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## Terrorism Remains a Global Issue

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*Among the issues directly affecting people everywhere, terrorism remains a high priority item on the U.S. foreign policy agenda.*

Today's world is still a dangerous place.

The fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War did not bring forth the "End of History" or a new dawn of world peace and harmony. Instead, this change brought into sharper focus serious global problems and threats.

You've heard the list before: ethnic conflict, weapons proliferation, environmental degradation, untenable population growth, international crime, and terrorism.

All these global issues directly affect our well being and security. They therefore have high priority in the foreign policy agenda of the Clinton Administration.

Perhaps none of these issues has caused Americans more anxiety than terrorism.

Terrorism, which we define as politically motivated violence against non-combatants, is an ancient evil, and American interests have been targeted by terrorists abroad for years. But now, the threat seems to loom larger, perhaps because the threat of conventional war against the United States has declined, and because we've been struck by two major terrorist acts at home — the World Trade Center and Oklahoma City bombings. Also the two bombings of U.S. forces in Saudi Arabia and the pipe bomb at the Atlanta Olympics.

It is a paradox that although terrorism kills relatively few people, compared to other forms of violence, and although the statistical probability of any of us



being killed by terrorists is minuscule, we are preoccupied by terrorism, and governments pay extraordinary attention to combating it. Why?

First, terrorism provokes deep fear and insecurity — more than other forms of violence. Terrorists strike innocent civilians, often randomly, and without warning. We think we can protect ourselves against other forms of violence, but we feel defenseless against terrorists.

Terrorists know this, and they seek to use intimidation to impose their political or other agendas. Killing is only a means to that end. By creating fear and panic, terrorists try to extort concessions or to weaken and discredit governments by showing they are unable to protect their citizens.

Terrorism is also used as low-cost strategic warfare, sometimes by rogue states using surrogates, and sometimes by groups motivated by ideology, religion, or ethnicity to overthrow governments and change the course of history.

Terrorists also use violence in a less focused way to express protest and rage, to advance messianic and fanatic religious agendas, and for even more obscure pathological reasons.

One can argue that terrorism has failed historically as a strategic weapon. But that's no cause for comfort. There is no doubt that it has caused great damage to American interests and those of our friends around the world. For example, terrorism has prolonged the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the North Ireland conflict for decades. Real progress toward peace making in these struggles has come only when terrorism has been renounced and its practitioners marginalized.

Terrorism also has a high economic cost. The U.S. government alone spends about \$5,000 million a year to guard against terrorism, at home and abroad, and these costs will doubtless rise. Terrorism can also cripple entire economies. For example, in Egypt, by targeting a few tourists, terrorists almost shut down the vitally important tourist industry for many months.

Technology has also added to the terrorist threat. In 1605, the terrorist Guy Fawkes planted 29 barrels of explosives in a plot to blow up King James and the British Parliament. Today, a small explosive device in a purse could achieve the same effect. And bomb making recipes are readily available on the Internet.

Terrorists use computers, cellular phones, and encryption software to evade detection, and they have sophisticated means for forging passports and documents. Ramzi Ahmed Yousef and his gang, convicted for a plot to blow up 12 U.S. airliners over the Pacific, used all these tools.

Even more dangerous is the specter that terrorists will turn to materials of mass destruction — chemical, biological, or nuclear — to multiply casualties far beyond traditional levels. The sarin gas attack in the Tokyo subway in 1995 by Aum Shinrikyo, the apocalyptic Japanese sect, showed that the threat of chemical terrorism is now a reality.

And the willingness of some fanatic or crazed terrorists to commit suicide while carrying out attacks makes terrorists using weapons of mass destruction an even more sinister threat.

Finally, terrorism today is far more devastating than in the past because of the mass media. No story plays better, or longer, than a terrorist attack. Today's media, especially television, multiply the fear effect of terrorism by vividly conveying its horror. And this greatly increases our collective sense of vulnerability. The terrorists, of course, know this. And they seek to exploit media coverage to put us and our governments on the psychological defensive.

What about the current trend in terrorism? Who are today's terrorists? And what is the U.S. government doing to combat them and put them on the defensive, where they belong?

First, the trend. There is good news and bad. The actual number of international terrorist incidents

has declined in recent years, from a high of 665 in 1987 to an average between three and four hundred in recent years.

