

## How Terrorist Groups End

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How do terrorist groups end? All terrorist groups eventually end. But do they end because police or military forces defeat them? Do they end by achieving victory? Or do they end for other reasons? As noted earlier, there has been little systematic work on how terrorist groups end. Understanding how terrorist groups have ended has significant implications for the U.S. struggle against such groups as al Qa'ida.

This chapter reviews the history of terrorist groups since 1968 and argues that terrorist groups usually end for two major reasons: They decide to adopt nonviolent tactics and join the political process, or local law-enforcement agencies arrest or kill key members of the group. Military force has rarely been the primary reason that terrorist groups end, and, since 1968, few groups have ended by achieving victory. This suggests that, where terrorist groups cannot or will not make a transition to nonviolence, policing is usually most effective in defeating terrorist groups. Police have a permanent presence in cities, towns, and villages; a better understanding of local communities than other security forces; and better intelligence. This means that they are best able to understand and penetrate terrorist networks. The use of military force has usually been effective in defeating terrorist groups when the terrorist group is so powerful that it becomes involved in an insurgency. We define an *insurgency* as an internal conflict in which (1) a group or groups are trying to overthrow the government or secede from it, (2) more than 1,000 have died over the course of the war, and (3) more than 100 have died on each side.