

Terrorism

CASE STUDY: September 11, 2001

MAIN IDEA

POWER AND AUTHORITY

Terrorism threatens the safety of people all over the world.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

People and nations must work together against the dangers posed by terrorism.

TERMS & NAMES

- terrorism
- cyberterrorism
- Department of Homeland Security
- USA Patriot Act

SETTING THE STAGE Wars are not the only threat to international peace and security. **Terrorism**, the use of violence against people or property to force changes in societies or governments, strikes fear in the hearts of people everywhere. Recently, terrorist incidents have increased dramatically around the world. Because terrorists often cross national borders to commit their acts or to escape to countries friendly to their cause, most people consider terrorism an international problem.

What Is Terrorism?

Terrorism is not new. Throughout history, individuals, small groups, and governments have used terror tactics to try to achieve political or social goals, whether to bring down a government, eliminate opponents, or promote a cause. In recent times, however, terrorism has changed.

Modern Terrorism Since the late 1960s, more than 14,000 terrorist attacks have occurred worldwide. International terrorist groups have carried out increasingly destructive, high-profile attacks to call attention to their goals and to gain major media coverage. Many countries also face domestic terrorists who oppose their governments' policies or have special interests to promote.

The reasons for modern terrorism are many. The traditional motives, such as gaining independence, expelling foreigners, or changing society, still drive various terrorist groups. These groups use violence to force concessions from their enemies, usually the governments in power. But other kinds of terrorists, driven by radical religious and cultural motives, began to emerge in the late 20th century.

The goal of these terrorists is the destruction of what they consider the forces of evil. This evil might be located in their own countries or in other parts of the world. These terrorists are ready to use any kind of weapon to kill their enemies. They are even willing to die to ensure the success of their attacks.

Terrorist Methods Terrorist acts involve violence. The weapons most frequently used by terrorists are the bomb and the bullet. The targets of terrorist attacks often are crowded places where people normally feel safe—subway stations, bus stops, restaurants, or shopping malls, for example. Or terrorists might target something that symbolizes what they are against, such as a government building

TAKING NOTES

Categorizing Use a chart to note information about the September 11 terrorist attacks and other terrorist incidents around the world.

World Terrorist Incidents

September 11 Attacks



▲ The sarin gas attack in the Tokyo subway in 1995 is the most notorious act of biochemical terrorism.

or a religious site. Such targets are carefully chosen in order to gain the most attention and to achieve the highest level of intimidation. **A**

Recently, some terrorist groups have used biological and chemical agents in their attacks. These actions involved the release of bacteria or poisonous gases into the atmosphere. While both biological and chemical attacks can inflict terrible casualties, they are equally powerful in generating great fear among the public. This development in terrorism is particularly worrisome, because biochemical agents are relatively easy to acquire. Laboratories all over the world use bacteria and viruses in the development of new drugs. And the raw materials needed to make some deadly chemical agents can be purchased in many stores.

Cyberterrorism is another recent development. This involves politically motivated attacks on information systems, such as hacking into computer networks or spreading computer viruses. Experts suggest that as more governments and businesses switch to computers to store data and run operations, the threat of cyberterrorism will increase.

Responding to Terrorism Governments take various steps to stamp out terrorism. Most adopt a very aggressive approach in tracking down and punishing terrorist groups. This approach includes infiltrating the groups to gather information on membership and future plans. It also includes striking back harshly after a terrorist attack, even to the point of assassinating known terrorist leaders.

Another approach governments use is to make it more difficult for terrorists to act. This involves eliminating extremists' sources of funds and persuading governments not to protect or support terrorist groups. It also involves tightening security measures so as to reduce the targets vulnerable to attack.

Terrorism Around the World

The problem of modern international terrorism first came to world attention in a shocking way during the 1972 Summer Olympic Games in Munich, Germany (then West Germany). Members of a Palestinian terrorist group killed two Israeli athletes and took nine others hostage, later killing them. Five of the terrorists and a police officer were killed during a rescue attempt. Since then, few regions of the world have been spared from terrorist attacks.

