COMBATTING INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM: THE ROLE OF CONGRESS

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I. DEFINITION OF THE ISSUE

Terrorism can be described as the use of actual or threatened violence to gain attention and to create fear and alarm, which in turn will cause people to exaggerate the strength of the terrorists and the importance of their cause. Since groups that use terrorist tactics are typically small and weak, the violence they practice must be deliberately shocking.

Repeatedly, during the last few years, small groups of extremists have demonstrated that by using terrorist tactics they can achieve disproportionate effects. They attract worldwide attention to themselves and their causes; they arouse worldwide alarm, and can create international incidents that national governments are compelled to deal with, often before a worldwide audience. To protect against their attacks or to respond to crisis situations they create, they force governments to expend resources -- manpower, money, the attention of senior officials -- vastly out of scale with the magnitude of the actual threat they pose.

Terrorism has in recent years become an international phenomenon. Modern jet air travel provides terrorists with worldwide mobility and also furnishes a source of convenient targets. Mass communications give them access to worldwide audiences through the almost instantaneous broadcasting of the violent dramas they create. New weapons have increased their capacity for violence, while society has become increasingly vulnerable because of growing dependence on complex systems and often fragile technology (civil aviation is an example) or technology that is potentially dangerous if exploited malevolently (an example here is nuclear energy).

International terrorism is simply terrorism that has clear international consequences. It includes incidents in which terrorists go abroad to strike their targets (as in the Lod Airport massacre), or select victims or targets because of their connections to a foreign

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state (as in the assassination or kidnapping of a diplomat), or attack international lines of communication and commerce (as in the hijacking of an airliner).

Although it is legitimate to focus our attention on international terrorism because it poses specific problems for the world community, we should bear in mind that the term "international terrorism" is a somewhat artificial construct. It does not account for all of the terrorist violence in the world. It excludes the considerable amount of violence carried out by terrorists operating within their own countries and against their own nationals, and by many governments against their own citizens. This terrorism, although internal, concerns all nations because it may imperil their nationals in such countries, be carried abroad to other countries, be imitated by other groups, affect the stability of nations individually and collectively, strain relations between nations, or entail intolerable violations of fundamental human rights.

II. BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

International terrorism took a sharp upswing in the late 1960s. Latin American guerrillas moved into the cities and adopted terrorist tactics as a means of gaining international attention; the Palestinians initiated an international campaign of terrorism against Israel; and small terrorist groups appeared in Japan, Western Europe, and the United States. Once the utility of terrorist tactics was demonstrated, new groups were inspired (and by watching instructed how) to employ them and terrorism became a continuing phenomenon.

The following two figures illustrate this increase. The first shows the total number of international terrorist incidents by year from 1968 to September 30, 1976. It shows a peak in the years 1973 and 1974, a decline in 1975, and an increase again in the first nine months of 1976.

The second figure, a record of the casualties incurred in these incidents, shows a similar increase to the year 1974, a decline in 1975, and a sharp rise again in the first nine months of 1976.
Fig. 1 — Total number of incidents of international terrorism

Fig. 2 — Total number of casualties in incidents of international terrorism

* Number of casualties as of October 6, 1976
Some observers have found encouragement in the apparent decline of international terrorism in the last year. Judging from the figures presented here, however, it would be dangerous to conclude that international terrorism has leveled off or might even be declining; the data for 1976 show no such decline. If decrease there was, it is in the eyes of the audience, for terrorism is largely a matter of perceptions. Neither the number of incidents nor body counts accurately reflect the amount of terrorism which comprises not only the actions of terrorists but also the publicity, the shock, the terror that these actions generate.

To illustrate the point, fewer incidents of international terrorism occurred in 1972 than in 1970; however, two particularly shocking episodes in 1972, the Lod Airport massacre in May and the Munich incident in September, appalled the world and provoked many governments to undertake serious measures to combat terrorism. In the United States, it led to the creation of the Cabinet Committee to Combat Terrorism.

Similarly, many people labeled 1975 as the "year of the terrorist." Certainly, 1975 seemed to surpass previous years in the number of dramatic and shocking episodes, particularly in Western Europe, and thus closer to us. Two attempts to shoot down airliners at Orly Field in Paris, the kidnapping of a candidate for mayor of West Berlin, the seizure of embassies in Stockholm, Kuala Lumpur, and Madrid, the IRA bombing campaign in London, the assassination of Turkish ambassadors in Austria and France, the hijacking of a train in The Netherlands, the takeover of the Indonesian consulate in Amsterdam, and the seizure of the OPEC oil ministers in Vienna, all combined to produce a spectacular effect. However, measured by the number of incidents and by the number of casualties, international terrorism had, in fact, declined in 1975. Fewer incidents of terrorism occurred than in 1973 or 1974, and fewer persons were killed than in 1974.

