



Center for Strategic & International Studies
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Homeland Security and Counter Terrorism

**A Dialogue with Otto Schily
Federal Interior Minister of Germany**

June 13, 2003

On June 13, 2003 the CSIS Transnational Threats Initiative hosted Germany's Federal Interior Minister, Otto Schily. Minister Schily led a panel of counter-terrorism experts from the German government to discuss Germany's role in counter-terrorism in Europe and around the world. The panel included Hans-Josef Beth, Director for Terrorism and Organized Crime in the German Intelligence Service; Bernard Falk, Vice President of the Federal Criminal Office; Dr. Udo Helmbrecht, President of the Federal Agency for Cyber Security; and Gerhard Schindler, head of the Directorate for Counter-Terrorism.

Otto Schily was appointed Federal Interior Minister of Germany in 1998 under Gerhard Schroeder's coalition government. Schily began his political activities as a radical in the German Anti-Establishment Movement of the 1970s and in 1980 helped establish Germany's Green Party. At odds with fundamentalist members of the party, Minister Schily departed in 1989 and joined the SPD. Today Minister Schily has aggressively pursued a counter-terrorism initiative, spearheading a program to develop a European riot police force to meet violence in the changing security environment. Otto Schily is well known for his efforts to eliminate terrorist support networks.

The Minister's discussion highlighted losses inflicted on terror groups under the international anti-terrorism coalition's efforts thus far. He also noted that both the successes and shortcomings of the effort were evident in the recent Al-Qaeda strikes in Saudi Arabia and Morocco. Minister Schily emphasized that the attacks were not of the same magnitude as some of those seen in the past, and are therefore representative of successful efforts to uproot and destroy terror organizations. He also recognizes that as terrorists adapt to counter-terrorism strategies, they will become more difficult to detect. For this reason, terrorists must be caught or eliminated before they have a chance to execute rather than have states react after an attack takes place.

The panel also stressed the need for strong reconstruction efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, reminding the audience that Germany's priorities are exemplified by the level of manpower it committed to Afghanistan to assist in rebuilding the post-Taliban state. This view is not only a reflection of Germany's willingness to partner with the United States, but also an act that is representative of Germany's support of reconstruction in Iraq.

In addition to current international counter-terrorism initiatives, Minister Schily looked ahead, stressing the importance of adapting "counter-terrorism" activities. Specifically, Minister Schily believes that counter-terrorism must include efforts to eliminate the educational framework at the root of Islamic extremism. The war on terrorism should not be limited to war against terrorists, but also recognize that extremism is often fostered through education dominated by Islamists. The driving beliefs manifest themselves from political and religious teachings born of extremist Islamic clergy and literature. These religious figures are creating an educational environment that will cultivate the types of hatred and Islamism driving Muslims toward terrorism.