

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

28 September 1984

Prospects for Increased Terrorism Against the United States
in the Wake of the Latest Bombing in Beirut

Summary

Although the bombing of the US Embassy Annex in Beirut could well signal a new wave of terrorist attacks against US personnel and facilities around the world, we see no indications at present that any coordinated effort by international terrorists is underway. Rather, the principal threat continues to come from the Middle East, where Iran, working through and with various fundamentalist Shiite terrorist groups, appears to be undertaking a concerted program of terror to drive any US presence or influence out of Lebanon. Over the next several months, Iranian-connected groups are likely to launch additional attacks against Americans in Lebanon, and possibly in other Middle Eastern States. The most likely targets will be diplomatic and military personnel and their official facilities and residences--though civilians will not be exempt--with terrorists choosing those that appear most vulnerable. Though we cannot rule out Iranian-inspired attacks outside the Middle East, anti-American terrorism in other regions is more likely to be stimulated largely by local or regional issues. In Latin America, Americans will be most vulnerable in El Salvador, particularly if a new rebel offensive begins, and in Colombia, where established terrorist groups have been plotting against senior diplomatic personnel. In Europe, attacks most likely would come from radical leftist groups in France, Italy, Greece, or Turkey.

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This memorandum was prepared by [redacted]
Terrorism Analysis Branch, Instability and Insurgency Center,
Office of Global Issues. The information provided here is
current through 28 September 1984. Comments or queries may be
directed to the Chief, Terrorism Analysis Branch, [redacted]

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Prospects for Increased Terrorism Against the United States
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Indications of Heightened Threat

Several considerations lead us to anticipate that serious incidents of anti-American terrorism could occur over the next several months.

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- o The latest spectacular suicide bombing against the United States in Beirut by the so-called Islamic Jihad-- the third since April of 1983--is significant in two ways: on one level, it signals Iran's continuing willingness to use terrorism to attempt to get the United States out of Lebanon; on another, however, it serves as a powerful example and possible incentive to users of terrorism in other countries.
- o The coming Presidential election in the United States offers an inviting opportunity for some terrorist groups to attempt to showcase their grievances and to influence the campaigns of the candidates and perhaps even the results of the voting, as Iran did through the hostage crisis four years ago. [Redacted]

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During the first nine months of 1984, terrorist attacks

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against US persons and facilities around the world have been marginally below those tallied in the comparable period of past years, and there are no indications that the tempo has accelerated in recent months. Moreover, the character and number of explicit threats--most of which turn out to be groundless--have not noticeably changed since the beginning of 1984. In fact, when the Middle East is excluded from the 1984 count, international terrorist activity elsewhere in the world actually has been running at low to moderate levels compared to the last two years. [redacted]

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Any increase in terrorism would most likely come in the form of more vicious, casualty-producing attacks against Americans than as a significant increase in the number of attacks. Over the past several years, the principal users of terrorist tactics have increasingly favored the bomb as their weapon of choice, and this has been particularly true in the Middle East. Moreover, though diplomatic and military personnel and their facilities and residences would be the most likely targets, many Middle Eastern and European terrorist groups have shown a growing willingness to hit "softer" targets--civilians and low-level officials. Consequently, if a new campaign of terrorism were to start, especially in the Middle East, any American should be viewed as at some, if only incidental, risk. This is particularly true in that many terrorist groups tend to choose their specific targets on the basis of apparent vulnerability. [redacted]

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There are no indications at present that any new campaign of terrorism against the United States would come as a worldwide, coordinated effort. There is occasionally contact between terrorist groups--typically on such matters as weapons exchanges--but most have unique motivations and goals [redacted]

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[redacted] What orchestration occurs comes mainly through state supporters like Iran or Syria, and tends to be region-specific and limited to groups under their influence. [redacted]

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Regional Perspective
Middle East and Africa

Terrorism originating in the Middle East poses the greatest near term threat to US persons and facilities. The number of attacks on interests by Middle Eastern terrorists thus far in 1984 are up sharply over 1983, while attacks by terrorists in other regions have declined or remained roughly constant. The Iranian threat exists in the Middle East and beyond, and Iranian-sponsored groups, such as the Hizballah (Party of God) in Lebanon and the Dawa (Islamic Call Party), are the most dangerous. The Iranian threat also extends beyond the Middle East into Europe. Among the Palestinian groups, only the Syrian controlled groups Abu Nidal and possibly Saiqa pose a serious threat to US interests.

