

## COMMENTARY

**Analysis of the National Counterterrorism Center Annual Report on Terrorism**

David Heyman

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Despite local and international efforts, the number of attacks worldwide have remained constant and still up sharply since 2005. The lethality—the ability to kill or injure people—however, has gone up by about 10 percent. This likely reflects that terrorists are adopting more powerful technology for making bombs and are becoming better at targeting—that is, a better ability for attackers to get closer to and blend in among their victims.

Al Qaeda has become operationally diminished, but it has stepped up its public relations campaign significantly and is seeking to expand its ideological influence through what its followers say, not what they do.

In terms of tactics, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) are the weapon of choice for terrorists. This should be a reminder to the U.S. officials responsible for developing federal plans for dealing with possible IED attacks—plans that are now months and months overdue.

In 2007, we saw the introduction of toxic chemicals, particularly chlorine, into IED attacks in Iraq. This is a heads up for other countries, as Iraq is the single-largest training facility for “foreign fighters” who travel to Iraq to gain operational experience and learn new tactics that they then can take back to their home countries.

Around the world, by and large, the victims of terrorism are primarily Muslims. Well over 50 percent of victims in 2007 were Muslims, most of these in Iraq.

This is an international problem. Even excluding the war zones of Iraq and Afghanistan, last year nearly 5,000 people were killed or wounded by terrorist attacks in India and Pakistan—numbers that approach what the United States experienced on 9/11.

*David Heyman directs the Homeland Security Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C.*

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