

Introduction

“Many potential adversaries, as reflected in doctrinal writings and statements, see US military concepts, together with technology, as giving the United States the ability to expand its lead in conventional warfighting capabilities.

This perception among present and potential adversaries will continue to generate the pursuit of asymmetric capabilities against US forces and interests abroad as well as the territory of the United States. US opponents—state and such nonstate actors as drug lords, terrorists, and foreign insurgents—will not want to engage the US military on its terms. They will choose instead political and military strategies designed to dissuade the United States from using force, or, if the United States does use force, to exhaust American will, circumvent or minimize US strengths, and exploit perceived US weaknesses. Asymmetric challenges can arise across the spectrum of conflict that will confront US forces in a theater of operations or on US soil.”

- National Intelligence Council's "[Global Trends 2015: A Dialogue About the Future With Nongovernment Experts](#)" report, December 2000 [Emphasis in original].

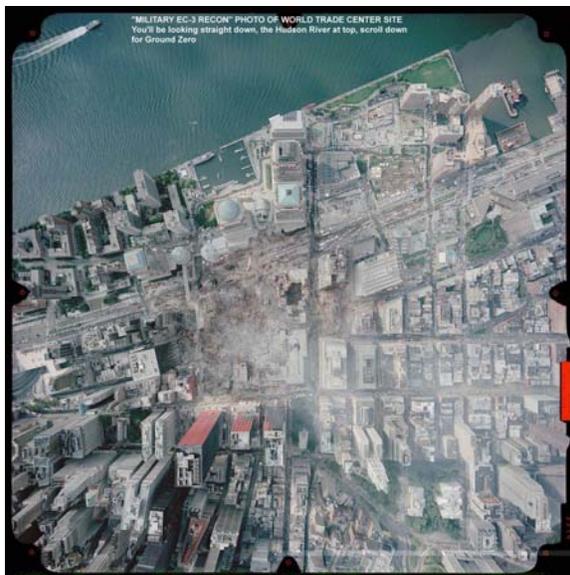
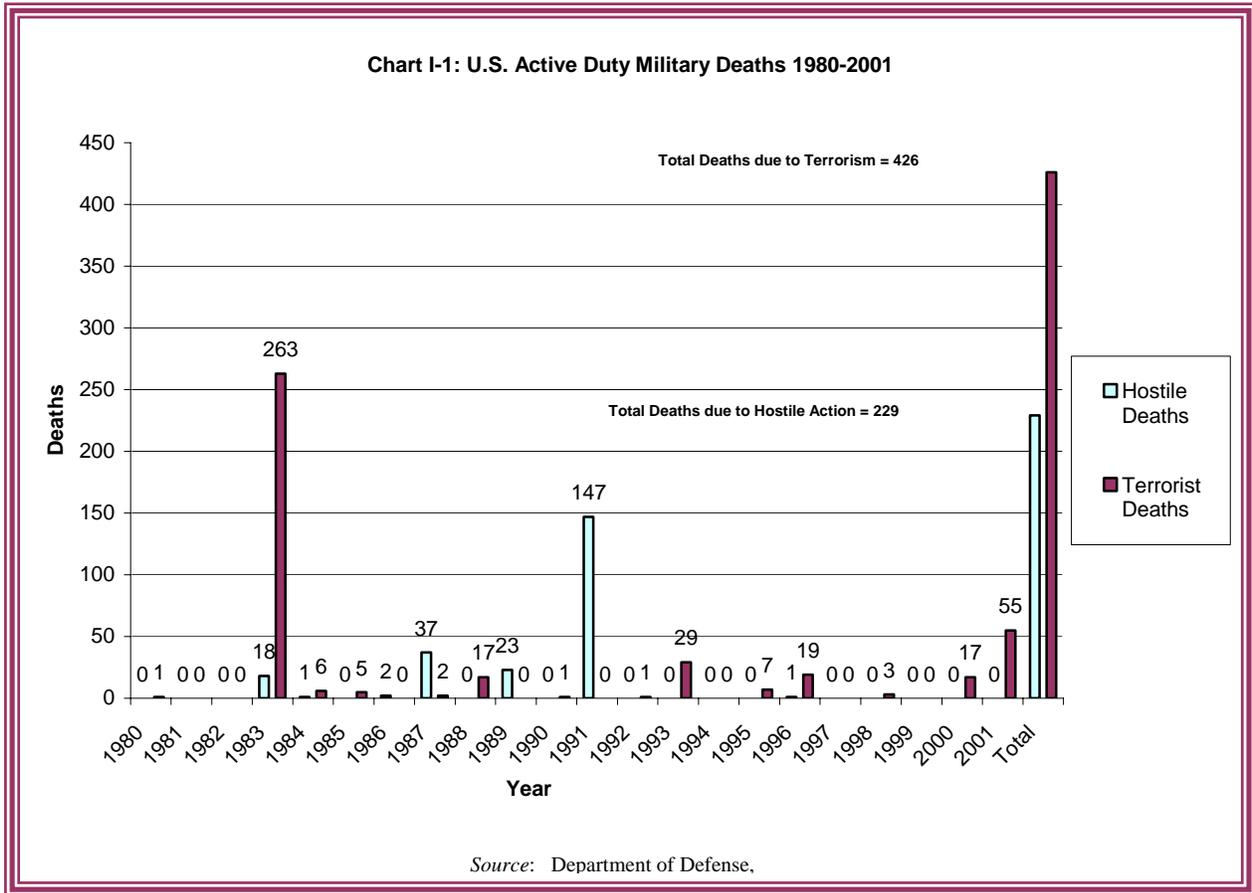


