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# FBI

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# Terrorism Today

**"... all levels of the law enforcement community must work together to ensure success against terrorists."**

By

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There is little doubt that today terrorism has become both a major concern for the United States and a major issue within the U.S. law enforcement community. During the past several years, bombings, assassinations, and armed robberies, which have captured the attention of both the media and the citizenry, have been committed against Americans in the United States and elsewhere by terrorist groups and individuals. These acts have been perpetrated for a variety of causes, ranging from a desire to destroy capitalism to retribution against historic enemies.

Terrorism is a form of organized criminal behavior, but it is unlike other crimes that we have experienced because terrorist crimes are allegedly committed for political purposes. Terrorism has been called a new form of warfare, but instead of standing armies, terrorism is committed by individuals or relatively small, but compact, groups. No major outlays for supply and logistic expenses are needed, and terrorists operate clandestinely. Terrorists in this arena call themselves many things—urban guerrillas, warriors, or freedom fighters—but they are nothing more

than criminals. These individuals are involved in criminal activity and the FBI pursues its counterterrorist responsibility within the law enforcement context, with prosecution of criminal activity its primary goal.

Terrorism is a worldwide problem. Fortunately, the United States has not experienced the same level of activity — and deadliness — of terrorism as elsewhere in the world: in Europe, in the Middle East, in Central America. Law enforcement at all levels, Federal, State, and local, must work together to ensure that terrorism does not become an even more significant factor tomorrow than it is today.

## Overview

The FBI is the lead Federal law enforcement agency in the U.S. Government's fight against terrorism, both international and domestic. Domestic groups are those which operate entirely within the United States or Puerto Rico and which generally direct their activities against our Government or some element of our society. International groups are those with some degree of foreign direction or support or

whose activities transcend national boundaries.

The mission of the FBI in counterterrorism is to both prevent incidents, where legally possible, and to react effectively after incidents occur. In an effort to prevent terrorist activity, the FBI collects information on individuals, groups, associations, movements, and support structures, when we have information that they are involved in illegal activity in support of terrorism. This serves not only to aid prosecution, but it builds the intelligence base which makes the prevention of terrorist acts possible. The reactive phase consists of an effective and timely investigative response to a terrorist act.

As a result of the FBI's counterterrorism effort, ably supported by a number of other agencies and departments, the number of terrorist incidents in the United States has declined during the past several years, from 51 in 1982, to 13 in 1984, to 7 in 1985. During 1986 there were 17 confirmed terrorist incidents in the United States. Although there was an increase during 1986, 11 of the 17 incidents were committed by



EAD Revell

two groups on two dates. The number of active groups and the relative terrorist threat in the United States has not increased. There has not been a terrorist act committed by an international terrorist group in the United States since 1983. During this same period, the number of terrorist incidents prevented rose from 3 in 1982 to 23 in 1985. An additional 8 preventions were recorded during 1986.

During the past 2 years, indictments or convictions have been obtained against individuals belonging to a wide range of domestic groups engaging in terrorism. Included among these were persons responsible for the 11 bombings claimed by the United Freedom Front; bombings, including the one of the U.S. Capitol, claimed by the Armed Resistance Unit; murders and robberies by the Aryan Nations and its affiliate group, the Order; and bombings, rocket attacks, and robberies by the Puerto Rican group EPB-Macheteros. At least 14 bombings planned in the Washington, DC, area and the northeastern United States were aborted because of the arrests of some of these individuals.

During this same period, planned acts of international terrorist activity prevented through investigative activity included attempted assassinations of the Prime Minister of India, a high-level Indian Government official, cooperating

witnesses in the Aryan Nations case, and Libyan dissidents residing in the United States.

#### Domestic

In the domestic arena during the past 2 years, there has been a resurgence in violent activity by Jewish terrorists that has been directed principally against Arab-American elements and individuals allegedly tied to World War II Nazi activities. Several deaths have resulted from these attacks and these matters are being afforded the highest investigative priority.

Right-wing extremist groups, some of which have engaged in paramilitary tactics and survivalist training, pose a significant threat to law enforcement personnel, to ethnic minorities, and to government buildings. These groups, such as the Aryan Nations and the Sheriff's Posse Comitatus, espouse philosophies that are violent, racist, and antigovernment. There is also evidence of communication between these groups, and possibly, a coordination of efforts.

Left-wing extremists, which include black, white, and Puerto Rican elements, are also of concern. These groups seek change through revolution, for example, "Independence" for Puerto Rico, the overthrow of capitalism and "imperialism," or the establishment of a black nation within the United States. The May 19th Communist Organization, the Prairie Fire Organizing Committee, the Armed Forces of the National Liberation, the Organization of Volunteers for the Puerto Rican Revolution, the EPB-Macheteros, and the Republic of New Afrika/New Afrikan Freedom Fighters are just a few of the organizations which espouse such philosophies.

