

**MIPT** National Memorial Institute  
for the Prevention of Terrorism

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Preventing terrorism or mitigating its effects

**The MIPT  
Terrorism Annual**

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**2004**

With contributions from:

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The National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to prevent terrorism on U.S. soil or to mitigate its effects. MIPT was founded as a living memorial to those who lived, those who died and those who were changed forever by the April 19, 1995 bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. MIPT conducts research into the social and political causes and effects of terrorism, and it feels a special obligation to serve the needs of emergency responders—police officers, firefighters, emergency medical technicians and all of the others who are first on the scene in the aftermath of terrorist activity.

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## Preface

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The National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT, located in Oklahoma City) firmly believes that the accurate dissemination of knowledge on terrorism is a critical ingredient for combating terrorism on U.S. soil. The U.S. Congress directed MIPT to conduct “research into the social and political causes and effects of terrorism,” and to this end the organization has partnered with the RAND Corporation to improve the nation’s awareness of the history and emerging trends of terrorism. In order for leaders to plan and responders to prepare, their policies must first be informed by the past. By learning lessons from previous incidents and grasping current trends, they can better understand the nature of future threats and how to protect against them.

This yearbook is designed to further the vital link between policymakers, emergency responders, public officials, scholars, and the public. The articles contained herein offer thoughtful perspectives of subject-matter experts who draw heavily on a powerful database of terrorist acts worldwide. Their contemporary analyses and insights probe cross-cutting issues and describe the terrorist threat environment. This volume also features graphical summaries and statistics on terrorist incidents and trends. While MIPT and RAND are not alone in chronicling trends in terrorism, no other organizations have been as active in terms of sharing their information with the public. Our publications that use the database are but the beginning of this type of information sharing; MIPT’s intent is for others to take advantage of this tool and develop further knowledge. By keeping the database open, objective, and online, we afford our users unparalleled access to a unique resource (which is available at the MIPT Web site, [www.mipt.org](http://www.mipt.org)).

Currently, there is no single, comprehensive site from which policymakers, practitioners, and the public can find facts concerning global terrorism. We believe that MIPT’s database and its related publications can help to satisfy this need. By combining them with other databases, Web documents, and library materials, MIPT will be able to offer an in-depth, interactive, and comprehensive Terrorism Knowledge Base in a central location. With this knowledge in hand, our nation can better understand and assess the threats it faces.



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## The World's Top Ten Most Active Terrorist Groups During 2003: Findings from the RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident Database

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*Audra K. Grant, Ph.D.*

### Introduction

Since September 2001, the global war on terrorism has dominated the U.S. foreign policy agenda, amid attempts to stem terrorist activity and eradicate terrorist organizations “with global reach.” The war on terrorism has been waged in Afghanistan, leading to the expulsion of the Taliban, and most recently in Iraq, resulting in the ousting of Saddam Hussein. However, as the mission in Iraq transitions to self-governance, the specter of terrorism has far from dissipated. On the contrary, terrorism continues to frustrate U.S. efforts in Iraq and plague U.S. interests in other countries, as well as the security of its allies, such as Spain, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan, to name a few. With global terrorism appearing to have such a potent and widespread impact, a pertinent question is, which are the most active terrorist groups? Where is the focus of their activity, and what are the factors that contribute most to the capacity of terrorist groups to implement their operations?

The goal of this report is to discuss recent trends in global terrorist activity, with an aim of identifying the world's most active terrorist groups during 2003, based on statistics from the RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident Database.<sup>1</sup> Using a multidimensional approach for gauging “activity,” findings from the database indicate that the groups highest on the list tended to be those that were also widely involved in terrorism during 2002. South Asia and the Middle East were the main locus of terrorist operations during 2003, having been affected by the greatest number of incidents. The countries in which terrorism was most abundant have in common a number of conditions that are exploited by terrorists, such as breakdown in rule of law due to civil strife, porous borders allowing for fluid movement of groups and resources, weak infrastructure for law enforcement, and widespread poverty. Results suggest that although the war on terrorism may have encouraged greater bilateral and regional cooperation between countries in an effort to eradicate terrorist violence, terrorist groups continue to exploit domestic weaknesses and are able to sustain an appreciable pace of operational activity. In cases where opportunities have become more limited, some organizations have strategically adapted to their more restrictive environments by conducting fewer operations that inflict more damage. At the same time, other organizations seem to have altered little with regard to their operations and remain viable as ever, and some have even

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<sup>1</sup> Although results are based primarily on statistics from the RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident Database, analysis also draws from the RAND Terrorism Chronology. Both databases have been integrated in the new MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, which is available at [www.tkb.org](http://www.tkb.org). The incident and figures (documented since 1968) are generated from media reports and credible research institutions indigenous to countries and worldwide. The groups discussed in this report are drawn from a total of 114 terrorist organizations considered active during 2003. Incidents attributed to groups are based on confirmed attacks.

augmented their violence. The overall implication of these circumstances is that a great deal of work is yet to be done in the war on terrorism.

This report proceeds in four main sections. The first section briefly defines the concept of terrorism and then discusses the operational definition used by the RAND-MIPT database. The second section discusses trends in international terrorism over the past several years and the conditions that have facilitated this pattern. Using general trends as a point of departure, the third section introduces the world's ten most active terrorist groups during 2003, where they have been active, and the factors influencing their operational dynamics.<sup>2</sup> The section also introduces and briefly discusses the measures of frequency and lethality of terrorist events. The final section closes with summary remarks and discusses the existing commonalities in countries where terrorist groups are most active.

An investigation of terrorist groups is important for a number of reasons. First, broad trends, while relevant, obscure the changing characteristics of individual terrorist groups. It is vital to understand their unique capabilities, strengths, weaknesses, and shifts in their activities over time as well as the factors accounting for those changes. Second, and related, such information could facilitate efficient targeting of resources toward thwarting group operations by developing more effective policy responses. Third, and equally important, the transnational nature of terrorism implies that an examination of groups is relevant not just from the perspective of foreign and domestic policymaking, but also because terrorism poses a challenge to the security and stability of the entire international community.

## Conceptualizing Terrorism

Although the debate over the definition of "terrorism" is vigorous and unresolved, some basic dimensions appear consistent across time, geography, and organization. According to RAND-MIPT, terrorism is the use of violence or the threat of violence, calculated to create an atmosphere of fear and alarm. These acts are designed to coerce others into action that they would not otherwise take. Terrorist acts are considered crimes that may also fall under violations of the rules of war in cases where a state is involved. While the ultimate targets of terrorists are usually governments, terrorist violence is generally directed at civilians as part of an aim to produce maximum sensational publicity. Such shock is generated with the expectation that terrorist acts will yield effects beyond the immediate physical damage of the action and will have long-term psychological consequences on the target audience. The fear created by terrorists has the added effect of causing publics to exaggerate the strength of terrorists and the importance of their cause, provoke extreme government reaction, discourage dissent, or merely intimidate to the extent of forcing compliance with their demands. In contrast to perpetrators of common crimes, terrorists often claim responsibility for their actions.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Figures from other sources will also be referenced. Readers are advised that, because of the variations in the definition of terrorism and how the term is operationalized, results can differ widely across other databases and similar analyses. Statistics may also vary based on the selection of primary and secondary sources. Thus, the findings in this report should be regarded as suggestive of general directions of trends.

<sup>3</sup> See the MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base online at [www.tkb.org](http://www.tkb.org). The U.S. Department of State uses a similar definition of terrorism. According to Title 22 of the United States Code, Section 2656f(d), "terrorism is the premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience."

In defining terrorist groups—the object of this study—RAND-MIPT describes such entities as a collection of individuals belonging to an autonomous non-state or subnational revolutionary or antigovernmental movement who are dedicated to the use of violence to achieve their objectives. Terrorist groups are seen as having at least some structural and command and control apparatus that, no matter how loose or flexible, provides an overall organizational framework and general strategic direction. This definition is meant to include contemporary religiously motivated and apocalyptic groups and other movements that seek theological justification or divine sanction for their acts of violence.

Terrorist groups often have at their disposal a variety of tactics and weapons,<sup>4</sup> and the ability of these groups to inflict harm extends well beyond a direct impact on civilians' lives. Terrorists may also threaten civilians' domestic security and quality of life. Such violence can be implemented through attacks on the institutions that serve as the foundation for the basic functioning of day-to-day life. Thus, the RAND-MIPT database takes into consideration a range of potential targets, including government officials; diplomatic representatives; religious and educational institutions; such infrastructure as utilities, transportation, telecommunications, airports, and military, police, and government structures; as well as nongovernmental organizations, media members and institutions, and businesses.<sup>5</sup>

## General Trends in Global Terrorism

While terrorism is certainly not a new phenomenon, it has been characterized by a number of features over the past several years. First, attacks by groups motivated by religious ideology have increased.<sup>6</sup> Religion has become a source of cohesion for organizations opposed to a status quo shaped by repressive regimes and a U.S.-dominated international system marked by globalization. Although current international terrorism embodies elements that have long characterized terrorist violence over the decades—such as the broad struggles between elites and the underprivileged, between rich and poor nations, and between traditional and non-traditional power—the distinguishing aspect of the recent trend in terrorist group agendas is the centrality of religion. For example, during the 1960s and 1970s, terrorist groups that relied on left-wing or nationalist revolutionary agendas to accomplish their mission dominated the global landscape.<sup>7</sup> With the collapse of communism, this ideology has been overshadowed by a significantly larger number of terrorist organizations that are guided by relig-

<sup>4</sup> The RAND-MIPT classification of tactics includes armed attacks, arson, kidnapping, assassination, and hijacking, as well as unconventional attacks. The RAND-MIPT categorization of weapons includes biological agents, chemical agents, explosives, fire or firebombs, firearms, knives or sharp objects, and remote-detonated explosives.

<sup>5</sup> References to data from 1998 to 2004 include both domestic terrorist incidents, which include local and indigenous targets, and international incidents, which refer to terrorist acts targeted at foreign and diplomatic targets. References to data during 1968 to 1997 pertain only to acts of *international* terrorism.

<sup>6</sup> According to the RAND database, the growth of this trend has been remarkable. In 1968, no terrorist organization could be categorized as “religious.” In 1980, following the Iranian Revolution, there were two; in 1995, this number totaled 25. Also see Nadine Gurr and Benjamin Cole, *The New Face of Terrorism: Threats from Weapons of Mass Destruction*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2000, pp. 28–29, and Audrey Cronin, “Behind the Curve,” *International Security*, Vol. 27, No. 3, Winter 2002/2003. Bruce Hoffman notes a similar trend in *Inside Terrorism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1998, pp. 90–91.

<sup>7</sup> Prior to this time frame, terrorist groups were motivated by self-determination as in the post–World War I period. During the post–World War II era, terrorist attacks were considered wars of liberation fought against colonial powers as attempts to gain independence.

ious ethos. Similar to groups driven by nonreligious goals, organizations driven by religion exploit the frustration of ordinary people who feel powerless and believe that they have received few advantages from the globalizing world. Religious groups offer an ideological, political, and social alternative to the domestic and international system, and, equally important, they act on their grievances through violent means on the behalf of others who are unable to do so. Herein lies the powerful attraction of religious and spiritual movements. The convergence of ideological motivation, the elements of religious identity, and the widespread alienation among populations are a potent mix of forces that resonate deeply. This, combined with the ability of terrorist groups to operate with support or sanctuary in vast areas that have not benefited from globalization, provides an enabling environment for their violent activities.

