

Terrorism



Terrorism – Talking Points & Takeaways

President Obama is breaking records in breaking al Qaeda. President Obama has stepped up America's fight against terrorists. He is setting records for strikes against al Qaeda, launching more drone strikes in his first two years than President Bush did in his entire time in office. The result? He's killed and captured hundreds more al Qaeda fighters than the last Administration. Meanwhile, his rules of engagement mean we are killing less civilians - and creating fewer terrorists fueled by such deaths.

President Obama has opened new fronts against terrorism through Special Operations Forces. If you want to defeat a shadowy enemy like al Qaeda, you have to be able to fight in the shadows. That's why President Obama has expanded the budget of America's Special Operations Forces, and deployed them to more countries, so they can stop terrorism before it starts.

Under Obama, America is Finally Prosecuting Terrorists. President Bush failed to create a system to prosecute terrorists. The Obama administration is using a one-two combination of military tribunals and civilian courts to put terrorists behind bars in the most efficient way possible.

President Bush gave al Qaeda a second chance by taking his eye off the ball in Afghanistan. The Bush administration got distracted with Iraq, and failed to pony up the resources to finish the job in Afghanistan.

Bush Administration policies created 35x more terrorist attacks. In the year before President Bush took office, there were about 400 terrorist attacks around the world. Attacks began to skyrocket after the war in Iraq. By 2007, there were more than 14,000 attacks worldwide. That's 35 times more attacks.

Terrorism – An Ongoing, but Changed, Threat



Attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan increased in 2008 and 2009. 35% of attacks in 2008 occurred in South Asia with Afghanistan and Pakistan registering increased attacks.

Attacks Worldwide Decreased in 2008. After eight years of increase under President Bush, 2008 terrorist attacks worldwide decreased by 20%, with 30% fewer fatalities. Attacks in Iraq decreased by almost 50% from 2007 to 2008.

Muslims are the biggest victims of terrorism. Almost 50,000 individuals worldwide were either killed or injured by terrorist attacks in 2008. More than 50% were Muslims.

Al Qaeda (AQ). AQ's ability to wage mass-casualty terrorism has been undercut by US attacks on the network's leadership, finances and training camps. In this weakened state, the group has shifted tactics to focus on small-scale operations that are far harder to detect and disrupt.

September 11, 2001



Worst Terrorist Attack in US History. 9/11 inflicted casualties and material damages on a far greater scale than any other terrorist attack in recent history.

Loss of Life. Nearly 3,000 Americans lost their lives.

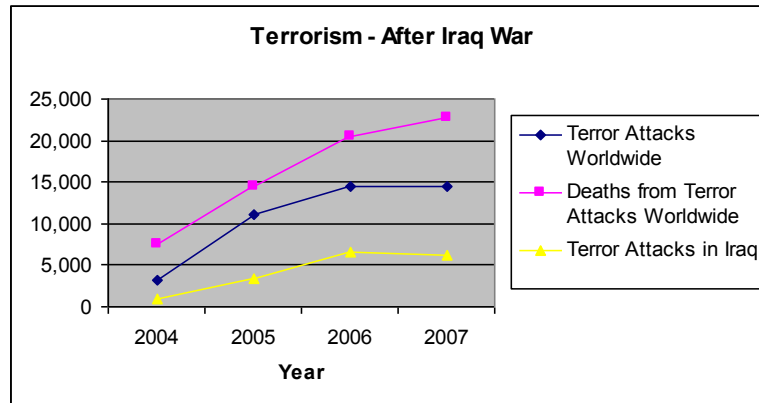
The World Trade Center was destroyed.

The Pentagon was severely damaged.

Economic Cost. Lower Manhattan lost approximately 30% of its office space, and the economic cost of the attacks is estimated to be anywhere between \$33 billion and \$50 billion.

Terrorist Attacks Skyrocket during Bush Years

In 2000, the year before President George W. Bush took office, there were 423 terrorist attacks around the world. Attacks began to skyrocket after the war in Iraq in 2003. By 2007, there were more than 14,000 attacks worldwide (NCTC – Worldwide Incidents Tracking System; State Department).



The Iraq War Contributed to Terrorism

“The Iraq War has become the ‘cause celebre’ for jihadists...and is shaping a new generation of terrorist leaders and operatives.”

- National Intelligence Estimate, 2006

Peter Bergen and Paul Cruickshank – researchers at the Center on Law and Security at the New York University School of Law – released a study in 2007 that claimed:

The war in Iraq caused a 607% rise in the average yearly incidence of terrorist attacks worldwide.

Excluding attacks in Iraq and Afghanistan, terrorist attacks worldwide increased by 35%, while attacks on Western targets increased by 25% after the Iraq War.
NOTE: These numbers do not include terrorist attacks carried out by Palestinian groups.

However, Improved Strategy Improved Iraq.

