A Check Against Terrorism

Realtor Daniel Rose's gift for joint research by the Technion and Yale sprang from a desire to see justice done.

by Doug Chandler
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The motivation behind large gifts to schools, hospitals and other institutions varies from donor to donor, who might wish to honor a relative, advance a favorite cause or to aid an organization that once helped his or her own family.

For Daniel Rose, the chairman of one of New York's oldest real-estate firms and a member of one its best-known philanthropic families, the driving force behind his latest gift couldn't be clearer.

The $1.3 million gift, made to the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology and the Yale School of Management, has established a three-year partnership between the two schools to conduct homeland-security and counterterrorism research. And it stems from the decision several years ago by a British academic union to boycott Israeli universities, according to Rose.

Sitting in a conference room of Rose Associates, the three-generation firm founded by Rose's uncle, David, and his father, Samuel, the 78-year-old businessman said the union's action alone proved "disheartening enough." But what he found especially dispiriting was "the lack of outrage" by the rest of the world, he recalled. And then, he added with a wry laugh, he learned that the couple who launched the boycott, Steven and Hilary Rose, shared his last name.

The academic union eventually revoked the boycott, saying that it could be illegal under British law and, therefore, couldn't be implemented. But the episode "galvanized" Rose to do something, he said, calling himself an "activist by nature."

Two questions followed that sense of resolution, Rose said: "What could we do to show the world that major institutions are not only not boycotting [Israeli universities], but are, in fact, reaching out [to them]?" And how can that desire translate into an effective, meaningful project?

The questions, and the thinking behind them, provide a glimpse into Rose himself.

Somewhat of a Renaissance man, he served as an intelligence-analyst and Russian-language specialist for the Air Force during the Korean War. Ever since, he has pursued an interest in foreign affairs as a leading member of the Foreign Policy Association, the Council on Foreign Relations and the International Institute for Strategic Studies. He's also an author and lecturer who has served on a number of city, state and federal panels; advised government officials; and sprinkles his speech with references to Arnold Toynbee, Alexis de Tocqueville and other such figures.
As Rose contemplated what shape his response would take, other concerns entered his thinking, he said. One of them involved how effective the U.S. government has been since 9/11 in preparing for terrorism. Rose’s answer: “Less than satisfying.” And the other involved Israel, which, in Rose’s view, is more experienced than any other country in the nitty-gritty of handling and preventing terrorism.

“To bring together Israel’s hands-on, day-to-day experience and Yale’s skill in managing and institutionalizing those lessons” seemed ideal to Rose, who broached his idea to leaders of the Technion and suggested Yale as a potential partner. “Both sides were enthusiastic,” Rose recalled. “And I said, ‘You’re up and running. Come back with a program.’”

Rose is close to each institution, a 1951 Yale alumnus who serves as a member of the Technion’s International Board of Governors. In addition, his uncle David was one of the earliest presidents of the American Technion Society, and the institute’s main campus thoroughfare is David Rose Avenue.

As Rose advised, the partnership between the Technion and Yale is already “up and running.” Led by Boaz Golany, a professor of industrial engineering at the Technion, and Edward H. Kaplan, a professor of management sciences, public health and chemical engineering at Yale, the project will sponsor conferences, seminars and lectures.

The challenges facing both professors concern “addressing the issues of homeland security and terrorism from our own point of view,” the standpoint of operations research, Golany said in a recent phone interview.

The field is a branch of applied mathematics with roots in World War II, Golany said, adding that it’s been used for many years “to deal with the various logistics of conventional warfare.” Those issues are “very clear,” involving such questions as moving material, scheduling the right amount of inventory and stationing soldiers in the most effective places.

But the issues posed by terrorism are “very blurry,” Golany continued. “How do you identify terrorists? And how do you separate them from the civilian population, which is, by and large, innocent?”

Israel’s conventional wars took place in the desert, far from any civilians, while Israelis today “are more and more immersed in a conflict without any borders,” Golany said. “In the war on terrorism, you [feel as if you] have to defend every house, every school, every factory.” The problem, though, is that “the number of potential targets becomes infinite; you can’t defend each and every target all the time.”

Those are among the questions that Golany and Kaplan are planning to address. Friends and collaborators for a number of years, both recently published a paper looking at the allocation of resources to protect different cities and different types of targets.

“It sounds like a daunting problem,” but there are certain principals for determining the level of risk, Kaplan said. “The idea here is that you assume where the threat is coming from. … In the military, it’s called ‘red-teaming.’ In academics, it’s ‘game theory.’ If I go here, what are you going to do; if you go here, what am I going to do. Since terrorists don’t act randomly, it’s possible to develop theories about future moves.”

Other areas of study will explore the development of technology to counter explosive devices, preventing them from going off in the first place, and the feasibility of a model to predict the timing of terrorist acts.

“The experts overwhelmingly agree that we’re going to have more terrorist acts,” Rose said, pointing to an article in the current issue of Foreign Policy, a bimonthly publication, making the same point. “So is this a dead issue? No, it’s not a dead issue — and that’s why this research is so timely and urgent.”

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