
Patterns of Global Terrorism: 1997

A Report by the U.S. Department of State

[The following is a selection of excerpts from the 1997 report on international terrorism that was promulgated in April 1998 by the Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State. The selections include the introduction to the report, the summary of the year in review, and an overview of state-sponsored terrorism. The full report is available on the worldwide web at http://www.state.gov/www/global_terrorism/1997report/1997_index.html, and may also be obtained from the Government Printing Office. In addition to the material included below, the full report provides regional overviews of terrorism, a chronology of significant 1997 terrorist incidents, and background information on international terrorist groups.]

INTRODUCTION

Although the number of international terrorist incidents has dropped in recent years and more terrorists are being arrested and tried for their crimes, international terrorism remains a serious, ongoing threat around the world. Individual bombings and armed attacks, while fewer in number than last year, continue to cause horrendous casualties. Moreover, domestic—rather than international—terrorism continues to beset countries such as Algeria, where numerous brutal massacres of ordinary citizens have been perpetrated by terrorists during the past five years.

During 1997 there were 304 acts of international terrorism worldwide, an increase of eight from the previous year. This figure is one of the lowest annual totals recorded since 1971. More than one-third of the year's attacks occurred in Colombia, 90 of which were low-level bombings of oil pipelines that caused damage but no casualties.

Countering the terrorist threat remains a high priority for the United States. We have developed a three-part counterterrorist policy that has served U.S. well over the years:

First. make no concessions to terrorists and strike no deals.

The United States has learned over time that this policy works. We supported the Government of Peru for steadfastly refusing to give in to demands made by terrorists who held 72 hostages in the Japanese Ambassador's residence in Lima for four months last year. The government's unyielding refusal to release convicted terrorists from prison allowed it time to plan and execute a successful rescue of the hostages in April.

Second. bring terrorists to justice for their crimes.

Continuing a positive trend of recent years, more terrorists are being apprehended, put on trial, and given severe prison terms for their crimes: several important trials and convictions of international terrorists occurred in 1997. The terrorists who planned and helped carry out the February 1993 World Trade Center bombing were convicted of the crime in New York. The terrorist who murdered two Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) employees outside CIA Headquarters in January 1993 was found guilty by a jury in Virginia. A highly publicized judgment in Berlin demonstrated in open court that the Government of Iran follows a deliberate policy of "liquidating" its political opponents abroad. The notorious "Carlos the Jackal" was convicted in Paris of three murders that he committed there 23 years ago. A terrorist who attempted to bomb the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta, Indonesia, by launching rockets into the complex in 1986 was found guilty by a jury in Washington, DC.

On 23 February a Palestinian gunman entered the observation deck at the Empire State building in New York City and opened fire on tourists, killing a Danish man and wounding visitors from the United States, Argentina, Switzerland, and France before turning the gun on himself. A note carried by the gunman indicated that this was a punishment attack against the "enemies of Palestine."

OVERVIEW OF STATE-SPONSORED TERRORISM

The Secretary of State has designated seven governments as state sponsors of terrorism: Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Sudan, and Syria. These governments support international terrorism either by engaging in terrorist activity themselves or by providing arms, training, safehaven, diplomatic facilities, financial backing, logistic and/or other support to terrorists.

The U.S. policy of bringing maximum pressure to bear on state sponsors of terrorism and encouraging other countries to do likewise has paid significant dividends. There has been a marked decline in state-sponsored terrorism in recent years. A broad range of bilateral and multilateral sanctions serves to discourage state sponsors of terrorism from continuing their support for international acts of terrorism, but continued pressure is essential.

Although there is no evidence to indicate that Cuba sponsored any international terrorist activity in 1997, it continues to provide sanctuary to terrorists from several different terrorist organizations. Cuba also maintains strong links to other state sponsors of terrorism.

Notwithstanding some conciliatory statements in the months after President Khatami's inauguration in August 1997, Iran remains the most active state sponsor of terrorism. There is no evidence that Iranian policy has changed, and Iran continues both to provide significant support to terrorist organizations and to assassinate dissidents abroad.

Iraq provides safehaven to a number of terrorist and rejectionist groups. It continues to rebuild its intelligence network, which had been used to support international terrorist activity, but there is no available evidence to prove active Iraqi participation in terrorist activity in 1997.

Libya also continues to provide safehaven to accused terrorists, refusing to hand over the two suspects in the Pan Am 103 attack and the six suspects named by French authorities in the attack on UTA 772. Libya refuses to comply fully with U.N. Security Council sanctions imposed because of Libyan involvement in both bombings. In addition, Libya continues to provide support to a number of Middle Eastern terrorist groups, including the ANO, PIJ, and the PFLP-GC. Credible evidence indicates Libya abducted prominent Libyan dissident and human rights activist Mansur Kikhia (a legal permanent resident of the United States) in 1993 and had him executed in early 1994.

Although North Korea has not been conclusively linked to any acts of international terrorism since the 1987 midair bombing of KAL 858, it continues to provide sanctuary for five hijackers of a Japanese airliner.

