

HOLY TERROR: THINKING THE UNTHINKABLE

Revisiting *Terror 2000*, the 1994 SO/LIC Report

**Delivered by Dr. Marvin Cetron,
President, Forecasting International
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Introduction

Forecasting International (FI) is in the business of foretelling the future. Therefore, let us begin with a few of the easiest and least welcome predictions that FI has ever made.

- Terrorist events will be more common and bloody in the years ahead than they have been to date. September 11 will prove to have been no more than a taste of things to come.
- Al Qaeda, often under other names, will grow much larger and more dangerous than the band of fanatics that attacked the Pentagon and the World Trade Center almost five years ago. This process already is well under way.
- The Muslim extremist movement will acquire nuclear weapons within the next ten years, if it does not possess them already.
- As things stand, the war on terror will drag on for decades with many tactical successes but little or no strategic benefit. In the long run, this could leave us facing choices even more horrific than the attacks themselves.

The remainder of this paper will be devoted to explaining these forecasts and to examining the prospects for changing them. Finding some way to change the obvious direction of the war on terror is the single greatest need that faces the United States today.

Background

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, came as a horrifying wake-up call for millions of Americans and their sympathizers around the world. For the first time since the War of 1812, foreign attackers had carried out a major assault on the United States mainland. For the first time since Pearl Harbor, thousands of Americans had been killed without warning.

Yet if this unexpected slaughter was shocking in itself, the differences between 9/11 and previous acts of war were in some ways even more disturbing. The attack on Pearl Harbor was aimed at a military base; of the 2,403 people who died on December 7, 1941, only 68 were civilians. In contrast, nearly all of the victims on 9/11 were private citizens going about their daily lives, and that clearly was what the terrorists intended. Previous attacks—with the exception of Pancho Villa's forgotten raids across the Mexican border—had been carried out by governments that could be identified and punished. The men and women who died at the World Trade Towers and the Pentagon were the victims of a shadowy band of religiously inspired fanatics who were largely unknown to the American

public and who, it soon became clear, would be extremely hard to punish, discourage, or even find. Terrorism, it seemed, was a phenomenon Americans would have to learn to live with for many years to come. There was no obvious way to defend against it.

However, not everyone was entirely surprised by the assault. Every major aspect of the September 11 attack had been anticipated in a report called *Terror 2000: The Future Face of Terrorism*, written in 1994. It was the product of a study carried out as part of the Fourth Annual Defense Worldwide Combatting Terrorism Conference, sponsored by SO/LIC and managed by Peter Probst, then on staff at SO/LIC. Probst was a pioneer in the study of terrorism at DoD and the CIA and, as a private consultant, continues to be a leader in the field. Acting for SO/LIC, Probst contracted with Forecasting International to help manage the conference and to carry out the *Terror 2000* study. His contributions to the study itself were so extensive that, had the report been released publicly, Probst would have been listed as co-author.

The common wisdom then held that terrorism was quickly becoming obsolete, as rogue states learned that sponsoring terrorist attacks cost far more than any possible benefit was worth. Sponsorship of the Lockerbie bombing had subjected Libya to an air and arms embargo, a ban on some needed oil equipment, and the loss of financial assets. Iraq, long a patron of terrorism, had finally exhausted the world's patience by invading Kuwait and lost a precedent-setting war to a broad coalition of foreign powers led, but by no means dominated, by the United States. With those lessons in mind, no state would be likely to sponsor future terrorist acts, and without that support terrorism itself would dry up.

The authors of *Terror 2000* saw it differently. Terrorism, they said, would grow more common, not less so. It would not be sponsored by states, but increasingly by Muslim extremists motivated by a bitter hatred of the West in general and America in particular. And it would be designed to cause bloodshed on a level never before seen, even at the cost of the terrorists' own death.

Some specific forecasts anticipated the September 11 attack with almost uncanny accuracy. The participants foresaw the execution of a second, much more successful, attack on the World Trade Towers; the accomplishment of simultaneous assaults on widely separated targets (also seen in the embassy bombings of 1998); and the deliberate crash of an airplane into the Pentagon. (That last was removed from the report for fear that it would give terrorists a valuable idea they had not already conceived on their own.)

Terror 2000 was the end product of a study carried out by Forecasting International for the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict (SO/LIC). Although that report is now more than a decade old, it still offers useful lessons for the present and future war on

terror. It is used in the curricula of the National War Collage, all three service academies, and their counterparts in a number of other countries.

Many of the analyses and recommendations originating in *Terror 2000* have been adopted with little change in later studies of terrorism. The reports of both the Commission on National Security (the Bremer Commission) in 1998 and the National Commission on Terrorism (the Rudman Commission) in 2000 relied heavily on our work. Even the 9/11 Commission used substantial portions of these three studies, including many that first appeared in the *Terror 2000* report.

Despite this, the lessons from *Terror 2000* have yet to be completely absorbed. Many of our recommendations have been implemented only in part, if at all. And some of the thinking that shaped the study, but then did not seem to merit inclusion in the final report, has since emerged as crucial to our understanding of the dangers the United States faces now, and will face in the years to come.

In its day, the *Terror 2000* project was one of the most extensive studies of terrorism ever undertaken. It also was one of the most unusual, due to a combination of resources pioneered by FI.

Like other studies, it involved leading experts in its subject area. Among these were Ambassador Paul Bremer of Kissinger Associates, formerly Ambassador-at-Large for Counter-Terrorism and more recently Administrator of Iraq from 2003 to 2004; Dr. Brian Jenkins, then with Kroll Associates and now senior vice president at the RAND Corporation; Dr. Bruce Hoffman, of the RAND Corporation; Dr. Paul Wilkinson, of the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, a leading advisor in the anti-IRA campaign; Dr. Yigal Carmon, counterterrorism advisor to two Israeli Prime Ministers; and even Maj. Gen. Oleg Kalugin (Ret.), who as head of the Soviet KGB foreign counterintelligence directorate had recruited, trained, funded, and managed some of the most dangerous terrorists of the 1970s and '80s; and of course Peter Probst, who brought his own expertise to the project.

However, it was a second group of advisors that made the study unique. They were professional forecasters. Few had ever considered terrorism before; their expertise was in identifying trends, regardless of subject, and figuring out where they would lead. These included Dr. Clement Bezold, of the Institute for Alternative Futures; Edward Cornish, then president of the World Future Society; Dr. Jean Johnson, of the National Science Foundation; and Dr. Vary Coates, head of the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment.

The combination of forecasting generalists with terrorism specialists proved, as we have seen, to be remarkably productive. The forecasters provided many ideas that did not fit within the specialists' experience. These included new issues that might inspire terrorism, new methods of attack, potential targets, and many similar items. The specialists in turn kept the forecasters grounded in

reality. They accepted some of the forecasters' ideas, rejected some as being too implausible, and elaborated on others, seeing implications that could not be recognized without their knowledge of the subject. A few ideas were rejected by the specialists, but were so strongly supported by the forecasters that they were included in the report despite the objections. The future importance of terrorism by Muslim extremists was one such case.

Terror 2000 was not just a theoretical study. It made specific recommendations for combating the growing threat, from hardening American facilities abroad to improving intelligence collection, particularly HUMINT, and rebuilding the "area studies" think tanks that were abandoned after the end of the Cold War. In retrospect, it seems fair to suggest that Al Qaeda would have found it much more difficult to strike at the United States if these and other suggestions had been implemented.

It was not to be. As the report was nearing completion, the Interagency Group headed by Ambassador Barbara Bodine, then Acting Coordinator for Counter-Terrorism, objected to its distribution. Bodine feared that a chapter titled "Holy Terror," which forecast dramatic growth in religiously and culturally motivated terrorism by Muslims, would undermine American relationships with the oil producing countries of the Middle East, and the threat of higher oil prices seemed more immediate and troubling than any possible risk of terrorism. In addition, she believed that little or nothing useful would be accomplished by releasing the report: As Bodine pointed out, in a democracy you can't deal with a crisis until it has become a crisis. In the end, Ambassador Bodine ordered the report shelved, labeled "Unclassified/Government Use Only," halted its planned distribution to the President, Vice President, Cabinet members, and members of Congress. The study was remembered only by a few participants who joined in later studies of the terrorist menace.

Today, terrorism is a crisis, but we still are not dealing with it effectively. It is not even clear that we can do so.

Present Status

It seems that hardly a day goes by without some good news on the counterterrorism front. Saudi Arabia declares that it has all but cleaned out the local Al Qaeda leaders responsible for bombings and murders there. Pakistan ships off yet another "high-level" terrorist for detention at some secret facility run by the United States. In late August 2004, Islamabad stated that it had no fewer than 100,000 government troops on the Afghanistan border, no doubt assuring that Osama bin Laden and Mullah Mohammed Omar would soon be rooted out of whatever cave sheltered them and delivered to American justice. Yet terrorist events large and small are reported with almost equal regularity, not all of them

in Iraq. In the long run, these counterterrorist failures may prove to be more revealing than the reported successes.

Behind those newsworthy scenes, and largely beneath the notice of the American public, more important things are happening, or failing to. Throughout the Muslim world, where future terrorists grow up and find their calling, we are failing to win hearts and minds. In part, that is probably our own fault, for we have gone about the task with extraordinary clumsiness. Yet, it is not at all clear that many of those allegiances are available to be won.

