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## **ATTACKING LEADERS DIRECTLY**

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### **ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING DIRECT ATTACKS**

Any decision to conduct a direct attack on an enemy leader is likely to be predicated on several key assumptions. In sanctioning such action, the decisionmaker will expect the attack to

- conform to existing moral, legal, and political constraints
- stand a reasonable chance of producing the physical, coercive, or deterrent effect desired
- produce no harmful, unintended consequences.

The experiential data on direct leadership attacks accumulated to date suggest that the decisionmaker would be well advised to approach the last two of these assumptions with considerable skepticism. Indeed, experience shows that direct leadership attacks are usually unsuccessful and, even when successful, rarely produce the effects intended. Moreover, some leadership attacks can be catastrophically counterproductive.

### **CONSTRAINTS ON LEADERSHIP ATTACKS**

Leadership attacks must adhere to the same moral, legal, and political constraints that circumscribe other U.S. military operations. The attacks must not violate the law of armed conflict or the principles of necessity, proportion, and discrimination that underlie the concept of a just war. Particular caution must be exercised to minimize injury

to innocent noncombatants and to avoid other unnecessary collateral damage.<sup>1</sup>

Care must also be taken to avoid military actions that might alienate the American public and thereby undermine U.S. domestic support for a continued U.S. military involvement. In addition, decision-makers must remain sensitive to the need to maintain some minimum of international support for U.S. military involvement, particularly among the populations and governments of states that provide bases and overflight rights for U.S. military operations.<sup>2</sup>

Each of these concerns may to some extent or other influence U.S. decisions about leadership attack. However, the constraint that will shape all such decisions will be the consistency of the proposed leadership attack with Executive Order 12333.

### **Executive Order 12333 Prohibiting Assassinations**

Executive Order 12333, which pertains to U.S. intelligence activities, contains provisions that limit the U.S. government's freedom of action to directly or indirectly promote attacks on enemy leaders or support their overthrow. Following congressional hearings about U.S. involvement in assassination plots against officials in the Congo, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic in the 1960s and in Chile in the early 1970s, President Ford—possibly to preempt legislation on the subject—issued Executive Order 11905 in 1976, which contained provisions designed to assure Congress and the U.S. public that such practices would not be repeated. The prohibitive provisions contained in President Ford's executive order were reissued without significant change by subsequent U.S. presidents and are now embodied in Executive Order 12333 as follows:

2.11 Prohibition on Assassination. No person employed by or acting on behalf of the United States Government shall engage in, or conspire to engage in, assassination.

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<sup>1</sup>For the law of armed conflict as it applies to air operations, see U.S. Department of the Air Force, *International Law: The Conduct of Armed Conflict and Air Operations*, AFP 110-31, Washington, D.C.: November 19, 1976. See also William V. O'Brien, *The Conduct of Just and Limited War*, New York: Praeger, 1981.

<sup>2</sup>Stephen T. Hosmer, *Constraints on U.S. Strategy in Third World Conflicts*, New York: Crane Russak & Company, 1987, p. 57.

2.12 Indirect Participation. No agency of the Intelligence Community shall participate in or request any person to undertake activities forbidden by this order.<sup>3</sup>

Over the years, commentators have disagreed about the scope of the executive order's prohibition. These arguments have risen in the main because the executive order provides no elucidation on what constitutes an assassination. Some believe that the order should be interpreted broadly as preventing the U.S. government "from directing, facilitating, encouraging, or even incidentally causing the killing of any specified individual, whatever the circumstances."<sup>4</sup> Other commentators view the prohibition more narrowly and see a distinction between operations in peacetime and operations in times of conflict, as well as between operations conducted covertly by intelligence personnel and operations conducted by U.S. military personnel. They see the executive order as barring only activities similar to the U.S. assassination attempts that gave rise to its issuance: peacetime efforts by U.S. intelligence officials to cause the death of targeted foreign persons, whose political activities are judged to be detrimental to U.S. security and foreign policy objectives.<sup>5</sup>

These commentators see a major distinction between intelligence operations aimed at assassination and military operations aimed at killing specific enemy combatants—including enemy leaders such as Saddam Hussein and Colonel Qaddafi—in situations where the United States is exercising its inherent right of self-defense.<sup>6</sup> According to W. Hays Parks, the United States generally recognizes three forms of self-defense: (1) "against an actual use of force, or hostile act," (2) "preemptive self-defense against an imminent use of force," and (3) "self-defense against a continuing threat."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in LCDR Patricia Zengel, "Assassination and the Law of Armed Conflict," *Military Law Review*, Fall 1991, pp. 144–145.

<sup>4</sup>Zengel (1991), pp. 145–146.

<sup>5</sup>Zengel (1991), p. 145.

<sup>6</sup>Zengel (1991), pp. 147–151.

<sup>7</sup>Parks argues that "a decision by the president to employ clandestine, low visibility, or overt military force would not constitute assassination if U.S. military forces were employed against the combatant forces of another nation, a guerrilla force, or a terrorist or other organization whose actions pose a threat to the security of the United States." (W. Hays Parks, "Memorandum of Law: Executive Order 12333 and Assassi-

### Executive Order 12333 in Practice

**Covert Attacks Have Been Constrained.** In addition to preventing U.S.-initiated assassinations, Executive Order 12333 has restricted U.S. involvement with foreign elements planning attacks or coups against leaders hostile to the United States. Members of the clandestine services have been barred from supporting any groups contemplating the killing of leaders and have been instructed to dissuade dissident groups from taking such action whenever possible.

For a period up to the late 1980s, senior U.S. officials apparently even prohibited the provision of U.S. assistance to any attack or coup by indigenous forces that might lead to the death of a country's leader in the heat of battle. Thus, even though it was U.S. policy to actively encourage the overthrow of Manuel Noriega, CIA personnel were apparently barred from providing advice to dissident Panamanian officers who were plotting a coup in October 1989 because of the possibility that the coup might lead to Noriega's death.<sup>8</sup> The Reagan administration reportedly had reached an agreement with the Senate Intelligence Committee in 1988 that American officials would not become involved in Panama with coup plotters whose efforts could result in the assassination of Noriega.<sup>9</sup> This interpretation of Executive Order 12333 was reportedly overturned in late 1989 by a Justice Department legal opinion that held that

the prohibition against supporting coup plotters applied only where assassination was the goal. . . . Additionally, the opinion made clear that Executive Order 12333 imposed no requirement to notify possible targets of coup plots.<sup>10</sup>

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nation," *Army Lawyer*, December 1989, p. 7.) Parks wrote the memorandum while serving as chief of the International Law Branch, International Affairs Division, Judge Advocate General, U.S. Army.

<sup>8</sup>Stephen Engelberg, "C.I.A. Seeks Looser Rules on Killings During Coups," *New York Times*, October 17, 1989a, p. A8.

<sup>9</sup>It was further agreed that, should the CIA officials discover that Panamanians working with the United States were planning to kill Noriega, the officials would move to prevent it. See Stephen Engelberg, "Reagan Agreed to Prevent Noriega Death," *New York Times*, October 23, 1989b, p. A10.

<sup>10</sup>Michael N. Schmitt, "State-Sponsored Assassination in International and Domestic Law," *Yale Journal of International Law*, Vol. 17, Summer 1992, pp. 672-673, and Engleberg (1989a), p. A1.

However, the prohibition against U.S. involvement with indigenous plots to kill leaders remained. When a CIA officer working with the Kurdish resistance in northern Iraq in 1995 reported that resistance forces had learned from a former Iraqi general that a certain road traveled by Saddam Hussein was vulnerable to ambush, officials at CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, ordered the officer to discourage the resistance fighters from even attempting such an attack.<sup>11</sup> Resistance forces encountering such U.S. restrictions no doubt must have wondered how they were to oust a tyrant as well-protected and ruthless as Saddam Hussein without causing risk to his life and limb.

**Overt Military Attacks Have Been Permitted.** In contrast to the restrictions it has imposed on covert operations, Executive Order 12333 has not prevented concerted, overt U.S. military attacks against facilities that were suspected of holding senior enemy leaders. Indeed, the executive order's prohibitions on assassination did not prevent: (1) the bombing of Qaddafi's home and headquarters in the Azziziyah Barracks compound during the 1986 U.S. raid on Libya; (2) the air attacks mounted during the 1991 Gulf War on the various presidential residences and command-and-control bunkers known or suspected to be used by Saddam Hussein; (3) the U.S. helicopter gunship raid of July 12, 1993, on the SNA command-and-control center in Mogadishu, Somalia, which was thought to house high-level SNA leaders, possibly including Aideed himself; (4) the 1998 cruise missile strikes against the military site in Afghanistan expected to be occupied by the terrorist leader Osama bin Laden; or (5) the 1999 NATO air attacks against Slobodan Milosevic's residences and bunkers in Serbia during Operation Allied Force.

However, U.S. leaders refused to identify Qaddafi, Saddam, Aideed, or Milosevic as the actual targets of these attacks.<sup>12</sup> Instead, officials

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<sup>11</sup>According to *Newsweek*, the CIA officer and the colleagues who served with him in the field were later investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which had picked up rumors that they had encouraged an illegal assassination plot. The investigation reportedly "went nowhere," and the CIA officer was decorated for his work in Iraq. See Evan Thomas, Christopher Dickey, and Gregory L. Vistica, "Bay of Pigs Redux," *Newsweek*, March 23, 1998, pp. 43–44.

<sup>12</sup>Clinton administration officials initially asserted that the 1998 U.S. cruise missile attacks on Afghanistan following the bombings of the U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam had targeted only training facilities and not specific individuals. Administration officials said that the timing of the attack was dictated by intelligence

described the attacks as attempts to destroy headquarters sites, command-and-control centers, and terrorist facilities.

