

Dealing with Terrorism

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An Overview

For the United States the world has changed dramatically since September 11, 2001. Americans no longer feel secure, although they cannot measure the extent of the danger. Being less secure means, irresistibly, that the United States has to take steps, costly in any of a variety of ways, to help reestablish safety.¹ What are the possibilities for stopping groups, organized largely abroad, from undertaking sustained campaigns in the United States of lethal terrorism? That—and not the more traditional problem of occasional, low-level terrorism—is the subject of this article.²

The list of options depends on the human, financial, moral, and political resources the United States is prepared to invest in its capacities for prevention, consequence management, deterrence, and retaliation. This in turn depends on whether the United States should anticipate a sustained terrorist campaign—either by Osama bin Laden or by others inspired by his success—and to what

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1. The United States has other goals besides increasing safety and reducing fear, but some of these are less important, and others will follow naturally from the first two. The additional goals that I have in mind are these. The United States has to maintain its foreign alliances, formal and informal. That requires not only the promise of mutual benefit but also persuasive moral and legal justification of U.S. military, diplomatic, and economic actions abroad. Americans have to maintain trust in—and avoid fear of—their government for all significant sections of the population. That requires effectiveness and fairness in the U.S. response. The United States wants to punish wrongdoers simply because that is what is right, and it would like to build as broad as possible a military, legal, and moral commitment to oppose all forms of terrorism—even those that do not threaten the United States. None of these is quite comparable in importance to creating safety and ending fear.

2. Developing as complete a list as possible of what the United States can do to recreate safety and reduce fear is of course only part of the solution. What will and will not work depends on understanding how the possibilities relate to the military, political, and cultural situation in which the options might be used. Even if an option would be effective in a specific context, whether to adopt it depends on its costs not only in dollars and American lives but also in terms of American values—the immensely important degree to which American citizens, their allies, and those suspicious of the United States can accept what it is doing as right or necessary. An important implication of this is that when the United States puts together a portfolio of actions, it must describe them in terms of a unifying theme. Very different actions—and very different reactions of others—will depend on whether, for example, this theme is to protect the United States or to defeat terrorism, whomever it may attack.

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extent any such campaign would involve other catastrophic attacks. Even discounting the threats of bin Laden himself, the case for a major investment in counterterrorism and homeland defense seems strong.

One way to approach how much danger Americans have to fear is to ask, as many have before, why the United States seemed so much better protected against terrorism within its boundaries than other countries such as Great Britain, Germany, France, and Spain (each of which has suffered sustained terrorist campaigns). If we knew what “prevented” such attacks in the United States before, and if we judge what September 11 has changed either in our understanding of that mystery or in terrorist capacities and attitudes, we might be better able to estimate the future.

Here are the possibilities. Perhaps the United States was better able than its allies to detect any plans of attack within its boundaries. Certainly the Federal Bureau of Investigation has aborted several major attacks. On the other hand, the bombing of the World Trade Center on two different occasions (the first in 1993) and the success in bombing U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 and bases in Saudi Arabia in 1996 do not support this theory. Either U.S. targets were never better protected than those of America’s allies that have been attacked, or terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda have developed new and unanticipated capabilities (such as a cadre of trained terrorists, some of whom are willing to die to target the attack more effectively). In either event, substantial investment is called for.

A second possibility looks at reputation, not reality. Perhaps terrorist groups believed, whether correctly or mistakenly, that it was not possible or it was too risky to engage in terrorism in the United States—at least any massive attack. Then, what the attacks on September 11 would have shown is that the United States had surprising vulnerabilities (particularly to suicide terrorists). Whatever psychological barrier of fear there was seems to have fallen with the World Trade Towers.

A third explanation of the rarity of attacks within U.S. borders by foreign-based terrorists is that they may have recognized that a condition of their organizational existence in a sheltering country such as Syria, Iraq, or Iran was not to bring down the wrath of the United States on their hosts. If so, the vigor of the U.S. response to the Taliban regime in Afghanistan is critical both because of what it does to that particular haven for terrorism and because of what it conveys to other potential havens.