In 2008, terrorists attacks in Iraq dropped by 55%. This is due to many factors, including improved American counterinsurgency strategy leading to greater political stability in Iraq, improved strategy for training for Iraqi forces, successful capture or killing of many top Iraqi insurgents, and some relocation of insurgents to other areas, such as Somalia, Yemen, and Afghanistan.



Pakistan: Sponsor and Victim of Terror

Pakistan sponsored terrorist groups for decades to fight India in Kashmir - and to assist America's fight against the USSR in Afghanistan during the Cold War. Afghans still distrust Pakistan, and fear that it continues to use terrorists purposefully to disrupt Afghanistan. Now, some of these "Pakistani Taliban" groups have turned against Pakistan, taking large swaths of territory in 2009. Pakistan has been slow to change its threat perception that local terrorists--not India--are its greatest threat.



Attacks increase in Pakistan. Since 2005, fatalities have almost doubled every year; they reached 6,700 in 2008. Attacks quadrupled from 2006 to 2008.

And Spill into Afghanistan. Pakistani and Afghan Taliban are separate, but can work together. Taliban are using tribal zones in northern Pakistan as launching sites for attacks in Afghanistan.

Al Qaeda. AQ is probably headquartered in tribal Pakistan. It has been shaken by US airstrikes, assistance from Pakistani intelligence, and capture/killing of top leaders.

Local Ethnic Issues. Pakistan has never controlled these lawless areas, and many attacks are driven by tribal, local and religious identities; not the global jihadist movement.

Afghanistan: Fighting to keep al Qaeda out

Afghanistan was relatively peaceful in the years immediately after the US first entered in 2001. However, as we focused on Iraq, local insurgents regrouped. There are over three dozen separate terrorist groups fighting in Afghanistan, many with local grievances that are not tied to the global jihadist movement. However, if the Taliban succeed in retaking Afghanistan, they may allow al Qaeda to regain sanctuary in their country, as they did before. With sovereign protection and access to drug money, al Qaeda - which is set on attacking America - would be immensely strengthened and harder to root out.



Attacks increase in Afghanistan. From 2002 to 2006, insurgent attacks increased by 400%; with a big jump from 1,558 in 2005 to 4,542 in 2006. Attacks increased in 2009.

Al Qaeda. AQ activity has increased steadily from 2006 until 2009 due to ties with Taliban field commanders

Opium – Funding Terrorism. The Afghan Taliban received more than \$100 million from the opium trade in 2008.

Insurgents battered, not beaten. Extremists in Afghanistan have suffered setbacks at the hands of the US-led coalition, but continue to recruit new members and stage new attacks. Increased troops and counterinsurgency are just beginning to show their effects.

Yemen is Becoming a New Hot Spot

Many intelligence experts believe that Yemen is becoming a new base for al Qaeda. It is the ancestral home of the bin Laden family and many early al Qaeda members. It is also well-located to launch attacks against Saudi Arabia, a country al Qaeda wishes to take over.



Underwear Bomber & Fort Hood Shootings. The so-called “Underwear Bomber” who tried to blow up an airplane over Detroit received training in Yemen. The accused perpetrator of the Fort Hood shooting had ties to a religious cleric based in Yemen.

Yemenis in al Qaeda camps. Thousands—perhaps tens of thousands—of Yemenis fought in Afghanistan or trained in al Qaeda’s camps there.

A Jihadist Recruitment Pool. Yemen was second only to Saudi Arabia as a source of soldiers for the Islamist brigade that fought against Soviet forces in Afghanistan in the 1980s, which eventually gave birth to al Qaeda.

USS Cole. Al Qaeda is thought to be responsible for the 2000 bombing of the *USS Cole* in Yemen, which killed 17 US sailors and injured 39. 17 suspects were arrested in Yemen for the attack; 10 escaped in 2003.

Al Qaeda: Decentralizing, Harder to Corral

Al Qaeda Exists in Three Forms. Of all global terrorist organizations, al Qaeda (AQ) poses the greatest threat to the US. In the decade since being rooted from Afghanistan, al Qaeda has regrouped and taken three separate forms to allow it to continue.



1.) **A small cadre of senior leaders** – likely just a few hundred – on the Afghanistan/Pakistan border who conceive large scale attacks, such as 9/11. AQ is considered the only network capable of conducting a large-scale attack within the US. The US invasion of Afghanistan dealt AQ leadership a severe setback, but it regrouped in Pakistan. It is now difficult to say whether it could conduct another 9/11-style attack within the US. Keeping these senior leaders from rebuilding their operation, gaining steady funding from opium, and protection from a sovereign country is the focus of the war in Afghanistan.