In a television address to the nation about the raid on Libya, President Reagan categorized the targets as “headquarters, terrorist facilities, and military assets” that supported Qaddafi’s subversive activities.<sup>13</sup> During the planning of the raid, Qaddafi’s residence had been selected as a target over the objections of U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz who had argued that the air strikes “wouldn’t get him” and “would be seen as an attempt by us to kill him that failed.”<sup>14</sup>

Even though he likened Saddam Hussein to Hitler and eventually openly called for his removal from power, President George Bush refused to allow the Iraqi leader’s death to become a formal objective of the Coalition air campaign. Other senior American leaders also held the view that Saddam should not be made an explicit target. These military officers and civilian officials worried that making Saddam an objective might contravene Executive Order 12333. There was also a concern that the task of killing Saddam would prove too difficult and that if the Iraqi leader were made a formal target, the United States would be subject to an embarrassment similar to the one experienced during the prolonged hunt for General Noriega in Panama. Finally, U.S. leaders worried that the formal establishment of such an objective might require “complex and possibly counter-productive negotiations” with other powers, as a declared intent to eliminate Saddam would exceed the war aims agreed to in the various UN Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq.<sup>15</sup>

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that a meeting of terrorist leaders was to be held at the sites—and press reports about the attack indicated that the attendees were to include Osama bin Laden. Later, administration officials admitted that bin Laden was indeed the prime target of the attack. See William Cohen, Statement on CNN, August 21, 1998.

<sup>13</sup>George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1993, p. 686.

<sup>14</sup>Shultz (1993), p. 683.

<sup>15</sup>Thomas A. Keaney and Eliot A. Cohen, *Gulf War Air Power Survey: Summary Report*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993, pp. 45–46; Barry D. Watts et al. *Gulf War Air Power Survey (GWAPS)*, Vol. II: *Operations and Effects and Effectiveness*, Part II: *Effects and Effectiveness*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993b, pp. 76–77, 277; and Stephen T. Hosmer, *Psychological Effects of U.S. Air Operations in Four Wars 1941–1991: Lessons for U.S. Commanders*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, MR-576-AF, 1996, pp. 45–46.

Even though Saddam was not a declared target of the air campaign, Coalition planners made a concerted effort to attack the facilities used by Saddam and other senior Iraqi officials. As GEN Norman Schwarzkopf, who commanded Coalition forces, put it: “At the very top of our target lists were the bunkers where we knew [Saddam] and his senior commanders were likely to be working.”<sup>16</sup> Brent Scowcroft, President Bush’s National Security Adviser, also agreed that a deliberate effort was made to eliminate Saddam.<sup>17</sup> Among the targets that were struck by Coalition aircraft were the facilities known or suspected to be personally used by Saddam, including the presidential residences and palace and the presidential and national command-and-control bunkers.

On July 12, 1993, U.S. Cobra gunships and ground forces attacked one of General Aideed’s headquarters in Mogadishu during a meeting of senior SNA officials and Habr Gidr elders. The avowed objective of the attack was to “eliminate the SNA command center and its occupants” and to seize arms, documents, and communications equipment.<sup>18</sup> However, senior United Nations (UN) officials averred that Aideed himself was not a target, although this assertion is disputed by other well-placed sources.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>In *It Doesn’t Take a Hero*, New York: Linda Grey Bantam Books, 1992, pp. 318–319, H. Norman Schwarzkopf (GEN, USA, Ret.) writes that his and the other assertions by U.S. officials that the United States was not trying to kill Saddam were only “true, to a point.” For other accounts of the purposes and conduct of Coalition air operations against leadership targets, see Rick Atkinson, *Crusade: The Untold Story of the Persian Gulf War*, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993, pp. 272–274, 473; Michael R. Gordon and Bernard B. Trainor (LtGen., USMC, Ret.), *The General’s War: The Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf*, Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1995, pp. 100, 137–138, 199, 313–314, 410–411; and U.S. Department of Defense, *Conduct of the Persian Gulf War: Final Report to Congress*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, April 1992, pp. 95–96, 150.

<sup>17</sup>In an ABC News interview, General Scowcroft did not disagree with the statement that the United States had “deliberately set out to kill” Saddam. Scowcroft stated, “We don’t do assassinations, but yes we targeted all the places where Saddam might have been.” When asked, “So you deliberately set out to kill him if you possibly could?” Scowcroft replied, “Yes, that’s fair enough.” See Peter Jennings, “Unfinished Business: The CIA and Saddam Hussein,” report, ABC News, June 26, 1997.

<sup>18</sup>John L. Hirsch and Robert B. Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope*, Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1995, p. 121, note 17.

<sup>19</sup>Donatella Lorch, “U.N. Says It Will Press Effort to Disarm Somalis,” *New York Times*, July 14, 1993a, p. A6. However, John Drysdale, a senior UN adviser in Mogadishu,

Allied spokesmen also asserted that the April 22, 1999, NATO cruise missile attack on Slobodan Milosevic's official residence in Belgrade and the subsequent repeated attacks on the Dobanovci presidential villa and its associated command-and-control bunker were not aimed at assassinating the president of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY).<sup>20</sup> While the republic's officials described the attack on the Belgrade residence as "an assassination attempt," Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon disagreed, describing the residence as a legitimate military target that included "security and military bunkers" and functioned as a "command-and-control bunker." According to Bacon, NATO's aim was to attack "the head of the military regime" so as "to cut that off and break the central nervous system" of the FRY's military.<sup>21</sup>

#### **SITUATIONS IN WHICH DIRECT ATTACKS ARE LIKELY TO BE SANCTIONED**

The experience to date suggests that American decisionmakers may be willing to sanction direct military attacks that might kill enemy heads of state and other senior leaders so long as the attacks can be

- justified under the right of self-defense as protecting important U.S. national interests
- said to be directed against enemy facilities that serve a military or security function, such as command and control
- conducted by uniformed members of the armed services in accordance with the law of armed conflict (e.g., observing the rules of proportionality and necessity and avoiding, when possible, civilian casualties)

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reports that Aideed was a target. See John Drysdale, *Whatever Happened in Somalia?* London: HAAN Associates, 1994, p. 203.

<sup>20</sup>General Wesley K. Clark, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, reportedly helped identify a target associated with Milosevic's residence at Dobanovci where the FRY president "might have gone to ground." See Michael Ignatieff, "The Virtual Commander: How NATO Invented a New Kind of War," *New Yorker*, August 2, 1999, p. 30.

<sup>21</sup>See Michael Dobbs, "Allied Strike Denounced as 'Attempt on Milosevic,'" *Washington Post*, April 23, 1999, p. A33, and Bradley Graham, "Missiles Hit State TV, Residence of Milosevic," *Washington Post*, April 23, 1999, p. A33.

- embedded in a larger military campaign in which other targets are being attacked as well.

Finally, decisionmakers will also be more willing to sanction leadership attacks if they believe the targeted leader is the key or sole promoter and facilitator of the policy and behavior that the United States desires to change. There was every reason to believe, for example, that Iraq's invasion of and later attempt to hold onto Kuwait were primarily, if not exclusively, the result of Saddam Hussein's personal decisionmaking. Similarly, Qaddafi was clearly the prime mover behind Libya's export of terrorism and revolution during the mid-1980s. Similarly, Osama bin Laden has been the key organizer, leader, and financial backer of the Al-Qaeda terrorist network, which continues to attack U.S. civilian and military personnel both within the United States and around the world. Bin Laden is believed to have been responsible for the catastrophic loss of life that resulted from the September 11, 2001, hijackings and attacks on the New York's World Trade Center and on the Pentagon.

However, except in the case of a notorious terrorist, such as Osama bin Laden, decisionmakers will generally be loath to concede that specific enemy leaders are the targets of U.S. attack. They will be particularly reluctant to authorize attacks that might be perceived as clear-cut assassination attempts, such as the employment of ruses to lure foreign leaders to sites where they will be vulnerable to attack.<sup>22</sup>

These restraints will apply even in cases where it has been a long-standing U.S. policy to bring the leader down. When asked in February 1998 to comment on congressional suggestions that the United States should develop plans to kill Saddam Hussein, President Clinton said "it was against U.S. policy, based on an executive order put in place by President Ford, to design military plans aimed at killing other world leaders." It was Clinton's view that Executive Order 12333 mandates that "political killing or assassination, if you

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<sup>22</sup>During the planning of the 1985 raid on Libya, a scheme was reportedly put forward at one of the Reagan administration's Crisis Pre-Planning Group meetings to lure Qaddafi to his compound on the night it was to be struck. The scheme was poorly thought out but was also rejected on the grounds that it would have been an "assassination plot," pure and simple. See David C. Martin and John Walcott, *Best Laid Plans: The Inside Story of America's War Against Terrorism*, New York: Harper & Row, 1988, p. 296.

will, is against [U.S.] foreign policy interests.” “Would the Iraqi people be better off if there were a change in leadership?” Clinton asked. “I certainly think they would be. But that is not what the United Nations authorized us to do.”<sup>23</sup>

### **ASSESSING THE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF DIRECT ATTACKS**

As noted above, one of the key assumptions underlying attacks on leaders is the belief that the attacks will produce the coercive or deterrent effect desired. Most such attacks aim either to force a change in enemy policy by intimidating a leader to change his policy (if the attack misses) or to bring to power a successor who will adopt a different policy (if the attack succeeds). There may also be the assumption that even if the enemy’s policy does not change, the elimination of a leader will weaken the enemy’s war effort by causing a succession struggle or by bringing to power a leader with less charisma or competence.

Before ordering a leadership attack, decisionmakers must try to assess the potential risks and benefits of the attacks. Typically, such assessments will be hampered by gaps in the decisionmaker’s information about the situation in the enemy camp and by his limited insight into the potential unintended consequences of the attack. One key question will be the probable orientation and competence of the leader who is likely to succeed to power in the event the incumbent were to be killed.

It is doubtful that many future risk/benefit assessments will be as uncomplicated as the one conducted by U.S. Admiral Chester Nimitz when he decided to intercept Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto’s aircraft on its flight to Bougainville Island on April 18, 1943. Nimitz asked his intelligence officer: “Do we try to get him? If we did, could they replace him with someone better?” Upon receiving a negative reply,

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<sup>23</sup>At the time of the confrontation with Iraq over UN inspections in February 1998, a number of U.S. lawmakers “called for a military plan aimed not just at coercing the Iraqis to allow unfettered United Nations weapons inspections, but at killing Saddam.” See Mary Ann Akers, “Legality of Killing Saddam Debated,” *Washington Times*, February 6, 1998, p. A12.

