

August 23, 1991

AN AMERICAN STRATEGY AGAINST TERRORISM

INTRODUCTION

America has an unprecedented opportunity to crush international terrorism. The collapse of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe ended the financial and logistical support for terrorists from East Germany and other states sponsoring terrorism. The Soviet Union, itself a training ground and financier for international terrorists, has reduced its assistance to these groups. The Palestine Liberation Organization, the world's largest terrorist group, has lost between \$100 million to \$300 million in Arab petrodollars and compulsory taxes on Palestinians working in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia because PLO leader Yassir Arafat backed Iraq's Saddam Hussein in the Persian Gulf war.¹

America's victory in the Gulf war has, for the time being, knocked Iraq out of the terrorist business, and dealt a temporary setback to Abu Abas's Palestine Liberation Front, the Abu Nidal Organization, and other terrorist groups in the Middle East.

The window of opportunity presented by these events, however, already is closing. The Iranian-backed *Hizballah* ("Party of God") terrorist network is reorganizing, and the Palestinian Islamic *Jihad* ("Holy War") and other groups are forming to attack Western interests globally. And Iran and some other sponsors of terror have emerged strengthened from the United States war against Iraq.

Terrorism remains a constant threat to American security. Though warnings of large-scale terrorist attack during the Persian Gulf war turned out to be unfounded, 55 civilians, including six Americans were killed, and 163 wounded, in over 386 incidents from January to June of this year.² While America and its allies averted a disaster along the lines of the destruction of Pan Am Flight 103 on December 21, 1988, which killed 270 people, it is not because terrorists have not been trying. A suitcase bomb,

1 Daniel Pipes, "PLO, Inc.," *The American Spectator*, February 1991, p. 27.

2 Interview with a representative of the U.S. State Department's Office of Counterterrorism, August 20, 1991.

for example, was intercepted in Sao Paulo, Brazil, before it was loaded onto a Los Angeles-bound Japan Airlines flight last month.

With America very strong internationally, Washington can develop an effective anti-terrorist strategy. To do so, George Bush should:

◆ ◆ **Declare terrorism an immediate threat to American security and enforce National Security Decision Directive 138 (NSDD-138).** A presidential finding that terrorism constitutes an immediate threat to U.S. security could mobilize the nation to resist terrorism with all the weapons in the American counterterror arsenal. The plan for doing so has existed since April 3, 1984, but Bush has not acted on it. Known as NSDD-138, this plan is a comprehensive strategy to fight terrorism by delegating areas of responsibility for U.S. federal agencies, assigning specific missions for offensive counterterror operations, and coordinating the actions of over 26 federal agencies. Enforcing NSDD-138 will bring coherence to the wide range of current U.S. counterterror activities and will provide a prescription for preemptively destroying terrorists and their bases.

◆ ◆ **Make better use of American military and paramilitary units to fight terrorism.** The U.S. has the technology and special operations forces, including the Army's Delta Force and the Navy's SEAL Team 6, to destroy terrorist training bases and capture terrorists. These capabilities should be employed in a sustained campaign against terrorists instead of relying mainly on non-military sanctions.

◆ ◆ **Instruct Secretary of State James Baker to announce the findings of the State Department's "Patterns of Global Terrorism."** This document annually reports on terrorist activity worldwide and provides information on groups most dangerous to America. The State Department, excessively concerned about offending nations that help terrorists, does not publicize the document sufficiently; an announcement by Baker would focus public attention on terrorism.

◆ ◆ **Appoint a Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs for Low-Intensity Conflict.** Bush still has not appointed a Deputy Assistant to the President for Low-Intensity Conflict (LIC) to the National Security Council as recommended by Congress in 1986. Among other things, this Presidential advisor would supervise enforcement of NSDD-138 and coordinate U.S. counterterrorism policies, which now are set by various federal departments and agencies including the Departments of Defense, Energy, Justice, State, Transportation, and Treasury, and the Central Intelligence Agency.

