

Terrorism and the Olympics: Sochi, Russia 2014

In anticipation of the upcoming Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, Russia, START has compiled this background report on the patterns of terrorist activity in Russia and the history of terrorism and the Olympics since 1970. Two suicide bombings in December targeted a train station and trolleybus in Volgograd, Russia, killing at least 34 people and wounding many more. The attacks, which took place approximately 400 miles from Sochi, highlight the potential threat of terrorist violence at the 2014 Winter Games. The militant group Vilayat Dagestan, part of the Caucasus Emirate, claimed responsibility for the Volgograd attacks. A statement made by the group threatens that if the Winter Olympics are held, the group will carry out additional attacks, particularly targeting tourists in retaliation for “the Muslim blood that is shed every day around the world, be it in Afghanistan, Somalia, Syria, all around the world.”¹

Here we review patterns of terrorist activity in Russia between 1992 and 2012, in particular trends over time, geography, perpetrators, tactics, and targets. We also analyze terrorist attacks that have taken place during the Olympic Games in the host country, attacks indirectly related to the Olympic Games, and attacks targeting other major sporting events. Bearing in mind that the heightened profile of international sporting events might increase the likelihood of a terrorist attack while the heightened security and surveillance might decrease the likelihood of an attack, we evaluate general patterns of terrorism in Olympic host countries at the time of the Games, compared to the same time period the previous year. The analysis indicates that there is no consistent increase or decrease in the frequency of terrorist attacks during the Olympics, suggesting that efforts to reinforce security are generally effective at mitigating any potential threats that may exist.

TERRORISM IN RUSSIA AND THE NORTH CAUCASUS REGION

Since the breakup of the Soviet Union in December 1991 through 2012, there have been nearly 1,900 terrorist attacks in Russia that resulted in more than 3,800 deaths and involved more than 7,200 hostages. Russia ranks seventh among countries with the most terrorist attacks and the most deaths from terrorist attacks.

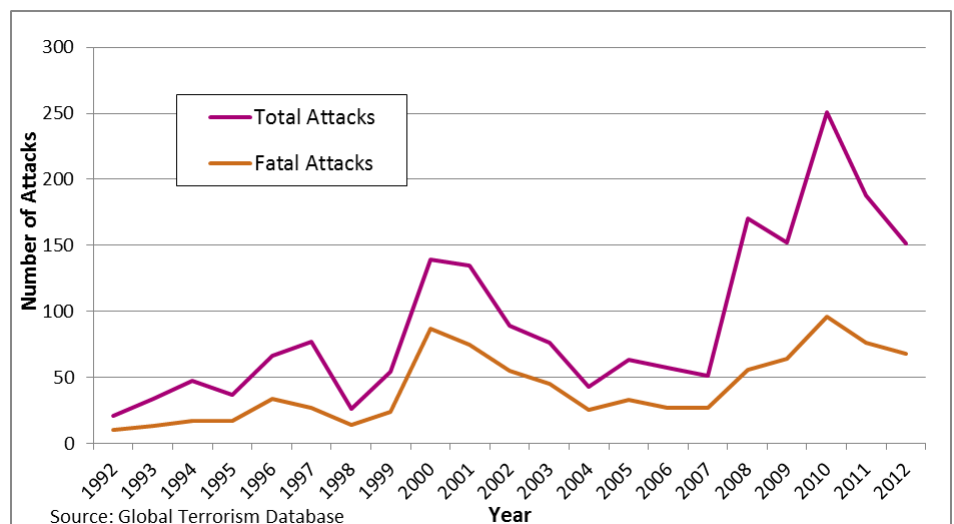
TIMELINE, 1992-2012

The frequency of terrorist attacks in Russia has been steadily increasing over the past two decades, ranging from approximately 20 attacks in 1992 to a peak of more than 250 in 2010. However, in 2011 and 2012 there were considerable declines in both total attacks and fatal attacks. Preliminary data indicate that this downward trend in the frequency of attacks continues through the first six months of 2013.

Forty-six percent of these attacks caused at least one fatality, which is slightly lower than the global average during this time period (50%). Twenty-two attacks caused more than 25 fatalities, all of which occurred between 1995 and 2011.

The deadliest terrorist attack in Russia was the 2004 school siege in Beslan, in which approximately 1,200 adults and children were taken hostage, resulting in more than 300 deaths and 700 injuries following a protracted standoff lasting several days.

