



Security Council Topic Background Guide  
**Topic 1: Threats to Security Caused by Terrorist Acts**<sup>1</sup>

28 September 2012

According to scholars, terrorism is “the systematic use of violence to create a general climate of fear and thereby bring about a particular political objective.” In particular, it refers to the “military tactic of targeting innocent civilians to persuade leaders to change their policies.”<sup>2</sup>

Unlike scholars, UN member states have been unable to define terrorism. This is not due to lack of effort. Before World War II, League of Nations members tried to define terrorism. Since 2001, a special UN committee has also attempted the task, with no progress as of this writing.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, many UN member states have negotiated and ratified international treaties that attempt to eliminate terrorism by considering it a crime. Today, 13 international treaties call on state parties to pass laws against terrorism, arrest people accused of the offense (however it is defined by each state), and assist one another by arresting people accused of terrorism in other states and extraditing (transferring) them to the state in which they are charged so they can be tried and punished.<sup>4</sup>

To date, all of the treaties related to terrorism deal exclusively with terrorist acts by non-state actors such as individuals, social groups, and militias.<sup>5</sup> This is because most states prefer a definition that ignores state acts of terror, either against one another or against individuals and groups within their borders.<sup>6</sup>

The Global Terrorism Database (GTD) compiles worldwide data on terrorist attacks by non-state actors.<sup>7</sup> According to the GTD, in 2010, there were more than 4,800 terrorist attacks worldwide. South Asia experienced the most attacks (1,920), followed by the Middle East and North Africa (1,364). There were 474 terrorist attacks in South East Asia, 308 in sub-Saharan Africa, 263 in Russia and the former Soviet bloc, 149 in South America, 137 in Western Europe, and 17 in North America. All other regions had less than 5 attacks.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This document was written by Karen Ruth Adams, MMUN faculty advisor, and Nicole Allen, 2012 research assistant, with contributions from Jake Pipinich (2005). Copyright 2012 by Karen Ruth Adams.

<sup>2</sup> John Philip Jenkins, “Terrorism,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, available from <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/588371/terrorism>, accessed 28 September 2010..

<sup>3</sup> Sami Zeidan, “Agreeing to Disagree: Cultural Relativism and the Difficulty of Defining Terrorism in a post-9/11 world,” *Hastings International and Comparative Law Review*, vol. 215 (2006).

<sup>4</sup> Upendra D. Acharya, “War on Terror or Terror Wars: The Problem in Defining Terrorism,” *Journal of International Law and Policy*, 37, 4, (Fall 2009), pp. 653-680.

<sup>5</sup> Acharya, “War on Terror or Terror Wars,” pp. 653-680.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph S. Tuman, *Communicating Terrorism: The Rhetorical Dimension of Terrorism*, (London: Sage, 2010), p. 15. See also Raphael Perl, “Terrorism the Future and US foreign Policy,” Congressional Research Service Issue Brief for Congress, December 2001, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), “Data Collection Methodology,” Global Terrorism Database, <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/using-gtd/>, accessed 28 September 2012.

<sup>8</sup> START, “Global Terrorism Database,” data file, <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/>. Compiled by browsing by date, then region (in pie chart). Accessed 28 September 2012.

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In 2010, just 30 percent (1,403) of the attacks identified by the GTD met the scholarly definition of terrorism (attacks on “private civilians and property”). About 37 percent were attacks on government facilities and personnel (966), police (652), and military (168). The remaining targets were primarily business (542), educational institutions (249), and transportation (207).<sup>9</sup> The majority (1,630) of 2010 terrorist attacks (defined broadly, not just in terms of attacks on civilians) had no casualties.<sup>10</sup> As shown in Table 1, together the ten deadliest attacks killed or injured 1,455 people.

Table 1  
The Ten Deadliest Terrorist Attacks in 2010<sup>11</sup>

Country	City	TargetType	Suspected Perpetrator	Fatalities	Injured
India	Midnapore	Transportation	Communist Party of India	115	140
Pakistan	Mohmand	Government	Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)	106	115
Pakistan	Bannu	Citizens	TTP	100	87
Pakistan	DarraAdamKhel	Religious	TTP	96	27
India	Dantewada	Police	Communist Party of India	82	0
Congo	Niangara	Citizens	Lord’s Resistance Army	74	0
Yemen	Harf Sufyan	Police	Houthis	69	0
Pakistan	Quetta	Citizens	Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, TTP	66	150
Iraq	Al Khalis	Citizens	Islamic State of Iraq (ISI)	60	73
Uganda	Kampala	Citizens	Al-Shabab	60	35
Total				828	627

In 2011, Maplecroft, a corporation that forecasts political risk, predicted that 20 countries faced “extreme risk” of frequent and severe terrorist attacks. In descending order, the countries were Somalia, Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Yemen, the Palestinian-occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, Colombia, Algeria, Thailand, Philippines, Russia, Sudan, Iran, Burundi, India, Nigeria, and Israel.<sup>12</sup>

From this data, it is clear that terrorism is a security problem that affects many people. Today, more than 10 years after the 9/11 attacks, terrorism remains a challenge for UN member states and their citizens. What can and should the Security Council do to diminish this threat?