The Middle East Many terrorist organizations have roots in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict over land in the Middle East. Groups such as the Palestine Islamic Jihad, Hamas, and Hizballah have sought to prevent a peace settlement between Israel and the Palestinians. They want a homeland for the Palestinians on their own terms, deny Israel's right to exist, and seek Israel's destruction. In a continual cycle of violence, the Israelis retaliate after most terrorist attacks, and the terrorists strike again. Moderates in the region believe that the only long-term solution is a compromise between Israel and the Palestinians over the issue of land. However, the violence has continued with only an occasional break.

MAIN IDEA

Analyzing Motives

A Of what value would gaining public attention be to a terrorist group?

Europe Many countries in Europe have been targets of domestic terrorists who oppose government policies. For example, for decades the mostly Catholic Irish Republican Army (IRA) engaged in terrorist attacks against Britain because it opposed British control of Northern Ireland. Since 1998, however, the British, the IRA, and representatives of Northern Ireland’s Protestants have been negotiating a peaceful solution to the situation. An agreement was reached in 2005.

Asia Afghanistan, in Southwest Asia, became a haven for international terrorists after the Taliban came to power in 1996. (See Chapter 34.) In that year, Osama bin Laden, a Saudi Arabian millionaire involved in terrorist activities, moved to Afghanistan. There he began using mountain hideouts as a base of operations for his global network of Muslim terrorists known as al-Qaeda.

Terrorist groups have arisen in East Asia, as well. One, known as Aum Shinrikyo (“Supreme Truth”), is a religious cult that wants to control Japan. In 1995, cult members released sarin, a deadly nerve gas, in subway stations in Tokyo. Twelve people were killed and more than 5,700 injured. This attack brought global attention to the threat of biological and chemical agents as terrorist weapons.

Africa Civil unrest and regional wars were the root causes of most terrorist activity in Africa at the end of the 20th century. But al-Qaeda cells operated in many African countries, and several major attacks against U.S. personnel and facilities in Africa were linked to al-Qaeda. In 1998, for example, bombings at the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania left over 200 dead and more than 5,000 people injured. The United States responded to these attacks with missile strikes on suspected terrorist facilities in Afghanistan and in Sudan, where bin Laden was based from 1991 to 1996.

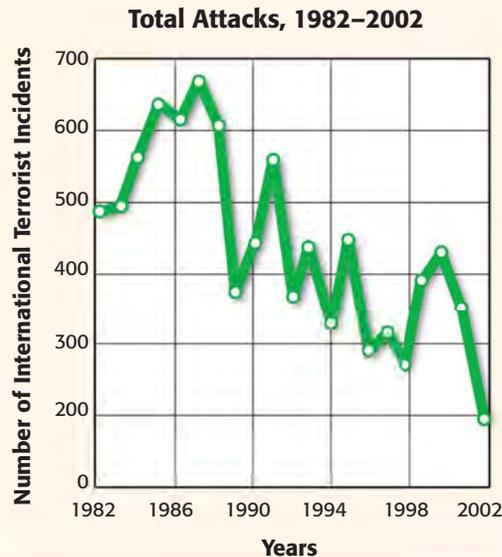
Latin America Narcoterrorism, or terrorism linked to drug trafficking, is a major problem in Latin America, particularly in Colombia. The powerful groups that control that country’s narcotics trade have frequently turned to violence. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) is a left-wing guerrilla group that has links with these drug traffickers. The FARC has attacked Colombian political, military, and economic targets, as well as those with American ties. **B**

MAIN IDEA

Analyzing Causes

B What are some reasons for terrorism in various regions of the world?

