



# Terrorist Attacks Against Diplomats

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A statistical overview of international terrorist attacks on diplomatic personnel and facilities from January 1968 to June 1981

December 1981

**Terrorism:** *The threat or use of violence for political purposes by individuals or groups, whether acting for or in opposition to established governmental authority, when such actions are intended to shock or intimidate a target group wider than the immediate victims.*

**International Terrorism:** *(a) Terrorism conducted with the support of a foreign government or organization. (b) Terrorism directed against foreign nationals, institutions, or governments. International terrorism has involved groups seeking to overthrow specific regimes, to rectify national or group grievances, or to undermine international order as an end in itself.*

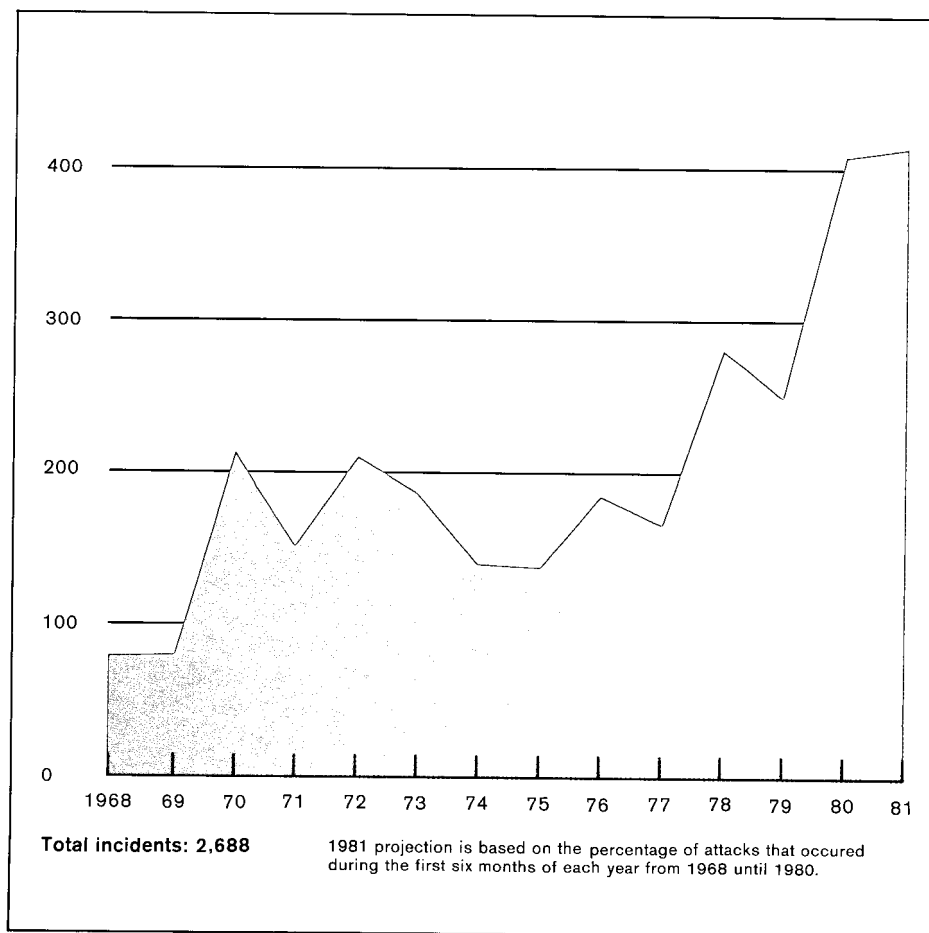
## Terrorist Attacks Against Diplomats

The number of international terrorist incidents against diplomats and diplomatic facilities has increased dramatically since 1978 and, based on trends through June, is likely to be higher in 1981 than in any other previous year. The number of casualties from attacks against diplomats has also increased. The casualties reached a high in 1979 and 1980 but are likely to be down slightly in 1981.

Attacks against diplomats have grown more widespread each year. In 1970 there were 213 attacks against diplomats from 31 countries. In 1978 there were 281 attacks against diplomats from 59 nations. And by 1980 the number had climbed to 409 attacks against diplomats from 60 countries.