As to massive attacks, terrorists have long been believed reluctant to engage in so lethal an operation, preferring the obvious benefits of a sympathetic audience to the anger generated by massive casualties. This fourth possibility, as

well as the technical difficulty of the enterprise, may have explained the relatively low number of massive terrorist attacks in the past and may have prevented biological or nuclear terrorism. If so, the events of September 11 and the terrorist use of anthrax thereafter suggest that moral restraints no longer provide much security against massive attacks.

Each of these explanations of changes in the grounds for the prior domestic tranquility of the United States would suggest the need for a very substantial investment in reestablishing domestic security, even if the United States were not confronted with a threatening opponent who commands extensive public support in Muslim countries.

Only a fifth possibility to explain September 11, 2001, is slightly more optimistic, emphasizing the uniqueness of U.S. vulnerability on that day. Possibly, the only innovation was that the terrorists discovered the remarkable capacity of combining suicide terrorists with a sky full of commercial jetliners. They also needed a haven, Afghanistan, that would permit the planning and financing of an attack, unacceptable to other terrorist havens, by a group that saw no advantage to restraint in selecting its targets. (But the anthrax attacks in October ended that basis for limited optimism.) And to prevent commercial flights from being used as missiles, radical changes in U.S. protections against hijacking (as well as in protection of targets from other forms of attack from the air) and powerful steps to reinforce the reluctance of any nation to tolerate groups planning attacks on the United States would still be needed to greatly reduce the risk.

In the final analysis, the case for taking relatively massive steps seems convincing. But what could they be?

Possible Responses to a Terrorist Threat

Responses to terrorism can be categorized in several ways. They can be either backward or forward looking. Thus, as punishment they can be considered inseparably joined—by a demand for justice—to an event that has already occurred; or, as prevention, they can be addressed to a future danger and intended to affect the probability or nature of a future event. A response can be both at once. Punishment of those involved in one terrorist attack may be a preventive step with regard to a future terrorist attack as well as a morale-sustaining form of retribution for the first. And there is more than prevention and punishment. The purposes may be not only to prevent future attacks and to remedy in some sense what has already happened, but also to greatly

reduce the cost to the United States of future attacks that it cannot prevent by organizing to deal intelligently with their consequences.

Because of the overriding importance of the goals of creating safety and a sense of security, I focus here on forward-looking ways of preventing a campaign of massive terrorism. Still, within this category there are critical distinctions. Most important by far, actions can be taken within the United States, or they can be taken abroad, requiring cooperation and alliances but also offering significant opportunities missing in the United States. Terrorists from abroad will presumably appear in the United States, their target country, in fewer numbers and for shorter periods than abroad in their home base. Moreover, to the considerable extent that terrorists in a haven abroad are like political challengers of a nondemocratic regime, they are potentially subject to control by a dictator's internal security apparatus, using techniques that the United States would not tolerate at home.

So a central issue becomes: Can the United States motivate the often politically risky use of that apparatus against terrorists who enjoy local public support but who threaten U.S. territory? Tolerance or support of the terrorists may be motivated by sincere beliefs of the government or by fear of a restive population supportive of the terrorist cause. To offset either of these, the United States has at its disposal the threat of military strikes, diplomatic and economic sanctions, and the promise of a range of rewards. It also has some, albeit limited, capacity to reduce the anger or the danger of the groups that the haven government fears.

Perhaps the last is the most important action that the United States can take to make its leverage effective: that is, reducing the threat of potentially violent or mass opposition to any government pursuing terrorists on U.S. behalf. That requires the United States to take more seriously its importance to the hopes and self-esteem of those large parts of the population that are now hostile to any government that supports the United States. Foreign assistance and a determined effort to persuade hostile publics that the United States does not want to be an enemy are thus critical, not because they are likely to reduce the number of potential terrorists to a safe number, but because they are likely to make it possible for a friendly state to do that. For the harder job of preventing terrorists from reaching their targets while they remain temporarily on U.S. territory, the United States must rely on its intelligence and law enforcement organizations.

