
Bombing bin Laden: Assessing the Effectiveness of Air Strikes as a Counter-Terrorism Strategy

MICHELE L. MALVESTI

In the wake of the September 11, 2001, aerial suicide attacks on U.S. soil, the United States has responded to the deadliest terrorist operation in history with a multifaceted counter-terrorism (CT) strategy aimed at defeating the perpetrators of the attacks and, more broadly, undermining terrorism in general. Among the instruments of statecraft employed in this strategy are diplomatic engagement of allies, law enforcement action, and economic measures aimed at the disruption of terrorist financial networks. More prominently, the U.S. response has included military air strikes against targets in Afghanistan that directly and indirectly support Al-Qaeda, the loosely affiliated terrorist network headed by Osama bin Laden that Washington states is responsible for the September terrorist attacks. In his address to the American people at the joint session of Congress following these attacks, President George W. Bush sketched the rough outlines of the U.S. military response: "Our response involves far more than instant retaliation and isolated strikes. Americans should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign, unlike any other we have seen."¹

An evaluation of the United States' three previous CT military air strikes (henceforth referred to as CT strikes) reveals that this option is a blunt, ineffective instrument that creates a cycle of vengeance.

Michele L. Malvesti, a former Middle East terrorism analyst with The U.S. Department of Defense, is currently a Ph.D. candidate at The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. The article is the winner of the Winter 2002 Fletcher Forum Prize for the best master's degree or Ph.D. candidate submission.

Indeed, if the U.S. plans to achieve its CT policy goals, this military campaign against terrorism must be unlike any other that Americans have seen. An evaluation of the United States' three previous CT military air strikes (henceforth referred to as CT strikes) reveals that this option is a blunt, ineffective instrument that creates a cycle of vengeance with minimal gains at best. Moreover, these previous strikes have failed to achieve U.S. CT policy objectives of prevention and accountability. With respect to overt military action, President Bush's words suggest a much-needed shift in our counter-terrorism strategy.

U.S. COUNTER-TERRORISM POLICY: IDENTIFYING THE GOALS

U.S. counter-terrorism policy and the concomitant strategy for its implementation have been evolving for nearly three decades. These goals, while virtually unchanged through the years, are articulated in the June 1995 Presidential Decision Directive-39 (PDD-39): U.S. Policy on Counter-Terrorism. In part, PDD-39 asserts:

It is the policy of the United States to deter, defeat and respond vigorously to all terrorist attacks on our territory and against our citizens, or facilities, whether they occur domestically, in international waters or airspace or on foreign territory. The United States regards all such terrorism as a potential threat to national security as well as a criminal act and will apply all appropriate means to combat it. In doing so, the U.S. shall pursue vigorously efforts to deter and preempt, apprehend and prosecute, or assist other governments to prosecute, individuals who perpetrate or plan to perpetrate such attacks.²

In aggregate, these words suggest two succinct policy objectives: (1) countering and deterring current threats (prevention), and (2) holding terrorists accountable for their actions (accountability). Further, these goals are intertwined with one another, the second buttressing the first—holding terrorists accountable for their actions, while pursued for its own merits, also is undertaken with the additional goal of preventing future terrorist actions.

ASSESSING CT STRIKES

Prior to the ongoing war against terrorism in the wake of the September 11 attacks, the U.S. had responded to acts of international terrorism against its interests with CT strikes three times: against Libya in 1986, against Iraq in 1993, and against targets in Sudan and Afghanistan, allegedly connected with Osama bin Laden's terrorist network, in 1998.³ In each case Presidents Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton, respectively, explained to the American people the reasons for

the strikes.⁴ Although there were factors unique to each case, two threads common to the justifications mirror U.S. CT policy goals: thwarting the terrorists' ability or desire to conduct future acts of terrorism (prevention), and holding the perpetrators responsible (accountability). Did the application of overt military action as an instrument of counter-terrorism response achieve these policy goals? An evaluation of this approach with respect to the first policy goal is undertaken first.

