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**DOES U.S. INTERVENTION OVERSEAS BREED TERRORISM?
*The Historical Record***

by Ivan Eland

Executive Summary

According to Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, terrorism is the most important threat the United States and the world face as the 21st century begins. High-level U.S. officials have acknowledged that terrorists are now more likely to be able to obtain and use nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons than ever before.

Yet most attention has been focused on combating terrorism by deterring and disrupting it beforehand and retaliating against it after the fact. Less attention has been paid to what motivates terrorists to launch attacks. According to the Pentagon's Defense Science Board, a strong correlation exists between U.S. involvement in international situations and an increase in terrorist attacks against the United States. President Clinton has also acknowledged that link. The board, however, has provided no empirical data to support its conclusion. This paper fills that gap by citing many examples of terrorist attacks on the United States in retaliation for U.S. intervention overseas. The numerous incidents cataloged suggest that the United States could reduce the chances of such devastating--and potentially catastrophic--terrorist attacks by adopting a policy of military restraint overseas.

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Introduction

The terrorist bombings of U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and retaliation by the United States with cruise missile strikes against Afghanistan and Sudan have once again focused international attention on the problem of terrorism. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright noted the importance of the issue to the Clinton administration: "We have said over and over again that [terrorism] is the biggest threat to our country and the world as we enter the 21st century."¹ Many analysts agree with Albright, especially in light of the possibility that terrorists may be able to buy, steal, or develop and produce weapons of mass destruction (nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons).

Considerable attention, both in and out of government, focuses on combating terrorism by deterring and disrupting attacks before they occur or retaliating after the fact. Less attention has been paid to investigating the motives of terrorists or their backers. Charles William Maynes, president of the Eurasia Foundation and former editor of Foreign Policy, advocates examining the motives of those who support terrorism in order to lessen their grievances.² If more emphasis were placed on exploring why terrorists launch attacks against the United States, innovative policy changes might be made that would reduce the number of such attacks and lower their cost--both in money and in lost lives.

Activist Foreign Policy and Terrorism

The Defense Science Board's 1997 Summer Study Task Force on DoD Responses to Transnational Threats notes a relationship between an activist American foreign policy and terrorism against the United States:

As part of its global power position, the United States is called upon frequently to respond to international causes and deploy forces around the world. America's position in the world invites attack simply because of its presence. Historical data show a strong correlation between U.S. involvement in international situations and an increase in terrorist attacks against the United States.³

In an August 8, 1998, radio address justifying cruise missile attacks on Afghanistan and Sudan in response to terrorist bombings of two U.S. embassies, President Clinton

admitted as much but put a positive spin on it with political hyperbole:

Americans are targets of terrorism in part because we have unique leadership responsibilities in the world, because we act to advance peace and democracy, and because we stand united against terrorism.⁴

Richard Betts, an influential authority on American foreign policy at the Council on Foreign Relations, has written about the connection between U.S. activism overseas and possible attacks on the United States with nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons: "American activism to guarantee international stability is, paradoxically, the prime source of American vulnerability." Elaborating, he notes, "Today, as the only nation acting to police areas outside its own region, the United States makes itself a target for states or groups whose aspirations are frustrated by U.S. power."⁵

Attempts to Obfuscate the Link between U.S. Foreign Policy and Terrorism

There are analysts who try to obfuscate the link between U.S. intervention and terrorism against American targets by arguing that a multitude of factors leads to such attacks. Rep. Frank Wolf (R-Va.), introducing legislation that would establish a national commission on terrorism, argued that "our military, industrial, and commercial presence around the world attracts frustration from many terrorist groups."⁶ Other analysts include American "cultural dominance" as a lightning rod for terrorist attacks against the United States.⁷

President Clinton, in a speech to the UN General Assembly, also attempted to diffuse the link between U.S. foreign policy and terrorist incidents:

Because we are blessed to be a wealthy nation with a powerful military and a worldwide presence active in promoting peace and security, we are often a target. We love our country for its dedication to political and religious freedom, to economic opportunity, to respect for the rights of the individual. But we know many people see us as a symbol of a system and values they reject, and often they find it expedient to blame us for problems with deep roots elsewhere.⁸

Curiously, however, later in the same speech, President Clinton seemed to reject the "clash of values" origin of terrorism that he had propounded earlier:

Some people believe that terrorism's principal fault line centers on what they see as an inevitable clash of civilizations. . . . Specifically, many believe there is an inevitable clash between Western civilization and Western values, and Islamic civilizations and values. I believe this view is terribly wrong.⁹

Yet the perception that the United States is targeted because of "what it is" rather than "what it does" endures. Gerald Seib, writing in the Wall Street Journal, admits that Islamic militants see the United States as propping up the secular government of Egypt and desecrating the Islamic holy sites by the presence of its troops in Saudi Arabia. At the same time, he observes that Islamic militants also see the United States as a political and cultural enemy, standing for everything they abhor--secularism, debauchery, and liberty. He concludes, "The U.S. is a target not because of something it has or hasn't done, but simply because it exists."¹⁰ Seib's conclusion underestimates the offense caused by propping up undemocratic regimes with dubious human rights records through aid or the presence of troops.

Logic and Empirical Data Support the Link

The logic behind the claim that there are other primary causes for terrorism against the United States needs to be examined. Many other Western nations are wealthy; have an extensive industrial and commercial presence overseas; export their culture along with their products and services; and believe in religious freedom, economic opportunity, and respect for the rights of the individual. Yet those nations--Switzerland and Australia, for example--seem to have much less of a problem with worldwide terrorism than does the United States.

