

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE UNITED STATES
USE OF MILITARY FORCE
AGAINST TERRORISM**

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ABSTRACT

Terrorism is a significant threat to U.S. national interests. To counter this threat U.S. policymakers have used a variety of options over the past thirty years, including political-diplomatic measures, economic sanctions, a sustained law enforcement effort, and the periodic use of military force. Of all the tools available to the U.S. in its struggle against terrorism, none has been as controversial as military force, due to the potential for deaths to innocent civilians and other collateral damage, casualties to U.S. servicemen, and other potential political risks. Mindful of these risks, this paper examines the utility of using military force against terrorism based on an analysis of three case studies: U.S. air strikes against Libya in 1986, U.S. cruise missile strike against Iraq in 1993, and cruise missile strikes against Sudan and Afghanistan in 1998. This analysis examines the military, political, and strategic results from each of the cases, and based on this analysis, concludes that military force is an essential and productive component of the U.S. strategy to contain terrorism.

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Introduction

Over the past thirty years international state-sponsored terrorism has emerged as a significant threat to the United States (U.S.). Although the number of terrorist acts varies from year to year, terrorism remains a major concern to U.S. policymakers. The 1998 bombings of two U.S. embassies in Africa resulting in over 200 deaths served to remind the American public that terrorism remains a real threat in an increasingly unstable world.

Each American president since Jimmy Carter has faced at least one major foreign policy crisis related to terrorism. Like it or not, policymakers are forced to recognize that terrorism has potential to erode U.S. influence and threaten U.S. national interests. In fact, terrorism by its very nature is recognized as a significant threat to the fundamental principles of U.S. national interest best expressed in the 1998 White House National Security Strategy Document:

The goal of the national security strategy is to ensure the protection of our nation's fundamental and enduring needs: protect the lives and safety of Americans, maintain the sovereignty of the United States with its values, institutions and territory intact, and promote the prosperity and well being of the nation and its people. . . . We seek to create a stable, peaceful international security environment in which our nation, citizens and interests are not threatened.¹

Reacting to the emergence of international terrorism during the past three decades, the United States has struggled to find effective ways of dealing with various terrorist groups and the states that support their activities. Both the complexity and diversity of the numerous players in the terrorist world have stymied this effort. As terrorist groups emerge, each with a unique set of goals, agendas and tactics, U.S. leadership has been forced to consider a wide range of options in an overall complex, if only marginally effective, struggle against terrorism. Indeed, frustrations exist because despite a number of attempts across a wide range of options, including political-

diplomatic pressure, economic sanctions, military strikes and rigorous law enforcement efforts, terrorism continues to threaten U.S. interests.

Two facts have become clear from this struggle against terrorism over the last three decades. First, although there is little possibility that the U.S. can totally eliminate the threat of terrorism, there is a realization that it is essential to develop strategies to minimize the influence of terrorism over the U.S. and its interests. Secondly, there is recognition that the fight against terrorism requires flexibility, including sometimes simultaneous or concurrent action across a wide range of options.²

Of all the tools used by the U.S. in its strategy to contain terrorism, none has been more controversial than the use of military force. Skeptics argue that military force does not deter terrorism and in fact only results in more violence when the terrorist retaliates. Clearly, the risk of deaths to innocent civilians and other collateral damage, casualties to U.S. servicemen, damage to international alliances, and other potential risks that can result from military operations, cause serious concern each time this option is considered.

Despite these risks, this paper will argue that the use of military force is an essential component of the U.S. effort to contain terrorism. This finding is based on an analysis of three case studies: U.S. air strikes in Libya in 1986, U.S. cruise missile strikes in Iraq in 1993, and U.S. cruise missile strikes in Sudan and Afghanistan in 1998. The paper will examine the military, political, and strategic outcomes from each of these strikes to verify specifically what the use of military force did, and did not do, when applied against state-sponsored terrorism. It will establish that, under certain conditions, the political and strategic gains resulting from the use of military force against terrorism justifies continued consideration of this option. These

findings are analyzed in the context of the overall U.S. strategy to contain terrorism and suggest that the use of military force compliments efforts in the political, economic, and law enforcement arenas.

As in any case study analysis, questions may arise as to why these three specific cases were selected for this study. In reality there are few situations in which the United States has opted to use military force to counter terrorism, so the field of potential cases is limited. Additionally, these three specific cases were selected because they represent three of the most significant terrorist acts committed against U.S. interests over the past thirty years. The Iraqi case is somewhat problematic because, although the U.S. military action was in response to Iraqi terrorism, it can also be viewed as part of the larger on-going confrontation between the U.S. and Iraq that continues to be played out since the Gulf War. Furthermore, the Sudan and Afghanistan strikes are problematic because this paper is being written less than a year after the strikes were conducted, and the long-term results are yet to unfold. Despite these limitations, however, these three case studies provide the clearest examples currently available of direct U.S. application of military force against terrorism and the associated results.

There is clear evidence that the use of military force is not the appropriate response to every terrorist problem and is generally an option of last resort. Based on these case studies however, there is evidence that military force can provide leverage against terrorist groups and supports U.S. national interests. As such, this paper will argue that military force should continue to be an option available to U.S. policymakers in the war against terrorism.

The Threat of State-Sponsored Terrorism to the United States

Before beginning the detailed analysis of the three case studies, it is important to establish certain definitions and assumptions that serve as fundamentals for this paper. As a starting point, this chapter will describe the nature of the terrorist threat to the United States and why the U.S. experience and response to terrorism necessarily differs from that of other countries, such as Israel. These fundamentals must be established at the outset and serve as a foundation, if this analysis is to be meaningful. In short, in order to evaluate the impact and appropriateness of a specific U.S. option designed to fight terrorism, one must first understand how terrorism threatens U.S. interests.

The study of terrorism is made difficult by the realization that there are hundreds of terrorist groups, each with unique characteristics, tactics, and goals. The word *terrorism* is itself extremely broad and can be used to explain a wide range of activities and groups. However, as there are several studies that attempt to define terrorism,¹ this paper will not deal with the details of these definitions, although they are helpful in gaining an understanding of terrorism in a broader sense. For simplicity's sake, this paper focuses specifically on state-sponsored terrorism, which, from an operational perspective, derives its motivation from *political or ideological* causes, rather than *economic incentives*.

What is the real impact of terrorism on the United States? What is the danger of terrorism to Americans and U.S. national interests? If you ask the average American about the threat of terrorism, it would likely conjure up images of the violent destruction and loss of life resulting from the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York or the 1998 bombings of two U.S. embassies in Africa. According to statistics maintained by the U.S. Department of

State during the twenty-year period from 1978 to 1997, there were 9,552 international terrorist incidents against U.S. targets or an average of 478 incidents per year.²

Despite the apparent significance of these numbers and the horrifying images of terrorist violence imprinted on the national conscience, the danger from terrorism is not a *physical* one. American citizens and property, both in the United States and abroad, are relatively safe and secure, and the average U.S. citizen does not live with the day-to-day fear that he or she will be a victim of some random act of terrorism. Similarly, although the number of terrorist acts varies from year to year, there are no indications of a proliferation of terrorism. In fact, based on empirical analysis, there has been a general reduction in the number of yearly international terrorist incidents since the late 1980s.³ Furthermore, despite the intense personal loss experienced by individual victims, when viewed from a larger societal context, it is clear that terrorism is not a major threat to the physical safety of the American public as compared to other realities of everyday life. For example, from 1992 through 1997, fifty-five Americans were killed by terrorism,⁴ while 17,461 Americans who were killed in alcohol-related traffic accidents in 1993 alone.⁵ Likewise, the average number of Americans killed *annually* due to terrorism, is less than those killed *weekly* in a single city (i.e., New York) due to criminal homicide.⁶ On average, an American citizen is more likely to be struck by lightning than be a victim of terrorism.⁷

Although terrorism is only a minimal physical threat to Americans, it is a danger in other important ways. At its basic level, terrorism attempts to use violence and intimidation to gain influence, create fear, and cause citizens to feel vulnerable. As a result, U.S. citizens are often subject to terrorism merely because of what America or American values represent.

Terrorism threatens U.S. interests in two fundamental ways. First, it acts as a means for an extremist group to further political objectives or goals that are generally counter to U.S. national interests. Phillip Heymann, a well-known expert on the subject, vividly describes the motives of terrorism as follows:

Terrorism is generally a calculated move in a political game. When the targets of one player, the terrorist group, are American citizens, it is generally because the terrorists intend to force the United States government into becoming the other player. The drama, the tragedy, the startling vividness of the memories—in short, the terror—are generally the calculated results of carefully selected steps intended to affect domestic or international politics. The effort may be to reduce the credibility of a government or to change particular policies or to strengthen a rival movement. In each case, the objective is political.⁸

In this sense, terrorism is an attempt to coerce the U.S. into taking actions that benefit the terrorist and are not in the best interests of the American people. The net result is a loss of U.S. influence and erosion of its national interests.

Secondly, beyond the motive of accomplishing political objectives, terrorism also attempts to shake the confidence of the American people, by making the U.S. government appear weak, ineffective, and unable to protect its citizens. Left unchecked, terrorism has the potential to erode the confidence in government that is essential to everyday peace and stability. Walter Laqueur, another well-known expert on terrorism, straightforwardly describes this aspect of terrorism by saying:

The impact of terrorism is measured not only in the number of its victims. Terrorism is an attempt to destabilize democratic societies and to show that their governments are impotent.⁹

Viewed from this perspective, terrorism is a dangerous psychological and political threat to U.S. society. Terrorism threatens America's ability to act in its own self-interest. As Phillip Heymann suggests:

The simple fact is that a handful of people can use murder, arson, and kidnapping to create public concerns strong enough and widely enough held to affect the policies and politics of the United States in ways totally disproportionate to their numbers, but far less because of the damage they can actually impose than because of its psychological, political, and social effects.¹⁰

The threat of terrorism is of particular concern to U.S. policymakers because of America's leadership role in the world. Terrorist groups often threaten U.S. targets because of its leadership role, and this role in turn demands that the United States take action to not only ensure that terrorism does not threaten peace and security at home, but on a broader international scale, as well.

It is in this sense that terrorism is a very real threat to the United States. If terrorist groups are successful in gaining influence through intimidation, then the U.S. government is not free to protect its citizens or pursue its national interests. If successful, terrorism minimizes U.S. credibility and influence. By its very nature, therefore, terrorism threatens the principles that are the bedrock of U.S. national security.