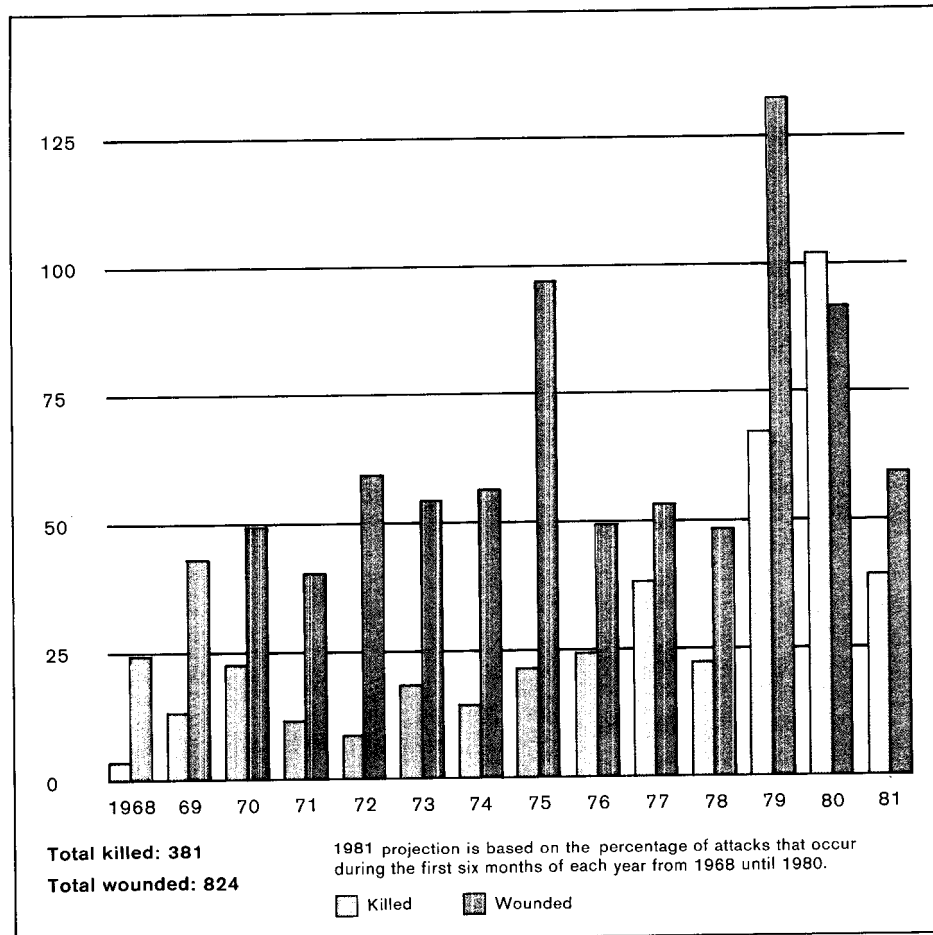
### International Terrorist Incidents Against Foreign Diplomats

January 1968–December 1981



## Deaths and Injuries Due to International Terrorist Attacks Against Foreign Diplomats

January 1968–December 1981



### Trends

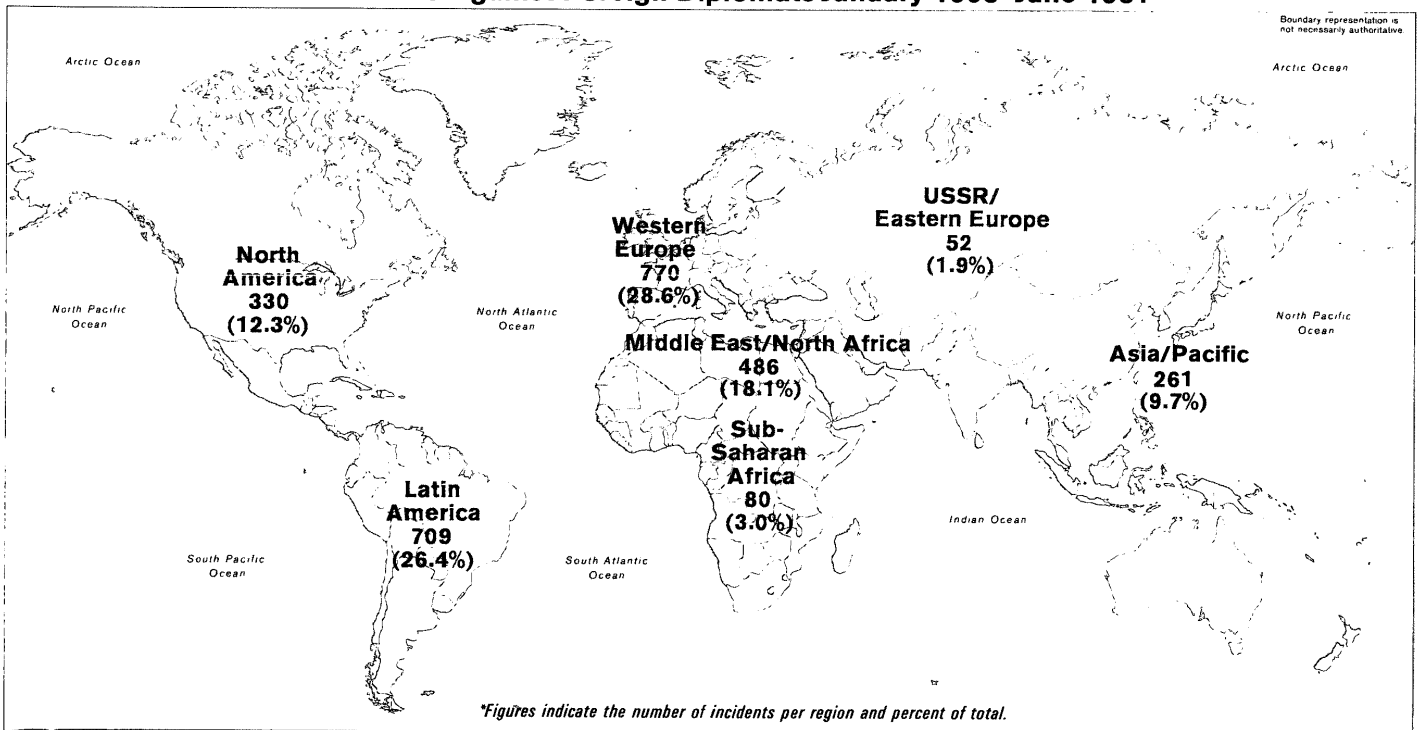
Increasingly, diplomats have been targets of international terrorism. In 1975, 30 percent of all terrorist attacks were directed against diplomats; in 1980 the number increased to 54 percent of the total.