International Terrorist Attacks



International Casualties of Terrorism, 1997–2002

	Africa	Asia	Eurasia	Latin America	Middle East	North America	Western Europe
1997	28	344	27	11	480	7	17
1998	5,379	635	12	195	68	0	405
1999	185	690	8	10	31	0	16
2000	102	904	103	20	78	0	4
2001	150	651	0	6	513	4,091	20
2002	12	1281	615	52	772	0	6
Total	5,856	4,505	765	294	1,942	4,098	468

Source: U.S. Department of State

SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Charts and Graphs

- 1. Comparing** Which three areas suffered the greatest numbers of casualties of terrorism?
- 2. Drawing Conclusions** How would you describe the overall trend in worldwide terrorist attacks since the mid-1980s?

Attack on the United States

On the morning of September 11, 2001, 19 Arab terrorists hijacked four airliners heading from East Coast airports to California. In a series of coordinated strikes, the hijackers crashed two of the jets into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City and a third into the Pentagon outside Washington, D.C. The fourth plane crashed in an empty field in Pennsylvania. 

The Destruction The planes, loaded with fuel, became destructive missiles when they crashed into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The explosions and fires so weakened the damaged skyscrapers that they crumbled to the ground less than two hours after impact. The fire and raining debris caused nearby buildings to collapse as well. The damage at the Pentagon, though extensive, was confined to one section of the building.

The toll in human lives was great. About 3,000 people died in the attacks. All passengers on the four planes were killed, as well as workers and visitors in the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The dead included more than 340 New York City firefighters and 60 police officers who rushed to the scene to help and were buried in the rubble when the skyscrapers collapsed.

The Impact of the Attack September 11 had a devastating impact on the way Americans looked at life. Many reported feeling that everything had changed—that life would never be the same. Before, Americans had viewed terrorism as something that happened in other countries. Now they felt vulnerable and afraid.

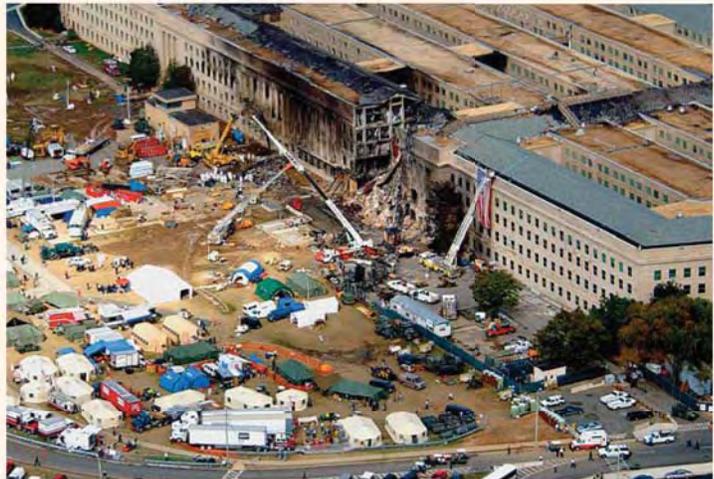
This sense of vulnerability was underscored just a few days after September 11, when terrorism struck the United States again. Letters containing spores of a bacterium that causes the disease anthrax were sent to people in the news media and to members of Congress in Washington, D.C. Anthrax bacteria, when inhaled, can

MAIN IDEA

Making Inferences

 Why were the specific targets of the September 11 attacks selected by the terrorists?

Destruction in New York City and the Pentagon



▲ The strike on the Pentagon left a charred, gaping hole in the southwest side of the building.

◀ Stunned bystanders look on as smoke billows from the twin towers of the World Trade Center.



damage the lungs and cause death. Five people who came in contact with spores from the tainted letters died of inhalation anthrax. Two were postal workers.

Investigators did not find a link between the September 11 attacks and the anthrax letters. Some of them believed that the letters might be the work of a lone terrorist rather than an organized group. Regardless of who was responsible for the anthrax scare, it caused incredible psychological damage. Many Americans were now fearful of an everyday part of life—the mail.

▲ A hazardous materials team prepares to enter a congressional building during the anthrax scare.