Based on this understanding of how terrorism threatens the U.S., it is now possible to focus on the appropriateness of *one* of the many elements of the U.S. terrorism containment strategy: the use of military force. From a general sense, in any academic study of the use of force against terrorism there is a natural inclination to turn to the Israeli example. Israel has aggressively used military force as a tool against terrorism throughout its history, and no other nation has used this option to a greater degree or frequency. However, this paper will not focus on the Israeli experience for several reasons. First, the nature and extent of the terrorist threat to Israeli citizens are significantly different than for Americans. For historical and religious reasons, Israel faces an on-going terrorist threat, and the extremity of this threat forces them to

take a more severe and forceful approach to terrorism. Secondly, the nature of the terrorist threat to Israel comes from a limited number of groups from a relatively small geographic area; while the U.S., on the other hand, faces varied terrorist threats from a large number of different groups across a wide geographical spectrum. Thirdly, from a psychological perspective, Israel's response to terrorism is shaped from the realization that Israel is surrounded by hostile nations and a terrorist threat exists across each of its borders with an Arab neighbor. As compared to Israel, the U.S. faces a terrorist threat that is neither as proximate nor as threatening to its very existence as a nation-state. Finally, America's response to terrorism is shaped by its role as a superpower. The United States has a responsibility, through its role as a world superpower, in maintaining international peace and security that is absent in the Israeli experience. For these reasons, the Israeli model for dealing with terrorism has little direct applicability to the United States. As a result, this paper looks at the option of military force against terrorism from strictly an American experience and context.

At its most basic level then, terrorism threatens United States national interests and principles. To be successful in containing terrorism, U.S. policymakers must develop options that minimize the influence and leverage of terrorism over U.S. national interests. The war against terrorism is an on-going conflict that may never be won in the conventional sense. History suggests, however, that it is a battle that must be fought if U.S. national interests are to be preserved. The struggle against terrorism can only be won with steady pressure and in small steps. Paul Bremer, the former head of the U.S. Office for Combating Terrorism, may have expressed it best when he said:

This is a game of drag bunts and stolen bases, not home runs. It is a game of constant pressure, not dramatic breakthroughs. It is a struggle that must be borne as a price of doing business in the world today. There will be no treaties of unconditional surrender

and probably no treaties at all. The best laid diplomatic, economic, legal and even military plans will only contain terrorism, not defeat it.¹¹

Guided by these fundamentals, this paper will examine terrorism in the three case studies.

Given the threat of terrorism to U.S. national interests, this analysis will attempt to establish the utility of using the most controversial option available to U.S. policymakers in the war against terrorism, the use of military force.

Case Study One: The U.S. Air Strike Against Libya in 1986

Events Leading Up to the Strike

Colonel Muammar Qaddafi rose to power in Libya through a coup overthrowing the existing monarch, King Idris, in September 1969. Almost from the beginning Qaddafi extended support to any terrorist or guerilla group across the globe that was anti-West or anti-American. Throughout the 1970s Qaddafi sponsored terrorists as diverse as the infamous "Carlos," the Red Brigades of Italy, the Red Army of Germany, Direct Action of France, FP-25 of Portugal, neo-Nazi activists in Spain and right-wing terrorists in Italy and Germany.¹ Beyond the support extended to terrorist organizations outside Libya, Qaddafi built a highly effective terrorist organization within his country. This organization was responsible for a growing number of international terrorist acts including the 1973 attack on the U.S. Information Service Installation at the American consulate in Morocco and the U.S. embassy seizure in Khartoum, Sudan in which two Americans were killed.²

By the early 1980s Qaddafi's terrorist activity reached new heights, and he provided weapons, money, training, and support to almost any group that was anti-West. Of particular concern to U.S. policymakers, Qaddafi developed ties with the most extreme and violent terrorist groups of the day, including Abu Nidal, Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad, and state-terrorist organizations in Syria and Iran.³

By the mid-1980s Qaddafi was seen by the Reagan administration as the most significant terrorist threat in the world for three distinct reasons. First there was the threat created by Qaddafi's own Libyan terrorist apparatus. Secondly, Qaddafi contributed to a new and

increasingly more violent wave of international terrorism through his open support (including arms, money, equipment and training) of the most dangerous terrorist groups of the day. Finally, Qaddafi's danger intensified because of his open and violent rhetoric: he brazenly called for attacks on the West and praised even the most brutal acts after they had occurred. Many in the U.S. came to believe that Qaddafi's open advocacy of terrorism encouraged others to turn to violence as a means of achieving their goals and objectives, making terrorism an increasingly used tactic throughout the globe. In a sense, Qaddafi had become both the personification and symbolic leader of an emerging international terrorist threat.

Although the Reagan administration saw international terrorism in general as a major concern, the increasing frequency and violence of the acts promulgated by Middle Eastern groups (in most instances encouraged either directly or indirectly by Qaddafi) took center stage. Three countries—Libya, Syria, and Iran—perpetrated this spiraling wave of violence. Although there was clear evidence that all three were actively involved in terrorism, Iranian and Syrian activities were for the most part limited to the Middle East, while Libyan terror had a more international orientation. Additionally, while the leadership in both Iran and Syria at least tried outwardly to distance themselves from the terrorist label, Qaddafi publicly advocated terrorism. Brian Davis, a leading expert on Qaddafi, describes Libya's leading role as an international terrorist threat as follows:

Libya provided the bulk of funding for the hard-line Palestinian groups, while Syria was comparatively poor and therefore expended far less money on terrorism; the two countries shared the arming and training; Syria played host to the headquarters of most of these groups after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982; and Syrian intelligence apparently tended to work more closely with these groups than did Libyan intelligence, whose technical expertise was no match for that of the Syrians. Libya's contribution to the overall infrastructure of international terrorism was greater than Syria and Iran and possibly of any other country. The Qaddafi regime was the closest thing in existence to a

missionary society for world terrorism; the role of Syria and Iran with terrorism outside the Middle East was much smaller.⁴

By the mid-1980s Qaddafi had openly intensified his sponsorship of terrorism. His involvement in an increasing number of violent acts included bombings, murders, kidnappings and aircraft hijackings. Qaddafi's actions demonstrated a real threat to international stability not only because the numbers of these terrorist acts were increasing, but because the acts also had become increasingly violent. Libyan terrorism became more public, flagrant, extreme, and threatening to international stability. In 1984 personnel inside the Libyan embassy in London fired upon anti-Qaddafi demonstrators killing a policewoman and injuring several others. Later that year, Libyan responsibility was established for the laying of sea mines that damaged nineteen ships in the Red Sea.⁵ These particular incidents are just a few examples of the growing violence and threatening nature of Qaddafi's terrorism.

As the Reagan administration struggled with options on how to deal with Qaddafi, in October 1985 terrorists seized the Mediterranean cruise ship, the *Achille Lauro*. During the incident the terrorists murdered Leon Klinghoffer, a wheelchair-bound sixty-nine-year-old Jewish American, and dumped his body overboard. Although the terrorists belonged to a Palestinian group, there were suggestions of Libyan support.⁶ At the very least, the episode increased the administration's frustrations with the growing Middle Eastern terrorist threat, for which Qaddafi was the self-proclaimed leader.

On 21 December 1985 the American public would witness another example of the growing boldness and brutality of the terrorist threat. On that day, simultaneous attacks by Palestinian extremists with AK-47 assault rifles and grenades at Rome's Leonard Da Vinci Airport and Vienna's Schwechat Airport killed nineteen innocent people, including five

Americans. As described by Brian Davis, the brutality of the attack was particularly vivid to Americans due to the death of a young American girl:

One of the American victims was eleven-year-old Natasha Simpson, who after being blasted to her knees received an additional burst of gunfire aimed directly at her head; she became a symbolic martyr of terrorism. ... Vivid television footage showed corpses and huge pools of the victim's blood on the airport floors, and President Reagan and the American people were enraged.⁷

Following the incident, Libya's state news agency praised the attacks. The U.S. government gathered information which, although it has never made fully public, led it to believe that Libya may have sponsored the attack.⁸

The American people were becoming increasingly convinced that Qaddafi's terrorism demanded a response. Following the airport attacks, the Reagan administration considered military options against Libya, but put military strikes on hold, hoping to generate European support for joint economic sanctions and political initiatives. The U.S. government began by freezing one billion dollars in Libyan assets in the United States. Further, Deputy Secretary of State John Whitehead was sent to Europe to garner support for a set of economic actions, including a reduction in European purchases of Libyan oil and a halt in the sale of military equipment to Libya. His mission was unsuccessful in obtaining European support for collective economic or political action, however.⁹

Unable to generate European support for political or economic measures against Qaddafi, the Reagan administration was running out of options. In March 1986, a huge U.S. naval task force, including the aircraft carriers *America*, *Saratoga*, and *Coral Sea*, as well as twenty-seven additional ships, was sent to the Mediterranean in hopes of intimidating Qaddafi and to demonstrate U.S. resolve against terrorism. During a mission named Operation *Prairie Fire*,

U.S. naval forces entered the Gulf of Sidra. After U.S. aircraft closed the coast, they were fired on by Libyan SA-5 missiles. When U.S. aircraft were illuminated several hours later by the same missile fire control radar, two navy A-7 aircraft fired HARM missiles at the radar site and the emissions ceased. Later that evening, two Libyan patrol boats were destroyed and one damaged as they closed an U.S. Surface Action Group operating in the Gulf of Sidra.¹⁰ There were no more aggressive moves by Libyan military forces and the U.S. fleet withdrew from the Gulf of Sidra without any damage to its forces. Tensions between Libya and the United States were at an all-time high.

The presence of the U.S. armada in the Gulf of Sidra had done little to intimidate Qaddafi. Following the incident with U.S. naval forces, Qaddafi sent messages to his “People’s Bureaus” (i.e., embassies) in East Berlin, Paris, Rome, Madrid and other European capitals, calling for terrorist acts against American targets.¹¹ Less than two weeks later, on 5 April 1985, the La Belle Discotheque in Berlin was bombed, killing two American soldiers and a Turkish woman. There were 229 additional casualties, including seventy-nine Americans, most of whom were also U.S. soldiers. Immediately, independent communication intercepts by U.S., British, and German intelligence groups confirmed Libyan sponsorship of the bombings.¹²

The Reagan administration decided that Qaddafi’s action demanded a response. Having been unable to generate the European support necessary to implement meaningful economic or political sanctions against Libya, President Reagan turned to what he deemed his only remaining option available: unilateral military strikes.

Military Strike

Nine days after the La Belle Disco bombing, U.S. military forces conducted Operation *El Dorado Canyon*, consisting of a night air strike against five individual targets in Libya. Eighteen U.S. Air Force (USAF) F-111 aircraft from the 48th Tactical Fighter Wing in Lakenheath, England bombed three targets in Tripoli, while twenty-six Navy and Marine Corps (USN) aircraft from the carriers *Coral Sea* and *America*, operating in the Mediterranean, simultaneously struck two targets in Benghazi.

The USAF F-111 aircraft, flying 2,500 miles from their base in England, had been tasked with three targets in downtown Tripoli: the Azziziyah Military Barracks, the Sidi Balal Terrorist Training Camp at Tripoli harbor, and the military section of the Tripoli Airport. These targets were selected because of their involvement with Qaddafi's terrorist organization.¹³ The aircraft arrived over Tripoli in the early hours of 14 April with nine aircraft tasked against Azziziyah, six against the airport, and three against Sidi Balal.¹⁴ Although the raid initially caught the Libyan military by surprise, the Libyan surface-to-air missile (SAM) and anti-aircraft fire increased as the raid progressed.

