

America's Fight against Terrorism: At Home and Abroad

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In-Depth Reports

It is a great honor to be here tonight, but also a little daunting to speak before this group about terrorism. What can I tell you that you -- after studying terrorism for so many years and personally experiencing it -- do not already know? At the risk of preaching to the choir, please allow me to make a few observations about recent developments in the phenomenon called terrorism.

Four fairly significant changes have taken place in the arena of terrorism in the last few years. First, the list of the most active state sponsors of terrorism has noticeably shifted. Ten years ago, the list consisted of only Libya, Iraq, and Syria. They are all still in the business but not on the top of my list of the most active state sponsors. The two on the top of my list presently are Iran and Afghanistan. Although I don't mean to be overly optimistic, we have reason to believe that there is a significant division of opinion in the governments of Iran and Afghanistan about the continued wisdom of being a state sponsor of terrorism. That development is a sign for hope. Unfortunately, both countries are still very much in the terrorism business.

Second, the national targets of terrorism have shifted. The nations that used to be perennial targets were Israel, the United States, and to some extent Western European nations. We all continue to be the targets of terrorism, but Arab nations increasingly have become targets and the bloodiest battlefields in the war of terrorism. In Egypt and Algeria, hundreds of people have been killed by terrorists in the last few years. Terrorist movements exist even in such unlikely places as Saudi Arabia and Libya. This change and shift in the national targets of terrorism has resulted in a significant reevaluation by Middle Eastern governments of their attitude toward terrorism and their willingness to take steps in conjunction with the United States in fighting terrorism.

Third, terrorists are acquiring new and dangerous weapons -- weapons of mass destruction and computer weapons. We witnessed with terrifying clarity in the Tokyo subway what a terrorist group can do with a weapon of mass destruction, by which I mean a chemical, biological, or nuclear weapon. The Aum Shinrikyo, allegedly a religious cult but actually a terrorist group, used sarin nerve gas in the Tokyo subway and had used biological weapons they developed on U.S. targets in Japan. Fortunately, their biological weapons failed, but terrorists in general have already begun using weapons of mass destruction, and reliable intelligence indicates other terrorist groups are actively

seeking chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons.

I would like to speak about a specific case that has been the object of some controversy in the last month -- the U.S. bombing of the chemical plant in Khartoum, Sudan. National Security Adviser Sandy Berger wrote an article for the op-ed page of today's Washington Times about that bombing, providing the clearest rationale to date for what the United States did. He asks the following questions: What if you were the president of the United States and you were told four facts based on reliable intelligence. The facts were: Usama bin Ladin had attacked the United States and blown up two of its embassies; he was seeking chemical weapons; he had invested in Sudan's military-industrial complex; and Sudan's military-industrial complex was making VX nerve gas at a chemical plant called al-Shifa? Sandy Berger asks: What would you have done? What would Congress and the American people have said to the president if the United States had not blown up the factory, knowing those four facts?

Is it really a crazy idea that terrorists could get chemical or biological weapons?

I would like to speak about two lists, one public and one classified. The first is a list of state sponsors of terrorism, published every year by the Department of State by law, which this year names seven nations. The second is a list of countries that have chemical and biological weapons, published routinely every year by the director of Central Intelligence. There is a unity and a singularity between those two lists. Although there are numerous states that have chemical and biological weapons, all the countries on the state sponsor list possess them.

What does it mean to be a state sponsor of terrorism? These countries have provided sanctuary to terrorist groups. They have funded terrorist groups, trained terrorists, and provided intelligence and weapons to terrorists. So is it beyond reason to think that, if the state sponsors who possess chemical and biological weapons have supported terrorist groups in these ways, they will not provide them with chemical or biological weapons in the future?

Another new type of weapon about which the United States is increasingly worried has a variety of names: cyber war, information war, computer attack. In World War II, countries flew heavy bombers over the enemy's cities to blow up communications nodes and electrical power stations. In the next war that effort may not be necessary. Electrical power grids and telecommunication grids are computer-controlled and linked over fairly open-access communication systems. It is now possible to hack one's way into such systems, take control of the controlling computer systems, and disable electrical power grids and telephones as surely as if they had been destroyed.

