

Local Terrorism Fight Not U.S. Task

WE TEND to think of terrorism in terms of big riots, bombings, sensational kidnappings and gang warfares.

Those things certainly qualify, but terrorism also shows up as small-time local crime with disastrous consequences.

Following a visit to English and German police departments, Oklahoma City Police Chief Tom Heggy said he was warned that it was just a matter of time until terrorism comes to the United States.

One needs only to clip terror and vandalism stories from newspapers for a couple of weeks to become convinced that the "matter of time" already has elapsed. Terrorism has come to Oklahoma.

A dozen or two incidents reported on Halloween, bringing danger or harm to people and property, might be matched in a few days by unrelated incidents of as bad or worse nature.

Terrorism is a broad term that could range from threats to neighbors over barking dogs or roaring motorcycles to burning down

schools and some types of political demonstrations. Many labor union strikes involve flagrant terrorism.

Sometimes terrorists and vandals may benefit temporarily from their spree, but just about as often the crimes are committed for other reasons, or perhaps for no reason at all.

Hatred, jealousy, revenge, desire for anonymous notoriety and other emotions might be causes. Many acts of vandalism seem to be thoughtless mischief by idle youngsters.

Whatever the cause, terrorism, arson and vandalism are costly and terrifying in their impact on the public. Frequently, they are catastrophic, as were school fires at Hammon and Beaver.

Tampering with large construction machinery in Oklahoma City incidents gained nothing for those who did the damage, but caused expensive repairs and delays for others.

Less spectacular and often unreported are such things as pushed-down mailboxes, cars driven across lawns and noisy disturbances, some-

times followed by acts of vengeance if victims complain.

Replacement of broken windows could cost many times the original price, and property destroyed may be irreplaceable.

Oklahoma has had few incidents of big-time terrorism, but we have far too many minor incidents with major consequences.

In a speech on his trip to Europe, Chief Heggy was correct in pointing out that neighborhood associations could be effective helpers in attacking crimes of this nature.

But he was off target when he suggested that responsibility for handling terrorism should be left to the federal government. Certainly, Washington agencies will become involved in bigger incidents, but our wave of terrorism isn't that big — yet!

Small-time terrorists might become big-time terrorists if they get away with petty gangsterism.

Control of local terrorism is a job for local police and local courts. It will only get worse if we leave it to Washington!