◆ ◆ **Increase U.S. intelligence operations against terrorist groups, particularly in the Middle East.** Intelligence is the first line of defense against terrorism, since planning for terrorism is always covert. Yet, U.S. intelligence coverage of the Middle East is weak. These intelligence capabilities should be improved by targeting and penetrating the governments of state sponsors of terrorism and terrorist networks. This requires more case officers and foreign agents.

◆ ◆ **Impose sanctions more strictly against states identified as sponsors of terrorism.** Terrorists could not operate effectively without safe-havens and financial support from Iran, Libya, Syria, and other terrorist sponsoring states. America should

strenuously impose sanctions on nations that directly aid terrorists. Sanctions could include economic and arms embargoes and diplomatic pressure on terrorist sponsors and those indirectly abetting them. If sanctions fail, the U.S. should consider using force against terrorist sponsors.

◆ ◆ **Expand counterterrorism cooperation with friendly nations.** The U.S. sends some of its counterterrorist personnel to train with similar forces in Britain and Israel. This cooperation should be expanded to include basing American counterterrorist units on foreign soil or on ships deployed overseas.

◆ ◆ **Submit new anti-terror legislation.** Despite some new laws that strengthen America's ability to use its legal system more effectively against terrorists, problems remain. Legislation is needed, for instance, for the U.S. government to be able to deport suspected terrorists without disclosing important intelligence information.

TERRORISM: UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE

The nineteenth century strategist Carl von Clausewitz, defined war as "an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will." He also observed that war is "an extension of politics by other means." By both of these definitions, terrorism is war, albeit without uniforms, borders, or rules of conduct.

The official U.S. government definition of terrorism meets Clausewitz's standards of war. According to the National Foreign Assessment Center of the CIA, "terrorism is the threat or use of violence for political purposes by individuals or groups, whether acting for or in opposition to established governmental authority, when such actions are intended to shock or intimidate a target group wider than the immediate victims."³ More often than not, the "immediate victims" of terrorism are innocent civilians, and they are all too frequently Americans.

Terrorist Warfare. Yet America does not treat terrorism as a form of warfare to be fought aggressively by American military forces, a right guaranteed by U.S. and international law. Despite the presidential directive, National Security Decision Directive 138, issued by Ronald Reagan on April 3, 1984, outlining U.S. plans for countering terrorism with military and non-military means, America treats terrorism not as an act of war, but as a criminal act. As a result, terrorism largely has been dealt with through the court system and law enforcement agencies, and through such other non-military means as diplomacy, and such economic sanctions as a terrorist-sponsor losing the right to trade with the U.S. or being limited in what it can trade.⁴

Since terrorism is considered as a criminal action, and not as an act of war, the President feels restrained from using military force to stop it.