Although severe setbacks have been dealt to both left- and right-wing groups during the past 2 years as a re-

sult of arrests and convictions, these organizations have a demonstrated ability to regroup following a period of adversity. Supporters or members still at large have the capability and the potential to carry out additional terrorist activities.

#### International

Of the international groups active in the United States, the FBI is most concerned about those associated with Libya and Iran. Both countries have large student populations in the United States which are well organized through societies and clubs and have the potential to serve as an infrastructure to support terrorist activity. The vast majority of these students do not and will not support terrorism; however, a minority within these groups have demonstrated a fanatical dedication to the regimes that control Libya and Iran and these governments have sponsored terrorism. Syria also has been a proponent of state-sponsored terrorism. To date, their activities in the United States have been confined primarily to monitoring and countering dissidents; however, this could well change due to an increasingly vigorous American response to terrorism abroad.

Our Government's military actions against Libya have resulted in threats by Colonel Qadhafi and Palestinian terrorists to export terrorist violence to the United States itself. These threats are taken seriously by the FBI and the U.S. intelligence community. Fortunately, these threats have not developed into terrorist attacks in the United States.

Other international groups, such as Sikh and Armenian extremists, continue to pose a serious threat to Indian and Turkish interests in the United States.

The threat to Americans travelling overseas and to American personnel

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**"Right-wing extremist groups, some of which have engaged in paramilitary tactics and survivalist training, pose a significant threat to law enforcement personnel...."**

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and interests abroad has increased as well. Groups which pose the greatest threat include Palestinian or Arab commando groups, such as Abu Nidal, Hizballah, and the 15 May Organization; shadowy associations, such as Islamic Jihad (Holy War), which is actually a concept or philosophy rather than an organization; and Libyan-sponsored elements. These have been responsible for a cruise ship hijacking (*Le Achille Lauro*) and several airline hijackings (TWA, Pan Am, Egypt Air) during which American citizens, simply because they were Americans, were singled out and murdered. These groups have also been responsible for the bombing of the La Belle Discotheque in West Berlin, West Germany, which was frequented by U.S. Army personnel; for the bombings of the American Embassy and Marine Corps compound and the kidnaping of American citizens in Beirut, Lebanon; and for the assaults at the Rome, Italy, and Vienna, Austria, airports.

In addition, American military personnel and facilities in Europe, especially West Germany and Italy, have been subjected to attacks, mostly by bombing. These have been carried out by domestic groups in those countries, such as the Red Army Faction in West Germany and the Action Direct in France. The threat level to our military and diplomatic personnel in these locations remains high.

Because of the attacks against American citizens, especially the hijackings, Congress passed the Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984. Chapter XX of the act deals with hostage taking. Pursuant to this act, if a hostage taking occurs outside of the United States, Federal jurisdiction can be asserted if at least one of these factors is met:

—If the perpetrator or any of the hostages are American na-

tionals;

- If the perpetrator is subsequently found in the United States; or
- If the U.S. Government is being compelled to take certain actions.

In addition, the Omnibus Diplomatic Security and Antiterrorism Act of 1986, which was enacted in August 1986, created a new section of the U.S. Code which expands Federal jurisdiction in matters of extraterritoriality to include homicide, conspiracy to commit homicide, or physical violence committed against a U.S. national abroad as part of a terrorist endeavor. This statute was applied for the first time in the September 5, 1986, hijacking of Pan Am Flight 73 in Karachi, Pakistan, in which two U.S. nationals were killed.

The FBI has been given the responsibility to conduct investigations when violations of these laws occur. Following the June 1985, Athens to Rome TWA hijacking and the October 1985, *Le Achille Lauro* affair, FBI investigative teams interviewed hostages, crews, and hijackers and conducted forensic examinations at the crime scenes. Arrest warrants have been issued by the U.S. Government for the hijackers in several of these incidents. The FBI undertakes an investigation within a foreign country only with the authorization and support of the host government.

#### **Vice President's Task Force**

The Public Report of the Vice President's Task Force on Combating Terrorism mandates a coordinated, national response to terrorism. Law enforcement agencies in the United States responsible for acting against terrorism must be prepared to coordinate their efforts with appropriate Federal, State, and local authorities. As law enforcement professionals, it is incum-

bent upon us to ensure that we will be able to manage, cope with, and resolve terrorist incidents involving U.S. citizens.

The Vice President's Task Force makes specific recommendations for our national response to terrorism. These recommendations include establishing additional reward incentives for information on terrorists and initiating legislation which will prevent terrorists from abusing the Freedom of Information Act. In light of these and other recommendations contained in the Vice President's Report, it is evident that all levels of the law enforcement community must work together to ensure success against terrorists.