At the same time, carrier aircraft attacked their targets at Benghazi. Seven A-6 bombers attacked military targets at the Benin Airport, while another seven dropped ordnance on the Jamahiriyah Military Barracks.¹⁵

Given the complexity of the military mission, including the precise coordination achieved between USN and USAF forces, the extreme ranges flown by the F-111s (this was the longest combat mission in the history of military aviation in terms of both time and distance),¹⁶ and

completion of precise air strikes at night against a substantial Libyan air defense system, *El Dorado Canyon* stands as a testimony to the capabilities of the U.S. military. From a strategic perspective, however, based on the actual level of damage to the five targets, the strike was only marginally successful.

In Tripoli, all three targets were hit, but the level of damage achieved was less than anticipated and many precise aimpoints were left entirely undamaged. Many of the planes suffered equipment or navigation problems, and only two of the nine planes that flew against Azziziyah actually delivered ordnance.¹⁷ Colonel Robert Venkus, the Deputy Wing Commander for the 48th Tactical Wing, suggested that only four of the eighteen aircraft actually hit their assigned targets.¹⁸ Additionally, one of the aircraft was lost (presumably shot down) during the raid and both crewmen were killed.

Results at Benghazi were only slightly better. Although both targets were hit, the amount of damage was also below expectations. The Jamahiriyah Barracks was heavily damaged and many of the targets at the Benina Airfield were damaged,¹⁹ however, as in Tripoli, buildings that were not on the target list were hit and many of the aircraft did not deliver their weapons as planned. Rear Admiral Breast, Commander of the *Coral Sea* Battle Group, speculated that only about 10% of the assigned aircraft actually got weapons on target.²⁰

The disappointment in the military effectiveness of the strikes was deepened by the collateral damage they caused. In the Benghazi region, bombs fell on a gas station and a dispensary, killing innocent civilians. At Jamahiriyah, a warehouse that was not on the target list was destroyed. The collateral damage in Tripoli was substantial. Bombs dropped in the city's Bin Ashur region damaged the French embassy and numerous other structures. Although reports from

different sources varied, the raids killed approximately thirty-seven and injured ninety-three, most of whom were civilians.²¹

The Libyan regime wasted no time in using the collateral damage to generate sympathy and encourage condemnation of the United States. Within hours of the strike, foreign journalists were taken to the scene of the damage and to hospitals to witness the death and destruction caused to innocent civilians by the strike.²² These unintended human costs would serve as a major justification for those who would later criticize Reagan's decision to use the military option against the Qaddafi regime.

Despite some of the raid's disappointing results, it did appear to have had a deep personal impact on Qaddafi, who is believed to have been in the Azziziyah compound as the bombs were falling. Although Qaddafi himself was not injured, his adopted fifteen-month old daughter was killed and two of his sons were seriously injured.²³ Additionally, Qaddafi's behavior appeared distracted for a period of time following the strikes, with few public appearances and a considerable reduction in terrorist rhetoric. Robert Venkus described this change in behavior as follows:

The latter aspect of Qaddafi's life in Tripoli had been in evidence as soon as the bombs stopped falling on April 15. Colonel Qaddafi had been seen only fleetingly in the weeks afterward, and even then only in controlled situations. He canceled public appearances and, to all intents and purposes, seemed to vanish into the desert for days at a time. According to some observers who saw him after the mission, he seemed extremely quiet, distracted, and even "unhinged." No Western reporter was granted an interview until over two months had passed.²⁴

The Results

With an understanding of the events leading up to and during *El Dorado Canyon*, it is now possible to examine the long-term results of the military strike. The *El Dorado Canyon* example is

perhaps the most valuable of the three case studies, because it provides the longest vista of time for discerning the long-term effects of military strikes against terrorism.

The first and perhaps most important outcome of the U.S. military action was that it left Qaddafi weak, vulnerable, isolated and less able to engage in terrorism. After almost ten years of brazen violence and outspoken bluster, Qaddafi's image as the most feared and powerful adherent of international terrorism was transformed almost overnight. The strike exposed Qaddafi's weakness at home and eroded his influence on the world stage. No longer viewed as an omnipotent terrorist to be feared or respected, Qaddafi would never again wield the international power and influence that he did prior to the strike. Additionally, the U.S. military action put Qaddafi's terrorist apparatus on the defensive, rendering it less able to focus on new terrorist activities.

Qaddafi's weakness and isolation was manifest in many ways. In Libya, the strike did little to enhance his power or popularity and there is no evidence that the bombing caused the Libyan people to rally around their leader in the face of the U.S. military action. Rather, in the months following the raid, many Libyans began to openly question Qaddafi's authority for the first time. There were also reports that force had to be used to quell rebellious Libyan military units. Although none of these internal military uprisings resulted in Qaddafi's overthrow, it was clear that Qaddafi's hold over both the military and intelligence establishments had been weakened in the aftermath of the strike.²⁵

Colonel Qaddafi's isolation on the international scene was even more significant. Rather than enhancing his standing in the Arab world as a hero, there was little public support for him from Arab capitals. The evidence suggests that most moderate Arab nations had tired of Qaddafi's extremist views and campaign of terror. The U.S. military strike exposed a weakness in Qaddafi

that convinced these nations that it was not only “safe,” but also prudent, to quietly distance themselves from a Libyan regime committed to terrorism.

In addition, the Soviet Union, previously one of Libya’s closest allies, began to distance itself from Qaddafi’s extremist behavior and the close Libyan-Soviet political and military cooperation that had existed prior to the air raid slowly deteriorated and would never again be as strong. As author Neil Livingstone suggests:

Not only did the raid make clear to Qaddafi the unmistakable fragility of his regime but Libya’s complete isolation. The Soviet Union did not raise a hand to assist its ostensible ally and in fact moved its warships out of Tripoli harbor in advance of the attack so they would not accidentally be hit. Neither Syria or Iran came to Libya’s defense, and the halfhearted clamor of disapproval from the Arab League quickly dissipated.²⁶

By exposing Colonel Qaddafi’s weakness and vulnerability, the U.S. military action left Libya isolated in a way that dramatically reduced both its national influence and credibility, and ultimately weakened the influence of Qaddafi’s terrorist agenda.

A second major result of the air strike was the emergence of new cooperation between America and Europe in support of unified diplomatic and economic measures against Libya. Whether out of a genuine desire to take strong action against Qaddafi’s terrorism or out of fear that failure to cooperate would result in additional U.S. military action, the U.S. air raid encouraged European support for the non-military options against Libya that it had earlier refused.²⁷ As Neil Livingstone summarizes:

In short, something remarkable occurred in Europe in the wake of the U.S. bombing raid: the once circumspect and cautious Europeans were galvanized into taking unilateral as well as concrete cooperative steps against terrorism in general and Libya in particular. Rationalizations and whitewashing aside, there is no explanation for the “born-again” anti-terrorism of the Europeans other than the U.S. raid on Libya and the fear that Washington would take additional unilateral military steps against terrorist and terrorism sponsoring states unless effective cooperative measures short of using force could be found.²⁸

In the political arena, European nations began to take diplomatic steps against Libya, and in the days following the bombing, many, including Germany, Great Britain, Spain and Ireland, placed restrictions on Libyan diplomats and employees of the Libyan People's Bureaus (embassies). In the months following the air raids, over a hundred Libyan diplomats and four hundred Libyan citizens were expelled from Europe.²⁹ The removal of these individuals, who had long been suspected of supporting Libyan terrorist activities throughout Europe, severely hampered the operation and effectiveness of Colonel Qaddafi's international terrorist apparatus.

A newfound willingness to take punitive steps against Qaddafi's terrorist regime also emerged on the economic front, as well. In a reversal of past behavior, many European nations began to distance themselves from Libya economically. Most Western European countries ended airline service with Libya and some took strong steps to reduce trade. Furthermore, during the summer of 1986 a number of European nations began to reduce imports of Libyan oil and cut off financing they had previously extended to that country.³⁰

The impact of these economic and political steps against Libya, stimulated by the U.S. air strike, further weakened and isolated Qaddafi beyond the immediate aftermath of the bombings. In fact, many believe that it was this new level of cooperation with Europe, across a broad spectrum of political, diplomatic and economic fronts, that was to have the most positive impact on the long-term war against terrorism.³¹

A third important result of the U.S. military strike was the restoration of the Americans public's confidence in their government's willingness to take a strong stand against terrorism. The raid was supported in the U.S. with a seventy-seven percent approval rate and staunch support from

Capitol Hill.³² The American public saw Qaddafi as a growing threat and overwhelmingly supported the use of military force against Libya.

Immediate reaction overseas was negative. President Reagan received intense international criticism, particularly from Europe.³³ Europeans opposed the strikes, fearing they would incite an escalation of Qaddafi's terrorism, with the European Community a likely target. However, as time passed and the expected *escalation* in terrorism never developed, European outrage at the aggressive U.S. action waned. In a fundamental sense then, this military strike, despite initial condemnation by the European community, served to reassure the American public by demonstrating U.S. resolve to take strong action against terrorism, without permanent damage to U.S.-European relations.

An analysis of the overall effect of *El Dorado Canyon* would not be complete without some comment on Qaddafi's reaction as a terrorist. Did these military strikes deter or encourage future Libyan terrorism? Even today, almost thirteen years later, this issue is subject to considerable debate.

In general it is extremely difficult to prove how one event (such as a military strike) impacts the actions of a country, when there are multiple influences (i.e., military strikes, diplomatic action and economic sanctions) acting simultaneously. Establishing the cause and effect mechanism in a complex world is extremely problematic. However, before the strikes the conventional wisdom was that military action against Libya would only lead to an increasing number of terrorist acts in reprisal. What in fact happened provides *no support* to this theory.

In short, following the air raid Qaddafi reduced his terrorist activity. Ultimately, he would resume his involvement in terrorism, although in far more covert and less confrontational way.

Libyan involvement in the 1988 bombing of Pan AM flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland and the resulting deaths of all 259 persons aboard and eleven on the ground, was a clear indication that Colonel Qaddafi had not totally abandoned his terrorist agenda. The expanding and public escalation of Libyan terrorism, however, had been broken for the first time in over ten years. Libyan terrorism would occur in the future, but it would never be as threatening or pervasive as it had before the strikes.