Figure I-1: World Trade Center after 9/11/01
(Source: DOD Photo)

Terrorism has become one of the most pervasive and critical threats to the security of the United States in recent history. U.S. military fatalities from terrorist actions since 1972 exceed the total battle deaths from Operations Urgent Fury (Grenada), Just Cause (Panama), and Desert Shield/ Storm (Persian Gulf).¹ As Chart I-1 depicts below, there were 655 military deaths between 1980 and 2001 attributed to either hostile action or terrorism. Of these deaths, 65% were due to terrorist actions. However, despite its consistent menace, terrorism is a threat that is poorly understood, and frequently confusing due to widely divergent views over exactly what it is.

¹ Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, *Table 13, Worldwide U.S. Active Duty Military Deaths, Selected Military Operations* (Washington, D.C., n.d.); available from <http://web1.whs.osd.mil/mmid/casualty/table13.htm>; Internet; accessed 3 February 2003.



Scope of Problem

Conflict (Army FM 100-20.) — A political-military situation between peace and war, distinguished from peace by the introduction of organized political violence and from war by its reliance on political methods. It shares many of the goals and characteristics of war, including the destruction of governments and the control of territory.

Terrorism is a significant challenge for U.S. military forces in the 21st Century. It has evolved from a tactic for influencing political and social action to a dominant strategy for the conduct of irregular warfare. As shown in the historical review in Chapter 1, terrorist violence has changed from an agenda-forcing and attention-getting tool of the politically weak to a distinct method of asymmetric conflict employed against adversaries of greater

economic, military, and political strength. It has also become a millenarian phenomenon; what some see as a precursor for cataclysmic change or apocalyptic transformation of society, religion, or the global status quo.

Terrorism is defined by DOD as: **“The calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or**

societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological”.² This is not a universally accepted definition outside of the Department of Defense, and the study of terrorism has often been mired in a conflict over definitions and semantics. This is examined at length in Chapter 1, but for the purposes of this document, this doctrinal definition will be used unless otherwise noted.