According to the U.S. State Department's Patterns of Global Terrorism: 1997, one-third of all terrorist attacks worldwide were perpetrated against U.S. targets.¹¹ The percentage of terrorism targeted at the United States is very high considering that the United States--unlike nations such as Algeria, Turkey, and the United Kingdom--has no internal civil war or quarrels with its neighbors that spawn terrorism. The major difference between the United States and other wealthy democratic nations is that it is an inter-

ventionist superpower. As Betts notes, the United States is the only nation in the world that intervenes regularly outside its own region.

The motives for some terrorist attacks are not easy to discern. They may be protests against U.S. culture or overseas business presence. Two incidents in 1995--the deadly attack by two gunmen on a van from the U.S. consulate in Karachi, Pakistan, and the bombing of a "Dunkin Donuts" in Bogotá, Colombia--could fit into those categories. But with no statement of motives by the terrorists, such attacks could just as easily have been responses to the perceived foreign policies of a global superpower.

Even if some terrorist attacks against the United States are a reaction to "what it is" rather than "what it does," the list of incidents later in this paper shows how many terrorist attacks can be traced back to an interventionist American foreign policy. A conservative approach was taken in cataloging those incidents. To be added to the list, a planned or actual attack first had to be targeted against U.S. citizens, property, or facilities--either at home or abroad. Then there had to be either an indication from the terrorist group that the attack was a response to U.S. foreign policy or strong circumstantial evidence that the location, timing, or target of the attack coincided with a specific U.S. intervention overseas.

Although the Defense Science Board noted a historical correlation between U.S. involvement in international situations and an increase in terrorist attacks against the United States, the board apparently believed the conclusion to be so obvious that it did not publish detailed data to support it. Some analysts apparently remain unconvinced of the relationship. The data in this paper provide the empirical evidence.

Recognizing the Link Is Even More Important Now

The large number of terrorist attacks that occurred in retaliation for an interventionist American foreign policy implicitly demonstrates that terrorism against U.S. targets could be significantly reduced if the United States adopted a policy of military restraint overseas. That policy change has become even more critical now that ostensibly "weak" terrorists--whether sponsored by states or operating independently--might have both the means and the motive to inflict enormous devastation on the U.S. homeland with weapons of mass destruction.

In the post-Cold War world, rampant U.S. military intervention overseas is no longer needed. A rival superpower no longer exists to threaten vital U.S. interests by taking advantage of "instability" in the world. The overwhelming majority of the conflicts in the post-Cold War world--95 of 101 from 1989 to 1996--involved disputes between parties within states, the outcomes of which are far less likely to be dangerous to U.S. security than are cross-border wars between states. Yet it is those intrastate wars, many of which are volatile ethnic or religious conflicts, that could spawn the terrorist groups that might attack the United States with weapons of mass destruction. Intervention in such conflicts does little to enhance U.S. security, but it may have the opposite, catastrophic, effect.

Betts, referring to the threat of terrorists' using weapons of mass destruction, argues that the "danger is that some angry group that blames the United States for its problems may decide to coerce Americans, or simply exact vengeance, by inflicting devastation on them where they live." He continues:

If steps to deal with the problem in terms of capabilities are limited, can anything be done to address intentions--the incentives of any foreign power or group to lash out at the United States? There are few answers to this question that do not compromise the fundamental strategic activism and internationalist thrust of U.S. foreign policy over the past half-century. That is because the best way to keep people from believing that the United States is responsible for their problems is to avoid involvement in their conflicts.¹²

If the U.S. government adopted a policy of military restraint overseas, in the long term the number of devastating, and potentially catastrophic, terrorist attacks against the United States--attacks like those described in this paper--could be reduced significantly. Even if some remaining terrorist incidents can be attributed to a hatred of U.S. economic power, individual freedom, or culture, those national attributes are much harder and more costly to alter, and it would be undesirable to do so. It is much easier (and after the Cold War, relatively painless) to change U.S. foreign policy than it is to change the American way of life. In fact, the interventionist foreign policy currently pursued by the United States is an aberration in its history. Adopting a policy of military restraint would return the United States to the traditional foreign policy

it pursued for the first century and a half of its existence before the Cold War distorted it. Such a foreign policy is more compatible with the individual freedoms and economic prosperity that define the American way of life.

Highlights of the List of Terrorist Incidents

Terrorism against American targets has changed over time. As the Cold War ended and the influence of Islamic radicalism grew, terrorism by leftist groups in the 1970s and 1980s was eclipsed by terrorism by Muslim fundamentalists in the 1980s and 1990s. As state-sponsored terrorism has declined, independent terrorist groups with loose ties among members have arisen. Finally and most important, terrorists now seem more willing to inflict mass casualties and can more readily obtain the weapons of mass destruction needed to do so.

Attempts at Catastrophic Terrorism

The Defense Science Board commented on the increased capability and willingness of terrorists to inflict mass casualties:

There is a new and ominous trend to these threats: a proclivity towards much greater levels of violence. Transnational groups have the means, through access to weapons of mass destruction and other instruments of terror and disruption, and the motives to cause great harm to our society. For example, the perpetrators of the World Trade Center bombing and the Tokyo Subway nerve gas attack were aiming for tens of thousands of casualties.¹³

Although the fundamentalist Islamic perpetrators of the World Trade Center bombing in 1993 were unsuccessful at mass slaughter, the mastermind of the plot said he was attempting to kill 250,000 people by collapsing the towers to punish the United States for its policies in the Middle East. (In a follow-on attack, the group planned to blow up buildings and key transportation nodes in New York City--UN headquarters, a U.S. government building, two tunnels underneath the Hudson River, and the George Washington Bridge--which would have inflicted substantial casualties.)