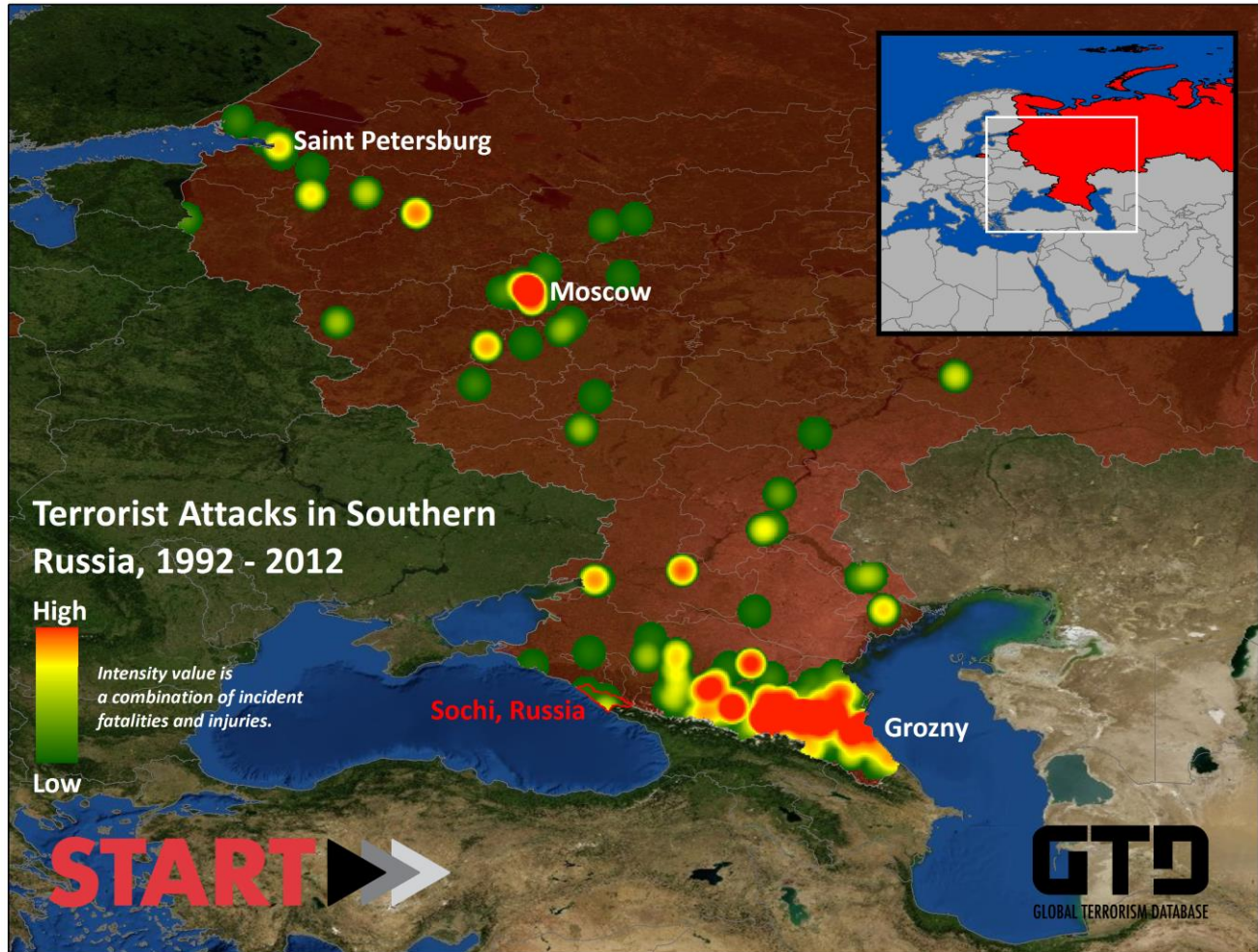
Terrorist attacks in Russia, 1992-2012



¹ Heritage, Timothy. ‘Militant Islamist video threatens Winter Olympics,’ Reuters, January 20, 2014. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/01/20/us-russia-olympics-militants-idUSBREA0JOCX20140120>

GEOGRAPHY

Terrorist attacks have occurred in 50 of Russia's federal subjects. Only eight attacks have taken place in Krasnodar Krai, the area of the North Caucasus region where Sochi is located on the Black Sea. However, the majority of attacks in Russia are geographically concentrated in nearby North Caucasian republics, including in Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, North Ossetia-Alania, Stavropol Krai, and Karachay-Cherkessia. Attacks also occurred frequently in Moscow and to a lesser extent, Saint Petersburg and Sverdlosk Oblast.



