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TASK FORCE ON TERRORISM & UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE
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THE GOP TERRORISM TASK FORCE:

RESEARCH TECHNIQUES & PHILOSOPHY

A Paper for the

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THE GOP TERRORISM TASK FORCE:

RESEARCH TECHNIQUES AND PHILOSOPHY

Since its establishment nearly four years ago, the Republican
Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare has been able
to provide a stream of accurate and detailed information to its
Members and other key offices of government through its Task
Force Reports. These Reports cover numerous subjects,
concentrating on the main crisis points throughout the Third
World and Eastern Europe. Indeed, the Task Force has had several
"scoops" over the years of which it is particularly proud,
including the manipulation of the Afghan resistance by
fundamentalist Islamist elements, the use of chemical weapons by
Vietnam in Laos, forecasting the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, and
the discovery that Iran had obtained nuclear weapons from the
Islamic republics of the former USSR.

However, perhaps the most remarkable aspect of this track record
is that all of the research material was obtained through open
sources. In this research, the emphasis is always on the use of
indigenous source material, that is, material produced by and for
the interested local populations, institutions and authorities.
These publications, predominantly foreign language publications,
constitute one of the best sources for obtaining an understanding
of the political and social forces at work in the Third World.
In this context, it should be noted that the Task Force does have
access to unique sources throughout the world, including
principly individuals on site, but that these sources operate
outside the official establishment. These sources are therefore
not too different from the confidential sources used by many
reputable journalists.

This all said, the Task Force's very existence stems from
Washington's increasing recognition of the importance of the
Third World and of the danger of state sponsored terrorism to
Western interests. This is important because, as the Third World
adjusts to the dynamic forces of nationalism, tribalism and
religious and ethnic fundamentalism, the danger of a backlash
against the West will intensify.

Furthermore, these problems have been complicated by a dangerous
trend in the strategic political development of Washington's
self-proclaimed "New World Order" which is viewed in the Third
World as little more than the proclamation of a "pax Americana."
Indeed, in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union,

many Third World leaders see a unique opportunity to consolidate
their positions as regional leaders. Thus, most of them perceive
the United States as a threat to their ambitions and will
therefore be tempted to make the U.S. a target of agitated Third
World populations. In this connection, the employment of
chemical, biological and nuclear weapons by these Third World
leaders and their allies cannot be ruled out.

Meanwhile, other major powers, primarily Western Europe
(especially France), Japan (with South Korea, Taiwan, etc. in
tow,) and a Russian dominated Commonwealth of Independent States
(CIS), are competing with the United States for access to the
Third World's markets and raw materials. With these resources so
crucial to the world economy, and with the United States
increasingly at odds with the other trading blocs over these
resources, local regimes may be inclined to exploit great power
rivalries to their own advantage.

Taken together, all these trends, mixed with an increasing
ideologization of the Third World, clearly point to an increased
risk of anti-Western terrorism and violence, as well as to the
build-up of Third World war machines to challenge Western
military predominance. These are factors that the United States
cannot afford to ignore. Moreover, because of the interests that
the United States has in the Third World, and because it is today
the world's only remaining military superpower with global
interests, increased US military and diplomatic involvement in
the developing world is almost inevitable.

This means, of course, that it is imperative for the United
States to understand and comprehend the Third World, particularly
its military and ideological components. The record of the
Terrorism Task Force leaves no doubt that this can be done. The
key to the Third World, however, will mean that intelligence
gathering will have to be done less by "bean counting" through
technical means and more through "on-the-spot" analysis.

This "professional factor" will therefore be the most important
resource for knowledge of military and security issues. Simply
put, weapons do not grow on trees and military experts are not
usually found amongst the tribes of the deserts and jungles of
the Third World. All of these have to come from somewhere and
therefore emphasis will have to be placed on tapping intelligence
sources who are involved in what will be a massive transfer of
weapons and expertise from the former Eastern bloc to the Third
World. An intelligence network designed to cover this issue,
combined with a greater understanding of indigenous Third World
cultures and problems, holds the key to understanding the post-
Communist world.

The Task Force recognizes this fact and understands that it will
therefore be necessary for the intelligence community to change

expectations about the kind of data that intelligence will be able to provide in the future.

Specifically, it is impossible to have a complete picture of any major topic on a timely basis. Concerning the crucial developments in the Third World, such as the acquisition of weapons including nuclear weapons, the development of terrorist networks, the involvement state sponsored terrorism in the Third World and technology transfers, the availability of data will be conditional on the ability of sources to get around and see past the security precautions taken by governments.

Almost all matters of interest to the professional intelligence gatherer will occur within a larger context. Nuclear weapons acquisition will have to be visible in order for the acquiring state to gain a deterrent over its potential opponents, but not so obvious as to provoke a response from the great powers. Terrorists strikes will not only be aimed by the state against its perceived opponents in the West, but amongst the various competing factions within given states and organizations. Thus, even the most visible events will reverberate with secret undercurrents that will affect the balance of power in the Third World.

These undercurrents will only be recognizable and comprehensible if viewed through the prism of the Third World's various cultural and strategic perspectives. This will require attention to daily events, including some of the seemingly smallest and most mundane matters. For example, did a given leader wear a certain ceremonial sash at a state meeting? Did a leader change his emphasis on who his enemies are by some small change in language? In a closed society these seemingly unimportant matters may speak volumes to the perceptive observer who is well versed on the cultural underpinnings of his subject. Thus, the researcher must be constantly attuned to all of these "vibes" and must record them, even if it is unclear what significance they will have.

Of Course, to some degree, it will not be possible to recognize the significance of events except through the eyes of natives in the region of concern. Thus, indigenous source materials, both written and oral, will be of crucial significance to any intelligence gathering effort. No amount of technical data gathering will be able to convey the logic and significance of events.

In this environment, there will be no such thing as a "key" source. Even access to a supreme national leader will not be enough. For especially in the Third World, even a despotic totalitarian leader will not have total control over his country. In the tribalized, balkanized Third World, a national leader will not often know what various segments of his country's populations are doing or how they are organized. Furthermore, given the

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sycophancy and cronyism that often surrounds leaders in the Third World, self-deception will be prevalent and verification of data will only be possible on a comparative basis.

Thus, knowledge of a situation from the "ground up" will be indispensable. The ability to see things "as the natives do," to put oneself in the shoes of given people, and to understand why a people will react to events as they will, these will be the keys to a successful intelligence gathering effort in the post-Cold War era.

As already noted, much of this will be possible with open sources. These sources provide the ability to notice the small "vibes," to correctly read the "dialogue" between key players and to accurately asses actions. Thus, the key to intelligence data will be a current reading of events done on a continuous basis.

Of course, open sources will only go so far, and specific details will still need to come from special sources. Background material provided by such sources will enable the researcher to narrow the scope of his studies, to be specific about given actions and to make optimum use of limited communications assets. This kind of material will allow the researcher to "fill in the blanks" and draw as complete a picture as is possible in a Third World context.

The result of this complex process will be excellent intelligence. In the case of the Task Force, with its comparatively limited resources, it has proven amazingly successful and has led, as has been noted, to not a few "scoops." When implemented by a reconfigured American intelligence community, with its enormous human and material resources, it will provide a treasure trove of data that will be crucial to understanding the world in the post-Cold War age. This "on the ground" technique, combined with the researcher's two most important tools, patience and perseverance, are the weapons by which the nation will secure its future in the volatile Third World.

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by Yossef Bodansky
& Vaughn S. Forrest

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(This paper may not necessarily reflect the views of all of the Members of the Republican Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare. It is intended to provoke discussion and debate.)

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