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INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM: TRENDS AND POTENTIALITIES, (U)
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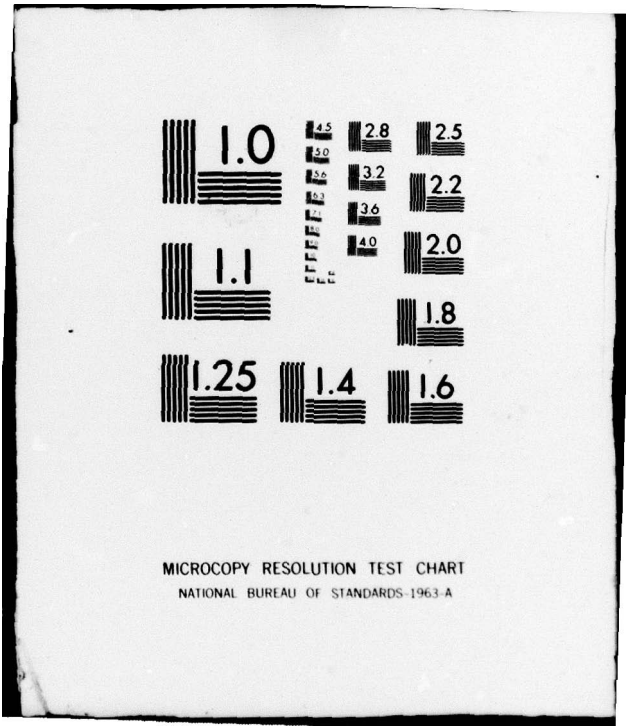
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INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM: TRENDS AND POTENTIALITIES

A SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

Terrorist tactics will continue to be a mode of political expression and a means of attracting worldwide attention, achieving limited political goals, and compelling opponents to divert resources to protection against terrorist attacks. Although few terrorist groups can claim to have attained any of their long-range objectives, the use of terrorist tactics has won them publicity and often gained them concessions. They are likely to regard these tactical victories as enough of a success to preclude the abandonment of terrorist tactics.

No great changes are foreseen in terrorist tactics. The bomb will continue to be the primary terrorist weapon. Despite the recent demonstrated firmness of the West German, Irish, and British governments in dealing with ransom demands, terrorists will continue to seize hostages for the purposes of attaining publicity and bargaining for specific concessions. Growing resistance to terrorist demands in barricade and hostage situations, on the other hand, could result in a reversion to the traditional form of kidnapping. Assassination of top government officials, a tactic seldom employed by political extremists, may be seen more often in the future.

Inspired by publicity and recognition given to such groups as the Palestine Liberation Organization, new groups will adopt terrorist tactics to further their own struggles. Terrorists operating in various parts of the world will continue to establish links with one another, form alliances, and provide each other with assistance. Emerging from the contacts and alliances established between these groups is the embryo of a loose brotherhood of freelance terrorists willing to carry out attacks on behalf of causes with which they are sympathetic or to undertake specific operations or campaigns of terrorism on commission from client groups or governments.

Nations or groups unable or unwilling to mount a serious challenge on the battlefield may employ freelance terrorist groups or adopt terrorist tactics as a means of surrogate warfare against their opponents. The potential also exists for the emergence of an international band of terrorists that would carry out operations against the more developed nations of the world on behalf of a constituency of poor Third World nations.

Thanks to new vulnerabilities and recent developments in explosives, small arms, and sophisticated man-portable weapons, power, defined in its most primitive sense simply as the capacity to disrupt and destroy, is descending to smaller and smaller groups. As a result, concepts of national security may have to be redefined; so may concepts of political authority and national sovereignty. Terrorist tactics may produce a greater diffusion of political authority.

National and minority groups will continue to be a potent force. Extremists and separatists are likely to adopt the tactics of terrorism to advance their causes. National governments may in turn be willing to compromise to avoid becoming the target or theater of a terrorist campaign, grant greater local autonomy, or in some cases independence to such groups.