***History and Current Events***

Terrorism has been used throughout history by a wide variety of political actors, including individuals, groups, and states. For example, in April 1995, American Timothy McVeigh blew up the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The bombing killed 168 people and injured 800 others. McVeigh’s motivation was to retaliate for and call attention to the US government’s treatment of the militias in Ruby Ridge, Idaho, and Waco, Texas. Until 2001, this was the most destructive act of terrorism in the US.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> START, “Global Terrorism Database.” Browsed by date, then by target type. Compiled aggregates from pie chart and fatality rankings from data list.

<sup>10</sup> START, “Global Terrorism Database.” Browsed by date, then by casualties, and compiled aggregates from pie chart.

<sup>11</sup> START, “Global Terrorism Database.” Browsed by date, then by casualties, and compiled ranking from data list.

<sup>12</sup> Maplecroft, “Newly formed South Sudan joins Somalia, Pakistan, Iraq and Afghanistan at top of Maplecroft terrorism ranking,” 8 March 2011, [http://maplecroft.com/about/news/terrorism\\_index\\_2011.html](http://maplecroft.com/about/news/terrorism_index_2011.html)

<sup>13</sup> Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

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On 11 September 2001, nineteen members of the radical Sunni Islamic group known as al Qaeda hijacked four planes and flew them into the World Trade Center in New York, the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., and a field in Pennsylvania, killing nearly 3,000 Americans. Since then, groups affiliated with al Qaeda have been implicated in bombings and other attacks in the UK, Tunisia, Bali, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Spain, India, Algeria, and other countries. Among the most significant was the 19 August 2003 attack on UN headquarters in Baghdad, Iraq, which killed 22 people, including UN diplomat Sergio Vieira de Mello. Another notorious attack occurred on 22 February 2006, when al Qaeda in Iraq (a precursor to ISI) bombed the al-Askari shrine in Samarra, Iraq, one of the holiest sites in Shia Islam, triggering a new and bloodier phase in the Iraqi civil war.<sup>14</sup>

Another recent, high-profile attack occurred in September 2004 in the Russian town of Beslan. This attack was carried out by a group of 32 Islamic fighters seeking the independence of Chechnya from Russia. The attack consisted of the capture of a school, followed by a three-day siege. Three hundred people died, mostly children. According to some observers, some Chechen separatist groups are affiliated with al-Qaeda.<sup>15</sup>

The extensive history of terrorist attacks and organizations reveals the diversity of actors who employ it as a means to achieve their ends. Just as McVeigh was not the first individual terrorist (before him, for example, was the Unabomber), al Qaeda is not the only group using terrorist tactics to achieve its objectives. In November 2008, ten Pakistanis affiliated with the group Lashkar-e-Taiba killed 116 people in attacks on more than 10 civilian sites in Mumbai, India.<sup>16</sup> Lashkar is believed to be sponsored by Pakistan's intelligence agency, Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), to undermine India in the long-running dispute over Kashmir.<sup>17</sup>

States, too, have carried out terrorist attacks. During World War II, the US and UK conducted "terror bombing" campaigns to encourage German citizens to rise up against Hitler. In February 1945, a one-day attack on Dresden killed 25,000 people and left 350,000 homeless.<sup>18</sup> The US carried out similar attacks later that year in Japan. A one-day attack on Tokyo created a firestorm that killed 120,000 people.<sup>19</sup>

### Al Qaeda

Al-Qaeda's origins lie in the American- and Saudi-funded Muslim fighters known as the Mujahedeen, a confederation of resistance groups that fought to end the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s.<sup>20</sup> In 2001, al Qaeda leaders planned the 9/11 attacks on the US from its base in southern Afghanistan, then escaped to Pakistan. Since then, al Qaeda has affiliated with anti-government organizations in other countries, such as the TTP in Pakistan, the ISI in Iraq, and al-Shabab in Uganda, which (as shown in Table 1) were responsible for some of the deadliest terrorist attacks in 2010.

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<sup>14</sup> "Timeline: al-Qaeda," *BBC News*, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in\\_depth/7546355.stm#2001](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/7546355.stm#2001), accessed 28 September 2010.

<sup>15</sup> Preeti Bhattacharji, "Chechen Terrorism," Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounder, April 8, 2010, [http://www.cfr.org/publication/9181/chechen\\_terrorism\\_russia\\_chechnya\\_separatist.html#p6](http://www.cfr.org/publication/9181/chechen_terrorism_russia_chechnya_separatist.html#p6)

<sup>16</sup> "Timeline: Mumbai under Attack," *BBC News*, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/7754438.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7754438.stm), accessed September 2 2012.