#### **Cooperation/Coordination**

On the Federal level, cooperation between Government agencies in terrorism matters has never been better. Through the medium of interagency policy coordination groups, such as the Interdepartmental Group on Terrorism and the Interagency Intelligence Committee on Terrorism, working relationships and policy coordination have been considerably strengthened. Further, the lead agency concept with the U.S. Department of State having responsibility for coordination of counterterrorism abroad and FBI responsibility in this country has worked quite well, particularly during significant events.

During incidents, the lead agency establishes and maintains a working group to discharge its primary responsibilities and also to coordinate with other agencies. Accordingly, the State Department and FBI, as well as various other agencies, maintain communications with each other during incidents through operations centers which are staffed around the clock.

Because the primary goal of the U.S. Government is to prevent terrorism in the United States and against

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***"Where persistent terrorist problems exist, chiefly in our major cities, formal joint task force relationships are created...."***

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U.S. citizens and facilities abroad, the FBI created a special Headquarters unit to work with other elements of the U.S. Government to identify possible targets and make plans responding to specific perceivable threats. This unit works closely with entities such as the Department of Defense and the Department of Energy on prioritization of locations and facilities that present the greatest potential risk, for the purpose of contingency planning in the event of a terrorist attack. To assist in this contingency planning, the FBI has signed a Memoranda of Understanding with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and Department of Energy with regard to threat, theft, or sabotage in the nuclear industry and response to an incident involving an improvised nuclear device. We are also developing joint contingency plans with State and local agencies in the vicinity of nuclear facilities.

The FBI also works closely with such agencies as the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, the Customs Service, the U.S. Secret Service, and Immigration and Naturalization Service where the jurisdictional interests of those agencies are involved. The FBI's cooperative efforts with State and local law enforcement agencies have been greatly enhanced in recent years. For special events, such as Olympic Games, World Fairs, and political events, antiterrorism working groups and operations centers are formed. Participation of State and local authorities is sought and a Memorandum of Understanding is signed. In order to facilitate exchange of information, security clearances are often given to State and local officers. In terrorism investigations where the FBI has concurrent jurisdiction with local law enforcement agencies, the FBI establishes direct liaison channels with the

local authorities to assure a coordinated response to the incident as well as coordination of the investigations.

Where persistent terrorist problems exist, chiefly in our major cities, formal joint task force relationships are created. The purpose of these task forces is to maximize interagency cooperation and create a close-knit, cohesive unit capable of addressing the most complex problems facing Federal, State troopers, and FBI Agents. All involved agencies participate equally in the formulation and implementation of investigative strategies. This approach has been so successful that plans are being formulated to create new task forces in order that the scarce resources of both Federal and local agencies can be put to more effective and efficient use.

Experience has shown that the pooling of personnel and resources on joint task forces in major metropolitan areas achieves results. However, because terrorists have the capability of striking anywhere in the United States, the concept of complete cooperation and coordination engendered by the task forces should be enlarged to ensure sufficient and timely dissemination to other local law enforcement agencies. General information on the terrorist threat is routinely disseminated; however, specific information on FBI terrorism investigations often cannot be disseminated to local agencies unless there is a specific need because of restraints placed upon the FBI by Federal statutes, Federal rules of criminal procedure, the Attorney General's guidelines, or other agencies' dissemination restrictions.

As the lead Federal agency in terrorism investigations, the FBI has a responsibility to ensure that local law enforcement officers are receiving pertinent information regarding terrorist activities in the United States. Special

Agents in Charge of local FBI field offices routinely meet with their local counterparts to maintain a continuing dialogue. Publications such as the *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin* and speaking engagements by FBI officials are also designed to disseminate information.

However, to facilitate increased dissemination of terrorist-related information to State and local law enforcement officers, additional procedures are being established. Increased direct contact on the management level between the FBI and local police is being encouraged. FBI participation in both international and local forums is continuing to ensure the flow of information to authorities who need it. The FBI advocates and supports enhanced cooperative efforts both nationally and internationally as the best and most effective means to combat the threat of terrorism.

#### **Conclusion**

Terrorism is indeed a global problem. As professional law enforcement officers, it is our duty to use all available foreign and domestic channels, such as Interpol and the FBI's National Crime Information Center (NCIC), to ensure that the appropriate authorities have access to information which may help prevent or resolve a terrorist incident. Information available through non-operational channels should also be more fully exploited. One of our strongest tools in the fight against terrorism is the sharing of information. We must all continue to identify areas where information can be shared and then establish the necessary channels to ensure that it is.

**FBI**