Plans for another such catastrophic attack on the United States were also uncovered. In a little-noticed

incident with potentially catastrophic ramifications, members of the Aum Shinrikyo (Supreme Truth) religious cult--the same group that released poison gas on the Tokyo subway--planned a nerve gas attack at Disneyland when it was most crowded, during a fireworks display. Fortunately, U.S. law enforcement officials, tipped off by Japanese police, apprehended members of the group before they could perpetrate the attack. Aum Shinrikyo believes in a final Armageddon between the United States and Japan near the millennium and that acts of mass terror will hasten it. It is interesting that the cult perceived an allied nation--the United States--as Japan's enemy rather than Japan's regional neighbors that are now or are much more likely to become rivals--for example, China, Russia, and North and South Korea. The U.S. role as a global superpower and the U.S. military presence in Japan most likely had something to do with the group's choice of the United States as a target.

U.S. Military Presence Overseas: Lightning Rod for Terrorism

The U.S. military presence in Lebanon in the early 1980s and in Somalia and Saudi Arabia in the 1990s also spawned terrorist attacks. Beginning in 1979, with the takeover of the U.S. embassy in Tehran, Iranians or Iranian-sponsored groups--such as Hezbollah in Lebanon--perpetrated many terrorist attacks against the United States. Two of the best known incidents were the suicide bombings by Hezbollah of the U.S. embassy and the Marine barracks in Beirut. Those Hezbollah attacks were launched in retaliation for U.S. military support of the Lebanese Christian government against the Muslim militias. The Iranians hated the United States for its long-time support of the shah and resented the U.S. presence in Lebanon.

In Somalia in 1993 the now-infamous Osama bin Laden trained the Somali tribesmen who conducted ambushes of U.S. peacekeeping forces in support of Somali clan leader Mohammed Farah Aideed. The result of the attack was 18 dead U.S. Army Rangers and U.S. withdrawal from Somalia. Osama bin Laden, a Saudi, did not merely object to U.S. intervention in Somalia. His main reason for attacking U.S. targets was the American presence in Saudi Arabia and Washington's support for Israel. Bin Laden was allegedly linked to the 1996 truck bombing of the U.S. military apartment complex, Khobar Towers, in Saudi Arabia that killed 19 U.S. airmen and wounded 515 others. He was also allegedly linked to the simultaneous bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 and other attacks.

Public Wars against Terrorism Have Been Tried Before

President Clinton is not the first president to launch a public war against terrorism. In the summer of 1981 Ronald Reagan began a very public "war" against Moammar Qaddafi, the ruler of Libya, shortly after taking office. Reagan believed that Qaddafi was a Soviet agent and was heavily involved in terrorism against the West. The Reagan administration pursued ways of getting rid of Qaddafi or, failing that, of isolating him politically and economically. (Some analysts assert that Reagan inflated the threat posed by Qaddafi to justify increased defense spending.)

The "war" began with an attempt by the Reagan administration to provoke Qaddafi by entering claimed Libyan territorial waters and air space during war games in the Mediterranean. In August 1981 U.S. jets--to challenge Libya's extension of its territorial waters and air space over the Gulf of Sidra--entered the gulf and shot down two Libyan aircraft that intercepted them. Reagan later accused Qaddafi of aiding the perpetrators of the bombings at the Rome and Vienna airports. In March 1986 Reagan sent a naval armada across the "line of death" that marked Libya's claimed territorial waters in the gulf, and another military altercation ensued. In April 1986 Qaddafi retaliated by sponsoring the bombing of the La Belle disco in West Berlin, which was frequented by U.S. servicemen. (Before 1986 there was little evidence that Qaddafi was targeting Americans. Reagan interpreted Qaddafi's terrorism as anti-American, but Western European nations had been Libya's major target.) The United States retaliated for the La Belle bombing with air strikes against Tripoli and Benghazi that apparently were meant to kill Qaddafi.

Contrary to popular belief, the air strikes did not cause Qaddafi to desist from terrorist acts. In fact, according to the Defense Science Board, over the next several years Qaddafi began a series of secret attacks on American targets in revenge for the air strikes.¹⁴ The most famous attack was the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, which killed 270 people (200 of whom were Americans).

Reagan's public war on terrorism may have been effective in helping to garner an increase in U.S. defense spending but not in curbing Qaddafi's terrorist activities. In fact, Qaddafi's secret activities seemed to accelerate in retaliation for Reagan's public military actions.

Assassinations and Attempted Assassinations

Independent or state-sponsored terrorists have attempted to assassinate prominent U.S. citizens in retaliation for perceived American meddling overseas. Sirhan Sirhan, Robert Kennedy's assassin, had grown up on the West Bank and regarded Kennedy as a collaborator with Israel. U.S. support for Israel and Kennedy's role in that policy were implicated in the assassination.

In 1993, 17 Iraqis were arrested trying to infiltrate Kuwait with a large car bomb and were accused of being part of an Iraqi government plot to kill former president Bush on his visit to Kuwait. According to the U.S. government, Saddam Hussein tried to assassinate Bush in retaliation for Bush's direction of the Gulf War (a threat Saddam had made during the war).