Ten Regions with Highest Number of Terrorist Attacks, 1992-2012

Administrative Region	Number of Attacks	Number of Fatalities
Chechnya	533	1172
Dagestan	484	610
Ingushetia	322	244
Moscow Federal City	163	172
Kabardino-Balkaria	153	608
North Ossetia-Alania	52	534
Stavropol	32	263
Karachay-Cherkessia	22	13
Saint Petersburg	19	8
Sverdlovsk	10	1

Source: Global Terrorism Database

PERPETRATOR GROUPS

For the vast majority of terrorist attacks in Russia (76%), information about the perpetrators is not available. The remaining attacks are attributed to 23 named organizations and various generic identifiers, including most commonly “Chechen rebels,” who are responsible for more than 300 attacks, 17 percent of the total. The table below shows the activity of the named groups. Note that some attacks were carried out by more than one group, so the attack statistics are repeated for each group. For example, the Moscow theater attack in 2002 involved the Riyadus-Salikhin Battalion, the Special Purpose Islamic Regiment, and the Islamic International Peacekeeping Brigade. This attack, the 129 deaths that resulted, and 850 hostages involved are attributed to each of the three groups on the table below.

Perpetrator Groups Active in Russia, 1992-2012

Named Perpetrator Groups	Attacks	Fatalities	Hostages
Caucasus Emirate	31	140	1
Armed Forces of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria	12	99	0
Riyadus-Salikhin Reconnaissance and Sabotage Battalion of Chechen Martyrs	11	541	2050
Dagestani Shari'ah Jamaat	5	13	0
Islambouli Brigades of al-Qa'ida	4	111	90
NVF	4	14	3
Special Purpose Islamic Regiment (SPIR)	3	143	850
Chechen Lone Wolf Group	2	23	2116
Kata'ib al-Khoul	2	2	0
People's Militia of Dagestan	2	0	14
SKIF Detachment	2	0	0
Islamic International Peacekeeping Brigade (IIPB)	1	129	850
Grozny Jamaat	1	17	0
Karabulak Gang	1	2	0
Sword of Islam	1	1	0
Militant Organization of Russian Nationalists	1	1	0
Wolves of Islam	1	1	0
Izberbash Gang	1	1	0
Black Hawks (Anti-Wahhabists)	1	0	0
Vanguard of Red Youth (AKM)	1	0	0
Congress of Kabardian People	1	0	0
Revolutionary Military Council	1	0	0
New Revolutionary Alternative (NRA)	1	0	0

Source: Global Terrorism Database

Perpetrators of terrorism in Russia, particularly in the context of the North Caucasus region, are highly factionalized and groups frequently organize themselves around key individuals who serve as unit commanders. Units led by Shamil Basayev, Ibn al-Khattab, and Doku Umarov are responsible for dozens of attacks. Basayev and al-Khattab were killed in 2006 and 2002, respectively. Umarov, who has made specific threats against the Sochi Games, claimed responsibility for orchestrating several major suicide attacks, including the Domodedovo Airport bombing in 2011 and the coordinated Moscow Metro bombings in 2010. There have been numerous unconfirmed reports of Umarov's death, most recently on January 28, 2014.

Twenty attacks in Russia are attributed to “**Black Widow**” female suicide bombers. While not a formal group, Black Widow suicide bombers have been associated with various units within the Chechen separatist movement and Caucasus Emirate. These attacks killed nearly 700 people and wounded nearly 1,500.

TACTICS AND TARGETS

The types of attacks that took place in Russia between 1992 and 2012 are generally consistent with the types of attacks that occurred worldwide during this time period. One exception is that more than half (53%) of all terrorist attacks in Russia between 1992 and 2012 were classified as bombings, compared to 47 percent globally. In particular, nearly 70 suicide bombings have taken place in Russia, killing nearly 700 people.