To capture all of these options, I begin with a description of what a terrorist group based abroad needs for a sustained campaign of large-scale attacks on

U.S. targets. To accomplish such a campaign, a terrorist organization must have a flow of recruits and the capacity to retain their commitment and loyalty. It must train them in the skills (organizational, technical, tactical, etc.) that executing a terrorist campaign requires. It must be able to provide them with the necessary resources, including information, to create and use the weapons needed to attack a target. It must furnish a means of getting access to the target for those carrying out the operation. All of this requires creating and maintaining an enduring organization and managing it. Last, and implicit in the others, it must be able to carry out all these steps in secrecy (or some of them with the tolerance of those who might otherwise prevent them).

Many of these measures can be taken abroad. As to each of these requirements we must ask: What makes it easier and what could make it more difficult for a terrorist group to accomplish a particular step, and what is the available capacity to affect either? The answers not only provide our options but also permit a rough estimate of the limits of the effectiveness of each and all altogether.³

Recruitment

Take, first, reducing the availability of recruits or making it more difficult to maintain the commitment of members. That could be accomplished by, for example, reducing grievances; preventing “schooling” in anger and hatred; denying the solidarity values of charismatic leadership, collegueship in a shared battle, and heroism including martyrdom; providing disincentives such as capture and punishment; or denying incentives in terms of the results the terrorists seek or even providing support for groups or causes that the terrorists oppose.

Some of these options are inconsistent with others. Reducing grievances *after* a terrorist event has taken place or been threatened may look to potential recruits like a victory and reward for those leaders who threaten terrorism, thereby creating incentives for terrorism and reducing the motivation of grievances at the same time. Other steps that the United States can take or urge oth-

3. The advantage of approaching options in this way is that it breaks the difficult task of imagining a full range of possibilities into two more manageable parts. I have listed a half-dozen requirements that a terrorist group would have to meet to mount a sustained campaign of massive attacks on the United States from abroad. There may be more or other ways of dividing up what terrorists must do, but the number is manageably small. Then, imagining what the United States or supportive nations can do to interfere with each of those steps again presents a relatively manageable problem.

ers to take may also be just as likely to increase recruitment as to reduce it. Assassinations may create martyrs and thus stimulate imitation with a greater effect on total commitment than the deterrence resulting from the assassination. Any step that threatens in a way that suggests unfairness can have the same effect. Recruitment to the Irish Republican Army (IRA) increased sharply during some periods of overly vigorous British action against suspects.

Many of the steps necessary for recruiting terrorists may be readily discoverable by internal security agents of a somewhat despotic host government *if* it wants to stop the terror. To recruit to any sizable organization requires at least minimal forms of advertising, and this exposes the organization to informants. Training in anger and hatred requires schools or other meeting places that will be discovered. Charismatic leadership requires exposure. What is likely beyond U.S. reach—recruitment abroad—can be greatly affected by the activities of the host country.

Why is effective action against recruitment largely beyond the reach of U.S. agents? Some steps are hardly feasible. Denying the capacities needed to teach anger and hatred is one. Others seem likely to be ineffective. It is doubtful whether the limited U.S. ability to capture and successfully try individual terrorists will provide much disincentive to recruitment, particularly in the case of suicidal terrorists. Even for a nonsuicidal terrorist, the United States can hardly increase the already severe sanctions if caught. Strengthening the disincentive to terrorism requires increasing the risk of apprehension and detention—a form of risk that may be hardly noticed by the most motivated fringe of any passionate movement.

This pessimistic picture of the prospects of *independent* U.S. efforts to reduce terrorist recruitment could be qualified to some extent by adopting a scheme of deterrence that systematically punishes terrorism, not by punishing the individual terrorists, but by harming their cause by providing advantages to people and causes that the terrorists fear and detest. One can imagine this sanction being a very good reason for even the most dedicated and zealous to forgo terrorism, *if* the terrorist campaign was rational, either at the level of recruitment or at the level of management. The problem, as Prime Minister Ariel Sharon may be learning in Israel, is that this sanction necessarily provides “new evidence” of hostility—the effect of which in reinforcing hatred may overwhelm any deterrent value.