The United States Responds

Immediately after September 11, the United States called for an international effort to combat terrorist groups. President George W. Bush declared, “This battle will take time and resolve. But make no mistake about it: we will win.”

As a first step in this battle, the U.S. government organized a massive effort to identify those responsible for the attacks. Officials concluded that Osama bin Laden directed the terrorists. The effort to bring him to justice led the United States to begin military action against Afghanistan in October, as you read in Chapter 34.

Antiterrorism Measures The federal government warned Americans that additional terrorist attacks were likely. It then took action to prevent such attacks. The [Department of Homeland Security](#) was created in 2002 to coordinate national efforts against terrorism. Antiterrorism measures included a search for terrorists in the United States and the passage of antiterrorism laws.

The al-Qaeda network was able to carry out its terrorist attacks partly through the use of “sleepers.” These are agents who move to a country, blend into a community, and then, when directed, secretly prepare for and carry out terrorist acts. A search to find any al-Qaeda terrorists who remained in the United States was begun. Officials began detaining and questioning Arabs and other Muslims whose behavior was considered suspicious or who had violated immigration regulations.

Some critics charged that detaining these men was unfair to the innocent and violated their civil rights. However, the government held that the actions were justified because the hijackers had been Arabs. The government further argued that it was not unusual to curtail civil liberties during wartime in order to protect national security. This argument was also used to justify a proposal to try some terrorist suspects in military tribunals rather than in criminal courts. On October 26, 2001,



▲ Passengers wait to go through a security check at La Guardia Airport in New York.

President Bush signed an antiterrorism bill into law. The law, known as the **USA Patriot Act**, allowed the government to

- detain foreigners suspected of terrorism for seven days without charging them with a crime
- tap all phones used by suspects and monitor their e-mail and Internet use
- make search warrants valid across states
- order U.S. banks to investigate sources of large foreign accounts
- prosecute terrorist crimes without any time restrictions or limitations.

Again, critics warned that these measures allowed the government to infringe on people’s civil rights.

Aviation Security The federal government also increased its involvement in aviation security. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) ordered airlines to install bars on cockpit doors to prevent passengers from gaining control of planes, as the

hijackers had done. Sky marshals—trained security officers—were assigned to fly on planes, and National Guard troops began patrolling airports.

The Aviation and Transportation Security Act, which became law in November 2001, made airport security the responsibility of the federal government. Previously, individual airports had been responsible. The law provided for a federal security force that would inspect passengers and carry-on bags. It also required the screening of checked baggage.

Airline and government officials debated these and other measures for making air travel more secure. Major concerns were long delays at airports and respect for passengers’ privacy. It has also become clear that public debate over security measures will continue as long as the United States fights terrorism and tries to balance national security with civil rights.

SECTION 4 ASSESSMENT

TERMS & NAMES 1. For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- terrorism
- cyberterrorism
- Department of Homeland Security
- USA Patriot Act

USING YOUR NOTES

2. How were the September 11 terrorist attacks unique? How were they similar to other terrorist incidents?

World Terrorist Incidents
September 11 Attacks

MAIN IDEAS

3. How has terrorism changed in recent years?
4. What methods do terrorists use?
5. What steps did the United States take in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001?

CRITICAL THINKING & WRITING

6. **ANALYZING MOTIVES** What might cause individuals to use terror tactics to bring about change?
7. **FORMING AND SUPPORTING OPINIONS** Is it important for the U.S. government to respect peoples’ civil rights as it wages a war against terrorism? Why or why not?
8. **DRAWING CONCLUSIONS** What do you think has been the greatest impact of terrorism on American life?
9. **WRITING ACTIVITY** **SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY** Conduct research to find information on how science and technology are used to combat terrorism. Then write an **illustrated report** titled “Science and Counterterrorism.”

INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGY INTERNET ACTIVITY

Use the Internet to research terrorist incidents since the end of 2001. Use your findings to create a **time line** titled “Recent Major Terrorist Attacks.”

INTERNET KEYWORD
terrorism