There were no fewer incidents of international terrorism in 1976 than occurred in 1975, and 1976 was no less bloody. The primary
difference was that 1976 saw more assassinations and murders and fewer hostage incidents. A hijacking, kidnapping, or other kind of hostage incident may be in the news for days, even weeks; murder may be news only for a day. Probably more people recall that Croatian terrorists hijacked an airliner on which no one was killed than recall that Cuban extremists planted a bomb aboard an airliner which killed 73 passengers.

The actual amount of terrorist violence overall has been exaggerated -- evidence of its success in gaining worldwide attention. Measured against the world volume of violence, terrorist violence is trivial. About a thousand persons have died in international terrorist incidents since 1968; another two thousand have been injured. If we add the casualties of domestic political violence (as in Belfast or Buenos Aires), the total number of deaths may ascend to ten thousand at the most. More than twice that many are murdered every year in the United States. Since 1968, six million people in the world have died in 13 wars.

But terrorism is more appropriately measured by the amount of attention it receives, by its ability to create national and international crises, by the enormous costs of protection against terrorist attacks, by the alarm it creates, and the consequences these have for society. Terrorist tactics are calculated to rivet attention and create alarm. In this they succeed. The fundamental issue is fear. Perhaps the biggest danger posed by terrorists lies not in the physical damage they do, but in the atmosphere of alarm they create, which corrodes democracy and breeds repression.

III. TRENDS AND POTENTIALITIES

While any forecasts about terrorism in the future are conjectural, some trends are discernible. Although few terrorists have reached their stated long-range goals, and in that respect terrorism is a failure, terrorism has proved useful in getting publicity and occasionally obtaining some political concessions. These limited tactical successes may encourage terrorists, who are typically short-sighted politically, to continue to use terrorist tactics. Terrorism is likely to persist and perhaps increase as a mode of political expression.
Terrorists will remain highly mobile, able to strike targets anywhere in the world. They appear to be getting more sophisticated in their tactics, their weapons, and their exploitation of the media. They will continue to emulate each other's tactics, especially those that win international publicity. Terrorist groups appear to be strengthening their links with each other, forming alliances, and providing mutual assistance. One result is the emergence of multinational freelance terrorist groups that are willing to carry out attacks on behalf of causes with which they are sympathetic, or to undertake specific operations or campaigns of terrorism on commission from client groups or governments. Nations or groups unable or unwilling to mount a serious challenge on the battlefield may employ such groups or adopt terrorist tactics as a means of surrogate warfare against their opponents.

Looking beyond terrorism, we are witnessing a diffusion of power in the world. The number of independent countries has tripled since World War II. Within a decade the inhabited portion of the globe may be subdivided into 200 independent countries. Power is also descending to subnational groups, terrorists among them, who are acquiring a capacity for violence once possessed only by national armies. As a result, we are seeing an atomization of conflict: many little wars -- within nations, between nations, between groups and nations, not confined territorially but rather spilling over into other parts of the world -- a world of many Belfasts, Beiruts, and Buenos Aires. These developments may compel us to alter our concepts of national security.

IV. THE ROLE OF CONGRESS

Some lawmakers talk about "eradicating" or "curing the malady of" terrorism in terms normally reserved for the fields of epidemiology and public health. International conventions will not end terrorism, although they are useful in building international consensus against the routine use of terrorist tactics. National governments will be largely on their own. The U.S. government cannot eradicate terrorism. It can improve its understanding of terrorism (to avoid ill-conceived solutions), attempt to contain it within tolerable limits, try to deter the more heinous terrorist actions, and equip itself to respond effectively to terrorist incidents.
Coping with terrorism is not a matter of legislation; it is a matter of government competence, the ability to respond effectively to a new range of threats and incidents. While this appears to be primarily a function of the executive branch of government, the Congress can play an important role in policy formulation and in promoting the development of the necessary instruments to combat terrorism. At the same time, the problem of international terrorism adds a new dimension to a number of other foreign policy issues (such as arms transfers, human rights, and nuclear exports), where legislation may be involved.