Russia experienced relatively fewer hostage takings than the global average. In fact, less than five percent of attacks in Russia were classified as kidnappings, hijackings, or barricade incidents. Despite this relative infrequency, more hostages have been taken in terrorist attacks in Russia than in any other country between 1992 and 2012. More than 7,200 people have been taken hostage across 100 attacks in Russia during this time period, 31 percent more than in Pakistan, which is ranked second.

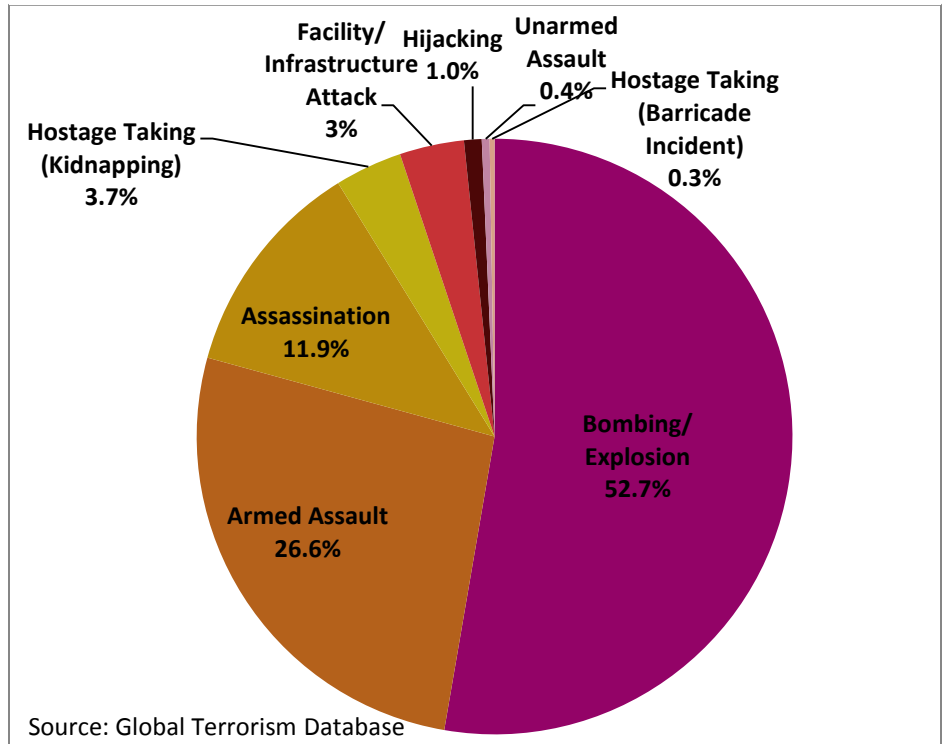
This exceptionally high number of hostages is a result of several events that involved hundreds if not thousands of victims. Three particularly elaborate attacks involved more than 1,000 hostages each and continued for one to five days. These include the Beslan school siege in 2004, a 1995 attack at a hospital in Budyonnovsk, and a 1996 attack in Kizlyar, Dagestan.

The most common targets of terrorist attacks in Russia are police (25%), general government (18%), private citizens and property (16%), and the military (10%). This is somewhat of a departure from global trends, where private citizens and property comprise 28 percent of all targets of terrorist attacks between 1992 and 2012, and police and general government each make up 14 percent.

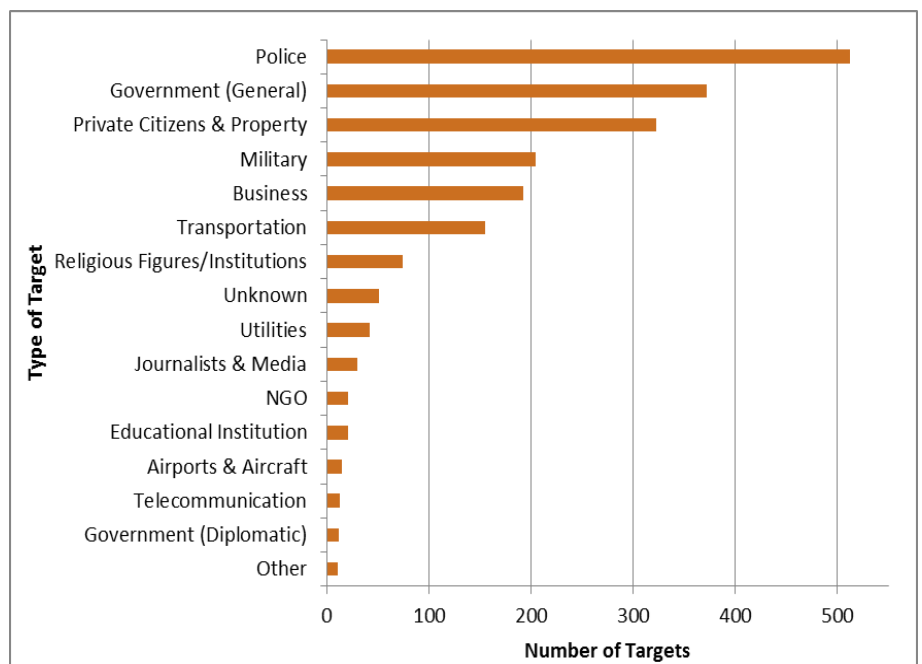
The vast majority of targets are Russian (97%), however terrorist attacks in Russia have targeted more than 30 different nationalities from many regions of the world. Aside from Russian targets, U.S. targets were attacked most frequently (11 targets), followed by the United Kingdom (7 targets). Most of these attacks occurred in the 1990s and targeted diplomatic entities, businesses, and NGOs.