In the weeks following the raid there were shootings against U.S. and British citizens in Sudan, Yemen, and Lebanon that were believed to be reprisals for the air strike, and then a sudden and dramatic short-term decline in Libyan terrorism.³⁴ The U.S. State Department reported this result as follows:

Although detectable Libyan involvement in terrorist activity dropped significantly in 1986 and 1987 after the US air raids in April 1986, Qaddafi shows no signs of forsaking terrorism.³⁵

Additionally, the European fear that the strong U.S. action would result in immediate terrorist retaliation never materialized. In fact, Colonel Qaddafi's highly visible role as a leader of world terrorism vanished. One noted expert on terrorism, Tim Zimmerman, described this effect by saying, "Following this immediate rash of terrorist counterattacks, Qaddafi did appear to be quiescent for a few months."³⁶ Authors David Martin and John Walcott described it as, "For three months there was nothing—at least nothing that bore Libyan fingerprints. It was as if Qaddafi had turned off his terror machine."³⁷ Neil Livingstone described a similar effect:

In the immediate aftermath of the raid, U.S. officials braced for Libyan reprisals. However, it soon became clear that the Qaddafi regime was in disarray, if not fighting for its life, and therefore too preoccupied to launch a new wave of terrorist attacks at the United States and Great Britain.³⁸

As suggested earlier, the assertion that the U.S. raids actually reduced Libyan terrorism has not received universal acceptance. While the U.S. State Department and most experts cite empirical evidence that suggests that the air raid did result in a short-term decrease in Libyan terrorism,³⁹ Walter Enders and Todd Sandler challenge this conclusion. Using a complex empirical approach, termed Vector-Autoregression-Intervention Analysis, Enders and Sandler suggest that the strikes actually resulted in an increase in Libyan terrorism. However, the data set used to generate this conclusion is questionable. Specifically, the data in this study included verbal threats as “terrorist acts.” In fact, based on their own findings, Enders and Sandler’s results show that their “cited” increase in terrorism following the U.S. raid was not due to actual acts of terrorism, but from an increased number of verbal threats that they counted as terrorism.⁴⁰ The interpretation of data in this way renders this particular empirical study and its conclusions highly suspect.

Despite the debate over whether the U.S. air strike actually increased or decreased the number of Libyan terrorist acts, a review of the evidence clearly shows that the U.S. military action did not lead to a spiraling tit-for-tat escalation of violence between the U.S. and Libya. The fear and anxiety created by the Libyan terrorist threat ceased to be the paralyzing influence it had been before the strike. In this, the U.S. military action interrupted a decade-long string of escalating violence and removed Qaddafi from his symbolic and influential role as a world terrorist, without triggering a new cycle of violence. As Brian Davis describes it:

Over against the rigid assertion that military force cannot possibly accomplish anything against terrorism, and in fact will only create a cycle of worse violence, it appears that the U.S. attack may have helped break the cycle of accelerating Middle Eastern terrorism dating from 1983.⁴¹

As previously mentioned, in 1988, two years after the U.S. air raid, Libyan agents were responsible for the bombing of Pan AM flight 103. Due to the significance and violence of the Lockerbie bombing, it requires special mention in this analysis. In fact, many argue that this particularly shocking and violent act of terrorism, committed in what most believe to be direct retaliation to the U.S. military strike, provides sufficient proof that the use of military force against Qaddafi was a mistake. It is essential to remember, however, that Qaddafi was a terrorist. Given his history up to the La Belle Disco bombing in 1986, it appears clear that Qaddafi was committed to terrorism and that his violent attacks against innocent civilians would have continued even if the U.S. had *not* responded with military force. One can therefore reasonably conclude that even if the U.S. had not bombed Libya in 1986, Qaddafi's terrorism would have continued, and in all likelihood, would have resulted in other acts of violence and loss of life, equal to the Lockerbie bombing. On balance, given this realization, and when viewed from a broader long-term perspective, there appears to be little merit to the argument that the Pam Am 103 bombing invalidates the U.S. decision to use military force against Libyan terrorism.

One final result from the *El Dorado Canyon* episode that bears mentioning resulted in the area of law enforcement. In August 1997, eleven years after the La Belle Disco bombings, Italian police arrested Abulgasem Eter, a former member of the Libyan Secret Service, in connection with the bombing.⁴² Mr. Eter was subsequently extradited to Germany and placed on trial in November 1997 with four other individuals, including two Germans and two Palestinians, for the 1986 bombing.⁴³ According to the U.S. State Department the trial is expected to last two years.⁴⁴

In summary, *El Dorado Canyon* stands as a significant event in the U.S. war against terrorism. For the first time, U.S. military force was employed in direct retaliation to state-

sponsored terrorism. Despite the only moderate military effectiveness of the strike, the resulting severe collateral damage, and the initial opposition of America's European allies to the U.S. action, Colonel Qaddafi's role as an international terrorist would be forever weakened by the U.S. air strike. The raid left Qaddafi damaged internally, isolated internationally, and less willing to openly encourage international terrorism. Most significantly, the U.S. military action eroded Qaddafi's terrorist agenda and influence, without resulting in a new cycle of terrorism against Americans.

Indeed one of the most significant aspects of *El Dorado Canyon* is that it dispelled many of the commonly held myths regarding the application of military force against terrorism. Most of the negative results predicted by those who opposed the use of military force against Qaddafi never materialized. The U.S. air raid did not make Qaddafi a martyr at home, did not enhance his standing in the Arab world, did not push Libya closer to the Soviets, and did not trigger a new cycle of violence against Americans.⁴⁵ *El Dorado Canyon* damaged Colonel Qaddafi's influence and standing in the world, and, as such, served as a significant and symbolic first step in the U.S. war against terrorism.

Case Study Two: The U.S. Missile Strike Against Iraq in 1993

Events Leading Up to the Strike

The Gulf War left a number of significant unresolved differences between the United States and Iraq. Iraq viewed the U.S. as responsible for the death and destruction inflicted by the coalition. Saddam Hussein remained in power with a great personal hatred for the country that led the coalition that had just defeated him in battle. Likewise, the U.S. continued to view Saddam Hussein as an irrational despot who threatened the security of the entire Gulf Region. The establishment of economic sanctions, a no-fly zone, and a rigorous weapons inspection regimen by the United Nations were viewed by Iraq as primarily U.S. initiatives and further deteriorated relations between the two nations in the years following the war.

It was within this context that the United States and its newly elected president, Bill Clinton, were again faced with the question of how to respond to terrorism. In this instance the terrorist threat was Saddam Hussein's Iraq, and the crisis involved a single highly visible terrorist act, rather than a sustained campaign of terrorism.

In May 1993, just months after Clinton had assumed office, reports began to surface that Iraqi terrorists had plotted to assassinate former President George Bush. The Kuwait government arrested sixteen individuals, including eleven Iraqi nationals, on charges that they had conspired to assassinate President Bush with a car bomb during his visit to Kuwait City on 14 April 1993. Along with the suspects, the Kuwaitis seized two cars with remote controlled devices and several hundred pounds of explosives,¹ and the Kuwait government stated that at least one of the

suspects had confessed to being an officer of the Iraqi Intelligence Service. There was also evidence that the bomb used in the plot was of Iraqi design and origin.²

The Clinton policymakers initially expressed a cautious tone, indicating that they had not yet found direct Iraqi sponsorship and would have to review all the evidence before deciding what action to take. The administration immediately sent investigators from both the Secret Service and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to Kuwait, in order to conduct an independent investigation of the available evidence.³

Almost immediately, pressure was put on the new president to take action. Although the Kuwaiti government had foiled the plot and President Bush had never been in any real danger, many Americans perceived the threat of violence against a former U.S. president as so egregious an act that a swift and serious response was mandated. Within days of the assassination plot appearing in U.S. newspapers, several members of Congress urged President Clinton to take military action if the Iraqi government were found to be responsible for the assassination plot.⁴ This was the first serious foreign policy crisis faced by the Clinton White House.

For the next two months U.S. law enforcement experts examined the evidence. The U.S. administration began to believe the allegation that the Iraqi Intelligence Service was behind the assassination plot based on two pieces of evidence. The first was the confessions from the conspirators themselves. Although there were suggestions that Kuwaiti authorities may have coerced the confessions, subsequent interviews by U.S. authorities reduced the administration's skepticism and strengthened the view that the government of Iraq had sponsored the plan. Although the details of these interviews have never been released, U.S. sources reported that at least one of the suspects admitted to working within the Iraqi Intelligence Service and that other

members of the group also received Iraqi government assistance.⁵ Secondly, American investigators became convinced that the unique design of the car bomb indicated Iraqi involvement.⁶

However, the evidence of Iraqi involvement in the assassination attempt was far from clear cut, and the Clinton administration believed it essential to have a reasonable level of proof of Iraqi involvement before opting for military retaliation. A final decision was therefore delayed until the FBI could examine all the evidence, independently interview the suspects, and provide a final assessment to the president. Indeed, this case highlights how difficult it can be to establish definitive proof of terrorist culpability. In cases involving terrorism, evidence may be either circumstantial or difficult to obtain quickly, if available at all. Indeed, many, including author Seymour M. Hersh, later questioned whether the evidence was sufficient to prove the Iraqi government was responsible for the assassination plot.⁷

By late June 1993 the FBI had completed its nearly two month investigation and concluded that the evidence did in fact suggest Iraqi Intelligence Service responsibility for the assassination plot. Now convinced of Iraqi responsibility for the plot and still facing domestic pressure to take strong action, President Clinton's options were limited. Saddam Hussein was already isolated, there were no meaningful diplomatic options that would serve to punish him for his actions, and severe economic sanctions against Iraq were already in place. Finally, although the agents who actually carried out the plot were to be tried by the Kuwaiti courts, there was no means to use law enforcement or the legal system to punish the Iraqi leadership for its role in the assassination plot. Faced with the option to do nothing or use military force, President Clinton

approved a cruise missile attack against the Iraqi Intelligence Service Headquarters in retaliation.

Military Strike

On 27 June the destroyer USS *Peterson* (DD 969) in the Red Sea and the cruiser USS *Chancellorsville* (CG 62) in the Arabian Gulf fired a total of twenty-three Tomahawk cruise missiles at the Iraqi Intelligence Service Headquarters in downtown Baghdad.⁸ Twenty of the missiles hit and heavily damaged the headquarters complex; the other three did not reach the target, but impacted in civilian neighborhoods surrounding the target, damaging homes and killing eight civilians.⁹

From a military perspective the missile strike was highly effective. All the major aimpoints were hit, the building was heavily damaged, and the main wing of the headquarters building was totally destroyed. As Secretary of Defense Les Aspin put it:

Damage was very extensive. There is no question that the strike was a success. ...It is definitely out of business when you see the photographs.¹⁰

Despite the damage done to the target, the success of the military operation was tempered by the resulting collateral damage. From the very beginning, military planners had been given a clear mandate from civilian leadership that minimizing collateral damage had to be a priority for the operation. While the collateral damage was limited and did not begin to approach the extent experienced in Tripoli in 1986, policymakers quickly began a public relations campaign to make the case that every reasonable step had been taken to minimize civilian casualties. In fact, immediately following the strike, administration officials stated that the attack had been conducted in the middle of the night, so as to minimize possible deaths of innocent civilians.¹¹ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Collin Powell, emphasized this concern regarding

collateral damage in the post-mission press briefings when he stated, “We tried to conduct the strike in a way that would have minimized collateral damage, but there were civilian casualties.”¹²

Beyond the efforts to minimize collateral damage, the Clinton administration attempted to minimize the political risks associated with the strike in one more important way. Cruise missiles were selected for the operation specifically to ensure no casualties to U.S. servicemen. As one Pentagon official put it, “The military chose the missile to avoid risks to U.S. pilots even though manned bombers generally have greater accuracy.”¹³

The day after the strike, in a public relations gesture aimed at winning international support for its strike, the U.S. delegate to the United Nations, Madeleine Albright, appeared before a special session of the United Nations Security Council, and presented evidence to support the U.S. case that it was legally justified in conducting the strike.¹⁴ Citing Article 51 of the United Nations (UN) Charter, Albright argued that the U.S. action was justified as a fundamental right of self-defense.