The second trend in international terrorism is the proliferation of transnational groups and networks. Indeed, a strength of transnational groups is their ability to establish linkages with other like-minded groups across borders in ways that are beyond the control of nation-states. In fact, the transnational character of terrorist organizations has become a distinctive aspect of such organizations, as technological advances and the explosion of electronic media have made it easier to unite the causes and activities of scattered groups under a common banner. Terrorists have pragmatically made use of the Internet and mobile phones to collect funds, distribute messages, share intelligence, coordinate tasks, and attract new members. The participation in and maintenance of extensive and complex networks also enhances terrorist groups' capacity to carry out their objectives while evading detection. At the most general level, many terrorist groups are no different from conventional organizations. They have stated missions, standard operational codes, hierarchy with leaders and rank-and-file members, a material resource base, and decisionmaking procedures. However, the elements that contribute to their transnational character, such as the erosion of barriers, advances in modern transportation, communication and information technology, and the advent of satellite television, all provide terrorist groups with the added capacity to become more efficient and effective.

Perhaps the world's most prolific transnational terrorist network at present is Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda, which is the lynchpin organization in a large network with global reach. Al Qaeda is believed to have cells or organizational links that extend to nearly every region, including Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Africa, South and Southeast Asia, Latin America, and North America.

Third, increased targeting of Americans and symbols of the U.S.-led globalization also shape the present direction of terrorism. The number of terrorist attacks on American targets rose starkly during the 1990s. This is likely attributed to the growing U.S. role in international affairs, particularly after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the continuing influence of American culture. While the targeting of Americans is hardly a new phenomenon, terrorism over the past decade has been marked by a sharp rise in attacks against Americans and U.S. interests in the aggregate.

In a final observation on longer-term trends, RAND-MIPT data indicate a general increase in the frequency of global terrorist activity that is matched by a similar pattern of lethality from the late 1990s through 2003 (see Figure 1). According to RAND-MIPT figures, the year 2001, which was also punctuated by the 9/11 attacks, saw a noticeable upswing

**Figure 1**  
**Global Terrorism Activity, 1998–2003**



SOURCE: RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident Database, 2003.

in terrorist activity (1,733 incidents) from recent years. Global terrorism continued to gain momentum during 2002, against the backdrop of the launch of the U.S.-led war on terrorism, as violent activity was even more frequent (2,644 attacks) than in the previous year. However, this pattern did not continue into 2003, which shows a modest decline in terrorist activity (1,892 attacks) as well as a corresponding decline in fatal terrorist attacks (2,367 fatalities) and in the number of those wounded in the course of terrorist incidents (6,240 injuries). Policies associated with the war on terrorism—particularly improved domestic law enforcement, sharing of intelligence between countries, apprehension and extradition of terrorists, and tighter controls on terrorists' assets—have likely attributed to the abatement of global incidents from 2002 to 2003. In the aggregate, however, terrorist activity has not returned to the lower levels documented prior to 9/11.

Across regions, RAND-MIPT findings show that terrorist activity in 2003 was predominantly concentrated in South Asia (32 percent), the Middle East–Persian Gulf (26 percent), and Western Europe (20 percent), followed more distantly by Latin America (10 percent) and Eastern Europe (7 percent). The dispute between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and Islamist militant activity in Iraq and Afghanistan have made the Arab and South Asia regions hotbeds of global terrorism. Consistent with aggregate figures, most regions since 2002 experienced either a decrease in terrorist activity or essentially no change in the level of terrorist violence, consistent with aggregate trends. Western Europe is the only area showing a rise in terrorist activity, albeit a slight one (see Figure A.1, appendix). The two al Qaeda attacks in Turkey on diplomatic and religious sites that killed 30 people may have partly accounted for the rise in the level of terrorism in Europe during 2003. However, RAND-MIPT data suggest that the Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA) organization, the Irish Republican Army (IRA), the National Liberation Front of Corsica (NLFC), and the November 17 group remain obstacles in European efforts to

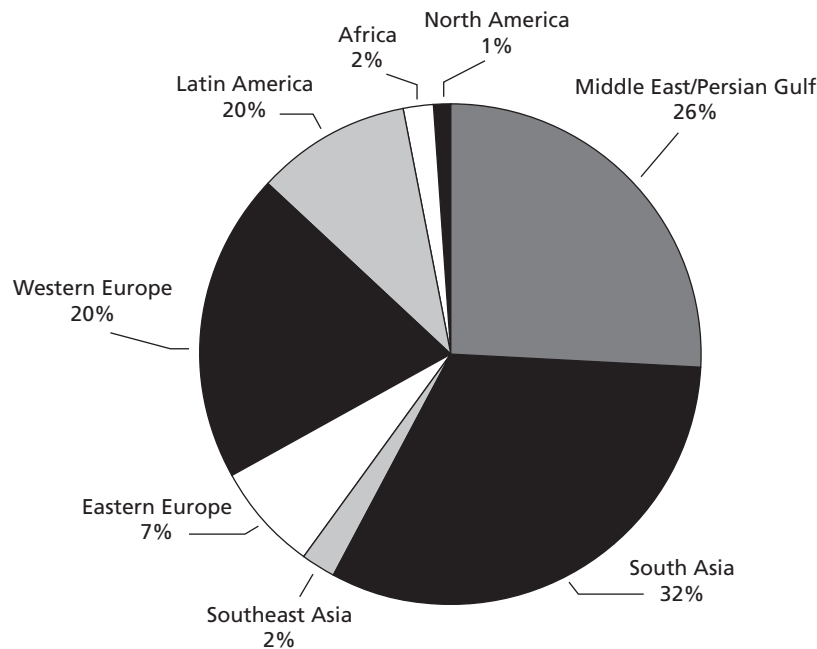
curb terrorist activity in Spain, Northern Ireland, Corsica, and Greece, respectively. Significantly, the ETA and NLFC appear to have stepped up their activities over the past year, pointing to the need for improved intelligence, law enforcement, and monitoring in order to address the long-standing internal conflicts that remain divisive issues in countries. Otherwise, Southeast Asia, Africa, and North America account for fewer than 3 percent of global terrorist attacks in 2003 (see Figure 2).

### The World's Most Active Terrorist Groups During 2003

The motivations and capabilities of the organizations responsible for the preponderance of terrorist attacks across regions vary according to political goals, religious orientation, and structure. In identifying the world's ten most active terrorist groups based on the measure of frequency, or the absolute number of attacks, several organizations stand out (see Table 1). Hamas, the FARC, and both the Communist Party of Nepal–Maoist (CPN-M) and the Peoples' War Group (PWG) are among the more frequent perpetrators of terrorism, having conducted the largest number of attacks during 2003, according to RAND-MIPT findings.

Al Qaeda, currently at the forefront of international attention, is comparatively less active, as is North America–based ELF, each conducting 11 attacks during 2003. The ELN and AUC of Colombia also have similar rates of attacks, as each group logged roughly ten

**Figure 2**  
Number of Terrorist Incidents by Region During 2003



SOURCE: RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident Database, 2003.

attacks in 2003.<sup>8</sup> However, a focus on the frequency of incidents clearly masks other potent aspects of global terrorist activity, which is that of lethality or the number of fatalities per incident. In fact, a vastly different picture emerges when examining the lethality of group attacks, which is a more accurate indicator of terrorist group effectiveness and capability. On this dimension, al Qaeda dramatically rises to the head of the list as the most deadly terrorist group, having killed 152 people during its violent pursuits of 2003 (see Table 2).

**Table 1**  
The Ten Most Active Terrorist Groups—Frequency of Attacks, 2003

Rank	Group	Base Country	Target Country	Incidents
1	Hamas	West Bank/Gaza	Israel	59
2	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)	Colombia	Colombia	54
3	Communist Party of Nepal–Maoist (CPN-M)	Nepal	Nepal	34
	Peoples' War Group (PWG)	India	India	34
4	The Taliban	Afghanistan	Afghanistan	22
5	Al-Fatah	West Bank/Gaza	Israel	19
6	National Liberation Front of Corsica (FLNC)	Corsica	Corsica	18
7	Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA)	Spain	Spain	16
8	National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT)	Bangladesh	India	14
9	Al Qaeda	Multiple	Multiple	11
	Earth Liberation Front (ELF)	U.S.	U.S./Canada	11
10	National Liberation Army–Colombia (ELN)	Colombia	Colombia	10
	United Self-Defense Forces/Group of Colombia (AUC)	Colombia	Colombia	10

SOURCE: RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident Database (January 1, 2003–December 31, 2003).

**Table 2**  
The Ten Most Active Terrorist Groups—Fatalities in Attacks, 2003

Rank	Group	Base Country	Target Country	Fatalities
1	Al Qaeda	Multiple	Multiple	152
2	The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)	Colombia	Colombia	91
3	Tawhid and Jihad	Iraq	Iraq	83
4	Hamas	West Bank/Gaza	Israel	59
5	Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)	Sudan/Uganda	Uganda	56
6	Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT)	Pakistan	Pakistan	53
7	Riyadhus Islamic Saliheyn Martyr's Brigade	Chechnya	Russia/Chechnya	52
	The Black Widows	Chechnya	Russia/Chechnya	52
8	All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF)	Bangladesh	India	42
	Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)	Philippines	Philippines	42
	Islamic Jihad Jerusalem	West Bank/Gaza	Israel	42
9	Al-Fatah	West Bank/Gaza	Israel	37
10	National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT)	Bangladesh	India	28

SOURCE: RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident Database (January 1, 2003–December 31, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> Some of the organizations discussed in this analysis were also officially listed in 2003 as “designated foreign terrorist organizations” by the U.S. Department of State. The organizations are: al Qaeda, ETA, FARC, ELN, AUC, Hamas, Islamic Jihad Jerusalem, and LeT. See the U.S. Department of State, *Patterns of Global Terrorism, 2003*, p. 113.

## Al Qaeda

In 2003, no other group demonstrated greater scope and lethality of attacks than al Qaeda, which claimed well over 100 lives in just 11 attacks. The ability of al Qaeda to inflict such widespread damage in so few incidents speaks to the scale and efficiency of the group's operations.<sup>9</sup> A closer examination of the evolution of al Qaeda's activity shows striking acceleration in the frequency of the organization's attacks over recent years. From 1996 to 1999, al Qaeda attacks occurred every two years. The rate of the organization's attacks began to climb notably between 2000 and 2002, and increased even more rapidly in 2003, with the frequency of incidents more than tripling (see Table 3). Diversification of targets and more extensive reliance on the use of jihadist network cells in other countries have contributed significantly to this drastic shift in the level of al Qaeda global activity.

Al Qaeda seeks to stop, through violent means, what it considers U.S. and Western aggression against Muslim countries and their communities, as evidenced, in the view of the group's jihadists, by U.S. policies toward Muslim states, namely Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Palestinian Authority. The organization also wants to rid Muslim countries of the West's

**Table 3**  
**A Chronology of Lethal Al Qaeda Attacks, June 25, 1996–June 22, 2004**

Year	Date	Site of Attack	Country Location	Fatalities
1996	6/25	Khobar Towers	Saudi Arabia	19
1997	<i>No attacks</i>			
1998	8/7	U.S. embassy	Kenya	219
		U.S. embassy	Tanzania	11
1999	<i>No attacks</i>			
2000	10/12	USS <i>Cole</i>	Yemen	17
2001	9/11	World Trade Center	U.S.	2,749
		Pentagon		189
		Shanksville, Pa.		44
2002	4/11	Jewish synagogue	Tunisia	15
	10/12	Bali night club	Indonesia	190
	11/28	Israeli hotel	Kenya	13
2003	5/13	Residential compounds	Saudi Arabia	34
	8/5	American hotel	Indonesia	13
	10/12	Baghdad hotel	Iraq	8
	11/8	Residential compound	Saudi Arabia	17
	11/15	Two Jewish synagogues	Turkey	25
	11/20	British embassy; Israeli embassy	Turkey	28
	12/17	Baghdad hotel	Iraq	27
2004	3/11	Madrid train bombings	Spain	192
	3/30	Tashkent	Uzbekistan	45
	4/27	Boat attack at oil terminal	Iraq	6
	5/1	Yanbu	Saudi Arabia	6
	5/29	Khobar oil facility	Saudi Arabia	25
	6/5	Road attack	Iraq	4
	6/14	Car bomb on convoy	Iraq	13
	6/13	Beheading of American	Iraq	1
	6/20	Beheading of American	Iraq	1
	6/22	Beheading of South Korean	Iraq	1

SOURCE: RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident Database (June 25, 1996–June 22, 2004).