Nimitz said, “All right, we’ll try it.”<sup>24</sup> The elimination of Yamamoto was a net plus in that news of the widely respected admiral’s demise depressed Japanese military and civilian morale. However, it is doubtful that Yamamoto’s absence from the command structure appreciably harmed Japan’s subsequent military conduct of the war.

As the following analysis will show, leadership attacks rarely produce positive outcomes even as modest as that of Yamamoto. An examination of past cases shows that direct attacks on leaders

- rarely produce wanted policy changes
- often fail to deter unwanted enemy behavior
- sometimes produce harmful unintended consequences
- frequently fail to kill the leader.

## **DIRECT ATTACKS RARELY PRODUCE WANTED POLICY CHANGES**

### **Political Assassinations Typically Prove Ineffective**

Experience shows that the demise of a targeted leader rarely produces the changes in government policy and practice anticipated. Historical analyses of the effects of political assassinations in both peacetime and war document the infrequency with which the killing of a particular leader has produced the results hoped for by the assassin. In addressing the question “Does assassination work?” one historian who examined the effects of assassinations from antiquity through modern times concluded

The history of countless assassinations, examined with an eye to comparing apparent motives with actual outcomes, contains almost none that produced results consonant with the aims of the doer, assuming those aims to have extended at all beyond the miserable taking of a life.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Spector, Ronald H., *Eagle Against the Sun*, New York: The Free Press, 1985, pp. 227–228. For a discussion of the shootdown, see also Hiroyuki Agawa, *The Reluctant Admiral: Yamamoto and the Imperial Navy*, Tokyo: Kodansha International Ltd., 1979, pp. 369–379.

<sup>25</sup>Franklin L. Ford, *Political Murder: From Tyrannicide to Terrorism*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985, p. 387.

Another analysis of the effects of the killing of important political personages during modern times found that

the impact of an assassination on the political system tends to be low . . . . In most cases . . . success (from the point of view of the assassin) is at best incomplete. Either no change takes place at all or the changes that do occur are incongruent with those desired by the assassin. Indeed one can say more than this: on most occasions, assassinations result in utter failure as far as the political aims of the conspirators are concerned, especially if these conspirators expect to profit politically from the deed.<sup>26</sup>

### **Revolutionary Movements May Even Survive Loss of Their Founding Leaders**

**Some Movements Weakened Through the Capture and Apostasy of Their Leaders.** Since the turn of the century, there have been several instances where the capture and subsequent apostasy of a particularly charismatic guerrilla leader have seriously weakened antigovernment rebellions. The capture of Philippine rebel leader Emilio Aquinaldo in 1901, for example, greatly reduced the armed resistance to the U.S. occupation of the Philippines. Once in American hands, Aquinaldo issued a proclamation calling on all insurgents to “lay down their arms and submit to American rule.” This appeal prompted the surrender of five of Aquinaldo’s seven regional commanders along with their troops.<sup>27</sup>

The Shining Path guerrilla movement in Peru was badly crippled by the 1992 capture in a Lima safe house of its founding father and leader, Abimael Guzman. Guzman’s capture proved particularly demoralizing to his followers because he subsequently “deserted” to the government side while in jail, calling on his former comrades to

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<sup>26</sup>Murray Clark Havens, Carl Leiden, and Karl M. Schmitt, *The Politics of Assassination*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970, pp. 148–149.

<sup>27</sup>See Uldarico S. Baclagon, *Philippine Campaigns*, Manila: Graphic House, 1952, p. 127; David Howard Bain, *Sitting in Darkness: Americans in the Philippines*, New York: Penguin Books, 1984, p. 385; and Bruce A. Ross (LCDR, USN), “The Case for Targeting Leadership in War,” *Naval War College Review*, Winter 1993, p. 78.

give up their arms and form a political party.<sup>28</sup> The Shining Path movement became fractionalized after Guzman's incarceration and has since been progressively weakened by the subsequent capture of other leaders, which has caused many of the guerrillas to lay down their arms.<sup>29</sup>

A similar pattern seems to have followed the 1998 capture and subsequent jail-cell political conversion of Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan. During his trial in a Turkish court, Ocalan called on the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) fighters he commanded to give up their armed struggle.<sup>30</sup> After Ocalan was sentenced to death on treason charges in June 1999, subordinate PKK leaders—no doubt partly motivated by the desire to save their leader from hanging—"pledged to abide by Ocalan's order to end their insurgency, to withdraw from Turkish territory and to transform themselves into a peaceful political movement."<sup>31</sup> Although gravely weakened, the PKK remains a residual presence in parts of southeastern Turkey.<sup>32</sup>

However, the removal of the architect of an enemy's war policy does not always result in its weakening. This is particularly true when the belligerent state or insurgent organization is governed by a collective leadership or has second-echelon leaders who are strongly motivated to continue a struggle.

**The Death of Ho Chi Minh.** Ho's death from natural causes in September 1969 during the midst of the Vietnam War did not in any measurable way impede North Vietnam's war effort or deflect the Hanoi regime from its goal of "liberating the South." The line of succession within the Hanoi leadership was firmly established within

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<sup>28</sup>See Calvin Sims, "On the Trail of Peru's Maoist Rebels," *New York Times*, August 8, 1996, p. A12.

<sup>29</sup>The principal leader who tried to reorganize the movement after Guzman's arrest, Oscar Ramirez Durand, Shining Path's military strategist, was captured in 1999. See Anthony Faiola, "Shining Path's Leading Light Is Captured Without a Fight," *Guardian Weekly*, July 22–28, 1999, p. 32.

<sup>30</sup>Ocalan described the uprising as "a mistake" and renounced any demands for Kurdish independence or even autonomy. See Selcan Hacaoglu, "PKK Leader Pleads for His Life," *Washington Times*, June 1, 1999, p. A9, and Amberin Zaman, "Kurds' Surrender Awakens Turkish Doves," *Washington Post*, October 7, 1999, p. 27.

<sup>31</sup>Zaman (1999), p. 27.

<sup>32</sup>See U.S. Department of State, *Turkey—Consular Information Sheet*, October 2, 2000c.

the North Vietnamese Politburo, as was the Politburo's war policy. As one U.S. general officer put it, after Ho's death "the Hanoi regime continued its unrelenting and uncompromising outlook without a change of beat."<sup>33</sup> Vietnamese communist cadres of all levels continued to use Ho's name and words to extract even greater sacrifices from the military and civilian populations under their control.

**Russian Attacks on Chechen Leaders.** During the course of the war in Chechnya, the Russian military and secret service made repeated attempts to capture or eliminate the leaders of the Chechen separatist movement. On April 21, 1996, the Chechen president, Dzhokhar Dudayev, was killed by a Russian missile while making a telephone call from a portable satellite dish in a copse near a village 20 miles southwest of Grozny. It is believed that the missile was air launched and guided to home in on Dudayev's satellite signal. This was the last of a series of Russian attempts to eliminate Dudayev, who had found it necessary to change locations constantly to elude the Russian secret services.<sup>34</sup>

In an interview shortly before his death, Dudayev reported that he had "lost count" of the number of assassination attempts made on him since 1991. The Russian secret services had "done everything to catch him," including "planting bugs in his car and giving one of his bodyguards at the peace talks a present of a commando knife with a transmitter concealed in the handle so that bomber planes could hunt him down."<sup>35</sup>

While Dudayev's removal from the scene may have given Boris Yeltsin a temporary political boost by clearing the way for peace negotiations with the Chechen separatists prior to the July 9, 1996, Russian presidential elections, his death did little if anything to further Russian objectives in Chechnya. The Chechen commanders and fighters were "determined to be seen to abide by their constitution and united in their desire not to let Russia exploit any internal differences," and accepted the succession to power of Dudayev's vice

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<sup>33</sup>GEN Bruce Palmer, Jr., *The 25-Year War: America's Military Role in Vietnam*, Lexington, Ky.: The University Press of Kentucky, 1984, p. 119.

<sup>34</sup>Carlotta Gall and Thomas de Waal, : *Calamity in the Caucasus*, New York: New York University Press, 1998, pp. 318–323.

<sup>35</sup>Gall and de Waal (1998), p. 323.

president, Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev.<sup>36</sup> They also remained steadfast in their commitment to wrest independence for Chechnya.

Less than a week after Yeltsin's reelection, the Russians mounted another coup de main, this time aimed at eliminating the remaining Chechen rebel leadership. In a calculated act and without provocation, the Russians broke the peace agreement they had recently negotiated with the Chechens by bombing the mountain village where virtually the entire Chechen leadership had gathered for a meeting. The bombing was followed by an airborne assault by Russian paratroopers to cut off escape routes from the village.

The operation proved to be a failure, as all the Chechen leaders got out safely. In response to this perfidy, the Chechen commanders resolved to go on the offensive and retake the Chechen capital of Grozny.<sup>37</sup> The recapture of Grozny by Chechen rebel infiltrators in August 1996 led to a new peace agreement, this time negotiated by Yeltsin's special envoy, General Alexander Lebed, that called for a total Russian military withdrawal from Chechnya.<sup>38</sup>

Following the August 1999 attack in Dagestan by a Chechen separatist group and the September 1999 bombings of two Moscow apartment buildings, Russian troops reentered Chechnya in October 1999 for the purported purpose of eliminating "foreign terrorists" from the North Caucasus.<sup>39</sup> By spring 2000, Russian forces controlled most Chechen territory, but the conflict continued as resistance fighters regularly ambushed federal convoys and troops.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, from all appearances, the Chechen resistance continues to

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<sup>36</sup>Yandarbiyev remained Chechen president until losing the presidential election in January 1997. Gall and de Waal (1998), pp. 324, 378.

<sup>37</sup>Gall and de Waal (1998), pp. 329–330.

<sup>38</sup>Gall and de Waal (1998), pp. 357–361.