Following the U.S. raid on Libya the Reagan administration had used a similar Article 51 argument, although it was far less formal or public. This move by the Clinton White House to present its case before the UN was a clear attempt to seize the political advantage and cut off international criticism in the wake of the strikes.

The Results

The long-term impact of this Tomahawk strike on America’s war on terrorism was less dramatic or obvious than the air raid on Libya in 1986. The Gulf War had already isolated

Saddam Hussein from the rest of the international community, and the U.S. strike in 1993 did little to change this. Overall, there was near unanimous support from America's European allies for the missile strike.¹⁵ Although there was some initial criticism from Arab governments, opposition quickly evaporated. The U.S. strikes did little to generate sympathy for Saddam Hussein or enhance his standing in the Arab world, nor did they alienate the United States from either its European allies or the Arab world.

The strike was widely supported by the American public. Polls showed a sixty-six percent approval rating of the president's decision to use military force against Iraq, which also drew bipartisan support from Congress.¹⁶ The general feeling was that America could not stand by and ignore an assassination attempt of a former president. So, in the sense that the strike reinforced public confidence and convinced the American people that the government was taking strong action against Iraqi terrorism, this military action may have made some minor contribution to the long-term war on terrorism.

From a broader perspective, however, the strike had little, if any, impact on Iraqi international terrorism. The strike did not stimulate a cycle of Iraqi violence in reprisal, but at the same time, there had never been a history of active Iraqi terrorism against Americans. Before the assassination plot Iraq was not perceived to be an international terrorist threat, and there was no long history of violence against innocent Americans as there had been with Qaddafi in 1986. The Iraqi Intelligence Service had surely been involved with violent acts, but most of this activity was internally focused on maintaining Saddam Hussein's control over the Iraqi people. Following the Tomahawk strike there was neither Iraqi reprisal against American targets in the

short-term, nor an increase in Iraqi international terrorism in the long-term. In short, there was little noticeable change in Iraqi terrorist activity in any respect.

If anything, the U.S. strike may have sent the message that an attempt to assassinate a former U.S. president was clearly beyond the country's threshold of tolerance. This military action put the terrorist world on notice that terrorism would draw strong punishment. The message that the U.S. was prepared to take strong action to contain terrorism, established in 1986 with Qaddafi, was reinforced by the U.S. missile strike against Iraq in 1993.

On balance the U.S. cruise missile strike against Iraq had a neutral impact on the U.S. war on terrorism. The strike was a military success, although limited in scope. The Iraqi Intelligence Service Headquarters was heavily damaged, which caused some interruption in the operation of the Intelligence Service. Furthermore, the strike was conducted without sparking a new cycle of Iraqi terrorist activity in reprisal. Although collateral damage resulted, it was considered marginal and did not incite condemnation of the U.S. outside Iraq. The United States did not lose standing within the international community, nor did the strike generate sympathy or support for Saddam Hussein either, at home or abroad. Given these factors, the strike certainly did not "hurt" the U.S. strategy to contain terrorism.

The strike may also have had some minor benefit to the U.S. war against terrorism, by reinforcing public confidence that the U.S. was taking strong action to contain terrorism. Additionally, the strike delivered a message to other groups that terrorism would result in substantial U.S. reprisal. Finally, it might also be argued that given Saddam Hussein's history, failure to respond strongly to the assassination plot might have encouraged future Iraqi terrorism against American targets.

In reality, however, although Saddam Hussein may have been a threat to the U.S. in many ways, at the time of the strike he was not a terrorist threat. Because he was not a terrorist threat, the Tomahawk strike did not benefit the long-term U.S. strategy to contain terrorism the way U.S. air strikes against Qaddafi did. The strike against Iraq was more of an episode in the ongoing conflict between the U.S. and Iraq, than an attempt to contain state-sponsored international terrorism. On balance, while the U.S. Tomahawk strike against Iraq in 1993 may have supported U.S. interests in certain ways, it had a neutral impact on the long-term war against terrorism.

Case Study Three: The U.S. Missile Strikes Against Sudan and Afghanistan in 1998

Events Leading Up to the Strikes

In the 1990s a new terrorist threat to U.S. interests emerged in the form of an Islamic extremist named Osama bin Laden. The son of a Saudi billionaire, Bin Laden had gone to Afghanistan in the 1980s to fight the Soviets alongside the Mujaheddin. Over time, bin Laden built up a quasi-military organization that became progressively militant and dedicated to driving Western influences out of the Arab world. The group, which became known as *al Qaida*, or “The Base,” remained in the shadows with factions operating throughout the Arab world.

Bin Laden was different from other state-sponsored terrorists. His terrorist organization was less dependent on, or concerned with, achieving the objectives of a single state, and it was driven by fundamentalist religious objectives. Milt Bearden, a former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) official described bin Laden’s group as follows:

His organization, such as it is, is unlike any other. It has no real headquarters and no fixed address to target. It is a coalition of like-minded warriors living in exile from their homes in Egypt, the Sudan, Pakistan and other Islamic nations riven by religious and political battles. The bin Laden organization is global and stateless, according to the United States intelligence analyses, more theological than political, driven by a millennial vision of destroying the United States, driving all Western influences from the Arab world, abolishing the boundaries of the Islamic nations and making them one, without borders.¹

With this group of guerrilla fighters and his considerable wealth, estimated by some at over 300 million dollars, bin Laden quietly began a war of terrorism against the United States.² Secretive and seldom seen, bin Laden exerted a terrorist influence far less public than either Muammar Qaddafi or Saddam Hussein. Although he had come to the attention of U.S. law enforcement agencies much earlier, the American public knew little of bin Laden before 1998.

Although Osama bin Laden returned to Saudi Arabia following the war in Afghanistan, he was exiled in 1991 after he began his radical campaign against the United States. Operating primarily out of the rural regions of Afghanistan and Sudan, he provided funding, support, and training for groups willing to strike out against the United States. He allegedly assisted terrorist groups in buying weapons, equipment and computers, and financed terrorist training camps in Sudan. He is also suspected of having provided support to the terrorists arrested in the 1993 bombing of New York's World Trade Center and of providing funding to the warlords in Somalia that battled U.S. military troops in 1993.³

In 1996, frustrated by the continued presence of United States military forces in Saudi Arabia, bin Laden called for a holy war against U.S. troops.⁴ Although he has not yet been formally charged and the cases are still being investigated, he is suspected of having supported the 1995 bombing of an American-run military building in Riyadh that killed seven people and the 1996 Khobar Tower bombing in Dhahran that killed nineteen American airmen.⁵

In February 1998 bin Laden issued a *Fatwa*, an Islamic edict, calling on Muslims to kill Americans. Becoming increasingly militant, he seemed intent on raising the level of violence against Americans. During an interview with a London-based Arabic newspaper, bin Laden was quoted as saying:

We had thought that the Riyadh and (Dhahran) blasts were a sufficient signal to sensible U.S. decision-makers to avert a real battle between the Islamic nation and U.S. forces, but it seems that they did not understand the signal."⁶

In an interview with ABC News correspondent John Miller in June 1998, bin Laden showed his hatred for Americans when he threatened:

We do not differentiate between those dressed in military uniforms and civilians; they are all targets."⁷

Despite these threats, Americans were totally unprepared for the simultaneous bombings of the U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania on 7 August 1998. The damage was horrific. In Nairobi, the bomb “brought down half the embassy” and the explosion left several square blocks of downtown Nairobi in shambles,⁸ while in Dar es Salaam most of the embassy building and some adjacent buildings were destroyed.⁹ The loss of human life was substantial. Although it took months to arrive at a final count, 224 people were killed in the two bombings, including twelve Americans; more than 4,800 persons were injured.¹⁰

Although few details were released regarding the investigation of the embassy bombings, the Clinton administration quickly gathered evidence that suggested bin Laden was responsible. The details of this evidence remain closely held. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Hugh Shelton, would only state that:

As many of you are aware, our intelligence community has provided us with convincing information based on a variety of intelligence sources, that Osama bin Laden’s network of terrorists was involved in the planning, the financing and the execution of the attacks on U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, attacks that killed over 300 people, including twelve Americans and wounded thousands more.”¹¹

Secretary of Defense William Cohen, when asked to explain the evidence of bin Laden’s culpability, would only say:

There’s been a series of reports that we have analyzed, statements by Osama bin Laden himself, other information coming in as recently as yesterday about future attacks being planned against the United States. We are satisfied there has been a convincing body of evidence that leads us to this conclusion.¹²

Soon after the bombings, President Clinton became convinced Osama bin Laden was responsible and that additional terrorist acts were being planned by his organization.¹³ Again, as with Iraq in 1993, few viable alternatives were available to the president. Because Osama bin

Laden was not a leader of a country like Qaddafi or Saddam Hussein, there were no meaningful political, diplomatic, or economic reprisals that could be used against him directly. Law enforcement agencies were doing all that they could to find and arrest members of bin Laden's organization, but these efforts would take time. Finally, the bombings of the embassies were seen as direct assaults on U.S. sovereign territory and as such demanded a strong unilateral response. Ultimately, President Clinton decided bin Laden's terrorism was a clear threat to U.S. national interests and for the second time in his presidency decided to use military force to counter a terrorist threat.

Military Strikes

On 20 August 1998, less than three weeks after the embassy bombings, U.S. Tomahawk strikes were conducted against terrorist targets in what was called Operation *Infinite Reach*.¹⁴ U.S. Navy ships and a submarine in the Arabian Gulf and Red Sea fired approximately seventy Tomahawk cruise missiles against terrorist targets in Khartoum, Sudan and Khost, Afghanistan.¹⁵ Unlike previous military operations, few details of the military operation or the results of the strikes were released, due to the administration's emphasis on operational security.