3 Ari Orfi, "Intelligence and Counterterrorism," *Orbis*, Spring 1984, p. 42.

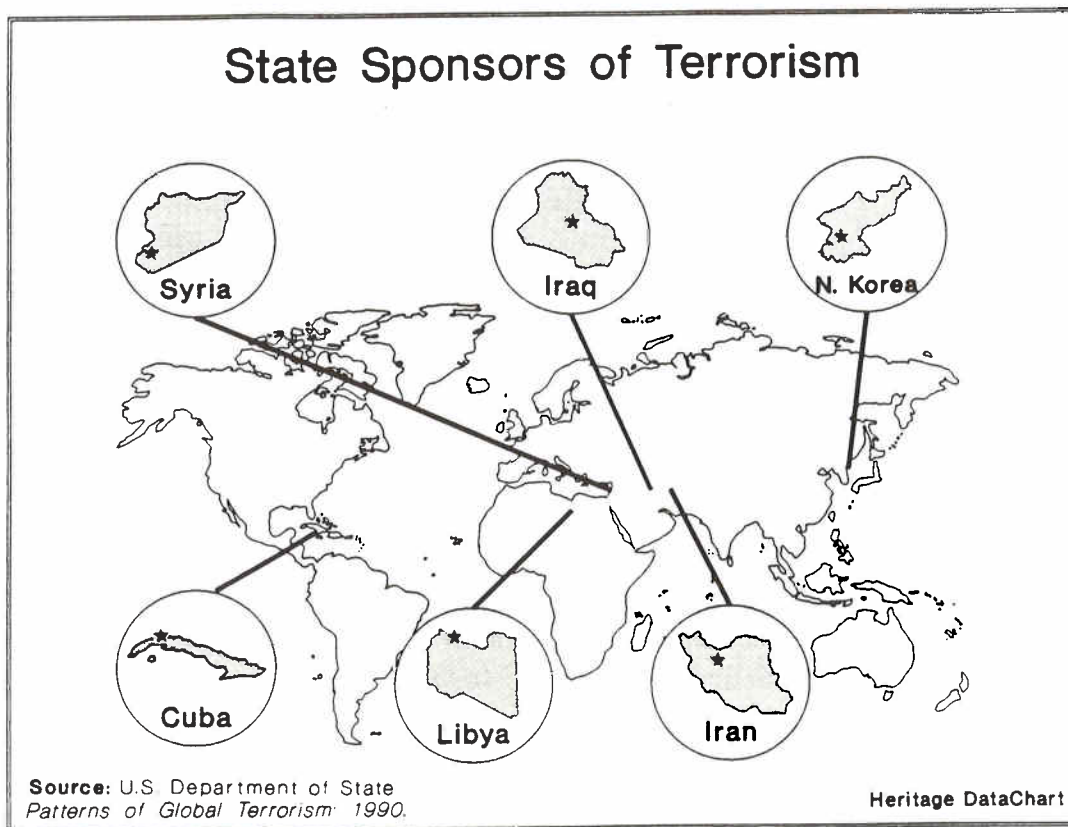
The National Foreign Assessment Center of the CIA has changed its name to the Directorate of Intelligence, which is responsible for all research and analysis, from an interview with CIA Public Affairs August 12, 1991.

4 Robert C. Toth, "Preemptive Anti-Terrorist Raids Allowed," *The Washington Post*, April 16, 1984, p. A19.

THE RECORD OF INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

Terrorism has been practiced for centuries, but it has increased in the years since World War II. Terrorism is viewed among some dictators and underground groups in the West and the Third World as a low cost and effective alternative to conventional warfare. Much of the increase in terrorism during the Cold War can be traced directly to the Soviet Union and its global proxies who supported such dictators and groups. While the Soviet Union continues to provide aid to states on the official U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism such as Cuba, today threats stem from a wider variety of sources.⁵

While the former East bloc countries of Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Yugoslavia, for the most part, no longer support terrorists, other countries are taking their place. Cuba, Iran, and Libya are maintaining, and in many cases stepping up, their ties with such groups as the Filipino New Peoples Army (NPA), the German Red Army Faction, and the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA). These countries finance, train, and equip terrorist groups and give them logistical and intelligence support.⁶ Six nations are on the State Department's 1991 list of terrorist state sponsors: Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, and Syria.⁷