Terrorist Incidents Caused by an Activist **U.S. Foreign Policy**

- 1915: The Senate reception room in the U.S. Capitol was damaged by a homemade bomb built by Erich Muentzer, a former Harvard professor who was upset by sales of U.S. munitions to the Allies in World War I.¹⁵
- June 5, 1968: Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, former attorney general and senior policy adviser to President John F. Kennedy, was assassinated by Sirhan Sirhan. Sirhan had grown up on the West Bank and regarded Kennedy as a collaborator with Israel.
- March 1971: A bomb exploded in a U.S. Senate restroom, causing extensive damage. The bombing came at a time of rising opposition to U.S. policies in Vietnam.
- November 4, 1979: Supporters of the Ayatollah Khomeini seized the U.S. embassy in Teheran to protest long-time U.S. support for the shah. The hostages were not freed until January 1981.
- December 1979: Iranians sacked and burned the U.S. embassy in Tripoli, Libya. Iranian-sponsored terrorism against the United States was a result of U.S. support for the shah and Israel.
- July 22, 1980: Ali Akbar Tabatabai, a former press counselor at the Iranian embassy in the United States during the shah's reign, was assassinated by the Islamic Guerrillas of

America (IGA) at his home in Bethesda, Maryland. He had supplied U.S. officials with a manifesto of the IGA that advocated strategically planned terrorism on U.S. soil and assassinations of U.S. officials and Iranian dissidents. The manifesto stated, "Any American can be targeted . . . no American is innocent . . . as long as U.S. foreign policies are to the detriment of the Islamic community." The document was especially critical of U.S. support for Israel. Tabatabai knew that the IGA had 230 members operating in the United States. Tabatabai's assassin fled to Iran and became part of an Islamic assassination squad.

· April 8, 1983: The anti-American, Iranian-sponsored Hezbollah (some sources also implicate the Islamic Jihad) bombed the U.S. embassy in Beirut, Lebanon. Information gathered by the American, French, and Israeli intelligence agencies indicated that the Iranian government funded and provided the explosives for the attack that killed 17 Americans. Intelligence information also showed that Syrian military experts directed the assembly and emplacement of the bombs that Hezbollah used. All attacks by Hezbollah in Lebanon around that time were in retaliation for the U.S. military presence there. The Americans were supporting the Christian government against the Muslim militias by training and arming the Lebanese National Army (LNA). Later, the U.S. Marines even began patrolling with the Christian LNA, and the Navy and Marines began shelling the Muslims to support the LNA.

· October 23, 1983: A suicide truck bomber from Hezbollah (some sources also implicate the Islamic Jihad) attacked the U.S. embassy and destroyed the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut (killing 290 people and wounding 200 more). Intelligence information gathered by the American, French, and Israeli intelligence agencies indicated that Iran funded the attack and provided the explosives used. Apparently, Syrian military experts directed the assembly and emplacement of the bombs that Hezbollah used. The U.S. Marines were later withdrawn from Beirut. A terrorist spokesman bragged that two "martyrs" had forced the Marines out of Lebanon: one who died to blow up the embassy and the other who drove the truck that destroyed the Marine barracks.

· September 1984: Hezbollah (some sources also implicate the Islamic Jihad) bombed the U.S. embassy annex in East Beirut. Twenty-three people were killed and four Marine guards were wounded.

- During the 1980s: Hezbollah kidnapped 19 American diplomats, educators, businessmen, clergy, journalists, and military personnel and killed at least 4.

- Mid-1980s: Lebanese Revolutionary Army Faction leader Georges Ibrahim Abdallah was accused of complicity in the deaths of American military attaché Lt. Col. Charles Ray and Israeli diplomat Yacov Barsimantov. The suspect was held by the French government. The most likely reason for the attack was the U.S. military presence in Lebanon.

- April 5, 1986: Libyan leader Moammar Qaddafi sponsored the bombing of the La Belle nightclub in West Berlin, which was frequented by U.S. servicemen. The bombing killed an American soldier and a Turkish woman. The bombing seemed to be in retaliation for two specific prior incidents: (1) Ronald Reagan had accused Libya of aiding Palestinian Abu Nidal in bombing the Rome and Vienna airports (those incidents did not occur within the jurisdiction of the United States). (2) In late March 1986 the largest peacetime American naval armada ever had sailed across the "line of death" that, according to Qaddafi, marked Libyan territorial waters in the Gulf of Sidra. Qaddafi had threatened to attack any invader. Fulfilling the predictions of American defense analysts, he shot missiles at the armada. The U.S. forces destroyed a missile site and three Libyan naval craft.

The La Belle bombing was part of a more general "war" between the Reagan administration and Qaddafi that started after a Reagan administration review of U.S. policy toward Libya in the summer of 1981, shortly after Reagan took office. The Reagan administration pursued ways to get rid of Qaddafi or, failing that, to isolate him politically and economically. Reagan believed Qaddafi acted as a Soviet agent and was heavily involved in terrorism against the West. Some analysts argue that the Reagan administration inflated the threat that Qaddafi posed to gain support for increased defense spending. The "war" began with an attempt by the Reagan administration to provoke Qaddafi by entering claimed Libyan territorial waters and air space during war games in the Mediterranean. In August 1981 U.S. jets--to challenge Libya's extension of its territorial waters and air space over the Gulf of Sidra--entered the gulf and shot down two Libyan aircraft that intercepted them.

On April 15, 1986 (two weeks after the "line of death" incident in late March), the United States retaliated for the La Belle bombing with air strikes--from air bases in the United Kingdom and from U.S. aircraft carriers in the Mediterranean--against Tripoli and Benghazi, Libya. The air

strikes were apparently intended to kill Qaddafi. According to the Defense Science Board, contrary to popular belief, the air strikes did not cause Qaddafi to shrink from using terrorism. In fact, he began a secret campaign of terrorism against the United States in retaliation for the air strikes (see the next eight entries). Before 1986 there is little evidence that Libyan agents harmed Americans. Ronald Reagan had interpreted Qaddafi's terrorism as anti-American, but Western European nations had been the major target. Beginning in April 1986, State Department analysts linked Libyan agents to an average of one attack per month against U.S. targets.

