

The Money Trail: Finding, Following, and Freezing Terrorist Finances

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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U.S. and international efforts to combat the financing of terrorism are an under-appreciated and little-understood aspect of the global counterterrorism campaign. But since terrorist attacks are often inexpensive to mount -- the September 11 attacks were staged for less than \$500,000 -- why should governments devote so much attention to tracking and severing the money trail for terrorism?

In this Washington Institute Policy Focus, senior fellows Matthew Levitt and Michael Jacobson -- both former officials in the Treasury Department's Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, now with the Institute's [Stein Program on Counterterrorism and Intelligence \(templateI02.php?SID=11\)](#) -- explore the critical role that money plays in the success of terrorist organizations, and why countering financial flows must be an integral part of the U.S. government's counterterrorism strategy.

Levitt and Jacobson analyze how terrorist financing has matured since 2001, with case studies on al-Qaeda, Hamas, and Hizballah. They also assess the effectiveness of U.S. and international responses to this evolving threat, focusing on the performance of governments throughout the Middle East. The authors, both veteran policy practitioners, offer timely recommendations to the new Obama administration on how to strengthen international efforts in the war on terror.

THE AUTHORS

Matthew Levitt is a senior fellow and director of The Washington Institute's [Stein Program on Counterterrorism and Intelligence \(templateI02.php?SID=11\)](#). Previously, Dr. Levitt served as deputy assistant secretary for intelligence and analysis at the U.S. Department of the Treasury, where he played a central role in efforts to protect the U.S. financial system from abuse by terrorists, weapons proliferators, and other rogue actors. His areas of focus include Middle Eastern terrorist groups, terror finance, state sponsorship of terrorism, and logistical and financial support networks -- subjects covered in his 2006 book [Hamas: Politics, Charity and Terrorism in the Service of](#)

Jihad (templateC04.php?CID=265). He is the author, most recently, of **Negotiating under Fire: Preserving Peace Talks in the Face of Terror Attacks (templateC04.php?CID=294)**.

Michael Jacobson is a senior fellow in The Washington Institute's **Stein Program on Counterterrorism and Intelligence (templateI02.php?SID=11)**. Previously he served as senior advisor in the Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence and as counsel on the 9-11 Commission. His areas of focus include sanctions and financial measures to combat national security threats, as well as other issues related to counterterrorism, national security law, and intelligence reform -- subjects covered in his 2006 Institute monograph **The West at War: U.S. and European Counterterrorism Efforts, Post-September 11 (templateC04.php?CID=237)**.

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