Having defined terrorism as violence in pursuit of goals, we have placed it squarely in the arena of warfare and conflict. Terrorism is a special type of violence; while it has a political element, it is a criminal offense under nearly every national or international legal code. Although terrorism has not yet caused the physical devastation and large number of casualties normally associated with warfare, it often produces a significant adverse psychological impact and presents a greater threat than a simple reckoning of the numbers killed or the quantity of materiel destroyed would indicate.³ For the U.S. military, conventional warfare has become less lethal due to the superiority of our equipment and training over potential adversaries. However, while casualties have been trending downwards in conventional conflicts, the lethality of terrorism is on the rise.

While terrorism creates effects greater than the simple physical impact, and therefore is frequently successful in attracting attention and creating fear and anxiety, it typically fails to translate that success into concrete gains, and fails to achieve its ultimate objective.⁴ Thus, as a tactic, terror is successful, but as a strategy, it either fails or requires concurrent political or military efforts to produce tangible results.⁵ The fact still remains, though, that terrorism is a serious threat to our forces.

Purpose

This document is intended as a resource to inform U.S. military personnel of the nature and characteristics of terrorist operations. The purpose is to provide unit leaders, planners and commanders with a useful tool for:

Understanding the nature of the terror threat through a concise historical review of terror, basic descriptions of the methods and organizational structures commonly used by terrorist organizations, an understanding of terrorist goals and objectives, and how terrorists plan and conduct operations.

Understanding the threat of terrorism to their units. By using terms descriptive of terrorist *capabilities* we attempt to show the likely level of threat and the types of actions that may be directed against U.S. military personnel and units.

² FM 100-20, *Military Operations in Low Intensity Conflict*, 5 December 1990; and Joint Publication 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, 12 April 2001, as amended through 9 January 2003.

³ Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 33-34.

⁴ Caleb Carr, *The Lessons of Terror: A History of Warfare Against Civilians: Why it has Always Failed and Why it will Fail Again* (New York: Random House, 2002), 11.

⁵ Walter Lacquer, *The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 48.

Identifying appropriate levels of force protection, security and countermeasures based upon unit status and situation. By providing data on commonly used weapons and tactics of terrorist groups, the intent is to enable realistic assessments of risk and vulnerability.

Providing relevant information applicable to Active, Reserve and Guard units either deployed, deploying, or in CONUS. This document details probable circumstances in which U.S. military units can expect terrorist operations to be undertaken against them and the likely motivations for such operations.

This document is not intended to be a counterterrorism “how-to” manual, or to replace current training and intelligence products. Its intent is to provide a base of knowledge that will allow better understanding and employment of existing resources.

Approach to the Topic

This document will discuss the phenomenon of terrorism in depth, beginning with Chapter 1, The Nature and History of Terror. From there we will examine Terrorist Behavior, Motivation and Characteristics in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 presents information on Terrorist Group Organizations. Chapter 4 provides some general observations on Terrorism And U.S. Forces, while Chapter 5 will examine the specific considerations that apply to units and individuals who are Deployed, Deploying, and Non-Deployable. Chapter 6 traces the Evolution and Future of Terrorism. Detailed information on terrorist weapons, tactics, organization, and areas of operation are provided in the Appendices A-G.

This document intends to provide a clear and straightforward description of an increasingly common method of conflict and will promote knowledge and facilitate understanding of the subject. To that end, historical discussions and vignettes are employed to familiarize the reader with the progressive development of terrorist thought and technique. We examine common features and key behaviors of terrorist groups and individuals to demonstrate what terrorists think. Many of the categories, descriptions, and classifications of terrorism and its associated aspects are introduced in order to simplify and rationalize them. Categorizations and nomenclature commonly used are introduced and discussed so the reader will understand what, if anything, they contribute to understanding terrorism. While we discard most of the accumulated terminology as being misleading or irrelevant to our needs, some terms are useful when employed carefully and understood narrowly.

The concepts used herein to classify terror groups are intended to aid the soldier in assessing the capabilities of potential adversaries. Social, philosophical, and political descriptions are avoided except where they assist in understanding or predicting behavior for a particular group. Descriptions employed focus on capabilities pertinent to the concerns of military professionals analyzing an adversary.