The missiles arrived over targets in both countries nearly simultaneously. In Afghanistan, the missiles damaged a series of buildings in four different complexes comprising a terrorist training camp and bin Laden's main operational base. Reports in the Pakistani press suggested that the camp "had been leveled,"¹⁶ while the Taliban faction that rules Afghanistan reported that twenty-one people were killed and an additional thirty were injured.¹⁷ Because the camp was a known terrorist area and far from any recognized civilian center, these deaths were considered

casualties to terrorists and not collateral damage. In fact, following the strike, National Security Adviser Sandy Berger said the attack was conducted on 20 August precisely because intelligence sources predicted a meeting of bin Laden and several of his key deputies at the camp that day. As one official commented, “Collateral damage was just not an issue in Afghanistan.”¹⁸ Although bin Laden was not injured in the raid, reports later emerged that he was at the camp at the time of the attack. One official stated:

The Tomahawks wiped out the guards, drivers, vehicles and electrical and water supplies. Bin Laden was there, but he was underground along with others in the terrorist leadership. The attack left him with a ringing head, and he had to walk to the nearest highway to make his way out.¹⁹

Finally, in January 1999, months after the strike, U.S. Defense officials released satellite reconnaissance photos that showed massive damage to the camp. It was reported that U.S. officials believed about 100 “terrorists-in-training” were killed and that at least one of bin Laden’s top lieutenants was believed to be among the dead.²⁰ A statement released with the photos made the assessment, “The capability to sustain terrorist operations from these facilities for the near term is *significantly* reduced.”²¹

In Sudan the missiles struck a pharmaceutical factory, named *El Shifa*, in downtown Khartoum. Based on television images taken immediately after the raid, the plant was completely leveled.²² Sudan’s state-run television reported that ten people had been injured, but that there had been no deaths.²³ Additionally, one of the missiles apparently failed to reach its intended target and struck a nearby candy factory, causing light collateral damage.²⁴

In the aftermath of the raid, White House officials justified the attack on the factory in Khartoum by claiming it was a secret chemical weapons factory financed by bin Laden.²⁵ To support this assertion, senior officials would claim that soil samples taken from the plant

indicated the presence of Empta, a precursor used in the production of the nerve gas VX.²⁶

However, in the weeks after the strike, many began to question the legitimacy of the administration's evidence. Several sources claimed that both the evidence of bin Laden's association with the plant and proof that it was involved in the production of chemical weapons was circumstantial at best.²⁷ Author Seymour Hersh claimed that the administration's evidence did not justify the attack on the Sudanese plant. In fact, he believed that the decision to strike the plant was a mistake driven by the administration's preoccupation with secrecy while planning the strike. As Hersh put it:

Those failures were a by-product of the secrecy that marked all the White House's planning for the Tomahawk raids—a secrecy that prevented decision makers from knowing everything they needed to know.²⁸

The Sudanese government requested that the United Nations conduct an independent investigation in order to prove, or disprove, U.S. allegations that the factory was involved in the production of chemical weapons. Even former President Jimmy Carter would call for an independent technical investigation of the evidence.²⁹ However, Clinton officials continued to argue that the evidence was sufficient to justify the raid, without releasing details, and they were able to convince the UN Security Council to shelve discussion of an independent investigation.³⁰

The call for the Clinton administration to make public its evidence against the Sudanese factory exemplifies one of the difficulties associated with the use of military force against terrorism. On the one hand, administration officials had an interest in convincing the American people and U.S. allies of the legality and legitimacy of the raids, while at the same time balancing a concern that releasing too much information could compromise operational security and/or intelligence sources. Bin Laden and his group remained a threat following the strike and caution

needed to be exhibited so as to ensure that vital information that could be used in future terrorist attacks against Americans was not released.

The Results

Given that this paper is written less than a year after the Tomahawk strikes into Sudan and Afghanistan it is not possible to assess the long-term effects on bin Laden's terrorism. Nevertheless, even lacking a true long-range vista, there are some results that merit discussion. Chief among these is that, to date, it appears that the U.S. strikes both limited bin Laden's terrorist activity and contributed to the long-term effort to contain terrorism.

The first major effect of the U.S. strikes was that they put bin Laden's terrorist organization on the defensive. Instead of being able to focus resources and attention on planning or executing new attacks, the group had to step back and regroup. U.S. military force threatened the group in a new and substantial way. Although the military strikes may not have ended bin Laden's terrorist operations, they would appear to have limited his organization's ability to carry out the additional terrorist acts believed to have been in planning at the time of the embassy bombings.

A second major result of the Tomahawk strikes against bin Laden was that they reinforced the perception that the U.S. had little tolerance for terrorism. This message initially sent to Libya in 1986 and then to Iraq in 1993, substantiated a determined U.S. resolve to use the strongest means available to punish terrorism. Once again, military force was the mechanism to demonstrate U.S. intention to limit an emerging terrorist threat. As Secretary of Defense William Cohen put it:

Our strikes against the bin Laden terrorist network in August sent an

unmistakable message to actual and would-be killers: America will not sit idle as you main and murder our citizens. We will confront you on every front with a defense that is passive, but proactive.³¹

A third major development in the wake of the strikes occurred in the area of international law enforcement. Just as cooperation on the diplomatic and economic fronts emerged following the strikes against Qaddafi in 1986, the strikes on bin Laden seemed to have generated a new level of cooperation in the international law enforcement effort against terrorism. The reasons for the new vigor and cooperation in this area are not entirely clear, however. Perhaps by exposing bin Laden's vulnerability, the military strikes encouraged other nations to overcome the fear of terrorist reprisal and to take strong action against bin Laden's organization. Whatever the underlying motivation, the military strikes demonstrated to the rest of the world that the U.S. was serious in its war against bin Laden's terrorism and stimulated support, action, and cooperation within the international law enforcement community that had not previously existed.

For example, within days of the strikes, various foreign law enforcement agencies, working with support from U.S. agencies made key arrests of the bombing suspects in Pakistan, Kenya, and Tanzania.³² Additionally, in the weeks that followed, several terrorists, including a number of key figures in the bin Laden organization, were arrested in Great Britain, Germany, and across Africa.³³ Most importantly, this newly stimulated international effort resulted in interventions and arrests that prevented bombings by bin Laden operatives against the U.S. embassies in Tirana, Albania and in Kampala, Uganda.³⁴ These arrests substantiated Clinton administration claims made at the time of the strikes that bin Laden's group had been planning additional terrorist attacks against American targets.

The importance of this newfound cooperation within the international law enforcement community cannot be overstated. Although the military strikes may have been the opening salvo against bin Laden, the law enforcement effort has continued the war. The combination of the military strikes followed by coordinated international law enforcement effort has kept Bin Laden's group on the run and disrupted their ability to focus on new acts of terrorism. In the months following the military raids, U.S. law enforcement agencies helped foreign agencies arrest over forty terrorists, most with close ties to bin Laden. As one source reported:

The FBI has enjoyed unprecedented cooperation from authorities in Kenya, Tanzania and more than a dozen other countries that have assisted in the probe, a sharp contrast from some of its previous investigations of terrorism on foreign soil.³⁵

By January 1999, this international law enforcement effort had led to a growing number of arrests of Islamic extremists linked to bin Laden and, perhaps more importantly, trials against these operatives in eleven different countries.³⁶ As the campaign against bin Laden continues, senior U.S. officials suggest that this worldwide effort has stopped at least seven different bombing attempts by bin Laden's operatives against an air base in Saudi Arabia and the U.S. embassies in Albania, Azerbaijan, Ivory Coast, Tajikistan, Uganda and Uruguay.³⁷ Additionally, cooperation between Indian officials and the FBI led to the arrests of a seven-member cell believed to be funded by bin Laden, who were planning the bombing of the U.S. embassy in New Delhi and two U.S. consulates elsewhere in India.³⁸

A fourth major result of the strikes was that they strengthened American public confidence in government. Once again, the military strikes served to reassure Americans that their government was willing to take strong action to limit terrorism. Over seventy-five percent of the public approved of the attack and President Clinton's job-approval rating rose to sixty-five

percent.³⁹ A few Republican members of Congress questioned the timing of the strikes, suggesting that they may have been used as a distraction from the president's domestic troubles associated with the Monica Lewinsky scandal. Nevertheless, overall President Clinton received bipartisan support for his strong action against terrorism.⁴⁰

On the international front, the U.S. strikes received strong support from Europe. Leaders from most Western countries, including Great Britain, Germany, France, Spain and Austria, all made strong statements defending the U.S. right to defend itself against terrorism.⁴¹

Russia, a country that has strongly criticized the use of U.S. military force against terrorism in the past, sent out confused and mixed views on the U.S. action. Although Russian President Boris Yeltsin criticized the attacks publicly, a spokesman for Mr. Yeltsin later downplayed the remarks. Russian Prime Minister Sergei Kiriyenko called the attacks unacceptable but added that "international acts of terrorism cannot go unpunished."⁴²

In the Arab world the U.S. strikes drew a mixed reaction. Angry protests were voiced in Sudan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Libya. In Kabul, protesters converged on the American embassy, while large street demonstrations were held in Khartoum.⁴³ However, most Arab governments remained "silent or equivocal about their views on the missile strikes."⁴⁴ Even from those Arab countries that publicly criticized the U.S. action, the public condemnation was short lived and quickly faded. By October, less than two months after the strike, even the Sudanese government had dropped calls for an investigation into the U.S. bombings and had initiated high-level talks with the U.S. government in hopes of improving relations between the two countries.⁴⁵ In February 1999, U.S. representatives met with Taliban representatives to discuss bin Laden's status in Afghanistan. Although the Taliban were not willing to extradite bin

Laden, they did place restrictions on his access to communications and banned him from making public statements while in Afghanistan.⁴⁶ It would seem, therefore, that the U.S. military action did not damage U.S. standing in the international community or substantially change U.S. relations with the Arab world.

Finally, there is the question of whether the Tomahawk strikes increased or decreased bin Laden's terrorist activity. As mentioned earlier, because so little time has elapsed since the strikes, a meaningful long-term assessment is not possible. However, there are indications that the military strikes have had a short-term effect on bin Laden's terrorist activity similar to that observed with Qaddafi in 1986. Except for a few minor terrorist incidents immediately following the strike, there have been no new acts of terrorism committed by bin Laden's organization.

In the days following the strike, an Italian Army officer and a French Political Affairs officer working for the United Nations in Kabul, Afghanistan were attacked. The Italian was killed and the Frenchman wounded in what appeared to be an act in retaliation for the U.S. raids.⁴⁷ A few days later, a group calling itself Muslims Against Global Oppression claimed responsibility for bombing a Planet Hollywood Restaurant in Cape Town, South Africa, killing one woman and injuring twenty-four other people. The group said the bombing was carried out to avenge the U.S. missile strikes.⁴⁸ Following these acts, however, neither of which may have been actually committed by a member of the bin Laden group, there have been no new terrorist acts attributed to the bin Laden organization. As discussed earlier, it would appear that the pressure put on bin Laden by the international law enforcement effort has also been a major deterrent to any new wave of bin Laden terrorism.

Although there has been no new cycle of terrorism in reprisal to the U.S. Tomahawk strikes to date, it would be naive to assume that the military strikes have put bin Laden out of business. In fact, as recently as December 1998, U.S. intelligence agents received indications that bin Laden's group was planning new terrorist attacks against American interests.⁴⁹ While the long-term effects of the strikes on bin Laden remain to be seen, in the short-term, the military strikes and law enforcement effort have put bin Laden on the defensive without igniting a new cycle of terrorism.