POLICY GOAL: PREVENTION

Libya On April 5, 1986, a bomb detonated in the washroom of West Berlin's La Belle discotheque, a club frequented by U.S. servicemen, killing a Turkish woman and two U.S. soldiers. Communications intercepts indicated Libyan complicity in the attack, and on April 14, the United States launched an air raid against terrorist-related facilities in Tripoli and Benghazi. After the strikes, President Reagan noted, "We believe that this preemptive action against (Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi's) terrorist installations will not only diminish Colonel Qadhafi's capacity to export terror, it will provide him with incentives and reasons to alter his criminal behavior."⁵

*Instead of thwarting
Libya's ability or intent to
conduct terrorist attacks
against U.S. interests,
the U.S. raid only seemed
to spur them on.*

The CT strikes, however, failed to achieve this objective. In the immediate wake of the strikes, terrorists working at Libya's behest are known to have attempted an attack on a U.S. officers' club in Ankara, Turkey. Further, Libya is suspected of involvement in the shootings of two U.S. Embassy communications officers in Sudan and Yemen; the purchasing of U.S. hostage Peter Kilburn from Lebanese Hizbollah and his subsequent murder; the bombing of an American Express office in London; and an attempted attack on a Bank of America office in Madrid. In July, three months after this initial wave of counterattacks, authorities arrested nine Togolese and Beninese nationals who confessed to orchestrating a plot at Libya's behest to attack the U.S. Embassy and a marketplace in Lome, Togo. In September 1986, the Abu Nidal Organization (ANO), a Libyan terrorist surrogate at the time, attempted to hijack Pan Am flight 73 in Karachi, Pakistan; two U.S. citizens were among the 21 killed by the terrorists during the attack.⁶

Accordingly, in the aftermath of the U.S. CT strikes, Libya is known to have sponsored two terrorist plots against U.S. facilities and is suspected to be behind five other anti-U.S. terrorist incidents. Libyan surrogate ANO also proved undeterred. Some may argue these attacks demonstrate a reflexive, near-term

counterattack ability Qadhafi had in place prior to the U.S. raid, rather than an indication the U.S. strikes had no effect on Libya's long-term ability or intent to wage terrorism. Individuals of this opinion could point to the fact that Libya is not known to have executed an anti-U.S. terrorist operation throughout the rest of 1986 and is only suspected of being connected to one anti-U.S. incident in 1987—the bombing of a building owned by a U.S. relief agency in Chad.⁷ To be sure, the U.S. State Department admitted that “detectable Libyan involvement in terrorist activity dropped significantly in 1986 and 1987.”⁸

In the same sentence, however, the State Department also observed that Qadhafi “shows no signs of forsaking terrorism.”⁹ Thus, with respect to the question of whether the strikes achieved the goal of preventing further Libyan acts of anti-U.S. terrorism, the answer appears to be “no.” Admittedly, it is difficult to confirm the absence of an occurrence and assign causality to that absence.¹⁰ It is possible that Libya had planned to conduct specific anti-U.S. attacks that were directly thwarted by the U.S. CT strikes. Yet, even if the U.S. raid prevented an

The fact that Iraq is not known to have conducted an anti-U.S. terrorist attack since the June 1993 strike is more likely a result of the massive disruption of its terrorist infrastructure from the Gulf War than from the 1993 counter-terrorist operation.

attack or two, the number of attacks that did occur overshadowed this absence. The CT strikes inspired a cycle of violence as Libya sought revenge by downing Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, in December 1988, which killed 270 individuals, including 189 U.S. citizens. In all, direct Libyan terrorist initiatives after the U.S. raid are known to have killed 196 U.S. citizens and, as noted above, possibly U.S. hostage Peter Kilburn.¹¹ Instead of thwarting Libya's ability or intent to conduct terrorist attacks against U.S. interests, the U.S. raid only seemed to spur them on.