Usama Bin Ladin

Usama bin Muhammad bin Awad Bin Ladin is one of the most significant sponsors of Sunni Islamic terrorist groups. The youngest son of Saudi construction magnate Muhammad Bin Ladin, Usama joined the Afghan resistance almost immediately after the Soviet invasion in December 1979. He played a significant role in financing, recruiting, transporting, and training Arab nationals who volunteered to fight in Afghanistan. During the war, Bin Ladin founded al-Qaida—the Base—to serve as an operational hub, predominantly for like-minded Sunni Islamic extremists.

The Saudi Government revoked his citizenship in 1994 and his family officially disowned him. He had moved to Sudan in 1991, but international pressure on that government forced him to move to Afghanistan in 1996.

In August 1996, Bin Ladin issued a statement outlining his organization's goals: drive U.S. forces from the Arabian Peninsula, overthrow the Government of Saudi Arabia, "liberate" Muslim holy sites in "Palestine," and support Islamic revolutionary groups around the world. To these ends, his organization has sent trainers throughout Afghanistan as well as to Tajikistan, Bosnia, Chechnya, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen and has trained fighters from numerous other countries including the Philippines, Egypt, Libya, and Eritrea. Bin Ladin also has close associations with the leaders of several Islamic terrorist groups and probably has aided in creating new groups since the mid-1980s. He has trained their troops, provided safehaven and financial support, and probably helps them with other organizational matters.

Since August 1996, Bin Ladin has been very vocal in expressing his approval of and intent to use terrorism. He claimed responsibility for trying to bomb U.S. soldiers in Yemen in late 1992 and for attacks on them in Somalia in 1993, and reports suggest his organization aided the Egyptian al-Gama'at al-Islamiyya in its assassination attempt on Egyptian President Mubarak in Ethiopia in 1995. In November 1996 he called the 1995 and 1996 bombings against U.S. military personnel in Saudi Arabia "praiseworthy acts of terrorism" but denied having any personal participation in those bombings. At the same time, he called for further attacks against U.S. military personnel, saying: "If someone can kill an American soldier, it is better than wasting time on other matters."

Sudan has taken some positive steps on terrorism, but it still has not complied with U.N. Security Council resolutions that demand an end to Sudanese support for terrorism and Sudanese rendition [i.e., extradition] of the three suspects involved with the 1995 assassination attempt against Egyptian President Mubarak in Addis Ababa. Moreover, Sudan continues to allow its territory to be used for safehaven, training, and transit by terrorists.

There is no evidence of direct Syrian involvement in acts of international terrorism since 1986, but Syria continues to provide sanctuary and support for both a number of terrorist groups that seek to disrupt the Middle East Peace Process as well as the PKK.

Cuba

Cuba no longer actively supports armed struggle in Latin America and other parts of the world. In the past, the Castro regime provided significant levels of funding, military training, arms, and guidance to various revolutionary groups across the globe. However, with the collapse of its prime sponsor—the Soviet Union—in 1989, Cuba suffered a severe economic decline. Without ready cash, Havana was forced to scale back severely its already waning support to international terrorists. To make up for this economic shortfall, the Castro government's focus in recent years has been on generating revenue through tourism. Cuba's attempts to encourage foreign investment in the hospitality industry have forced the nation to seek upgraded diplomatic and trade relations with other nations.

Although Cuba is not known to have sponsored any international terrorist incidents in 1997, it continued to give safehaven to several terrorists during the year. A number of ETA terrorists who gained sanctuary in Cuba some years ago continue to live on the island. In addition, members of a few Latin American-based international terrorist organizations and U.S. fugitives also reside in Cuba.

Cuba also maintains close ties to other state sponsors of terrorism and remains in contact with leftist insurgent groups in Latin America. For instance, Colombia's two main terrorist groups, the FARC and the ELN, reportedly maintain representatives in Havana.

Cuba suffered from a string of small bombings targeting the island's tourism industry in 1997. At least six bombs detonated at Havana hotels and restaurants in April, July, August, and September. An Italian tourist was killed in one blast in early September, the only fatality of the bombing campaign. On 10 September, Cuban security forces announced they had arrested a Salvadoran citizen who confessed to planting the bombs. Havana charged that US-based groups were responsible for directing the bombing campaign from the United States, but it has repeatedly ignored U.S. requests for evidence to support these charges.

Iran

Iran remained the most active state sponsor of terrorism in 1997. Tehran continued to be involved in the planning and execution of terrorist acts by its own agents and by surrogates such as the Lebanese Hizballah and continued to fund and train known terrorist groups throughout 1997. Although the August 1997 accession of President Khatami has resulted in more conciliatory Iranian public statements, such as public condemnations of terrorist attacks by Algerian and Egyptian groups, Iranian support for terrorism remains in place.

Tehran conducted at least 13 assassinations in 1997, the majority of which were carried out in northern Iraq. Iran's targets normally include, but are not limited to, members of the regime's main opposition groups, including the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) and the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK). Elsewhere in Iraq, in January 1997 Iranian agents tried to attack the Baghdad headquarters of the MEK using a "supermortar" of a design similar to that discovered aboard the Iranian ship "Kolahdooz" by Belgian customs authorities in early 1996. The attack was unsuccessful, resulting in the death of one person and some damage to an Iraqi hospital building.