That is bad news, for widespread hostility toward the West will allow Al Qaeda to make a pivotal transition. Today, the terrorists are merely outlaws; they enjoy a base of popular support, but nonetheless remain outside the formal power structure of the Muslim world as it is recognized in other lands. In the next five years, they are likely to become something far more dangerous: legitimate political factions, and even governments, as first Fatah and then Hamas have done in Palestine.

We will take each of these issues in turn.

To Western eyes, the Muslim world appears a strange and exotic place. It is far stranger than it seems. Virtually none of the assumptions that we in the West make about the world and our relationship to it hold true there. Nothing in our experience prepares us to understand what we are dealing with, nor why Muslim extremists are so much more dangerous than Western terrorists such as the Red Brigades and the Baader-Meinhoff Gang of a generation past.

What follows is an attempt to clarify these mysteries. It grows out of some basic insights that FI managed to glean during the *Terror 2000* study. This nascent understanding, which shaped the report but was not included in it, led directly to the belief that 21st-century terrorism would emerge, bloodier than ever, from fundamentalist Islam. We have learned much about Islam since then. Our current, more detailed picture of the Muslim world and mind owes much to the work of Dr. Borik Zadeh and Dr. Stephen M. Millett, at Battelle Institute.

Islam is the second-largest religion in the world today, and probably the fastest growing. There are roughly 1.7 billion Muslims, compared with about 2.1 billion Christians and 900 million Hindus. By 2025, there will be perhaps as many as 2 billion. In Europe and America, Islam is expanding even faster, thanks in part to immigration and in part to high birthrates. There are about 5 million Muslims in the United States and 1,500 mosques. In France, at the current rate of growth, more than half the population will be Muslim within 20 years.

Muslims view Islam as the culmination of the world's great faiths. In their eyes, the Koran is the "fourth book," the most recent revelation from God, supplanting the Torah and the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. The Koran also is the

last divine revelation that humanity will ever receive. In the Muslim worldview, Islam replaces Judaism and Christianity, but will never be replaced itself.

In theory, Islam is the ultimate “big tent.” Mohammed specifically stated that disagreements would arise among his followers, but all could be good Muslims if they adhered to a bare minimum of precepts and practices; submission to the will of Allah in all things, tithing for charity, and making the once-in-a-lifetime trip to Mecca, if possible, complete the list. All else is open to interpretation.

Islam, we are told, is a religion of peace. Non-Muslims are second-class, but they are to be tolerated—unless they show themselves to be enemies of Islam. In fact, this is very much how Arab Sunni Muslims view non-Arab Shiites.

Yet some aspects of the Muslim world seem difficult to reconcile with claims of tolerance and piety. Consider these statistics:

- One-third of Muslims believe that the 9/11 attacks were justified.
- Two-thirds are unshakably convinced that no Muslims were involved in those events.
- Two-thirds believe that the attacks were carried out by the intelligence services of Britain, the United States, or Israel, and perhaps all three, in an attempt to discredit Muslims.
- These beliefs are held, in roughly those proportions, in every country of the Muslim world, at every socioeconomic and educational level.
- In short, two-thirds of the world’s 1.7 billion Muslims, roughly 1 billion people, take it as a matter of faith that the American “war on terror” is no more than a fraud carried out for the purpose of returning them to colonial rule. It did not help that in the initial phases of the Global War on Terror it was referred to as a “Crusade,” a word that Muslims have neither forgotten nor forgiven in more than 700 years.

It is not possible to believe these things within the context of Western thought. Where the European heritage dominates, we cling to reason and evidence. To a greater or lesser degree, we believe that the individual is of supreme importance; as a corollary, we believe in freedom of choice, with relatively few limitations. We regard the world as an uncertain place, but look to the future and see ourselves largely in control of our own destinies. None of these, reason and evidence least of all, supports the Western-conspiracy theory of 9/11 held by a majority of Muslims.

Yet none of these beliefs holds true in the Muslim world. In Islam, the Koran is the fount of all knowledge; directly or by parable, it provides God’s answer for

every question a man can ask. Reason thus is not a guiding principle, but merely a tool in service to the teachings of Allah. And because reason is not supreme, speculation and fantasy are as valid as rational thought. In fact, it is not clear that they are recognized as being fundamentally different from rational thought.

For evidence of this, witness Abdul Kadeer Kahn. Dr. Kahn is renowned in Pakistan as the father of that country's atomic bomb. Trained in England and Germany, he clearly mastered the knowledge of a practical physicist. However, it appears that his conversion to Western rationalism was incomplete. In the 1990s, he published three papers in which he used his knowledge of mathematics to calculate the exact location of Heaven in the universe. He is almost as widely revered for this accomplishment as for giving Muslims nuclear weapons.

Faith, family, and tribe are paramount in the Muslim world; individuals are significant only within this context. Since the teachings of Allah are absolute and detailed—some Muslim scientists can point to verses in the Koran that they believe foretell the existence of televisions and cassette recorders—there is no room for uncertainty in the world. Destiny is to be met with fatalism, the needs of the individual ever secondary to the perceived needs of faith and the extended family, even if the individual must die to serve the greater good. Yet the ever-present history of Islam shows Muslims to be oppressed by colonial rulers. In their own minds, Muslims are perpetual victims.

The recent controversy over cartoons unfavorably depicting Mohammed in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* is a case in point. Interpreted as an attack on Islam, rather than as a commentary on terrorism, the cartoons gave Muslims around the world one more item with which to reinforce their hostility toward the West. Rather than weighing the evidence and considering the meaning of events, as Western tradition encourages, Islam requires only the search for proof of existing beliefs.

Given this context, the notion that Americans or their allies must be responsible for the attacks that brought down the World Trade Towers, slaughtered four airplanes-full of innocent passengers, and killed 125 people at the Pentagon becomes no less than reasonable. In fact, it takes on a certain inevitability. No good Muslim would kill the innocent. Who does that leave but non-Muslims? And which non-Muslims have the most to gain from discrediting Islam? Which have long had troops in Saudi Arabia, home of holy Mecca? Which have invaded Iraq twice in a dozen years? Which desperately want to control Arab oil? The answer presents itself.

It has presented itself again after other terrorist acts. Many Muslims believe that the 2004 slaughter of 168 schoolchildren in Beslan, Chechnya, by Shamil Basayev and his followers was really carried out by Russian forces in an attempt to discredit their Muslim antagonists. So, too, the destruction of the al Askariya mosque in Samarra. Soon after the February 22 bombing, President Mohammed

Ahmadinejad blamed the attack on Israel and the United States, arguing that Muslims would not blow up their own mosque.

Islam is an extraordinarily self-reinforcing faith. Because the Koran is all-encompassing, and because it is believed to answer all the questions one might have, additions to it are fundamentally illegitimate. There can be no social change, no new learning, without harming the perfection that is the word of Allah, as recorded by Mohammed and interpreted by the clergy. Despite several centuries of effort, Muslim scholars have never been able to reconcile modern notions of rationality and materialism with the tenets of Islam. Thus, in a world of cell phones and portable computers the Muslim version of the good life is to be lived essentially as it was in the seventh century, A.D.

That life is extraordinarily repressive by Western standards. Muslim society is profoundly paternalistic; women are chattels of the family's men and have no place outside the family. Contact between the sexes outside of marriage is strictly forbidden. Alcohol and gambling are banned. Anything that smacks of materialism is frowned upon as well. (On this basis, FI believes that the third city to be attacked in Al Qaeda's original plans was to have been Las Vegas.) Western-style capitalism is impossible, because lending money for interest is banned.

Just as there is no god but Allah, and no source of true knowledge but the Koran, there is no valid authority save that of the clergy. Secular government is illegitimate under God's law, secular law an oxymoron, inevitably as weak and corrupt as the men who operate it. There is a vast and impassable gulf between secular governments throughout the Muslim world and the people whom they claim to rule. We see it in Pakistan and Iraq, Egypt and Jordan, and even Morocco and Turkey, where decades of secular tradition and rule have not erased the appeal of fundamentalist extremism.

The supremacy of the clergy is, from the Western point of view, one of the great weaknesses of Islam. There is no credentialing authority for clerics, nor even a broadly agreed set of tenets to which legitimate clergy can be expected to adhere. This apparently liberal philosophy makes religious leaders of men whom any Western creed would reject as vicious lunatics. It also opens the Muslim world to more, and more intense, cults of personality than any devout communist could have feared. The result is predictable. Wherever Islam is dominant, taxicabs now carry a photograph of the clergyman their drivers most revere: Osama bin Laden.

This is only appropriate. Despite the peaceful nature that believers universally attribute to Islam, the living history that obsesses Muslims is one of violence and war. The principle Muslim sects, Shia and Sunni, split almost immediately after the death of Mohammed in 632, over the issue of succession to the leadership of Islam. In 685, Sunnis assassinated Hussayn, the Shia leader and a descendent

of Mohammed. Persian Shias and Arab Sunnis waged intermittent warfare among themselves for centuries, when not too busy battling European Crusaders. The tactics we now know as terrorism have been part of those wars for more than 1,300 years. However, when there are infidels to fight, the gulf between the two Muslim sects disappears for the duration—a tradition overlooked by Washington advisors who forecast that Iraqi Shiites would view American troops as liberators, rather than as an occupation force, and make common cause against their Sunni oppressors.