Iraq In April 1993, shortly before former President George H.W. Bush was to begin a three-day visit to Kuwait, Kuwaiti authorities thwarted an assassination plot against the former President, seizing a Toyota Landcruiser rigged with a carbomb and arresting 11 Iraqi and three Kuwaiti nationals. U.S. intelligence information and law enforcement evidence revealed that the plot was conceived and orchestrated by the Iraqi Intelligence Service (IIS), and on June 26, the United States executed a cruise missile attack against the IIS headquarters. In line with the U.S. policy goal of preventing or countering threats, President Clinton stated, “Our intent was to target Iraq's capacity to support violence against the United States and other nations and to deter Saddam Hussein from supporting such outlaw behavior in the future.”¹²

Iraq is not known to have conducted or sponsored an anti-U.S. incident of international terrorism since the U.S. CT strikes in June 1993. Baghdad's terrorist-related activities generally have been restricted to anti-dissident targeting and providing safe haven to virtually defunct terrorist groups such as the Palestine Liberation Front (PLF) and ANO. While some might cite this limited scope as evidence that the U.S. strikes were effective in achieving the policy goal of preventing future acts of terrorism, Iraq's "good behavior" more likely is a function of its decisive military defeat during the Persian Gulf War rather than a result of the U.S. counter-terrorism strikes. During Operation Desert Storm, the U.S.-led coalition severely damaged Iraq's intelligence network and, concomitantly, Baghdad's ability to effectively conduct or support international terrorism. Reeling from the disruption of its terrorist apparatus, the Iraqi regime's plot to assassinate former President Bush is the only known anti-U.S. terrorist incident perpetrated by Iraq since the end of the Gulf War and, more important, it was not brought to fruition.

Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda never wavered in their resolve to attack U.S. interests after the 1998 counter-terrorism strikes, and on September 11 they unleashed a degree of terror previously unseen.

Even before the Gulf War came to an end, Iraq's ability to conduct anti-U.S. international terrorism was damaged. Of Baghdad's three known anti-U.S. attempts during Desert Storm, two were thwarted and the third resulted in the wounding of the terrorists before they could complete the mission.¹³ The fact that Iraq is not known to have conducted an anti-U.S. terrorist attack since the June 1993 CT strike is more likely a result of the massive disruption of its terrorist infrastructure from the Gulf War than from the 1993 counter-terrorist operation. That said, it must be noted that Iraq probably has recovered certain components of its terrorist network in the eight years since its last known anti-U.S. attempt. Saddam Hussein likely remains undeterred in his desire to attack the U.S. and would relish the opportunity to target U.S. interests with plausible deniability.

Osama bin Laden On August 7, 1998, a vehicle bomb detonated at the rear entrance of the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya. Almost simultaneously a second vehicle bomb exploded at the U.S. Embassy in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The two explosions killed 224 people, including 12 U.S. citizens, and wounded more than 4,000 others. In the wake of the bombings, the U.S. intelligence community received substantial credible information indicating Osama bin Laden's terrorist network had orchestrated, financed, and executed the attacks. Less than two weeks later, the United States launched Tomahawk cruise missiles against facilities in Sudan and Afghanistan linked with bin Laden's terrorist network. Five years after

the strike against Iraq and in line with the U.S. goal of preventing further terrorist action, President Clinton again explained to the American people, "Our objective was to damage their capacity to strike at Americans and other innocent people."¹⁴

These CT strikes are perhaps the gravest example of how such actions—as the U.S. has conducted them in the past—are overwhelmingly inadequate in crippling the capability or intent of terrorists to conduct or sponsor future acts of terrorism. Bin Laden and his organization, Al-Qaeda, never wavered in their resolve to attack U.S. interests after the 1998 counter-terrorism strikes and on September 11, unleashed a degree of terror previously unseen. The ineffectiveness of the 1998 strikes was evident long before the aerial suicide operations on U.S. soil. In late 1999, Jordanian authorities thwarted attacks against U.S. and Israeli tourists attending millennial activities in Jordan. These attacks were allegedly planned by bin Laden operatives. Moreover, bin Laden's terrorist network was culpable in the October 2000 attack against the *USS Cole* in the Yemeni port of Aden that killed 17 U.S. sailors.