[redacted]

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two other radical Palestinian groups could target US facilities. We believe the Palestinian threat in the near term is limited to Turkey and the Middle East. An act of Libyan-sponsored terrorism against a US target has never occurred, but

[redacted]

Libya may be inciting terrorists 25X1

in Africa and the Middle East to attack American targets on its behalf. [redacted]

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Iranian-Sponsored Terrorism Radical Lebanese Shias-- operating under the cover name of Islamic Jihad--pose the most serious terrorist threat to US interests. These religious fanatics are dedicated to eliminating the US presence in Lebanon, and their willingness to sacrifice their lives in pursuit of this goal makes them virtually impossible to deter. Iran has provided religious indoctrination, military training, and material support to the extremist Shias. This support has enabled them to conduct successful, sophisticated terrorist operations, particularly in the chaotic atmosphere of Lebanon.

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The radical Shias are the leading suspects in three major terrorist attacks against US facilities in Beirut during the last 18 months, including the recent bombing of the US Embassy Annex in a Christian-controlled suburb of East Beirut. This attack clearly demonstrates their capability to operate anywhere inside Lebanon.

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Iran continues to recruit and train radical Shias from nearly all the Arab States in the Persian Gulf, and [redacted] some of these individuals have been infiltrated back into their homelands for potential terrorist activities. Iraqi and Kuwaiti members of the Shia Dawa Party were responsible for the bombing of the US Embassy and other US targets in Kuwait in December 1983, probably with the assistance of more experienced Lebanese Shia terrorists. No attacks on US targets in the Persian Gulf have occurred since then, but the Iranian terrorist threat remains serious. Iran views the United States as the principal backer of the moderate regimes that Tehran would like to replace with Islamic governments like its own. We believe Iran has Shia sympathizers available for terrorist operations in most of the Gulf States and Iranian embassies are available to support, plan, and direct attacks. Only if Iran is sincerely interested in improving diplomatic relations with its neighbors would the terrorist danger from Tehran be likely to decline in the near term.

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- o In Kuwait, local security is improving but still is not sufficient to eliminate the terrorist threat. Two Iranian-backed plots against non-US targets have been aborted since May, but Kuwait probably remains a prime target. Dawa Party members convicted for the December bombings, remain in jail in Kuwait, and US interests

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[redacted]
could be targets of any Iranian attempt to secure their release through extortion.

o In Bahrain, the Dawa organization and the Iranian-controlled Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain (IFLB) have been disrupted by government action. Nevertheless, [redacted] Iran is continuing its efforts to infiltrate trained Bahraini Shias back into the country. On 16 August an IFLB infiltrator was arrested, and he admitted a US-owned oil refinery was one of his targets. The US Navy facility received an anonymous threat from Islamic Jihad early last summer.

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o In Iraq, government security is extensive, but has not prevented several Dawa attacks against British and French targets during the past year. US diplomatic personnel could be attacked in the future.

o In the UAE, [redacted] [redacted] local security is poor and the US Embassy is highly vulnerable.

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o In Saudi Arabia, the government improved its security measures substantially prior to the recently concluded Hajj. We believe an attack on Americans is less likely than in other Gulf states, [redacted]

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Iranian-backed terrorism also poses a danger outside Lebanon and the Persian Gulf. The potential threat to US interests probably is greatest in western Europe. [Redacted]

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Iranian operatives demonstrated their capabilities by hitting non-US targets.

- o A prominent Iranian exile was assassinated in Paris in February.
- o Anti-Khomeini students were attacked in West Germany last year.
- o In Spain, Islamic Jihad claimed credit for the murder of a Saudi citizen in September and the wounding of a Kuwaiti in August. Moreover, Spanish authorities arrested several Iranians plotting to hijack a Saudi airliner this summer. Vulnerable US consulates or other small, accessible facilities may be at the greatest risk, as would be exposed US officials in large European cities. [Redacted]

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In our judgment, the Iranians pose the greatest potential foreign terrorist danger within the United States, although we still consider that threat fairly low. Violence against Iranian exiles is the most likely Iranian action, although Tehran could be stimulated by events in the Middle East to direct attacks against US Government property or prominent citizens. The Islamic Society is the largest pro-Iranian student group in the United States, and [Redacted] it receives government support. [Redacted]

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We believe Iran

would be more likely to select more accessible and vulnerable US targets outside the United States. [Redacted]