The Pentagon loves jargon, and there are two key words of jargon to remember when thinking about computer war: Eligible Receiver and Solar Sunrise. Eligible Receiver was an exercise in which the United States asked a small group of people to attack the Pentagon's computer systems using only unclassified techniques and information that they could garner from open sources on the Internet. Very few people in the Pentagon knew that the attack would occur. Several days into the computer attack, very few people in the Pentagon knew the attack was going on. By the end of the week, a small group of unclassified hackers had control of numerous significant computer systems owned by the Department of Defense throughout the world. Control.

Solar Sunrise took place last February. Solar Sunrise is the code name the Justice Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation now give to a case that developed like this: Iraq was giving the United Nations Special Commission on Iraq -- UNSCOM -- problems with its inspection regime. The United States was threatening to bomb Iraq. The president had sent additional aircraft and ships to the Persian Gulf and was preparing to send more. While these events were taking place, unknown parties were hacking into the logistics control computers at military bases throughout the country. Route access, or systems administrator status, was achieved. Lists of passwords were downloaded, commuter trapdoors were inserted, and for several days it was believed that Iraq was engaging in information warfare against the United States to cripple its logistics build-up.

Several days of investigation and court orders from nine federal district courts resulted in the discovery of two 14-

year-olds in San Francisco and one 17-year-old in Tel Aviv. If such an attack can be conducted by three teenagers, what could a trained terrorist group do to cripple a country if it adopts techniques of computer attack and information warfare?

The fourth significant change in terrorism in the last few years involves the defense of the United States. Although the United States is protected by two great oceans and has long been invulnerable to conventional attack, this is no longer the case. The issue of homeland defense must be taken seriously once again. The observation proves itself, but a few examples serve as good reminders: the World Trade Center, the conspiracy to blow up the Holland Tunnel and the United Nations building, the Oklahoma City bombing, and the attack on Central Intelligence Agency employees at the CIA gatehouse. Three of these four attacks were planned attacks by foreign terrorists who entered the United States to conduct their terrorism.

Why would people conduct terrorism in the United States? One reason is blackmail. A major terrorist attack occurs involving chemical weapons or computers, then someone reliably says they did it and adds that, if the United States continues its support for Israel or eradicating coca on the Upper Huallaga valley in Peru or whatever, it will happen again. Perhaps their motive is revenge. The Iraqis attempted to assassinate former President George Bush in Kuwait in 1993, and many other people around the world feel they also have justifiable reasons for revenge against the United States. Maybe attacks in the United States would be part of a regional war, just as in the Solar Sunrise scenario, where the United States may be rushing troops to another part of the world and someone wants to make that difficult to do.

If these are new trends, what is the United States doing about it? In May, the president signed a security directive, Presidential Decision Directive 62, which is partially classified and contains three new initiatives the United States is undertaking in addition to all of the counterterrorism programs it has pursued for many years. The first program is active, ongoing, everyday disruption of terrorist groups. Whereas I cannot go into detail about what actions the United States is taking to disrupt terrorist groups, the basic philosophy behind this policy mirrors community policing belief: Get them off the streets, round them up. It has worked with friendly governments, friendly police, and friendly intelligence agencies. Long before our embassies in Africa were attacked on August 7, 1998, the United States began implementing this presidential directive. Since the embassies were attacked, we have disrupted bin Ladin terrorist groups, or cells. Where possible and appropriate, the United States will bring the terrorists back to this country and put them on trial. That statement is not an empty promise.

For those of you who may think it is, you may want to talk to the people who did the World Trade Center bombing, those who planned to attack the UN and the Holland Tunnel, the man who killed the CIA employees at the gatehouse, and some of the people who blew up our embassies in Africa. To talk to those people, however, you are going to have to go to prison, because all of those people are in prison tonight.