The number of assassination attempts against diplomats has increased steadily since the mid-1970s to a high of 29 attempted assassinations in 1980. The high number of assassinations in 1979 and 1980 is due, in part, to assassination campaigns by Armenian terrorists against Turkish diplomats, and by Iran and Iraq as part of their war.

As is true in general of international terrorist attacks, most attacks directed at diplomats or diplomatic facilities do not cause casualties. Only about one-fifth of all attacks recorded between January 1968 and June 1981 resulted in death or personal injury. The number of incidents that caused bodily harm, however, began to increase in the mid-1970s, and in 1980 the largest number of such attacks were recorded.

Most attacks on diplomats occur in the industrialized democracies. More than 30 percent of the incidents took place in Western Europe. Attacks against foreign diplomats were made both by indigenous

### International Terrorist Incidents Against Foreign Diplomats January 1968–June 1981\*



**Table 1**

**International Terrorist Incidents  
Against Foreign Diplomats  
January 1968-June 1981, by Type**

	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	Jan-Jun 1981	Total*
Kidnaping	1	3	30	16	4	8	5	12	6	4	12	8	4	7	<b>120</b> (4.5)
Barricade-hostage	1	0	4	1	3	7	7	9	3	6	15	9	25	13	<b>103</b> (3.8)
Letter bombing	0	1	3	1	64	20	8	1	2	6	8	5	3	2	<b>124</b> (4.6)
Incendiary bombing	12	20	31	14	15	16	17	16	28	41	44	14	20	7	<b>295</b> (11.0)
Explosive bombing	51	33	64	56	37	42	67	54	60	45	60	82	100	33	<b>784</b> (29.2)
Armed attack	0	4	3	3	8	4	7	8	6	8	9	14	33	18	<b>125</b> (4.6)
Assassination	2	6	10	8	3	6	5	6	16	13	12	17	29	12	<b>145</b> (5.4)
Sabotage	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b> (0.0)
Threat	11	10	45	39	67	75	17	16	41	31	98	64	97	34	<b>645</b> (24.0)
Theft, break-in	0	2	11	6	2	1	1	3	1	1	2	1	12	4	<b>47</b> (1.7)
Conspiracy	0	0	4	2	0	4	4	3	4	4	9	2	9	6	<b>51</b> (1.9)
Hoax	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	42	36	<b>84</b> (3.1)
Sniping	2	2	5	3	4	3	1	7	13	6	10	24	20	8	<b>108</b> (4.0)
Shootout with police	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	<b>2</b> (0.1)
Arms smuggling	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	<b>5</b> (0.2)
Other actions	0	0	1	3	1	0	1	4	2	2	2	8	14	11	<b>49</b> (1.8)
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b> (3.0)	<b>81</b> (3.0)	<b>213</b> (7.9)	<b>153</b> (5.7)	<b>210</b> (7.8)	<b>187</b> (7.0)	<b>141</b> (5.2)	<b>139</b> (5.2)	<b>184</b> (6.8)	<b>167</b> (6.2)	<b>281</b> (10.5)	<b>252</b> (9.4)	<b>409</b> (15.2)	<b>191</b> (7.1)	<b>2,688</b> (0.0)

\* Figures in parentheses are percentages of total.

organizations and by foreign-based groups. About 26 percent of the incidents occurred in Latin America. In all, since 1968, diplomats from 108 countries have been victims of international terrorism. Twenty ambassadors from 12 countries were assassinated, diplomats from 39 countries were kidnaped, and embassies of 38 countries were seized.

