

1. OVERVIEW

The primary national security challenge confronting the United States in the immediate future and likely for the next generation will be the international jihadist terrorism network. Members of that movement are a small minority of the Muslim world who seek to overthrow governments based upon a perverted interpretation of Islam.

Governments and the media use the phrase “al Qaeda” or “al Qaeda-related” to describe the network of jihadist terrorist groups. Despite the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and the arrests of jihadist leaders around the world, the jihadist network remains strong. It has conducted twice as many attacks since September 11, 2001, as it did in the three years prior to that date. Jihadist leaders who have been captured or killed have been replaced. Although it is difficult to be precise about the number of active jihadists, the strong consensus among experts is that the ranks of the jihadists have increased significantly since 9/11.

Since 9/11, President George W. Bush’s administration has squandered valuable time in addressing the jihadist threat. As we evaluate U.S. progress in neutralizing the jihadist movement, we need to acknowledge that the war in Iraq has been deeply counterproductive to the greater effort.

As a sin of commission, the Iraq war alienated crucial allies in the battle against jihadists, made friendly Muslims into skeptics, turned skeptics into radicals, and created a new battleground for itinerant jihadist insurgents. Iraq had no connection to the terror threat facing the United States, and Saddam Hussein’s removal has done nothing to lessen the threat we face from al Qaeda and the jihadists. Perhaps the most vivid demonstration of this point is that more than a year and a half after Saddam’s removal, the terror alert level in America remains elevated and there is anticipation of a major al Qaeda attack. The simple fact is that even if Iraq magically turned into a stable, secure democracy one day, the United States could suffer another 9/11-type attack the next day.

As a sin of omission, the Iraq war diverted massive and much-needed resources from the war on jihadists. The continued unrest in Iraq will further delay any U.S. effort to create a new international coalition to confront Syria's and Iran's terrorist activities. The international consensus to confront state sponsors of terrorism evaporated as a result of the Iraq war, a point not lost on Damascus and Tehran. As a result, they will do everything in their power to further bog down U.S. efforts in Iraq. Ironically, the war in Iraq has contributed to creating the breathing room Syria and Iran so desperately needed to avoid a robust international response to their terrorist activities.

The reliance on U.S. contractors to rebuild Iraq has slowed the reconstruction and restoration of services. U.S. contractors and their foreign sub-contractors are unable to move freely about the country due to security concerns. The lack of services has, in turn, added support for the insurgency and the terrorist network. To accelerate the reconstruction and to give more responsibility to the Iraqi government, the United States should change its aid and procurement rules and procedures to give more of the U.S. money directly to the Iraqi authorities. There is a risk of corruption in this idea, but there is also a risk of mismanagement with U.S. companies.

In an effort to have a nationwide election in January 2005, the U.S. authorities plan a series of attacks on "no go zones" where insurgents have taken control of large urban areas. Such attacks will be counter-productive, with high collateral damage. For long-term stability, the United States should contain movement in and out of the insurgent areas rather than engaging in urban combat that will alienate those in the cities and those who watch the fighting on television in the Islamic world.

We can be lulled into thinking that we are making good progress in quelling the jihadists by noting that many positive things have happened since 9/11. We have disrupted the central al Qaeda organization. Many of its leaders have been captured or killed (and replaced). There has been greater international cooperation on terrorist financing in the international banking system, although that has only forced the money flow into the underground financial markets. Some homeland security initiatives have begun to address vulnerabilities, but most weaknesses remain largely unchanged.

The war against the jihadists must be, and can still be, won. This report provides a blueprint for succeeding in that enormous challenge. The 9/11 Commission provided its own excellent road map, which we endorse; our analysis seeks to build on its recommendations.

The task of defeating the jihadists has four important components, which will be examined herein:

- ♦ capturing or killing the hard-core terrorists who are intent upon murder and martyrdom,
- ♦ improving relations with the Islamic world and with specific nations therein, to reduce support for the jihadists,
- ♦ reducing America's vulnerabilities to terrorist attack at home and abroad, and
- ♦ reinventing or transforming government services and capabilities to support the three tasks above.

Other related issues of equal importance and difficulty must be addressed to defeat the jihadists. They are complicated but essential challenges that deserve detailed treatment elsewhere but are touched on in this report only briefly to suggest their relevance and a general direction for analysis. Due to the lack of significant progress in the last decade, they too must be pursued with unusual speed:

- ♦ reducing the threat from the proliferation of nuclear weapon and biological weapon technologies, and
- ♦ shifting the economy from dependence on foreign fossil fuel sources for energy requirements.

In pursuing all of these objectives, the nation would benefit greatly from developing clear measurements of progress to assist the public in judging whether adequate success is being achieved. Both the media and Congress bear responsibility for monitoring such measurements and promoting continuing debate on the efficacy of efforts to address those challenges.

This report suggests a broad and comprehensive strategy. It begins with a description of the threat and how it has changed, providing details about the many groups that make up the jihadist movement.

Adding to the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, the analysis here suggests the need for detailed country strategies for increasing

stability in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Iran, and Iraq. It also proposes: (1) taking an active anti-jihadist approach to the Islamic world in general; (2) developing enhanced counterterrorism capabilities in our intelligence, anti-terrorist financing, law enforcement, and military communities; and (3) improving our homeland security capabilities, securing nuclear weapons technology and materials around the globe, and developing a plan to attain energy independence for the United States.

