

ALLEGED TERRORISTS AND AMBITIOUS REPORTERS

When Victoria Police and the Australian Federal Police recently foiled an alleged Mumbai-style attack on Holdsworthy Army base it was disconcerting to note the alleged plotters were Australians, born and bred. It seems this dark thing called terrorism isn't going anywhere soon. In fact, it's getting closer to home.

But how ridiculous, thinking you could walk into an army base and shoot the place up. Impossible. Couldn't happen. There are highly trained soldiers in there with sophisticated weapons.

Yet a day after the arrests a reporter and a photographer from the Daily Telegraph were caught wandering around inside the base taking photographs. Which is not only a major embarrassment for the army but for the government as well. It doesn't fill the citizenry with confidence to know their Defence Force is as vigilant as a stoned koala with a sleep disorder.

It was a great victory for the media... exposing security concerns at an army base. They're feeling pretty chipper, and now every newshound keen to make his name will be trying to sneak onto some forbidden site and spend the night showing how stealthy they are and how deficient your security is and what a risky operation you run. It will all be done in the best interests of the public, of course. Merely to expose holes in security before terrorists can find them and exploit them. But its major effect will be to make you look negligent and your business a dangerous, unprotected place. They say any publicity is good publicity. Not true. Cadet journos dancing an Irish Jig in your inner sanctum can tend to make your customers think you a tad reckless, and make them want to do business elsewhere, on safer ground.

The Army can cope with being made to look foolish (we're stuck with them). But what business needs adverse publicity like that? It's important to make sure your property is secure in these times. Terrorists, and the media, are out there.