The number of incidents involving the taking of diplomatic hostages by terrorists has also been rising in recent years. Both kidnapings and hostage and barricade situations at diplomatic facilities are becoming more frequent compared with the early 1970s.

The number of terrorist groups that attack diplomats has increased almost every year since 1968. Moreover, terrorist groups are increasing the level of violence directed against diplomats. Many of the new groups that appeared during the last few years

have tended to single out diplomats for attack and to use more deadly violence, perhaps because they calculate that increasingly higher levels of violence are required to obtain the international publicity they seek.

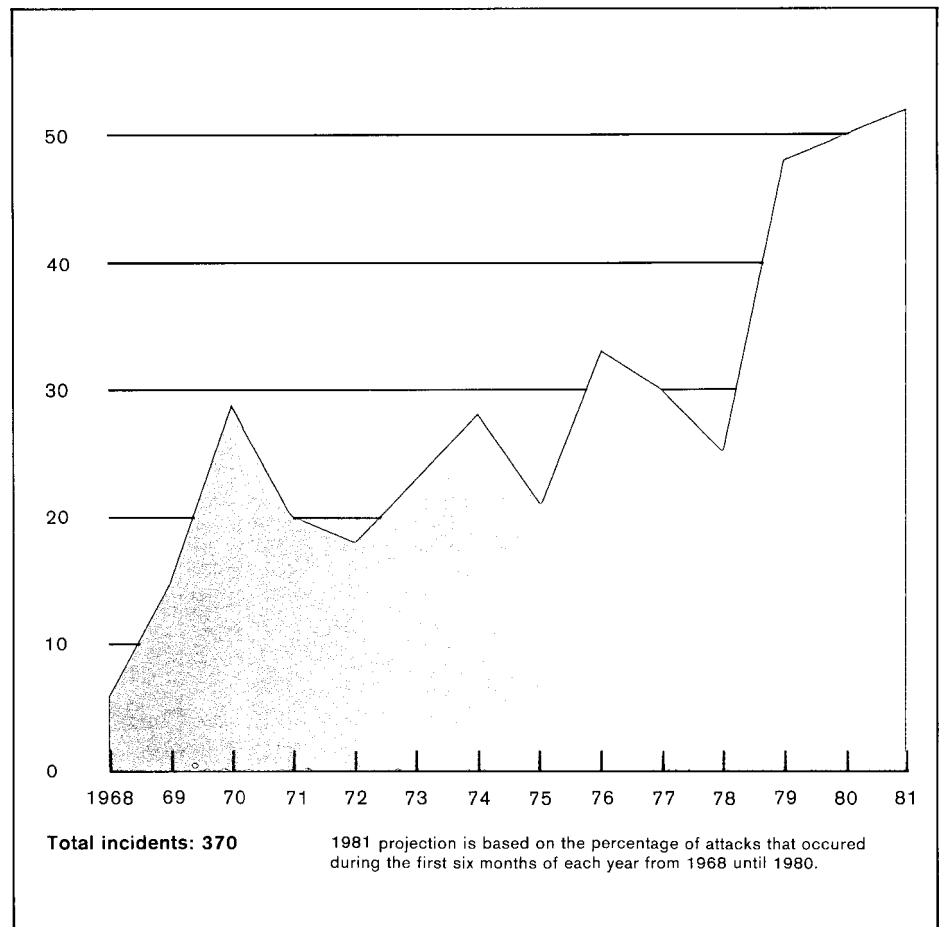
#### **Types of Attack**

International terrorists directed many kinds of attacks against diplomats and diplomatic facilities during the years from 1968 to 1981. Such attacks ranged from telephone threats received at diplomatic facilities, to bombings of embassy and consular buildings, to kidnapings and murders of diplomatic personnel (see table 1).

Almost all types of attacks have occurred in all regions of the world, but some types are prominent in particular areas (see table 2). For example, kidnapings and barricade and hostage situations occur most

## International Terrorist Attacks Against Foreign Diplomats That Caused Casualties

January 1968–December 1981



frequently in Latin America, while bombings and assassinations are recorded most often in Western Europe and the Middle East.

Bombings have long been the preferred method of attack against diplomats. They normally involve little risk of capture, and explosives are relatively easy to obtain. The majority of the bombings have not caused significant damage, but a few have resulted in loss of life and the destruction of diplomatic facilities.

Handgun assassinations, which generally attract more media attention than most other types of terrorist attack, constitute a growing proportion of the terrorism directed against diplomats.