One final result from Operation *Infinite Reach* has occurred in the area of law enforcement. Although the debate continues over whether the factory in Sudan was a legitimate terrorist target, the question of bin Laden's involvement in the embassy bombings has never been questioned. In November 1998, a federal grand jury in New York issued a 238-count indictment against Osama bin Laden for committing acts of terrorism including the U.S. embassy bombings.⁵⁰ Soon after, the U.S. State Department offered a reward of up to five million dollars for bin Laden's capture.⁵¹

Although a final assessment of this case may not be possible for several years, based on results to date, the U.S. Tomahawk strikes against Osama bin Laden have contributed to the U.S. strategy to contain terrorism. The strikes were a military success, destroying a terrorist base camp and a suspected chemical weapons plant with only minimal collateral damage, and the operation punished a powerful terrorist group without resulting in a new cycle of violence. Despite the fact that controversy regarding the Sudanese factory remains, the strikes were hugely popular with the American people and supported by U.S. allies. The limited criticism of the U.S. raid from the Arab world dissipated quickly and U.S. standing in the world was not damaged.

The strikes also encouraged a worldwide law enforcement effort against bin Laden's organization, which has led to numerous arrests and has kept bin Laden on the defensive. Finally, from a long-term perspective, the military strikes contributed to the containment of terrorism by reinforcing the message sent to Qaddafi in 1986 and Saddam Hussein in 1993, that the U.S. was willing to take the strongest action available to punish terrorism and protect U.S. national interests. On balance, U.S. military strikes against bin Laden limited an emerging terrorist threat and contributed significantly to the long-term war against terrorism.

Overall Analysis: What Are the Impacts of Using Military Force Against Terrorism?

Now that a detailed analysis of each case study is complete, it is time to discuss the broader conclusions that can be derived regarding the effectiveness of using military force to contain terrorism. Despite great diversity in terms of the scope, motivation, and conditions associated with the terrorist threat, each case study provides strong evidence that the use of military force by the United States can contribute to the containment of terrorism. Military force cannot stop a given extremist from engaging in terrorism; no option exists to achieve this goal, no matter how desirable. However, the use of force can provide the U.S. with leverage in the war on terrorism and support its national interests in a number of significant and fundamental ways.

The first way in which the use of military force supports the containment of terrorism derives from the fact that such strikes prevent any terrorist group from becoming too powerful or influential. In each of the case studies, military strikes left the terrorist weak, isolated, and less effective as a terrorist. This result manifests itself in a physical sense because the military strikes destroy buildings, camps, headquarters and other facilities used in terrorist operations. Damage to the Azziziyah Barracks in 1986 and the destruction of the bin Laden's training camp in Afghanistan in 1998 are examples of important terrorist facilities that were severely damaged by U.S. military force. There is no question that U.S. military strikes put both Qaddafi's and bin Laden's terrorist organizations on the defensive, leaving them weakened and less able to focus on new acts of terrorism.

This weakening of the terrorist also manifests itself in a psychological sense. Just as the terrorist gains power through intimidation and violence, military strikes erode this influence by

exposing the terrorist as impotent and vulnerable. Qaddafi's weakness and immediate loss of influence due to the 1986 air strikes serve as a vivid example of this result.

The second major way in which military force contributes to the U.S. counterterrorism strategy is by establishing the precedent that terrorism, particularly if it is prolonged, extreme, or threatening to U.S. interests, will not go unpunished. In each of the case studies, U.S. policymakers used military force as the means to demonstrate that there were limits to U.S. tolerance of terrorism. It may not be wise or practical for the U.S. to use force against every terrorist threat, but it can serve as a powerful tool when a terrorist threatens to get out of control. The psychological deterrence of such a message may be difficult to quantify, but more than any other player on the world stage, the terrorist understands the significance of force. In this sense, the use of military force demonstrates a determined commitment by the U.S. to use the strongest means available to limit terrorism. Perhaps most importantly this commitment is conveyed to the terrorist through a means that reinforces the depth of the commitment.

The importance of establishing this limit can be viewed from another perspective. For example, the ramifications of *not* taking strong action when threatened by terrorism have potentially devastating results and must be considered carefully. Failure to respond decisively to terrorism leaves the terrorist with the notion that an agenda of violence and intimidation is effective. Such a lack of response has the potential of encouraging more terrorism. Walter Laqueur describes this situation as follows:

But the lack of reaction is usually interpreted as a sign of weakness, in which case the attacks will become more frequent and murderous. The sponsors of international terrorism resemble in many respects children trying to find out by trial and error how far they can go in provoking adults until punishment will be meted out to them.¹

Muammar Qaddafi's campaign of terrorism in the late seventies and early eighties offers a clear example of this effect. Because Qaddafi's early terrorism was undeterred, he became bolder; believing that he had intimidated the West, the number and severity of his terrorist acts intensified, until the U.S. unleashed air strikes in 1986. These strikes provided a means to demonstrate to Qaddafi that his reign of terror had gone too far and that continued terrorism would now draw swift retaliation. Likewise, Tomahawk strikes delineated a similar limit with Saddam Hussein in 1993 and Osama bin Laden in 1998. In effect, these strikes established the precedent that the United States would respond to terrorism with the strongest means available. From a strategic perspective then, military force provides a long-term psychological deterrent by demonstrating U.S. resolve to punish terrorism.

This precedent of using force to limit terrorism is particularly important, given the U.S. role as a superpower. The entire world looks to U.S. leadership in almost every area. Acting to limit terrorism against U.S. interests not only protects Americans, but discourages terrorism on a global basis. As the post-Cold War superpower, the U.S. is compelled to take strong action to contain terrorism not only because it is in U.S. national interests, but because it promotes long-term international stability and security.

A third major way military force supports the containment of terrorism is by encouraging international support for anti-terrorism measures in other non-military areas. In 1986, U.S. air strikes against Libya led the way for support from the European community for diplomatic and economic sanctions that had previously been rejected. In 1998, Tomahawk strikes generated support from the international law enforcement community against Osama bin Laden that had

been absent prior to the strike. This international cooperation across a broad range of areas is critical to the long-term containment of terrorism.

Why military strikes have generated international support against terrorism in non-military areas is not clear. Some argue that this new support results because a military strike exposes the weakness of the terrorist and reduces fear. Others suggest that military action demonstrates strong U.S. resolve to limit terrorism and that this strong resolve creates a “vacuum effect” that draws other nations into the cooperative effort. Phillip Heymann, in his book *Terrorism and America*, suggests that U.S. military strikes foster this cooperation because the allies fear failure to cooperate would result in further U.S. military action:

The threat of further military response also proved a stimulus to the cooperation among allies that is necessary for effective economic, diplomatic and travel sanctions against a state sponsoring terrorism. Such sanctions require difficult decisions of allies, but decisions that are less difficult than those presented by military action by the United States.²

Regardless of the reasons, the case studies show that U.S. military action can indeed encourage this type of international cooperation and that such cooperation can limit terrorism.

A fourth major way that military force contributes to the war on terrorism is by building public confidence in the U.S. government’s ability to maintain safety and security. In each of the three case studies, the overwhelming support for the decision to use force against terrorism shows that the American public believes strong action against terrorism is appropriate and necessary. The public opinion polls cited in the case studies were not intended to overstate the importance of such polls, but there is little question that such polls reflect a fundamental American belief that terrorism should be punished swiftly and severely. Use of military force against terrorism, even if it cannot stop the threat completely, reinforces public confidence and

minimizes fear. David Leggold, in his study of terrorists and drug traffickers, emphasized the importance of public confidence from a psychological perspective:

Does this imply that coercive counter-terror and drug policies are a waste of resources? They would seem so if the criterion for success is shutting down the terrorist and drug operations. But if such policies make people feel safer, regardless of their actual effectiveness, stopping them might be a mistake. Security is partly subjective; if people believe that their government is passive vis-à-vis threats, the state or regime could lose a great deal of legitimacy.³

The final major factor that supports the use of military force against terrorism is the realization that such force does not result in a spiraling cycle of new violence. The common argument against the option of military force, which suggests this option necessarily leads to a tit-for-tat cycle of new violence, is invalid. The evidence from each of the three case studies shows that U.S. military force does not lead to increased terrorism. According to U.S. Department of State statistics, there was a decline in Libyan terrorism following the strikes in 1986. Additionally, there was no increase in Iraqi international terrorism following the strikes in 1993, and to date there has been no increase in Osama bin Laden's terrorism following the strikes in 1998. While there is nothing to suggest that military strikes have forced Muammar Qaddafi, Saddam Hussein, or Osama bin Laden to abandon terrorism as a means to further their ends, the strikes have provided the U.S. with significant leverage in the war against terrorism without resulting in new cycles of violence.

Despite all these positives, there is an argument against the use of force as an option to limit terrorism that merits further consideration. Some believe that the use of military force against terrorism is counterproductive from a strategic sense, because it alienates allies and erodes U.S. credibility on the world stage. This argument maintains that the use of force creates

an image of the U.S. as a “cowboy,” much more willing to use force than diplomacy to resolve differences, and that this image damages U.S. standing as a superpower.

In this, the air strikes on Libya in 1986 certainly created tension between the U.S. and Europe. Once it became clear that there would be no immediate reprisal from Qaddafi against Europe, however, this criticism quickly faded and there was no long-term damage to relations between the U.S. and its European allies. Furthermore, there was overwhelming European support for the strong U.S. action against Iraqi terrorism in 1993 and bin Laden in 1998. Nor is there any evidence from the case studies to suggest U.S. military operations against terrorism have damaged U.S. standing in the Arab world. The lack of a strong condemnation from Arab capitals following U.S. strikes in both 1993 and 1998 imply a “quiet” approval of the tough U.S. stand against terrorism. Ironically, recent moves by both Sudan and the Taliban in Afghanistan to normalize relations with the U.S. suggest that even relations with these nations, whose sovereign territory were fired upon, were not permanently damaged. The case studies provide no evidence to support the assertion that the U.S. use of force against terrorism necessarily erodes U.S. credibility or standing as a world power; in fact, the studies suggest that under certain circumstances it may actually enhance U.S. leadership in the international war against terrorism.

Finally, this paper does not detail the differences between the subgroups (individuals or organizations) that engage in terrorism and the states that sponsor terrorism. Although there may be differences between the two, it is critical to recognize that if the U.S. intends to use military force to modify behavior, either by reducing terrorist acts or minimizing state-sponsorship of terrorism, the subgroup or state against whom the military force is aimed, must have “something to lose”. Although the specifics vary in each situation, in general, nation-states have more to lose

from military retaliation than terrorist subgroups. The case studies provide strong evidence that military force can modify the behavior of the nation-state and deter state-sponsorship of terrorism. Following the airstrikes in 1986, in a dramatic reversal of previous behavior, Libya significantly reduced its direct involvement in terrorism and took a much less public role in sponsoring terrorism. Furthermore, after the cruise missile strikes in 1998, the Taliban in Afghanistan, took steps for the first time, to reduce Osama bin Laden's freedom of movement and access to communication outside Afghanistan. In both instances, military force provided the incentive for a state, which was actively involved in sponsoring terrorism, to modify its behavior in a way that was beneficial to the United States.

