

The U.S. Campaign to Squeeze Terrorists' Financing

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Articles & Testimony

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While mounting an individual terrorist attack may cost relatively little, money remains of critical importance to terrorist organizations. Without it, terrorist groups would be incapable of maintaining the broad infrastructure necessary to run an effective organization. Finding means to quickly and securely raise, launder, transfer, store and access funds remains a top priority for all terrorist groups, from al Qaeda and its various globally oriented affiliates to regionally focused groups like Hamas and Hezbollah. Terror finance is also an area of rapid change as terrorist organizations actively seek to evade governmental scrutiny and take advantage of new, emerging technologies. The shift in the nature of the global terrorist threat -- from a centralized al Qaeda to a franchise model -- has impacted terrorist financing as well.

Until the September 11, 2001 attacks, combating the financing of terrorism was not a strategic priority for the U.S. government. In the wake of the September 11 attacks, the United States dramatically increased its focus on combating terrorist financing, designating and freezing the assets of numerous terrorist financiers and support networks, prosecuting individuals and entities for providing material support, as well as increasing its focus on "following the money" as a means of collecting financial intelligence. . . .

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