### Incidents Resulting in Injuries and Death

On 2 June 1978, three Armenian terrorists fired into the windshield of the Turkish Ambassador's limousine parked at a stoplight in Madrid. The Ambassador was not in the car, but the terrorists killed his wife, his wife's brother, and the chauffeur.

This incident was one of 370 international terrorist attacks on diplomats between January 1968 and June 1981 that caused death or personal injury. The number of such attacks has increased almost every year since 1968. In 1980 there were 50 such incidents—far more than in any previous year. If present trends continue, even

**Table 2**

**Locations of Terrorist Attacks  
on Foreign Diplomats  
January 1968-June 1981, by Type**

	North America	Latin America	Western Europe	Eastern Europe	Africa	Middle East	Asia	Pacific	Other	<b>Total*</b>	
Kidnaping	2	59	15	0	13	21	8	0	2	<b>120</b>	(4.5)
Barricade-hostage	5	49	23	2	1	19	3	0	1	<b>103</b>	(3.8)
Letter bombing	6	10	92	0	4	6	3	0	3	<b>124</b>	(4.6)
Incendiary bombing	43	55	122	3	5	30	24	5	8	<b>295</b>	(11.0)
Explosive bombing	117	209	225	11	8	154	49	8	3	<b>784</b>	(29.2)
Armed attack	1	33	19	0	9	53	9	0	1	<b>125</b>	(4.6)
Assassination	10	23	51	2	4	40	13	1	1	<b>145</b>	(5.4)
Sabotage	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>	(0.0)
Threat	71	166	171	28	22	107	52	25	3	<b>645</b>	(24.0)
Theft, break-in	2	20	9	1	7	5	3	0	0	<b>47</b>	(1.7)
Conspiracy	6	11	12	0	1	11	7	0	3	<b>51</b>	(1.9)
Hoax	39	12	9	2	2	7	11	1	1	<b>84</b>	(3.1)
Sniping	15	54	5	1	0	25	7	1	0	<b>108</b>	(4.0)
Shootout with police	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>2</b>	(0.1)
Arms smuggling	0	0	3	0	1	1	0	0	0	<b>5</b>	(0.2)
Other actions	13	5	14	2	3	7	5	0	0	<b>49</b>	(1.8)
<b>Total</b>	<b>330</b> (12.3)	<b>709</b> (26.4)	<b>770</b> (28.6)	<b>52</b> (1.9)	<b>80</b> (3.0)	<b>486</b> (18.1)	<b>194</b> (7.2)	<b>41</b> (1.5)	<b>26</b> (1.0)	<b>2,688</b> <b>(100.0)</b>	

\* Figures in parentheses are percentages of total.

more such attacks will be recorded in 1981.

An examination of the attacks against diplomats that caused casualties highlights the broad psychological impact of international terrorism. Such attacks, which are almost always perpetrated by well-trained, experienced terrorist organizations, provoke a response from the highest levels of government and command attention from media around the world.

Attacks against diplomats resulting in casualties have occurred in 80 countries since 1968, with the most events in Lebanon, France, the United States, and El Salvador. Forty-eight terrorist groups have claimed credit for these attacks. US diplomats were the most often killed or injured. Diplomats from the Soviet Union, Turkey, Israel, Yugoslavia, the United Kingdom, France, and India were also frequent victims.

Assassinations of a designated target with handguns or bombs accounted for almost 60 percent of these incidents.