#### **There are various reasons for this positive trend:**

- ❑ The Soviet Union and almost all of the many revolutionary terrorist groups it supported are now history.
- ❑ After 50 years of war and terrorism, Arabs and Palestinians are struggling for peace. The PLO has renounced terrorism, and most Arab states have also condemned it unequivocally.
- ❑ Only a few rogue states continue to sponsor or support terrorism.
- ❑ There is a growing international consensus today that killing innocents for political reasons is absolutely unacceptable, whatever the motivation or cause.
- ❑ And there is a corresponding willingness by the majority of states to crack down on terrorists by all means available, especially by using the law to combat terrorism.

#### **But there is also a negative side of the ledger.**

- ❑ Notwithstanding the commitment of the Palestinian and Arab mainstream to peace in the Middle East, groups like Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad in 1995 carried out a vicious rear guard campaign of bombings in Israel in an effort to defeat the peace process.
- ❑ And an Israeli terrorist assassinated Prime Minister Rabin for the same purpose.
- ❑ Iran, notwithstanding U.S. efforts to contain it through sanctions, continues to use terrorism as a weapon of foreign policy to kill dissidents and disrupt the peace process.
- ❑ Libya, although U.N. sanctions have curtailed its terrorism abroad, still defies the U.N.'s mandate to deliver two suspects in the bombing of Pan Am 103 at Lockerbie to a British or U.S. court for trial.
- ❑ Exploitation of religion by terrorists may also be on the upsurge. In previous decades, most terrorist groups were secular, but more and more terrorists

today claim to act on behalf of religion, especially Islam. Some are part of organized groups such as Hamas, the Lebanese Hizballah, and the Egyptian Gamaat. Others are ad hoc Islamic elements, such as Ramzi Ahmed Yousef's gang, many of whom received training in Afghanistan.

❑ Exploitation of religion for political purposes, and violence, is an age-old phenomenon. It is important to remember that all religions have produced deviant and dangerous fringe groups, and Islam, like Christianity and Judaism, preaches peace and non-violence. Terrorists who claim to speak for Islam are abusing their faith, and they are increasingly condemned throughout the Islamic world.

❑ Domestic terrorism — terrorism that does not involve the citizens or territory of more than one state — has waxed and waned over time. Today it seems to be waxing, for example, in South Asia.

❑ Messianic cults, like the Japanese Aum Shinrikyo, who use terrorism to fulfill their visions of Armageddon, could also be a growing threat. They are all the more dangerous when they have access to money and technology.

### **The United States is doing a lot to combat terrorism.**

❑ Our policy is to seek out relentlessly and punish terrorists wherever they may be, using the combined assets of U.S. law enforcement, diplomacy, and intelligence. Our ability to bring to justice the World Trade Center terrorists, the conspirators, including Sheik Abdul Rahman, who planned to blow up New York's Holland tunnel, the U.N. and federal buildings in New York, and the gang who plotted to blow up U.S. airliners over the Pacific, are major success stories.

We make no concessions to terrorists. We refuse to bow to demands for political concessions or ransom.

❑ We designate states who sponsor terrorism, impose economic sanctions, and ask our friends to do likewise. In a speech in Stuttgart, directed to our European allies, Secretary of State Christopher said "working together against state sponsors of

terrorism is an imperative, not an option....Our principled commitment to free trade simply does not oblige us to do business with aggressive tyrannies like Iran and Libya. We must join forces on effective multilateral measures to deny these rogue regimes the resources they crave."

❑ The United States stresses the rule of law in dealing with terrorists, and insists that terrorism is an unmitigated crime, whatever its motives or causes. By strengthening U.S. laws against terrorism, and aggressively promoting international treaties and conventions against terror, of which there are now 10, we have led a worldwide trend to use the law as our most effective tool against terrorists.

### **Also:**

❑ We have superb military assets for use, when in rare cases the situation demands.

❑ Since terrorists operate in the dark, we are investing heavily in the collection and analysis of intelligence.

❑ The Department of State's Bureau of Diplomatic Security has trained over 18,000 foreign government officials from over 80 countries in counterterrorism techniques and aviation security through our Anti-Terrorism Assistance Program.

❑ We have a strong program of research and development in counterterrorism technology, especially in explosives detection.

❑ And finally, cooperation with other states is indispensable to stop terrorists, as terrorism becomes increasingly transnational. For this reason, President Clinton has given high priority to counterterrorism in our diplomatic agenda. We consult with dozens of governments annually, and we promote multilateral action, such as the Sharm el-Sheik Peacemaking Summit and follow-up counterterrorism meetings in Washington, and the G-7 ministerial conference on terrorism in Paris.

We can be proud of the successes we've achieved, using these policies and tools. But we can't be complacent, since terrorism is a dynamic, moving target.