

keep the country safe



● New technology beefing up policing

identify passengers who are potential threats before they even board a plane to Bahrain.

Bahrain has also adopted a hands-on approach to ensure the third layer of protection, namely mainland security – paying particular attention to protecting the country's key infrastructure.

“Over the last two years, full reviews have been carried out of parts of our critical national infrastructure including the nation's oil, gas, petrochemical and water and electricity facilities,” revealed Capt Al Khayat.

“This has resulted in the production of a National Integrated Security Plan for protection of these assets.”

The assets include major facilities such as Bapco, Banagas, GPIC, Alba, Bafco and the country's national water and electricity infrastructure – including the Hidd Power Company and Al Ezzel Power Plant.

Security forces have compiled a database of all potential terrorist targets in the country, as well as people who are considered to be at a higher risk of attack.

“In conjunction with appropriate embassy staffs, we know where the majority of such citizens live, work and the locations they frequent for leisure,” revealed Capt Al Khayat.

“With this information we have carried out reconnaissance of these areas and our contingency plans ensure that in the event of an increase in the threat, additional patrols can quickly be deployed to act in a protection, deterrent and interception role.”

The fourth layer of defence is a risk management strategy that is being drawn-up as part of a two-year action plan under Public Security Chief Major General Al Zayani, who is also chairman of the National Committee for Disaster Management.

A National Major Civil Contingency Strategy is being drawn up, to foster a culture of safety, risk awareness and risk reduction; ensure procedures are in place to manage risk; and put steps in place to manage a major crisis.

The country, under the co-ordination of the Interior Minister, is continually identifying risks and assessing them, with the intention of either preventing them or preparing for them if they happen.

Such risks could include a national disaster, natural or manmade, terrorism, an air crash, industrial sabotage or attacks on government data networks.

Bahrain has its own hazard assessment system, which gives priority for action based on



● Community policing key to the new approach

the chance of an incident happening - balanced against the potential impact if it did.

Two events have been identified as “very high risk” in terms of impact and likelihood; the

first - an influenza pandemic - was identified last year and the second was a major fire in labour or other overcrowded accommodation with mass fatalities.

However, an example of a hazard considered most likely is a serious dust storm lasting more than a week, which is worse than any experienced in recent history.

“This would lead to increased demand on medical services, particularly by the old and sick, and have an impact on transportation such as aircraft - with the airport possibly being closed for a while and thus also (an impact) on commerce,” said Cap Al Khayat.

Other changes have included the realignment of Bahrain's police force boundaries in line with the country's five governorates – Central, Southern, Manama, Muharraq and Northern.

The creation of a community police force has also been a major factor in changing the public face of the Interior Ministry.

“We have community service police consisting of approximately 500 local Bahraini men and women – 100 to each of the five governorates – who come from and reflect the make-up of the communities they are serving,” said Major Mohammed Abdulla Al Haram.

“Their main role is to provide a visible presence to reassure, deter and provide local expertise.

“They are an outward sign that we are here to support and not to control the community and that local matters are important to us.”

criminals

Mohammed Abdulla Al Haram.

He said risks to Bahrain's national security, like any other nation, included any destabilising factor that affected security or stability.

These could be political violence - including threats of aggression from another country - terrorism and civil disorder.

They also include criminal violence and other criminal activities – particularly organised international financial, cyber, electronic and drug crimes – and national disasters.

The Interior Ministry has now adopted a policy of achieving “national resilience”

to help ensure Bahrain's security.

“The words are accurate because for a substance to be resilient, it must be made to be strong and flexible,” explained Maj Haram.

“You should be able to bend, stretch or compress it and it should be able to recover and resume its original shape.

“That is our security vision of Bahrain: a nation which is both strong, flexible and prepared for all risks; deals with a crisis if and when it occurs and then recovers from it.”



● The Interior Ministry's hi-tech control room