<sup>17</sup> Richard A. Opiel, Jr., and Salman Masood, "Pakistani Militants Admit Role in Siege, Official Says," *New York Times*, December 31, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/01/world/asia/01pstan.html>

<sup>18</sup> Frederick Taylor, *Dresden: Tuesday, February 13, 1945* (New York: Harper, 2005), p. 351.

<sup>19</sup> Bernard Brodie, *War and Politics* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), p. 51. See also "People's Century: Total War," PBS [video]; summary at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/peoplescentury/episodes/totalwar/description.html>

<sup>20</sup> Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*. See also Ted Galen Carpenter, "The Unintended Consequences of Afghanistan," *World Policy Journal* 11:1 (Spring 1994), pp. 76-87.

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Since the assassination of al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden by US security forces in 2011, as well as years of US drone attacks on al Qaeda leaders and operatives in Pakistan, the strength of what terrorism expert Daniel L. Byman calls the “core” of al Qaeda (or “al Qaeda central”) has been reduced.<sup>21</sup> According to some analysts, by 2015, al Qaeda will have only symbolic importance in Pakistan. In recognition of this, al Qaeda’s new leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, has been willing to overlook differences between al Qaeda central’s goals and methods and those of their affiliates in various countries. Today, instead of al Qaeda deputizing local affiliates to carry out its aims, al Qaeda seeks local affiliates to keep the idea of a unified al Qaeda alive. The organization is currently affiliated with groups in more than 22 countries.<sup>22</sup>

According to Byman, the affiliate that is most like al-Qaeda in its desire to attack Western interests and Western targets is al Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), which is based in Yemen. By contrast, affiliates such as al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) began and largely remain concerned with local interests, such as unseating local governments.<sup>23</sup>

This is not to say that al Qaeda’s affiliates are unable to carry out significant attacks. In the past year alone, affiliates have held major towns in Somalia, seized the northern part of Mali, threatened the Nigerian government, and fought with anti-government rebels in the Syrian civil war.<sup>24</sup> But it is important to recognize that affiliates have different goals from al Qaeda central. As a result, it is possible that the post-9/11 consensus among UN member states about the goals and methods of counter-terrorism may break down, with developed Western states such as the US, France, and UK primarily concerned about major attacks on Western cities by AQAP, and less-developed states more concerned about civil wars with groups such as AQIM, ISI, and al Shabab.

To date, there is mixed evidence of this divide. The permanent five (P-5) members of the Security Council have been hesitant to become involved in the civil wars in Syria and Mali.<sup>25</sup> Yet the US has supported the African Union and Kenya in their effort to drive al Shabab from Somalia.<sup>26</sup> How the US and other countries will respond to allegations that AQIM was behind the recent attack on the US consulate in Benghazi, Libya remains to be seen.<sup>27</sup> If the Security Council agrees to authorize attacks on al Qaeda affiliates in these and other countries, the affiliates’ local leadership and close relationship with local populations may make them more difficult to weaken than al Qaeda central.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Daniel L. Byman, “Al Qaeda’s M&A Strategy,” *Foreign Policy*, 7 December 2010, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/12/07/al\\_qaedas\\_m\\_and\\_a\\_strategy](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/12/07/al_qaedas_m_and_a_strategy)

<sup>22</sup> “Times Topics: Al Qaeda”, *New York Times*, June, 7, 2012, [http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/a/al\\_qaeda/index.html?8qa](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/a/al_qaeda/index.html?8qa)

<sup>23</sup> Byman, “Al Qaeda’s M&A Strategy.”

<sup>24</sup> “Times Topics: Al Qaeda.” For additional information, see the *New York Times* pages on Somalia, Mali, Nigeria, and Syria.

<sup>25</sup> See the Security Council Report pages on Syria and Mali, <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/country-regional-issues.php>

<sup>26</sup> “Kenyan forces attack last remaining stronghold of al-Qaida-linked militants in Somalia,” Associated Press, 28 September 2012, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/kenyan-forces-attack-last-remaining-stronghold-of-al-qaida-linked-militants-in-somalia/2012/09/28/c6905994-0937-11e2-9eea-333857f6a7bd\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/kenyan-forces-attack-last-remaining-stronghold-of-al-qaida-linked-militants-in-somalia/2012/09/28/c6905994-0937-11e2-9eea-333857f6a7bd_story.html)

<sup>27</sup> Steven Lee Myers, “Clinton Suggests Link to Qaeda Offshoot in Deadly Libya Attack,” *New York Times*, 26 September 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/27/world/africa/clinton-cites-clear-link-between-al-qaeda-and-attack-in-libya.html?ref=alqaeda>

<sup>28</sup> Azmat Khan, “Understanding Yemen’s Al Qaeda Threat,” PBS Frontline, 29 May 2012, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/foreign-affairs-defense/al-qaeda-in-yemen/understanding-yemens-al-qaeda-threat>.