V. SPECIFIC ISSUES

"Where do you stand on terrorism?" is not a question likely to cause much hesitation in answering. Like war, famine, pestilence, and death, few will argue fervently on its behalf. The policy of the U.S. government toward terrorism is not much of an issue. It is not difficult to denounce terrorist tactics, or the systematic use of terror by governments themselves -- wholesale arrests of political dissidents, torture, violation of fundamental human rights. The questions arise in the application of policy. Would declaratory policy prevent the government from establishing discrete channels of communication with any group that has sponsored or employed terrorist tactics? Should distinctions be made between terrorist groups and, if so, on what basis? Should the U.S. response to groups who attack democratic governments by using terrorist tactics be the same as its response to groups who kidnap government officials or diplomats to win the release of prisoners being held illegally or tortured? If a group or government uses terrorist tactics, what measures is the U.S. government willing to take? Such issues are probably best judged on a case-by-case basis.

Legislation already passed or suggested includes suspension of economic assistance, refusal of loans, and refusal to provide military assistance or sell arms to any nation that violates fundamental human rights at home or that willfully aids or abets terrorism or harbors terrorists; suspension of air service to nations that refuse to abide by international conventions on hijacking, or that parole convicted terrorists; and denial of landing rights to nations that refuse to boycott offending nations.
An International or Unilateral Approach?

The utility of an international approach in combatting terrorism is a matter of some debate. Since it is by definition an international problem, some believe the proper answer lies in formulating international conventions skillfully framed so as to win widespread support and ratification. International cooperation of the kind employed against pirates in the nineteenth century and against hijackers in the twentieth is seen as the way to approach the problem. Some go further and argue for the creation of international bodies to assume the responsibility for responding to terrorist demands, international courts where captured terrorists may be tried, and international prisons where convicted terrorists may be incarcerated, thereby relieving individual nations from being subjected to terrorist blackmail and retaliation.

Others counter that it is a waste of time to pursue international consensus on this problem, since terrorism is often defined not by law but rather by political point of view. To gain widespread approval, conventions against terrorism must be so broadly worded as to be meaningless, and are likely to be no more effective than a convention against terrorism adopted by the League of Nations in 1937. The most that can be realistically obtained is limited cooperation among a few like-minded governments. The occasional damage inflicted by terrorists is seldom likely to override the pursuit of national interests. It is not a paramount issue. Few governments are willing to take vigorous action against foreign terrorists or hold foreign terrorists prisoner if this will subject its own citizens to the threat of terrorist retaliation or obstruct the government's foreign policy goals. (It is quite a different story when governments are threatened by domestic terrorists.)

With the possible exception of agreements about airline hijacking, and perhaps the protection of diplomats, the skeptics have thus far been correct in their assessment of the feasibility and utility of international conventions. The outbursts of universal denunciation following
almost every major terrorist outrage appear to be shortlived. The successes, however, suggest a useful approach. Rather than seek international consensus on broadly framed antiterrorist agreements, it might be more profitable to pursue limited agreements to outlaw specific tactics or attacks on specific categories of targets.

To deal with the problem of nations that support terrorist groups, it may be useful to introduce a notion of shared responsibility. To begin with, the application may be limited to acts of mass destruction. According to such a notion, nations that knowingly provide or assist terrorists in the acquisition of devices of mass destruction would bear some portion of the responsibility for any acts which the recipients carry out. Meanwhile in the absence of international cooperation against terrorists, nations seem likely to turn more to direct unilateral action against terrorists or nations that shield them. This trend has already been noted.

**Threats of Mass Destruction**

Terrorists have thus far not attempted or threatened to use weapons of mass destruction, but they could do so in the future. The U.S. government has not yet developed an adequate capability for assessing and dealing with threats of mass murder. Some capabilities exist in the nuclear area, and the general problem has been discussed; but a serious threat would find the government woefully unprepared.

It is necessary to explore what measures the government could take to reduce the possibility that nongovernment groups will acquire or fabricate nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons. If nongovernment groups abroad acquire or assemble weapons of mass destruction, what actions may the United States contemplate? Should the United States promote the idea that nations must take whatever action is necessary to prevent certain extremely dangerous acts of nongovernment groups, since a "loose" nuclear weapon (or biological or chemical device) could threaten all humanity? For example, ought one nation intervene unilaterally when it has clearcut evidence that a nongovernment group is fabricating a weapon of mass destruction with the knowledge of the host government, or that prior notification of the host government would prevent apprehension of the perpetrators and recovery or destruction of the device? The
idea is not likely to gain widespread acceptance, but it could provide a useful basis for defense of any such action that might become necessary.