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Palestinian Terrorism The short term threat to US facilities and personnel from Palestinian groups is considered to be generally low. Groups within the PLO continue to observe Arafat's 1974 ban on terrorism outside Israel and the occupied territories. We believe that Arafat would sanction a return to international terrorism only if he felt the survival of the PLO as an organization or his continuation as its leader depended on it. Alternatively, a widening of the schism between pro- and anti-Arafat groups also could lead some of the more radical groups such as Saiqa or the PFLP to commit acts of terrorism against US or other international targets in an effort to demonstrate their power, gain publicity, and force the United States and others to reckon with them. Maneuvering among the competing PLO factions over the future of the organization is likely to continue at least until the end of this year, making either of these developments unlikely. [Redacted]

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[Large Redacted Area]

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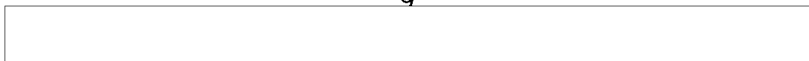
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The non-PLO Abu Nidal Group (previously known as the Black June Organization), based in and probably controlled by Syria, poses a serious threat in Jordan and possibly elsewhere. Abu Nidal placed bombs near US diplomatic facilities in Jordan last summer. We believe the group is used by Syria--along with the Jordanian Revolutionary People's Party--to pressure King Hussein not to negotiate with Israel or to support Arafat. The recent Jordanian resumption of diplomatic relations with Egypt may provoke more terrorist attacks in Jordan, possibly against US targets. The Abu Nidal group has demonstrated its capability to conduct assassinations throughout the world, and its overseas cells could be turned against the United States. In July, a number of US Embassies and other facilities in the Middle East received threats from the Arab Revolutionary Brigades, a cover name previously used by Abu Nidal. [REDACTED]

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During the next few months attacks by other Palestinian groups on US targets outside the Middle East are unlikely, although we cannot rule them out. The Iraqi-based 15 May organization attempted to place bombs on commercial airlines flying between Europe and Israel earlier this year, but Iraq



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appears to have forced a temporary suspension in its activities after US objections. [redacted]

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[redacted]

Should there be Palestinian attacks they would most likely occur in Greece or Turkey because of the ease with which foreign terrorists can operate in those nations. [redacted]

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Armenians While Armenian terrorists have killed Turkish diplomats in the United States, they have not thus far targeted US personnel or property and do not appear to have a strong motive to do so. [redacted]

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Libyan Terrorism Libyan-backed terrorism became a major problem in 1984 after a year of relative quiescence, but none of Tripoli's 25 attacks this year have been against US targets. Despite Qadhafi's strident anti-US rhetoric, he appears reluctant to strike at the United States directly. Qadhafi might abandon that reluctance if he were to become convinced that US support for his opponents was seriously threatening him or if he believed himself faced with a direct US challenge. Libya's strong ties with some terrorist groups, the growth of its own terrorist capabilities, and the nation's substantial economic resources give Qadhafi the capability to threaten US targets abroad at any

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[redacted]
time. An act of Libyan terrorism in the United States is possible but we believe Libya would be hard-pressed to mount such an operation because of US security measures. [redacted]

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US persons and facilities are vulnerable to Libyan attacks in Western Europe and the Middle East. [redacted]

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[redacted]

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The only serious terrorist threat to US personnel and facilities in Africa is likely to come from hostile Libyan-sponsored groups in countries that stretch south and east from Libya itself. With French troops in the process of pulling out of Chad, US facilities in the capital may be at greater risk from a crossboarder operation by GUNT insurgents. Libyan-sponsored terrorists arrested in Chad earlier this year said the US Embassy was on their target list. In Sudan, Libyan sponsored rebels in the south probably represent the greatest threat to US facilities in that country. [redacted]

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[redacted] In Ethiopia, through which most of Tripoli's aid to the Sudanese rebels is funneled, a large Libyan infrastructure could carry out attacks on American diplomats with

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little or no warning. A house in Addis Ababa occupied by Libyans who were building a bomb, blew up on 11 May, just after the resolution of the seige of the Peoples' Bureau in London.

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[Redacted] Zairean exiles operating out of neighboring states are recieving increased support from Libya and could attack US facilities.

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Elsewhere in Africa, the threats are more difficult to assess. Small pockets of Islamic fundamentalists throughout Africa--for example in northern Nigeria--could threaten US interests and we would have little or no warning of attack from such a quarter. These groups, however, are closely watched by host governments, which view them as threats to regime stability. In other African countries, the combination of inadequate security and endemic political violence--such as in Uganda--could also affect official and nonofficial US personnel at any time.

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Latin America

Terrorism in Latin America usually occurs in the content of leftist guerrilla insurgencies--and its violence tends to be much more localized and limited than in the Middle East. The United States is identified by the guerrillas in those countries as being the major supporter and manipulator of the governments they seek to overthrow and is thus rationalized as a legitimate target. The greater the US presence, the stronger the argument for attacking it. Moreover, insurgent leaders could be tempted to attack US interests if they come to believe that such attacks against Americans in a US political year could erode US support for the government.