- April 1986: In retaliation for the U.S. air strikes on Libya, an American hostage in Lebanon was sold to Libya and executed.
- 1986: In retaliation for the air strikes, Libyans attempted to blow up the U.S. embassy in Lomé, Togo.
- September 1987: In retaliation for U.S. air strikes, Abu Nidal, working for Libya, hijacked Pan Am Flight 73 in Karachi, Pakistan. The hijacking caused the death of several Americans.
- April 12, 1988: A Japanese Red Army operative was arrested in New Jersey with three anti-personnel bombs that were intended for a terrorist attack on a military base in the United States. The attack was to have been timed to coincide with the second anniversary of the U.S. air strikes on Libya.
- April 14, 1988: The Japanese Red Army, under contract from Abu Nidal, planted a bomb at the USO military club in Naples, Italy, to coincide with the same anniversary. The blast killed five people.
- December 1988: Two Libyan intelligence agents allegedly bombed Pan Am Flight 103. The bomb killed 270 people, 200 of whom were Americans. The bombing was part of Libya's retaliation campaign for U.S. air strikes in 1986.
- 1988: Libya carried out bombings of U.S. library facilities in Peru, Colombia, and Costa Rica. The bombings were part of Qaddafi's retaliation campaign.
- September 1989: Libyans recruited a Chicago street gang to attack U.S. airliners with shoulder-fired weapons. The plot, which was foiled, was part of Libya's retaliation campaign.

- March 10, 1989: A pipe bomb exploded beneath a van owned by Sharon Rogers, wife of Will Rogers III, commander of the U.S.S. Vincennes. The bombing was related to the July 3, 1988, incident in which the Vincennes had shot down an Iranian airliner over the Persian Gulf (killing 290 civilians) during U.S. participation in the "tanker war" against Iran.
- March 31, 1990: Four terrorists attacked a U.S. Air Force bus in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. Eight people were injured. The Morazanist Patriotic Front claimed responsibility. The attack was most likely related to the U.S. military presence in Honduras.
- May 13, 1990: New People's Army assassins fatally shot two U.S. airmen near Clark Air Base in the Philippines. The killings came on the eve of the U.S.-Philippine exploratory talks on the future of U.S. military bases in the Philippines. Most likely, the attack was perpetrated to protest the U.S. presence in the Philippines.
- May 1990: A group of religious extremists led by Ramzi Yousef assassinated Rabbi Meir Kahane, radical leader of the Jewish Defense League in the United States. The murder was first treated as a mere homicide but was later discovered to be a part of a larger revenge campaign against U.S. foreign policy that included the World Trade Center bombing in 1993.
- June 13, 1990: An American Peace Corps worker was kidnapped from his home in the Philippines. The New People's Army was responsible. The American was released unharmed on August 2 even though no ransom was paid. Coming around the time of U.S.-Philippine exploratory talks on the future of military bases in the Philippines and exactly a month after the killing of two U.S. airmen at Clark Air Base, the attack was most likely a protest against the U.S. presence in the Philippines.
- January 2, 1991: A U.S. military helicopter was shot down by the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front militants (Marxist guerrillas) in San Miguel, El Salvador. The two crewmen were then killed. The crewmen were most likely targets because the United States provided military aid and advisers to the government of El Salvador.
- Mid-January to late February 1991 (during the Persian Gulf War): A sharply increased number of terrorist attacks hit American targets all over the world (120 compared with 17 over the same period in 1990). Terrorism analysts labeled

those incidents "spontaneous" or "freelance" Iraqi-inspired terrorism. The following are examples of such terrorism:

- In late January 1991 two incidents occurred in Adana, Turkey: A car exploded next to the U.S. consulate, and Bobbie Mozelle, an American customs official, was murdered outside a NATO air base. Dev Sol (Revolutionary Left), a Turkish group that analysts said had no links to Iraq, claimed responsibility for the incidents. The group claimed that Mozelle was a Central Intelligence Agency agent and that the bombing campaign was to retaliate for the Turkish government's approval of U.S. air strikes on Iraq being launched from Turkish air bases.
- During the same period of time, a bomb exploded across the street from an American Express office in Athens, Greece. U.S. involvement in the Persian Gulf War was probably the reason for the attack.
- February 2, 1991: Dev Sol shot and killed a U.S. civilian contractor who worked at Incirlik Air Base in Adana, Turkey.
- Dev Sol shot a U.S. Air Force officer as he entered his residence in Izmir, Turkey.
- March 12, 1991: A U.S. Air Force sergeant was blown up by a remote-controlled bomb placed at the entrance of his residence in Athens, Greece. A group called "November 17" claimed responsibility. The deadliest terrorist group in Greece, November 17, attacks U.S. targets because of "American imperialism-nationalism." The timing of the attack indicates that it was most likely related to U.S. involvement in the Gulf War.
- March 28, 1991: Three U.S. Marines were shot by an Arab while driving near Jubial, Saudi Arabia. The incident was most likely related to U.S. involvement in the Persian Gulf War or the continued U.S. presence in Saudi Arabia.
- October 28, 1991: The Turkish Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for a car bomb that killed a U.S. Air Force sergeant. Like the other incidents in Turkey around that time, the bombing was probably related to U.S. use of Turkish air bases during the Gulf War.
- June 10, 1992: A U.S. Army vehicle traveling between Panama City and Colón, Panama, was raked with gunfire. The driver was killed and a passenger and a nearby civilian

bystander were wounded. The incident was most likely related to the U.S. military presence in Panama and U.S. control of the Panama Canal Zone.

