

DATE 12/7/85

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DOC NO GIM 86-20203~~CONFIDENTIAL~~OIR 2P & PD 1

The Year in Review -- 1985

International terrorists had a banner year in 1985. They carried out more attacks than in any year since the decade began; caused more casualties -- especially fatalities -- over that same period (329 alone occurred when an Air India jetliner was blown up in June); conducted a host of spectacular, publicity-grabbing events that ultimately ended in cold-blooded murder; increasingly turned to business targets as official and military installations were hardened to defend against terrorism; exploited more accessible targets and, in so doing, counted among their victims a record number of innocent bystanders; and, finally, gave pause to international travelers worldwide, who feared the increasingly indiscriminate nature of international terrorism.

In 1985, 784 international terrorist incidents occurred, one-third of which resulted in casualties. Altogether, more than 800 persons were killed in these incidents; and more than 1,200 were wounded. The number of incidents recorded in 1985 was much higher than in any of the preceding four years and represented a 30-percent increase over 1984.

A comparison of the data for 1985 with those of the previous year reveals increased levels of international terrorism in some places and substantial declines elsewhere. Last year, more international terrorist incidents -- over 350 -- were recorded in the Middle East than in any other part of the world. If the number of attacks conducted by Middle Eastern terrorists elsewhere is also included, then Middle East terrorism accounted for 438 incidents for the year. For the first time, Western Europe dropped from first to second place as a venue of international terrorism, with 219 incidents. Although most attacks by West European terrorists were designed to avoid casualties, many of those by Middle Eastern terrorists were intended to cause maximum casualties. In 1985, Middle Eastern terrorists worldwide killed more than 240 persons, and injured more than 760.

Citizens and property of at least 84 countries were victims or targets of international terrorist attacks last year, compared to 76 the previous year. International terrorist incidents took place in at least 75 countries. Last year, attacks against business interests increased over the previous year -- from 165 to 224. Attacks against diplomatic personnel or facilities dropped from 133 to 93, but attacks against other official and military targets increased from 83 to 95, and from 53 to 67, respectively.

There were marked increases in certain categories of incidents. Arson attacks jumped from 57 in 1984 to 102 in 1985; bombings rose from 303 to 397; and the number of kidnappings

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increased from 47 to 89. Attacks against US citizens or property rose from 133 in 1984 to 174 in 1985. Nearly half of the 1985 incidents involving US targets occurred in Latin America; more than one-third took place in Western Europe. Of the 17 anti-US terrorist incidents that occurred in the Middle East, 13 were in Lebanon.

Last year saw a substantial increase in the number of indiscriminate casualties. In 1985, most victims were random targets, such as tourists or passers-by. The number of incidents against victims such as nonofficial public figures and others not expressly affiliated with business, government, or the military increased from 281 in 1984 to 483 in 1985.

Sovereign states continued to be active in supporting terrorism last year. In 1985, 92 incidents, one-third of which occurred in Western Europe, were directed or facilitated by states. More than 90 percent of state-supported terrorist incidents were conducted by groups or agents supported by Middle Eastern states -- most notably Libya, Syria, and Iran. Libya moved toward closer ties with the radical Palestinian Abu Nidal Group, and Syria's role as a patron of international terrorism reached a new high. Iranian-backed groups such as the fundamentalist Shia Hizballah in Lebanon kidnaped nearly a dozen Westerners in Lebanon in 1985, although these kidnapings probably did not occur as a result of Iranian direction.

International terrorism of Middle East origin increased substantially in 1985. Nearly six out of every 10 attacks either occurred in the region or were conducted by Middle Easterners elsewhere. Palestinian groups increased their level of international terrorism by nearly 200 percent and, as a result, accounted for 257 incidents throughout the year, or one-third of the total.

Middle Eastern terrorists increased their level of activity outside the region, especially in Western Europe. In 1985, 72 acts of terrorism by Middle Eastern terrorists occurred in Western Europe, compared with 61 the previous year. During the period 1981 - 1983, the annual average number of incidents was 35. The highest levels of Middle East-origin activity in the region last year were in Greece, Cyprus, and Italy. Among these "spillover" incidents were some of the most dramatic, and lethal, attacks of the year: the hijacking in June of a TWA jetliner flying from Athens to Rome; the seizure of the Italian cruise ship Achille Lauro in October as it departed Alexandria, Egypt; the hijacking in November of an Egyptian jetliner from Athens to Malta; and near-simultaneous machinegun and grenade massacres at the Rome and Vienna airports in December.

In Israel and the occupied territories, international terrorism increased markedly last year. In 1985, of 358

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international terrorist incidents which occurred in the Middle East, more than 220 took place in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza strip, up nearly 200 percent from the previous year. Much of the increase was due to the activity of various Palestinian groups, both inside and outside the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), against Israeli targets -- partly in competition with, or opposition to, each other and partly to demonstrate that they still constitute a force to be feared.

Last year, Western Europe experienced a slightly reduced level of international terrorist incidents because decreased activity by West European terrorists offset increased Middle Eastern terrorism there. A series of terrorist attacks directed against NATO targets in 1984 by indigenous terrorists continued into 1985. Speculation concerning cooperation among several West European groups was fueled by the joint communique issued in January by the West German Red Army Faction (RAF) and the French Action Directe (AD) calling for a "common anti-imperialist front" in Western Europe, and joint claims of responsibility for attacks such as the assassination in January of a French Defense Ministry official in Paris and the carbombing in August at Rhein-Main airbase in West Germany.

In Latin America, international terrorism increased by about 30 percent over the previous year to 124 incidents. Chile and Colombia accounted for most of the increase. Terrorism against US targets comprised the largest portion of international terrorist activity in Latin America last year. Perhaps the most vicious anti-US attack was the June massacre by a component of the Central American Revolutionary Workers' Party (PRTC) of 13 persons -- including four off-duty US Marines and two US businessmen -- in a San Salvador cafe. Most of the political violence in the region, however, continues to spring from local insurgencies, not international terrorism.

Asia and sub-Saharan Africa each accounted for 5 percent of all international terrorist activity last year. Asia witnessed a significant increase from the previous year, but the number of incidents in sub-Saharan Africa declined somewhat. Sikh terrorists, who carried out their first international attacks in 1985, probably were responsible for the most lethal single incident of the year -- the bombing of an Air India jetliner over the North Atlantic.

In 1985, nearly one-fourth of all international terrorist activity involved US citizens or property. Most anti-US attacks--nearly one-half--occurred in Latin America, primarily in Chile and Colombia. Another one-third took place in Western Europe, with West Germany a favorite location. Altogether, last year 38 US citizens were killed, and 158 were wounded, compared to 11 and 31, respectively, during the previous year. Business interests were the most frequently attacked US targets in 1985.