A broader viewpoint with respect to the efficacy of the first U.S. strikes against bin Laden is provided by Bruce Hoffman: "So far as the application of military force goes, the benefits of (the August 1998) cruise missile attacks against Afghanistan and Sudan must be questioned in light of the lionization of bin Laden by Muslims and others throughout the world that has followed in the attacks' wake."¹⁵ These air strikes may have served to exalt bin Laden's status to mythic proportions, increasing his popularity among extremists throughout the region and thus providing a broader base of support for his future actions against the United States.

This review of the U.S. CT strikes against Libya in 1986, Iraq in 1993, and targets related to Osama bin Laden's network in Sudan and Afghanistan in 1998 reveals they did not achieve the U.S. counter-terrorism policy goal of preventing future acts of terrorism. Indeed, the 1986 and 1998 strikes spurred Qadhafi and bin Laden to conduct two of the most devastating terrorist attacks against U.S. interests—the destruction of Pan Am flight 103 and the four-pronged suicide operation on U.S. soil. Iraq's capability, on the other hand, was diminished. This, however, was not due to the U.S. CT strikes but rather to the disruption of its terrorist network during the Persian Gulf War. That said, Baghdad's failure to execute terrorism against U.S. and other Western interests in the decade following Gulf War military operations against Iraqi infrastructure suggests that overt military action could have utility as an instrument of counter-terrorism response under certain conditions. Those conditions appear more clearly after considering if U.S. CT strikes have achieved some degree of accountability.

POLICY GOAL: ACCOUNTABILITY

At the core of accountability is the notion of justice, and one aspect of justice is the right of the United States to defend itself against terrorism, a right guaranteed

by Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. In his address to the joint session of Congress, President Bush intimated that military action would be employed to achieve justice against the perpetrators of the September 11 attacks. He stated, "Whether we bring our enemies to justice, or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done."¹⁶ Yet, overt military action is one of the most aggressive instruments available in the counter-terrorism arsenal and often is regarded as a tool of hostility and punitive action rather than one of justice. In addition to the very nature of the action itself, this perception of hostility also is a function of the time frame in which the U.S. decisions to conduct retaliatory strikes have tended to occur. The strikes against Libya, Iraq, and bin Laden's network in 1998 each occurred within weeks, even days, of perpetrator identification. With emotions still raw, U.S. officials may have opted for the tool of hostility that reflected their current mindset; in contrast, if the perpetrators of the attacks were not identified until years or months later, it is possible that U.S. decision makers, removed from the anger of the moment, might have selected less aggressive measures to achieve accountability and bring the terrorists to justice.

The case of Pan Am 103 highlights this assertion. Although the bombing occurred in December 1988, Libya did not become a key suspect until more than a year later, and the U.S. (and Great Britain) did not formally charge Libyan agents with the attack until November 1991, nearly three years after the downing. Removed from the heat of the moment, U.S. officials pursued the less aggressive accountability option of

criminal justice action—indicting the two Libyan agents responsible for the attack and subsequently trying them in a court of law—instead of conducting armed action against the Libyan state as it had in 1986.¹⁷ While discussing the Bush administration's decision not to execute CT strikes against Libya this time around, former National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft later acknowledged, "You have to strike while the situation is hot."¹⁸ Military strikes, therefore, appear to be an instrument of hostility rather than justice.¹⁹

The characterization of military strikes as a tool of hostility suggests that this CT response option is a mechanism of punishment that, like justice, is also an aspect of accountability. But to what end do military strikes punish the terrorists? Certainly, armed action can devastate a nation's infrastructure and kill innocent people, undercutting the fabric of society. However, U.S. CT strikes in their previous applications have not been all-out offenses. The 1993 strike against Iraq was focused on one facility and timed to minimize casualties. The damage Libya suffered in 1986 likewise

If the perpetrators of the attacks were not identified until years or months later, it is possible that U.S. decision makers, removed from the anger of the moment, might have selected less aggressive measures.