#### **Nationalities of Victims**

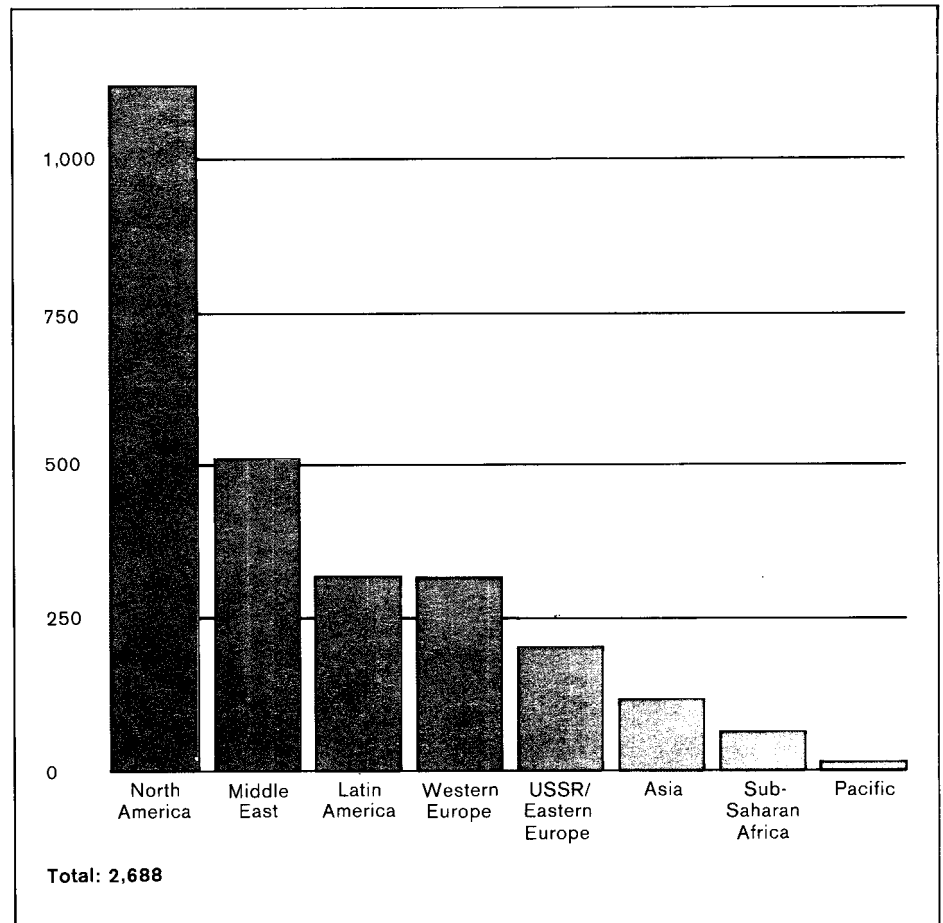
Among the 20 ambassadors from 12 countries assassinated by international terrorists have been the US ambassadors to Afghanistan, Lebanon, Cyprus, Sudan, and Guatemala and the Turkish ambassadors to Australia, France, and Austria. The embassies of 38 countries have been seized by international terrorists, and diplomats from 39 countries have been kidnaped.

Since 1968, diplomats from 107 countries have been victimized by international terrorist attacks (see appendix A). North American diplomats were the most frequent targets; second in frequency were Middle Eastern diplomats. Countries



### Nationality of Victims of International Terrorist Attacks Against Foreign Diplomats

January 1968–June 1981



whose diplomats have been the most frequent victims are the United States, Israel, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, Cuba, and Turkey.

Attacks against British diplomats have been typical of attacks against diplomats from these six countries. Seventy-five incidents occurred in 31 countries and involved 24 different terrorist groups. The incidents included assassinations and kidnappings of diplomatic personnel and bombings and seizures of embassies and diplomatic facilities. The assassination in March 1979 by the Provisional Irish Republican Army of Sir Richard Sykes, the UK Ambassador to The Hague, and the

kidnaping by the Tupamaros in January 1971 of Sir Geoffrey Jackson, the UK Ambassador to Uruguay, are examples of some of the most violent incidents involving British diplomats.

#### Location of Incidents

Since 1968, incidents of international terrorism against diplomats have been recorded in 125 countries (see appendix B). More than 70 percent of the attacks occurred in only 20 countries, primarily those in Western Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America. The most terrorist incidents involving diplomats occurred in the United

States, France, the Netherlands, West Germany, Greece, and Argentina. In most of these countries the attacks tended to be carried out by foreign-based rather than indigenous terrorists. For example, 119 attacks were carried out against diplomats in France, but French terrorists were involved in only 20 percent of them. More than half of all attacks against diplomats occurred in Western Europe and Latin America. In both regions, attacks were carried out by indigenous groups against foreign targets and by foreign-based groups.

In Europe, however, only about one-fourth of the attacks were carried out by European citizens, while in Latin America well over three-fourths of the attacks were by indigenous groups.

#### **International Terrorist Groups**

A total of 102 terrorist groups (see appendix C) have claimed credit for attacks against foreign diplomats since 1968. Black September (BSO), a Palestinian terrorist group that conducted most of its operations during the mid-1970s, has claimed responsibility for more attacks on diplomats than any other group. BSO mainly targeted diplomats from Israel, but also attacked diplomats from six other nations. Its operations in 18 countries have included assassinations, hostage and barricade situations, and all types of bombings. Examples include the seizure of the Israeli Embassy in Bangkok in December 1972 and the attack in March 1973 on the Saudi Arabian Embassy in the Sudan in which two American diplomats and one Belgian diplomat were murdered.

Like the BSO, the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) has also concentrated on attacks against diplomats. Attacks by ASALA against diplomats have occurred each year since 1975, but were the most numerous in 1980 and 1981. The majority of attacks were against Turkish diplomats, including the assassination of a consul in Switzerland in

June 1981, the assassination of a consul in Denmark in April 1981, the assassination of a consul in Australia, and two attacks on diplomats in Paris.