**U.S. Antiterrorist Military Capabilities**

If terrorism persists, as seems likely, and perhaps takes new directions that will more seriously imperil public safety than it has done to date, serious consideration must be given to developing the U.S. government's capabilities for direct action. For example, as a measure of last resort, U.S. forces might be deployed to rescue U.S. nationals held hostage by terrorists. Conceivably this might be done with the tacit approval of the local government. At stake will be the lives of the hostages as well as the image of the U.S. government. Without such an option the U.S. government might find itself in a politically untenable situation: capitulating to extravagant demands or taking no action while hostages are being shot.

Preemptive or punitive action against foreign terrorist groups might be considered in extreme cases, for example, where there is a clear and present threat of mass destruction or where mass destruction has been carried out. In effect, it amounts to according a subnational group belligerent status. Such missions, if they are ever undertaken, ought not to be "black bag" operations, even if they must necessarily remain covert during the execution phase. They may be considered legitimate applications of force in extreme circumstances, and again an appropriate function of the legitimate armed forces of the nation.

Admittedly, such missions seem far-fetched now, although perhaps somewhat less far-fetched than they might have appeared before the hijacking of three airliners and the holding of 300 hostages, among them numerous Americans, in the Jordanian desert for a week (58 were held for two more weeks) in 1970; before the evacuation of American citizens from Beirut (fortunately, in this case, with the cooperation of the Palestinian Liberation Organization); before the Israeli rescue operation at Entebbe; and before the threat of terrorists acquiring nuclear weapons was considered a genuine possibility.
There is, at present, considerable confusion over the responsibility of the Department of Defense and military services with respect to anti-terrorist roles and missions. The military units presently designated for such missions -- principally, elements of the Marines and the Army's Ranger battalions and Special Forces -- appear either too cumbersome or not appropriately trained. It is questionable whether they could be deployed rapidly enough. The related issues of intelligence, contingency planning, command and control, and the legal problems involved, also need to be carefully examined.

**Terrorism and Nuclear Safeguards**

The threat posed by terrorists is central to the national debate on nuclear energy. Many opponents of expansion of the nuclear industry argue that criminals and political extremists constitute a real threat to civilian nuclear facilities, that there have been grave breaches of security in this country, and that considerable amounts of plutonium, the stuff bombs are made of, are missing or unaccounted for. Adequate security, they argue, cannot be provided without controls that would seriously threaten a democratic society. Critics of these arguments say that such concerns are exaggerated; the nuclear industry has functioned for more than two decades without terrorist attacks: no breach of security has endangered society; as for the "missing" plutonium, it is still in the system. Most agree that better security is needed.

At the international level, the spread of nuclear reactors and reprocessing facilities will greatly increase plutonium production worldwide. This will increase the possibilities for theft or diversion and, some fear, may eventually generate an international blackmarket in nuclear material and lead ultimately to the acquisition of a nuclear capability by the terrorist or criminal group. There is consensus that current international safeguards are totally inadequate to prevent diversion or theft of fissionable nuclear material. At issue here are measures necessary to establish and enforce more stringent security worldwide, U.S.
efforts to discourage the sale of reprocessing facilities that will increase the availability of plutonium, and export regulations for nuclear materials.

Arms Transfers

The acquisition of advanced, man-portable weaponry by terrorist groups adds a new dimension to arms transfers (arms sales and military aid). Of particular concern are precision-guided munitions (PGMs) such as the American Redeye and the Soviet Strela. These weapons are cheap, easy to operate, highly destructive, and extremely accurate at ranges of 1 to 3 kilometers. Hand-held surface-to-air missiles may be used against civilian airliners (the target of Arab terrorists captured with SA-7s), and hand-held, antitank missiles against speakers' podiums or motorcades. By the end of the decade, man-portable PGMs will be available in the hundreds of thousands. Moreover, 30 to 40 Third World countries, where security measures may not be stringent and in some of which terrorist groups are currently active, will possess such weapons. At a conservative loss rate through theft or blackmarket sale of even one-tenth of one percent, man-portable PGMs will be "loose" in the hundreds by 1980. Attention needs to be focused on measures to prevent both the loss of such weapons and their being fired by unauthorized users. The likelihood of their acquisition by nongovernment groups should be a consideration in formulating sales policy. The possibility also should be explored of achieving agreements with allied nations, as well as the Soviet Union, to restrict the distribution of sophisticated man-portable weapons where there is a strong likelihood of their acquisition by terrorists.