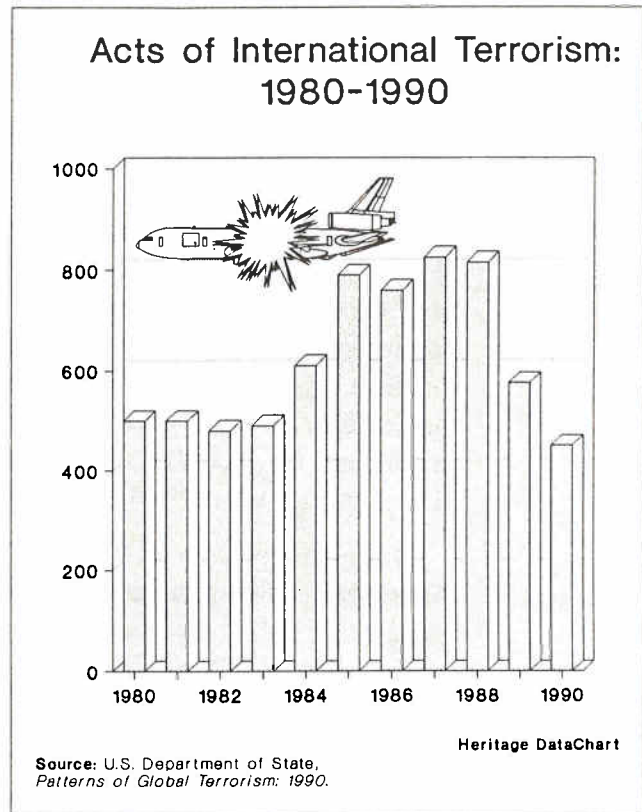


⁵ *USA Today*, July 26, 1990, p. 2A.

⁶ See Richard H. Shultz, et al., *Hydra of Carnage* (Lexington, Mass: Lexington Books, 1986).

⁷ *Patterns of Global Terrorism*, U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C., April 1991.

Major acts of terror were relatively unknown until after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. The failure of Arabs to defeat Israel by conventional force caused them to change tactics and use terror. Arab terror attacks against Israel soon became the paradigm for other so-called revolutionary struggles. The toll since 1968 includes the murder of 11 Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics; the murder of 21 schoolchildren and wounding of 65 others on May 15, 1974, in Maalot, Israel, by members of the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, operating under the umbrella of the PLO; the murder of 14 and wounding of 121 civilians at the Rome and Vienna airports on December 27, 1985, by members of the Abu Nidal Organization; the November 29, 1987, mid-air destruction of Korean Airlines Flight 858 by North Korean secret agents, killing 115; and the attempted murder of British Prime Minister John Major and his Cabinet on February 7, 1991, in London by the Provisional Irish Republican Army.



The State Department reports that 455 international terrorist attacks took place last year, and it warned that America “remains, by far, the most popular target of international terrorists. In the 197 anti-U.S. attacks, 10 Americans were killed and 34 injured.”⁸ While the number of international terrorist attacks has declined since the mid-1980s, when they were running as high as 800 per year, Western governments obviously still cannot protect their citizens completely from terrorism.⁹

INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM TODAY

International terrorists have suffered serious setbacks since the Soviet bloc dissolved. No longer does the government of Czechoslovakia supply Semtex plastic explosives and training to the PLO and other terrorist organizations. The former East Germany’s secret police, *Stasi*, no longer exists to provide refuge, training, and funds

⁸ *Ibid* p. 37.

⁹ *Ibid*. p. 39.

to the German Red Army Faction, the Italian Red Brigades, and the many Middle Eastern terror groups it once supported.

The collapse of the communist states' intelligence services that ran support networks in the East bloc, meanwhile, not only ended assistance to terrorists, it also forced them to concentrate their men and material in fewer state sponsors or go deeper underground. Added to these setbacks was the cutoff of Arab petrodollars to the PLO because of its support for Iraq during the Persian Gulf war, and after its defeat, the virtual elimination of Iraq as a major sponsor of terror. As a result, terrorists face a difficult period.

Terrorist Nuclear Weapons? Yet attacks undoubtedly will occur again. There is the chance, moreover, that terrorists will obtain nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons. Many attacks presumably will be carried out by the groups that have been operating for years. Many of the most formidable groups are based in the Middle East; some of these ostensibly operate in the name of the Palestinians, including the Abu Nidal Organization, Achmed Jibril's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, and the Palestine Liberation Front headed by Abu Abbas in the Middle East. These groups are backed by Iraq, Libya, and Syria.