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### The Situation in Yemen

What are today the northern and southern parts of the Republic of Yemen have long been ruled separately, first by the Ottomans in the north and the British in the south, then by governments affiliated with the US in the north and the Soviet Union in the south. With the demise of the Soviet Union, the two countries, which had fought one another for many years with help from their superpower sponsors, united in 1990 under a single government.<sup>29</sup>

From 1990 to 2011, the Republic of Yemen was ruled by President Ali Abdullah Saleh. In 2011, in response to the Arab Spring, an assassination attempt, and a Gulf Cooperation Council mediation plan, Saleh transferred power to Abed Rabboo Mansour Hadi, who was elected president in February 2012. Despite the change of government, Yemen continues to face threats of political instability from Saleh loyalists in the north and from separatist movements led by AQAP in the south, which has taken advantage of political instability to consolidate control over considerable parts of Yemeni territory.<sup>30</sup>

The creation of AQAP dates back to the 2006 escape of 23 prisoners from a high-security prison in Yemen's capital, Sana. Among the escapees was Nasir al-Wuhayshi, a close affiliate of bin Laden. AQAP claims loyalty to Sunni Islam and opposes both the US and the Saudi royal family. Yet AQAP differs from al Qaeda central in asserting a dedication to limiting civilian casualties and operating with a decentralized command structure that incorporates local emirs. According to US intelligence sources, AQAP has grown from 200-300 members in 2009 to more than 1,000 in 2012.<sup>31</sup>

Since 2009, AQAP and a related organization, Ansar al Shari, have controlled parts of southern Yemen, including "substantial operational spaces in Abyan and Shabwa, in addition to a presence in Mareb, Rada, Hadramout and other regions."<sup>32</sup> According to some analysts, their control has been weakened by US drone strikes<sup>33</sup> and military cooperation between the US and Yemeni government, including the transfer of military vehicles, communication technology, rifles, small arms, rocket launchers,<sup>34</sup> and the training of Yemeni Special Forces by US military personnel.<sup>35</sup> Others dispute this, arguing that AQAP has benefited from the drone strikes and more visible US presence, which anger local people and make them more likely to help AQAP fighters.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> "Times Topics: Yemen," *New York Times*, 26 September 2012, <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/yemen/index.html>

<sup>30</sup> "Times Topics: Yemen." See also Khan, "Understanding Yemen's Al Qaeda Threat."

<sup>31</sup> Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, "Chapter 2. Country Reports: The Middle East and North Africa," United States Department of States, 31 July 2012, <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2011/195544.htm>.

<sup>32</sup> Ibrahim Mothana, "Room for Debate: More Diplomacy, Fewer Drones," *New York Times*, 26 September 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2012/09/25/do-drone-attacks-do-more-harm-than-good/more-diplomacy-less-drones> See also "Times Topics: Yemen" and Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, "Chapter 2. Country Reports."

<sup>33</sup> "Expanded U.S. Drone Strikes in Yemen Approved," CBS News, April 26, 2012, [http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-202\\_162-57422576/expanded-u.s-drone-strikes-in-yemen-approved/](http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-202_162-57422576/expanded-u.s-drone-strikes-in-yemen-approved/)

<sup>34</sup> Carlo Munoz, "Details Emerge on US Counterterrorism Support for Yemen," *The Hill*, 16 July 2012, <http://thehill.com/blogs/defcon-hill/policy-and-strategy/238091-details-emerge-on-us-counterterrorism-support-for-yemen> .

<sup>35</sup> Margaret Coker, "U.S., Yemen Restart Training: Controversial Push to Instruct Special-Operations Forces Is Aimed at Fighting Resurgent Al Qaeda," *Wall Street Journal*, 6 March 2012, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204276304577265321207513952.html>.

<sup>36</sup> Mothana, "Room for Debate." See also Tom Finn, "U.S. Drone Attacks in Yemen Cause Political Strain," *Reuters*, 9 May 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/05/09/us-yemen-security-idUSBRE8480S320120509>

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Recent interviews and studies within Yemen suggest that drone strikes are turning Yemeni citizens away from the Yemeni government and towards local militants and terrorist organizations. Experts warn that “The drones are killing al Qaeda leaders, but they are also turning them into heroes,”<sup>37</sup> especially since the new AQAP strategy is to minimize civilian casualties.<sup>38</sup>

Several recent terrorist attacks have been attributed to AQAP, including the assassination of the head of the Saudi counter-terrorism efforts, Prince Mohammed bin Nayef. AQAP is also known to have a presence in the geopolitically significant Port of Aden, where the al Qaeda bombed the USS Cole in 2000. In northern Yemen, the AQAP has targeted Shi’a Houthi rebels in Yemen’s northern mountainous tribal areas, who were responsible for a 2010 terrorist attack.<sup>39</sup>