<sup>9</sup> The attacks discussed in this report are those that have been claimed by al Qaeda or by groups affiliated with al Qaeda.

corrosive moral and cultural influence by replacing Muslim governments with a grand caliphate guided by a purely Islamic religious constitution.<sup>10</sup>

Americans have been al Qaeda's primary targets as far back as 1993. The organization's anti-American violence reached a zenith with the 9/11 attacks, in which al Qaeda killed three times more Americans than had any other terrorist organization, according to findings documented by RAND since 1968. Since the start of the U.S.-led war on terrorism, al Qaeda has begun to extend its targeting to the civilians and interests of the United States' allies, especially those cooperating in the war on terror. Saudi Arabia, Britain, Turkey, Indonesia, Pakistan, South Korea, and more recently (in 2004) Uzbekistan and Spain have each been recipients of al Qaeda terrorism. While 2003 proved to be a somewhat more lethal year for al Qaeda violence than 2002 (218 deaths total that year), more individuals died on average during 2002 (73 per attack), a trend largely accounted for by the mass number of casualties suffered in the Bali nightclub explosion—190 deaths. In 2003, by contrast, there were 22 deaths on average per terrorist attack.

Al Qaeda primarily depends on bombings and directs its violence at civilians, diplomatic targets, and religious institutions. The group's operations in 2003 spanned several regions (see Table 3), with Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey being focal points of its activity. At the latter part of 2004, the lethality of al Qaeda terrorist attacks continued to expand—particularly in Iraq, where the group waged attacks on the United States and its coalition partners in objection to the invasion. In fact, the number of deaths (294) during the period of March 11 to June 22, 2004, far exceeds the number tallied in 2003 (see Table 3).<sup>11</sup>

The geographic scope of al Qaeda pursuits indicates that the group has opted for a strategy of waging a multi-front jihad against the United States and its allies while drawing on the operational resources of its affiliates in other countries to do so. This has also allowed the organization to broaden the spectrum and number of targets, which now comprise military and diplomatic targets as well as economic sites, religious institutions, and mass transit systems. Although U.S.-led efforts to bolster domestic law enforcement and monitoring systems abroad may have attributed to a general decrease in global terrorist activity, al Qaeda and groups associated with al Qaeda in some way have, nevertheless, clearly retained an ability to carry out attacks exacting mass casualties. Possible leadership issues may have led to some internal fragmentation in the organization; yet the organization still appears to have an adequate—if not diminished—supply of resources and followers in a sufficiently wide network that allows the group to maneuver abroad, despite domestic and international initiatives to restrict its ability to function. This transnational dimension of the organization has proven to be a key advantage for al Qaeda but one that mounts a significant challenge for states.<sup>12</sup>

Correspondingly, al Qaeda is known for its ability to exploit weak state structures. The fluid and unstable political environment of countries such as Sudan, Afghanistan, and

<sup>10</sup> See the MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base at [www.tkb.org](http://www.tkb.org).

<sup>11</sup> In Iraq, however, it is difficult to determine the source of many attacks because of the uncertainty regarding the status of various organizations' relationships with al Qaeda, such as the former breakaway organization of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, Tawhid and Jihad (discussed below). Al-Zarqawi, however, is now in allegiance with al Qaeda.

<sup>12</sup> Al Qaeda's reach is impressive. The group reportedly has links to like-minded organizations or cells in Western and Eastern Europe, Africa, South and Southeast Asia, Latin America, and even the United States. For a brief background on al Qaeda and other groups, see the MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base at [www.tkb.org](http://www.tkb.org).

Pakistan provides favorable conditions for the group's terrorist activities and offers fertile soil for the recruitment of followers.

### **The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)**

Turning to Latin America, the Colombia-based FARC follows al Qaeda as the world's second most lethal terrorist group.<sup>13</sup> The FARC is Colombia's largest and most resourceful terrorist organization, whose stated goal is to overthrow the Colombian government and replace it with a communist regime.<sup>14</sup> As such, the FARC is a leftist organization that purports to represent the rural poor (its roots are from the peasant population). The organization opposes the privatization of natural resources, the presence of foreign multinationals more generally, and right-wing organizations. The U.S. influence on Colombia's oil industry and U.S. military aid to Colombia are issues that particularly engender anti-U.S. sentiment.

Despite the bilateral cooperation facilitated under the U.S.-supported Plan Colombia,<sup>15</sup> the FARC and the operations of other Colombian terrorist groups, such as the ELN and AUC, continue to stymie domestic efforts to counter their terrorist activities and curb their criminal enterprises.<sup>16</sup> In staging its attacks, the FARC employs a range of tactics, including kidnappings, hijackings, and political assassinations. According to RAND-MIPT data, the FARC's extremely diverse targets include Colombian civilians, Americans and other foreign tourists, government officials, members of the media, military, police, and utilities and infrastructure.

Lack of government control over areas beyond Colombia's urban centers has provided a permissive environment for FARC operations. However, the number of the FARC's individual terrorist incidents and fatalities has declined overall since 2002, as Colombian forces began to reclaim control over FARC strongholds after the failure of peace talks that same year. This appears to have mitigated FARC terrorist violence at least somewhat, thereby limiting the organization's activities to destabilizing, rather than overthrowing, the Colombian government.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, domestic conditions still enhance the prospects for the continuation of FARC violence.

### **Tawhid and Jihad**

Tawhid and Jihad, led by insurgent Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, is a relatively new group that is committed to the establishment of an Islamic state in Iraq. The lethality of Tawhid and Jihad attacks during 2003 places the organization among the top three most deadly terrorist organizations. Emerging after the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the group is an Islamist organization that opposes the U.S. presence and mission in Iraq.

<sup>13</sup> Significantly, the FARC was ranked in 2002 as the world's most active terrorist organization and was also one of the deadliest groups that year, earning the fifth position. See the appendix, Tables A.1 and A.2.

<sup>14</sup> See the MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base at [www.tkb.org](http://www.tkb.org).

<sup>15</sup> Plan Colombia is a \$1.3 billion U.S.-backed initiative launched to assist the Colombian government in its efforts to eradicate cocaine production and trade in the regions controlled by the FARC and ELN. See Council on Foreign Relations, "FARC, ELN and AUC," 2004, online at <http://cfrterrorism.org/groups/farc.html>.

<sup>16</sup> The FARC relies on the illegal drug trade to sustain its operations, as does the ELN and AUC. The most significant proportion of the FARC's income is derived from revenues in illicit drug trading. The rest of its income is generated from extortion, kidnapping, and "protection" taxes. See the Terrorism Knowledge Database, the "Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia."

<sup>17</sup> See the MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base at [www.tkb.org](http://www.tkb.org)

Tawhid and Jihad carries out its goals from a base of operations within Iraq and employs a variety of tactics that include kidnappings, assassinations, and suicide bombings, RAND-MIPT data show. As well, the organization uses rocket-propelled grenades and has been linked to several televised beheadings of both American civilians and civilians of U.S. ally countries. The group also extends its attacks to Kurdish politicians and religious figures, humanitarian organizations, and the United Nations. Foreign terrorists, elements of the Kurdish Islamist group Ansar al-Islam, and indigenous Sunni Iraqis comprise the membership base of Tawhid and Jihad. Significantly, in October 2004, al-Zarqawi ended months of speculation regarding his relationship with Osama bin Laden, when he announced his allegiance to bin Laden and al Qaeda. The group pledged to respect al Qaeda's orders and instructions, an intention that appears to be substantiated by recently intercepted communications between al-Zarqawi and bin Laden in Pakistan.<sup>18</sup>

### **Hamas, Islamic Jihad Jerusalem, and Al-Fatah**

Palestinian Islamist organizations Hamas and Islamic Jihad Jerusalem<sup>19</sup> and the late President Yassir Arafat's secular al-Fatah are the West Bank and Gaza groups most often associated with violence against Israelis amid the ongoing Middle East conflict. These "factions" were relatively quiet in the eight years following the Oslo Accords of 1993. However, the collapse of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations erupted into the Palestinian Al-Aqsa *intifada* in October 2000, touching off a wave of Palestinian-Israeli violence that escalated into a vicious and deadly cycle of provocation and reprisal. This surge in violence places Hamas, Islamic Jihad Jerusalem, and al-Fatah among the world's more active organizations in 2003. Compared with Hamas and al-Fatah, Islamic Jihad Jerusalem is smaller, lacks a substantial support base, and is less organized; Jerusalem further differs ideologically from its organizational counterparts in that it seeks to create an Islamic state for Palestinians and has financial ties to both Syria and Iran.<sup>20</sup>

Despite these structural differences, each of these Palestinian groups employs conventional explosions and, often, suicide bombings. Hamas and al-Fatah, as active as they are deadly in RAND-MIPT findings, tend to target civilians within Israel, although the group is known to target the military as well. Other targets of Palestinian terrorism are Jewish settlers and soldiers in the West Bank and Gaza. Islamic Jihad Jerusalem also limits its locus of activity to the West Bank and Gaza, but in the past it has conducted operations in Jordan and Lebanon.

The right-wing government of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has adopted a hard-line approach to Palestinian violence against Israel, eliminating the leadership of Palestinian organizations through assassinations while also targeting Palestinian groups' rank and file.<sup>21</sup> Although this plan has weakened the organizational structure and capabilities of Islamic Jihad Jerusalem and Hamas especially, the frequency of Hamas attacks in particular is still notable. The organization's operations have increased more than twofold since 2002, but Hamas has a reduced capacity to stage lethal attacks, given substantial erosion of its leader-

<sup>18</sup> See the MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base at [www.tkb.org](http://www.tkb.org).

<sup>19</sup> This name is a variation of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ).

<sup>20</sup> See the MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base at [www.tkb.org](http://www.tkb.org).

<sup>21</sup> Israeli policy was originally directed toward the makers of bombs; however, the scope of Israeli targets has expanded to include political leaders as well as emerging leadership within Palestinian factions.

ship and membership base and, thus, expertise. In contrast to the pattern of Hamas, the frequency of al-Fatah attacks has decreased slightly between 2002 and 2003. Al-Fatah, in response to the same newfound constraints on its organizational capability, appears to have adopted a different strategy by implementing fewer but more deadly dramatic attacks that produce mass fatalities. Unlike al Qaeda, neither Hamas nor al-Fatah has demonstrated the intent to attack outside its domestic theater of operations.

### **Basque Fatherland and Freedom (ETA)**

The ETA, which focuses its activities in Spain, uses terrorism as a means of establishing an independent state in parts of northern Spain and southwestern France. The ETA claims to represent the interests of Spain's Basque community, which has its own distinct culture and language. Although Spain guaranteed the Basque a homeland in the 1978 constitution, the government nevertheless opposes the establishment of an autonomous region and has been at odds with the ETA almost since the organization's inception in 1959.<sup>22</sup>

The ETA, leftist in ideology, primarily conducts explosive attacks against regional government officials in Spain, including the Basque region.<sup>23</sup> In recent years, however, the organization has begun to target civilians, journalists, and, of significance in 2003, mass transportation targets. Since 9/11, ETA activity has subsided somewhat. This may be a reflection of tighter law enforcement and a depletion of resources that occurred following the freezing of ETA assets after 9/11. Still, the organization remains active, and it continues to challenge the Spanish government. Among its attacks recorded during 2003, for example, the ETA allegedly killed two policemen and injured two civilians in a car bombing in the village of Sanguesa, Navarra region.<sup>24</sup>

### **Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT)**

LeT is one of several Muslim organizations seeking to reclaim the disputed territory of Kashmir—two-thirds of which is presently held by India—for Pakistan. In addition to challenging Indian sovereignty over this South Asian territory, LeT seeks to restore Islamic rule over all parts of India and bring about a union of all Muslim majority regions in countries that surround Pakistan.<sup>25</sup> RAND-MIPT assessments indicate that LeT is one of the best-trained groups fighting against India in Kashmir. LeT earns a position on the list of the world's most lethal organizations, employing bombs and explosive devices to carry out attacks against Indian government officials, soldiers, and infrastructure. RAND-MIPT findings indicate that non-Muslim civilians are the most frequent recipients of terrorist violence in Kashmir. The mix of terrorism and the existence of nuclear weapon capability (which both India and Pakistan possess) make Kashmir one of the most volatile regions in the world.