Reducing the total number of recruits to a number too small to mount a sustained campaign of terrorism requires steps that reach all the way to the most angry and hostile fringe of the population that feels aggrieved and in need of heroes. In the case of Muslim fundamentalists, this seems unlikely, whether we

are discussing deterrence or reducing grievances or changing the atmosphere in which youth are brought up to be terrorists.

Access to Targets and to the Resources and Skills Necessary for Attacking Them

To carry out the September 11 attacks in New York, the terrorists had to find a way to bring two huge explosives into the World Trade Center buildings. Access to the buildings from the air was uncontrolled. To get the huge explosives—the needed resources—the terrorists had only to get control of planes leaving Boston with enough fuel to take them to California. To direct the planes, they had to have at least minimal flight skills and information about navigating. To take over the controls of the aircraft, they needed numbers (four or five persons per plane) and at least primitive weapons.⁴

The possibilities for preventing the repetition of such an event come directly out of this, admittedly partial, list of what the terrorists had to have or do. Many of these steps had to take place within the United States. The government has since taken steps to tighten controls on access to planes (the needed explosive resources), to the controls of planes (the cockpit), and even to the buildings that might be targets from the air. (President George W. Bush has authorized firing on planes that may be targeted on buildings.)

It is easy enough to make the case for forbidding weapons on planes, preventing passengers from entering the pilot compartment, and prohibiting planes flying in airspace near attractive targets. But denying an individual access enjoyed by others to a plane or, before that, to pilot training or to other skills that might prove critical to a terrorist attack depends on being able to match a record of who may intend violent harm with who is obtaining dangerous resources or access to targets. Access controls can be no better than the three conditions they require: (1) a record of who may be dangerous; (2) a reliable identification of an individual seeking access; and (3) the ability to match these quickly.

The United States may obtain access to a membership list of those who belong to dangerous organizations from informants, spies, or foreign intelligence agencies. If not, it can sometimes develop evidence of who is dangerous by combining pieces of information about an individual and his activities. Although taking one or two steps along the six-or-eight-step path to bringing a weapon into dangerous contact with a tempting target may not warrant suspi-

4. We could make a similar list for use of the mail to deliver anthrax.

cion, taking three or four steps along that path may be very suspicious. With computer technology, the United States can combine information obtained from monitoring anyone seeking access to potentially dangerous resources and potentially tempting targets and identify those unlikely to be engaged in an innocent activity. By combining that information and then assessing the package, the United States can develop a picture that might justify either denying access or further investigation of the suspicious person and of any others or any organization with whom he is closely associated.

The role of foreign governments at this stage is likely to be mainly in helping to produce a thorough list of suspects. The target, by my assumption, is in the United States, so access must be obtained by the terrorists here. It will generally be far riskier to try to import the necessary resources for attacking it than to acquire them within the United States.

The limits of U.S. ability to weaken or defeat a campaign of terrorism by controlling access to targets and to needed information and resources are important and perhaps not obvious. The resources (even explosives) and the needed information (often available on the internet) are now freely available in the United States. The Congress would have to pass something comparable to the Brady Law to monitor purchases of particular weapons or particular explosives and perhaps some form of marker to let authorities know when explosives were near a target. But dangerous possibilities for evasion would remain; and even a rudimentary effort to limit information about how to make or use explosives or other weapons may be constrained by the First Amendment to the Constitution or defeated by the internet.

There are two extremely troublesome problems in any effort to deny access to targets and resources. First, there is the problem of "fresh faces" about whom no one—not the United States or its allies—have information suggesting terrorist leanings. The number of such fresh faces may be very large. Second, those on the defensive often do not know what targets to protect and what resources to deny. The United States can and does tightly control access to a relatively small percentage of its many attractive targets, but there are far too many to rigorously limit access to every target whose loss might have a major effect on feelings of security in the United States. Similarly, there are a large number of resources that might be useful in a terrorist attack, many more than one could sensibly monitor.