In recent years, several AQAP efforts to blow up international airlines have been disrupted. In May 2012, Ansar al Shari carried out a terrorist attack in Sana that killed 90 people and wounded hundreds. In mid-September 2012, hundreds of people attacked the US embassy in Sana in response to calls from Muslim cleric, Abdul Majid al-Zandani, to protest an anti-Islamic video produced in the US. Later in the month, at the UN General Assembly, President Hadi called for limits to speech that insults religion.<sup>40</sup>

### The Potential for Nuclear Terrorism

With the development of nuclear weapons in 1945, the destructive potential of terrorism reached new heights. According to the US Strategic Bombing Survey, the uranium bomb exploded over the Japanese city of Hiroshima in August 1945 killed 30 percent of the city’s population of 245,000 and injured another 30 percent. The plutonium bomb exploded over Nagasaki a few days later wreaked similar destruction.<sup>41</sup>

Since 1945, additional states have developed and stockpiled nuclear weapons, but no further use of them has occurred. According to some analysts, this is because states and other actors fear nuclear retribution, rendering it irrational to carry out nuclear strikes.<sup>42</sup> Others say it is just a matter of time until terrorists or rogue states obtain and use nuclear weapons, as well as other weapons of mass destruction.<sup>43</sup>

Weapons of mass destruction (WMD) have destructive effects that occur so quickly and so extensively that it is impossible to protect people. It is often said that nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons are WMD. In fact, however, only nuclear and biological weapons are likely to have mass effects.<sup>44</sup> We know that nuclear weapons are WMD. According to physicists, a one kiloton (kt) nuclear device exploded at ground-level in Manhattan would kill approximately 210,000 people. About 30,000 would die immediately from the blast or burns, and the remainder

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<sup>37</sup> Sudarsan Raghavan, “In Yemen, U.S. Airstrikes Breed Anger, and Sympathy for Al Qaeda,” *Washington Post*, 29 May 2012, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle\\_east/in-yemen-us-airstrikes-breed-anger-and-sympathy-for-al-qaeda/2012/05/29/gJQAUmKI0U\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/in-yemen-us-airstrikes-breed-anger-and-sympathy-for-al-qaeda/2012/05/29/gJQAUmKI0U_story.html)

<sup>38</sup> Letta Taylor, “Losing Hearts and Minds,” *Human Right Watch*, 31 May 2012, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/05/31/losing-yemeni-hearts-and-minds>

<sup>39</sup> Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, “Chapter 2. Country Reports.”

<sup>40</sup> “Times Topics: Yemen.”

<sup>41</sup> United States Strategic Bombing Survey, “The Effects of the Atomic Bombs,” *United States Strategic Bombing Survey Summary Report*, Washington, D.C., 1 July 1946, <http://www.anesi.com/ussbs01.htm>

<sup>42</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, “Nuclear Myths and Political Realities,” *American Political Science Review* 84:3 (September 1990).

<sup>43</sup> Hans Blix, et al., *Weapons of Terror: Freeing the World of Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Arms*, WMD Commission, June 2006, <http://www.wmdcommission.org/>

<sup>44</sup> Karen Ruth Adams, “Weapons of Mass Destruction,” *International Encyclopedia of Political Science* (New York: CQ Press, 2010).

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would die from radiation in a week or so. The uranium bomb exploded by the US over the Japanese city of Hiroshima in 1945 was 13 kilotons (kt) and killed 30 percent of the city's population. Contemporary US and Russian nuclear weapons are approximately 150 kt.<sup>45</sup>

States that ratify the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1970 agree that the only legal nuclear weapons states are those that had declared nuclear programs when the Treaty was written in 1968, namely the United States, Russia (which developed nuclear weapons in 1949), United Kingdom (1953), France (1964), and China (1964). All other state parties to the Treaty agree to pursue nuclear programs only for energy, not for weapons (NPT 1968, Articles II and IV). In exchange, the five existing nuclear states promise to "pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to ... nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control" (Article VI). Despite these stipulations, since 1970, a number of states have developed or otherwise obtained nuclear weapons, including Israel, India, Pakistan, and North Korea. No serious effort to abolish nuclear weapons has been made by any of the five legal nuclear states.<sup>46</sup>

One of the first recordings featuring Osama bin Laden detailed al Qaeda plans to obtain nuclear weapons to further its goal of pushing Western capitalist states out of the Middle East and establishing an Islamic Caliphate. During the 1990s, senior members of al Qaeda tried to acquire enriched uranium from Russia and technical help from Pakistani nuclear scientists. Despite these efforts, al Qaeda has thus far failed to acquire nuclear weapons.<sup>47</sup>

### ***Previous Committee Work on This Topic***

Due to widespread opposition, the Comprehensive Convention against Terrorism, a draft treaty that would comprehensively and legally define terrorism, has stalled in the General Assembly. This reflects both the shared interest of many states in keeping state terrorism out of the definition, and the diverging interests of other states in labeling certain groups as terrorists while others see them as freedom fighters.<sup>48</sup> Thus the historical trend in which states call their opponents terrorists continues, despite sea changes in the specific individuals regarded as terrorists. For example, the South African government once considered Nelson Mandela to be a terrorist. Today he is seen as a leading force for peace.<sup>49</sup>

In 2004, the Security Council adopted Resolution SC 1566, an effort to describe, if not define of terrorism. The resolution encourages international efforts to oppose:

... criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act, which constitute offences within the scope of and as defined in the international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Adams, "Weapons of Mass Destruction."