Also of great concern are the possible links between LeT and other resourceful Muslim groups, namely al Qaeda. LeT leadership has reportedly engaged in ongoing consultations with Osama bin Laden, and many of LeT's rank and file have trained in madrassas

<sup>22</sup> See the MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base at [www.tkb.org](http://www.tkb.org)

<sup>23</sup> In 1973, the ETA killed Francisco Franco's successor, Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco, in a parking lot bombing, and in 1995, the organization almost assassinated Jose Maria Aznar, then the Popular Party leader and a future prime minister of Spain. The group was also implicated in a scheme to kill King Juan Carlos. See Council on Foreign Relations (2004).

<sup>24</sup> Council on Foreign Relations (2004).

<sup>25</sup> See the MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base at [www.tkb.org](http://www.tkb.org)

(Muslim religious schools), attended by al Qaeda and Taliban members. LeT cadres are also believed to have trained in terrorist camps in Afghanistan, where the group attracted some veterans from the 1980 Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

Pakistan has supported LeT and other Islamist groups to aid the country in its dispute with India. Pakistan has provided funds, assistance with border crossings to Kashmir, arms, and training facilities. Members of Pakistani and Kashmiri diaspora communities and Muslim sympathizers in the Persian Gulf continue to donate to LeT and its confederate organizations. Since late 2001, Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf, under intense pressure from the United States, has cracked down on domestic groups, banning LeT and others. As a consequence, many have gone underground. However, groups like LeT have shifted their activities in response to these environmental constraints and have made other various adjustments in strategy, such as assuming other names, forming separate ad hoc organizations, or joining with other groups to avoid detection.<sup>26</sup> Some experts conclude that these militants have even managed to expand the purview of their operations, conducting attacks on Christian and Shi'a minorities, as well as on American and Western targets.<sup>27</sup> Whether Musharraf will be able to successfully stem terrorist activity in Pakistan remains to be seen, since the Pakistani president faces external pressures to cooperate with the global war on terrorism and internal pressures to appease a conservative Muslim public sympathetic to Muslim groups. As such, Musharraf's own survival is at stake; the two assassination attempts on his life that occurred in as many weeks in December 2003 vividly illustrate his dilemma.

### **The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)**

The objective of the LRA is to overthrow the Ugandan government. The organization has bases operating from northern Uganda and southern Sudan, and concentrates its operations on northern Uganda in an effort to destabilize the Ugandan regime and replace it with a government guided by Christianity.<sup>28</sup> Although the LRA is a small group totaling just 1,000, the organization has managed to inflict brutal violence on thousands of local Ugandan civilians, according to human rights reports. Furthermore, the LRA is believed to be involved in engineering abductions of Ugandan children and youth to train as guerrillas.<sup>29</sup> As part of its violent pursuits, the group has subjected civilians to torture and has maimed many. In addition to kidnapping, the group uses explosives as a primary weapon.<sup>30</sup> Aside from unseating the Ugandan regime, LRA terrorist acts are aimed at discouraging foreign investment. Ultimately, the main victims of LRA terrorism are Ugandan civilians. Nevertheless, the group directs its activities toward government targets, as well as nongovernmental organizations.

As with most terrorist groups, the LRA is preoccupied with maintaining its ranks, instead of recruiting new members by offering incentives through a shared ideology. To this

<sup>26</sup> This makes it even more difficult to determine responsibility for attacks. For example, one group that calls itself al-Qanoon or Lashkar-e-Omar is believed to actually be a coalition of LeT, Jaish-e-Muhammed, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, and other groups. See the MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base at [www.tkb.org](http://www.tkb.org) and Council of Foreign Relations online at [www.cfrterrorism.org](http://www.cfrterrorism.org).

<sup>27</sup> Brahma Chellaney, "Fighting Terrorism in South Asia," *International Security*, Winter 2001/2002, pp. 94–116.

<sup>28</sup> The organization is also a designee on the U.S. Department of State's "Terrorist Exclusion List." For a background on the LRA, see the MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base at [www.tkb.org](http://www.tkb.org)

<sup>29</sup> Amnesty International reports that without children and young adult abductees, the LRA would have few combatants. See John Pike, "The Intelligence Resource Program," Federation of American Scientists, May 2002, [www.fas.org](http://www.fas.org).

<sup>30</sup> See Pike (2002) and the U.S. Department of State, *Patterns of Global Terrorism, 2002*.

end, the LRA abductions of civilians continue to account for a large portion of the group's activities. While LRA attacks are infrequent in number, according to RAND-MIPT statistics, the organization earned a spot on the top ten list of terrorist organizations for its effectiveness in inflicting mass casualties and suffering.

Until very recently, the LRA was supported by the government of Sudan, which hosted a number of the group's bases. However, the Ugandan government launched a major military offensive against the LRA in 2002, and, as a result of pressure following 9/11, Sudan has begun cooperating with Uganda to eliminate the organization. RAND-MIPT findings suggest that bilateral collaboration may have had only a marginal effect on the LRA's activities thus far, since the number of fatalities decreased only slightly in 2003.

### **The Riyadhus Saliheyn Islamic Martyr's Brigade and the Black Widows**

The Chechen struggle for independence from Russia has resulted in a violent and protracted conflict that has claimed the lives of tens of thousands of Russians and Chechens. Chechen terrorist groups have aligned with Chechen guerrillas in their struggle for independence, which is aimed primarily against Russian military forces. Moreover, in addition to their demand for statehood, Chechen groups seek to spread Islamic jihad to the Caucasus region, a cause that has attracted foreign Islamic militants, some of whom are believed to be Arab fighters linked to al Qaeda.<sup>31</sup>

In Russia, the Riyadhus Saliheyn Islamic Martyr's Brigade is one of several groups responsible for extending acts of terrorism, including hostage-taking and assassinations. The group, whose name translates to "Requirements for Getting into Paradise," is a relatively young organization, dedicated to the creation of an independent Islamic republic in Chechnya. However, most experts agree that the primary inspiration behind the Riyadhus Brigade's activities is a desire for the independence of "Chechen lands" rather than religious zealotry.<sup>32</sup> The organization, along with two other militant groups, was directly involved in the seizure of more than 800 hostages at Moscow's Dubrovka Theater in October 2002, an incident that resulted in the deaths of 129 hostages, including one U.S. citizen.<sup>33</sup> Prior to this event, the Riyadhus Saliheyn, or "Garden of Martyrs," was not known to exist, and for this reason it has had a rather short history of carrying out terrorist operations. Its most recently claimed terror operation following the Dubrovka hostage incident was the bombing of the Russian government compound in Grozny in December 2002.

Broadening its scope of targets beyond the Russian government, the Riyadhus Brigade has been increasingly targeting civilians in public places and using tactical measures that include both conventional and suicide bombings, as well as kidnappings, to carry out its mission. Although the group is reported to be at least 200-strong, its operations are typically much smaller and deploy no more than 50 fighters per incident.

<sup>31</sup> Experts have found a number of alleged ties between Chechen groups and al Qaeda. The late Chechen warlord Khattab was a Jordanian who fought with Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan; Muhammad Atta, one of the 9/11 hijackers, initially planned to join the Chechens in combat; Zacarias Moussaoui was supposedly a recruiter for al Qaeda in Chechnya; and many rebels fought with the Taliban and al Qaeda in Afghanistan. See the MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base at [www.tkb.org](http://www.tkb.org).

<sup>32</sup> According to RAND-MIPT analysis, the organization also has links to the Movsar Baryayev Gang, the International Islamic Brigade (IIB) and the Special Purpose Islamic Regiment (SPIR). See the MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base at [www.tkb.org](http://www.tkb.org).

<sup>33</sup> Those groups are the IIB and the SPIR.

Another prolific Chechen group that has emerged is the Black Widows, an organization that also has a position on RAND-MIPT's list of global terrorists. The Black Widows are especially noteworthy. The organization, composed of women thought to be the widows of Chechen rebels, is responsible for suicide bombings in Russia and Chechnya that have killed as many as 52 people in 2003.<sup>34</sup> Like the Riyadhus Brigade, the Black Widows are thought to have first surfaced during the Dubrovka Theater hostage incident and have since been involved in a number of other deadly attacks. For example, in July 2003, two female suicide bombers killed 14 people at a rock concert in Russia that was attended by 20,000 people, and in the previous month, a woman strapped with explosives killed 17 people after throwing herself under a bus carrying members of Russia's military.<sup>35</sup> Russian officials conclude that the Black Widows' method of suicide bombings is more characteristic of terrorist measures commonly used by Islamist groups and raises specific concerns about al Qaeda, which is believed to have affiliations with Chechen organizations.<sup>36</sup> In the view of Russian authorities, the Black Widows' tactics merely confirm al Qaeda's involvement in training the Chechen groups' ranks.<sup>37</sup>

Both Riyadhus Brigade and Black Widows' attacks, while infrequent in 2003, were decidedly lethal. Terrorist acts by each group claimed the lives of 52 people. The range of targets mostly consisted of government officials and civilians. In these attacks, the Black Widows relied almost exclusively on suicide bombings, while the Riyadhus Brigade employed numerous tactics. Russian President Vladimir Putin's militant policy toward the Chechen groups' resistance has likely constrained the movement of these organizations and weakened their ranks. However, they have sufficiently circumvented Russian security measures through bribes of security forces and other methods to carry out deadly attacks. The fortitude of these groups is also aided further by funding provided by Islamist charities and by the tactical assistance provided by al Qaeda.<sup>38</sup>

### **The All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF)**

The ATTF is a nationalist organization that concentrates its operations in the Indian state of Tripura and benefits from bases in Bangladesh, where poor infrastructure and weak enforcement institutions make it possible for the group to function with relative ease. An amalgam of several ethnic groups, the vast majority of the organization's leadership is Hindu and only a very small minority is Christian. The ATTF opposes the presence of Bengali immigrants in the Tripura area of India and aspires to restore the land to tribal groups.<sup>39</sup>

The Indian government considers the ATTF one of the most active groups operating in Tripura, and in RAND-MIPT results, it is also one of the most deadly organizations. A government amnesty in 1994 depleted the organization of its membership base after 1,600 members laid down their arms. The ATTF was further challenged by a state ban on the

<sup>34</sup> See "Chechnya's 'Black Widow' Bombers," *CNN.com*, July 13, 2003, and Anssi Kullberg, "From the Dubrovka Theatre to 'Black Widows,'" *The Eurasian Politician*, October 2003.

<sup>35</sup> See "Chechnya's 'Black Widow' Bombers" (2003).

<sup>36</sup> "Chechnya's 'Black Widow' Bombers" (2003).

<sup>37</sup> "Chechnya's 'Black Widow' Bombers" (2003).

<sup>38</sup> See the Council on Foreign Relations, *Chechnya-Based Terrorists*, 2004, <http://cfrterrorism.org/groups/chechens.html>.

<sup>39</sup> See the South Asia Terrorism Portal at [www.satp.org](http://www.satp.org).

group in 1997. However, the organization has been able to reconstitute itself by forming ties with several other like-minded organizations, including the United National Liberation Front (UNLF), the People's Liberation Army (PLA), the National Liberation Front of Arunachal Pradesh (NLFA), and the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), from which the ATTF allegedly receives arms. The ATTF also takes advantage of the proximity of Bangladesh. Its members rely on the country as a safe haven and use the Chittagong Hill Tracts area as a training site.

