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SYSTEM II

THE WHITE HOUSE

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WASHINGTON

January 20, 1986

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National Security
Decision Directive Number 207

THE NATIONAL PROGRAM FOR COMBATting TERRORISM (A)

The Vice President's Task Force on Combatting Terrorism has completed an in-depth review of our current policies, capabilities, and resources for dealing with the terrorist threat. I have reviewed the Task Force Report and accompanying recommendations and concluded that our strategy is sound. I have determined that we must enhance our ability to confront this threat and to do so without compromising our basic democratic and human values. (A)

Terrorists undertake criminal acts that involve the use or threat of violence against innocent persons. These acts are premeditated, intended to achieve a political objective through coercion or intimidation of an audience beyond the immediate victims. U.S. citizens and installations, especially abroad, are increasingly being targeted for terrorist acts. Our policy, programs and responses must be effective in ameliorating this threat to our people, property and interests. (A)

Policy

U.S. policy on terrorism is unequivocal: firm opposition to terrorism in all its forms whether it is domestic terrorism perpetrated within U.S. territory, or international terrorism conducted inside or outside U.S. territory by foreign nationals or groups. The policy is based upon the conviction that to accede to terrorist demands places more American citizens at risk. This no-concessions policy is the best way of protecting the greatest number of people and ensuring their safety. At the same time, every available resource will be used to gain the safe return of American citizens who are held hostage by terrorists. (A)

The U.S. Government considers the practice of terrorism by any person or group a potential threat to our national security and will resist the use of terrorism by all legal means available. The United States is opposed to domestic and international terrorism and is prepared to act in concert with other nations or unilaterally when necessary to prevent or respond to terrorist acts. (A)

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Partially Declassified/Released on 11/21/92
under provisions of E.O. 12958
by S. Tilly, National Security Council

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States that practice terrorism or actively support it, will not be allowed to do so without consequence. Whenever we have evidence that a state is mounting or intends to conduct an act of terrorism against us, we have a responsibility to take measures to protect our citizens, property, and interests. The USG will pay no ransoms, nor permit releases of prisoners or agree to other conditions that could serve to encourage additional terrorism. We will make no changes in our policy because of terrorist threats or acts. The United States is determined to act against terrorists without surrendering basic freedoms or endangering democratic principles. We oppose asylum, sanctuary, or safehaven for terrorists and will make every legal effort to extradite and prosecute terrorists. The USG encourages other governments to take similar strong stands against terrorism. ✕

The National Program

The national program to combat terrorism is designed to provide coordinated action before, during, and after terrorist incidents. Our program includes measures to deter, resolve and, when necessary, respond proportionately to terrorist attacks. The implementation of this strategy requires an organization compatible with the overall structure of the U.S. Government, and relies on the authorities and responsibilities of the various departments and agencies. ✕

The coordination of the Federal response to terrorist incidents will normally be the responsibility of the Lead Agency. The Lead Agency will be that agency with the most direct operational role in and responsibility for dealing with the particular terrorist incident at hand. The Lead Agency will coordinate all operational aspects of the incident, including press and intelligence. The Lead Agency will normally be designated as follows:


- The Department of State for international terrorist incidents that take place outside of U.S. territory. ✕
- The Department of Justice for terrorist incidents that take place within U.S. territory. Unless otherwise specified by the Attorney General, the FBI will be the Lead Agency within the Department of Justice for operational response to such incidents. ✕
- The FAA for aircraft hijackings within the special jurisdiction of the United States. ✕

The Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs will resolve any uncertainty on the designation of the Lead Agency or on agency responsibilities. ✕

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The entire range of diplomatic, economic, legal, military, paramilitary, covert action, and informational assets at our disposal must be brought to bear against terrorism. To ensure that these measures are fully integrated and mutually supportive, the following interagency groups will assist the Lead Agencies in the coordination of our national program to combat terrorism. ~~AS~~

1. The Terrorist Incident Working Group (TIWG). To support the Special Situation Group (SSG -- see NSDD-3 and NSDD-30) during a terrorist incident, a Terrorist Incident Working Group has been established. This group consists of representatives from State, Treasury, DOD, Justice, CIA, JCS, FBI, the Office of the Vice President, and the NSC staff, with augmentation from other agencies as required. The TIWG will be activated by the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs or at the request of any of the members. The NSC staff will provide a senior representative to chair the TIWG, and a staff member to serve as the Executive Director of the TIWG and chair the Operations Sub-Group (OSG) of the TIWG to review ongoing non-crisis operations/activities. The TIWG will normally remain convened for the duration of a terrorist incident. The Ambassador-at-Large for Counter-Terrorism will serve as the Vice Chairman of the TIWG. ~~AS~~
2. The Interdepartmental Group on Terrorism (IG/T). The Interdepartmental Group on Terrorism, chaired by the Ambassador-at-Large for Counter-Terrorism, is responsible for the development of overall U.S. policy on terrorism, including, inter alia, policy directives, organizational issues, legislative initiatives, interagency training activities, coordinated budget/programs, and policy direction of the Anti-Terrorism Assistance Program. Membership will include all departments and agencies supporting the national program to combat terrorism. Vice Chairmen of the IG/T will be the Department of Justice and the Executive Director of the TIWG. ~~AS~~
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Extracts from pages 4-9

Expand State Department's outreach program to hostage families.

Continue efforts to enlist international cooperation in combatting terrorism through both bilateral and multilateral agreements.

Continue a dialogue with media representatives to obtain support for denying terrorists the visibility they seek.

Provide, in conjunction with the Department of Justice, more extensive publicity regarding the terrorist reward program in order to more effectively integrate it into the overall counterterrorism (CT) effort.

Prepare and encourage enactment of legislation that makes the murder of U.S. citizens abroad a Federal crime.

Pursue enactment of legislation that permits the death penalty for the murder of U.S. citizens during a hostage-taking.

Pursue enactment of legislation establishing a Joint Committee on Intelligence (the Hyde proposal).

Provide coordinated public affairs/Congressional guidance to all departments/agencies involved in resolving a terrorist incident.

Stimulate private and academic initiatives addressing the relationship between terrorism and the domestic and international legal systems.

Review the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and determine whether terrorist movements or organizations are abusing its provisions.

Ensure that training and support of terrorists at so-called mercenary camps in the United States are not permitted under U.S. law.

Complete review of the proposal to enhance Federal jurisdiction over domestic terrorist incidents.

The Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs shall review progress made on the implementation of this directive and report the results to me by July 1, 1986.

EXCISED COPY FOLLOWS

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Partially Declassified/Released on May 8, 1989
under provisions of E.O. 12356
by G. Philip Hughes, National Security Council

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Partial text of
NSDD 207

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