

## ***Spain reviews terrorism protection***

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**SPAIN** has ordered a review of the state-funded protection given to potential terrorist victims after allegations that police escorts are being used as chauffeurs or errand boys.

The Socialist Government has admitted that it is reviewing the list of 5,200 potential terrorist victims who warrant bodyguards paid for by the State, incurring a bill of more than Euro 67 million (Pounds 45 million) a year. Jose Antonio Alonso, the Interior Minister, has ordered a so-called "map of terrorist risk" and a study to "optimise and rationalise" the secret programme.

Prominent individuals who are accompanied by bodyguards include diplomats, judges, politicians and businessmen. Most are considered to be at risk of attack by Eta, the Basque separatist group. In the Basque country alone more than 1,000 people have security escorts.

Since the al-Qaeda train attacks in Madrid on March 11, however, protection has been given to a number of individuals who may be targeted by Muslim extremists. Although Eta's strength appears to have been substantially reduced, with 600 convicted terrorists in Spanish prisons, it has been able to conduct its annual beach-bomb campaign on the Costas this year, albeit without causing major injuries.

The review of protection has caused alarm within the centre-right Popular Party, defeated by the Socialists of Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero in an election held in the aftermath of the Madrid rail bombings. Opposition MPs claim that the Socialists are more likely to withdraw protection from those known to be supporters of the Popular Party. "For obvious reasons we cannot say what our policy on bodyguards is," a spokesman for the Interior Ministry said. "But our objective is to improve the quality and efficiency of personal protection. "Each case demands an examination of the type of protection required, the perceived threat, evaluation of resources and technical support."

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