was meager.²⁰ The words of Admiral William Crowe, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, indicate such U.S. military action has been less punishing than might be presumed: "Any time you plan a raid when you're over the target fifteen seconds, and you have such a high political content to the raid—to reduce your casualties, to reduce peripheral damage, to reduce all these things that are not military but political—you're not going to have a lot of damage."²¹ To what extent were the terrorists targeted in the 1986, 1993, and 1998 CT strikes punished? While lives were lost and damage was done, the leaders were still in power and—particularly in the cases of Qadhafi and bin Laden—undeterred. Their subsequent anti-U.S. planning and operations questions the extent to which they were punished and thus held accountable.

While Osama bin Laden's capture or death would be an important psychological blow to those vested in his invincibility, his loosely affiliated, broad-based Al-Qaeda network likely would have viability beyond his demise.

The inability of CT strikes to achieve accountability is further highlighted by the subsequent U.S. decisions to pursue or support the trial and conviction of the perpetrators of the La Belle discotheque bombing, the Bush assassination plot, and the U.S. embassy bombings in East Africa. To be sure, there is more than one way to hold terrorists accountable for their actions, and a state is not restricted to one response option to the exclusion of all others. Still, the pursuit or support of criminal justice in the wake of military action raises the question of whether the U.S. itself deemed the military response a sufficient mechanism of accountability.

ATTACKING THE CRITICAL NODES

To be effective in undermining and defeating terrorism, the instruments of counter-terrorism response, including CT strikes, must target the critical elements, or nodes, in a terrorist infrastructure. These nodes, which help facilitate the terrorists' ability to plan, train for, and execute operations, include financial networks, such as bank accounts, front companies, and fundraising channels; weapons and munitions; and documents, such as passports, licenses, and access badges that facilitate travel as well as entry into denied areas. A terrorist organization's political base is also a key node, as are training camps and bases for recruitment. Terrorists also need communication channels and an intelligence network to gather information in support of their operations. Three other critical nodes in a terrorist infrastructure are sanctuary (places of safe haven), cells (particularly if the group conducts transnational attacks), and leadership.

The leadership node is often cited as the linchpin element in a terrorist infrastructure. The death or removal from power of leading figures in an organization can often cripple that organization, reducing its viability and ability to conduct future attacks. The United States has long recognized the critical nature of the leadership element. For instance, one of the national intelligence memoranda and security documents prior to the U.S. raid on Libya noted that "no course of action short of stimulating Qadhafi's fall will bring any significant and enduring change in Libyan policies."²² Indeed, the U.S. strike on Libya, although not executed to assassinate Qadhafi, was "consciously structured in a way that made Qadhafi's death possible."²³ The same could be said for the attack against bin Laden's network in Afghanistan in 1998. In his address to the nation on the day of the strikes, Clinton stated, "We have every reason to believe that a gathering of key terrorist leaders was to take place there today, thus underscoring the urgency of our actions."²⁴

The critical nature of the leadership node is contingent upon the nature of the organization. For a centralized terrorist state-sponsor such as Qadhafi's Libya, his downfall in the 1980s likely would have had significant effect on Libyan-sponsored terrorist initiatives. The Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ) is an example of a terrorist organization whose leader was a linchpin in the group's viability. Indeed, the assassination of PIJ leader Fathi Shiqaqi in Malta in October 1995, likely by Israeli hands, stripped the PIJ of its ability to execute operations for several years. For other terrorist organizations, however, the leadership node is less critical. While Osama bin Laden's capture or death would be an important psychological blow to those vested in his invincibility, his loosely affiliated, broad-based Al-Qaeda network with alliances among various groups likely would have viability beyond bin Laden's demise. There is a difference between eliminating one leader, sometimes a figurehead, and effectively rooting out all elements in the leadership.

ATTACKING THE NODES VIA CT STRIKES?

