: "[2007 will] not see many full convictions being secured for terrorism offences. People facing offences relating to planning and organising terrorism and belonging to a terrorist organisation will likely be convicted of more minor charges and receive short jail terms".

There's also a clear, if coded, hint that we're in for a federal election where 'security and terrorism fears' get ramped up: the Notes say Australia will "not see a diminishing of national security as a key feature in political debate in 2007".

<http://www.homelandsecurity.org.au/publications.html#practice>