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A RESPONSE TO CRIME'S WAR ON TOURISM

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ABSTRACT

The priority of any hospitality venture is the assurance of the safety and security of the traveler and the guest. Beginning in 1991, there was a critical attack by the criminals upon the traveler, both foreign and domestic. Initially this thrust was against the domestic traveler and lodging guest. In 1993, the focus shifted to the foreign visitor to the United States. The media looked to the hospitality industry as the one to resolve a problem which had baffled many professional police authorities as they encountered increased levels of crime with minimum dollars and insufficient staff to appropriately address the problem. The hospitality industry accepted the challenge and fashioned new and effective weapons in initiating methods for attacking the multifaceted problems of crime. We shall read of co-ventures that involve, associations, agencies, employers, employees, police authorities, as well as the foreign and domestic travelers. We will consider how the "awareness" programs through The Traveler Safety Campaign and

the Traveler Safety and Security Initiative are beginning to make a difference.

INTRODUCTION

Fortunately for the tourism industry and its many support industries, such as air travel, lodging, food and beverage, rental car, travel agencies, and entertainment industries, to name but a few, the nature and extent of the crime problem has altered significantly and favorably during 1995. There is a tendency within the above named industries to be reactive; rather than to continue in a preventive mode. Consequently, it is not time "to rest upon one's laurels;" but to continue to do "what is being done in a right and in an effective manner." This paper looks to those strategies and techniques for combatting the war against tourism by crime.

THE WAR ON TOURISM

Let us look back to 1993 when the headlines were indicating a "war on tourism" by the

crime community within the United States. In locales as diverse as Florida, Illinois and California, the foreign visitor was being targeted as "easy pickings" by the local gangs or by individual criminals "on the prowl." Tragically, many of the criminals were "hopped up" on drugs and were out to find enough money to cover the next drug "fix." In that state of physical and psychological disarray, the perpetrator was most likely to kill the victim--for no reason; but as a matter of convenience. In the drugged mind, this somehow eliminated any problem as the victim could never appear to identify the criminal. Unfortunately, there were others that represent a new "breed" of criminal who kill, without remorse, "for the fun of it."

During 1992 and 1993, the deaths of foreign visitors in the United States resulted in a significant reduction in visitors from many nations throughout the world. There was an over-all reduction of six percent in international arrivals with 45.5 million coming to the USA. Projections for 1995 indicated an anticipated drop in Canadian and Mexican visitors with the major concern of the two countries being the problems of security and crime. Of course the travel reductions also had a financial basis as the peso plunged in value and the Canadian dollar traded at an average of twenty-five cents less on the dollar exchange. The United States Travel and Tourism Association projected a total of 12.5 million visitors from Canada, a reduction of 9% from the 13.7 million visitors during 1994. Mexico was projected at a level of 8.2 million visitors in 1995, a loss of 15% as compared with the 9.6 million visitors during 1994. Fortunately, the Asian visitors remained strong and it was anticipated that South Korea would increase 20% from 604,000 visitors in 1994 to an anticipated

high of 725,000 Korean visitors during 1995. Japan's level of visitation was anticipated to increase 9.5% from 1994's 4.4 million visitors to a level of 4.8 million visitors in 1995. Moving from the Asiatic Rim to South America, a significant increase was anticipated from Brazil with a 13% increase from 745,000 visitors during 1994 to 842,000 visitors in 1995 (1).

Crime Also Impacts US Travelers

The "war against tourism" did not focus on foreign visitors, only. Approximately a year earlier on July 18, 1991 the Wall Street Journal printed a front page article by investigative reporter, Kevin Helliker under the title, "*Unwelcome Guests With Cut-Rate Inns Scrimping on Security, Criminals Move In. Motel 6 Case Highlights Issue of Lax Policies on Keys, Guards, and Identification. Rapes, Robberies on the Rise*"(2). The author had the unenviable assignment of being interviewed by Kevin Helliker and many other media representatives for the many articles and TV "stings" that were to follow. The "Journal" article reported on a ten million dollar settlement for a rape victim at a Fort Worth Motel 6 property. A major theme of the article was that budget and economy properties were sacrificing the security of the guests in order to provide an inexpensive room. This charge resulted in a challenge to the senior management of the lodging industry, and the Economy Lodging Council of the American Hotel & Motel Association met in Washington, D.C. in August, 1991 to address this problem. This was the beginning of the answer to the problem of "Crime and Tourism;" namely, a cooperative effort on the part of the lodging industry.