Attacks against tourists are typically rare, however only three attacks in Russia targeted tourists in particular. Incidentally, one of them occurred in Sochi in 2008 when a bomb containing of TNT exploded on a beach, killing two tourists and wounding 13 others. No group claimed responsibility for the attack.

Types of terrorist attacks in Russia, 1992-2012

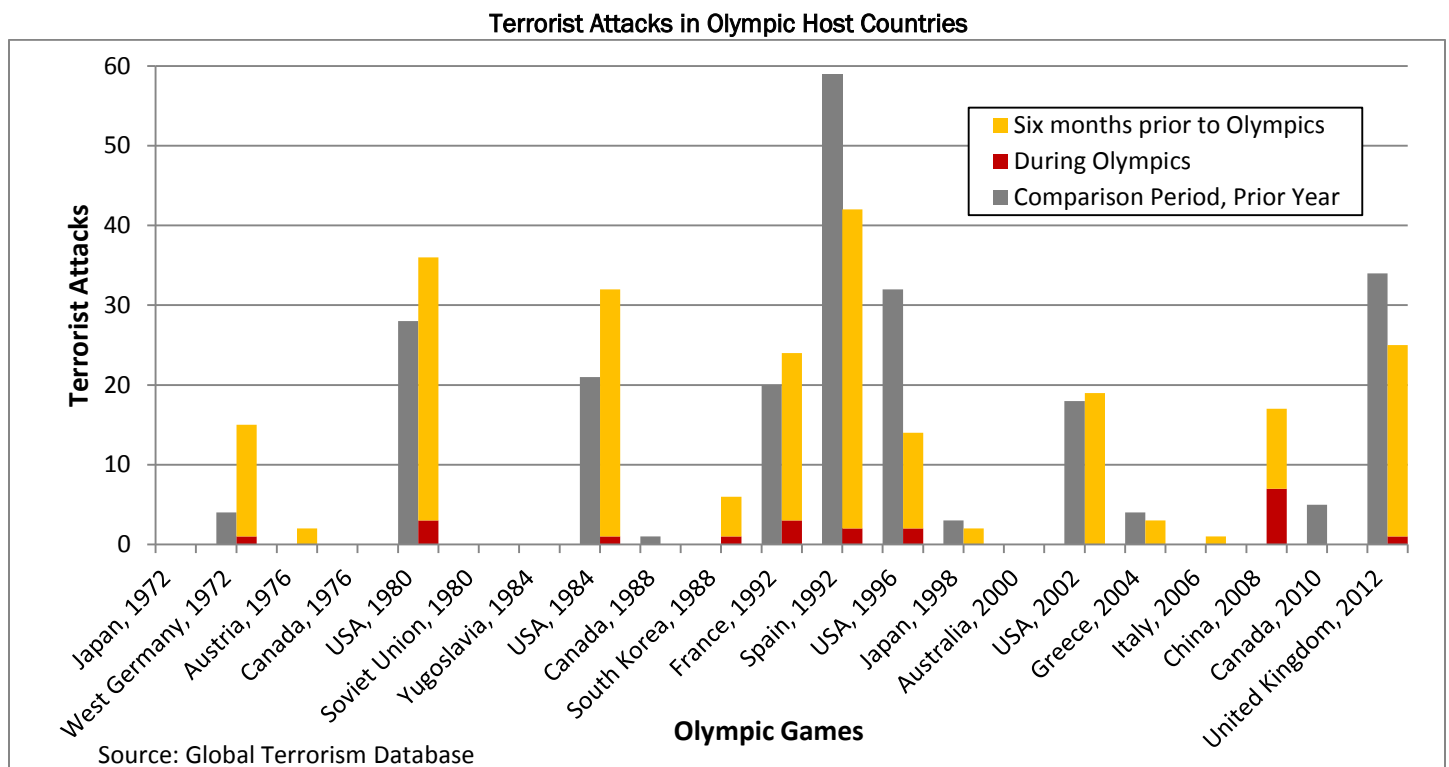


Targets of terrorist attacks in Russia, 1992-2012



PATTERNS OF TERRORISM IN 21 OLYMPIC HOST COUNTRIES

To better understand general patterns of terrorism in Olympic host countries, we use the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) to compare the number of terrorist attacks and casualties that happened in the host country during the Olympic Games with the number of terrorist attacks and casualties for the same time period previous year (Figure 1).² Because preparation for the Games and international attention begins long before the official start of the Games, the time periods we evaluate begin six months before opening ceremonies and end on the day of closing ceremonies. We do not assume that all attacks taking place during the “Olympic” time period are explicitly linked to the Olympics, however one could hypothesize that the same mechanisms that may increase or decrease the likelihood of a terrorist attack in the host city during the Olympics also impact patterns of terrorism at other locations in the country, among all types of perpetrators, and in advance of the Games themselves.



Overall, the locations of the Olympic Games are quite safe with respect to terrorism. In five Olympic venues there were no terrorist attacks reported in the GTD during the Olympics, six months prior to the Olympics, or during the same time period the previous year. These locations include Japan 1972, Canada 1976, Soviet Union 1980, Yugoslavia 1984 and Australia 2000. Additionally, in South Korea and Canada in 1988, Japan in 1998, Greece in 2004 and Canada 2010, there were no fatal attacks recorded during any of the time periods we examined.

The location with the greatest number of attacks during the actual Olympic Games is China 2008, with seven. The location with the greatest number of fatalities during the Olympic Games is West Germany 1972 with 16, and the most injuries took place in the United States in 1996 with 110. The Olympic host country that experienced the most attacks during both the Olympic period and the comparison period was Spain 1992.