April 1997 witnessed the conclusion of the trial in Germany of an Iranian and four Lebanese for the 1992 killing of Iranian Kurdish dissidents, one of whom was then Secretary General of the KDPI, in Berlin's Mykonos restaurant. A German judge found the Iranian and three of the Lebanese guilty of the murders. Two defendants, Kazem Darabi and Abbas Rhayel, were sentenced to life in prison. Two others, Yousef Amin and Muhammad Atris, received sentences of 11 years and five years and three months, respectively. The fifth defendant, Aatollah Ayad, was acquitted. The court stated that the Government of Iran had followed a deliberate policy of liquidating the regime's opponents who lived outside Iran, including the opposition KDPI. The judge further stated that the Mykonos murders had been approved at the most senior levels of the Iranian Government by an extra-legal committee whose members included the Minister of Intelligence and Security, the Foreign Minister, the President, and the Supreme Leader. As a result of elections in May, however, the positions of Minister of Intelligence and Security, Foreign Minister, and President are now held by individuals other than those who were involved in the "Mykonos" murders. In March 1996 a German court had issued an arrest warrant in this case for Ali Fallahian, the former Iranian Minister of Intelligence and Security.

In September 1997, Iran's new leadership affirmed the *fatwa* on Salman Rushdie, which has been in effect since 1989, stating once again that revocation is impossible since the author of the *fatwa* is deceased. There is no indication that Tehran is pressuring the Fifteen Khordad Foundation to withdraw the \$2.5 million reward it is offering for executing the *fatwa* Rushdie.

Iran continued to provide support—in the form of training, money, and/or weapons—to a variety of terrorist groups, such as Lebanese Hizballah, HAMAS, and the PIJ. The Iranian Government continues to oppose recognition of Israel and to encourage violent rejection of the Middle East Peace Process. In the fall of 1997, Tehran hosted numerous representatives of terrorist groups—including HAMAS, Lebanese Hizballah, the PIJ, and the Egyptian al-Gama'at al-Islamiya—at a conference of "Liberation Movements." Participants reportedly discussed the jihad, establishing greater coordination between certain groups, and an increase in support for some

convey the gravity of U.S. concerns about Sudan's continued support for international terrorism and regional opposition groups as well as its abysmal human rights record.

Sudan has not complied with U.N. Security Council Resolutions 1044, 1054, and 1070 passed in 1996, despite efforts that year by the regime to distance itself somewhat from terrorism, including ordering the departure of terrorist financier Usama Bin Ladin. The Security Council's demands include that Sudan cease its support to terrorists and turn over the three Egyptian al-Gama'at fugitives linked to the 1995 attempted assassination of Egyptian President Mubarak in Ethiopia. President Bashir, consistent with Khartoum's repeated denials that its officials had any foreknowledge of the planning of the event, in October 1997 scoffed at the idea Sudan could be seen to have had anything to do with the attack.

Since Sudan was placed on the list of state sponsors of terrorism in August 1993, the Sudanese Government has continued to harbor members of several of the most violent international terrorist and radical Islamic groups. These groups include Lebanese Hizballah, the PIJ, the ANO, and HAMAS. The Sudanese Government also supports regional Islamic and non-Islamic opposition and insurgent groups in Ethiopia, Eritrea, Uganda, and Tunisia.

Sudan's support to terrorist organizations has included paramilitary training, indoctrination, money, travel documentation, safe passage, and refuge in Sudan. Most of the organizations present in Sudan maintain offices or other types of representation. They use Sudan as a base to organize some of their operations and to support compatriots elsewhere. Sudan also serves as a transit point and meeting place for several Iranian-backed terrorist groups.

Syria

There is no evidence that Syrian officials have been directly involved in planning or executing international terrorist attacks since 1986. Syria, however, continues to provide safehaven and support for several groups that engage in such attacks. Several radical terrorist groups maintain training camps or other facilities on Syrian territory. Ahmad Jibril's PFLP-GC and the PIJ, for example, have their headquarters in Damascus. In addition, Syria grants a wide variety of terrorist groups basing privileges or refuge in areas of Lebanon's Bekaa Valley under Syrian control: these include HAMAS, the PFLP-GC, and the PIJ. The PKK also continues to train in Syrian-controlled areas of Lebanon, and its leader, Abdullah Ocalan, resides at least part-time in Syria.

Although Damascus has stated its commitment to the peace process, it has not acted to stop anti-Israeli attacks by Hizballah and Palestinian rejectionist groups in southern Lebanon. Syria also assists the resupply of Hizballah and Palestinian rejectionist groups operating in Lebanon via Damascus. Nevertheless, the Syrian Government continues to restrain the activities of some of these groups and to participate in a multi-national monitoring group to prevent attacks against civilian targets in southern Lebanon and northern Israel.