2.) **A branding operation** that subsumes regional movements under the same name. Al Qaeda In Iraq (AQI) is an example of a major “branding” partner. These partners do not take direct orders from AQ leadership. But they may be given help, money, or training from AQ. They also conduct anti-American operations in hopes of leveraging the “AQ brand” to attract recruits, money, and weapons to causes that are often locally inspired.



3.) **A cause that inspires** unconnected cells and “lone wolf” individuals. The AQ “cause” has fostered thousands of self-radicalized copy-cats seeking to conduct attacks in their home countries. For example, the cells that conducted the 2005 London bombings may have received training from AQ leaders, but did not receive funding, direction, or recruits. They largely use internet resources and how-to manuals to launch home-grown terrorism.

The Taliban: Keep Out of Power, Keep Divided



Birth of the Taliban. The Taliban is a Muslim fundamentalist movement that formed out of the Pashtun ethnic group in the 1990s in Afghanistan and Pakistan. It took control of Afghanistan's government in 1996 and ruled until 2001. According to recent polling, less than 10% of the Afghan people support the Taliban's activities.

Relationship with al Qaeda. While in government, the Taliban harbored Osama bin Laden after 9/11, and many top AQ leaders have close and long standing relationships with major Taliban leaders.



Strength of the Taliban. The Taliban were dealt a major setback when the US invaded Afghanistan in 2001. However, the Bush administration got distracted in Iraq, and the Taliban grew back, claiming strongholds in the south and east of Afghanistan.

The Hardcore versus the "Accidental Guerilla." There are many different, local "Taliban" groups within the larger movement. Many people join these groups for money, employment, or local grievances, not because they support the Taliban's harsh religious views. These people have been called "Accidental Guerillas." A major goal of US policy is to separate these individuals from the hardcore elements of the Taliban.

The Challenges of Combating Terrorism



Challenge #1: Following the trends. Terrorism trends are consistently changing. When one group executes an innovative attack, other groups will seek to adopt it, whether or not they are affiliated. Groups adapt new tactics very quickly, and find ways to defeat high-level American technological defenses with simpler and simpler methods.

For instance, fertilizer-based bombs worked in Casablanca in 2003, and were adopted in Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005. As we became better at fighting that tactic, terrorists moved on to small, simultaneous attacks, such as the Mumbai attacks in December 2008, where a small group of gunmen attacked multiple targets, leaving 173 people dead and more than 300 injured.



Al Qaeda has even adjusted its tactics of late. US officials maintain that AQ's ability to wage mass-casualty terrorism has been undercut by US attacks on the network's leadership, finances and training camps. However, AQ seems to be responding by employing smaller scale attacks – such as the recent Fort Hood shootings and "Underwear Bomber" attack.

The Challenges of Combating Terrorism

Challenge #2: Dividing Our Enemies – Distinguishing between terrorist organizations.

Al Qaeda, Hamas and India's Maoist Naxalites are all terrorist organizations that are guilty of spilling innocent blood. Yet only al Qaeda has the potential reach and stated desire to execute large-scale attacks against America. It is vitally important for the US government to distinguish between terrorist organizations' differing goals, causes, and targets. By recognizing the various motivations of terrorist organizations and by understanding their different historical backgrounds, we can better divide our enemies and protect ourselves from attack.



Iraq presents an instructive case. Although not Islamic extremists, nationalist Sunni Arabs teamed up with al Qaeda to fight US forces in Iraq after the war began in 2003. However, al Qaeda's brutality and rigid theology eventually caused most of Iraq's Sunni Arab insurgents to turn on al Qaeda. U.S. military commanders smartly took advantage of this opportunity and began to court Sunni Arabs with guns and money. **By recognizing that terrorist acts can be motivated by different issues, the US was able to drive a wedge between AQ and other Sunni Arabs in Iraq.**

The Challenges of Combating Terrorism

Challenge #3: Distinguishing between violent and non-violent Islamist organizations. "Islamism," also known as "political Islam," is a belief system in which Islam provides a blueprint for religious life *and* political life. As opposed to secular Muslims, Islamists believe that Islamic laws and values ought to be at the foundation of all political activity. However, not all Islamists believe that violence must be used to enforce their vision of Islam on others. The Justice and Development Party of Turkey (AKP) and the Party for Justice and Development (PJD) in Morocco are examples of non-violent Islamist parties that participate in elections and abide by the results.



We must differentiate non-violent Islamist organizations, such as the AKP, and violent Islamist organizations, such as al Qaeda. Because some members of non-violent parties were formerly associated with violent groups, this can be difficult. However, Islamist parties enjoy greater popularity and legitimacy in the Muslim world than many secular parties. They are seen as less corrupt and less beholden to the West. Moreover, the most likely way to transition many groups from violence is to give them a say at the ballot box -- as occurred in Northern Ireland, when the IRA agreed to disarm to allow the Sinn Fein, its political arm, to hold power. To reduce terrorist movements in the Islamic world the US will need to accept the existence of non-violent Islamist parties, and work to ensure that they remain committed to non-violent politics.