Other groups, now on the ascent, mix Islamic fundamentalism and virulent anti-Westernism. These include *Hizballah* and Palestinian Islamic *Jihad*. *Hizballah* in particular, which is based in Lebanon with the tacit support of Syria and backed by Iran, poses a growing threat. It now has put operatives on nearly every continent by using local support "cells," or groups of sympathizers.¹⁰

Latin American Terrorists. Not all terror emanates from the Middle East. Terrorism plagues Latin America, where such leftist groups as *Sendero Luminoso* ("Shining Path") and *Tupac Amaru* (MRTA) in Peru, and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) bomb and attack civilians and government officials. This July 12, the *Sendero Luminoso* killed three Japanese engineers working at an agricultural research facility in Huaral, Peru.

In Asia, the communist New Peoples Army (NPA) in the Philippines murdered as many as six Americans last year. In August 1990, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam slaughtered more than 200 Muslim Sri Lankans. In Europe, the German Red Army Faction, the Provisional Irish Republican Army, *Dev Sol* in Turkey, and *17 November* in Greece, which are all radical leftist groups, continue to target businessmen, diplomats, and U.S. military personnel. Last April, the Red Army Faction shot the German head of the government trust responsible for selling the property of the former East Germany, proving that they have survived the cutoff of East bloc support.

10 Maskit Burgin, "Shi'ite International Terrorism," in *International Terrorism 1989*, Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv, Israel, 1990, pp. 36-58; also Vincent Cannistraro, "Terrorism: Status and Prospects," National Strategy Information Center, Washington, D.C., 1991, pp.11-12.

THE AMERICAN RESPONSE TO TERROR

Before the mid-1980s, America took little or no forceful action to stop terrorists. Then in the mid 1980s, steps were taken to improve U.S. capabilities to counter international terrorism. Laws now make it easier to prosecute terrorists. The Omnibus Diplomatic Security and Anti-Terrorism Act of 1986, for instance, makes it a federal crime to murder or attempt to murder American citizens in the course of a terrorist act overseas. The Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984 outlaws acts of violence against an aircraft and its passengers. Other laws passed in the 1980s prohibit direct air or sea travel between the U.S. and officially-designated state sponsors of terrorism, extend U.S. jurisdiction over attacks abroad against U.S. diplomats, and enable the Federal Bureau of Investigation to make arrests overseas.

Trade and other economic sanction laws also give America better legal tools to combat terrorism. The most important of these are the Anti-Terrorism and Arms Export Amendments Act of 1989, the Export Administration Act of 1989 and the International Emergency Economic Powers Act of 1977.

No Foreign Aid. Each of these acts regulates exports and imposes import and export bans on specified goods and technology, particularly technology with military applications. Such goods can include high powered computers, mobile communications devices, or instruments made for U.S. aerospace projects. Other economic sanctions restrict foreign aid and credit to state sponsors of terrorism and require that U.S. representatives to the World Bank and other international monetary organizations vote against assistance to terrorist-sponsoring states. Because of these laws, nations on the U.S. list of terrorism-sponsors are denied all types of foreign aid.

America also improved its "passive" measures against terrorism during the 1970s and 1980s. These increase screening of passengers and luggage at airports, add new computerized information services to better track suspects at U.S. ports of entry, and increase security standards of airports serving U.S. carriers around the world. These countermeasures were carried out by the Federal Aviation Administration and the Customs Service among others.

Special Rescue Teams. The 1970s and 1980s also saw the creation of "active" countermeasures, including the formation of a special hostage rescue team in the FBI, and SWAT teams around the country to respond to domestic acts of terror.

The Persian Gulf war heightened American sensitivity to terrorist attacks. The Federal Aviation Administration raised its threat index to its highest level, requiring more intensive luggage and passenger screening at airports and mobilizing more security personnel to guard and monitor ports of entry. The U.S. Postal Service, meanwhile, ceased shipping mail packages in passenger aircraft cargo holds as a precaution against hidden explosives.

What the new U.S. counterterror efforts have not done is coordinate the various departments and agencies involved in the fight. On this matter, NSDD-138, promulgated in 1984, remains ignored. This plan assigns specific missions to U.S. agencies, coordinates the operations of these agencies, and provides a prescription for striking offensively and preemptively at terrorists. Because NSDD-138 is ignored, America lacks a