The location of ATTF bases in Bangladesh places the group beyond the jurisdictional reach of the Indian authorities. Consequently, ATTF operations continue (mainly against civilians and government officials) due to the very same circumstances contributing to the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NFLT) activity—the porous border between India and Bangladesh, which only aids in maintaining the operational viability of the organization. The ATTF can move essentially unimpeded between countries to recruit fresh members and to sustain its terrorist mission.

### **The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)**

The MILF is an Islamic liberation movement based in the Bangsamoro region of Mindanao and its neighboring islands of the Philippines. The MILF is currently the largest Islamic terrorist and separatist group in the Philippines, estimated to have between 8,000 and 15,000 members. The MILF demands independence for Muslims in the entire southern Philippines, making the region a flashpoint of conflict between the Muslim populations, who see the area as their historic homeland, and the Christian population, who dominate economic and political affairs. Although a 1996 peace agreement led to the establishment of an autonomous region in Muslim Mindanao after decades of bloody conflict with the Philippine government, the plan engendered only fragmented support and was rejected not only by the MILF but also by its parent organization, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). The MILF has refused to accept any compromises regarding independence, and antigovernment activities continue in the area.<sup>40</sup>

The MILF draws its members from Mindanao cities and a number of the Muslim-dominated provinces. MILF leadership tends to be Islamic clerics, and the organization stresses military, political, and economic self-reliance. Sources of organizational strength include popular support in the rural areas of Mindanao, but the MILF also has relationships with other resourceful foreign terrorist networks, such as Jemaah Islamiyya (JI) and al Qaeda.<sup>41</sup> The Philippine government believes that the MILF's ties to al Qaeda have mainly involved the exchanges of funds; however, officials also believe that, in recent years, al Qaeda operatives may have cooperated with MILF members in terrorist operations.

A temporary breakdown in February 2003 of a cease-fire established between the government and the MILF in 2001 likely explains the upsurge in terrorist attacks in the months following. Since the agreement's reinstatement in July, the MILF claims to be committed to peace, possibly in an effort to avoid scrutiny. Philippine authorities appear less san-

<sup>40</sup> The MILF has a mission similar to that of its separatist counterpart, the MNLF. The MILF split from the MNLF during the 1970s over ethnic and strategic divisions. The MILF emphasizes the Islamic aspects and goals of the movement, whereas the MNLF does not. Elements of both organizations maintain active perpetrators of separatist violence, but the U.S. State Department does not consider the MNLF or MILF to be terrorist organizations.

<sup>41</sup> See Jose Sole Vanzi, "Arrested Al-Qa'ida Suspect Links Terrorist Group to MILF Rebels," *CNN.com*, June 4, 2004.

guine regarding the prospects for a cessation of MILF operations, against the backdrop of ongoing insurgent violence. The government believes that the MILF intends to expand its activities beyond the southern Philippines, as evidenced in alleged affiliation to al Qaeda and other groups.<sup>42</sup> Although the MILF denies foreign terrorist links, the potential relationship with transnational terrorist organizations, along with its robust capability, makes it a formidable terrorist group in Southeast Asia.

During 2003, the MILF was not a frequent perpetrator of terrorism, yet the few attacks the group managed to successfully conduct were deadly. Vigorous counterterrorism cooperation between the United States and the Philippines may also be a contributing factor to diminished frequency of MILF activity, but Philippine efforts are also undermined by weak and occasionally corrupt law enforcement. While some observers note that the MILF is trying to distance itself from global terrorism in general, its longtime links to such opportunistic organizations as al Qaeda and JI leave room for uncertainty as to how active the organization will remain in the near term.<sup>43</sup>

### **The National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT)**

The RAND-MIPT compilation of the world's most active terrorist groups concludes with the NLFT of India. The NLFT, like the ATTF, focuses its activities in the Indian state of Tripura. However, the impetus driving the NLFT's armed struggle is the creation of an independent state in Tripura that is governed by Christian principles. With many of the group's members motivated by Christianity, the NLFT manifesto seeks to end "Indian colonialism" and "neo-imperialism."<sup>44</sup> The organization, operating from Bangladesh, uses its numerous bases to execute subversive terrorist activities in India.

Typical NLFT targets include Indian government employees and officials, as well as civilians. Members of the rival Communist Party of India and their family members are also victims of NLFT attacks. Bombings and kidnappings are the tactical measures used most often by the NLFT.

A number of internal developments have fractured the NLFT over the past three years, such as disputes over the misappropriation of the funds by senior leaders, complaints regarding the forcible conversion of tribal members and civilians to Christianity, and disagreement over leadership of the "Tripura Kingdom."<sup>45</sup> Yet these circumstances have had little bearing on the potency of the NLFT, as both the frequency and lethality of NLFT terrorist violence have risen significantly since 2002.<sup>46</sup> As a result, the group ranks as one of the most active terrorist groups in terms of both incidents and fatalities (see Tables 1 and 2).

A number of factors reinforce the sustainability of the NLFT. First, the organization reportedly receives financial assistance from Christian supporters in India, enabling the orga-

<sup>42</sup> Hassan Mustafa Bakry, an Egyptian allegedly linked to al Qaeda, was arrested in the Philippines in June 2004 and is thought to have been involved in training the MILF. Authorities say that he arrived in the Philippines in 1999. See Vanzi (2004).

<sup>43</sup> See the Council on Foreign Relations' report on the Philippines online at <http://cfrterrorism.org>.

<sup>44</sup> According to Bangladesh police, as many as 90 percent of the NLFT's leadership is Christian.

<sup>45</sup> See the South Asia Terrorism Portal at [www.satp.org](http://www.satp.org). *The NLFT*.

<sup>46</sup> That year, the group ranked 16th and 17th, respectively, on RAND-MIPT scales of frequency of terrorist events and fatalities.

nization to implement its operations.<sup>47</sup> Second, the NLFT has fully functional base camps located in Bangladesh along the country's Indian border, a very porous area that permits easy movement between Bangladesh and India. The absence of adequate police, intelligence resources, and monitoring of the border—a common problem in many developing countries like Bangladesh—further compounds the difficulty of curbing terrorist activity in neighboring India. The NLFT has managed to maintain contacts with various terrorist organizations, such as the National Liberation Front of Bodoland, an organization active in Assam; the Nagaland-based National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak-Muivah (NSCN-IM); and the Manipur-based Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL). The NLFT has, likewise, cultivated transborder linkages in Myanmar and Bhutan, which are also rather accessible, and has formed strategic networks with intelligence organizations in Pakistan.

## Summary and Conclusion

This report has identified the ten most active terrorist groups based on analysis from RAND-MIPT data from 2002 and 2003. Significantly, the results indicate a decline in the overall level of global terrorist activity from 2002 to 2003, a trend that may be explained by improved security cooperation between countries since September 11, 2001, which has helped curtail the activities of terrorist groups and allowed more extensive sharing of intelligence, freezing of organizational assets, closer monitoring and surveillance, and vigorous efforts to apprehend terrorist suspects. These have each contributed to the decrease in global violence during 2003.

Despite an aggregate decline, however, the number of attacks and the absolute number of fatalities have not returned to the comparatively lower levels found in previous years. The violent operations of specific terrorist groups offer a more nuanced interpretation of terrorist activity. A number of groups have increased or maintained their terrorist operations and are just as lethal or—as in the case of al Qaeda and Hamas—have grown even more lethal over just the past year. As terrorists find their resources and functions restricted as a result of enhanced security measures, some are forced to conduct fewer attacks but are nonetheless able to execute events that are instead more deadly in scope, exacting larger death tolls. Other groups boosted the number of attacks despite domestic constraints limiting their capacity to do so.

The current survey of terrorist groups shows that this kind of strategic adaptation is enhanced by several conditions common to the countries in which terrorist groups are best able to thrive. First, many of countries in which terrorist groups operate are impoverished. Wide gaps between the rich and poor persist, and unemployment is soaring. These conditions only foment popular discontent, making conditions ripe for the terrorist recruitment of disaffected individuals searching for an alternative to the status quo. Second—related to the overall problem of country-level poverty—is the lack of human and financial resources necessary to institute the legal infrastructure needed to facilitate the prosecution and extradition of suspects, the effective monitoring of terrorist organizations, and law enforcement that would impede their operations.

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<sup>47</sup> *South Asia Intelligence Review Weekly Assessments and Briefings*, Vol. 1, No. 33, March 2003. See also the South Asia Terrorism Portal at [www.satp.org](http://www.satp.org).

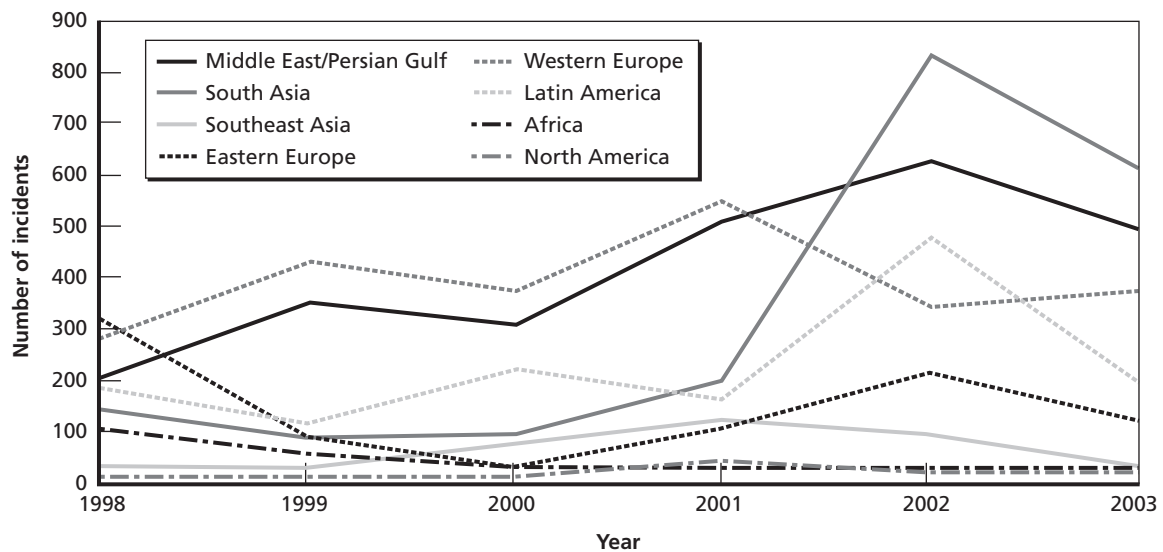
Third, open or permeable borders provide terrorists with the ability to move easily between countries, which contributes to the transnational quality of terrorist organizations. As a consequence, groups can conduct their strategic operations relatively unfettered, establishing bases in one country while moving to a neighboring state to carry out subversive terrorism, evidenced by the examples of the LRA, ATTF, NLFT, and several other groups.

The fourth factor is a feature common to the terrorist groups themselves. The organizations cited in this report are endowed with diverse economic resources that are conventional and non-conventional in nature. Economic opportunities have enabled terrorists to sustain their own operations and assist other groups with theirs, despite greater international cooperation between countries to diminish terrorists' coffers. Al Qaeda, for example, has profited from involvement in legitimate business ventures (from which assets are diverted to illegal activities), while others, such as the FARC, engage in illicit economic endeavors that include extortion and drug trading. Groups also rely on funds from allied and sympathizing groups, and solicit donations from individuals. All of these revenues provide terrorists with the means to conduct attacks far from their organizational base, an advantage that further adds to the complexity of tracing the party responsible for the incident.

Finally, the countries and regions where the preponderance of terrorism occurred during 2003 were plagued by drawn-out conflicts. Unresolved antagonisms only exacerbate tensions between terrorist groups and governments. These ongoing conflagrations serve as the basis for terrorist group motivation and their *raison d'être*. Conflict and instability additionally frustrate the prospects for economic growth and political stability, which have broader implications for the capability of states to address terrorism.