Those advisors seem also to have overlooked the tradition of *jihad*, religious war against enemies of Islam, as those enemies are identified by whatever clergyman chooses to issue a *fatwa* against them.

Muslim attitudes and beliefs create extraordinary volatility when they come into contact with the West. For all their belief in the moral superiority of Islam, many Muslims find American freedom and material prosperity to be enormously seductive. This is profoundly disturbing to people for whom piety is all-important and who equate self-denial with religious purity. Then the habit of attributing Muslim poverty and oppression to the misdeeds of Western colonizers makes it easy to blame the infidels for any temptation to stray from the true path of Islam. This is the true source of Muslim hatred for America: Not that we support Israel against the Palestinians, not that they think we exploit their oil and support corrupt and oppressive governments throughout the Middle East, but that contact with our values and material comforts could distract them from their duty to Allah. Worse yet, American values could influence their children, who are looking more like Westerners every day.

We are hated not for what we do or what we have, but for what we are. The temptation that we represent, to abandon pious self-denial, to accept freedom and comfort here on Earth and thereby lose Paradise, makes us “enemies of Islam” in a way that no specific action ever could. This is why Muslim extremists no longer seek to change our policies but instead aim simply to destroy us.

That implacable hatred takes much of its power from a long history that is every bit as important to Islam as any event in the present day. Time is of little significance to the Muslim worldview. The triumphs of Saladin in the Third Crusades rank alongside the destruction of the World Trade Center, without regard to the centuries that separate them. The pan-Arabism of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1920s is an obvious extension of the battle to drive infidels from Muslim lands. More recent successes include the bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983, the African embassy bombings in 1998, the attack on the Cole, and so endlessly on. Osama bin Laden’s *jihad* is simply the latest expression of an everlasting war against the evils of the West, for the greater glory of Allah.

This is a context in which the terrorist cause can never be lost, much less abandoned. Successes are forever remembered, failures ennobled. It does not matter that Osama now hides in the mountains of Pakistan; he struck a valiant blow against the great Satan. It is not important that Saddam now sits in prison; he sent the Americans packing after the first Gulf War and serves as an inspiration to jihadists around the world. Both these heroes will rise again, or live on in Paradise, glorified for all eternity. Through fantasy and repetition and in the light of the eternal battle against evil, losses become gains, defeats become triumphs. And if the terrorist war can never be lost, there is reason to wonder whether the war against it can ever be won.

Looking Forward

At Forecasting International, we see three major changes coming in the years ahead. They will fundamentally alter both the terrorist threat to the United States and the terms on which we must fight the “war” on terror. The terrorists will continue to gain more fighters. They will gain far more destructive weapons. And they will gain the kind of legitimacy that could make them even more difficult to stop.

Terrorist Ranks Are Growing

In deposing the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and depriving Al Qaeda of a safe haven there, the United States struck a major blow against the terrorist movement as it existed five years ago. Yet by failing to follow up on that success effectively, we have squandered much of the benefit that should have been gained from that first step in the counterterrorist battle. And by invading Iraq, we have supplied Al Qaeda and its sympathizers with a cause around which to rally their existing forces and recruit new ones. As a result, the terrorist movement is now growing stronger, not weaker.

There is ample evidence to support this belief. Up to 30,000 foreign fighters are believed to have gravitated toward Iraq, where they are now gaining contacts and experience that will serve them well in future campaigns against the United States. In this, Iraq is now serving the function that Afghanistan provided in the 1980s. The war in Iraq is building a skilled and disciplined terrorist cadre that will fan out across the world.

Saudi Arabia even has been forced to build a major program aimed at keeping young men from going to Iraq. The Wahhid there is teaching that joining the *jihad* is the Muslim man’s second-greatest duty, after going to Mecca. They must fight in Iraq, then come back and be available to fight for fundamentalist Islam in Saudi Arabia. Thus are terrorist cells built, independent of al Qaeda but firmly committed to its goals and methods.

Similar developments are seen elsewhere. The Madrid railway bombings were carried out by a semi-autonomous terrorist cell based in Morocco whose members cited the invasion of Iraq as one inspiration for their efforts. In Britain, the London subway bombings in 2005 were the work of a small, independent band of British citizens inspired by al Qaeda. In France and Australia, authorities have arrested a number of Western converts to Islam, many of whom are believed to have joined Al Qaeda or associated organizations since the invasion of Afghanistan. A report by French intelligence officials estimated that there were between 30,000 and 50,000 such converts, and by implication potential terrorists, in that country alone.

It is clear that they have considerable sympathy among Europe's Muslim population. The French riots of October and November 2005 affected at least 20 cities in that country, resulting in 2,888 arrests, and touched off lesser violence in Belgium, Denmark, Greece, the Netherlands, Spain, and even Switzerland.

More such events are all but inevitable. Saudi Arabia funds an extensive network of religious schools, from New York to Pakistan. Saudi authorities have admitted that as much as 10 percent of the curriculum in those schools contains material preaching hatred of other religions, the West, and the United States. At times, those schools even have coordinated their sermons to deliver consistent anti-Western messages in far-distant locales. In a preliminary study during 2003, Dr. Borik Zadeh, of Battelle Institute, found that mosques in Ohio, London, Frankfurt, and Paris were delivering virtually identical sermons, the key message of which was an endorsement of global war against the West. In Pakistan, where Saudi Arabia's Wahhabi movement supports thousands of *madressas*, the call to jihad is even more enthusiastic. Those schools are recruiting extremists, sending money and fighters to Iraq, and systematically building an extremist cadre that will pursue the battle against the West for generations to come.

They are most dangerous in their target countries: Saudi Arabia, Australia, Europe, and to a lesser extent the United States. Individuals from these countries are absorbing the extremist creed, going to Iraq and learning to fight, and returning to their own countries. France, Denmark, Saudi Arabia, and too many other lands are now home to revolutionaries with all the rights of citizens. Identifying these home-grown, foreign-trained terrorists will be one of the most difficult tasks for antiterrorist forces in the years ahead.

They Will Gain WMD

At FI, we take it for granted that the elite among tomorrow's terrorists will have more than plastic explosives with which to make their point. They will have nuclear weapons. Dr. Abdul Kadeer Kahn ensured that when he gave Pakistan what most extremists regard as an "Islamic bomb" and then spread the plans far

and wide. If terrorists cannot lay hands on a stolen weapon from the former Soviet Union, they soon may be able to obtain them either from Islamabad or from Tehran.

They Will Gain Legitimacy

There is another alternative, however, and it seems increasingly likely. Rather than obtaining nuclear weapons from a sympathetic government, Al Qaeda or its spinoffs may soon become the government in any of perhaps a dozen countries. Wherever secular government is weak, it might easily be replaced by a much stronger and more virulently anti-American theocracy with leaders drawn straight from the terrorist movement. Candidates for a terrorist take-over include Iran (where the job already is half-done), Iraq, Sudan, Syria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, the “stans” of the former Soviet Union, and perhaps the Gulf states. However, our own choice for “most likely to undergo a religious revolution” is Saudi Arabia, where the royal family has supported the extremist *Wahhabi* sect for some 200 years. At FI, we will not be surprised if Osama bin Laden returns to his homeland and sets up an Islamist government in Riyadh, with dire consequences for the U.S. economy and for national security.

There is precedent for the transformation from terrorist movement to legitimate government. In Russia, the Bolshevik killed the Czar, took over the government, and established a regime that would survive for seven decades and become one of the world’s most powerful nations. In Palestine, Yassir Arafat made the transition from guerilla leader to something resembling a senior statesman, only to be replaced by Hamas, which remains an active terrorist organization. On the other side of Jerusalem, the Irgun Svi, Haganah, and Stern Gang were terrorists as bloody as any that Palestine has ever produced; yet they supplied Israel with Prime Ministers, senior politicians, and statesmen for more than 30 years. Bin Laden and his senior advisors can be expected to attempt to enter mainstream politics in much the same way. FI believes they may be successful.

There is ample precedent for this as well among Muslim extremist organizations. In Palestine and other parts of the Middle East, Fatah, Hamas, and Hezbollah provide the kind of social safety net that governments in the region do not. Food, clothing, education, shelter, jobs, and medical assistance all flow from these organizations, bringing them a kind of legitimacy that terrorism, however widely admired, never could. This service, combined with the corruption of the Fatah government, was the primary reason Palestinians voted Hamas into power, not the organization’s intransigent rejection of Israel’s existence.

This is not the last time terrorists will ascend to government leadership. At Forecasting International, we see little chance that Iraq will make a successful transition to peaceful democracy. When the United States withdraws its forces, the current unrest is likely to broaden into a civil war between the Sunnis and

Shiites. Though the Sunnis are heavily outnumbered they have a near-monopoly on weapons and military experience. In the end, they will recapture control of the country, returning the Ba'ath Party to power. If Saddam Hussein is still alive, there is every possibility that he will emerge as the victorious leader of a more hostile, less stable Iraq.

There is worse to come. Within five years, and probably sooner, Al Qaeda will begin this same transition. Its practical, day-to-day contributions to the lives of ordinary citizens will provide a foundation for future political activities. Unlike any government in the Muslim world, in almost any country bin Laden already has the allegiance of a majority of the population.

