

THE WORLD CUP *Hagai Segal*

Germany's goal: to defeat a dual threat

Most negative attention in the run-up to the football World Cup has concerned the Europe-wide scourge of hooliganism, but German authorities are looking to more pressing matters: the dual threat of political violence from far-right extremists and radical Islamist terrorists is increasingly preoccupying them.

The build-up to the tournament, which begins tomorrow, has been accompanied by a set of racially motivated attacks, and wider security alerts and concerns.

In April, an Ethiopian man was beaten into a coma in a suspected racist attack in Potsdam. On May 26, three serious racial attacks occurred in Weimar, Wismar and Berlin. The victims were from Mozambique, Cuba, India and Turkey. The same week, a Turkish-born local politician, Gyasettin Sayan, was seriously assaulted in Berlin.

In light of such incidents, public warnings have been issued to non-white visitors to stay away from entire parts of Germany. The Africa Council, a

group that represents Germans of African origin, has published a list of "no-go areas".

Uwe-Karsten Heye, a former government spokesman who now heads an anti-racism lobby, said: "There are towns in Brandenburg and elsewhere I would advise anyone with a different skin colour not to go to... They may not leave with their lives."

In the 16 years since the fall of the Berlin Wall, there have been 133 race murders in Germany, according to the Amadeu Antonio Foundation, an anti-Nazi organisation named after the first victim.

A report released in April by Germany's Office for the Protection of the Constitution highlights a 27 per cent increase, in 2005, in violence committed by far-right extremists. Most of the attacks were in the former East Germany, where 12 World Cup venues are located.

And the extremists seem determined to put on a show of force during the World Cup, which could prove a

huge embarrassment for German authorities. It may point an unwelcome spotlight on the modern manifestation of a fascist movement that most Germans hoped had been consigned to the dustbin of history.

A number of far-right rallies are expected to take place, including one in Leipzig on June 21, when Iran plays Angola in the city. That rally is planned to support Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his anti-Semitic and Holocaust-denying statements – just as European politicians try to ban Mr Ahmadinejad from attending the tournament due to these very same statements.

If these issues were not enough of a headache for German authorities, they must also deal with the potential terrorist threat to the event.

Al-Qaeda's targeting of Europe in recent years rightly has states like Germany profoundly concerned. The good news is that Osama bin Laden's group is unlikely to dedicate much of its now-limited resources to target a

country on high alert. The bad news is that Germany does not have the luxury of dropping its guard, especially mindful as it will be of the home-grown aspect of today's terrorists.

The local, fellow-countryman nature of the terror threat was horribly illustrated in Madrid and London, and highlighted again by the recent arrests in Canada of 17 terrorist suspects, all of whom are Canadian residents. Do similar cells await, undetected, in Germany today?

The heat is thus well and truly on German authorities, who are determined not to allow terrorism – or the modern manifestations of the country's Nazi past – affect this showpiece of sport, friendship and international co-operation.

Clearly, not everybody supports the tournament's motto: "A time to make friends."

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