The result is that the United States can be prepared for attacks on certain targets (e.g., the White House) or types of targets (e.g., reservoirs), and it can attempt to control access to certain types of dangerous resources (commercial airliners filled with fuel). But it cannot even monitor access to all targets and all

destructive resources, let alone deny or limit access to those persons who are demonstrably safe. So those charged with the security of United States must guess. They have to choose the targets they want most to protect and also choose the targets that may be most attractive to terrorists, designing access controls to these two sets of targets. They also have to guess at the most dangerous resources or the ones most easily used by terrorists and try to control access to these.

The inability to identify the dangerous resources to which terrorists want access is somewhat less of a problem with regard to the most dangerous forms of terrorism: the use of biological or nuclear weapons. Only a relatively few places in the world (mostly seventeen states) have the skills necessary to develop a biological weapon or the radioactive material necessary to develop a nuclear weapon. The United States should and does monitor the latter. It must also monitor and regulate any access to the information, skills, and resources necessary to make a biological weapon. Its failure in this regard helps to explain the difficulty that the United States has had in finding those responsible for mailing anthrax.

The importance is great enough for the United States to treat any state that refuses the monitoring as itself a suspect. But that requires the United States to accept monitoring on its territory, which it has not yet done with regard to chemical and biological weapons. By international treaty the nations of the world can and should also make any private or state cooperation in furnishing skills or resources to someone known to be making a nuclear, chemical, or biological weapon a universal crime (i.e., an act punishable in every nation in the world regardless of where it occurred).

The United States does not presently have a domestic organization with the skills, training, or inclination to address these questions of prevention. Even if it did, it would still have to recognize that the price of access controls will be substantial inconvenience, such as waiting in line at airports; that asking guards or businesses to find a needle of suspicion in a haystack of legitimate access to targets and resources is complicated by the inherent boredom of the task; and that simplifying the problem involves a dangerous trade-off of the many risks of ethnic profiling for more convenience to most Americans.

The problem of denying access to resources for a terrorist attack changes radically if the needed resources are being provided by another nation—for example, one of the seventeen or so with biological weapons programs. State support for a campaign of terrorism against the United States by providing

skills, resources, technical information, and even help in entering the country and getting to the target poses special risks but also offers special opportunities.

The capacity of the terrorist organization is likely to be vastly increased by this support. At the same time, the likelihood that the United States can learn of the support and therefore deter the state supporter and the terrorist group that relies on that support is also increased. The United States has massive military force, conventional and unconventional. Every nation has the right, under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, to act in self-defense unless and until the Security Council acts. Deterring a state that provides resources to those planning terrorist attacks against another nation is well within Article 51 and the precedents that the United States created in military responses to attacks secretly supported by Libya, Iraq, and now Afghanistan.

Organizational Capability and Secrecy

To mount a sustained terrorist campaign against the United States, more than four or five or even twenty individuals are necessary. There has to be a relatively sizable ongoing organization to raise money, recruit, train, establish contacts for help with resources and skills, choose targets for maximum impact, and so on. The small operational cells for such an organization, al-Qaeda, were able to work in the United States for some years prior to September 11, 2001. It is in fact very difficult for a law enforcement or internal security agency to detect the activities of small numbers of people, even if they are illegally within the United States.

STEPS ABROAD

Despite this difficulty, the mass of the organization, al-Qaeda, was detectable and its general location—that it was based in Afghanistan—was easily discovered. The final requirement for terrorists to mount a sustained campaign from abroad against the United States is that they be able to build and maintain for sustained periods a significant organization abroad despite the efforts of law enforcement and internal security agencies in the states where the organization is located.

That capacity may depend on the host state's tolerance of the organization's activities, as in the case of Afghanistan. The U.S. response to open tolerance of those preparing to attack its territory should be severe military, diplomatic, or economic sanctions against the haven.