THE LODGING INDUSTRY DECLARES WAR ON CRIME

Security Awareness for Every Employee

The Educational Institute of the AH&MA was called upon to provide a security oriented videotape that would effectively enroll ALL employees as the "eyes and ears" for a lodging establishment. There was no intention of making every employee a security officer but it was an effort to establish an "awareness campaign" that would enlist the employees in promptly reporting any person(s) or situation which caused suspicion in an employee's mind. The resulting "Ten Minute Trainer" provided a format for the presentation of a security scenario with the opportunity for discussion and input by all viewers. Unfortunately, there were other videotapes that became available as training tools as ABC, CBS, CNN, NBC and many local channels began individual "sting" operations in the community or in a randomly selected city. However, the security officials within the major hotel/motel chains began to use these videotapes to emphasize with the employees those staff oversights that could compromise the security of a guest. Another weapon in the arsenal against crime.

Enhanced Security Officer Training

The Security Committee of the American Hotel & Motel Association includes the senior security executives for many of the major hotel/motel chains. They focused upon the development of a training program that could be made available through the Educational Institute of the AH&MA.

Rather than a certification program, this provides the presentation of a "Certificate of Completion" upon successful completion of the program by a security employee in the lodging industry. While focused upon the lodging industry, it could have application for other disciplines under the hospitality industry umbrella.

Overview (3)

This is a modularized, self-study program designed for persons with security responsibilities within a lodging property, especially security officers. Those who complete the entire program take an Educational Institute-graded examination and receive a certificate of completion after passing the examination.

Program Objectives

After completing the course, the user will:

- * Understand the role of the lodging security officer.
- * Understand laws and regulations that affect the security function of a lodging property.
- * Be able to perform routine and special security activities.
- * Be able to respond to misdemeanors and crimes that may occur at a lodging property.
- * Be able to handle emergencies that may arise at a lodging property.

Electronic Locking Systems Are Introduced to Solve Key Control Problems

The lodging industry accepted the challenge of Helliker's article implying "lax policies on keys." By August of 1993, the Hilton Hotels corporate properties and by April, 1996 the franchised properties had electronic locks installed for every guest room. The ITT Sheraton corporate properties had electronic or card operated reprogrammable systems in place by August, 1994. Less than one percent of the franchised properties have yet to comply with the mandate for the Sheraton Inns. Such compliance is anticipated during 1996. During this same period of time there have been millions of dollars invested in the electronic card access systems for protection of the guest room as the senior managements of chain after chain have mandated the installation of such locking systems or the loss of the franchise contract for non-compliance. Today, to name but a few, Holiday Inns Worldwide, Ramada, Howard Johnsons, Days Inns, Super-8 Motels, Budgetel, Sleep Inns, Comfort Inns, Quality Inns, and Clarion Hotels and Suites have either installed electronic lock systems or mandated them to be in place by October 31, 1996. Needless to say, the move of so many properties within the industry to electronic locks establishes this as a system that must be considered by all lodging chains or organizations whenever constructing or renovating a property.

American Automobile Association Impacts Lodging Industry Security

At the March 16, 1993 press conference in New York City, (detailed later in this article), the AAA announced that lodging

establishments would be required to have deadbolts installed on connecting room doors; or the property would not qualify for inclusion in the AAA Guides for its membership in 1995. A slide-bolt, chain or bar would be unacceptable to the AAA field inspector. Continuing their emphasis on security, this supplemented the earlier requirement that all AAA qualifying properties must include deadbolt installations on all guest room corridor doors. It further stipulated that the deadbolt have a throw of a minimum of 1 to 1 1/2 inches long. In addition, there must be a viewport (peephole) and a chain or a bar-guard should also be provided on the guest room corridor door.

National Restaurant Association Provides Security Training

The Educational Foundation of the National Restaurant Association has also provided training videotapes and a unit in its Management Skills Program Skillbooks entitled, Basics of Foodservice Security (4). This program includes:

The Law and Your Responsibility

Establishing a Security Program and Selecting a Security System

Hiring and Training Employees

Preventing Internal Theft

Preventing External Theft

Handling Security Emergencies

Here, again, there is an effort within the hospitality industry to confront the problem of "crime and tourism."