<sup>39</sup>Russian authorities accused the Chechen government leaders of failing to halt rebel activities and failing to curb hostage taking and banditry in the republic. Russian officials also alleged that the Moscow bombings and similar explosions in other areas of the Russian Federation were the work of insurgent groups from Chechnya and Dagestan. However, they presented no evidence linking Chechen separatists to the bombings. See U.S. Department of State, *Patterns of Global Terrorism: 1999*, Washington, D.C.: April 2000a, and U.S. Department of State, *Background Notes: Russia*, May 2000b.

<sup>40</sup>U.S. Department of State (2000b).

be led by individuals no less committed than was Dudayev to their country's independence from Moscow.

### **DIRECT ATTACKS OFTEN FAIL TO DETER UNWANTED ENEMY BEHAVIOR**

The deterrent effect of leadership attacks also has yet to be proven. It is difficult to find instances where punitive attacks against enemy leaders or terrorists have reformed their behavior. The concerted Coalition attempts to eliminate Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War and its aftermath have not deterred the Iraqi leader from organizing an assassination attempt against former President Bush, repressing the marsh Arabs, invading the Kurd areas of northern Iraq, defying UN Security Council resolutions, ousting UN WMD inspectors, or attempting to militarily contest the allied no-fly zones. Obviously, the U.S. attempt on Osama bin Laden's life did not dissuade the terrorist leader from ordering further attacks on the U.S. homeland, embassies, and armed forces.

Those who see a deterrent value in leadership attack often point to the Israeli retaliations against terrorists and the U.S. bombing of Qaddafi as evidence of the efficacy of punitive responses. However, an examination of the record with regard to these cases provides little support for this thesis.

### **Israel's Countermeasures Against Terrorism**

It has long been Israel's policy to respond forcefully to terrorist attacks and threats against its citizens. Israeli countermeasures have aimed both to reduce the terrorist capabilities and propensities to strike and to limit the damage terrorist attacks can inflict.<sup>41</sup> In addition to a wide range of passive defense measures, Israeli countermeasures have focused on (1) counterforce operations designed to reduce terrorist resources, (2) impeding operations designed to intercept terrorist strikes, and (3) punishment operations mounted in response to completed strikes.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Hanan Alon, *Countering Palestinian Terrorism in Israel: Toward a Policy Analysis of Countermeasures*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, N-1567-FF, 1980, p. 69.

<sup>42</sup>Alon (1980), pp. 68–69.

Israel's counterforce, impeding, and punishment operations have been targeted at both terrorist leaders and rank and file. Over the years, numerous air, naval, and ground force strikes have been mounted against suspected terrorists and terrorist sites outside Israel, and a variety of clandestine attacks have been conducted against individual terrorists by a unit of Israel's Central Institute for Intelligence and Special Missions (Mossad). While these operations have no doubt impeded and even prevented terrorist strikes in some cases, countermeasures aimed at individual terrorists seem to have had marginal deterrent value.

An analysis of Israeli strikes against Palestinian terrorism from 1967 to 1978 produced by an Israel Defense Force officer conversant with Israeli countermeasures found "no proof that the strikes reduced the willingness of Palestinians to join the organizations and die for their cause." The study's author went on to write: "one may assume that, on the contrary, the strikes led to rage which may have encouraged joining terror organizations and taking part in their operations."<sup>43</sup>

Another assessment, written in 1998, concluded that Israel had experienced little success in its attempt "to frighten and deter terrorists and disrupt their plans for future violence."<sup>44</sup> Even though Mossad's clandestine unit had reportedly eliminated more than a dozen "master terrorists" over the years, it was asserted that this had not ended the threat. "Those who were assassinated were soon replaced and terrorism resumed, sometimes more ferociously than before." The assessment went on to assert that

except for Mr. [Ariel] Sharon and Prime Minister Netanyahu himself, most Cabinet ministers and many senior Mossad officials publicly and privately acknowledge the ineffectiveness of assassination as a weapon in the war against terrorism.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Alon (1980), pp. 80–81.

<sup>44</sup>Yossi Melman, "Israel's Darkest Secrets," *New York Times*, March 25, 1998, p. A27.

<sup>45</sup>Melman (1998), p. A27. Some Israeli intelligence officials argue that the elimination of leaders of "small terrorist groups" has proven effective, in that it has disrupted the groups and compelled their successor leaders to "spend considerable energy keeping low." Even if retaliation does not deter further terrorist attacks, some observers see the Israeli attacks on terrorist leaders as helping to buttress public morale. As Ehud Sprinzak, a professor at Hebrew University, put it: "When you consider that terrorism

Some of the Mossad operations directed at specific targets provoked damaging retaliation or proved counterproductive in other respects. In the view of at least some “wise and experienced Israeli intelligence officials,” the 1996 “successful” assassination of a Palestinian terrorist leader in Gaza led directly to a series of retaliatory suicide bombings that cost a number of Israeli lives.<sup>46</sup> A different example of counterproductive effects was provided by Mossad’s 1997 botched assassination attempt against a subordinate Hamas leader in Amman, Jordan. The attempted killing strained Israeli-Jordanian relations and forced the Israelis to release the senior Hamas spiritual leader they had previously held in captivity.<sup>47</sup>

During the intifada that began in late 2000, Israeli forces adopted a “tactic of hunting down and killing individual Palestinian militants whom Israel [held] responsible for planning attacks on or attacking its citizens.”<sup>48</sup> In a break with their past reticence to openly discuss assassination operations, senior Israeli officials publicly acknowledged this new “liquidations” policy. While Israeli officials asserted that the tactic was effective in thwarting attacks and degrading the Palestinians’ operational capability, Palestinian officials claimed the attacks were counterproductive and simply added “fuel to the fire” on the Palestinian streets.<sup>49</sup> Given the escalating violence witnessed

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is largely a psychological weapon, psychology is very important in the fight against terror. Sometimes you have to boost the morale of your own people.” Still others see Israel as having little choice but to employ assassination. Yossi Melman, a writer on security matters for the newspaper *Ha’aretz*, summed up the problem facing Israel as follows: “What else do you do? You’re involved in a game where you do not set the rules. There’s no other way for the state to protect itself except through a balance of terror, through revenge.” See Serge Schmemmann, “Hit Parade: The Harsh Logic of Assassination,” *New York Times*, Week in Review, October 12, 1997, pp. 1, 4.

<sup>46</sup>Raymond Close, “Hard Targets: We Can’t Defeat Terrorism with Bombs and Bombast,” *Washington Post*, August 30, 1998, pp. C1, C5.

<sup>47</sup>See the *Washington Times* interview with Geoffrey Kemp, “Botched Assassination Boosts Hamas, Hurts Netanyahu-Hussein Bond,” October 8, 1997, and Paul Koring, “Mossad Again Finds Itself in Public Glare: Amman Fiasco Recalls ’73 Incident,” *Washington Times*, October 8, 1997, p. A14. See also Youssef M. Ibrahim, “Jordan Is Angered by Israeli Findings on Assassination Fiasco,” *New York Times*, February 18, 1998, p. A7.

<sup>48</sup>See Deborah Sontag, “Israel Acknowledges Hunting Down Arab Militants,” *New York Times*, December 22, 2000, p. A10.

<sup>49</sup>Among other effects, the Israelis claimed that the assassinations had a “chilling effect on Palestinian paramilitary operations,” forced well-known Palestinian commanders to keep a “lower profile,” and “undermined the confidence of Palestinian

in the area during 2001, it is difficult to demonstrate that the new Israeli “liquidation” policy had either significantly stemmed Palestinian street violence or reduced suicide bombings and other attacks against Israeli citizens.

### The 1986 U.S. Raid Against Libya

One of the objectives of the 1986 Operation El Dorado Canyon air strikes on Libya was to dissuade Qaddafi from engaging in further terrorist attacks on Americans and U.S. allies. In his television address to the nation announcing the raids, President Reagan expressed the hope that the air strikes would both “diminish Colonel Qaddafi’s capacity to export terror” and “provide him with incentives and reasons to alter his criminal behavior.” The president warned, “Tonight we have done what we had to do. If necessary, we shall do it again.”<sup>50</sup> In a private communication to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher requesting the use of British bases for the raid, the president assessed the likely effect of the attacks as follows:

I have no illusion that these actions will eliminate the terrorist threat. But it will show that officially sponsored terrorist actions by a government—such as Libya has repeatedly perpetuated—will not be without cost. The loss of such state sponsorship will inevitably weaken the ability of terrorist organizations to carry out their criminal attacks even as we work through diplomatic, political, and economic channels to alleviate the more fundamental causes of such terrorism.<sup>51</sup>

Even though the U.S. attack on Qaddafi’s residence in the Azziziyah Barracks compound missed hitting Qaddafi directly, it reportedly left the Libyan leader psychologically shaken. Laser-guided bombs detonated within 50 feet of Qaddafi’s headquarters-residence and caused considerable damage to the compound. The bombing

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militiamen.” See Sontag (2000); see also Deborah Sontag, “Israel Hunts Down and Kills a Top Arafat Security Officer,” *New York Times*, February 14, 2001, p. A3; and Matt Rees, “The Work of Assassins,” *Time*, January 15, 2001, pp. 36–39.

<sup>50</sup>Quoted in Joseph T. Stanik, “*Swift and Effective Retribution*”: *The U.S. Sixth Fleet and the Confrontation with Qaddafi*, *The U.S. Navy in the Modern World Series*, No. 3, Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Center, Department of the Navy, 1996, p. 49.

<sup>51</sup>Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, New York: HarperCollins, 1993, p. 444.

reportedly killed Qaddafi's adopted 15-month-old daughter and seriously injured two of his sons.<sup>52</sup> Some accounts also list Qaddafi's wife among the injured.<sup>53</sup> Qaddafi escaped unharmed, apparently because he was in his underground bunker at the time of the attack.<sup>54</sup>

The attack, however, had its effects. In the months immediately following the El Dorado attack, Qaddafi reportedly suffered bouts of severe paranoia, apparently because of fears of another air attack or an American-backed assassination:

He abandoned his headquarters at [Azziziyah Barracks], and moved around the country in an armored bus. He faltered and his mind seemed to wander in the few taped speeches he made, though staff members said this was due largely to the strain of never sleeping in the same place two nights in a row.<sup>55</sup>

Eyewitnesses described Qaddafi as "shaken, confused, and uncharacteristically subdued."<sup>56</sup>

Immediately following the raid, there was a dramatic rise in terrorist events targeting Americans and American property abroad. One analysis counted 18 such events in April 1986.<sup>57</sup> Some of these terrorist events may have been sparked by provocative Libyan

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<sup>52</sup>Stanik (1996), pp. 41, 45.