## Appendix

**Figure A.1**  
Number of Terrorist Incidents by Region, 1998–2003



SOURCE: RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident Database, 1998–2003.

**Table A.1**  
**The Ten Most Active Terrorist Groups—Frequency of Attacks, 2002**

Rank	Group	Base Country	Target Country	Fatalities
1	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)	Colombia	Colombia	179
2	Communist Party of Nepal–Maoist (CPN-M)	Nepal	Nepal	86
3	Al-Fatah	West Bank/Gaza	Israel	57
4	National Liberation Army (ELN)	Colombia	Colombia	37
5	Hamas	West Bank/Gaza	Israel	33
6	Peoples' War Group (PWG)	India	India	23
7	Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA)	Spain	Spain	21
8	United Self Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC)	Colombia	Colombia	16
9	National Liberation Front of Corsica (FLNC)	Colombia	Colombia	15
10	Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)	West Bank/Gaza	Israel	11

SOURCE: RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident Database (January 1, 2002–December 31, 2002).

**Table A.2**  
**The Ten Most Active Terrorist Groups—Fatalities in Attacks, 2002**

Rank	Group	Base Country	Target Country	Fatalities
1	Jemaah Islamiyya (JI)	Indonesia	Multiple	202
2	Hamas	West Bank/Gaza	Israel	181
3	Movsar Baryayev Gang	Chechnya	Russia/Chechnya	162
4	Al-Fatah	West Bank/Gaza	Israel	159
5	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)	Colombia	Colombia	157
6	Riyadhus Islamic Saliheyn Martyr's Brigade	Chechnya	Russia	72
7	Islamic Jihad Jerusalem	West Bank/Gaza	Israel	64
8	Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)	Sudan/Uganda	Uganda	60
9	National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB)	India	India	52
10	Peoples' War Group (PWG)	India	India	48

SOURCE: RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident Database (January 1, 2002–December 31, 2002).

## Al Qaeda Recruitment in the United States: A Preliminary Assessment

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William Rosenau, Ph.D.

### Introduction

Although relatively modest in size when compared with its presence in South Asia, the Middle East, or Southeast Asia, al Qaeda remains active in the United States. Some of this presence takes the form of operational cells, although most of the individuals who have been linked to al Qaeda serve as a support base, providing logistics, financing, and other services to the international jihadist movement.<sup>1</sup> Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, U.S. residents connected to al Qaeda have been prosecuted for establishing terrorist training camps, for traveling to Afghanistan to fight on behalf of the Taliban, and for plotting to destroy major bridges, amusement parks, and military installations.

Yet much remains unknown about al Qaeda activities within the United States, particularly with respect to recruitment, defined for the purposes of this article as “a process in which individuals, groups, and populations are targeted by psychological operations designed to enlist their witting/unwitting participation in and exploitation by the recruiter’s organization.”<sup>2</sup> Before 9/11, the FBI collected and analyzed little information about al Qaeda’s U.S.-based networks. “We didn’t understand the magnitude of what was going on here,” a former senior FBI counterterrorism official has concluded.<sup>3</sup> The FBI’s use of human sources—essential for understanding the inner workings of terrorist groups—was extremely limited, according to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (the “9/11 Commission”).<sup>4</sup> Nor did the FBI or other intelligence agencies develop a list of graduates of terrorist training camps in Afghanistan who had entered the United States.<sup>5</sup> Such a list could have helped the bureau develop a picture of al Qaeda’s activities in the United States, including the group’s recruitment efforts.

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<sup>1</sup> Testimony of Robert S. Mueller III, Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, February 24, 2004, [www.fbi.gov/congress04/mueller022404.htm](http://www.fbi.gov/congress04/mueller022404.htm), accessed February 27, 2004. Although there are differences among the following terms, for stylistic purposes the phrases “al Qaeda,” “international jihadists,” and “violent Islamist extremists” will be used interchangeably in this article.

<sup>2</sup> Sara Daly et al., *Identifying and Mitigating al-Qaeda Recruitment Nodes*, unpublished RAND research, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in John Mintz, “U.S. Jihadis Tough to Track,” *The Gazette* (Montreal), July 20, 2002, p. B1.

<sup>4</sup> “Law Enforcement, Counterterrorism, and Intelligence Collection in the United States Prior to 9/11,” Staff Statement No. 9, April 2004, [www.9-11commission.gov/staff\\_statements.htm](http://www.9-11commission.gov/staff_statements.htm), accessed April 20, 2004, cited hereafter as 9/11 Staff Statement.

<sup>5</sup> “Chasing the Sleeper Cell,” *Frontline*, transcript, April 29, 2003, [www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/sleeper/interviews/watson.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/sleeper/interviews/watson.html), accessed April 30, 2004.

Since 9/11, the FBI has undertaken an ambitious program to build the bureau's capacity to prevent future terrorist attacks on the American homeland.<sup>6</sup> Although today the FBI is devoting considerably more resources and attention to al Qaeda activities within the United States, it is unclear from publicly available information how comprehensive a picture the bureau has been able to draw. Some observers conclude that major lacunae remain. When asked by a reporter about the matrix of sleeper cells of al Qaeda operatives in the United States, one former top FBI official, replied, "It looks very frightening ... about what we don't know."<sup>7</sup>

This article will attempt to fill in at least part of this gap by offering some preliminary thoughts on al Qaeda recruitment practices within the United States. Other international terrorist groups, such as Lebanese Hizballah, the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA), and Hamas, have been active in the United States.<sup>8</sup> However, their actions have been confined largely to fundraising, weapons procurement, and other essentially logistical activities. Al Qaeda alone has demonstrated the willingness and ability to kill thousands of people on American soil, making it the most formidable terrorist threat to the nation. Understanding the recruitment process is critical if law enforcement and intelligence officials are to plan, mount, and assess operations to penetrate and disrupt al Qaeda's networks and support bases.

Before proceeding, several words of caution are in order. This analysis will necessarily be tentative and restricted in scope, given the paucity of unclassified primary-source material on the subject. Secondary sources, though useful, have limitations, since they tend to focus on recruitment activities prior to Operation Enduring Freedom, the U.S.-led military operation that destroyed the Taliban regime and al Qaeda's sanctuary in Afghanistan. As many terrorism analysts have observed, al Qaeda as a terrorist enterprise has morphed dramatically since that time, and its recruitment practices may have changed as well.<sup>9</sup>

As a final caveat, it should be noted that this article also draws on accounts of al Qaeda recruitment in several Western European countries. This approach has obvious limitations, given the different cultural, political, and social contexts in which that recruitment has taken place. That said, a number of European sources, such as the Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service (the Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst, or AIVD), have conducted invaluable systematic assessments of the terrorist recruitment process, which may prove useful in understanding the process in its American context.<sup>10</sup>

The remainder of this article is divided into three sections. The first part will explore, in a general way, the nature of al Qaeda recruitment within the United States, with a par-

<sup>6</sup> For a description of this program, see testimony of Robert S. Mueller III, Director, FBI, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations, June 18, 2003, [www.fbi.gov/congress/congress03/mueller061803.htm](http://www.fbi.gov/congress/congress03/mueller061803.htm), accessed July 9, 2003.

<sup>7</sup> "Chasing the Sleeper Cell" (2003).

<sup>8</sup> Mueller testimony, Senate Intelligence Committee; Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Terrorism in the United States, 1999*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, n.d., p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> For useful discussions of al Qaeda's metamorphoses since 9/11, see Xavier Raufer, "Al Qaeda: A Different Diagnosis," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 26, No. 6, November–December, 2003; Bruce Hoffman, "Al Qaeda, Trends in Terrorism, and Future Potentialities: An Assessment," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 26, No. 6, November–December 2003, p. 437; and Jason Burke, "9/11 Two Years On," *The Observer* (London), September 7, 2003, p. 21.

<sup>10</sup> See in particular Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst, *Recruitment for the Jihad in the Netherlands: From Incident to Trend*, Leidschendam, The Netherlands: AIVD, December 3, 2002, p. 7, cited hereafter as *AIVD Recruitment Study*.

particular emphasis on the use of prisons as venues for recruitment activities. The second section will focus more narrowly on the recruiters and the recruits themselves, and will consider such topics as psychological motivation, personal histories, and the processes by which individuals are drawn into the terrorist enterprise. The concluding section will draw together these preliminary assessments and suggest ways in which government officials might go about developing a more complete picture of the recruitment process in the United States.

## Al Qaeda Recruitment Trends

The FBI, as one counterterrorism official testified in 2003, is “deeply concerned about Al Qaeda’s efforts to recruit U.S. citizens to support its terrorist goals and, perhaps, to carry out attacks on American soil.”<sup>11</sup> Al Qaeda, according to subsequent testimony by another bureau policymaker, “is seeking to recruit human sources within the United States, as demonstrated by their training manuals.” Terrorists, in his view, exploit America’s traditionally tolerant attitude toward organized religion “by using radical forms of Islam to recruit operatives.”<sup>12</sup> U.S. nationals make enticing candidates for any terrorist group seeking to carry out operations, raise money, procure weapons, or engage in other terrorist activities. Within the United States, American citizens are far less likely than foreign nationals to draw the attention of the authorities, particularly since 9/11, which helped usher in a wave of new immigration restrictions and border control measures. Those whom al Qaeda members have termed the “blue-eyed” Muslims or the “white Moors” are considered by the organization to be far more difficult for security authorities to identify and track.<sup>13</sup>

American citizenship, and a U.S. passport, also proved useful to al Qaeda in the past. Wadih el-Hage, a former Arlington, Texas, tire store worker who was convicted in connection with the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, told an FBI agent “that because he [el-Hage] had an American passport, [al Qaeda leader] Usama bin Laden wanted him to work for him because he could travel more freely and buy things for bin Laden.”<sup>14</sup> Finally, recruiting American Muslims is consistent with al Qaeda’s ideological orientation, which considers nationality a godless human construct and stresses pan-Islamic unity against the “Jews and Crusaders” and their satraps in the Middle East. As one reputed al Qaeda member told a reporter, “There are no foreigners among us. We are all brothers, believers, and have a close relationship.”<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Statement for the record by Larry M. Mefford, Assistant Director, Counterterrorism Division, FBI, U.S. Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, Terrorism, Technology and Homeland Security Subcommittee, June 27, 2003, [www.fbi.gov/congress/congress03/mefford062703.htm](http://www.fbi.gov/congress/congress03/mefford062703.htm), accessed July 9, 2003.

<sup>12</sup> Statement for the record by John S. Pistole, Assistant Director, Counterterrorism Division, FBI, U.S. Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, Terrorism, Technology and Homeland Security Subcommittee, October 14, 2003, [www.fbi.gov/congress/congress03/pistole101403.htm](http://www.fbi.gov/congress/congress03/pistole101403.htm), accessed February 27, 2004, cited hereafter as Pistole statement.

<sup>13</sup> Daniel McGrory, “Convert ‘White Moors’ Are Now Focus of Recruiters for Terrorism,” *Times* (London), October 27, 2003, p. 10.

<sup>14</sup> *United States v. Usama Bin Laden et al.*, United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, S(7) Cr. 1023, trial transcript, March 20, 2001.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Mahmud Khalil, “Al-Qa’ida Figure on Recruiting Europeans, Americans,” *Al-Majallah* (London), August 3, 2003, pp. 15–17.

