

# Sociology's Mathieu Deflem is authority on world terrorism

By MARSHALL SWANSON

Mathieu Deflem's historical research on international police forces was once thought by his colleagues to be "interesting, but kind of quaint."

But since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, Deflem has been spotlighted as an oft-quoted authority on the role of multinational police organizations in countering terrorism. His work was featured in a May 8, 2003, CNN debate about the United Nations' response to terrorism, and he has been called on as a source for numerous news stories about terrorist threats at home and abroad.

"It's like my work went from merely interesting to highly relevant in just one day," said Deflem, a native of Belgium who joined the USC Department of Sociology in 2002 after receiving his Ph.D. at the University of Colorado and teaching at Kenyon College and Purdue University.

Police forces around the world also are being transformed by the global war against the international flow of illegal drugs,



Deflem

illegal immigration, cyber crime, and international terrorism. But the notion of worldwide cooperation in police work is not new, Deflem said. His recent book *Policing World Society* (Oxford University Press, 2002; paperback 2004) documents the rise of international police cooperation since the middle of the 19th century.

Deflem's National Science Foundation-funded research in the globalization of socio-legal phenomena and the history of international policing was followed by research applying insights from his historical work to police strategies in counter-terrorism.

The work has been partially funded by a faculty grant from the Walker Institute of International Studies at USC. Deflem also edited a new book, *Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism: Criminological Perspectives* (Elsevier Science, 2004), in which he collected criminologists' contributions in the study of counter-terrorism.

The first European international police organization was the Police Union of German States, which operated between Austria and other sovereign German-language countries from 1851 to 1866 to combat the political threat of socialist and communist groups fomenting rebellion, Deflem said.

The second true international organization of police agencies forging cooperation among European countries was formed in the 1990s when the European Union created the European Police Office, or Europol, headquartered at The Hague in Holland. It has an agreement with Interpol to fight terrorism as well as accords with other police agencies.

The attacks of 9/11 were not the first events that propelled cooperative international police work, particularly in Europe, where terrorist incidents in the early 1970s spawned the TREVI Treaty of 1975 among European Community states for cooperation and coordination among their police forces. The cooperation accelerated in the 1980s with concerns about terrorism hitting the United States and increased in the late 1990s when the threat of terrorism from loosely connected networks surrounding Osama bin Laden were clearly identified, Deflem said.

Can a global police force defeat terrorism? Probably not by itself, said Deflem, who argues that an effective response to terrorism will require more than just international cooperation by police agencies, and more than unilateral or even multilateral military intervention.

"Terrorism is a multidimensional problem that is not solely the act of a particular person or group committing particular crimes; it also has certain political and cultural dimensions that are part of a culture of terrorism that has been embraced or tolerated by some countries," Deflem said.