- October 12, 1992: A U.S. soldier serving with the United Nations in Umm Qasr, Iraq, was stabbed and wounded. Most likely, the stabbing was in retaliation for U.S. intervention in Iraq.

- December 29, 1992: An explosion occurred at the Gold Mihor Hotel in Aden, Yemen. About 100 U.S. soldiers, part of Operation Restore Hope in Somalia, had been staying in Aden since mid-December.

- January 23, 1993: Mir Aimal Kanshi, a Pakistani, opened fire on CIA employees on the highway outside the agency's headquarters in Virginia. Kanshi allegedly told a roommate that he was angry about the treatment of Muslims in Bosnia and was going to get even by shooting up the CIA, the White House, and the Israeli embassy.

- February 26, 1993: A group of Islamic extremists detonated a massive van bomb in the garage of the World Trade Center in New York City. The Egyptian perpetrators were trying to kill 250,000 people by collapsing the towers. Ramzi Yousef, the leader of the terrorists, said the intent was to inflict Hiroshima-like casualties to punish the United States for its policies in the Middle East. The perpetrators considered augmenting the explosion with radiological or chemical agents that would have increased the casualties.

- March 3, 1993: Terrorists exploded a bomb in front of the U.S. embassy in Belgrade. This attack was most likely directed at U.S. policy toward Serbia and Bosnia.

- April 15, 1993: Seventeen Iraqis were arrested by Kuwaiti authorities as they tried to infiltrate Kuwait. A large car bomb and weapons were confiscated. The group was charged with being part of an Iraqi government plot to assassinate former president George Bush on a visit to Kuwait. According to the U.S. government, Saddam Hussein was carrying out a threat he had made during the Gulf War--to assassinate President Bush in retaliation for his direction of the war against Iraq. President Clinton later retaliated militarily against Iraq for the assassination plot by attacking Iraqi intelligence headquarters with cruise missiles.

- June 1993: Sheik Omar Abdul Rahman--a militant Egyptian cleric--and other radical Muslims conspired to destroy several New York landmarks on the same day, inflicting many

casualties. On July 4, as a follow-on to their bombing of the World Trade Center, the group planned to blow up UN headquarters, the Lincoln and Holland tunnels under the Hudson River, the George Washington Bridge, and the federal government's main office building in New York. The group also planned to assassinate Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.) and others. Funding for the operation apparently came from Iran and was funneled through Sudan. Two intelligence officers from Sudan were planning to place the bombs in the UN building. At the time they were arrested, the conspirators were mixing fertilizer and diesel fuel to create a bomb like the one used on the World Trade Center. Rahman and nine others were convicted of the plot on October 1, 1995. As in the World Trade Center bombing, the plotters were attempting to punish the United States for its policies toward the Middle East.

- July 1, 1993: Terrorists fired two rockets at the U.S. Air Force base at Yokota, Japan. The incident happened a few days before President Clinton arrived at the base. The incident most likely resulted from opposition to the U.S. military presence in Japan.

- July 7, 1993: Six days later, terrorists fired four projectiles at the headquarters of the U.S. Air Force in Japan at Camp Zama, Japan. Again, the incident was most likely related to opposition to the U.S. military presence in Japan.

- October 3, 1993: Osama bin Laden's operatives trained Somali tribesmen who conducted ambushes of U.S. peacekeeping forces in Somalia in support of clan leader Mohamed Farah Aideed. The ambushes culminated in the downing of two helicopters, the death of 18 American Army Rangers, and the dragging of dead American soldiers through the streets of Mogadishu. An indictment of his followers alleged that bin Laden's organization, al Qaida, believed that the United States--an "infidel nation"--had a nefarious plot to occupy Islamic countries, as demonstrated by its involvement in the peacekeeping operation in Somalia and the Persian Gulf War. The October 3rd incident led to the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Somalia. Bin Laden called the Somalia operation his group's greatest triumph.

- October 21, 1994: Members of the Abu Nidal organization were convicted of plotting to kill Jews in the United States, blow up the Israeli embassy in Washington, and kill anyone who exposed their plots. The attacks were likely motivated by anger over U.S. support for Israel.

- February 7, 1995: Ramzi Yousef, mastermind of the World Trade Center bombing, was arrested in Pakistan. The arrest foiled a plan he had already set in motion to bomb 12 U.S. jumbo jets in flight and kill the 4,000 passengers. Yousef wanted to punish the United States for its policies toward the Middle East.

- Shortly before Easter 1995: Authorities were tipped off by Japanese police that members of the Aum Shinrikyo (Supreme Truth) religious cult planned a nerve gas attack at Disneyland in Anaheim, California. The group planned to attack during a fireworks celebration when attendance at the park would reach maximum capacity. U.S. authorities apprehended members of the group at the Los Angeles airport before they could launch the attack. The plan also included an attack on petrochemical facilities in Los Angeles. Aum Shinrikyo had earlier used sarin nerve gas to attack the Tokyo subway (March 20, 1995). According to the group's belief system, the last years of the millennium will give rise to an Armageddon between Japan and the United States. Aum Shinrikyo believed that attacking the Tokyo subway would hasten the Armageddon. The group was hoping to kill tens of thousands of people.