## Prisons

Angry, isolated from their families, and frequently violent, *les damnés de la terre* who make up much of the U.S. prison population serve as a tempting recruitment pool for terrorist groups and other illicit enterprises such as organized crime and gangs. “[American] correctional institutions are a viable venue for ... radicalization and recruitment,” according to the FBI.<sup>16</sup> Although the total number of Muslims within the U.S. federal prison system is unknown, the fact that approximately 9,000 inmates, or roughly 6 percent, seek out Islamic religious services gives a rough idea of the Islamic prison population.<sup>17</sup> Some observers characterize the threat of Islamic terrorist recruitment in prisons as overstated<sup>18</sup>—indeed, there are no documented cases of U.S. inmates actually joining al Qaeda while in prison.<sup>19</sup> However, the U.S. Bureau of Prisons, which manages federal penal complexes, believes that inmates are acutely vulnerable. Contractors and volunteers enlisted to provide Islamic services, as well as extremist inmates themselves, are helping to radicalize some unknown portion of the incarcerated population.<sup>20</sup>

Inmates are typically radicalized through anti-U.S. and anti-Western sermons at prayer services, exposure to propaganda, and contact with radicalized fellow prisoners.<sup>21</sup> This indoctrination can be the first step in a process of radicalization that often continues after an inmate leaves prison. As noted in a recent Department of Justice study:

While radicalization does not necessarily lead inmates to join terrorist organizations, it can, upon their release, lead them to attend and serve in radical mosques or obtain religious education overseas in locations that provide further opportunities for radicalization and terrorist recruitment.<sup>22</sup>

For many recruits to the jihad, the “journey begins in the mosques and Islamic centers of America. There young Muslims may hear imams full of fire and brimstone sermonizing on the persecution of Muslims abroad.”<sup>23</sup> This message is reinforced by videos and websites containing lurid, blood-soaked images of the violent persecution of Muslims in places like Chechnya, Kashmir, and Bosnia.

The case of Jose Padilla, a U.S. citizen arrested in June 2002 for plotting to detonate a radioactive “dirty bomb” in the United States, illustrates the prison–mosque–foreign travel trajectory described above. After exposure to the religion while serving time in a Florida jail, Padilla converted to Islam and attended radical mosques in the southern part of the state.

<sup>16</sup> Pistole statement. Radicalization has also been a major problem in France, where roughly half of the country’s 45,000 inmates are Muslims. The country’s prisons “have become the cradle of the future jihad,” as one convict told *Le Monde*. Quoted in Frank Viviano, “French Prisons: Extremist Training Grounds,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 1, 2001, p. A4.

<sup>17</sup> Office of the Inspector General, *A Review of the Federal Bureau of Prisons’ Selection of Muslim Religious Services Providers*, U.S. Department of Justice, April 2004, p. 5, abbreviated hereafter as *Review of the Federal Bureau of Prisons*.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, testimony of Paul Rogers, U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, “Terrorist Recruitment and Infiltration in the United States: Prisons and Military as an Operational Base,” October 14, 2003, [http://judiciary.senate.gov/testimony.cfm?id=960&wit\\_id=2717](http://judiciary.senate.gov/testimony.cfm?id=960&wit_id=2717), accessed April 27, 2004.

<sup>19</sup> Mark Williams, “Prisons Have New Concern: Al-Qaida Recruitment of Inmates,” Associated Press, September 22, 2003.

<sup>20</sup> *Review of the Federal Bureau of Prisons*, pp. 6–7.

<sup>21</sup> *Review of the Federal Bureau of Prisons*, p. 7.

<sup>22</sup> *Review of the Federal Bureau of Prisons*, p. 7.

<sup>23</sup> David E. Kaplan, “Made in the U.S.A.,” *U.S. News & World Report*, June 10, 2002, p. 17.

Then, according to one press account, Padilla “plunged into the extremist underground” and moved to Pakistan, where he met repeatedly with Abu Zubaydah, bin Laden’s “operations chief” at the time, to whom he proposed the idea of carrying out a dirty bomb attack in the United States.<sup>24</sup>

Of course, not all of those who are radicalized in prison or on the outside become violent terrorists. Al Qaeda, like many other terrorist entities, relies on a support structure to provide safe houses, raise funds, provide legal services, and arrange transport.<sup>25</sup> In the view of one FBI agent, al Qaeda is not trying to recruit new bands of suicide bombers from the prison population. Rather, recruits are intended to serve in an important but auxiliary role that includes logistics, gathering information on possible targets, and identifying other individuals potentially useful to al Qaeda.<sup>26</sup>

Finally, radicalized Muslims could potentially serve as a support base for al Qaeda while they are still behind bars. Terrorist movements, ranging from Shining Path in Peru to the PIRA in Northern Ireland, have been able to transform a weakness—the imprisonment of their cadres—into a strength by using prisons as arenas for indoctrination, group solidarity, and training. Prison officials face a dilemma. Segregating extremists from the general population “enables people of like minds to work effectively together to refine their plans or reinforce their commitment to the cause.”<sup>27</sup> The other alternative, dispersing them among other inmates, brings with it the risk that radicals will proselytize and potentially “infect” other inmates and go on to function as a terrorist support network beyond the prison walls, as was evident in Northern Ireland.<sup>28</sup>

## Recruiters and Their Targets

What are some of the personal characteristics of the men (no women play a direct role in al Qaeda’s activities) drawn to terrorist enterprises like al Qaeda? Any such generalizations are problematic, given the wide variety of motivations, personality types, and personal histories of individuals who join Islamist or other terrorist groups.<sup>29</sup> In the words of Donatella Della Porta, “no specific personality types are ‘typical’ of terrorists.”<sup>30</sup> That said, a number of gen-

<sup>24</sup> Amanda Ripley, “The Case of the Dirty Bomber,” *Time*, June 16, 2002, [www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,262917,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,262917,00.html), accessed May 13, 2004.

<sup>25</sup> To take one example, the now-defunct Red Army Faction (*Rote Armee Fraktion*, or RAF) in Germany maintained a three-tier structure composed of “commandos,” “militants,” and a support base. Christoph Rojahn, *Left-Wing Terrorism in Germany: The Aftermath of Ideological Violence*, Conflict Studies 313, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, UK: Research Institute for the Study of Conflict and Terrorism, October 1998, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> Laura Sullivan, “Al-Qaida Targets ‘Captive Audience,’” *Seattle Times*, November 30, 2002, p. A5.

<sup>27</sup> Gregory R. Copley, “The Intelligence and Management Challenge Handling Radical, Terrorist and Politicized Prisoners,” *Defense & Foreign Affairs’ Strategic Policy*, January 2002 (online edition).

<sup>28</sup> Copley (2002).

<sup>29</sup> For more on the difficulty of generalizing about terrorist motivations, see Rex A. Hudson, *Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why: The 1999 Government Report on Profiling Terrorists*, Guilford, Conn.: The Lyons Press, n.d., particularly pp. 23–52.

<sup>30</sup> Donatella Della Porta, “Introduction: On Individual Motivations in Underground Political Organizations,” in Donatella Della Porta, ed., *Social Movements and Violence: Participation in Underground Organizations*, International Social Movement Research, Volume 4, Greenwich, Conn., and London: JAI Press, 1992, p. 7. However, Della Porta notes that “In societies in which underground organizations are more isolated from their environment [e.g., in Western Europe] ... analysts favor interpretations of militance that stress pathological characteristics” (p. 7).

eral characteristics emerge from a consideration of some recruits to violent Islamist extremism:

- Recruits are young, typically in their late teens or early to mid-20s. Groups like al Qaeda are able to harness the violent passions of young men by giving them a sense of purpose and drama and by channeling their youthful energy toward the supposed enemies of Islam.<sup>31</sup>
- Some, like Padilla, Richard Reid (the British “shoe bomber” who attempted to blow up a commercial airliner in December 2001),<sup>32</sup> and John Walker Lindh (the “American Taliban” who fought U.S. troops on behalf of the Taliban regime),<sup>33</sup> are converts to Islam. Being relatively new to the faith, they may be more receptive to the sophistries and distortions propagated by radical clerics and other extremists.
- Many are marked by a deep sense of anger and alienation from society. Fury, resentment, and a desire for revenge may make such individuals more open to appeals of radical recruiters. Dawud Salahuddin (born David Theodore Belfield), a convert to Islam who assassinated an Iranian dissident in Washington, D.C., in 1980, described his adolescence in Bay Shore, New York, as being marked by “an implacable hatred toward all symbols of American authority,” and he characterized himself as a “time bomb.”<sup>34</sup>
- Some are marked by a high intelligence, a quality likely to appeal to terrorist groups that must maintain complex support networks and mount sophisticated operations. Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh, the British-born al Qaeda member convicted in Pakistan for his involvement in the kidnap and murder of journalist Daniel Pearl in January 2002, was a high-achieving student who attended the London School of Economics.<sup>35</sup>

### Recruiters

Much less is known about the individuals who have served or are currently serving as recruiters for al Qaeda within the United States. Work by the Dutch AIVD, though focused on a Western European country with obvious differences from the United States, offers important insights into how international jihadists are recruiting young males in another democratic, modern, and prosperous nation, and it remains the most comprehensive open-source study on the subject published to date. In the Netherlands, recruiters share the following general characteristics:<sup>36</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Lionel Tiger, “What Makes Young Muslim Men Turn to Terrorism?” *The Guardian* (London), October 2, 2001, p. 8.

<sup>32</sup> “Who Is Richard Reid?” *BBC News*, December 28, 2001, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/1731568.stm>, accessed May 14, 2004.

<sup>33</sup> For an account of Lindh’s transformation from a suburban San Francisco teenager into a violent Islamist extremist, see Mark Kukis, *My Heart Became Attached: The Strange Journey of John Walker Lindh*, Washington, D.C.: Brassey’s, 2003.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Ira Silverman, “An American Terrorist,” *The New Yorker*, August 5, 2002, [www.newyorker.com/fact/content/020805fa\\_fact](http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/020805fa_fact), accessed April 29, 2004.

<sup>35</sup> Stephen McGinty, “The Very Model of an English Islamic Terrorist,” *The Scotsman*, July 16, 2002, p. 2.

<sup>36</sup> Unless indicated otherwise, the follow section draws from *AIVD Recruitment Study*, pp. 11–20.

- Recruiters have typically received ideological, religious, and military training abroad, most often in Afghanistan.
- They vary in age from early 20s to over 40, and many are married to Muslims with Dutch nationality, which enables recruiters to establish Dutch citizenship relatively easily.
- Some carry out their activities on their own initiative, while others are deployed by al Qaeda specifically to recruit among Western Muslim populations.
- They seek to promote an “aura of wisdom” and leadership around themselves, primarily by demonstrating a deep knowledge of radical Islamist doctrine. A prominent position in the mosque helps reinforce this image and allows them access to financial and other material resources useful in the recruitment process.
- Few recruiters have full-time jobs. Living relatively modestly, most are able to sustain themselves by selling false passports and telephone cards.
- Recruiters frequently “spot” potential recruits in radical mosques, where the persecution of fellow Muslims in places like Chechnya is frequently discussed. Videos, summer camps, Islamic centers, lectures, and the Internet help to emphasize the theme that Islam is under siege and to pave the way for recruitment.
- As in the United States, prisons offer an ideal audience, since “Muslim youths who are deprived of their freedom appear to display a striking receptivity for radical missionary enthusiasm.”
- Isolating potential recruits from their social milieu is a key part of the recruitment process. As this process unfolds over time, young men are brought into increasingly closed-off and private settings (e.g., the recruiter’s house), where the recruiter is able to engage in sustained psychological manipulation.<sup>37</sup>
- Recruiters use videos, lectures, and other means to reinforce the jihadist themes introduced at the radical mosque and other venues. Throughout this process, recruiters reinforce the belief that the West is at war with Islam, that Muslims must defend the faith, and that ultimately a society based on “pure” Islamic principles is required.<sup>38</sup> Al Qaeda recruiters in France employ similar tactics, building on the sense of victimization felt by many young Muslims.<sup>39</sup>
- During the final stage of the process, recruiters encourage their protégés to record video or audio testimonials affirming their willingness to die on behalf of the international jihad.
- Finally, recruiters tap into their international networks to secure military training for their recruits. Before 9/11, this training typically took place in Afghanistan or Pakistan. Today, however, obtaining such training abroad is far more difficult. Instead, recruits are kept in the West and prepared there for carrying out violent attacks on European targets. As demonstrated by the Madrid bombings in March 2004, the “field of jihad” is no longer limited to far-flung reaches of the world.

