

# ***COUNTERING THE CHANGING THREAT OF INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM***

## **Report of the National Commission on Terrorism**

Pursuant to Public Law 277,  
105th Congress

# FOREWORD

Six months ago, the National Commission on Terrorism began its Congressionally mandated evaluation of America's laws, policies, and practices for preventing and punishing terrorism directed at American citizens. After a thorough review, the Commission concluded that, although American strategies and policies are basically on the right track, significant aspects of implementation are seriously deficient. Thus, this report does not attempt to describe all American counterterrorism activities, but instead concentrates on problem areas and recommended changes. We wish to note, however, that in the course of our assessment we gained renewed confidence in the abilities and dedication of the Americans who stand on the front lines in the fight against terrorism.


Each of the 10 commissioners approached these issues from a different perspective. If any one commissioner had written the report on his or her own, it might not be identical to that which we are presenting today. However, through a process of careful deliberation, we reached the consensus reflected in this report.

Throughout our deliberations, we were mindful of several important points:

- The imperative to find terrorists and prevent their attacks requires energetic use of all the legal authorities and instruments available.
- Terrorist attacks against America threaten more than the tragic loss of individual lives. Some terrorists hope to provoke a response that undermines our Constitutional system of government. So U.S. leaders must find the appropriate balance by adopting counterterrorism policies which are effective but also respect the democratic traditions which are the bedrock of America's strength.

- Combating terrorism should not be used as a pretext for discrimination against any segment of society. Terrorists often claim to act on behalf of ethnic groups, religions, or even entire nations. These claims are false. Terrorists represent only a minuscule faction of any such group.
- People turn to terrorism for various reasons. Many terrorists act from political, ideological, or religious convictions. Some are simply criminals for hire. Others become terrorists because of perceived oppression or economic deprivation. An astute American foreign policy must take into account the reasons people turn to terror and, where appropriate and feasible, address them. No cause, however, justifies terrorism.

Terrorists attack American targets more often than those of any other country. America's pre-eminent role in the world guarantees that this will continue to be the case, and the threat of attacks creating massive casualties is growing. If the United States is to protect itself, if it is to remain a world leader, this nation must develop and continuously refine sound counterterrorism policies appropriate to the rapidly changing world around us.

  
Ambassador L. Paul Bremer III  
Chairman

  
Maurice Sonnenberg  
Vice Chairman