<sup>46</sup> Karen Ruth Adams, "Nuclear Club," *International Encyclopedia of Political Science* (New York: CQ Press, 2010).

<sup>47</sup> Rolf Mowatt-Larsson, "Al Qaeda's Pursuit of Weapons of Mass Destruction: The Authoritative Timeline," *Foreign Policy*, 25 January 2010, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/01/25/al\\_qaedas\\_pursuit\\_of\\_weapons\\_of\\_mass\\_destruction?page=full](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/01/25/al_qaedas_pursuit_of_weapons_of_mass_destruction?page=full) .

<sup>48</sup> Thalif Deen, "Politics: U.N. Member States Struggle to Define Terrorism," Inter Press Service, 25 July 2005,, <http://www.ipsnews.net/2005/07/politics-un-member-states-struggle-to-define-terrorism>

<sup>49</sup> Tuman, *Communicating Terrorism*, p. 15.

<sup>50</sup> UN Security Council, Resolution 1566 (2004), para. 3, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N04/542/82/PDF/N0454282.pdf?OpenElement>

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This resolution was a departure from previous Security Council approach, which encouraged individual states to develop domestic law unilaterally.<sup>51</sup>

Although UN member states have not agreed to a definition of terrorism, the Security Council has passed resolutions condemning specific acts of terrorism. In addition, in 1979, the Council resolved to treat terrorist activities as crimes, not acts of war. Since 2001, resolutions emanating from the SC have continued to address terrorism as a criminal activity.

Since 9/11, perhaps the most important Council action with regard to terrorism has been to create the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) to “bolster the ability of UN member states to prevent terrorist acts both within their borders and across regions.”<sup>52</sup> The mandate of this Council sub-committee has four aspects: technical assistance to connect countries to technical, financial, regulatory, and legislative assistance and donors; regular country reports from all UN member states on their counter-terrorism activities; information on best practices, codes and standards for addressing terrorism; and meetings to develop ties between states and relevant international, regional, and sub-regional organizations to avoid duplication of efforts.

In 2010, the Council passed Resolution 1963, which charged the CTC with also considering social factors in each country.<sup>53</sup> The Council has also encouraged the CTC to develop and pursue strategies that respect human rights.<sup>54</sup> Security Council presidential statements (such as S/PRST/2010/19) suggest that many members are moving towards supporting a more holistic approach, addressing not only terrorist groups and terrorist attacks but the overall political, military, economic, social, and cultural conditions that give rise to them.<sup>55</sup> Yet the strength and significance of this sentiment are unclear because presidential statements are not binding on member states.

With regard to Yemen, in 2011, the Security Council endorsed the Gulf Country Cooperation’s (GCC) initiative for a peaceful change of leadership.<sup>56</sup> In June 2012, the Council demanded “the cessation of all actions aimed at undermining” the government and expressed “its readiness to consider further measures, including under Article 41 of the United Nations Charter.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ben Saul, “Definition of ‘Terrorism’ in the UN Security Council: 1985-2004,” *Chinese Journal of International Law* 4, No. 1,(2010), pp. 141-1666, <http://chinesejil.oxfordjournals.org/content/4/1/141.full#fn-141>

<sup>52</sup> Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee, “Our Mandate,” <http://www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/>, accessed September 2, 2012.

<sup>53</sup> UN Security Council, “Global survey of the implementation by Member States of Security Council resolution 1624 (2005),” Report S/2012/16, January 9, 2012, p. 29, [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/2012/16](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2012/16)

<sup>54</sup> Rosemary Foot, “The United Nations, Counter Terrorism, and Human Rights: Institutional Adaptation and Embedded Ideas,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 29, (2007), pp. 489-514, [http://ccw.modhist.ox.ac.uk/publications/foot\\_un\\_and\\_countersterrorism.pdf](http://ccw.modhist.ox.ac.uk/publications/foot_un_and_countersterrorism.pdf)

<sup>55</sup> Security Council Report, “High-Level Event on Threats to International Peace and Security Caused by Terrorist Attacks,” UN Security Council, April 30, 2012, [http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2012-05/lookup\\_c\\_glKWLeMTIsG\\_b\\_8075181.php](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2012-05/lookup_c_glKWLeMTIsG_b_8075181.php)