The Colombian 19th April Movement (M-19) has attacked diplomats from 15 different countries stationed in Colombia. M-19 activities have included kidnappings, hostage and barricade situations, and bombings. M-19 has also conducted operations in Venezuela and mailed threatening letters from Spain and the United States. Its best known attack took place on 27 February 1980, when M-19 seized the Dominican Republic Embassy in Bogota. Timing their attack to coincide with a diplomatic reception, the terrorists took 57 hostages, including the ambassadors of 11 countries. They demanded the release of 311 prisoners, \$50 million ransom, and safe passage out of the country. After a 61-day siege they finally accepted safe passage to Cuba and \$2 million in ransom.

#### **Taking Diplomats Hostage**

Since 1968, there have been at least 130 attacks in which diplomats were taken hostage to satisfy political or monetary demands by international terrorists. Diplomats from 54 countries have been taken hostage, most often from the United States, West Germany, France, and the United Kingdom. The taking of diplomatic hostages has occurred in 57 countries, but almost half of these incidents took place in Latin America, especially in Mexico, Brazil, and Colombia. Over 1,000 persons have been taken hostage in attacks on diplomats. The following incidents are among the most publicized:

The M-19 attacked the Dominican Republic Embassy in Bogota on 27 February 1980. Fifty-seven hostages were seized, including ambassadors from 11 countries.

On 8 August 1975, the JRA attacked the US Consulate in Kuala Lumpur and seized 53 hostages, including diplomats

from the United States, Japan, Sweden, and Malaysia. These hostages were replaced by substitutes and the terrorists, with the new hostages, flew to Libya.

On 13 July 1979, in Turkey, Palestinian terrorists shot their way into the Egyptian Embassy and seized 20 victims. After prolonged negotiations, they released their hostages and surrendered to PLO mediators who had been active in the negotiations.

On 13 September 1974, three JRA terrorists seized the French Embassy in The Hague and took 11 victims, including the French Ambassador, in order to obtain the release of one jailed JRA terrorist. The terrorists demanded the release of a comrade who was held in a French prison, as well as \$1 million in ransom. After four days of negotiations, the French Government released the prisoner. The terrorists agreed to accept \$300,000 in ransom and were flown to Syria and turned over to Palestinian representatives in Damascus.

## Appendix A

### Countries Whose Diplomats Have Been Victimized by International Terrorism

This list includes the names of each country whose foreign diplomats have been victimized by an international terrorist attack. It is based on media coverage of these attacks, and therefore may not cover countries that do not report incidents.

Afghanistan	Guinea	Paraguay
Albania	Guyana	Peru
Algeria	Haiti	Philippines
Angola	Honduras	Poland
Argentina	India	Portugal
Australia	Indonesia	Romania
Austria	Iran	Saudi Arabia
Bangladesh	Iraq	Senegal
Belgium	Ireland	Somalia
Bolivia	Israel	South Africa
Brazil	Italy	South Korea
Bulgaria	Ivory Coast	South Yemen
Burma	Jamaica	Spain
Canada	Japan	Sri Lanka
Cape Verde	Jordan	Sudan
Chad	Kenya	Sweden
Chile	Kuwait	Switzerland
China	Lebanon	Syria
Colombia	Liberia	Taiwan
Costa Rica	Libya	Tanzania
Cuba	Malawi	Thailand
Cyprus	Malaysia	Tunisia
Czechoslovakia	Mali	Turkey
Denmark	Mauritania	Uganda
Dominican Republic	Mexico	United Kingdom
East Germany	Mongolia	United States
Ecuador	Morocco	Uruguay
Egypt	Netherlands	USSR
El Salvador	New Zealand	Vatican City
Ethiopia	Nicaragua	Venezuela
Finland	North Korea	Vietnam
France	North Yemen	West Germany
Gabon	Norway	Yugoslavia
Ghana	Oman	Zaire
Greece	Pakistan	Zimbabwe
Guatemala	Panama	

**Appendix B**

**Locations of International Terrorist Attacks  
on Foreign Diplomats**

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Abu Dhabi	Guatemala	Panama
Afghanistan	Guinea	Paraguay
Albania	Guyana	Peru
Algeria	Haiti	Philippines
Angola	Honduras	Poland
Argentina	Hong Kong	Portugal
Australia	Hungary	Puerto Rico
Austria	Iceland	Qatar
Bahamas	India	Romania
Bahrain	Indonesia	Saudi Arabia
Bangladesh	Iran	Sierra Leone
Barbados	Iraq	Singapore
Belgium	Ireland	Somalia
Benin	Israel	South Africa
Bolivia	Italy	South Korea
Botswana	Ivory Coast	Spain
Brazil	Jamaica	Sri Lanka
Bulgaria	Japan	Sudan
Burma	Jordan	Sweden
Burundi	Kampuchea	Switzerland
Canada	Kenya	Syria
Chile	Kuwait	Taiwan
China	Laos	Tanzania
Colombia	Lebanon	Thailand
Costa Rica	Lesotho	Trinidad and Tobago
Cuba	Liberia	Tunisia
Cyprus	Libya	Turkey
Czechoslovakia	Luxembourg	Uganda
Denmark	Malaysia	United Arab Emirates
Dominican Republic	Malta	United Kingdom
East Germany	Martinique	United States
Ecuador	Mexico	Upper Volta
Egypt	Morocco	Uruguay
El Salvador	Mozambique	USSR
Equatorial Guinea	Nepal	Vatican City
Ethiopia	Netherlands	Venezuela
Finland	New Zealand	West Bank
France	Nicaragua	West Germany
Gabon	Nigeria	Yemen
Ghana	Norway	Yugoslavia
Greece	Pakistan	Zambia