The cult chose the United States--a friendly nation--as Japan's adversary rather than other regional nations that are much more likely to be future rivals of Japan in East Asia--China, Russia, and North and South Korea. That indicates how easily an interventionist superpower can be vilified by conspiratorially minded groups, even in a friendly nation.

The Aum Shinrikyo cult had assets of \$1.2 billion and the capability to produce sarin and VX gas, the agents that cause anthrax and botulism, and radiological weapons. The group is still active.

- August 18, 1995: The Manuel Rodriguez Patriotic Front claimed responsibility for a bomb explosion at an office building that housed the American company Fluor Daniel in Santiago, Chile. The group stated that the incident was carried out in solidarity with Cuba and in opposition to the American economic blockade of that island.

- September 13, 1995: A rocket-propelled grenade was fired at the U.S. embassy in Russia. Authorities suspect the attack was in retaliation for U.S. involvement in NATO air strikes against Bosnian Serb targets.

- November 13, 1995: A car bombing of a military complex in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia--which housed a U.S. military advisory group--killed 7 people (including 5 Americans) and wounded 42 others. Muslim militants seeking to topple the Saudi monarchy and push the "infidel" United States out of Saudi Arabia carried out the bombings. Three groups, including the Islamic Movement for Change, claimed responsibility. U.S. officials suspect that Osama bin Laden was involved. Bin Laden is opposed to the U.S. presence in Saudi Arabia and U.S. support for Israel.
- November 15, 1995: An explosive device was discovered on a power line to a U.S. military complex in Sagmihara, Japan. No group claimed responsibility. The incident was most likely related to opposition to the U.S. military presence in Japan.
- February 15, 1996: Unidentified assailants fired a rocket at the U.S. embassy compound in Athens, Greece, causing minor damage to three diplomatic vehicles and surrounding buildings. The State Department noted that the circumstances of the attack suggested it was an attack by the group November 17. November 17 attacks U.S. targets because of "American imperialism-nationalism."
- May 31, 1996: In Nicaragua a gang of disgruntled former Contra guerrillas kidnapped an employee of the U.S. Agency for International Development who was assisting in preparations for the Nicaraguan elections. She was later released unharmed.
- June 25, 1996: A truck bombing of the U.S. military apartment complex, Khobar Towers, near Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, killed 19 U.S. airmen, wounded 515 persons (including 240 U.S. citizens), and resulted in many other casualties. Muslim militants seeking to topple the Saudi monarchy and push the "infidel" United States out of Saudi Arabia carried out the bombings. U.S. officials have linked Osama bin Laden to the bombing. Some analysts also suspect Iranian complicity.
- February 23, 1997: Ali Hassan Abu Kamal, a Palestinian, opened fire on the observation deck of the Empire State Building in New York City. After killing or wounding several tourists, he committed suicide. Abu Kamal apparently acted in revenge for the treatment of Palestinians by the United States and Israel.
- July 31, 1997: Police in Brooklyn arrested two Palestinian men who allegedly planned suicide bombings of the subway and

a commuter bus. They had a portrait of Sheik Omar Abdul Rahman in their possession. Like Rahman, the Palestinians were probably motivated by opposition to U.S. policies toward the Middle East.

- November 12, 1997: Four employees of Union Texas Petroleum died in an attack on their vehicle one mile from the U.S. consulate in Karachi, Pakistan. Two groups--the Islamic Revolutionary Council and the Aimal Secret Committee--claimed that the killings were revenge for the conviction of Mir Aimal Kanshi, the Pakistani who had murdered CIA employees to protest the treatment of Muslims in Bosnia. (Angry about the treatment of Muslims in Bosnia, Kanshi had told his roommate that he would get even by shooting up the CIA, the White House, and the Israeli embassy.)

- December 23, 1997: Assailants fired shots at the teachers' residential compound of the Karachi American School. The school and the teachers' residence are in the same neighborhood as other consulate residences. One guard was shot at a guard post that had been established after the November 12, 1997, shooting of Union Texas Petroleum employees in Karachi. Because of the timing (about a month after the first incident) and the location, this attack was probably also in retaliation for the conviction of Mir Aimal Kanshi.

- April 3, 1998: The Greek November 17 movement claimed responsibility for a recent rash of attacks against U.S. targets. November 17's victims since 1975 include a CIA station chief and three other Americans. The group issued a statement saying the campaign was "aimed against American imperialism-nationalism."

- August 7, 1998: Simultaneous car bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania--allegedly linked to wealthy Saudi Osama bin Laden--led to more than 200 deaths. Before the bombings, bin Laden declared openly that he would kill Americans and would not discriminate between military personnel and civilians. Bin Laden objects to the U.S. presence in Saudi Arabia and American support for Israel. On August 20, 1998, the United States launched cruise missiles on bin Laden's training camp in Afghanistan and a chemical factory in Sudan. The Clinton administration claimed that the Sudanese factory produced chemical weapons and was allegedly linked (at least tangentially) to bin Laden.

- August 25, 1998: A Planet Hollywood restaurant (part of an American chain) in South Africa was bombed. South African authorities said the likely culprits were local terrorists ("Muslims Against Global Oppression") seeking revenge on the

United States for the U.S. cruise missile attacks against Afghanistan and Sudan.

- August 26, 1998: A U.S. government information center in Pristina, Kosovo, was fire-bombed by an unknown person. The incident was most likely aimed at U.S. and NATO policy on Kosovo.