<sup>53</sup>Edward Schumacher, "The United States and Libya," *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1986/1987, p. 335, and Stanik (1996), p. 45.

<sup>54</sup>Vice Admiral Frank Kelso, Commander, U.S. Sixth Fleet, stated after the attack that the U.S. aircraft did not carry "ordnance to go after deep bunkers." The absence of such weapons and Qaddafi's well-known propensity to change locations frequently make it unlikely that U.S. planners had high confidence that the attack would kill the Libyan dictator. However, there can be little doubt that U.S. officials hoped Qaddafi would be one of the casualties of the air strikes and had consciously structured the raid "in a way that made Qaddafi's death possible." See Brian L. Davis, *Qaddafi, Terrorism, and the Origins of the U.S. Attack on Libya*, New York: Praeger, 1990, p. 122, and Tim Zimmermann, "Coercive Diplomacy and Libya," in Alexander L. George & William E. Simons, eds., *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*, Second Edition, Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1994, p. 204.

<sup>55</sup>Schumacher (1986/1987), p. 336.

<sup>56</sup>Stanik (1996), p. 49.

<sup>57</sup>Henry W. Prunckun, Jr., *Operation El Dorado Canyon: A Military Solution to the Law Enforcement Problem of Terrorism: A Quantitative Analysis*, dissertation, University of South Australia, Wayville, South Australia: Slezak Associates, 1994, p. 48.

broadcast messages calling on Arab listeners to attack American persons and facilities.<sup>58</sup> Other events are believed to have been more directly the result of Libyan action, including the killing of one of the American and three of the British hostages then held in Lebanon, the shooting of an American embassy official in the Sudan and another in South Yemen, and the foiled terrorist operation to attack the U.S. Air Force officers' club in Turkey.<sup>59</sup>

In July 1986, nine Libyan-sponsored terrorists were arrested in Togo for planning to bomb a marketplace and the U.S. embassy in Benin. In August, terrorists whom the British believed were under Libyan control, attacked the United Kingdom base at Akrotiri on Cyprus and a crowded beach near the base.<sup>60</sup>

The El Dorado Canyon raid, however, also apparently led Qaddafi to eventually reduce the visibility and incidence of Libya's involvement in terrorist activities. While not disavowing terrorism as an instrument of state policy, Qaddafi did mute his rhetoric in support of terrorist groups.<sup>61</sup> After the spate of reprisal attacks against American and British targets in the immediate aftermath of the raid, the number of terrorist incidents linked to Libya began to decline.

As reported by the U.S. State Department, the number of terrorist incidents involving Libya "dropped from 19 in 1986 to 6 each in 1987 and 1988."<sup>62</sup> A quantitative analysis of all terrorist events through November 1987 also noted a worldwide drop-off in "high-severity" and "medium-severity" terrorist events in the months following the initial surge of reprisal attacks. However, the number of "low-severity" events increased significantly during the same period.<sup>63</sup>

Some of this reduction in Libyan terrorist activity may have resulted from the cutbacks and restrictions imposed on Libya's diplomatic

<sup>58</sup>Prunckun (1994), p. 48, note 38.

<sup>59</sup>The Libyans also made an abortive attempt to strike back by launching two missiles at the U.S. Coast Guard station located on the Italian island of Lampedusa. See Martin and Walcott (1988), pp. 313–314, and Stanik (1996), pp. 48–49.

<sup>60</sup>Zimmermann (1994), p. 217.

<sup>61</sup>Stanik (1996), p. 49.

<sup>62</sup>Stanik (1996), p. 49.

<sup>63</sup>Prunckun (1994), pp. 49–53.

officials in Europe, which degraded Qaddafi's capabilities to mount terrorist operations. Apparently galvanized by the prospect of U.S. military action against Libya, the members of the European Economic Community imposed their first meaningful sanctions against Libya on the eve of the April 15 raid by "reducing the number of Libyan diplomats in their countries and tightening surveillance on those remaining." Additional sanctions were enacted following the raid, including restrictions of the movements of Libyan diplomats, agreements not to admit Libyans suspected of involvement in terrorism, and further cutbacks in the size of Libya's "People's Bureau" diplomatic missions and student presence in particular European countries.<sup>64</sup> Qaddafi seems to have adopted a more disciplined approach to terrorist operations following the raid, enlisting more competent surrogates and striving to mask his personal involvement in particular terrorist operations.<sup>65</sup>

However, Qaddafi continued to employ terrorism against his perceived enemies. In December 1988, most likely as a delayed payback for the El Dorado Canyon raid, Qaddafi apparently arranged the sabotage of Pan Am Flight 103, which blew up over Lockerbie, Scotland, killing 270 persons, some 189 of whom were Americans. Less than a year later, in September 1989, Qaddafi apparently also repaid France for successfully opposing Libya's attempts to dominate Chad by having his agents plant a bomb on the French airliner UTA 772, which blew up over Niger in central Africa, killing 171 passengers and crew.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>Martin and Walcott (1988), p. 314. Secretary of State George Shultz attributed the European crackdown on Libya to the fact that the Europeans were "more alert now to the dangers posed to them by Libya, alarmed at the use of force by the United States, and anxious to show cooperation with a popular U.S. action." Shultz (1993), p. 687.

<sup>65</sup>The U.S. State Department reported in 1988 "that it had 'seen no evidence that Libya has abandoned support of international terrorism, subversion, and aggression.'" See Stanik (1996), p. 49.

<sup>66</sup>Stanik (1996), p. 49. On January 31, 2001, a Scottish court found a Libyan intelligence official, Abdelbaset Ali Mohamed Al Megrahi, guilty of murder in the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103. A second defendant, Al Amin Khalifa Fhimah, indicted for the bombing, was set free because of a lack of evidence. In rendering their verdict on the Pan Am bombing, the Scottish judges concluded: "The clear inference which we draw from this evidence is that the conception, planning and execution of the plot which led to the planting of the explosive device was of Libyan origin." French officials concluded that the Libyan intelligence service was also responsible for the bombing of UTA 772 and named Qaddafi's brother-in-law, Muhammad al-Sanusi, as the master-

It is important to note that in the downing of Pan Am 103, Qaddafi killed far more Americans than were killed in the 1986 Berlin disco bombing that triggered El Dorado Canyon or in all other Libyan terrorist operations involving U.S. citizens. Yet, when U.S. leaders finally determined the Libyan source of the Pan Am bombing, they did not mount another military raid on Libya as previous U.S. leaders had threatened but instead opted to take the matter to the UN Security Council, which eventually imposed air travel and other commercial sanctions on Libya.<sup>67</sup> Although Libya has not been implicated in any international terrorist act for several years, the U.S. Secretary of State continues to count the Libyan government among its list of state sponsors of terrorism.<sup>68</sup>

### **DIRECT ATTACKS CAN SOMETIMES PRODUCE HARMFUL UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES**

The possibility that a leadership attack may not produce the desired changes in enemy policy and behavior may be a risk that at least some decisionmakers will be prepared to accept. What will be far less palatable to the decisionmaker will be unanticipated outcomes that prove contrary to the initiator's interests. As the Israeli experience and the cases discussed below suggest, leadership attacks can produce counterproductive and even catastrophic results.

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mind of the attack. Given Qaddafi's tight control over his intelligence service, it is inconceivable that these terrorist operations could have occurred without his knowledge and direction. See Donald G. McNeil, Jr., "Libyan Convicted By Scottish Court in '88 Pan Am Blast," *New York Times*, January 1, 2001, pp. A1, A8, and Gerald Seenan, "How the Trap Closed on the Libyan Bomber," *Guardian Weekly*, February 8–14, 2001, p. 25.

<sup>67</sup>When Qaddafi initially refused to surrender the two suspects in the Pan Am bombing for trial, the United Nations banned international flights and the sale of certain aviation, oil, and defense equipment to Libya. While these and even more severe unilateral U.S. sanctions discouraged investment, made transport difficult, and increased import costs for Libya, they did not cripple the economy or significantly affect Libya's main industry and source of income, oil. See "Libya, Mystery of the Vanishing Oil Money," *Economist*, February 7, 1998, p. 48. However, the UN sanctions were sufficiently onerous that to get them suspended, Libya agreed to turn the suspects over to trial in the Netherlands. (See note 66, above.) The United States, however, continued to impose sanctions even after the January 31, 2001, verdict by the Scottish court, holding that Libya should accept responsibility for the bombing and pay compensation to the families of the victims. See Jane Perlez, "Unpersuaded by Verdict, Bush Backs Sanctions," *New York Times*, February 1, 2001, p. A8.

<sup>68</sup>U.S. Department of State (2000a).

### The British Plans to Assassinate Hitler

The dilemmas and uncertainties decisionmakers sometimes face when contemplating possible unintended consequences are manifest in the debate that surrounded the British plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler.

In June 1944, the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) began to develop plans to kill Hitler. A number of schemes for assassinating the German leader were devised using such instruments as poisons, sniper attacks conducted by commandos in fake Nazi uniforms, and explosives placed underneath Hitler's personal train. All the designs were predicated on attacking the German leader either at his alpine residence at the Berghof above Berchtesgaden or on the train that carried him to or from the Berghof retreat. The schemes were given the code name Operation Foxley.<sup>69</sup>

Senior British officials both within and outside the SOE had sharply divided views about the desirability of killing Hitler. The proponents of assassination held that the German war effort would collapse almost immediately if Hitler were eliminated.<sup>70</sup> They argued that Hitler's death would break the "mystical hold" he had on the German population and bring the war to a rapid conclusion. As a senior SOE officer put it: "Remove Hitler, and there is nothing left."<sup>71</sup>

Those opposing assassination held that Hitler's removal would not accelerate war termination. They further argued that Hitler's "strategic blundering made him more of an asset to the Allies alive than dead" and that his elimination by enemy hands would ensure his martyrdom among the German population. In particular, opponents feared that a successful assassination would create a new "stab-in-the-back legend" and help promote the myth that Germany's forces had not been defeated militarily—perceptions similar to those that had poisoned politics in the Weimar Republic

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<sup>69</sup>For a discussion of the operation, see Public Records Office, *Operation Foxley: The British Plan to Kill Hitler*, Kew, U.K., 1998. See also T. R. Reid, "British Spies Planned Many Deaths for Hitler," *Washington Post*, July 24, 1998a, p. A32, and, "Blow the Fuhrer from the Train and Other British Plots," *New York Times*, August 2, 1998, p. WK7.