The efficacy of CT strikes is tied to their ability to neutralize the critical nodes in a terrorist infrastructure. Do they have this ability? While the 1986, 1993, and 1998 strikes failed to target and destroy the key terrorist nodes in Libya, Iraq, and bin Laden's respective networks, Iraq's failure to conduct terrorist attacks in the decade since the Gulf War suggests that this option does have some utility in disrupting critical infrastructure nodes.

Although it was not the primary goal of the U.S.-led coalition, the 1991 war against Iraq had the residual effect of devastating Baghdad's terrorist centers of gravity, or key terrorist nodes. It damaged the intelligence structure that supported terrorist operations, wiped out personnel, virtually repealed Iraq's safe haven status, and disrupted financial and logistics networks. While the war did not kill Saddam Hussein, it effectively neutralized the leadership element, taking him out

of the game. Iraq became an international political pariah and one with neither a terrorist surrogate to do its bidding, nor the money or infrastructure to support one. Additionally, a strong monitoring presence activated against the country in the wake of the war further inhibited Saddam Hussein from executing terrorist operations. The war attacked Iraq on all fronts and, in doing so, assaulted virtually all the critical nodes in its terrorist network.

The CT strike against Iraq in 1993—a mere pinprick in comparison—failed to disrupt a key terrorist node. Although the strike targeted the Iraqi Intelligence Service (IIS) headquarters, a component in Iraq's terrorist network, the 23 precision-guided Tomahawk missiles were timed to hit the target at 2:00 a.m. local Baghdad time in an effort to minimize civilian casualties.²⁵ The timing necessarily lessened the destructive effects of the strike on the IIS leadership and

While overt military strikes against Iraq during the Persian Gulf War had the residual effect of disrupting Iraq's terrorist infrastructure, such action has limited utility against a non-state terrorist actor whose network may not be so readily identifiable.

personnel ultimately responsible for the Bush assassination plot.

The strikes against bin Laden-related targets in 1998 also had minimal effect on the Al-Qaeda terrorist infrastructure. In addition to the controversial target in Sudan, the missiles in Afghanistan struck a base camp, a support camp, and a terrorist training facility. While these targets in Afghanistan were part of bin Laden's terrorist network, the camps and training facilities themselves were not linchpins in bin Laden's ability to conduct terrorist attacks, as evidenced by his subsequent anti-U.S. operations. Arguably a key linchpin for bin

Laden's network is its sanctuary in Taliban-controlled land, permitting the organization to prepare for its terrorist operations in a safe environment.

While overt military strikes against Iraq during the Persian Gulf War had the residual effect of disrupting Iraq's terrorist infrastructure, such action has limited utility against a non-state terrorist actor whose network may not be so readily identifiable and thus does not easily lend itself to conventional targeting. Moreover, non-state actors necessarily reside on the territory of a state, which can present severe political and military impediments to overt military action. The United States, for example, is not likely to execute CT strikes against the New People's Army (NPA) in the Philippines or against the Revolutionary Organization 17 November in Greece. To be sure, the 1998 strikes against bin Laden's network targeted a non-state actor. However, the territories on which the targeted elements resided, Afghanistan and Sudan, were both politically and militarily vulnerable to such strikes.²⁶

It should be noted that CT strikes could be applied preemptively to achieve a narrow goal such as the destruction of a group's specific ability to produce chemical weapons.²⁷ Indeed, the 1998 strike in Sudan against an alleged bin Laden-sponsored chemical weapons facility had this objective, although that particular action is more appropriately couched in terms of the overall response to the U.S. embassy bombings in East Africa. Such preemptive action, another goal outlined in PDD-39 under the larger rubric of prevention, could help defeat a group's ability to employ weapons of mass destruction (such as chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons) in a terrorist attack. This goal-specific CT strike would not necessarily prevent terrorist actions from that group in general. Rather, it would likely inspire retaliation, albeit via conventional weapons or the unconventional use of conventional force, as witnessed on September 11.

ASSESSING THE CURRENT STRIKES

A full assessment of the current CT strikes in Afghanistan in response to the September 11 attacks could not be ventured at the time of this writing in early November 2001. That said, some general comments can be made. The current CT strikes contrast sharply with those of the past in terms of length and scope. However, they are unlikely to be sufficient in undermining bin Laden's ability to conduct future acts of terror because the strikes are unlikely, by themselves, to destroy the critical nodes in his terrorist infrastructure.