Military strikes can encourage a state to reduce its sponsorship of terrorism. Without such sponsorship, terrorist groups become less effective and terrorist operations become more difficult. The effectiveness of military force as a means to modify the behavior of the terrorist subgroup may be less clear, than that of a nation-state. As stated earlier, military force can't stop terrorism. Military force can, however, deter a nation-state from sponsoring terrorism, which in turn limits terrorism in the long-term.

In summary, the case studies provide compelling evidence that the use of military force can support the containment of terrorism. In each of the three cases, the option to use military force against terrorism was either the option of last resort or the only viable unilateral option available. But when used in the proper context and under the right conditions, military force limits the influence of the terrorist. Military force can demonstrate U.S. resolve to punish those who engage in terrorism, it can keep the terrorist weak and isolated, it can support anti-terrorism action in other areas, it can serve to strengthen public confidence in government, and it can also

modify behavior by reducing state-sponsorship of terrorism. All these factors contribute to the long-term containment of terrorism. Perhaps equally significant, military force can help achieve these essential goals without resulting in an increased cycle of new violence. In this sense, the case studies demonstrate that military force is a viable component of the long-term U.S. strategy to contain terrorism and support U.S. national interests.

Conclusion

Terrorism is not a physical threat to the security of the American public and U.S. citizens do not live in fear that at any moment they will be the victims of terrorist violence. Nor do terrorists such as Muammar Qaddafi and Osama bin Laden have the power to topple the U.S. government or eliminate the U.S. as a world power. Nevertheless, terrorism is and will continue to be a legitimate threat to the United States. Terrorism attempts to coerce through violence and intimidation; if left unchecked it creates fear and erodes influence. Terrorism therefore threatens the very security and stability that is the cornerstone of U.S. national interests. As such, it is essential that the U.S. government find options to contain the spread and influence of terrorism.

Since military force cannot eliminate terrorism, one must ask the central question as to whether the use of military force is a viable option in the U.S. war against terrorism. In this, it must first be pointed out that there is no single option that can end terrorism. However, the cases studied here show that the use of military force can in fact contribute to the long-term containment of terrorism in a number of fundamental ways.

In order to contain terrorism in the long-term, the U.S. must take action to ensure no single terrorist group becomes too powerful. Containment necessitates keeping individual terrorist groups weak and isolated, and military strikes provide the most effective means of destroying terrorist facilities and disrupting terrorist operations. Periodic use of military force is an efficient and viable means to keep terrorists off guard and on the defensive. Under the right circumstances, there is no more direct or powerful means to keep a terrorist organization in check.

Secondly, in order to limit terrorism in the long-term, those who choose to engage in terrorism must know that engaging in violence will come at a cost and that they will be held responsible for their actions. As the world's sole superpower, the United States must take strong action to discourage terrorism and experience has shown that without such action terrorism expands and proliferates. The credibility established by the force of the world's most powerful military clearly establishes the precedent that those who engage in terrorism will do so at a cost. Military force provides a vivid reminder that terrorism will not go unpunished, and as such, acts as a deterrent to terrorism in the long-term. Significantly, the use of force sends this message in a way both the terrorist, and the state that sponsors terrorism, understand and respect. As Neil Livingstone suggests:

The fact remains that there is overwhelming evidence that military retaliation will deter terrorism. Terrorists respect very little, but it is clear they respect superior force.¹

A third means of containing terrorism in the long-term is by stressing counterterrorism across a broad range of areas. Diplomatic-political policies, economic sanctions and rigorous law enforcement effort have all proven effective in limiting terrorism, but gaining the cooperation to implement meaningful anti-terrorism measures in each of these areas is often difficult. Without such cooperation, however, these measures are seldom meaningful or effective. Furthermore, recent history has shown that military strikes can foster international cooperation in support of these non-military measures against terrorism.

A fourth means of limiting terrorism in the long-term is by ensuring terrorism does not erode public confidence in government. To maintain credibility, the U.S. government must take action to ensure the American public feels safe and secure. Americans must believe that their

government has not only the means, but the will, to protect them from terrorism. The use of military force to punish terrorism can support this goal, by acting to bolster public confidence in government.

A fifth means of limiting terrorism in the long-term is by discouraging state-sponsorship or support of terrorism. Without state-sponsorship, individual terrorist groups have difficulty obtaining the weapons, training and supplies necessary to be a threat. State-sponsorship provides the terrorists the freedom of movement necessary to effectively plan and execute their operations. In situations in which a nation-state is providing such support however, military force can provide a powerful incentive to modify behavior of the offending state and lead to a reduction in the state-sponsorship of terrorism.

Perhaps just as significantly, military force can provide these benefits to the war against terrorism without a resulting increase in violence. No evidence has been found to support the claim that the use of military force against terrorism by the U.S. necessarily results in substantive retaliation or an increased cycle of terrorist violence. To the contrary; the evidence shows that, in the long-term, U.S. military force can deter the proliferation of terrorism.

Despite all these factors, however, the use of military force in itself cannot solve every terrorist problem and may not be appropriate at all times or in all cases. The use of military force involves risks, and policymakers must understand that military strikes risk both collateral damage and the loss of U.S. service personnel. The moral and legal considerations involved with the use of military force demand that this option be reserved for those situations in which U.S. national interests are *significantly* threatened. Furthermore, military force must be applied in a way that is

proportional, if it is to be justified to the American public and the world community. In his book *Terrorism and America*, Phillip Heymann describes this point as follows :

If a hostile state is tolerating or supporting terrorist actions against U.S. citizens or interests, we must be prepared to retaliate militarily as we have done in Libya and Iraq. But such retaliation ought to depend on a very careful review of the facts and an honest and open statement of the legal standards we believe should apply. Being a superpower does not relieve us from the responsibility of justifying the use of lethal force that will, almost inevitably, kill innocent individuals. And the retaliation must be proportional and targeted to minimize the inevitable deaths or injury to innocent parties. Innocent deaths in the wrong nation are a double abomination.²

Due to these risks, military force must be the option of last resort. Despite the risks, however, the use of military force limits terrorism, and as such, remains a viable option in the U.S. war against terrorism.

Military force must remain available as an option for U.S. policymakers for one other important reason. The use of military force remains the only true unilateral option in the war on terrorism. Diplomatic measures, economic sanctions, and law enforcement action all require international cooperation to be truly effective against terrorism. As Phillip Heymann suggests:

For other nations, and generally for the United States as well, economic and diplomatic sanctions are only powerful enough if they are implemented in concert by substantially all the nations on whose trade, assistance, investments, and travel the punished country depends. It has proved difficult to bring about this cooperation.³

Given the inherent limitations of these non-military measures, it remains essential that the U.S. have a unilateral option to counter direct threats to U.S. security and to protect its national interests. As the world superpower, the U.S. requires such a unilateral option for those situations in which international cooperation cannot be reached in the face of a terrorist threat. Without the unilateral option, the U.S. is vulnerable to terrorism anytime there is disagreement

within the international community. Consequently, despite the fact that military force is the option of last resort, it is essential precisely because it provides the U.S. with the only genuine unilateral action available to deter terrorism. Although military force may not be the first option of choice, it must remain available. As Phillip Heymann suggests:

The inevitable confusion underlying the facts, the lack of clarity of international law, the certainty of civilian casualties, and the general uncertainty of deterrence should create a strong preference for economic, diplomatic, and travel sanctions rather than military action to deter a state supporting a terrorist group. Unilateral military action must, however, remain an option when the alternative is a free shot at the United States and its citizens by a hostile nation.⁴

Although the use of military force remains a powerful tool in the war against terrorism it is only part of the solution. Military force as a solution to the problem of terrorism is limited, because it treats only the results of terrorism and does nothing to address its causes. If the U.S. is to be successful in the war against terrorism, tactics such as the use of force must be complimented with a focused long-term diplomatic strategy that breaks down barriers between the U.S. and those countries who either secretly sponsor terrorism or allow terrorists to operate from within their borders. Diplomatic efforts to normalize relations with nations such as Iran, Libya, Syria, Sudan, and Afghanistan could do much to reduce the terrorist fervor against America. Initiation of dialogues with such countries could serve to ease tensions, resolve differences, and dispel notions of “American arrogance,” that could help ease extremist feelings against the United States and serve to discourage terrorism in the long run. Unfortunately, there are no indications to date that the U.S. is working towards a coordinated diplomatic strategy to address the underlying causes of terrorism.

Innovation in seeking new methods and approaches to limiting terrorism must also be pursued. Given the growing terrorist threat, the U.S. can no longer sit back and wait for a

terrorist to strike before responding. In this, a new approach by the international law enforcement community reflects one way in which the U.S. can use a more proactive approach to terrorism. The use of a tactic called “disruption,” a coordinated effort between U.S. and foreign law enforcement agencies, attempts to interdict and harass terrorists before they can conduct a major terrorist attack.⁵ Such an approach appears to have substantial potential and has been credited with keeping bin Laden on the defensive since the 1998 bombings.⁶ Disruption, therefore, represents a pre-emptive and offensive counterterrorism strategy that may well be necessary when dealing with terrorist threats of the future.

In conclusion, the use of military force can contribute to the containment of terrorism and support U.S. national interests. The use of military force against terrorism is, however, not without risk. Furthermore, while such action is not appropriate for every terrorist threat, given the right situation and the proper conditions, military force can provide a powerful option.

Perhaps Neil Livingstone best summarizes this conclusion as follows:

Military force is certainly not the answer to every terrorist challenge. It represents one of the most useful options that policymakers must have to choose from. It gives credibility and currency to all other potential options, and the prudent systematic use of military force on an intermittent basis keeps terrorists and their state sponsors off balance and forced to devote far more attention and resources to their own protection instead of to the conduct of terrorist operations. Just as unpredictability is critical to the survival of a threatened individual targeted by terrorists, so too is unpredictability a useful characteristic for nation-states to exhibit on occasion.⁷

The war on terrorism will continue to challenge the United States. As new threats emerge, each must be examined, assessed, and dealt with. To accomplish this goal, U.S. policymakers need every resource and trick in the book. Flexible and effective approaches are necessary to counter terrorism and protect U.S. national interests, while an innovative diplomatic strategy to address terrorism’s underlying causes must be coupled with proactive

counterterrorism tactics to deal with emerging terrorist threats. Even with these new innovations, however, and regardless of the precautions, future terrorist acts are inevitable. In such cases, despite the risks it entails, military force remains one of the most powerful and effective means to limit terrorism. This option must continue to be available, if U.S. policymakers are to protect U.S. national interests and contain the influence of terrorism in an increasingly unstable world.

Notes

Introduction

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