But to prevent the terrorist organization from operating, the host state would have to do far more than deny or hide open support. It would also have to use its domestic intelligence and law enforcement capacities to find and punish the terrorists. The more undemocratic—the more despotic—the state, the more likely these capacities will be adequate for the job, because intelligence agents will already have been trained to protect the undemocratic government against its challengers. Fortunately, it is in such despotic states that al-Qaeda finds most of its supporters and its havens. Unfortunately, such states generate substantial and threatening dissident movements and are understandably reluctant to enflame them by opposing their hostility to the West.

The critical question thus is: What limits does the United States face in compelling this extremely valuable support? For the internal security tasks are *not* ones the United States could carry out itself. It could demand access for investigators or even military forces to help conduct law enforcement operations in Iran, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Sudan, or Afghanistan. But these states are highly unlikely to agree to that sacrifice of sovereignty. Even Saudi Arabia would not allow the FBI to freely investigate the 1996 bombing of the Khobar Towers. Even if all agreed, moreover, the capacity of U.S. agents to find terrorists in an unfriendly setting, without taking over the country and mounting a costly and repressive occupation, is likely to be very low indeed.

Even if the United States located and captured terrorist leaders, it would remain difficult to try them and prove personal guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. For this reason the United States declined efforts to try the Palestine Liberation Front leader, Mohammed Abbas (Abu Abbas), for the seizure of the *Achille Lauro* and, in 1996, Osama bin Laden for his terrorist efforts. Assassination of a leader may create in the terrorist group a vacuum of leadership or demoralization or a harmful conflict over new leadership. But it also threatens retaliatory efforts (such as Israel experienced with the October 2001 assassination of its minister of transportation), the recruitment benefits of martyrdom, and the profound embarrassment of mistaken identity.

So the United States will have to rely on the efforts of law enforcement and internal security forces of states where the terrorist organization is operating. Careful analysis suggest that threats alone will be inadequate to create reliable cooperation. Some states will lack the competence to really help, and states that do not believe in the cause will make efforts too half-hearted to be effective but real enough to be indistinguishable from sanctionable incompetence. And there is little the United States will be able to do when a state, where

terrorists may be planning attacks, plausibly claims that it cannot find them. Greece's leading terrorist organization has operated in Greece against the United States for decades without "detection" by the Greek government.

In sum, all that the United States can accomplish by threat of military force or other sanctions is to end state support or tolerance of terrorism where it is available and open or where it is likely to be discovered. That will not prevent secret support or tolerance, which may continue but in a carefully concealed form, as many believe happened after the United States bombed Libya in 1985 in retaliation for its terrorism against American soldiers at a disco in Berlin. Similarly, our intelligence suspected, but could not prove until after the fall of the communist states in Eastern Europe, that these states were providing support for various terrorist groups in the West. That concealed support can continue at least as long as the host state (such as Greece today) can pretend to be unable to locate, let alone control, the terrorist organization. For, in the absence of proof of bad faith, any U.S. military response will threaten the continued support of coalition partners and cause widespread suspicion of injustice within the United States and abroad.

With feigned good faith an effective reply to military threats, the best bet—one that the U.S. government is presently pursuing—is a combination of military threat, economic or political inducements, and a moral campaign against terrorism. To win the sincere cooperation of states, where terrorist organizations are located, in using their internal security and law enforcement forces, the United States will have to form mutually beneficial alliances as well as make a persuasive ideological case against terrorism wherever it takes place and whomever it targets, not just terrorism targeted at the United States. The former will require rewards as well as threats. The latter will require abandoning support for groups that are attacking civilians in any country whose enthusiastic support the United States wants in tracking down terrorist organizations. The case made will have to be that terrorists are no one's "freedom fighters."

Even if the United States can coax or coerce the full support of a state where an organization such as al-Qaeda is located, that may not end the threat. Terrorist organizations whose support by one state has been withdrawn may find alternative support in another state that is unrelentingly hostile to the United States and prepared to bear the consequences. Iraq and Sudan come quickly to mind as possible hosts. And not to be forgotten, the terrorist organization may be able to operate despite good faith efforts to eliminate it by the state where it is located. After all, even the British could not disable the IRA during its most

dangerous years and U.S. authorities have yet to apprehend Eric Rudolph, charged with three domestic bombings. Like organized crime, a terrorist group may be able to survive the most steely of state opposition.

