

June 15, 2006

International Security

Recent events present new challenges to world stability

There have been significant recent international developments in the war against terror: The death June 7, 2006 of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of al Qaeda in Iraq, called by most the mastermind of the Iraqi insurgency, the arrests on June 2 of 17 terror suspects in Canada, and the capture of Somalia's capital, Mogadishu, by the Union of Islamic Tribunals, a radical Islamic militia. These events, combined with the upcoming World Cup and continuing instability in the Middle East and Asia, especially in Iran and Indonesia, underscore the need for continued vigilance against terror threats worldwide.

Seventeen homegrown terror suspects

The recent arrest of 17 terror suspects in Canada should be a wakeup call for anyone who has succumbed to complacency as the memories of 9/11 become more and more distant. Every year since the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., al Qaeda and its international network of supporters have carried out a major terror attack against allies of the United States of America. The Australians suffered as a result of the bombings in Bali in 2002, a truck bombing targeted a U.S.-owned hotel in Jakarta, Indonesia in 2003, the Spaniards were attacked in Madrid in 2004 and the British were attacked in the London subway system in 2005. Now it appears that Canada, which continues to commit troops in Afghanistan, was a target in 2006. The attacks are coming closer and closer to the U.S. mainland. All those arrested are either Canadian citizens or landed residents. These homegrown terror suspects are accused of running terrorist training camps in Canada and smuggling weapons into Canada. Law enforcement authorities say the group planned to storm the Canadian Parliament, take and behead hostages and simultaneously attack the Toronto subway system. The alleged goal was to cause a significant number of casualties.

Authorities said that the group planned to use conventional weapons – truck bombs *à la* Timothy McVeigh – and smuggled weapons. The arrests shatter the notion, put forth by most intelli-

gence sources, that al Qaeda would have to clandestinely move a complete cell into the United States or Canada to accomplish another terrorist act. The existence of this group is a cause of great concern for United States and Canadian law enforcement. Another question remains: How were these individuals indoctrinated, recruited and convinced to hate their adopted homeland and trained to produce truck bombs in order to undertake terrorist tactics? Twenty years ago, the focus of the United States counter terrorism program was the activities of rogue states supporting terrorist groups: Libya, Syria, Iraq and Iran, in addition to Cold War suspicions. Now, the current has changed from specific goals to widespread hatred of the West and the threatened use of far more lethal weapons. Twenty-five years ago, American establishments and institutions abroad were considered the most vulnerable targets; while this is still true, domestic institutions are no longer immune from international terrorists.

Iran as a nuclear threat

This leads us to the Islamic Republic of Iran as an example of the increased risk. Iran, led by fundamentalists, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, poses a serious security concern to the international community. Iran's recent declarations that it has successfully enriched uranium and developed a new missile technology, along with its continued support for terrorist organizations, lends strength to the U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's assertion that Iran is a "central banker for terrorism" The Grand Ayatollah of Iraq, Ali al-Sistani, oversees thousands of Iraqi religious students studying in Shia religious schools in Iran. "We are a family of Shia," Ali al-Sistani was recently quoted as saying.

The U.S. Department of State has called Iran the world's "most active state sponsor of terrorism." Iran continues to provide funding, weapons, training and sanctuary to numerous terrorist groups based in the Middle East and elsewhere.

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During March 2006, Secretary Rice noted that “Iran has been the country that has been in many ways a kind of central banker for terrorism in important regions like Lebanon through Hezbollah in the Middle East, in the Palestinian Territories, and we have deep concerns about what Iran is doing in the south of Iraq.”

Iran has been governed by Shia (or Shi’ite) Muslim clerics committed to a stern interpretation of Islamic law since a 1979 revolution led by the Ayatollah Khomeini toppled the American backed regime of Shah Mohamed Reza Pahlavi. Today Iran has two main leaders: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is the popularly elected president and Ayatollah Ali Khamenei is the supreme leader. Ahmadinejad is a conservative nationalist and anti-Western. Hard-liners like Khamenei still dominate the Iranian military and intelligence services. Iran mostly backs Islamic groups, including the Lebanese Shia militants of Hezbollah (which Iran helped found in the 1980s) and Palestinian terrorist groups such as Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Iran also supports the Kurdistan Worker’s Party, a Kurdish separatist movement in Turkey, and other militant groups in the Persian Gulf region, Africa and Central Asia. Some reports also suggest that Iran has been interfering in Iraq by providing funding, safe transit and arms smuggling to insurgents in Iraq.