If the terrorists do manage to gain control of a functional country, the nature of the game changes radically. When terrorists become the government, all terrorism is state-sponsored. The budget available to fund terrorist activities grows many-fold. The nation's laboratories and scientists become available to develop chemical, biological, and even nuclear weapons for the cause. If the country is Pakistan, where Pervez Musharraf enjoys the support of virtually none of his citizens, nuclear devices already are available. Preventing terrorists from gaining control over those weapons is one of the most pressing necessities now facing the counterterrorist community.

The Challenges Ahead

Throughout the Muslim world, between 60 and 90 percent of the people in each country support Osama bin Laden. Equal numbers consider the United States to be a menace intent upon returning the Muslim lands to Western domination. There was a time when that would not have mattered, because most Muslims were so impressed by American wealth and power that the United States seemed invincible. The attacks of September 11 destroyed that useful illusion and told extremists everywhere that we could be hurt. Our problems in Afghanistan and Iraq have reinforced this lesson. From an antiterrorist perspective, this has probably been the single most dangerous result of the events of the last few years.

As we have seen, the Muslim hatred of the United States, through no basic fault of our own, runs deep. It grows more inflamed with each incident in which terrorists strike effectively at the West. It is further nurtured by the Muslim religious schools sponsored by Saudi Arabia throughout the world. The sight of Osama bin Laden or one of his successors as a head of state could unite the Muslim world in a way that nothing thus far has even approached. It is likely to happen quickly. At FI, we expect to see major changes within the next three to four years.

There are very few ways to deal with what could amount to a terrorist army of 1.7 billion people bent on our destruction. In fact, after years of weighing this situation we see only two possibilities, neither of them good:

The United States can expel its Islamic community and try to wall itself off from the Muslim lands. Unfortunately, this is unlikely to work. Tactical nukes are simply too portable. Over time, the chances that a skilled, motivated, or just plain lucky terrorist would smuggle a bomb into the country and detonate it in downtown New York or Washington are much too high to be ignored. The terrorists only need to get lucky once. And for the foreseeable future we will need Middle Eastern oil much too badly to cut off all contact with Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and even Iran unless there is no other alternative.

Alternatively, the U.S. can strike preemptively against the terrorists and their sympathizers and destroy them before they destroy us. In light of the statistics above, the number and breadth of targets required to eliminate the terrorist infrastructure and deter its reconstruction could involve so many deaths, and such an horrific level of guilt, that our country would be unlikely to survive intact. Despite this, FI believes that the Pentagon should plan for this possibility. In case of need, however improbable, the plan must be ready to go on as little notice as possible.

Short of draconian measures, there are a few steps that can be taken to delay the ultimate crisis, perhaps giving enough time to find a permanent and acceptable solution to the problem.

- There is no alternative: Whatever else American counterterrorism and diplomatic efforts accomplish, the issues of Pakistan currently possessing nuclear weapons and Iran moving quickly to acquire them must be addressed. The alternative might be eventually to witness the detonation of an atomic bomb in a major American population and financial center.
- At the same time, we need to secure the nuclear material now effectively abandoned around the world. In 1992, the United States agreed to help Russia secure some 600 metric tons of nuclear material so that it would not fall into the hands of terrorists. A dozen years later, only 135 tons are properly secure; at least 340 tons remain untouched.
- We also need to keep track of nuclear scientists in the Muslim world. It should not have been possible for Abdul Kadeer Kahn to transfer key nuclear technologies to Iran unnoticed. It should not have been possible for him to develop those technologies at all. Preventing any repetition of this incident is a task for a greatly expanded HUMINT program.

- Saudi Arabia must be discouraged from supporting the *madressas* and their virulent anti-American message. If this cannot be accomplished diplomatically, then other, more stringent methods must be considered.
- Some way must be found to keeping Iran from producing nuclear weapons. This may not be the most certain source of nuclear devices for tomorrow's terrorists, much less the only one. Yet it is the most immediate and identifiable.
- Finally, and most importantly, we need to search for more options. This list of antiterrorist measures is no more than a first attempt to identify the most immediate problem areas. None of these efforts will eliminate the terrorist threat. None will prevent it from spreading throughout the global Muslim community. To accomplish these goals, we need a comprehensive program of research designed to help us better understand the world of Islam and to identify pressure points that can be used to interrupt the spread of terrorism. The alternatives are too grim to contemplate.

Recent Work

In 2005, Forecasting International, in cooperation with Irene Sanders of the Washington Center for Complexity and Public Policy, undertook to identify potential targets of future terrorist events. Like *Terror 2000*, this study involved both subject specialists and general forecasters. More than 150 very capable participants contributed their expertise to this study. More than 100 professional forecasters filled out the questionnaire during and after a session at the 2005 annual meeting of the World Future Society. More than 50 retired military officers contacted by FI also joined in this work; many were of flag rank, and many had specific experience related to the study of terrorism. So did a number of top executives from the hospitality industry, which has been a frequent target of terrorist attacks. Most valuably of all, the questionnaire also was distributed after our lecture at the 15th Defense Worldwide Combatting Terrorism Conference, where it was filled out by more than 50 high-ranking military officers currently serving in positions related to counter-terrorism.

In all of these groups, a majority provided ideas and insights far beyond the limits of the questions themselves. The forecasters noted how easy it would be for small suicide squads armed with guns, rather than bombs, to attack the crowds at shopping malls, rock concerts, and Washington's many monuments and tourist attractions and pointed out that synagogues, Jewish community centers, the YMCA, and the Israeli embassy all are obvious targets for attack. The retired military careerists suggested the random murder of uniformed military officers in the Capitol area and the use of suicide squads to attack military bases or workers arriving at the Pentagon or CIA headquarters. One participant foresaw a possible

assault on the then-coming Presidential inauguration, with a major strike on the podium and many smaller attacks on crowds throughout Washington.

The report from this study is attached as Appendix A.

This work was only a small first step in developing counterterrorist strategies for the future. Yet it is important for what it represents: the beginning of a long and difficult process by which we may avoid the extreme measures considered in this report. This is one effort that absolutely must succeed. The alternative is truly too horrifying to accept.

APPENDIX A: IDENTIFYING FUTURE TERRORIST RISKS

**Presented by Dr. Marvin J. Cetron,
President, Forecasting International
To the SAS Regiment at Swanbourne, Western Australia
May 10, 2005**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the last few months, two significant reports have looked at the kinds of attack that terrorists might carry out in the future. One was conducted by Forecasting International (FI), the other by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). These efforts were designed to identify which possible terrorist attacks are most likely to occur and which would have the greatest impact on the target country. This information should assist the allocation of antiterrorism resources where they will have the greatest benefit. It also may reveal previously unrecognized opportunities to defend the country and its facilities abroad against terrorist events.

Although these studies focused on the United States, we believe they offer valuable insights for the future of terrorism in Australia, or in any industrialized country. Specific targets may differ—a hotel in Melbourne rather than one in Orlando, or a natural gas pipeline in Sydney instead of a pipeline in Houston—but the kinds of target that terrorists will prefer are likely to be similar from one country to the next. So is the chosen method of attack for each. This kind of information is vital for planning. Prior to this research, it had been hard to come by.

Critical events identified by the DHS study included blowing up a chlorine tank at an urban sewage treatment plant; spreading pneumonic plague in the bathrooms of an airport, sports arena, or train station; and infecting cattle with pneumonic plague.

FI's work found that the most likely attack was simply to create public unease by spreading rumors of an impending terrorist attack. However, more serious events came close behind. These included attacking Saudi oil production; coordinated suicide bombings in Washington, D.C.; general Internet overload; attacking commuter trains into New York or another major city; bombing one or more oil pipelines; and destroying the rail and auto tunnels that serve New York City. However, events with the greatest impact included:

- Setting off a suitcase nuclear bomb at any target;
- Shooting down Air Force 1;
- Setting off a "dirty bomb" packed with stolen radiological medical waste in a populated area;
- Detonating a liquefied natural gas tanker in Boston Harbor;
- And introducing nerve gas into the air conditioning of a major public building or office tower.

Each of these events was rated as likely to have a greater impact than the 9/11 attacks.

WORKING METHODS

The two projects differed significantly in their goals and in their approach to the work. The DHS sought to identify a limited number of events against which federal and state authorities should direct their resources because of their probability or their human and economic cost. That work was carried out by a cadre of DHS personnel with relatively little input from outside.

FI took a broader look at nearly 50 possible attacks and then surveyed several diverse groups of experts for their view on those events. We also asked them to suggest plausible attacks that we had overlooked. We did not attempt to provide specific body counts or dollar costs for the attacks, as the DHS team did, but instead sought to identify an expert consensus about which events were most likely or would have the greatest impact on the United States.

Our study combined some groups of experts whose views of the future are seldom compared. In the first stage of research, two major polls gathered data on the probability and impact of possible terrorist attacks. One surveyed participants at the annual meeting of the World Future Society, in July; it collected the views of nearly 100 leading forecasters. The second was carried out at the 15th annual Defense Worldwide Combating Terrorism Conference, held in September by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict; it produced replies from 216 experts on counterterrorism, many of them extremely detailed. In later surveys, we also obtained responses from approximately 50 retired military officers, many of flag rank, and a number of executives in the hospitality industry, which has often been targeted by terrorists in foreign lands. The questionnaires for this study took into account both current efforts to secure the United States against attack and a variety of trends now changing the aims and capabilities of the international terrorist community.

