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Fact Sheet

Office of the Spokesman

Washington, DC

April 28, 2006

Fact Sheet on Country Reports on Terrorism 2005

The "Country Reports on Terrorism 2005" offers a strategic assessment of trends in international terrorism and the nature of the terrorist threat, as well as chapters examining terrorist safe havens, our efforts to build international will and capacity, and the nexus between weapons of mass destruction and terrorism. Under the new statutory requirements, the report also includes an annex of statistical information from the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) that addresses the victims of terrorism.

General Trends

- Micro-actors. Increasingly, small autonomous cells and individuals drawing on advanced technologies and the tools of globalization combined with the motivation to commit a terrorist act now represent "micro-actors" who are extremely difficult to detect or counter.
- Sophistication. Many terrorists worldwide moved to improve their sophistication in exploiting the global interchange of information, finance, and ideas. They also improved their technological ability across many areas of operational planning, communications, targeting, and propaganda.
- Overlap with transnational crime. In some cases, terrorists used the same networks used by transnational criminal groups, exploiting the overlap with illicit organizational networks to improve mobility, build support for their terrorist agenda, and avoid detection.

Terrorist Safe Havens

- Terrorist safe havens worldwide tend to exist astride international borders or in regions where ineffective governance facilitates their presence, such as Afghanistan's border regions, Somalia, the Triborder region of South America, and the Celebes (Sulawesi) Sea in Southeast Asia.
- Denying safe havens to terrorists requires a regional approach based on coordinated action by the United States working with partner governments who in turn work with regional partners, and by regional and multilateral institutions.

- Terrorists exploit corruption, poverty, a lack of civic institutions and social services, and the perception that law enforcement and legal systems are biased or brutal to create allies or to generate a permissive operating environment.
- Efforts to build partner capacity and encourage states to cooperate more effectively with each other at the regional level are essential to denying terrorists safe haven.

Iraq

- We have consistently said that Iraq is a central front in the global war on terror.
- While Iraq may now be the principal battleground, al-Qaida's principal aim remains the same -- to attack the United States. Operation Iraqi Freedom has not changed that.
- Iraq is not the safe-haven for terrorism that Afghanistan was before September 11.

Conclusions

- Al-Qaida is not the organization it was four years ago. International efforts have largely succeeded in denying the group its Afghan safe-haven, disrupting its operations, and capturing or killing many of the men in leadership positions.
- Al-Qaida remains adaptive and resilient, however, and important members of its core cadre are still alive. The group increasingly emphasizes ideological and propaganda activity, which has led to cooperation by al-Qaida in Iraq (led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi) with al-Qaida affiliates around the globe.
- In 2005, there was an increase in suicide bombings. The July 7 London bombing was the first such attack in Europe (three of the four terrorists were second-generation British citizens of South Asian descent); we also noted a marked increase in suicide bombings in Afghanistan.
- In 2005, we witnessed the growth of strategically significant networks that support the flow of foreign terrorists to Iraq.
- Overall, we are still in the first phase of a potentially long war. Terrorists' proven ability to adapt means it is likely that we will face a resilient enemy for years to come.

A Broader Definition of Terrorism

- For this year's report, in order to meet new Congressional requirements, a broader statutory definition of terrorism was comprehensively applied to include not just acts of international terrorism, but all acts of terrorism. As a result, there was a sharp rise in the number of terrorist incidents counted by the NCTC for 2005.
- Because the methodology has changed, there is no baseline for useful comparisons between 2005 and 2004 or with any previous years. An incident count alone does not provide a complete picture.
- Approximately one-half of the incidents in the NCTC database involved no loss of life. An attack that damages a pipeline and a car bomb attack that kills 100 civilians both count as one incident in the database.
- An increase in terrorist incidents in Iraq accounted for approximately one third of all incidents in 2005, and more than half of all deaths from terrorism.
- In 2005, 56 Americans lost their lives in acts of international terrorism, and of that number, 47 of the fatalities occurred in Iraq.

2006/427

Released on April 28, 2006



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