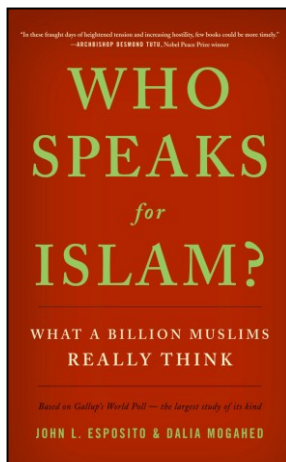
The Challenges of Combating Terrorism

Challenge #4: Attacking Current Terrorists Without Creating More. Terrorists are not a finite group. Their ranks can swell following US actions that help recruitment, and can diminish when they overplay their own hand—as occurred when terrorist groups in Pakistan began targeting Pakistani civilians and saw their support in that country plummet.

If the US is to succeed at defeating terrorists around the globe, it must act on the reality of what motivates terrorists, not on political rhetoric. In some instances where large numbers of AQ terrorists have congregated, it will sometimes make sense to introduce conventional ground forces into countries where it is suspected of hiding. Such warfare must minimize civilian death to avoid creating new recruits, as dictated by counterinsurgency strategy.

However, according to terrorism expert Peter Bergen, there are only 100-150 “hard core” members of al Qaeda left. Plus, multiple studies indicate that terrorists are recruited by family and friends engaged in jihad, especially if they are killed or tortured in captivity, while some are radicalized by television footage of fellow Muslims killed by Western forces. This means that large scale ground invasions can have the effect of increasing terrorism. Instead, the US should foster ties with other governments and provide them with the capabilities, training, and small-scale military assistance to tackle problems closer to their own borders. This is the tactic we are using in the Philippines, where local security forces are aided by US intelligence and small scale military assistance to minimize scorched-earth tactics of other militaries that can increase terrorist recruitment.

The Challenges of Combating Terrorism



Strategic Giving & Terrorism

Terrorist organizations such as Hamas and Hezbollah often find support from local populations because they provide social services – schools, hospitals, orphanages, etc. The people who benefit from these services may be morally opposed to terrorism, but they appreciate the social services, especially when governments are corrupt or incompetent and do not provide such help. The US cannot win everyone over by funding alternative social services, but it can win some. And every Muslim who decides that America is a friend is one more victory for the US.



The US has the economic and political resources to compete on this playing field. Without a friendly population to blend into, terrorists would have nowhere to hide and no one to recruit. By lending a helping hand, we can give Muslims fewer reasons to turn to terrorism or tolerate terrorists in their midst. After engaging in two wars in Muslim countries, the US has left far too many with the mistaken belief that it is prosecuting a “War on Islam.” Making headlines by giving – not just bombing – would help dispel this myth and allow Muslims to focus their attention on the murderous brutality of Islamic extremists.

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American Values – A Weapon Against Terrorism

Drying up international support of terrorism need not always require giving. In many cases, all the United States needs to do is act according to its values. The Abu Ghraib scandal and reports of torture have turned away potential informers and prompted many otherwise apolitical Muslims to engage in terrorist activities. In the words of one FBI counterterrorism expert:

“I am persuaded that revenge, in the form of a catastrophic attack on the homeland, is coming, that a new generation of jihadist martyrs, motivated in part by the images from Abu Ghraib, is, as we speak, planning to kill Americans and that nothing gleaned from the use of coercive interrogation techniques will be of any significant use in forestalling this calamitous eventuality.”



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Obama has a Strong Strategy Against Terrorism

Drone Attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan – Breaking Records in Breaking al Qaeda. President Obama has battered al Qaeda and the Taliban through drone strikes, seriously weakening their ability to stage wide-scale attacks. A record 53 targeted strikes took place in 2009, and the US is on pace to eclipse that number in 2010.

Closing Guantanamo Bay. Guantanamo Bay is the gift that keeps on giving to al Qaeda. It's the best propaganda poster they have, allowing them to promote lies about America and recruit insurgents that kill American service-members. That's why military leaders such as General David Petraeus support the closure of Guantanamo Bay; and that's why Obama is working to make that happen.



Prohibiting Torture. Torture produces bad intelligence and puts US troops at risk. Prohibiting torture leads to good intel and protects US service-members. It takes a propaganda weapon out of AQs hand, so they can't use it to spread lies about America or recruit new terrorists.

Major Victories. By refraining from torture, the US gained critical information by questioning the Underwear Bomber and the New York City bomber, while the FBI disrupted a major plot by Najibullah Zazi to bomb the New York City subway.

A Legal System to Prosecute Terror Suspects. President Bush left America with a legal mess and a backlog of prisoners. President Obama is working to create an effective system that uses civilian courts when appropriate, and uses military tribunals when needed.

Terrorism – Sources

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