In the second stage, FI analyzed the results of these surveys to identify the most likely and devastating assaults that America must be prepared to face. For each possible event, we examined the likelihood of an attack by four specific antagonists: a native American organization such as Aryan Nation; a small, semi-independent terrorist cell linked to Al Qaeda; a major terrorist organization with global reach, such as Al Qaeda itself; and a terrorist group with state sponsorship.

The combination of forecasters and subject specialists is one that FI has often used with great success. In previous studies of terrorism, forecasters have been able to suggest many possible developments that might not have occurred to subject specialists, while terrorism experts have kept the research firmly rooted in reality.

For example, our ground-breaking *Terror 2000: The Future Face of Terror* was carried out in 1994 for the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict. It predicted virtually the entire course of international terrorism as it has developed over the last ten years. Specific forecasts included the rise of Muslim fundamentalism; a second, much more successful, assault on the World Trade Center; the use of multiple coordinated attacks aimed at causing mass casualties; and the deliberate crash

of an airplane into the Pentagon. (That last item was removed from the final report at the request of the State Department.) Many of these insights were refined by terrorism experts from the suggestions of generalist forecasters. Many lay outside the consensus view of terrorism at the time and would have been unlikely to originate within the specialist community

RESULTS

The study by the Department of Homeland Security identified twelve possible terrorist attacks that its researchers felt required special attention from security personnel, either because they were particularly likely or because they would be especially devastating. Among the most serious:

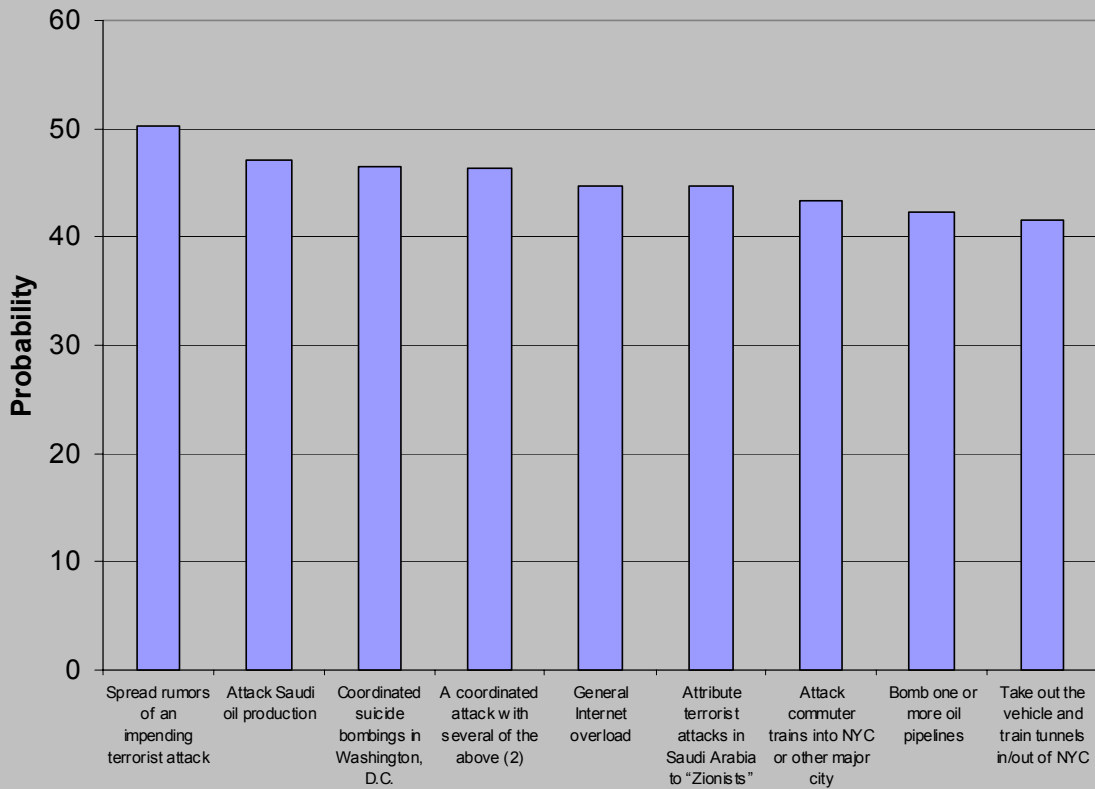
- Detonating a nuclear bomb, of course, was assessed as likely to be the most destructive attack, both in lives lost and in economic impact.
- Blowing up a chlorine tank at a big-city sewage treatment plant would release a cloud of toxic gas that could kill 17,500 people and sicken more than 100,000.
- Spreading pneumonic plague in the bathrooms of airports, sports arenas, and train stations would kill or sicken relatively few people—2,500 and 8,000, respectively—but its effects would be felt world-wide.
- Infecting cattle with hoof-and-mouth disease at several locations would cause hundreds of millions of dollars in losses.
- Spraying anthrax from a truck driving through five cities over two weeks would expose as many as 350,000 people to the disease. An estimated 13,200 could die.
- Detonating a “dirty bomb” packed with radiological medical waste would kill 540 people initially, but radioactive contamination would quickly spread over an area of 36 blocks, contaminating businesses and homes, schools and shopping areas, mass transit, and the urban infrastructure.

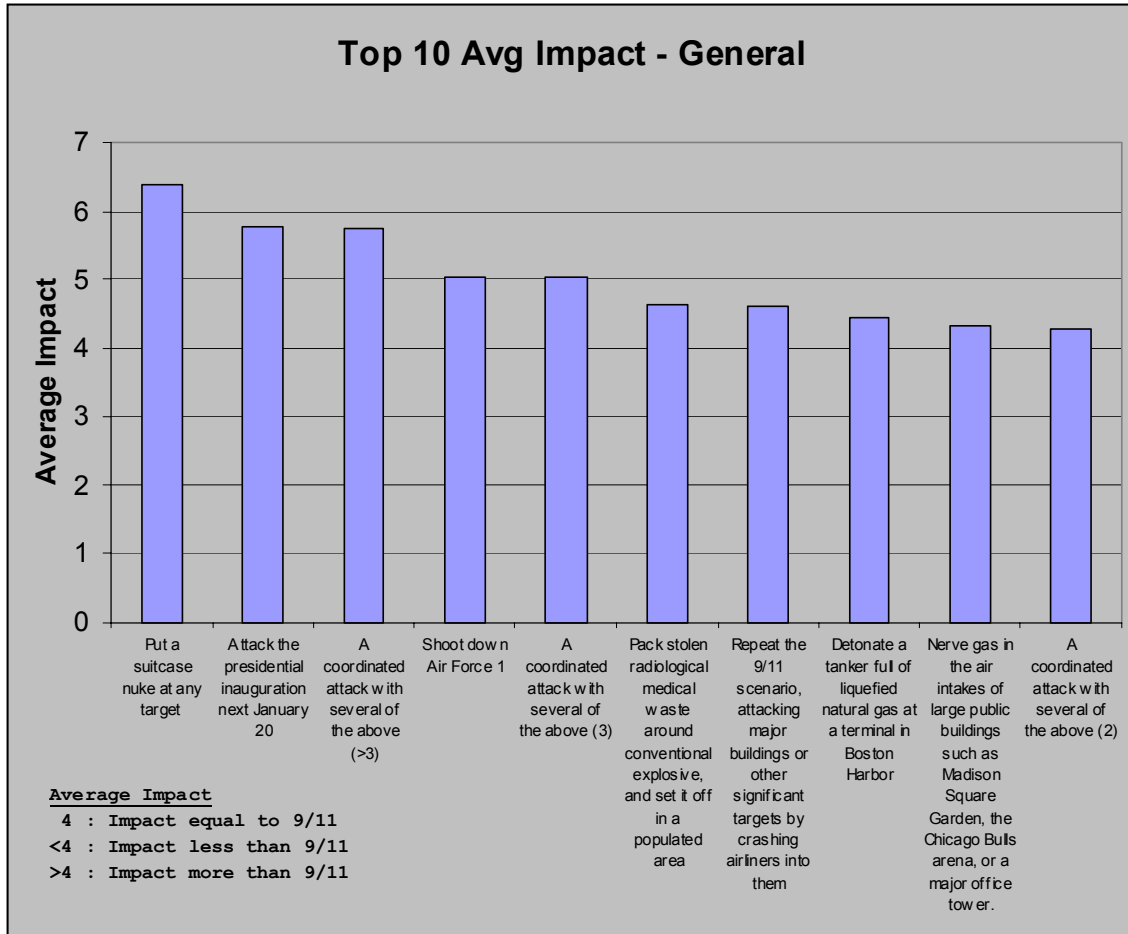
The study deliberately omitted some plausible attacks. For example, it did not consider an airline hijacking because plans for dealing with such an event have already been well refined. The goal was to identify unrecognized risks and figure out what how to deal with them. For each event, the study attempted to establish what kind of demands would be placed on the emergency response and public health systems. One section of the report listed no fewer than 1,500 specific tasks that might have to be performed in response to an attack.

Forecasting International’s study was more comprehensive than the DHS research in some ways, less so in others. It focused on the events themselves, and examined more than four times as many possible attacks. However, it left the demands that would be placed on medical and emergency services for later examination.

The consensus results of our study are presented in the two graphs below. Their significance to Australia, and some related topics, will be considered in the summary that follows.