A central element in the Al-Qaeda terrorist network is its sanctuary in Taliban-controlled land because it allows the network to plan, train, and prepare for terrorist operations in a safe environment. Denying this sanctuary would force bin Laden and his associates to plan operations on the run, undercutting their ability to operate with success. While the CT strikes may help degrade the Taliban militarily, they must be augmented with unconventional warfare on the ground to replace the Taliban with a regime that will repeal bin Laden's safe haven.²⁸ Specifically, U.S. special forces must be engaged to help train, equip, and assist a viable resistance movement that will supplant the Taliban and to help guide surgical CT air strikes in support of the resistance movement's operations.

Special operations forces along with covert action must also be used to target other critical nodes in bin Laden's infrastructure, including cells beyond the sanctuary in Afghanistan. These unconventional, asymmetrical mechanisms can better target terrorist networks that operate in the shadows, beyond the reach of blunt military strikes. Such operations generally could include sabotaging a terrorist group's weapons and equipment, seizing personnel, employing foreign intelligence assets to directly target terrorist cells, and creating and exploiting group cleavages to facilitate internecine violence.²⁹

The United States must apply all weapons in its counter-terrorism arsenal in a comprehensive strategy to combat terrorism. Diplomatic measures, financial mechanisms, and law enforcement action are all necessary to uncover and thwart future terrorist plots as well as to prosecute and hold accountable those terrorists who do target the United States. As evidenced in President Bush's congressional address, the United States has recognized this need for an offensive on all fronts: "We will direct every resource at our command—every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence, every instrument of law enforcement, every financial influence, and every necessary weapon of war—to the disruption and to the defeat of the global terror network." No single mechanism of response, especially CT strikes, will be a panacea. Only a comprehensive approach gives U.S. CT policy a chance of long-term success in the fight against this increasingly deadly threat. ■

I would like to thank Corinne Werner, Robert Rosich, Hy Rothstein, Caleb Temple and Steve Werner for their helpful comments on various drafts and aspects of this article.

NOTES

- 1 George W. Bush, *Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People*, September 20, 2001, <<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/index.cfm?docid+5025>> (October 2, 2001), 3.
- 2 United States White House, *Presidential Decision Directive 39: U.S. Policy on Counterterrorism*, June 21, 1995, <<http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/pdd39.htm>> (October 3, 2000), 2.
- 3 Controversy surrounds the United States' decision to strike the El Shifa pharmaceutical plant in Khartoum, Sudan. See Vernon Loeb, "U.S. Wasn't Sure Plant Had Nerve Gas Role," *Washington Post*, August 21, 1999; and James Risen, "To Bomb Sudan Plant or Not: A Year Later, Debates Rankle," *The New York Times*, October 27, 1999. For an alternative viewpoint, see Paul R. Pillar, *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 2001), 107-109.
- 4 For details regarding the U.S. justifications for the strikes, please see William J. Clinton, "Address to the Nation on the Strike on Iraqi Intelligence Headquarters," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: William J. Clinton, 1993*, Book I (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1994), 938-939; William J. Clinton, "Address to the Nation on Military Action Against Terrorist Sites in Afghanistan and Sudan," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: William J. Clinton, 1998*, Book II (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 2000), 1460-1462; William J. Clinton, "Remarks on Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, on Military Action Against Terrorist Sites in Afghanistan and Sudan," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: William J. Clinton, 1998*, Book II (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 2000), 1460; and Ronald Reagan, "Address to the Nation on the United States Air Strike Against Libya," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1986*, Book I (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1988), 468-469.
- 5 Reagan, 469.
- 6 For details on anti-U.S. attacks sponsored by Libya in the wake of the U.S. raid, see United States Department of State, *Patterns of Global Terrorism: 1986* (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, January 1988).
- 7 See review of anti-U.S. incidents detailed in *Patterns: 1986* and United States Department of State, *Patterns of Global Terrorism: 1987* (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, August 1988).
- 8 *Patterns of Global Terrorism: 1987*, 36.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 I thank former colleague Robert Rosich for highlighting this point.