<sup>70</sup>Public Records Office (1998), p. vii.

<sup>71</sup>Air Vice Marshal A. P. Ritchie, quoted in Warren Hoge, "Britain Reveals Elaborate Plots to Kill Hitler as War Nears End," *New York Times*, July 24, 1998, p. A10.

and facilitated the resurrection of German militarism after World War I.<sup>72</sup> Prime Minister Winston Churchill, among others, was convinced that the “elimination of Hitler would not be advantageous” and might prove “positively counterproductive.”<sup>73</sup>

Writing in October 1944, a SOE officer argued that assassination would prove counterproductive over both the short and the longer terms:

As a strategist, Hitler has been of the greatest possible assistance to the British war effort. To remove him from the wheel at a time when he and his fanatics have pledged themselves to defend every street and every house on German soil would almost inevitably canonize him and give birth to the myth that Germany would have been saved if he had lived.<sup>74</sup>

These arguments have carried over to the present day as historians still hold differing views about whether the elimination of Hitler by British hands after mid-1944, on balance, would have produced a positive or negative result.<sup>75</sup> Similar arguments have been raised about a successful German assassination of Hitler. One historian who speculated about the possible consequences that might have flowed had the July 20, 1944, German assassination attempt proved successful concluded that

It would be placing an extraordinary high value on a single outcome—the peaceful internal development of postwar Germany—to suggest that such a result was worth the price of [the] last nine months of Hitler’s war.<sup>76</sup>

As things turned out, none of the assassination schemes was ever acted upon. By the time the SOE’s assassination plan was fully developed in spring 1945, the war was virtually over—and had it been attempted, it certainly would have failed. The plan contemplated at that point in time suffered from a fatal operational flaw:

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<sup>72</sup>Public Records Office (1998), pp. vii–ix, and Hoge (1998), p. A10.

<sup>73</sup>Public Records Office (1998), p. 30.

<sup>74</sup>Quoted in “Blow the Fuhrer from the Train and Other British Plots” (1998), p. WK7.

<sup>75</sup>For a discussion of the possible desirable and undesirable consequences of a successful British assassination, see Public Records Office (1998), pp. vii–x.

<sup>76</sup>See Ford (1985), pp. 283–286.

Hitler was not at the Berghof. Allied intelligence was unable to keep track of Hitler's whereabouts, and as a consequence, the SOE's planning for an attack at the Berghof continued in "blissful ignorance" of the fact that Hitler had left Berchtesgaden nine months earlier, on July 14, 1944, "never to return."<sup>77</sup>

### The Proposal to Bomb Hirohito's Palace

In a November 1944 memorandum to Henry (Hap) Arnold, Commander, U.S. Army Air Force, Lauris Norstad, Commander, the 20th Air Force, proposed that the Army Air Force commemorate the anniversary of Pearl Harbor by mounting a huge strike against Emperor Hirohito's palace in Tokyo. General Norstad indicated that "he had discussed the idea with experts in Japanese psychology, who felt that even a partial destruction of the palace would 'directly attack the Emperor's position of the invulnerable deity.'"<sup>78</sup> General Arnold did not act on the proposal, considering the idea premature.<sup>79</sup>

When weighing the potential downside of bombing the palace, General Norstad focused on the risk that the Japanese might mistreat and perhaps kill U.S. prisoners of war in retaliation.<sup>80</sup> What General Norstad could not foresee was the crucial role Hirohito was to play in facilitating Japan's surrender some nine months later. When the last wartime Japanese cabinet was split over accepting allied surrender terms in August 1944, it was the emperor who broke the deadlock by ordering the cabinet ministers to accept the Allied conditions. Hirohito's intervention and public declarations were also crucial to inducing many potentially obstructionist Japanese military officers to accept the decision to terminate the war.<sup>81</sup> Had Hirohito been killed in an air attack on the palace, the Pacific war would likely have

<sup>77</sup>Public Records Office (1998), pp. x, 30.

<sup>78</sup>Ronald Schaffer, *Wings of Judgment: American Bombing in World War II*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1985, p. 123.

<sup>79</sup>General Arnold wrote on Norstad's memo: "Not at this time. Our position—bombing factories, docks, etc. is sound. Later destroy whole city." Quoted in Schaffer (1985), p. 123.

<sup>80</sup>Schaffer (1985), p. 123.

<sup>81</sup>Robert J. C. Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1954, pp. 166–233.

continued longer, as Hirohito's successor, the 11-year-old Crown Prince Akihito, would have lacked the personal authority to influence such deliberations.

### **The Hijacking of Ben Bella in Algeria**

From early on in the Algerian war, the French secret intelligence service had identified Ahmed Ben Bella as the “Number One leader” of the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) revolt and had mounted abortive attempts to assassinate him.<sup>82</sup> In October 1956, French military personnel managed to capture Ben Bella and several of his colleagues by illegally ordering Ben Bella's Moroccan-owned but French-piloted aircraft to land on French-held Algerian territory. Ben Bella and his party had been en route to Tunis to attend a summit conference with the Tunisian and Moroccan heads of state to discuss the future conduct of the war and the furtherance of the peace initiatives that were then secretly under way with representatives of the French government.<sup>83</sup>

Contrary to the French military's view that the neutralization of Ben Bella would constitute a major blow to the FLN, his capture, in retrospect, turned out to be a major blunder, as it increased the militancy of both the FLN and its outside supporters. The Tunisian and Moroccan leaders, who prior to that point had been pressing the FLN toward a negotiated peace with France, were so affronted by the hijacking that they “henceforth stiffened their resolve to back the Algerian war effort to the utmost.”<sup>84</sup>

More significantly, the capture of Ben Bella eliminated a widening rift and power struggle within the FLN command between the “exterior” leadership headed by Ben Bella, which concentrated on mobilizing international materiel and political support for the revolution, and the more hard-line “interior” FLN leaders, who directed most of the fighting. Secretly, the “interior” leaders were delighted by Ben Bella's capture and incarceration:

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<sup>82</sup>Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954–1962*, New York: Viking Press, 1977, p. 129.

<sup>83</sup>Horne (1977), pp. 159–160.

<sup>84</sup>Horne (1977), p. 160.

[U]nity had been restored and all argument about the primacy of the “interior” resolved—because now the “exterior” had simply ceased to exist. Any flagging by potential “soft-liners” had been effectively quelled. Thus had the French army devisors of the coup really done the enemy a good turn. Whatever else, the Ben Bella episode undoubtedly marked a major turning-point in the war. From now on the war could only proceed savagely and irreconcilably; any other way out had been sealed off.<sup>85</sup>

Ben Bella and his captured colleagues remained in French custody for four and one-half years. As a result of their prolonged incarceration, they grew increasingly embittered and intransigent and became “a source of constant embarrassment to successive French governments, a veritable time-bomb in their midst.” Ben Bella and the other prisoners eventually became so unforgiving and implacably militant toward the French that they were among the “hardest of the hard-liners” when setting terms for ending the war. During the subsequent peace talks with the French, Ben Bella strove to persuade FLN negotiators to oppose “any dilution of future Algerian sovereignty, or the continuance of French influence in Algeria in any form whatsoever.” French interest suffered a further blow when Ben Bella became the first president of Algeria in 1962.<sup>86</sup>

### **The 1993 U.S. Attacks on SNA Positions in Mogadishu**

Leadership attacks aimed at producing beneficial results can prove counterproductive when the assumptions underlying the operations fail to reflect existing cultural, political, and military realities. Such was the case in Mogadishu, Somalia, during June and July of 1993, when, following an SNA ambush of Pakistani peacekeepers, U.S. and other UN Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) II forces mounted air and ground attacks on weapon caches, radio facilities, and headquarters sites belonging to General Mohamed Farah Aideed and the SNA.<sup>87</sup> While these attacks were militarily effective in reducing the

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<sup>85</sup>Horne (1977), p. 161.

<sup>86</sup>Horne (1977), pp. 468–469.

<sup>87</sup>Twenty-four Pakistanis were killed and scores of others injured. In response to this attack, the UN Security Council on June 6, 1993, adopted Resolution 837, which reemphasized the need for the early disarmament of all Somali parties and the neutraliza-

SNA's immediate weapon inventories and neutralizing Aideed's radio, their political and psychological effects were counterproductive. Designed to destroy Aideed's power base, the attacks instead resulted in increased Somali support for Aideed and intensified Somali opposition to U.S. and UN forces.

From the standpoint of Somali perceptions, the most important of these attacks occurred on July 12, 1993, when U.S. Cobra gunships and ground forces assaulted one of Aideed's headquarters in Mogadishu during a meeting of senior SNA officials and Habr Gidr elders.<sup>88</sup> The attack aimed to "cripple" the SNA's command structure and, if possible, Aideed himself, as well as to capture arms, documents, and communications equipment.<sup>89</sup> The strike, which had been "approved in advance up the entire U.S. chain of command to the White House," was conducted without warning.<sup>90</sup> It was the first time U.S. or UN forces in Somalia had targeted people instead of buildings and arms depots.<sup>91</sup> The Cobras fired some 16 missiles into the building in "an attempt to eliminate the SNA command center and its occupants."<sup>92</sup>

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tion of radio broadcasting systems that contributed to the violence and attacks directed against UNOSOM II. Without naming Aideed specifically, the resolution essentially called for Aideed's arrest, trial, and punishment. See UN Security Council Resolution 837 (1993).