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A serious risk to Americans comes from Colombia, where four major groups and their splinters have been fighting the government for years. The high US profile in Colombia, and US support for the government's actions against narcotics

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traffickers and subversives make US officials and facilities compelling targets. The most virulently anti-US group is the Ricardo Franco Front--a faction of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. The Front claimed responsibility for a series of bombings in Bogota on 23 May 1984 directed primarily against offices of the US Government and American businesses such as ITT and Texaco.

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As the 1980 seizure of Ambassador Diego Asencio by M-19 demonstrates, the Colombian groups have both the will and capability to hit US targets.

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Ecuador's nascent terrorism has a distinctly anti-US flavor. The most active group is Alfaro Vive Carajo (AVC), which bombed the Embassy in May 1984.

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The AVC's small numbers and

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limited resources lessen its ability to conduct an attack, but the ill-equipped government security forces would have difficulty countering them. [redacted]

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The scene of extensive anti-government demonstrations this year, Chile is experiencing a rising tempo of bombings that has included US businesses as incidental targets. We do not believe, however, that US interests have been singled out for these attacks. [redacted]

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In the Caribbean, the upcoming 19 October anniversary of former Grenadian Prime Minister Maurice Bishop's death may provide regional leftist groups with an excuse for anti-US violence. Leftwing groups in St. Lucia and Dominica have discussed marking the date with anti-US violence. This could include actions against our Embassies in Antigua and Barbados. [redacted]

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Threats in Central American countries other than El Salvador are more potential than real at present. A Costa Rican group, La Familia, was surveilling Embassy personnel last January, but most members of the group were jailed this year. The Revolutionary Armed Forces, a Guatemalan group responsible for anti-American attacks in 1983, may be planning soon to engage in urban terrorism--which, if true, could include US targets. [redacted]

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Elsewhere in South America, the threat to Americans is less immediate. Peru's vicious guerrilla group, the Maoist Shining Path, has so far not directly targeted US interests, being content instead to commit atrocities against the rural population in south-central Peru. Although the Ambassador's residence in Bolivia was bombed on 4 March 1984, the anti-US threat there is from drug traffickers rather than terrorists. Rightist frustration in Argentina prompted threats against US installations during President Alfonsin's just concluded visit to Washington, but no attacks directly tied to the visit occurred. [redacted]

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Western Europe

Indigenous terrorist groups in the region are no longer as active as they were at the beginning of the decade--largely as a result of police successes in Italy and Germany over the past three years. Indeed, a good portion of the more lethal terrorist incidents now occurring in Western Europe is either a spillover from the Middle East or the work of separatist or irredentist groups like the Basques, Armenians, and IRA for whom the United States is not a target of choice. But, while small and placed on the defensive by more aggressive and effective government countermeasures, these leftwing or anarchistic groups cannot be discounted in some countries as a significant threat to US personnel and property. [redacted]

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A major imponderable in France and perhaps elsewhere in Europe is the Lebanese Armed Revolutionary Faction (LARF), a shadowy group of unknown membership and organization. We believe it may be composed of radical Palestinian and leftist European terrorists. LARF has made sporadic attacks on US and Israeli diplomats since 1981, most recently it attempted to assassinate the US Consul in Strasbourg, France in March of this year.

[redacted] its focus on US targets makes it a serious threat to US personnel at any time.

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[redacted]

According to Turkish police warnings to the US Embassy, the 27 September sentencing of Turkish terrorists belonging to the Marxist-Leninist Armed Propaganda Unit (MLAPU), a group responsible for assassinating several Americans during the chaotic days prior to the September 1980 coup in Turkey, could provoke a terrorist attack. Turkish police believe that MLAPU, largely quiescent since 1981, may have been responsible for the bombing of the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce in July. Based on MLAPU's past record and the propaganda value an attack on a US target would have--and assuming the group has been able to recover from the extensive government countermeasures--we believe its threat to US servicemen and property, though not high, is

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increasing. [redacted]

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The leftist Greek terrorist organization 17 November remains a significant threat to US personnel and property. The group claimed responsibility for the assassination of US Navy Captain Tsantes in late 1983 and the shooting this year of a JUSMAGG military courier, and has labeled the United States "a power of occupation and terrorism." The 17 November's Group's harsh anti-US rhetoric, coupled with the Greek government's lax attitude towards terrorism against foreign targets creates a climate conducive to further terrorist attacks on US targets. [redacted]