Although the numbers of attacks in these locations are generally low, four locations experienced terrorist attacks during the Olympic period, but not during the comparison period the year before (Austria 1976, South Korea 1988, Italy 2006 and China 2008). Two others – Canada in 1988 and Canada in 2010 – experienced attacks during the comparison period the prior year but not during the Olympic period.

Of the 16 countries that experienced any attacks during the time periods we analyzed, nine had a higher number of attacks during the Olympic period than the comparison period. Of these nine cases, six took place in 1992 or earlier. Seven venues had a lower number of attacks during the Olympic period. All seven cases in which there were fewer attacks at the time of the Olympics than the year prior took place since 1988. Note, however, that these findings are generally consistent with temporal

² We exclude the 1994 Winter Olympics in Lillehammer, Norway because data on terrorism from 1993 are missing from the Global Terrorism Database.

patterns in terrorism worldwide, which increase from the 1970s through the early 1990s, decrease in the mid-1990s and early 2000s, and increase in the mid-2000s.

Due to the fact that fatal attacks in Olympic locations are rare and fatality statistics are sensitive to atypical events such as the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing and the 2001 attacks on September 11 in the United States, no clear pattern emerges regarding the relative lethality of attacks that take place in the context of the Olympics. In four locations the total number of fatalities during the Olympic period was lower than the comparison period the previous year. In six locations, the total number of fatalities during the Olympic period was higher than the comparison period.

OLYMPICS-RELATED ATTACKS

Since 1970 there have been a number of attacks directly and indirectly related to the Olympic Games and other major sporting events. These include attacks that occurred during the competition as well as attacks on officials, athletes, tourists, venues and crowds of viewers.

FATAL ATTACKS DURING THE OLYMPICS

There have been lethal attacks in three host cities during the Olympic Games. These include the 1972 Munich attack, the 1996 Atlanta attack and two attacks during the 2008 Beijing Games. The perpetrators of these attacks represent a variety of ideological influences. Combined, they resulted in the deaths of 16 victims and six perpetrators. More than 100 people were wounded.

