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A Question of investment: Is prevention worth the price?

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Guest Column
May/June 2010

**A Question of Investment:
Is Prevention Worth the Price?**

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In today's calculus of public and private budgeting, an ounce of prevention may no longer be worth a pound of "cure."

"Prevention" takes many forms: Preparing one's family for an emergency. Buying life and property insurance. Buying corporate insurance. Having a sufficiently-sized and well-trained security workforce at your workplace. Supporting law enforcement efforts to get one step ahead of the bad guy (whether a criminal or a terrorist). **Supporting entities like UNLV's Institute for Security Studies whose sole *raison d'être* is to make Las Vegas and Nevada a safe and secure place to live, work and visit.**

When one views the horrific results of terrorist activities in Jakarta, Mumbai or elsewhere...or the equally horrific results of Mother Nature's wrath in Haiti, Chile, tornado alley or New Orleans, one is taken aback by the amount of time it requires for a region to get back on its feet--emotionally, spiritually, economically. One is also stricken by the serious flaws in the Federal response to tragedies in the United States. It seems as if we have no expectation of terrible things happening...and as though we must learn hard lessons from scratch, time and again.

Recently, in testimony before the United States House of Representatives' Committee on Homeland Security's Subcommittee on Emergency Communications, Preparedness and Response, UNLV's own Dr. Christine Springer [spoke](#) of a National Academy of Public Administration panel that looked at the robustness and capability---or lack thereof---of FEMA regional offices. The study, requested by Congress, points out several areas where improvement is imperative. If states, counties, communities, businesses and families are to regard FEMA as an insurance policy against the impacts of the next bad day, then FEMA must heed the recommendations set forth in the October 2009 report: "*FEMA's Integration of Preparedness and Development of Robust Regional Offices.*"

Whatever the reaction to the NAPA report, it is well to realize that, regardless of how well and promptly FEMA performs, communities, businesses and families should expect no help from FEMA or any other state or Federal agency for at least three full days. For this and many other reasons, it is wise to make as heavy an investment in *prevention* as possible. We realize that preventing acts of Mother Nature are one thing, but applying preventive techniques to head off terrorists is something that we can engage in.

Recognizing one's shortcomings and dealing with them in a satisfactory manner require honesty, commitment and openness. We in the Las Vegas Valley are beginning to understand our need to build communities of trust, to build linkages among people who may become aware of the indicators of terrorist activities and who are committed to the free and open sharing of information that will frustrate terrorists' plans.

Nevada's insurance policy against terrorism is *the vigilance of its citizens*. Nevada's best-tasting preventive medicine against terrorism is the alertness of its citizens *and their willingness to share their concerns*. We need to engage as many sets of eyes and ears as possible in being on the alert for the signs of terror...and in reporting them to the appropriate authorities.

Nevada's front line of defense---entities like the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, the Southern Nevada Counter-Terrorism Center, and the Institute for Security Studies---need your support more than ever.