Top 10 possible attacks - General





SUMMARY

As we can see in the graphs above, in Appendix A, and in results of the DHS study, there is no shortage of ways in which a terrorist group can spread death and destruction in a developed country. Many of them, such as the production of nerve gas, require a significant investment in technology. Others are within reach of a relatively small and unsophisticated cell. The bombing of commuter trains in Madrid was carried out by a small, independent group of extremists based in Morocco. It could be repeated in any city in the world by anyone capable of stealing dynamite from a construction site. Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney, and Perth all have extensive systems of commuter trains that would be difficult to defend against random bombing. Given the success of the Madrid bombings, we would rate a similar bombing as being perhaps the single terrorist event most likely to strike any major city.

Most of the other attacks considered in both these studies are as applicable to Australia as they are to the United States. Foot-and-mouth disease is as deadly to Australian cattle as it is to American cattle, and could be equally destructive to Australia's extensive sheep ranches. Radiological medical waste

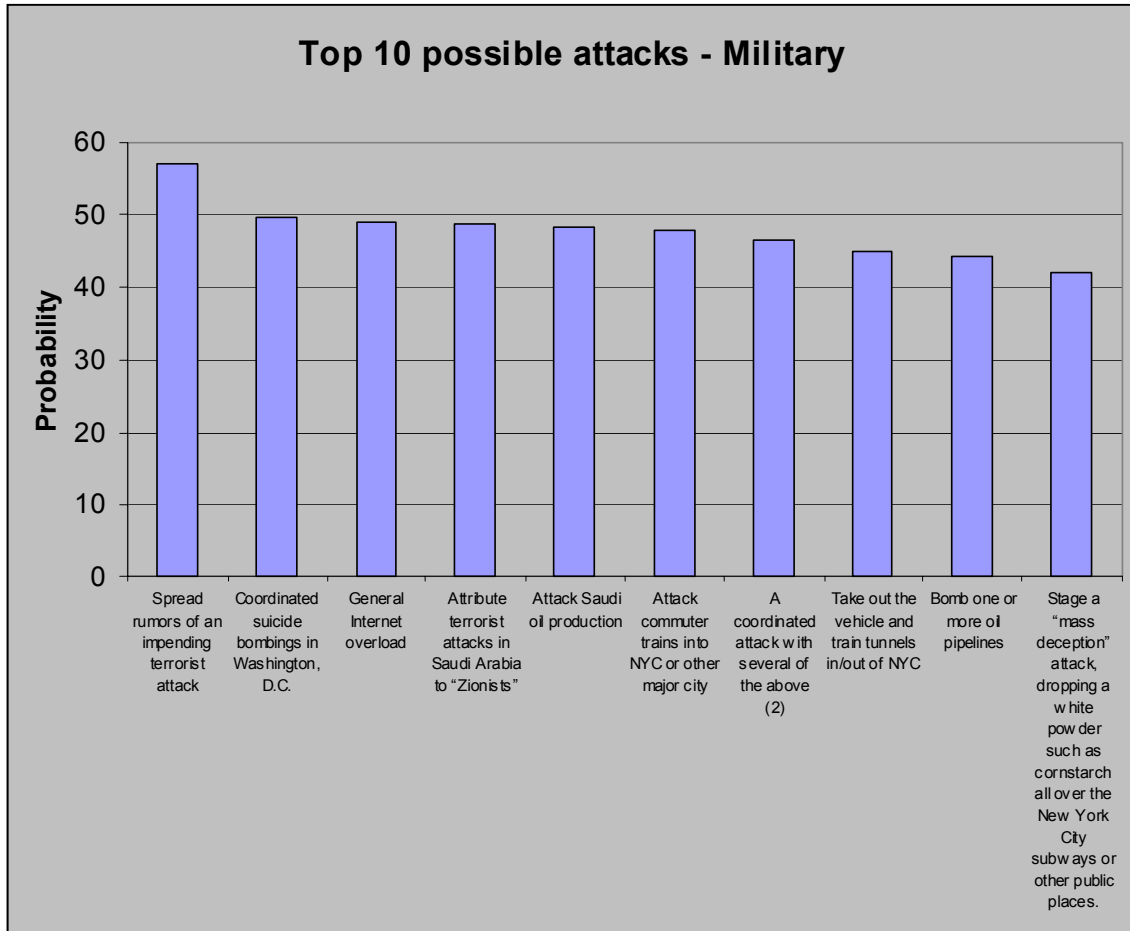
probably is no harder to steal in one country than in the other. Pipelines are easy targets in both countries; at least four run through Sydney, two that carry natural gas, one containing ethane, and one for oil. These potential terrorist targets all merit attention from Australian security personnel.

Given the rapid growth of Australia's Muslim population, two more points need to be made, though they have nothing to do with the studies above. Whatever terrorist attacks Australia faces in the future almost certainly will come out of the Muslim community. They may be committed by Muslim immigrants; they could originate with native Australian converts to Islam. Any heavy-handed attempt at surveillance or control makes such an event more likely, not less so. The United States made this mistake in the early days after the September 11 attack and has spent the years since trying to repair the damage. Muslims are not only the most likely source of trouble; they are the people most likely to learn of it before it occurs, and therefore are the most likely to be able to help in heading it off. They should be presumed to be loyal Australians, with the same rights that others enjoy, and cultivated as possible allies in the war against terror.

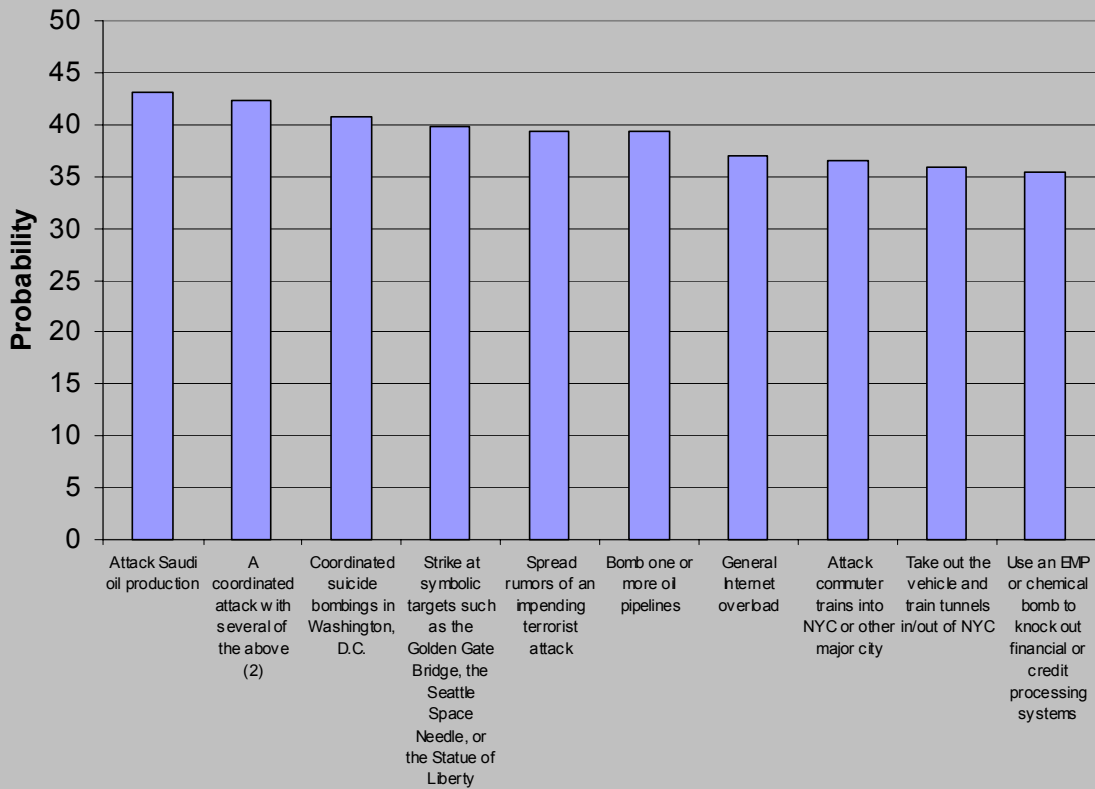
However, one group of people, Muslim or not, does require special attention. These are Australian Army personnel themselves, and particularly those charged with antiterrorism duties. No one has a better chance to do harm than those who are trusted to prevent it.

In the United States, we have seen the power that military personnel have to strike at our counterterrorist forces. In March 2003, Sgt. Hasan Akbar, then with the 101st Airborne Division in Kuwait, attacked his fellow troops with grenade and rifle. An Army captain and an Air Force major died in the attack, and 14 soldiers were wounded. Better security screening might have identified Sgt. Akbar as a potential problem long before he had the chance to act. Australian forces can learn from our mistake.