- Early September 1998: The Ugandan government and the Federal Bureau of Investigation uncovered a plot by Osama bin Laden's terrorist organization to bomb the U.S. embassy in Kampala, Uganda. It was the second attempt to bomb the embassy; the first attempt occurred on August 7 in conjunction with the bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. U.S. and Ugandan officials agreed that the August 7th attempt failed because Uganda had more experience with terrorism and was better prepared to deal with it than were Kenya and Tanzania. Ugandan officials say that the U.S. cruise missile strike on Sudan in retaliation for the bombings in Kenya and Tanzania may have prompted the bombers to try a second time to attack the embassy in Kampala. Several arrests have been made in connection with the bombing.

Conclusion

All of the examples of terrorist attacks on the United States can be explained as retaliation for U.S. intervention abroad. Empirically validating the connection between an interventionist foreign policy and such attacks is more critical than ever now that terrorists can more readily obtain weapons of mass destruction and seem to be more willing to use them. The extensive number of incidents of terrorism linked to U.S. foreign policy implies that the United States could substantially reduce the chance of catastrophic terrorist attacks if it lowered its military profile overseas.¹⁶ The United States needs to adopt a new policy that would use military force only as a last resort in the defense of truly vital national interests.

The Cold War has ended, yet the United States continues to use its worldwide military dominance to intervene anywhere and everywhere in an effort to maintain its defense perimeter far forward. In a changed strategic environment in which ostensibly weak terrorist groups might acquire weapons of mass destruction, such an extended defense perimeter may actually increase the catastrophic threat to the American homeland. Even the U.S. Department of Defense admits the problem:

Indeed, a paradox of the new strategic environment is that American military superiority actually increases the threat of nuclear, biological, and chemical attack against us by creating incentives for adversaries to challenge us asymmetrically. These weapons may be used as tools of terrorism against the American people.¹⁷

But proponents of America's current interventionist foreign policy, such as the National Review, ignore the new strategic realities and criticize the proposed policy of military restraint as "preemptively capitulating to the terrorists."¹⁸ Adopting a restrained foreign policy has nothing to do with appeasing terrorists. Terrorist acts are morally outrageous and should be punished whenever possible.

Reducing the motive for terrorists to attack the United States with weapons of mass destruction is not the only reason to adopt a policy of military restraint overseas, although it is a sensible one. In the more benign environment of a post-Cold War world, promiscuous military intervention by the United States--which can result in lost lives, high financial costs, and open-ended commitments--is no longer needed. It is common sense, rather than appeasement, for the United States to adapt its activist Cold War foreign policy to the new strategic environment that requires more restraint overseas.

Notes

1. Quoted in John Carey, "Missile Defense vs. Terror: New Terrorism Has Many Faces, Including Ballistic," Defense News, August 31-September 6, 1998, p. 27.

2. Charles William Maynes, "Fighting Dirty Won't Work," Washington Post, August 31, 1998, p. A21.

3. Defense Science Board, The Defense Science Board 1997 Summer Study Task Force on DoD Responses to Transnational Threats (Washington: U.S. Department of Defense, October 1997), vol. 1, Final Report, p. 15. Emphasis added. Cited hereafter as Transnational Threats.

4. White House, "Radio Address by the President to the Nation," August 8, 1998.

5. Richard Betts, "The New Threat of Mass Destruction," Foreign Affairs 77, no. 1 (January-February 1998): 28.

6. Quoted in Dan Smith, "The Great Terrorism Scare," Defense Monitor, October 1, 1998, p. 3.

7. Ibid., p. 4.

8. White House, "Remarks by the President to the Opening Session of the 53rd United Nations General Assembly," September 21, 1998.

9. Ibid.

10. Gerald Seib, "Why Terror Inc. Puts Americans in the Cross Hairs," Wall Street Journal, August 28, 1998, p. A24.

11. U.S. Department of State, Patterns of Global Terrorism: 1997 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1997), p. 2.

12. Betts, p. 40.

13. Transnational Threats, p. ix.

14. Ibid., pp. 15-16.

15. The list shows only the most prominent acts of terrorism against the United States in retaliation for its interventionist foreign policy. It is by no means exhaustive. The sources for the list are as follows: International Policy Institute for Counterterrorism data base ([www.ict.org.il /inter _ter/attackresults.cfm](http://www.ict.org.il/inter_ter/attackresults.cfm)); Louis Mizell Jr., Target USA: The Inside Story of the New Terrorist War (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1998), pp. 179-200; Beau Grosscup, The Newest Explosions of Terrorism: Latest Sites of Terrorism in 90's and Beyond (Far Hills, N.J.: New Horizon, 1998), pp. 1-34, 123-45, 263-319, 363-410; Leroy Thompson, Ragged War: The Story of Unconventional and Counter-Revolutionary Warfare (London: Arms and Armor, 1996), pp. 156-75; Transnational Threats, pp. 13-20; Edwin P. Hoyt, America's Wars and Military Excursions (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1987), pp. 525-29; and J. Robert Moskin, The U.S. Marine Corps Story (Boston: Little, Brown, 1992), pp. 727-41.

16. For a more comprehensive discussion of that thesis, see Ivan Eland, "Protecting the Homeland: The Best Defense Is to Give No Offense," Cato Institute Policy Analysis no. 306, May 5, 1998. See also Betts, pp. 27-28, 40-41; and Oscar Lurie, "Does 'Superior Power' Abroad Risk Terror at Home?" Weekly Defense Monitor, October 15, 1998, p. 5.

17. U.S. Department of Defense, Proliferation: Threat and Response (Washington: Government Printing Office, November 1997), p. iii. Emphasis in the original.

18. "The Right Blames America First," National Review, August 28, 1998.

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