PENETRATION OF TERRORIST SECRECY IN THE UNITED STATES

The task of defeating secrecy takes place in the United States, where the terrorist event occurs, as well as abroad, where the terrorist organization is housed. As discussed above, penetrating its secrecy abroad requires the coaxed or coerced cooperation of the haven country and its vigorous use of intelligence capacities going far beyond what many democratic states would tolerate from their governments. Effectively keeping tabs on the small part of the organization that is operating in the United States may be far more difficult.

The core difficulty lies in the *initial* detection of a dangerous group worth following. Once such a group is detected most nations, including the United States, have a range of devices for learning about the activities of the group. That includes not only informants and undercover government agents but also electronic surveillance, highly sophisticated physical surveillance, and more. Government surveillance powers are somewhat greater, and available resources are far greater, in combating international terrorism than in pursuing crime. The great difficulty is in detection of a dangerous group in the first place without massive and constant spying on all citizens.

Within the United States, the presence of a dangerous individual or group may be revealed by information about its activities from a foreign intelligence or law enforcement agency. The United States learned of the presence within its borders of Mohammed Atta, apparent leader of the September 11 attacks, months earlier. A state can also learn of a terrorist presence by simply matching a master list of suspected terrorists against information as to who is entering the country or who is in particularly dangerous locations or who is purchasing particularly dangerous materials. The first is made far more difficult by the ease of illegal entry from Canada or Mexico combined with the ease of entry—legally or illegally—into those countries.

But what about “new faces” without terrorist records? The United States can also learn of the presence of dangerous groups by detecting activities that only members of such a group are likely to undertake. Certain fermenting equipment would be an unlikely purchase by anyone other than either the operator of a brewery or someone considering biological terrorism with anthrax. Simple checks could place purchasers in one category or the other. Although the use of

different people or false identity papers to make different purchases is an obvious way for terrorists to avoid detection while purchasing ingredients that might be monitored, looking for linkages among the locations of purchases or the mode of payment may help.

Two types of reward have worked to obtain the initial level of suspicion necessary to justify further spying. Large and well-advertised financial rewards, sometimes accompanied by the protection of being admitted to the United States, have led to revelations about terrorists. Ramzi Yousef, the mastermind of the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993 and the author of a plan to simultaneously attack a number of U.S. airliners crossing the Pacific, was caught by using offers of rewards on matchbooks. Alternatively, people arrested know that they can reduce their sentence or even obtain immunity by revealing information about far more serious past crimes or future dangers. Terrorism plainly qualifies. Both of these systems of rewards need better advertising.

Conclusion

I have argued that with a predominant goal of reestablishing citizen safety and a feeling of security, the dangers of the present situation warrant considering even quite costly alternatives. Then, I have tried to show how one can generate, and crudely assess, a list of alternatives to be considered by the United States in dealing with a serious danger of an organized campaign of terrorism based abroad.

The result of this exercise is a moderately optimistic conclusion. It is likely that, at low cost to its citizens, the United States can threaten damage and offer incentives that more than offset the benefits to almost any state of harboring terrorists. And the states that harbor terrorists have the capacity, in the form of internal security forces, to prevent sustained terrorist campaigns against the United States. The critical step may be to help diminish dangers to life and political power that result from pursuing enemies. Beyond that, some effective steps can be taken at home, even in the short term and even with the small-cell structure the terrorists will use in the target country.

Deciding what precisely to do requires more than recognizing trade-offs and competition among the items on a list of what could be done to discourage terrorism. Not every harboring state and not every terrorist group will behave in a uniform way. The alternatives have to be considered in the far more detailed

context of a particular terrorist threat: its leadership, capacities, beliefs, culture, alliances with states and other organizations, and so on.

The final step—deciding on a portfolio of actions and a theme to unify and reassure Americans and recruit allies—depends on also addressing intangible as well as tangible costs. In a very deep way national values will be revealed, and altered, by the choices made in dealing with the dangers of terrorism.