<sup>88</sup>According to John Drysdale, the purpose of the Somali meeting was to explain the findings of a meeting held on the previous day "concerning a renewal of dialogue between the SNA and UNOSOM II." See Drysdale (1994), pp. 202–203.

<sup>89</sup>The target of the attack was a house owned by Aideed's defense minister, Abdi Qaybdiid. See Keith B. Richburg, "In War on Aideed, UN Battled Itself: Internal Conflict Stymied Decisions of Military Operations," *Washington Post*, December 6, 1993.

<sup>90</sup>Hirsch and Oakley (1995), p. 121. According to Elizabeth Drew, President Clinton personally approved the gunship attack. She quotes Anthony Lake, then President Clinton's National Security Adviser, as saying that they had approved the attack, "But nobody was supposed to be killed." See Georgie Anne Geyer, "Syndrome That Began in Somalia," *Washington Times*, October 3, 1998, p. 19.

<sup>91</sup>According to Keith Richburg, "The Cobra gunners had a specific purpose—to kill everyone inside. They accomplished their mission with deadly accuracy, first blasting away the stairwells to prevent escape, then pounding missiles into the top floors of the old, whitewashed villa." Apparently, this mode of attack was chosen both because U.S. officials wanted to hold down U.S. casualties when "trying to catch Aideed" and because Pakistani troops had "refused to surround the house so that those meeting inside could be forced out and arrested." See Richburg (1993).

<sup>92</sup>Hirsch and Oakley (1995), p. 121.

The number killed in the attack remains a matter of dispute. American officials claimed that no more than 20 died and that all of those were “top Aideed militia leaders,” whereas the Somalis claimed some 73 were killed, including religious leaders and elders of the Habr Gidr subclan.<sup>93</sup> As previously mentioned, there is also some dispute as to whether Aideed was a target of the attack. American officials asserted that he was not a target, as he rarely attended such meetings.<sup>94</sup> However, John Drysdale suggests that Aideed was a target in that he was scheduled to attend the meeting and was not present only because he was unexpectedly called away for talks with an important international figure.<sup>95</sup>

UN military officials described the attack against Aideed’s headquarters as a “complete success.” One senior official called it “a very heavy hit on the SNA leadership. . . . They’re stunned.”<sup>96</sup> But the effects were, in fact, short lived. Rather than “crippling the SNA,” the strike “merely caused a brief period of disarray before the SNA regrouped with new leaders.”<sup>97</sup>

More important, instead of weakening Aideed’s power base, the raid greatly strengthened it. The attack generated intense bitterness among many Somalis toward U.S. and UN forces. Indeed, the raid turned out to be a defining event in the UNOSOM II peace operation, as it “affected Somali attitudes as much as the attack on the Pakistanis had influenced attitudes within UNOSOM.”<sup>98</sup> Anger was now directed toward other foreigners as well. Mobs turned on four journalists whom the SNA had invited to view the attack scene and beat them to death.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>93</sup>The International Committee of the Red Cross put the number of casualties at 54 killed and 161 wounded. See Richburg (1993), and Hirsch and Oakley (1995), p. 121, note 18.

<sup>94</sup>Lorch (1993a), p. A6.

<sup>95</sup>Drysdale (1994), p. 203.

<sup>96</sup>Lorch (1993a).

<sup>97</sup>Hirsch and Oakley (1995), p. 121, note 17.

<sup>98</sup>Hirsch and Oakley (1995), p. 121.

<sup>99</sup>Donatella Lorch “U.N. Finds Peace Elusive with Somali Leader at Large,” *New York Times*, July 15, 1993b, p. A10, and Lorch (1993a).

The strike also increased Somali support for Aideed at a time when his hold on power was less than robust. Other leaders within Aideed's Habr Gidr subclan had been close to running him out of town on several occasions. But as one observer put it:

Each time he was rescued, inadvertently, by the United States, Aideed deftly learned that he could unite his forces only by focusing on a common enemy; a call to arms against infidels and imperialists still gets adrenaline pumping in that part of Africa.<sup>100</sup>

In the view of U.S. Ambassador Robert Oakley and John Hirsch, the raid “caused a number of non-Habr Gidr to sympathize, and even join forces with, the SNA” and increased “Aideed’s support among those Habr Gidr who had not previously been with him.” The attack also had two additional “irrevocable” effects: It greatly diminished any chance for an accommodation between the SNA and the United States and UNOSOM II, and it led Aideed to make a calculated decision to kill Americans.<sup>101</sup>

According to Abdi Abshir Kahiye, a spokesman for the SNA whose father was killed in the air strike, Somalis after July 12 “tried to kill anybody American. There was no more United Nations—only Americans . . . and if you could kill Americans, it would start problems in America directly.”<sup>102</sup> Leaflets were circulated in Mogadishu calling on Muslims worldwide to “kill Americans” and proclaiming that Somalis would now launch an attack against American compounds in the city.<sup>103</sup> On August 8, the SNA exploded a remote con-

<sup>100</sup>Michael Maren, “Somalia: Whose Failure?” *Current History*, May 1996, p. 203.

<sup>101</sup>Hirsch and Oakley (1995), pp. 121–122. In the words of a Western journalist who was stationed in Mogadishu at the time, the intended result of the raid “backfired: any wavering Somali was now full committed against the UN, since the dead were largely elders who had left their shoes at the door.” See Scott Peterson, *Me Against My Brother*, New York: Routledge, 2000, p. 130.

<sup>102</sup>Richburg (1993). One Somali, who had “never taken up a gun throughout the war,” told a Western journalist that the raid had made him “so angry” that if he had encountered an American on the day of the attack, he “would have shot him.” The journalist described this Somali as “among the best-educated Somalis” he had ever met. See Peterson (2000), p. 133.

<sup>103</sup>The leaflets were signed by the *Muslim Voice*, a publication believed to be associated with Aideed’s faction.

trol mine under a humvee, killing four U.S. troops. Six more Americans were wounded by a land mine on August 22.<sup>104</sup>

The Somali opposition became so animated that it eventually rendered the continued presence of U.S. forces in Mogadishu untenable. During the October 3–4, 1993, firefight between U.S. Rangers and Aideed's militia, which followed the Ranger capture of SNA leaders in Aideed's section of Mogadishu, an estimated 1,000 Somali men, women, and children suffered death or injury in suicidal attacks on the U.S. forces.<sup>105</sup> The American casualties taken in this battle—18 killed and 75 wounded—greatly intensified the growing public and congressional opposition to the U.S. involvement in Somalia and prompted President Clinton to announce that all U.S. forces would be withdrawn from the country by March 31, 1994.<sup>106</sup>

### **DIRECT ATTACKS FREQUENTLY FAIL TO NEUTRALIZE THEIR INTENDED TARGETS**

Direct attacks on enemy leaders by external powers are rarely successful. The only successful U.S.-conducted or -orchestrated elimination of a major enemy leader by direct attack was the shoot-down of Admiral Yamamoto in 1943.

There is conflicting evidence as to whether American-supplied weapons may have been used in the shooting of Rafael Trujillo in May 1961, but the U.S. role in the Dominican leader's assassination seems to have been largely indirect.<sup>107</sup> The repeated U.S. plots to kill

<sup>104</sup>Hirsch and Oakley (1995), p. 122.

<sup>105</sup>Conservative counts put the number of Somali dead at 500. See Mark Bowden, *Black Hawk Down*, New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1999, p. 333.

<sup>106</sup>Richburg (1993). See also Eric V. Larson, *Casualties and Consensus*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, MR-726-RC, 1996, pp. 67–72.

<sup>107</sup>The United States generally supported the Dominican dissidents who shot Trujillo, and some U.S. personnel were aware that the dissidents intended to kill Trujillo. American officials furnished three pistols and three carbines to the dissidents, but “there is conflicting evidence concerning whether the weapons were knowingly supplied for use in the assassination and whether any of them were present at the scene.” The U.S. Senate investigation of alleged assassination plots also concluded that there was no direct U.S. involvement in the killings of Patrice Lumumba (Congo/Zaire) in 1961, Ngo Dinh Diem (South Vietnam) in 1963, and General Rene Schneider (Chile) in 1970. See U.S. Senate, *Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders: An*

Castro between 1960 and 1965 all failed. More recent U.S. attempts to capture Aided in Somalia and neutralize Qaddafi, Saddam, bin Laden, and Milosevic by air or cruise missile attack have also proved unsuccessful.

Such leaders are hard to kill because they devote careful attention to their personal security, and some have survived numerous coup and assassination attempts. They habitually maintain tight security about their planned movements and change locations frequently, conducting state business from a variety of safe houses and other sites and seldom sleeping more than a few nights at the same residence.<sup>108</sup>

At time of heightened peril, these leaders become even more peripatetic or seek protection in underground bunkers. In the weeks prior to the U.S. invasion of Panama, Noriega is said to have moved to different locations an average of five times a night.<sup>109</sup> Qaddafi is said to have escaped injury from U.S. attacks because he was located in an underground bunker at the time of the U.S. bombing. Qaddafi—fearing another U.S. aerial strike or a U.S.-prompted assassination attempt—abandoned his bunker and headquarters at Azziziyah Barracks compound and moved around Libya aboard an armored bus during the months immediately following the U.S. air attack.

### The Case of Saddam Hussein

Saddam, correctly assuming that residential areas would be off limits to Coalition air attacks, apparently relocated to a residential section of Baghdad even before the Gulf War bombing began.<sup>110</sup> The private homes he used for refuge were chosen specifically for their innocent appearance and were rarely slept in for more than one night.

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*Interim Report of the Select Committee to Study Government Operations*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975, pp. 4–5.

<sup>108</sup>Watts et al. (1993b), p. 277; Schumacher (1986/1987), p. 336; and Martin and Walcott (1988), p. 296.

<sup>109</sup>Thomas Donnelly, Margaret Roth, and Caleb Baker, *Operation Just Cause*, New York: Lexington Books, 1991, p. 105.