The United Nations General Assembly's recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organization may provide a precedent. Other separatist groups may seek and be granted recognition in the international forum. "Non-States" are likely to become increasingly important international actors. However, as the size of the groups and the need for supportive constituencies decreases, so will the constraints that organization and constituencies impose. More extreme acts may be contemplated by small groups.

Some of the new weapons being developed for military arsenals may find their way into the hands of terrorists who, in turn, may use them, not against the military targets for which they were designed, but against vulnerable civilian targets. The development and deployment of man-portable, precision-guided munitions and their likely acquisition by political extremists represent the most serious new terrorist threat. We probably will see the use of these weapons by terrorists within the next decade.

The news media in general and television in particular will continue to be exploited by terrorists. Greater government controls over the media--undesirable and unlikely in a democracy, voluntary agreements by newspapers and broadcasters not to provide detailed, especially visual, coverage of terrorist incidents--also unlikely, or simply a surfeit of terrorist activity in the world which would result in a decline in its news value--a possibility--could result in less coverage and a diminution of the effectiveness and attractiveness of terrorism.

However, any of these possibilities could also produce a requirement for escalation on the part of the terrorists.

Inherent in modern technology and the complex vital systems that maintain the artificial environments of major population centers are new vulnerabilities. Though the ease with which all large systems can be disrupted is somewhat exaggerated, even partial disruption of some of these systems could cause widespread inconvenience and pose serious dangers to public safety. The greatest vulnerabilities lie in civil aviation, components of certain energy systems--in particular, off-shore oil rigs, liquified natural gas facilities, natural gas pipelines, power transmission lines, and nuclear power facilities--mass communications, and computerized information and management systems.

The threat of nuclear action by terrorists appears to be exaggerated. The primary attraction to terrorists in going nuclear is not that it will enable them to cause extensive casualties or damage--they have that capacity now--but that nuclear action by terrorists will attract widespread attention and cause widespread alarm. We may see low-level actions designed to grab headlines, and we may see extortion based on nuclear threats, but the use of nuclear weapons to kill hundreds or thousands of people remains a remote possibility.

Mass murder appears to be counterproductive and is unlikely to be contemplated by groups capable of making elementary political judgments. It is not a matter of technical obstacles, but rather one of self-imposed constraints. History suggests that there are upper limits to terrorism, although the ceiling may be rising. Mass murder could, however, be attractive to the lunatic fringe and small bands of political extremists who have no real constituencies to concern themselves with. While mass murder seems an unlikely terrorist tactic, we may be faced with mass hostage situations in which there is considerable uncertainty about the capabilities and willingness of the authors of the threat to carry out their threatened action. There will be moments of alarm.

The growing problem of terrorism will continue to require a major diversion of resources to internal security functions. The protection of political leaders and diplomats, airports, nuclear facilities, and other vital systems will demand increasing manpower and money. Armies and police departments will be compelled

to develop specialized units to meet new terrorist threats. Police forces will require heavier armaments to meet the increased firepower possessed by political extremists. The development of special weapons and tactics (SWAT) teams may be seen as the predecessors of militarized antiterrorist units.

In response to the terrorist threat, nations individually will attempt to impose greater social controls on their citizens. We will see the development of new technologies of social control. Depending on perceptions of the terrorist threat, these controls may be tolerated, even supported by a frightened population. There will be clashes between increased social controls and individual liberties.

If terrorism continues, governments are likely to grow tougher, less yielding to terrorist demands and less likely to grant political asylum. There may be limited cooperation between governments against certain types of terrorism, but unless terrorists carry out truly horrendous acts, formal international cooperation against them is likely to remain minimal.

Confronted with terrorist violence emanating from abroad, and frustrated by the lack of international cooperation, national governments are more likely to take direct military action, overt and covert, against terrorists and the nations that support them. As a result of international terrorism and counter-terrorism, changes will be made in the laws of land warfare.

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