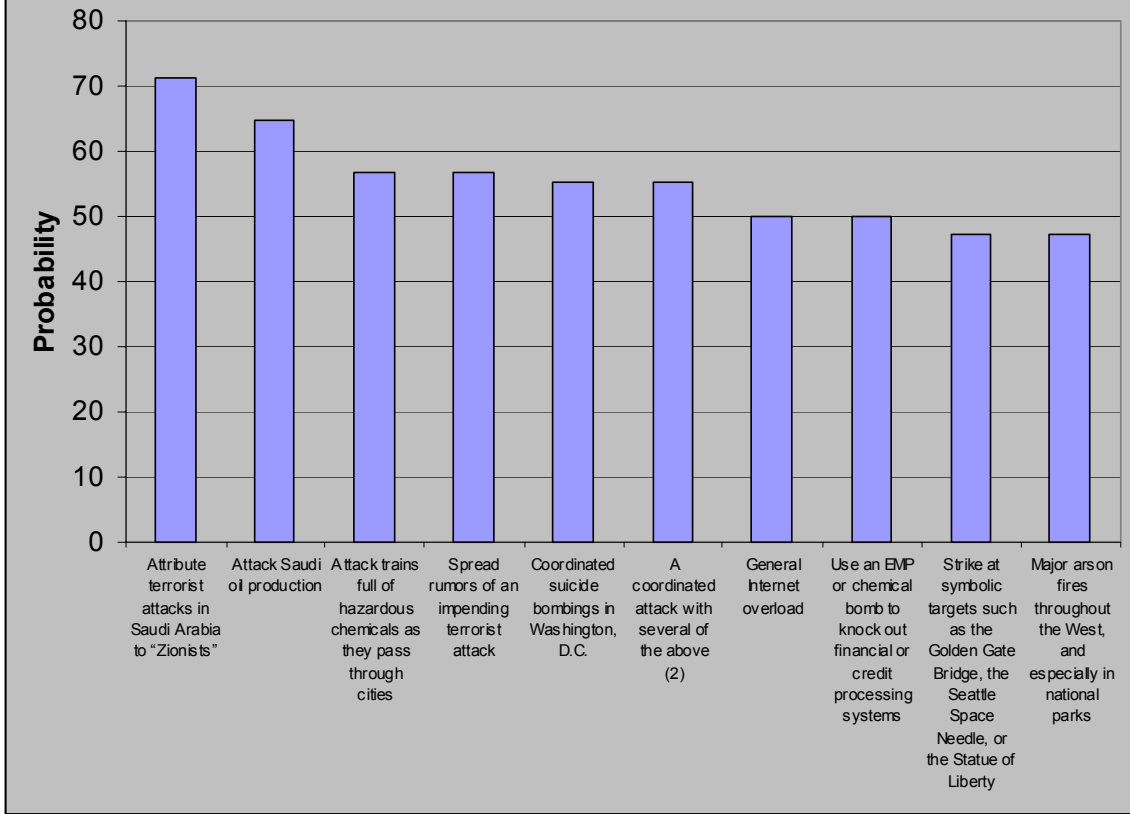
APPENDIX A: DETAILED RESULTS OF THE FI STUDY