<sup>110</sup>William H. Arkin, “Baghdad: The Urban Sanctuary in Desert Storm?” *Airpower Journal*, Spring 1997, and Atkinson (1993).

Saddam's meetings with Yevgeni Primakov, the Soviet official whom Gorbachev sent to Baghdad to broker peace between Iraq and the Coalition, and with CNN correspondent Peter Arnett all took place in houses located in Baghdad residential areas.<sup>111</sup>

To escape attack, Saddam sometimes used American-made Wanderlodge recreational vehicles for staff conferences and travel.<sup>112</sup> For camouflage, he also used a lorry and an old taxicab to move about Baghdad. According to General Wafic Al Samarrai, former head of Iraqi military intelligence:

Saddam never frequented the well-known palaces all during the war. He moved in the city center and moved out to the outskirts but he was quite well away from the places where there was shelling. I think the nearest they got was ten kilometers from where he actually was. Saddam personally did not have any particular bunker for himself. There are many bunkers in Baghdad. Some of these are for command and control. Some of them are located under the presidential palace. One of them is in al Amariya, which was hit by U.S. aircraft and it claimed many lives.

He frequented all these bunkers . . . also many of these bunkers were built recently to protect people against nuclear attacks. He did not come to these bunkers to sleep in them. He preferred to sleep in very usual, normal civilian houses.<sup>113</sup>

It is also possible that, at some point during the bombing campaign, Saddam occupied facilities that were later struck. He may even have experienced one or more near misses, but we have no definitive evidence of this.

In contrast with General Samarrai's claim that Coalition strikes never got closer than ten kilometers from Saddam, GEN Norman

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<sup>111</sup>Saddam met with Arnett on January 28 and with Primakov on February 12, 1991. See Yevgeni Primakov, "My Final Visit with Saddam Hussein," *Time*, March 11, 1991, p. 44, and Robert D. McFadden, "Hussein Hints Use of All His Weapons," *New York Times*, January 29, 1991, p. A12.

<sup>112</sup>Barry D. Watts et al., *Gulf War Air Power Survey (GWAPS)*, Vol. II: *Operations and Effects and Effectiveness*, Part I: *Operations*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993a, p. 241.

<sup>113</sup>See *Frontline's* interview with General Samarrai ("The Gulf War," *Frontline*, PBS, January 28, 1997).

Schwarzkopf reports that Saddam barely escaped death when Coalition aircraft struck a large convoy in which he was riding: “It is my understanding that we hit the vehicle in front of his and the vehicle behind his and killed the bodyguards in it [but] didn’t touch him.”<sup>114</sup>

In at least one instance, Saddam seems to have evaded attack because of the Coalition’s concern to avoid civilian casualties. Gen Charles Horner, the Coalition Air Component commander, reports that in the final days of the war air planners got “very good” intelligence about the location of Saddam. However, the target was located in a residential area of Baghdad, which would have caused “widespread collateral damage.”<sup>115</sup>

### The Cases of Noriega and Aideed

Even with substantial U.S. forces on the ground, it has proved difficult to locate and capture leaders such as Manuel Noriega and Mohamed Aideed in urban settings. Noriega, who was knowledgeable about U.S. intelligence techniques as a result of his training in U.S. military intelligence schools, proved particularly adept at using deceptive measures to escape U.S. monitoring. Noriega’s capture was a priority objective of Operation Just Cause and in the weeks prior to the U.S. invasion, the U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) maintained an around-the-clock “Noriega watch” on the Panamanian leader’s daily activities and routes.<sup>116</sup> A cell of watchers at SOUTHCOM monitored radio and telephone communications relating to Noriega’s whereabouts and directed a network of U.S.- and Panamanian-manned surveillance teams that tracked Noriega’s movements. However, the false messages and decoy convoys routinely used to mask Noriega’s whereabouts caused the U.S. surveillance teams to lose track of the Panamanian leader just prior to the U.S. invasion. Thereafter, despite an intensive U.S. manhunt that barely missed apprehending Noriega on several occasions, the Panamanian leader managed to elude capture until he took refuge in the papal nunciature four days after the U.S. attack.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup>See *Frontline’s* interview with General Schwarzkopf (“The Gulf War,” 1997).

<sup>115</sup>See *Frontline’s* interview with General Horner (“The Gulf War,” 1997).

<sup>116</sup>Donnelly, Roth, and Baker (1991), p. 104.

<sup>117</sup>Donnelly, Roth, and Baker (1991), pp. 104–113.

General Aideed in Somalia proved an even more difficult subject to locate and capture. Despite continuous U.S. helicopter surveillance of Mogadishu and an intensive focus of other U.S. intelligence assets on determining his whereabouts, the wily Somali leader was able to elude capture during the entirety of the abortive U.S. and UN three-month-long “hunt for Aideed.”

To avoid detection, Aideed reportedly changed his location once or twice a night and adopted disguises and other deceptive tactics, including the planting of false information about his planned movements. Only two or three of his closest aides knew his whereabouts. To further bolster his personal security, Aideed reorganized his intelligence network and weeded out suspected double agents thought to be in the pay of the UN or the CIA. American commanders nevertheless claimed that U.S. forces had Aideed in their “gunsights at least twice” during the hunt but that the “goal was not to kill” the Somali leader.<sup>118</sup>

## **PREREQUISITES OF EFFECTIVE AIR ATTACKS ON ENEMY LEADERS**

### **Accurate, Up-to-Date Intelligence**

To effectively attack senior enemy leaders, air campaign planners will require accurate, up-to-date human (HUMINT) and other intelligence on the location of these leaders at a given time. They will also require the capability to strike targets effectively within the window provided by this intelligence.

Because wary leaders like Saddam Hussein frequently change location to foil assassination plots or military attacks, air planners will probably require either predictive or near-real-time intelligence on the whereabouts of their leadership targets. Acquiring such information will prove difficult in the types of closed, security-conscious regimes that the United States is most likely to confront.

Predictive intelligence will be needed if time is required to mount an attack. When commenting on the Coalition’s failure to hit Saddam

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<sup>118</sup>See Peterson (2000), pp. 96–98.

during the Gulf War, Harry E. Soyster, the Army general who headed the Defense Intelligence Agency during the bombing campaign, said,

You can find out, perhaps, where he has been. You can find out even where he is. But what you need to know is where he's going to be because you must mount an attack. And so it's almost an impossible task.<sup>119</sup>

Buster Glosson, the Air Force general who planned the Gulf War air campaign, indicated that a lack of HUMINT limited the Coalition's ability to locate Saddam:

There is no question it is tough to determine an enemy's intentions without some HUMINT. It's next to impossible to determine someone's location using only technical intelligence. If you don't have HUMINT as a fail-safe [or] sanity check, you find yourself boxing with a lot of shadows.<sup>120</sup>

The U.S. hunt for Aideed in Somalia was also greatly hampered by a lack of predictive intelligence and reliable HUMINT. General Joseph Hoar, Commander, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), saw a

real problem with HUMINT. The people who provided information lacked credibility. . . . I felt the possibility of getting predictive intelligence regarding Aideed was poor; it was. But we did everything favorable to produce the intelligence.<sup>121</sup>

It should be noted that the one U.S. success—the shoot-down of Admiral Yamamoto's aircraft in 1943—was based on predictive intelligence. The attack was made possible by the decryption of messages concerning the admiral's itinerary, which the Japanese had sent out from Rabaul on New Britain Island to alert subordinate units about the admiral's visit to their various commands.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>119</sup>See "The Gulf War" (1997).

<sup>120</sup>David A. Fulghum, "Glosson: U.S. Gulf War Shortfalls Linger," *Aviation Week & Space Technology*, January 29, 1996, p. 58.

<sup>121</sup>General Hoar's view about the shortcomings of HUMINT in Somalia was shared by the other U.S. commanders associated with the hunt for Aideed. See Senator John Warner and Senator Carl Levin, "Memorandum for Senator Thurmond and Senator Nunn," Washington, D.C.: U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services, September 29, 1995, p. 42.

<sup>122</sup>See Spector (1985), pp. 227–228, and Agawa (1979), pp. 369–379.

### **Special Munitions for Some Targets**

Special munitions may be required if the United States is to successfully attack enemy leaders in some future conflict situations. In the case of another war with North Korea, for example, a large inventory of penetrating weapons would be needed to attack effectively the numerous leadership and C<sup>3</sup> sites that are located deep underground throughout that country. In conflicts where enemy leaders seek refuge from the bombing in civilian residential areas, extremely accurate low-yield munitions will be required to attack such leadership sites without causing large-scale civilian casualties or collateral damage.

### **Assurances That the Attack Will Be Legal and Beneficial If Successful**

Finally, any deliberate attack against an enemy leader must, of course, be in keeping with the international law of armed conflict and Executive Order 12333. Decisionmakers must also determine that the likely benefits of the attack will outweigh its likely costs. In making this judgment, decisionmakers will have to try to assess possible longer-term consequences as well as the likely short-term effects.

Possible unintended consequences are likely to prove particularly difficult to assess. However, as with the physician, the decisionmaker's first concern should be to avoid doing harm. To help his evaluation of potential downside consequences, the decisionmaker should consult the views of area experts knowledgeable about the enemy country and its leadership.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>123</sup>Gen Charles Horner, the Coalition air commander during the 1991 Persian Gulf War, commented in an interview that even though stealth and precision technologies had allowed the United States to attack targets in heavily defended urban areas,

what we haven't learned is how to exploit this revolutionary capability. . . . I think we learned we need to do a better job of analysis of target systems, such as [enemy] "leadership" [sites] in order to have effective attacks, and I do not believe we are strong in the area of understanding other cultures, modes of leadership, and the ways to alter them so as to fit our goals and objectives in a war.

See the *Washington Post* interview with General Horner, "Fog of War" (1998).

It will be important that the decisionmaker understand how a successful leadership attack might affect popular attitudes both within the country and in the world at large, its probable impact on the sources of the enemy policy and behavior the United States finds injurious to its interests, and how it would most likely affect the inner power relationships within the enemy camp. Particular emphasis should be given to identifying and establishing the likely policy orientation of the targeted leader's probable successor.