-
- 11 The known deaths of U.S. citizens at Libyan hands after the U.S. raid are the result of: (1) the December 21, 1988 bombing of Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland: 189 U.S. deaths; and (2) the September 19, 1989 bombing of French UTA flight 772 over Niger, killing 171 persons: seven U.S. deaths. Libya is also responsible for the December 1993 abduction and 1994 execution of Libyan dissident and human rights activist Mansur Kikhia, a U.S. green card holder.
 - 12 Clinton, "Address to the Nation," 1993, 938.
 - 13 During Operation Desert Storm, which began in January 1991, Iraqi agents are known to have attempted only three anti-U.S. terrorist operations, each of which failed: (1) On January 18 a bomb planted by Iraqi agents was discovered outside the U.S. Ambassador's residence in Jakarta; (2) On January 19 a bomb prematurely detonated near the Thomas Jefferson Cultural Center in Manila, the Philippines, killing the Iraqi transporting the device and injuring his partner before the mission was complete; and (3) Also, in January authorities uncovered and thwarted an Iraqi terrorist plot against the U.S. Embassy in Zimbabwe. In addition to these known attempts, Iraq is suspected in the bombing of the American Airlines Travel Agency in New Delhi, India, on January 16. For details on these operations, please see United States Department of State, *Patterns of Global Terrorism: 1991* (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, April 1992).
 - 14 Clinton, "Remarks on Martha's Vineyard," 1460.
 - 15 Bruce Hoffman, "Is Europe Soft on Terrorism?" *Foreign Policy* (Summer 1999): 74.
 - 16 Bush.
 - 17 In April 1999 Tripoli finally surrendered two Libyans accused of planting the bomb on the aircraft. In January 2001 a Scottish court seated in the Netherlands convicted Libyan intelligence agent Abdel Bassel al-Megrahi of 270 counts of murder. Co-defendant Al-Amin Khalifa Fhima was acquitted after the prosecution failed to prove his involvement "beyond a reasonable doubt."
 - 18 Brent Scowcroft, as cited in John Lancaster, "Compromising Positions," *Washington Post Magazine* (9 July 2000): 22.
 - 19 For a fuller explanation of U.S. decisions to conduct CT strikes in the "heat of the moment," see Michele L. Malvesti, "Explaining the United States' Decision to Strike Back at Terrorists," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 13 (2) (Summer 2001): 94-96.
 - 20 David C. Martin and John Walcott, *Best Laid Plans: The Inside Story on America's War Against Terrorism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 311.
 - 21 William Crowe, as quoted in Martin and Walcott, 311.
 - 22 Tim Zimmerman, "Coercive Diplomacy and Libya," in *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*, eds. Alexander L. George and William E. Simons, 2nd ed., (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 203.
 - 23 Zimmerman, 204.
 - 24 Clinton, "Address to the Nation on Military Action Against Terrorist Sites in Afghanistan and Sudan," 1461.
 - 25 William J. Clinton, "Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Strike on Iraqi Intelligence Headquarters," *Public Papers of the Presidents: William J. Clinton: 1993*, Book 1 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1994), 940.
 - 26 For a more detailed treatment of this argument, see Malvesti, 97-99.
 - 27 I credit Ambassador Allen Holmes with helping me develop the idea of military strikes achieving alternative effects. Personal interview, Nov. 9, 2000. Follow-up correspondence, Nov. 21, 2000.
 - 28 I credit Richard Shultz and Hy Rothstein with helping me develop this argument.
 - 29 For an excellent discussion of covert action as a tool for countering terrorism including these examples, see Roy Godson, *Dirty Tricks or Trump Cards: U.S. Covert Action and Counterintelligence* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 1995), 161-164, 173-174, 180-183.
-