THE REPORT'S KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

CLARIFY THE THREAT: To be effective, we must have consensus about the nature of the problem facing us. It should be clarified that the threat is not terrorism, or even all terrorist organizations, but rather the jihadist terrorists who seek to hijack Islam and use violence to replace existing governments with nondemocratic theocracies.

ENGAGE IN THE BATTLE OF IDEAS: In addition to countering the jihadist terrorists with law enforcement, intelligence, and military measures, we must erode support for them in the Islamic world through what the 9/11 Commission called the “Battle of Ideas.” Nations other than the United States (including both Islamic and non-Islamic countries) and nongovernmental organizations must take the lead in actively appealing to Muslims to denounce intolerance and terrorist violence conducted in the name of Islam. These efforts must stress our common values and overcome misunderstandings and terrorist propaganda. Reactivating the Israel-Palestine peace process must be a part of this larger effort. As part of the Battle of Ideas, the United States and Europe must demonstrably welcome Islam as a part of their cultures. For Europe, it is essential to fight anti-Islamic discrimination in European Union member countries; it is equally important that EU member states be willing to approve formal entry talks paving the way for Turkey’s accession to the EU. Both the European Union and the United States need a concerted program to fight religious intolerance against Islam.

PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO ISLAMIC NATIONS: Although jihadist terrorists are often not poor or uneducated, they use the underprivileged populations in some Islamic nations as one base for their support and as a lever for undermining national stability. The United States, the European Union, wealthy Arab states, and the international financial institutions must greatly expand their financial and programmatic support for development efforts in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Jordan, Morocco, and other economically challenged Islamic nations. These efforts must support human rights efforts and strengthen educational systems and economic opportunities, especially for women.

IMPLEMENT TAILORED STRATEGIES FOR KEY COUNTRIES: The United States must have tailored, detailed, proactive, and integrated policies for enhancing stability and democratic forces in key Islamic nations, including Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Iraq. As part of this effort, the United States must develop its own reliable sources of information about domestic political, social, and security trends in these nations.

DEFUSE SOURCES OF ISLAMIC HATRED FOR THE UNITED STATES: The jihadist terrorists oppose the United States not for what it believes or does, but because they see America as a barrier to their creation of theocratic nation-states or caliphates. Many supporters of the jihadists, however, are persuaded to oppose the United States and support the terrorists because of specific U.S. actions and policies, especially America's support for Israel and occupation of Iraq. The United States should not alter its support of Israel, but it should seek to revivify the Israel-Palestinian peace process. The United States should not precipitously withdraw from Iraq before indigenous security forces are in place but should cease U.S. military operations against urban areas, transfer rebuilding activities to Iraqi entities, abandon the concept of permanent U.S. military bases in the country, and reduce U.S. goals in Iraq so that a withdrawal can be achieved at an early date.

IMPROVE U.S. INTELLIGENCE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT ORGANIZATION: In addition to speedily implementing the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, the United States should modify personnel policies in intelligence and law enforcement agencies (notably the Central Intelligence Agency and Federal Bureau of Investigation) to facilitate noncareer tracks. The domestic intelligence activities of the FBI should be performed by a distinctly separate new organization within the bureau. The next administration should establish an independent, outside oversight board, as recommended by the 9/11 Commission, rather than the internal advisory group recently created by executive order.

ELIMINATE TERROR FINANCING: The next president should designate a special assistant to the president for combating terrorist financing at the National Security Council, with the specific mandate to lead U.S. efforts on terrorist financing issues. Congress should pass and the president should sign legislation requiring the executive branch to submit to

Congress on an annual basis a written certification detailing the steps that foreign nations have taken to cooperate with American and international efforts to combat terrorist financing.

IMPROVE U.S. MILITARY ORGANIZATION: The U.S. military's special operations forces for counterterrorism activities should be greatly expanded and should be supported by a military organization that maintains a covert—"not official cover"—presence in other nations to support U.S. military action against terrorists. The military must enhance its capabilities and modify its policies to facilitate small-unit special forces operations, including covert operations, against terrorists. Congress must make clear that it will accept casualties in such operations.

AUGMENT HOMELAND SECURITY: Funds for reducing vulnerabilities and improving defenses in the United States should be significantly enhanced. Among the highest priorities should be the security of rail systems, chemical plants, and ports receiving shipping containers. Assistance to states and metropolitan areas should be based upon a requirements-driven, multiyear plan that provides each major metropolitan area with certain specific minimum essential capabilities.

PREVENT NUCLEAR TERRORISM: Although the probability of nuclear terrorism may not be high, the consequences of failure to prevent it would be catastrophic. The president should appoint a senior official to direct all U.S. nuclear nonproliferation and nuclear counterterrorism efforts. Such efforts should include new initiatives to provide international guarantees of nuclear energy supplies in exchange for agreement to terminate enrichment activities.

IMPROVE ENERGY SECURITY: Increasing U.S. dependence on Middle East oil is a failure of market forces and complicates our response to security issues in the region. The United States should, therefore, appropriate significant funds to subsidize a rapid shift to energy sources that do not rely upon oil and gas.