Iran has a rich history of assistance to terrorists and involvement in terrorist activities from the occupation of the American Embassy in Tehran, Hezbollah assistance in Lebanon, to issuing edicts against Salman Rushdie, to the bombing of the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia.

Although the Canadian terrorist cell only had conventional weapons, Iran is a militant Islamic state predisposed to assist Islamic terrorists and is in the process of developing weapons-grade nuclear material. With the help of Russia, Iran is building a nuclear power plant, but U.S. officials say Iran is

more interested in developing a nuclear weapon than in producing nuclear energy. Recently Iran announced it has successfully enriched uranium. The international community has called on Iran to stop its nuclear program and negotiations continue.

Abu Musab al-Zarqawi eliminated

There has been some recent good news on the counterterrorism front: The arrests in Canada and related arrests in the United Kingdom, in addition to the recent death by U.S. air strike of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, leader of al Qaeda in Iraq. However, the possibility of a militant Islamic state possessing a nuclear weapon is a matter of serious concern because, unlike our Cold War adversaries who were comparatively conservative and responsible, there is a higher possibility that Iran might spread or use these weapons.

Somalia and Islamic fundamentalists

After four months of bloody combat, the leaders of the Union of Islamic Tribunals (UIT), a radical Islamic militia, captured Somalia’s capital Mogadishu from the warlords that had controlled the city since 1991. The efforts of the past 15 years to establish a government in this country failed. Last February, to counteract the increasing influence of the UIT, the United States of America financially supported the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace & Against Terrorism (The Alliance), which considered itself a political party but was in reality a coalition of “warlords.” This interim government was put in place with the support of the United Nations and was supposed to bring some stability to the country. During the last four months of intense fighting, the interim government engaged the UIT with the use of heavy weapons, resulting in more than 300 deaths and numerous injuries from both sides. The loss of Mogadishu to Islamic fundamentalists is considered a blow to the U.S. war on terror and places Mogadishu under the control of an Islamic fundamentalist coalition potentially fashioned after the

Taliban that had brutally ruled Afghanistan.

At this writing, analysts cannot predict if the fighting has stopped or if there will be a counteroffensive. Nor is anyone sure how this coalition of different styles of Islamic militants and fighters, united by convenience under the umbrella of the UIT during the war, will evolve. According to one analyst, who wants to remain anonymous, "...to take Mogadishu militarily is quite different than to control a city of over a million people." At this moment, it is also difficult to know if the UIT, assuming it maintains control of the country, will impose a harsh version of Islamic law. This is indeed a source of concern for many western governments that see a potential safe harbor for al Qaeda elements. The country's geographical location *vis-à-vis* the Arabian Peninsula and other countries in Africa makes the establishment of a fundamentalist Islamic government like the Taliban's highly undesirable and a threat to the safety and security of surrounding countries and Western interests in the region. This concern is accentuated when one remembers that the operational leaders behind the 1998 bombings of the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania were residing in Somalia.

Indonesia remains a hotbed

Indonesians have been the victims of recent terrorist bombings in both Bali and Jakarta; most Indonesians now understand that these are political acts and not religious ones. In the October 2005 Bali bombing, 20 were killed, and 120 injured. Six of the injured were Americans.

There is concern about Laskar Jihad, a violent group aiming to eliminate Christians from the Moluccas and Sulawesi Island and establish an Islamic state. Extremist madrassahs continue to function in eastern Java, and the separatist movement in Sumatra continues although there has been something of a ceasefire since the devastating tsunami of December 2004.

While Indonesia is the largest Muslim country in

the world, based on population, its official position is that it is a secular country. It too has a large Chinese population, and substantial Hindu and Christian communities.