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A French leftist group, Direct Action (AD), poses a potential threat. Although historically the AD has not concentrated on US targets--even though it has bombed US business interests in the past--its anti-Jewish, anti-Israeli stance would make it easy for the group to rationalize attacking US officials or buildings. The AD was active in Paris last summer, bombing offices of the Atlantic Institute for International Affairs, the European Space Agency, and the Western European Union. According to an Embassy report, Direct Action stole 800 kilograms of TNT from a Belgian quarry in June, and has threatened to attack "symbols of Western Imperialism" by placing five car bombs around Paris. [redacted]

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West German groups historically have been the most active against the United States in Western Europe. But the leftist Red Army Faction (RAF), which attempted to assassinate then NATO Commander Haig and CINCUSAREUR Kroesen, has not committed a terrorist act since 1981. Police counterterrorist operations since 1982 have done much to reduce RAF's effectiveness, and in July 1984, their capture of RAF personnel and documents may have prevented the staging of attacks against US and NATO targets. Among the targets were the US Army airfield in Karlsruhe, Dolan Caserne in Schwaebisch, the caserne and housing area at Bad Toelz, the Campbell Caserne in Oberammergau, and about 30 locations along the NATO pipeline. The RAF's surprising ability to recruit new members despite West German police successes makes

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it a continuing threat to US interests. Another group, the Revolutionary Cells (RZ), has been responsible for most recent terrorist acts in West Germany. RZ attacks, however, have been mostly explosive and incendiary harassment attacks against US military installations and "soft" targets. [redacted]

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Italy this summer suffered through a spate of low level bombings carried out by leftist groups against US commercial interests and targets related to the NATO presence. But Red Brigades (BR) documents [redacted] indicate a continuing interest in NATO installations as well as domestic political and military targets. The BR claimed responsibility for the February 1984 assassination of Sinai MFO Chief Leamon Hunt. [redacted]

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[redacted] there are indications that the BR has improved internal security practices, at least in northern Italy. Key members remain at large, and the BR continues to reorganize. Even more ominous, recent reforms in the preventive detention system could allow the release of some 300 accused terrorist from prison, including several suspected of being involved in the Aldo Moro kidnaping and murder. [redacted]

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Most Spanish and Portuguese groups usually do not target US personnel or property. The exceptions are two Spanish groups: Iraultza--presently in disarray and probably incapable of mounting attacks--and the small leftist group, First of October Anti-fascist Resistance Group (GRAPO). The GRAPO hardcore, which probably numbers under 10, this summer embarked on a bombing campaign that included among its targets the General Motors showroom in Aviles, Spain. GRAPO has survived repeated attempts by the Spanish police to destroy it, and its "anti-imperialist" stance could cause it to target US military installations in Spain. The group is known to have gathered data on the US military residence connected with the Torrejon base but its capability to conduct an attack is minimal. [redacted]

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Asia

Although there is currently no evidence of any ongoing terrorist plots targeting US personnel or facilities in Asia, the history of terrorist attacks in the region suggest that American interests in some countries will remain at varying levels of risk through the short term and beyond.

The most serious threat comes from South Asia. The Pakistani group Al-Zulfikar has recently targeted Americans both inside and outside that country. Last December, Al-Zulfikar members were apprehended while planning to kill the US Consul General in Lahore. Members of another Al-Zulfikar cell were arrested in Vienna last summer after planning to seize American hostages there and in Rome. Within Sri Lanka, Tamil terrorist groups represent an increasing threat to US personnel and facilities. Since May, an American USAID couple has been kidnaped, the hotel housing the Israeli Interests Section has been bombed, and the main USAID office was the object of a planned bombing. In Bangladesh, a new threat could grow out of an "Islamic Jihad Organization" with reported ties to both Libya and Iran. The group has stated its intention to attack "un-Islamic" Western targets, beginning later this year.

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Elsewhere in Asia, we believe the short term threat is somewhat lower, and in Japan, for instance, the left-wing radical group Chukaku-ha (Nucleus Faction) conducted a series of minor firebombings against lightly-guarded US facilities last summer,

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Firebombings

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also characterize the threat to US installations in South Korea, where three American cultural facilities have been attacked since 1982. South Korean dissidents are thought to have been responsible for the bombings, which killed or injured several South Koreans. In the Philippines, anti-Marcos violence by the Communist New People's Army could affect US interests with little

[Redacted]

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[redacted]
or no warning. The last attack against American servicemen was
in 1971, but the United States remains a high-visibility target
because of its many military and diplomatic installations. [redacted]

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