<sup>56</sup> Security Council Report, “Security Council Report: Monthly Forecast May 2012,” UN Security Council, April 30, 2012, <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/May%202012%20Forecast.pdf>

<sup>57</sup> UN Security Council, S/RES/2051 (2012), <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/YEMEN%20S%20RES%202051.pdf>



## Montana Model UN High School Conference

To deal with individual terrorists, the Security Council created the 1267 Committee via Resolution 1267(1999), which is responsible for monitoring international sanctions against individuals affiliated with Al Qaeda. In 2012, the Committee ceased to treat Taliban members as threats, leaving only al Qaeda membership as illegal.<sup>58</sup>

Addressing the issue of nuclear proliferation by terrorist organizations, Security Council members recently expressed “grave concern about the threat of terrorism, and the risk that non-state actors may acquire, develop, traffic in or use weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.”<sup>59</sup>

The danger of terrorists obtaining and using weapons of mass destruction was recognized before the al Qaeda attacks of September 2001. In 1996, the GA established a committee to draft a convention to address this threat. In 2005, the resulting convention was approved by the GA and opened for signature and ratification by member states. This treaty is called the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (ICSANT) and is often simply referred to as the Nuclear Terrorism Convention. It came into force in 2007. As of today, 82 of the UN’s 193 member states have ratified the treaty.<sup>60</sup>

In 1998, American scholars Ashton Carter, John Deutch, and Philip Zelikow argued for a four-pronged strategy to prevent terrorist acquisition and use of WMD. Their suggested approach is similar to that later adopted in ICSANT. It involves: (1) intelligence and warning, (2) prevention and deterrence, (3) crisis and consequence management, and (4) coordinated acquisition of equipment and technology.<sup>61</sup>

States that ratify ICSANT agree to treat the pursuit of nuclear weapons by individuals as a crime and to share intelligence with one another and the UN Secretary General to apprehend such persons. Although ICSANT’s focus is on individuals, the treaty also applies to terrorist groups, whose members can be tried as individuals. ICSANT participants agree not to allow individuals to use political or religious beliefs as a defense for their actions. In addition, they agree that either the country that was the target of the intended attacks or the country that arrests the individual can try the person in a court of law, and that countries must extradite accused individuals to one another. Finally, ratifying countries agree to transfer nuclear and radiological materials confiscated from individuals to states that are allowed by the NPT to possess such items. Recipient countries must then destroy the materials, according to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) requirements, and provide verification that this has occurred.<sup>62</sup>

In Spring 2010, the United States invited 40 countries to attend a Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, D.C. The summit focused primarily on preventing nuclear terrorism.<sup>63</sup> At the summit, a number of countries agreed to ratify ICSANT,<sup>64</sup> and all participants agreed to work for its universal adoption. These commitments are not legally binding but are to be carried out on a voluntary basis.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> “UN to Delink Al Qaeda, Taliban Sanctions,” *CBS News*, June 17, 2012, [http://www.cbsnews.com/2100-202\\_162-20071955.html](http://www.cbsnews.com/2100-202_162-20071955.html).

<sup>59</sup> Security Council Report, “Security Council Report: Monthly Forecast May 2012,” p. 27.

<sup>60</sup> The text of the treaty is available at United Nations, “International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (ICSANT),” 2005, <http://treaties.un.org/doc/db/Terrorism/english-18-15.pdf>. For information on ratifications, see “International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism,” 13 April 2005, UN Treaty Collection, accessed 28 September 2012, <http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetailsIII.aspx?src=UNTSO&no=XVIII%7e15&chapter=18&Temp=mtdsg3&lang=en>

<sup>61</sup> Ashton Carter, John Deutch, and Philip Zelikow, “Catastrophic Terrorism: Tackling the New Danger,” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 77, no. 6 (November-December, 1998), p. 83.

<sup>62</sup> UN, “ICSANT,” Articles 2, 5, and 18.

<sup>63</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Communiqué of the Washington Nuclear Security Summit,” 13 April 2010, available at <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/140355.pdf>.

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Participants in the Nuclear Security Summit also called for international cooperation to follow up on UN Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004), which calls on UN Member States to criminalize the possession of all WMD materials and delivery systems (nuclear, chemical, and biological) by individuals and groups. This resolution, entitled “Preventing Non-state Actors from Obtaining Weapons of Mass Destruction, Their Means of Delivery, and Related Materials,” details steps that Member States must take to ensure their ability to track and contain all attempts at acquiring WMD by non-state actors. Furthermore, the resolution calls for periodic reports from states on the progress they are making towards these objectives.<sup>66</sup> Participants at the Washington Nuclear Security Summit acknowledged the importance of thorough and timely reports to the Security Council and committed themselves to providing pressure and assistance to countries which are not currently meeting their reporting obligations under Resolution 1540.<sup>67</sup>

