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Terrorism abroad, Terrorism at home: How serious is the U.S. domestic threat?

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Introduction

We often associate the events of 9/11 with terrorism in the United States. However, the U.S., in the homeland and abroad have long been the victims of domestic and international terrorism. Prior to 9/11, terrorism was not a part of our daily vocabulary or part of our daily news. Children born today will more than likely not know a life or vocabulary with social media and terrorism. Social media and terrorism? Through the use of social media terrorist groups such as ISIS have taken on a campaign of subversion to elicit interest from vulnerable populations, most commonly teenagers in a worldwide recruitment campaign. Recent breaking news reports often highlight stories of the progress of ISIS on the battlefield, their impact on the economy, their impact on homeland security, in addition to stories of misguided U.S. and foreign youth traveling abroad to join the plight of ISIS. This research discusses the terrorism abroad and in the U.S., drawing attention to how safe are our teenagers and how safe are we as a nation. The intent is to create an open forum to discuss the U.S. readiness to respond to and recover from terrorists attacks.

Discussion

As stated in the introduction, most U.S. citizens relate the start of terrorism to 9/11. However, terrorist activities dates back hundreds of years in the U.S. and abroad. However, in the past two decades, the U.S. has become the most notable target of international terrorist groups, as well as a number of domestic terrorist. Although attacks on the U.S., domestic and abroad, are infrequent, the rise of many groups are due to their dislike for the westernization of non-U.S. countries. The time between attacks against the U.S. is usually consumed with the very careful planning and training for the next attack.

Terrorists have demonstrated great ability adapting to new techniques and methods of counter-terror agencies and intelligence organizations over the long term. Additionally, terrorists have more and more adapted to the use of new technologies, and adapt existing ones to their uses. The debate over privacy of computer data was largely spurred by the specter of terrorists planning and communicating with encrypted data beyond law enforcement's ability to intercept or decode this data (Terrorism Research, n.d.).

Due to the increase in information outlets, and competition with increasing numbers of other messages, terrorism now requires a greatly increased amount of violence or novelty to attract the attention it requires. The tendency of major media to compete for ratings and the subsequent revenue realized from increases in their audience size and share produces pressures on terrorists to increase the impact and violence of their actions to take advantage of this sensationalism (Terrorism Research, n.d.)

Islamic State a.k.a. ISIS

The group originated as Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad in 1999. This group was the forerunner of Tanzim Qaidat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn, commonly known as Al-Qaeda. In April 2013, the group changed its name to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. It grew significantly under the leadership of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. There are many foreign fighters in ISIL's ranks. In June 2014, The Economist reported that "ISIS may have up to 6,000 fighters in Iraq and 3,000–5,000 in Syria, including perhaps 3,000 foreigners; nearly a thousand are reported to hail from Chechnya and perhaps 500 or so more from France, Britain and elsewhere in Europe" (The Economist, 2014).

Recently in the news, there have been reports of at least 4 U.S. teenagers attempting to leave the U.S. for Turkey and cross the border to join ISIS. These teenagers are being recruited via outlets such as twitter, Facebook and Snapchat. Once recruited, ISIS makes all travel arrangements. Do you know who your child is communicating with online?

U.S. Terrorist Attacks in the Past 100 years

- **2013 - April 15, Boston, Marathon Bombing**
Multiple bombs explode near the finish line of the Boston Marathon. Two bombs go off around 2:50 in the afternoon as runners finish the race. Three people are killed. One is an eight year old boy. More than 260 people are injured.
- **2010—Times Square Bombing Attempt**
A car bomb—filled with propane tanks, fertilizer, gasoline, and firecrackers—failed to ignite in Times Square.
- **2009—Fort Hood Shooting**
Nidal Malik Hasan, a 39-year-old Army psychiatrist, killed 13 and injured 30 in a shooting at an Army base in Fort Hood, Texas.
- **2002—The Beltway Sniper**
John Allen Muhammad and Lee Boyd Malvo terrorize the D.C.-beltway area, taking shots at people from the modified trunk of a Chevrolet Caprice sedan.
- **2001—9/11**
The deadliest terrorist attack in U.S. history. Nearly 3000 people died.
- **1996 – Khobar Towers Bombing**
June 25, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia: truck bomb exploded outside Khobar Towers military complex, killing 19 American servicemen and injuring hundreds of others. 13 Saudis and a Lebanese, all alleged members of Islamic militant group Hezbollah, were indicted on charges relating to the attack in June 2001.
- **1995—Oklahoma City Bombing**
Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols killed 168 and injured more than 600 people when he exploded a car bomb in the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City.
- **1993—The First World Trade Center Bombing**
Ramzi Yousef, a member of al Qaeda and nephew of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, loaded a truck bomb into the parking garage below Tower 1 of the World Trade Center.
- **1983 – Bombings against U.S. interests Abroad**
April 18, Beirut, Lebanon: U.S. embassy destroyed in suicide car-bomb attack; 63 dead, including 17 Americans. The Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility.
Oct. 23, Beirut, Lebanon: Shiite suicide bombers exploded truck near U.S. military barracks at Beirut airport, killing 241 marines. Minutes later a second bomb killed 58 French paratroopers in their barracks in West Beirut.
Dec. 12, Kuwait City, Kuwait: Shiite truck bombers attacked the U.S. embassy and other targets, killing 5 and injuring 80.
- **1920 – Wall Street Bombing**
Sept. 16, New York City: TNT bomb planted in unattended horse-drawn wagon exploded on Wall Street opposite House of Morgan, killing 35 people and injuring hundreds more. Bolshevik or anarchist terrorists believed responsible
(InfoPlease, 2014)

Pandemic Threats

A pandemic is an epidemic that spreads throughout the world, as influenza did in 1918. Pandemics may involve an old disease, such as smallpox or the bubonic plague, or they may occur when a new disease or a new form of an old disease develops and spreads. If the source of the pandemic is a new virulent pathogen or a new form of an old virulent pathogen, very few people, if any, may be resistant to the disease, and the rates of illness and death may be high around the world, unless effective prevention strategies can be rapidly developed and implemented.

In the past decade, the United States has experienced two major pandemics, the H1N1 virus, and three documented cases of Ebola in the U.S. (CDC, 2014). Although there seems to be adequate planning and a recovery process for the H1N1 virus, the U.S. recently experienced that we are in no way prepared for an Ebola outbreak in the U.S.

A question to ponder: Could ISIS rebels begin to use humans to spread the Ebola virus abroad?

Conclusions

As stated in the abstract, this is an open forum to gather public opinion on the United States posture of readiness to plan for, respond to, and recover from natural / man-made disasters and pandemics.

Rather than provide a conclusion, I invite you to include your conclusion in the space below.

Draw your Conclusion

Is the U.S. prepared for the Ebola pandemic or subsequent pandemics, why or why not?

Is the U.S. prepared to respond to a major terrorist attack on the U.S. domestically or abroad, why or why not?

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