Police Authorities Play a Strategic Role Against Crime's War on Tourism

The lodging and tourism industry, at large, are well aware of the critical role played by police authorities in the implementation of a program to combat crime's war on tourism. The larger cities frequently have Hotel Squads which have officers especially assigned to work with the security directors and security officers at lodging establishments within their jurisdiction.

Properties are anxious to establish a police presence on their premises. To that end, they will invite the officers to drive through the parking lot when in the vicinity and to stop to use the various facilities of the property--washrooms, telephones, and a donut and coffee.

Senior officers are invited to make a security survey of the property to assist in maximizing the security of the establishment. During such a visit, the senior management of the property will confirm the intention to fully prosecute any criminal actions on the property; whether internal or external. There must be clarification as to the obtaining of information under such a liaison. Unless the local community has enacted a requirement that guest information be provided to a police officer, upon request, the property will require a court order to release such data. Obviously there are constitutional considerations in "rights of privacy" that pertain.

An example of outstanding police and lodging industry cooperation is to be seen in Orlando, Disney World and adjoining hospitality facilities. In December, 1993, the first Annual Security Conference sponsored by the Central Florida Hotel and Motel Association was conducted in

Orlando. This brought together police officials from Orlando, other Florida jurisdictions, and from a number of states throughout the nation. In addition, there were numerous senior management officers, security directors, and security officers from lodging establishments, not only in Florida, but from throughout the United States.

There was a focus upon the need for becoming "tough with juvenile offenders" and since that meeting, Florida has gone on to become one of the "toughest" states in the United States in dealing with the juvenile offender.

Networking

Computers and the FAX machine have been enlisted in the battle against tourism crimes. Utilizing police assistance, the victim of a robbery, for example, will not only report to the police but will also put the information on E-mail or FAX to all properties in the community who are participating in such networking. This provides almost instantaneous advice on the incident; as much information as possible on description of the perpetrators; the vehicle being used; and any special data that may be of value in apprehending the criminal(s). Where computer or FAX services may not be readily available, a "telephone tree," while a bit more labor intensive, will provide the sharing of information as property calls to property and passes the message on throughout the tree.

Tourism Employee/Police Cooperation

In the Orlando/Orange County area, there is an unusual liaison relationship between the police and Orlando's Tourism Employees

against Crime, (TEAC) (1). TEAC brings together local organizations, i.e. Central Florida Hotel/Motel Association, the Orange County Sheriff's Office, and Crimeline to fight crime against tourists. The TEAC program enlists tourism employees to become additional eyes and ears for law enforcement officials to assist in prevention of tourism criminal incidents. This approach allows employees to report information to law enforcement officials which will lead to the apprehension of criminals. Participation is enhanced by allowing employees to collect reward money for leads that result in arrests and convictions.

CALLING UP THE TROOPS

Traveler Safety Campaign

On March 16, 1993 a press conference was called in the Marriott Marquis Hotel on Times Square in New York City to announce a special initiative involving five organizations, united in their efforts to combat crimes against tourism. The American Hotel & Motel Association was the organizer of the Traveler Safety Campaign which focused upon enlisting the traveler as a member of the team against tourism crimes. This was the previously "missing link" in addressing the problem. There was the need for enlisting the awareness of the traveler without frightening them and this program held promise of doing exactly that. Cooperating with the AH&MA was the American Automobile Association (AAA); the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), the American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA) and the National Crime Prevention Council and its mascot, "McGruff."

AH&MA introduced a public service announcement tape that was available to the industry for use on the property's information channel, as well as for use on community television. The Association also introduced a card entitled, "Traveler Safety Tips,"(5) which advised:

1. Don't answer the door in a hotel or motel room without verifying who it is. If a person claims to be an employee, call the front desk and ask if someone from their staff is supposed to have access to your room and for what purpose.
2. When returning to the hotel or motel late in the evening, use the main entrance of the hotel. Be observant and look around before entering parking lots.
3. Close the door securely whenever you are in your room and use all the locking devices provided.
4. Don't needlessly display guest room keys in public or carelessly leave them on restaurant tables, at the swimming pool, or other places where they can be easily stolen.
5. Do not draw attention to yourself by displaying large amounts of cash or expensive jewelry.
6. Don't invite strangers to your room.
7. Place valuables in the hotel or motel's safe deposit box.
8. Do not leave valuables in your vehicle.
9. Check to see that any sliding glass doors or windows and any connecting room doors are locked.