<sup>37</sup> There are obvious parallels with recruitment processes associated with religious cults and hate groups such as Nazi skinheads. Randy Blazak, “White Boys to Terrorist Men: Target Recruitment of Nazi Skinheads,” *American Behavioral Scientist*, Vol. 44, No. 6, February 2001, p. 994.

<sup>38</sup> E. S. M. Akerboom, AIVD, “Counter-Terrorism in the Netherlands,” November 11, 2003, [www.aivd.nl/actueel\\_publicaties/publicaties/counter\\_terrorism](http://www.aivd.nl/actueel_publicaties/publicaties/counter_terrorism), accessed May 11, 2004.

<sup>39</sup> “Expert on Muslim Fundamentalism Describes Terrorist Recruitment in France,” *Paris Match*, January 10, 2002.

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Identifying and monitoring all of the potential al Qaeda recruits in the United States is a demanding task for law enforcement and intelligence agencies. Although the number of “hard core” terrorists engaged in plotting violent attacks is relatively small, the broader support network is considerably larger.<sup>40</sup> The analysis in the preceding sections could help the authorities manage this challenge and apply resources more effectively by suggesting ways to “cue” intelligence collection and the gathering of law enforcement information. Few Muslims in the United States are likely to become radicals, let alone violent jihadists, so it makes sense to focus official scrutiny on the individuals, institutions, and activities most closely associated with terrorist recruitment.

Key “risk factors” that might help authorities identify possible recruits include

- Youth, particularly males in their late teens to early 20s
- Recent conversion to Islam, particularly after exposure to the faith while in prison
- Higher-than-average intelligence
- Regular attendance at a mosque where anti-Western and other jihadist themes are routinely aired
- Religious instruction in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, or other countries known for their extremist populations
- Travel to Chechnya, Bosnia, the southern Philippines, or other classic “fields of jihad.”

Identifying such individuals is only part of the challenge, however. Although some recruits may be entirely “self-generating”—that is, deciding on their own to enter the jihadist underground—in most cases, recruiters play a large role in inciting young Muslims to violent extremism. Preventing recruitment from taking place therefore requires police and intelligence officials to recognize those individuals who may be operating as al Qaeda recruiters. Important characteristics include the following:

- Ideological, religious, or military training abroad
- Relative youth (i.e., between early 20s and 40)
- Charismatic leadership qualities and a reputation for sagacity
- A position of importance in a mosque or Islamic center
- Extensive international ties, particularly with individuals in countries with a significant extremist presence
- Lack of full-time employment and a relatively modest lifestyle
- Involvement in document and credit card fraud or other related small-scale crimes.

Gathering and assessing such information in a comprehensive way will naturally require a major commitment of resources. The 9/11 Commission and other bodies of government are currently debating the creation of a new domestic intelligence service modeled along the lines of Britain’s Security Service (MI5). For the time being, though, the FBI has

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<sup>40</sup> Eric Lichtblau, “Al Qaeda Still Active in U.S., Counterterrorism Official Says,” *New York Times*, September 5, 2003, p. A11.

the primary responsibility for gaining intelligence on al Qaeda within the United States. Although the bureau is increasing its cadre of analysts and taking other steps to enhance its ability to assess the threat, many observers have pointed to the FBI's deeply entrenched, case-driven, law enforcement culture as a major obstacle to reform.<sup>41</sup> Central to developing a more complete understanding of the recruitment process in the United States will be the greater use of high-quality human sources, which were in short supply before the terrorist attacks of 9/11.<sup>42</sup> Only through the extensive use of networks of human agents will intelligence and law enforcement analysts and operators be able to disrupt the recruitment process.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> See, for example, 9/11 Staff Statement, and Alfred Cumming and Todd Masse, "FBI Intelligence Reform Since September 11, 2001: Issues and Options for Congress," Congressional Research Service, April 6, 2004, [www.fas.org/irp/crs/index.html](http://www.fas.org/irp/crs/index.html), accessed May 2, 2004.

<sup>42</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, *Report of Joint Inquiry into Intelligence Community Activities Before and After the Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 2001*, U.S. Government Printing Office, December 2002, p. 246.

<sup>43</sup> For more on the importance of human intelligence in counterterrorism, see William Rosenau and Peter Chalk, *Confronting the "Enemy Within": Security Intelligence, the Police, and Counterterrorism in Four Democracies*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-100-RC, 2004, pp. 44–45.



**Database**

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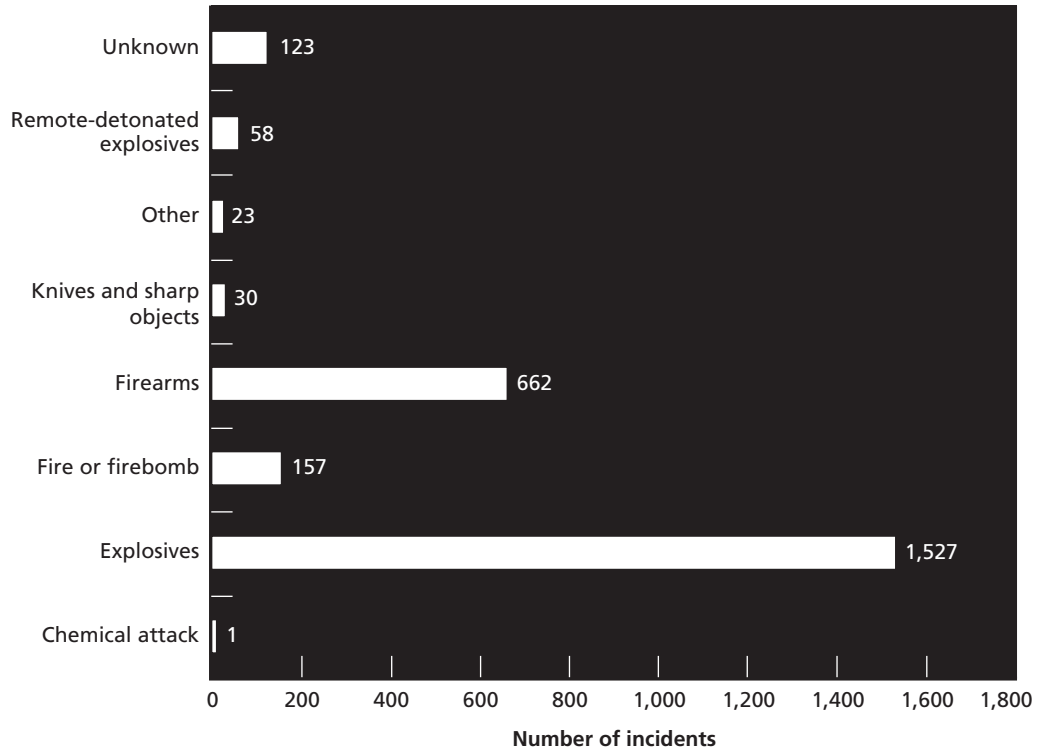
DATABASE

## **Terrorism Statistics for 2004**

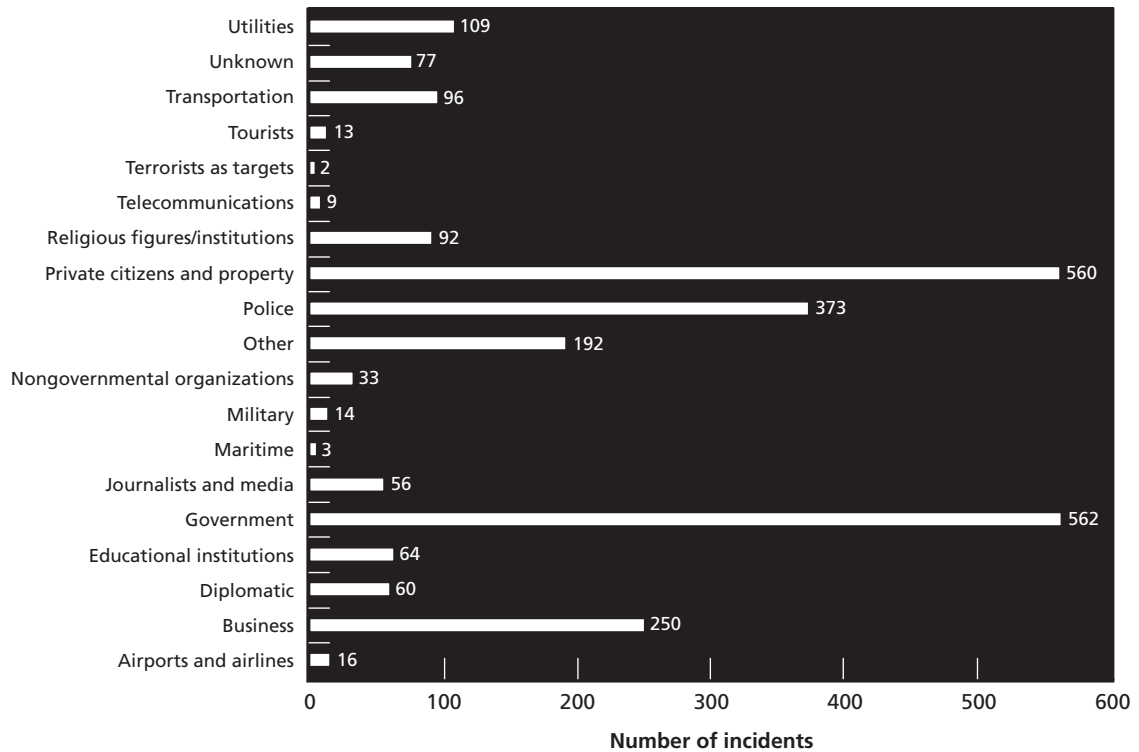
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The following figures are based on RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident data, captured from January 1, 2004, to December 31, 2004.

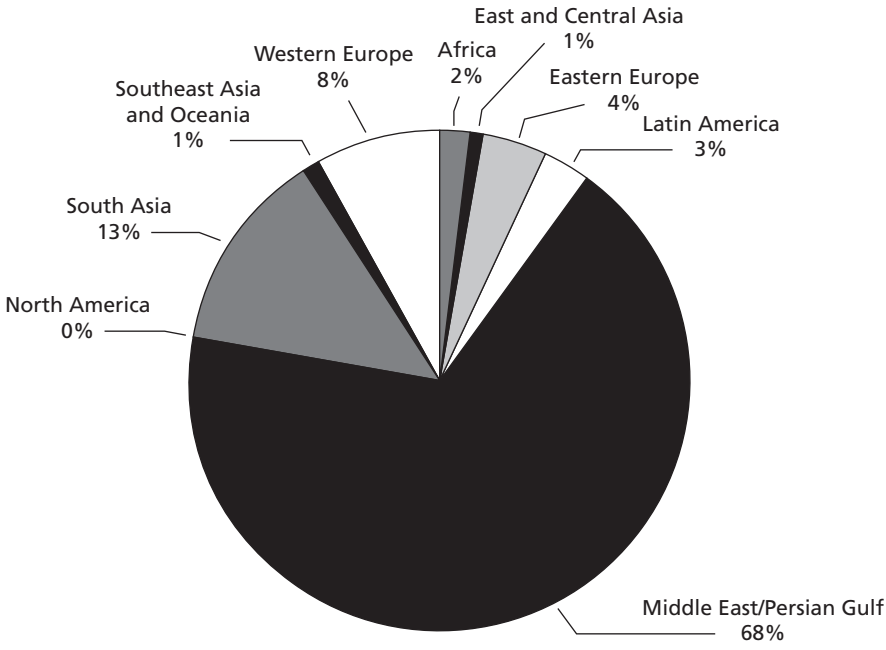
### Incidents by Weapon



### Incidents by Target



### International Incidents by Region



### Domestic Incidents by Region