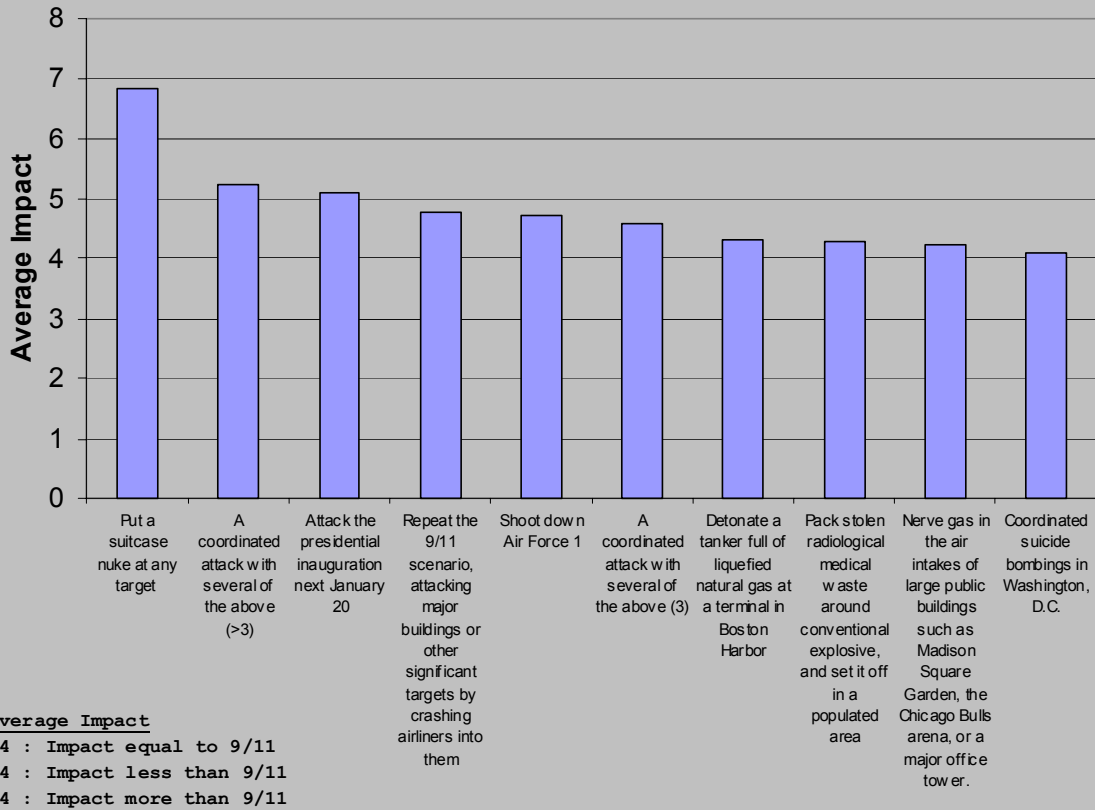
Top 10 possible attacks - Futuristic



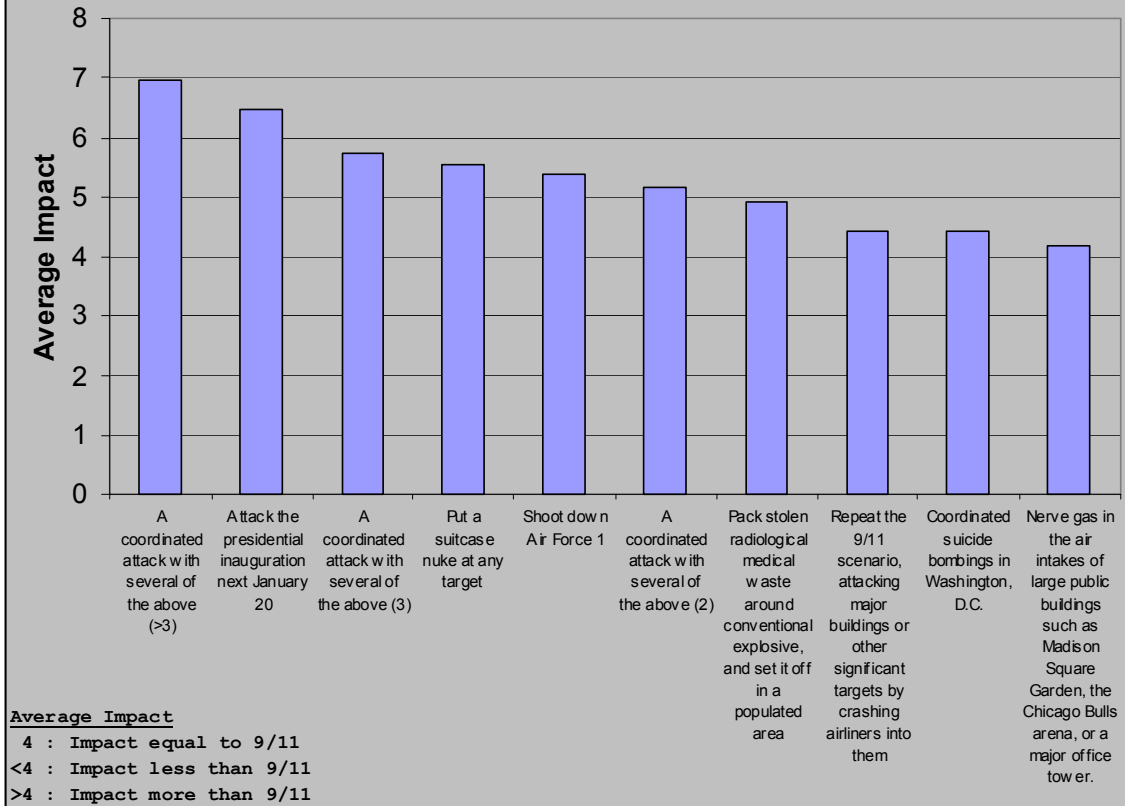
Top 10 possible attacks - Hospitality



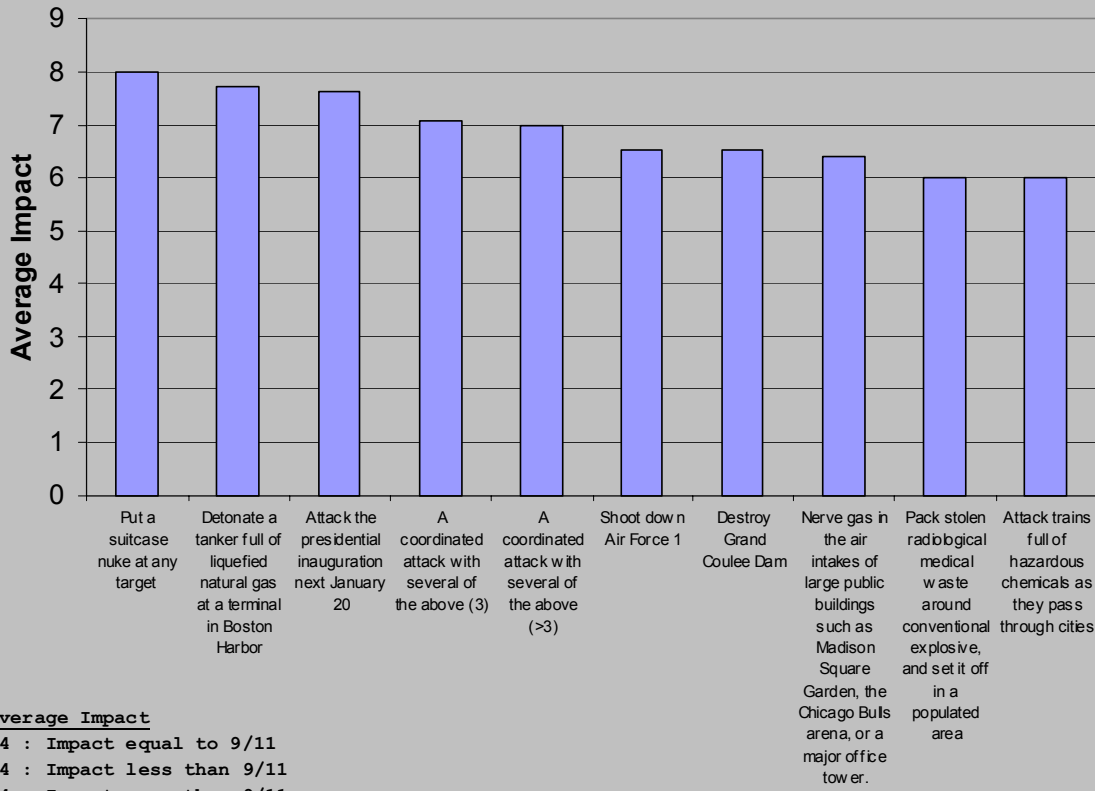
Top 10 Avg Impact - Military



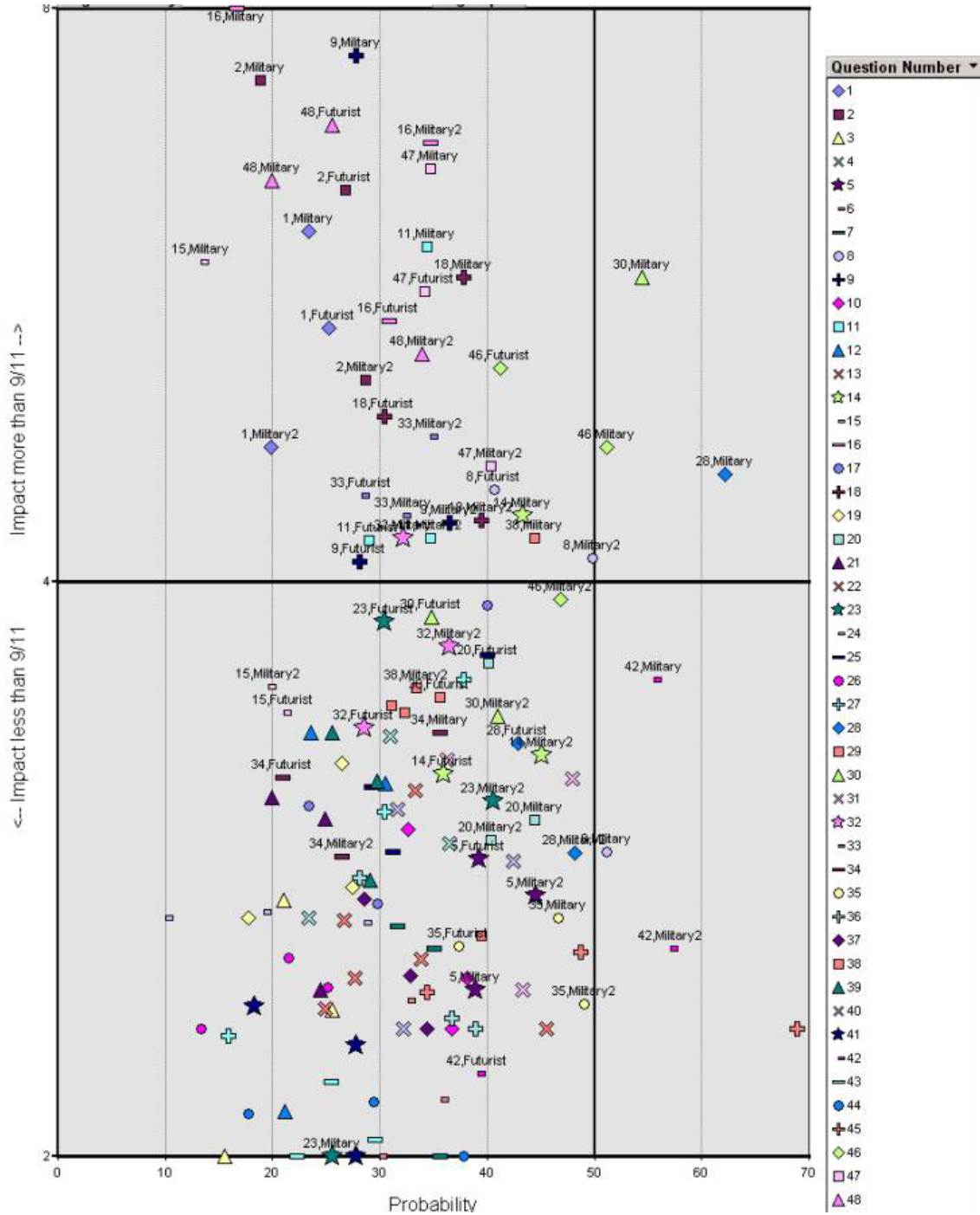
Top 10 Avg Impact - Futuristic



Top 10 Avg Impact - Hospitality



APPENDIX B: RAW DATA



APPENDIX C: POSSIBLE TERRORIST EVENTS

- 1 Shoot down Air Force 1
- 2 Attack the presidential inauguration next January 20
- 3 Take out the St. Louis Arch
- 4 Launch coordinated attacks on chlorine tanks at sewage treatment plants
- 5 Bomb one or more oil pipelines
- 6 Bring down one or more of the high tension wires across the Far West
- 7 Truck bombs at truck stops
- 8 Coordinated suicide bombings in Washington, D.C.
- 9 Detonate a tanker full of liquefied natural gas at a terminal in Boston Harbor
- 10 Simple tanker truck "accidents" on bridges across the Mississippi, Hudson, or other major rivers
- 11 Nerve gas in the air intakes of large public buildings such as Madison Square Garden, the Chicago Bulls arena, or a major office tower.
- 12 Mix blight or other plant disease into crop dusting
- 13 Chemical poisoning of metropolitan sewage plants
- 14 Take out the vehicle and train tunnels in/out of NYC
- 15 Destroy Grand Coulee Dam
- 16 Put a suitcase nuke at any target
- 17 Use stolen medical waste to contaminate reservoirs, swimming areas, or building air vents
- 18 Pack stolen radiological medical waste around conventional explosive, and set it off in a populated area
- 19 Target the locks on the St. Lawrence Seaway
- 20 Strike at symbolic targets such as the Golden Gate Bridge, the Seattle Space Needle, or the Statue of Liberty

- 21 Poison the food at Greenbriar Conference Center
- 22 Major arson fires throughout the West, and especially in national parks
- 23 Coordinated shooting attacks in Disneyworld and Disneyland
- 24 Using mosquito abatement trucks to spread whatever—just taint the tanks and let the regular workers do the dirty work
- 25 Take out a major cruise ship entering or leaving the harbor in Miami or New York
- 26 Bomb a semiconductor plant
- 27 Attack winning U.S. Olympians during a celebration on their return from Greece
- 28 Attack Saudi oil production
- 29 Attack American refineries with bombs or RPGs
- 30 Attack trains full of hazardous chemicals as they pass through cities
- 31 Attack commuter trains into NYC or other major city
- 32 Bomb a chemical plant upwind of a major city
- 33 Repeat the 9/11 scenario, attacking major buildings or other significant targets by crashing airliners into them
- 34 Introduce *E. coli* into McDonalds hamburgers in occasions all across the United
- 35 General Internet overload
- 36 Contaminate foreign products coming into the U.S.
- 37 Contaminate American products abroad
- 38 Use an EMP or chemical bomb to knock out financial or credit processing systems
- 39 EMP bombs in the Internet-critical region of northern Virginia

40 Stage a “mass deception” attack, dropping a white powder such as cornstarch all over the New York City subways or other public places.

41 Steal several crop-dusting airplanes, and destroy them so that they cannot be found

42 Spread rumors of an impending terrorist attack

43 Steal the identity of a government official or other obstacle to the terrorist cause

44 Hijack FedEx trucks, repaint them, and dump them.

45 Attribute terrorist attacks in Saudi Arabia to “Zionists”

46 A coordinated attack with several of the above (2 incidents)

47 A coordinated attack with several of the above (3 incidents)

48 A coordinated attack with several of the above (>3 incidents)