10. If you see any suspicious activity, please report your observations to the management.

Almost twenty million of these cards have been distributed throughout the nation and several chains have incorporated the information on the key or access card folder; and one chain has incorporated it on the electronic access card. In addition the cooperating associations carried the message to millions of members through newsletters and special information pieces.

Security Seminars for the Federation

The American Hotel & Motel Association is a federation of state, some city, provincial, and international associations. It was agreed that the city and state federation should become involved in seminars supported through funding by the Educational Institute of the AH&MA. Several security consultants to the Association provided full-day seminars to city and state groups throughout 1993 and 1994. These seminars developed a greater awareness among the management and staff of their responsibility to provide more effective security. The seminar included owner-managers, managers, and department heads and supervisors from security, housekeeping, food and beverage, front office, front service, engineering and maintenance, and accounting departments. Again, "shoring up the troops" in this continuing battle against tourism crimes.

Security and Risk Management at the College Level

The author was invited by Dean Alan T. Stutts, PhD, CHE, of the Conrad N. Hilton

College, University of Houston to join the faculty in August, 1994 as an adjunct professor to provide a course for undergraduate and graduate students in Security and Risk Management. What better place to prepare the "troops and their future commanders" than at the hotel and hospitality school level. To that end a poster session presentation was made at the August 1995 annual meeting of the Council on Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Education (CHRIE) to invite other baccalaureate institutions to consider the addition of subjects supportive of this war on tourism crime.

The Security sessions of the course include: (6, 7, 8)

- * Security and the Lodging Industry
- * Some Court Cases
- * Setting Up the Security Program
- * Security Equipment
- * Guest Security
- * Departmental Responsibilities in Guest and Asset Protection
- * Protection of Assets--Scams--The Role of Insurance
- * Additional Management Responsibilities and Concerns
- * Emergency Management
- * Crisis Communications

USTTA/TIA Traveler Safety and Security Initiative

The heavy weapons were moved into place as the United States Travel and Tourism Administration (USTTA), and the Travel Industry Association of America (TIA) moved to complement the National Traveler Safety Campaign of the AH&MA and its coalition, previously noted. On May 24, 1993 David L. Edgell, Sr., Ph.D., Acting Under Secretary of Commerce for Travel and Tourism and Edward R. Book, President, TIA called for an industry-wide *Traveler Safes and Security Initiative*. This initiative was "designed to bring together all elements of the U.S. travel and tourism product, consumers and suppliers alike, in pursuit of common approaches to traveler safety and security. The announcement was made at the Discover America International Pow Wow in New Orleans, Louisiana. The initiative involved the following: (1)

On June 25, 1993 a survey was distributed to a sample of private and public sector travel organizations to inventory and catalog current policies, programs and practices in the area of traveler safety and security. A follow-up survey was accomplished in November, 1993. The organization types within the survey provided a broad spectrum of the hospitality industry. The participants included: states, convention bureaus, regional groups, associations, hotels, national park concessionaires, attractions, transportation, and travel agencies. The survey indicated that only 47% of the respondents felt that traveler safety and security were matters that required special action. However, 77% of the hotels felt that this was a matter that should receive priority consideration. Seventy-four percent of travel agencies and 70% of transportation also concurred in the need for special action. It is interesting to note that 43% of the states

called for immediate action and this reflected the regional nature of the problem in its relation to the foreign visitor. Unfortunately, there are no States that have no crime involving travelers and guests, whether foreign or domestic, within the lodging establishments of any given state.

On February 9, 1994 the USTTA presented the preliminary survey results to the industry during the USTTA's International Tourism Conference in Washington, D. C. Since that date, the USTTA and TIA continue to work with their partners inside the industry and are involved in efforts to focus internationally on solutions and to provide case studies or models for policies and employee education/training programs in the area of traveler safety and security.

CONCLUSION

The war continues, and as may be seen in this article, there have been some battles won. There will undoubtedly be continuing skirmishes before the hospitality industry can truly declare that it has crime at bay. As the coalition of associations, agencies, employees, employers, police authorities, and governments maintain a focus on providing the maximum safety and security for the traveler, there will be an increased number of "battles won."

Then we will be called upon to focus upon the next challenge to the hospitality industry. The author attended the Tenth Annual Meeting of the Overseas Security Advisory Council to the U. S. Department of State, on the 8th of November, 1995, and the new challenge appears to be the incursion of organized crime into the area of big business. As "today's youth" might say,

when confronting such a challenge:
"AWESOME!"

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