The Indonesian government has accepted hundreds of counterterrorist investigators from Australia, the U.S., neighboring countries, and Europe to help it combat Islamic extremist terrorism. More than 100 members of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and other terrorist affiliated groups have been convicted.

Police have arrested more than 50 suspected terrorists since October 2004, including six key individuals and the field lieutenant of the September 9, 2004, Australian Embassy bombing in Jakarta. The Attorney General's office initiated 17 new cases under the 2003 antiterrorism law and won convictions in all 17 trials. Two were sentenced to death for their roles in the Australian Embassy bombing, and one received life in prison for his role in the December 2002 McDonald's bombing in Sulawesi.

The U.S. has resumed military assistance, officially, to improve the ability of the Indonesian military to carry out disaster relief operations, to conduct joint operations with the United States, and to secure the Straits of Malacca; but clearly there is a quid pro quo for continued and improved counter terrorist cooperation.

The risk continues for foreigners, including tourists to Bali and Jakarta, and businessmen and their assets in Jakarta. Structures such as the Australian embassy and the Marriott Hotel have been targeted, but individuals do not seem to have been targeted, although most senior foreign businessmen take precautions every day in their business and travel routines.

The 18th Soccer World Cup Championship: A security assessment

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which began June 9, 2006 in Munich, Germany, is the largest and most-watched sporting event in the world and takes place every fourth year. It ends on July 9, 2006 in Berlin. It is projected that the 32 countries represented, competing in 62 matches in 12 German cities, will attract approximately 2 billion viewers throughout the world. According to Germany's Ministry of the Interior, which is coordinating all the security efforts, there will be an estimated 3.3 million spectators, including 1 million foreigners at the different venues.

This World Cup competition is being played in a country that, because of its history, is fully conscious that it will be the center of detailed attention. While thrilled to host this major world event, Germany is nonetheless concerned that something could go wrong, as it did in 1972 when Palestinian terrorists killed 11 Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics.

The World Cup Championship is being organized against the backdrop of a year that has seen allegations of corruption among referees, fixing of matches, Internet gambling, the emergence of Asian betting syndicates, and violence and racism in the stadiums. A potential major terrorist attack has been the primary concern for German, European and American police authorities. The atmosphere of international insecurity, Islamic terrorism, the qualification of teams from countries that contributed troops to the war in Iraq and world tension increase this concern.

Hooligan violence, or unruly and destructive group behavior, has become a rather "routine" matter in some cities in Europe in particular when British, Dutch, German, Italian and Polish, soccer teams compete in a national or international context. This time, however, a new factor has been added to the conventional scenarios: The announced presence of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad at the games played by his national team. Police in Frankfurt are bracing for demonstrations reportedly

planned by neo-Nazi groups on June 17, when Portugal plays Iran. Media reports indicate the groups are planning to show their solidarity with Ahmadinejad, who claims the Holocaust never happened and has called for the elimination of the state of Israel. This has prompted neo-Nazi groups to announce demonstrations and marches in support of "our friend," the "anti-Semitic" Ahmadinejad.

Even if German security officials have taken pains to stress that they do not have any "...concrete evidence that an attack is planned" and that they are most worried about hooligans flinging beer bottles at fans, they do not deny their fear of neo-Nazis attacking foreigners or an Islamic terrorist act.

It is important that all team delegations, the thousands of accredited journalists, and the local citizens who will be mingling with the visitors throughout Germany during the month-long World Cup tournament feel safe and protected.

*We live in challenging times. The arrests in Canada bring home the possibility that a terror attack could again occur on U.S. soil. The threat posed by Iran's pursuit of a nuclear program and its ongoing support of terrorist groups, the newly established fundamentalist regime in Somalia and continuing Islamic extremism in Indonesia are issues of grave concern that pose new challenges to global stability. The world is also watching Germany, as soccer fans converge for the World Cup. All of these events serve as reminders that much work remains to be done in the war on terror. **The Time for Urgency is Now®***



The Lipman Report Editors