

# The Wrong Models for Tenet

by [Matthew Levitt \(/experts/matthew-levitt\)](/experts/matthew-levitt)

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[Matthew Levitt \(/experts/matthew-levitt\)](/experts/matthew-levitt)

Matthew Levitt is the Fromer-Wexler Fellow and director of the Reinhard Program on Counterterrorism and Intelligence at The Washington Institute.



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In an effort to resuscitate flat-lining Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking, President Bush dispatched CIA Director George Tenet to the region one more time. This time, however, his mission has focused not on obtaining a ceasefire, but on merging the various Palestinian security forces into a coherent, hierarchical, and accountable security and intelligence service.

While restructuring and professionalizing the Palestinian security services is critical, Director Tenet must also address the equally essential need to reform the political dimension of Palestinian decision-making that directs security forces to take or refrain from taking certain actions.

In fact, corrupt political decision-making will cripple even the most professional of security services.

Egypt and Jordan have extensive experience with the Palestinian security establishment, and have reportedly offered to help Tenet with his reorganization effort. In principle, the willingness of Arab states to play a positive role in deescalating the current conflict is both welcome and praiseworthy, but Egypt and Jordan are both poised to set only half an example for the Palestinian Authority (PA).

While their security services are well structured and professional, the actions of both countries are subject to political decisions that impede their ability to fulfill their mission.

Egyptian security services, while highly effective, operate on a spectrum that runs from suppressing political pluralism (such as the arrest of American citizen and democracy advocate Saad ed-Din Ibrahim) to passively tolerating extremism directed outside Egypt (such as the public unveiling of the Muslim Brotherhood's Suicide Bombers Unit at Al-Azhar University). Egypt's track record is impressive in terms of cracking down on extremist groups targeting the regime, but not in terms of groups targeting others. Egyptian security services, despite being first-rate professional organizations, are encumbered by answering to a body politic that is itself badly in need of reform.

Jordan boasts of one of the most accomplished and professional security services in the region, which, as a result of al-Qaida's multiple attempts to stage attacks in the Kingdom, has particular expertise in the field of counterterrorism. Even so, while Jordan is positioned to play a very positive role in helping shape the new Palestinian security service, its geostrategic position between Iraq and a hard place (the West Bank) make for a very

different operating environment than that in the West Bank and Gaza. Moreover, Jordan has also recently shown leniency toward outward-oriented terrorist activity. The Kingdom recently thwarted a Hizbullah plot to smuggle Katyusha rockets through Jordan into the West Bank, followed by the quick and quiet release of the terrorists back to Lebanon.

Even if Director Tenet successfully merges the various Palestinian security organs into a unified command structure focused on combating terror instead of political infighting, the Palestinian leadership will still have to make the political-strategic decision to crack down on extremists whomever and wherever they plan to attack, despite the political cost. The Palestinians would do well to learn from the structure, not necessarily the strategy, of the Jordanian and Egyptian security models. Security reform must be applied in tandem with a reform of the political decision-making process that guides the activities of security services. In the case of the PA, structural security reform is a fraction of the problem; only political reform will lead Palestinian decision-makers to instruct the newly professionalized security service to actually crack down on terrorism. ❖

Jerusalem Post

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