## Appendix C

### **Names and Acronyms Used by Major Groups Claiming Responsibility for International Terrorist Attacks Against Foreign Diplomats, January 1968-June 1981**

This list includes names of organizations responsible either by claim or attribution for specific international terrorist actions noted in the statistics. The inclusion of any group should not be interpreted as an evaluation of that group's goals or motives. Some attacks may have been carried out without the approval, or even foreknowledge, of that organization's leaders. Also, claims of responsibility may be falsely made by opponents of the organization in an attempt to discredit it.

Some of the names listed are cover names for organizations wishing to deny responsibility for a particular action that may have yielded counterproductive results. Some names may have been used by common criminals to throw off police investigators or by psychotics seeking public recognition.

Afghanistan Dissidents Led by Sahruddin Baez	Farabundo Marti Popular Liberation Forces (FPL)
Alacran Scorpion	Farug
Al Saiqa	Fatah
Ananda Marg	FR Auto-Def Juive
Anti-Fascist Movement	Greek Anti-Dictatorial Youth (EAN)
Anti-Imperialist Fighters for a Free Palestine	Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP)
Arab Communist Organization	Holger Meins Kommando Revolutionary Cell
Arab People	Honduran Revolutionary Union (URP)
Argentine Peoples Revolutionary (ERP)	Honduran Socialist Party (PASO)
Armed Arab Revolution	International Solidarity Command for Free Papua Movement
Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN)	Iranian Fedayeen
Armed Revolutionary Party of the People	Japanese Red Army
Armenian Liberation Front	Jewish Armed Resistance
Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia	Jewish Committee of Concern
Baader-Meinhof Gang/Red Army Faction	Jewish Defense League (Wrath of God)
Basque Fatherland and Freedom (ETA)	Justice Commando Armenian Genocide
Black Revolutionary Assault Team	Latin American Anti-Communist Army
Black December	Laos People One
Black June	Lebanese Red Brigades
Black September	M-7 (Cuban)
Charles Martel Group	Mano Argentine National Organization Movement
Che Guevarra Brigade	Maruseido
Condor (Chile)	Marxist-Leninist Armed Propaganda Unit
Croatian Liberation	May 15 Organization
Cuban Action Communists	Montoneros
Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP)	Movement of the 19th of April (M-19)
Dominican Popular Movement	Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR)
El Condor (Cuban)	Muslim Brotherhood (Syria)
El Poder Cubano	National Liberating Alliance (ALN)
EOKA-B (Greek)	National Liberation Army (ELN)
Eritrean Liberation Forces (ELF)	National Front for the Liberation of the Congo (FLNC)
Eylem Birligi Faction of TPLP/F	National Democratic Popular Front

New World Liberation Front	Secret Trans-world Organization for Punishment (STOP)
Omega 7	Soldiers of the Algerian Opposition Movement
Peoples Revolutionary Army	Turkish Peoples' Liberation Army (TPLA)
Peoples Army in Zaire (APOZA)	Turkish Peoples' Liberation Party Front (TPLP/F)
Peoples Strugglers	Tupamaros
Petra Kraus Group	Turkish Revolutionary Youth Federation (Dev Sol)
Polisario	Uganda Freedom Movement
Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)	Ukrainian Nationalist Group
Popular Armed Forces (FAP)	United Front Popular Action (FAPU)
Popular League 28	United Liberation Front for New Algeria
Popular Liberation Army (Colombia)	Voice of the People (Halkin Sesi)
Popular Revolutionary Resistance Group	Workers Party of Guatemala (PGT-FAR)
Popular Revolutionary Bloc	Yanikian Commandos (Armenian)
Popular Revolutionary Movement	1st of October Armed Revolutionary Group (GRAPO)
Popular Revolutionary Vanguard (VPR)	2 June Movement
Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA)	12 January Liberation Movement
Quebec Liberation Front (FLQ)	23 September Communist League (Mexico)
Revolutionary Force 7	
Revolutionary Organization of the Armed People (ORPA)	
Revolutionary Student Front (FER)	
Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)	

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