The United States may wish to propose that special classes of weapons be designated, perhaps by an international group, as subject to special controls and security measures to which all nations must subscribe. Such weapons might include man-portable, concealable, easy-to-operate, highly destructive, precision weapons, and other munitions that are likely to have great utility off the battlefield against civilian targets.
Effects of Terrorism on U.S. Investments Abroad

U.S. corporations abroad are a favorite target of terrorists. Corporate offices and facilities are bombed, executives assassinated or kidnapped, millions paid in ransom. The burden to industry includes losses from property damage, ransom payments, the cost of increased security and insurance, management time devoted to dealing with crises caused by terrorists, and possible lawsuits by stockholders (in cases where multimillion-dollar ransoms have been paid). We do not know what these direct and indirect costs amount to, or whether they are perceived as sufficient to alter investment decisions. We do not know what effect terrorism is having on business operations and patterns of American investment abroad, or on the American economy. In Argentina, however, terrorists are succeeding in driving out the American business community and have used money extorted from American and other foreign corporations to finance the drive. In another Latin American country, as the ultimate consequence of a kidnapping of one of its executives, a U.S. corporation is losing a local subsidiary valued at $100 million.

What assistance, if any, can and should the U.S. government provide American corporations abroad in dealing with this problem? The contention that American business abroad is not the business of the U.S. government is undermined by recent government efforts to control the behavior of American corporations abroad (e.g., preventing them from paying bribes to foreign officials). Should the government prohibit U.S. corporations from paying ransom? Some corporate leaders have said they would welcome such legislation; most would oppose it.

The United States as a Theater for International Terrorism

Foreign terrorist groups thus far have chosen not to carry their campaigns to U.S. territory. Given the unfortunate popularity of American officials and installations as targets of terrorist attacks abroad, this immunity at home is somewhat surprising. The United States, however, is the theater of operations of a number of domestic extremist groups whose actions may at times have international consequences. Two groups have become increasingly active in the past two
years: anti-Castro Cubans and the Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN), a Puerto Rican separatist group dedicated to violence. Although small, both groups are regarded as particularly dangerous because of their technical sophistication and apparent ruthlessness.

Right-wing Cubans, some of whom reportedly were once covertly supported by the Central Intelligence Agency, have carried out attacks in the Miami area, where over a hundred bombings have occurred during the past two years, and in other parts of the Caribbean. On October 6, 1976, anti-Castro Cubans claimed credit for the crash of a Cubana Airlines jet in which 73 people were killed. It is also suspected that right-wing Cubans get support from the Chilean national intelligence agency and in return carry out operations on its behalf, including the assassination last September of the former Chilean cabinet minister living in exile in Washington.

Violence on behalf of Puerto Rican independence is nothing new in the United States. In 1950, proponents of an independent Puerto Rico attempted to assassinate President Truman, and in 1954, a group of Puerto Rican separatists shot their way onto the floor of the United States House of Representatives, wounding five congressmen. However, the current wave of violence credited to the FALN, the latest incarnation of Puerto Rico's violent separatists, differs from earlier campaigns. Cuba may be behind the increased activity and new technical competence of the group. Like other little terrorist groups, the FALN's principal activity is bombing. Most of the bombs are meant only to cause property damage, but the FALN has not hesitated to kill, as it did in 1975 when it planted a bomb timed to go off at noon in a Wall Street restaurant, killing 4 and injuring 53. The renewed attention given to the possibility of Puerto Rican statehood may provoke further violence by the group. There also have been reports of newly established links between members of the FALN and members of left-wing extremist groups in the United States.
The United States appears caught in the middle of the two Caribbean issues. Castro himself sees the violent activities of Cuban exiles as U.S.-inspired and supported. Continued animosity between the United States and Cuba may produce continued or increased Cuban support for FALN terrorists. On the other hand, moves toward normalization of relations with Cuba may inspire further anti-Castro violence.

Other domestic groups that could cause international trouble include Croatian nationalists, who dramatized their cause by hijacking a TWA airliner in 1976 and may present a more urgent threat as the end of the Tito era approaches. The Jewish Defense League and other anti-Soviet groups already have to their credit a string of minor bombings and shootings, unimportant except for their effect on Soviet-American relations. Finally, there are several left-wing domestic groups such as the New World Liberation Front, which in 1976 claimed credit for two bombings of the South African consulate in San Francisco, and which may carry out further actions against the diplomatic representatives of various " despised" regimes.