The Nuclear Security Summit also focused on the need for states to secure their nuclear weapons and nuclear energy materials so terrorists cannot obtain them. This effort is consistent with the IAEA’s *Nuclear Security Plan 2010-2013*, which discusses the need to create an “effective nuclear security infrastructure” within countries comply with the requirements of the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Materials (CPPNM).<sup>68</sup> The IAEA offers support to any country willing to secure its nuclear materials.<sup>69</sup> At the Nuclear Security Summit, states pledged to adopt the recommendations and to partner with the IAEA in providing assistance to countries.<sup>70</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Terrorism poses complex challenges, ranging from sporadic local attacks to the fall of governments and the possibility of nuclear weapons acquisition and use. How should the Security Council respond to these threats? In researching your country’s position on this issue, consider the following questions:

- Has your country ever been threatened or attacked by terrorists? If so, what is the basis of the conflict? Did the threats or attacks involve WMD?
- To what extent has terrorism affected your state’s allies and/or the states in its region?
- What position does your country take on terrorism in general and on the challenges of al Qaeda, Yemen, and WMD terrorism in particular?
- What kind of counter-terrorism policies does your country favor?
- Does your state need help with terrorism? Could it offer help to others?
- What aspects of terrorism and counter-terrorism should the Council prioritize, and how should it encourage UN member states to address them?

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<sup>64</sup> A summary of each state’s commitments is available in U.S. Department of State, “Nuclear Security Summit: Highlights of National Commitments,” 13 April 2010, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/140356.pdf>

<sup>65</sup> For the general commitments, see U.S. Department of State, “Nuclear Security Summit Final Work Plan,” 13 April 2010, p. 1, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/140354.pdf>

<sup>66</sup> UN Security Council, “Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction,” Resolution 1540, 28 April 2004, [http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/unsc\\_resolutions04.html](http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/unsc_resolutions04.html)

<sup>67</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Nuclear Security Summit Final Work Plan,” p. 2.

<sup>68</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency, “Nuclear Security Plan 2010-2013,” 17 August 2009, [http://www.iaea.org/About/Policy/GC/GC53/GC53Documents/English/gc53-18\\_en.pdf](http://www.iaea.org/About/Policy/GC/GC53/GC53Documents/English/gc53-18_en.pdf), pp. 2, 4. The text of the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Weapons is at <http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Conventions/cppnm.html>, accessed 15 July 2010.

<sup>69</sup> IAEA, “Nuclear Security Plan 2010-2013,” p. 6-7.

<sup>70</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Nuclear Security Summit Final Work Plan,” p. 2-3.

***Recommended Reading***

Deen, Thalif. "Politics: U.N. Member States Struggle to Define Terrorism." Inter Press Service. 25 July 2005. Available at <http://www.ipsnews.net/2005/07/politics-un-member-states-struggle-to-define-terrorism>

The author of this 2005 article summarizes several positions in the debate about defining terrorism and provides examples of divergent views from various countries.

Khan, Azmat. "Understanding Yemen's Al Qaeda Threat." PBS Frontline. 29 May 2012. Available at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/foreign-affairs-defense/al-qaeda-in-yemen/understanding-yemens-al-qaeda-threat>

This site provides transcripts of recent interviews about national and international aspects of the terrorist threat in Yemen.

National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). "Global Terrorism Database." Data file. Available at <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd>

This website provides access to detailed historical and current information on terrorist attacks in particular countries and regions. For tips on navigation, see footnotes 9-12.

Security Council Report. "UN Documents. on Yemen." Available at <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/yemen/>

This site provides easy access to all Security Council documents on Yemen.

"Times Topics: Al Qaeda," *New York Times*. June, 7, 2012. Available at [http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/a/al\\_qaeda/index.html?8qa](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/a/al_qaeda/index.html?8qa)

This and other *Times* sites noted in the footnotes provide background information on al Qaeda central and its affiliates in various countries. In addition, there are links to recent articles on terrorist attacks, intelligence reports, etc. On al Qaeda, see also the article by Daniel Byman in footnote 22.

United Nations. "International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism." (ICSANT). 2005. Available at <http://treaties.un.org/doc/db/Terrorism/english-18-15.pdf>, accessed 12 July 2010.

It is important to read this treaty and know your country's position on it. To find out whether your country has ratified it, go to the UN Treaty Collection site mentioned in footnote 73.

United Nations. "Treaties on Terrorism." Available at: [http://treaties.un.org/Pages/DB.aspx?path=DB/studies/page2\\_en.xml](http://treaties.un.org/Pages/DB.aspx?path=DB/studies/page2_en.xml)

From this site you can find out which terrorism treaties your country has ratified.

United Nations Security Council. "Global survey of the implementation by Member States of Security Council resolution 1624 (2005)." Report S/2012/16. January 9, 2012. Available at [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/2012/16](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2012/16)

This recent report analyzes country progress towards the goals and standards established by the Security Council and implemented by the Counter-Terrorism Committee. Search on your country's name or region. For additional information, see the source in footnote 32.