The second initiative in the president's directive was, for the first time since the 1960s, a serious program of preparedness against weapons of mass destruction in the United States, with several important elements. As the attorney general announced today, one office in the FBI will prepare 120 metropolitan areas throughout the country to respond to terrorism involving weapons of mass destruction. We will work with state and county and city governments, with police and fire departments, and with hospitals and doctors to train them, to equip them with chemical suits and with chemical and biological weapons detectors, and to create a regional plan in each of those cities to deal with a chemical, biological, or even nuclear attack.

The United States will for the first time have a nationwide stockpile of medicines designed specifically to respond to chemical and biological attacks and to treat the civilian population. The president withdrew \$300 million in various program proposals from the fiscal year 1999 budget he had sent to Congress and asked Congress for \$300 million instead for this program to buy the medicines, to research new vaccines against biological weapons, and to train and

equip 120 metropolitan areas. I am pleased to tell you tonight that Congress, in its omnibus spending bill which hopefully will pass on Monday, has appropriated \$350 million.¹ We are off to a good start in what will be a five-year plan.

Part of dealing with weapons of mass destruction in the hands of terrorists, however, is preventing the terrorists from obtaining these weapons. Although we are preparing to deal with the consequences of terrorists using weapons of mass destruction, the president adopted a policy that the United States will not accept a situation in which terrorist groups have acquired or procured weapons of mass destruction. When people complain about the United States blowing up the ibuprofen factory in Sudan, they should remember that policy.

The third new policy is a directive to develop, for the first time in history, a national cyber defense plan to prevent people from invading U.S. computer systems and turning off telephones and lights and crashing stock markets. The president has asked us over the course of the next three years to work with the private sector that owns and operates that critical infrastructure -- because the government does not own and operate the telephone or the electric power grids -- to build a defensive system to detect computer attacks, isolate them, and destroy them before they destroy our infrastructure. We are asking for \$250 million in research and development this year with a proposal currently on the table to double that amount next year.

The United States is engaged and busy with new policies and programs, but there are still those who do not yet understand U.S. policy on terrorism. To preempt some of the most frequently asked questions about U.S. terrorism policy -- which sometimes are statements posing as questions -- I thought I would offer the answers first.

Is not terrorism, like war, just really politics by other means? Is a little bit of terrorism not, after all, a fact of life? Is not terrorism always there like death and taxes? Can we really sustain our enthusiasm and our resources against terrorism, or do we only get involved after U.S. embassies get blown up in Africa, then tend to forget about it?

Are not terrorists really a little bit smarter and more adaptive than governments and always capable of outsmarting stodgy, old, bureaucratic governments? Is not it sometimes better to give in a little to terrorism rather than being so ideological about opposing it? Finally, is it not true that just as crime does pay, terrorism really does pay?

Presidential Decision Directive 62 offers President Bill Clinton's answers to those questions. One, the United States will never accept terrorism as a legitimate means of political activity. Two, the United States will never tolerate any terrorism at any level. Three, the United States will always be energetic at rooting out terrorism. Four, the United States will adopt, adapt, adjust, and seek to stay ahead of terrorists. Five, the United States will never appease terrorism or make concessions to terrorists. Finally, as the president, the attorney general and the secretary of state said publicly, the United States will punish those who engage in terrorism no matter how long it takes, no matter how much money it costs, and no matter where they seek to hide. The terrorism policy of the Clinton administration is not just what we say. It is what we do and will continue to do every day.

¹ The omnibus appropriations bill did pass shortly after this address. ❖

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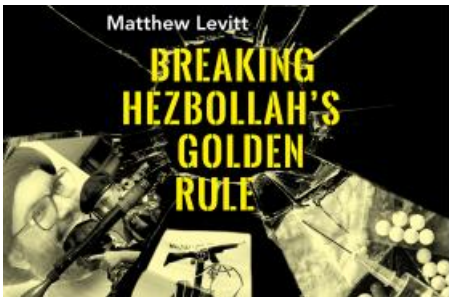
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