None of the groups pose a threat to the national security of the United States. Most count fewer than a dozen dedicated "bombers and shooters." Owing to the responsiveness of the American political system and the effectiveness of American law enforcement, such groups are unable to acquire genuine constituencies or grow much beyond their current size. They have in the past directed their violence against property, not people, but that seems to be changing. Furthermore, they are capable of creating international incidents at any time, and they complicate the conduct of American foreign policy and resolution of difficult international issues.

Organization for Dealing With Terrorism

Terrorists operate in the cracks between organizational boundaries and missions, just beyond law enforcement, just before national security, where intelligence files touch the limits of legality.
Currently, no single department or agency of the U.S. government is charged with dealing with terrorism. The Cabinet Committee to Combat Terrorism has met only a few times since its creation in 1972. The Working Group of the Cabinet Committee, representing 26 departments and agencies, is primarily a bureaucratic coordinating body, not a command organization. The Department of State's Office for Combatting Terrorism consists of five Department officials plus two secretaries. The FBI has the mission of combatting domestic political violence. At the international level, a task force is assembled in the Department of State to deal with incidents involving U.S. citizens abroad. This works reasonably well for some episodes, but a serious incident, one in which Americans are directly and imminently in peril, or a serious domestic incident (the kidnapping of a foreign ambassador in Washington) may quickly move over to the White House. The Croatian hijacking, for example, was apparently handled by the National Security Council, but it is not clear what special capabilities the NSC possesses for dealing with terrorism. The requirement for a government entity, its location in government, internal structure, capabilities, and authority need to be addressed.

The Role of Intelligence

More attention needs to be focused on intelligence activities directed against subnational groups that could threaten the security of the United States or the safety of U.S. citizens abroad. Intelligence information about terrorist groups is hard to obtain. They are seldom sophisticated enough to be vulnerable to sophisticated intelligence gathering techniques, such as electronic surveillance. Knowing what is going on inside a terrorist group is mainly a matter of human intelligence work, but terrorist groups are typically small and difficult to penetrate. Such efforts require years of patient work: In some cases, the prospects for prior apprehension may be so low as not to justify the costs and risks of the effort, or if we are talking about intelligence gathering efforts aimed at domestic groups, the possible invasions of privacy that may result.
Intelligence and local law enforcement officials complain, with some justification, that directives are often poorly written and that overcautious higher officials tend to interpret the directives too conservatively, for fear of getting into trouble over the slightest infraction. This conservatism is perhaps an understandable reaction to revelations of prior abuses and the widespread distrust of government in the post-Vietnam, post-Watergate era; but the result is an atmosphere in which it is extremely difficult to collect and maintain information about terrorist groups. It is especially difficult because, to reiterate a point made earlier, the job of coping with terrorism lies in a grey area of responsibilities and jurisdictions. To be on the safe side, there is a tendency, particularly among local police, to keep one's files in one's head -- a rough-and-ready stratagem that works well enough so long as memories last and personnel are not rotated. A further problem is that the Privacy Act prevents the sharing of intelligence data; one consequence is a wasteful duplication of effort and, more important, the danger of lacking vital pieces of information when a crisis arises. No specific piece of legislation will solve this problem. Congress should at least be aware, however, of these unintended consequences of well-intended and often necessary legislation.

The definition and creation of a small legitimate entity with clearly defined responsibilities in this area would help. (Its existence might also obviate any perceived need to create impromptu, unauthorized "units" to deal with threats that no government agency seems prepared to handle.) The perceived conflict between civil liberties in a democratic society, on the one hand, and the intelligence activities necessary for the legitimate suppression or at least containment of terrorist violence, on the other hand, is somewhat artificial. It can be solved by skillfully drafted law and sensible directives.

Given limited resources and the difficulty of intelligence collection, choices have to be made regarding the most crucial areas to focus on. Although terrorist violence is always deplorable, the nation can survive acts of terrorism directed against it at home or abroad, at the level we have seen thus far. It is a more disturbing consideration
that certain terrorist groups have the capacity for causing far greater
disruption or damage than they have thus far inflicted. Whether they
will or not, we simply do not know. It may therefore be prudent for
us to concentrate our intelligence resources on identifying, in advance,
potential threats of mass destruction, which society would find far
more difficult to endure.