1972 MUNICH

On Sept. 5, 1972 eight assailants from the Palestinian Black September Organization broke into an apartment complex housing the Israeli Olympic team. Initially, two members of the team were killed and nine others were taken hostage. After a daylong standoff during which the hostage-takers demanded that Israel release more than 200 Palestinian prisoners, the terrorists and hostages travelled by bus and helicopter to a nearby air base where a plane was waiting. At the air base, police opened fire and a shootout took place during which one of the perpetrators detonated a grenade in the helicopter carrying the hostages. Ultimately, all nine hostages, one West German policeman and five Black September members were killed.



1996 ATLANTA



On July 27, 1996 a pipe bomb packed with nails and screws and hidden inside a backpack exploded in Atlanta's Centennial Park, where a crowd had gathered for a concert. The explosion killed one person and wounded more than 100 others. A cameraman also died of a heart attack while running to cover the event. Initially there was little known about the perpetrator, however in 1998 Federal authorities charged Eric Rudolph with the Centennial Park bombing, as well as the 1997 bombings at a gay nightclub and an abortion clinic, both in Atlanta. Reports indicate that letters claiming responsibility for these bombings were signed "Army of God." Rudolph was arrested in 2003 in Murphy, NC. He has since confessed to the Centennial Park bombing and is currently serving multiple life sentences in prison.

2008 BEIJING

On Aug. 9, 2008 a knife-wielding assailant killed an American businessman and injured his wife and their tour guide. The couple's daughter, a former Olympic volleyball player, was with them at the time of the attack and was unharmed. Their son-in-law was the coach of the US men's volleyball team. The attack occurred at the Drum Tower, an ancient landmark in Beijing located three miles from the main Olympic stadium. The perpetrator, Tang Yongming, committed suicide following the attack by jumping from the second floor of the tower. The motive for the attack is unclear and reports speculate that the perpetrator was mentally ill. Tang had no criminal record or known ties to terrorist organizations.



On Aug. 13, 2008 a bomb detonated at a building in the Qinhuangdao economic and technological development zone near Beijing. Two people were killed by the explosion. Little additional information about the event is available, and the perpetrator is unknown. Chinese authorities indicate that the explosion was related to production activities.

TERRORIST ATTACKS LINKED TO THE OLYMPIC GAMES

In addition to the events described above, a number of other attacks worldwide were indirectly linked to the Olympic Games. The table below illustrates the various locations, tactics and targets of these attacks.

Attacks indirectly linked to the Olympic Games

Year	Location	Details
1983	San Salvador, El Salvador	Jose Larios Guerra, retired Army Colonel and former head of Salvadoran Olympic Committee assassinated by unidentified gunmen.
1986	Amsterdam, The Netherlands	“Into the Blue Commando of the Revolutionary Cells” claimed responsibility for bombing the headquarters of 1992 candidature committee in Amsterdam to protest Amsterdam’s bid for the 1992 Olympics. There were no casualties.
1992	Barcelona, Spain	Basque Fatherland and Freedom (ETA) suspected in an arson attack on a five-star hotel near the Olympic village in May. In July, two weeks before the Olympics began, ETA offered a two-month ceasefire in exchange for talks with the Spanish government.
1996	Colombia	In February, a Russian cyclist was kidnapped and killed by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). The cyclist was on transcontinental bike tour toward the 1996 Atlanta Summer Games. His body was found a year later near the Panama border.
2006	Iraq	The Chair of Iraq’s Olympic committee, approximately 30 other officials, and numerous athletes were abducted in a series of mass kidnappings. An unspecified number of victims were killed or remain missing.

TERRORIST ATTACKS LINKED TO OTHER SPORTING EVENTS

Several lethal terrorist attacks have taken place in the context of other high profile sporting events. In particular, a number of attacks targeted major marathons around the world and several attacks in Africa targeted fans gathering to watch the FIFA World Cup.

MARATHONS

The most recent attack on a marathon took place on April 15, 2013 when two coordinated explosions targeted the finish line at the Boston Marathon in the United States. The explosions at the marathon, caused by pressure cooker bombs, killed three spectators and wounded over 260 runners and bystanders. The alleged perpetrators, brothers Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev were apprehended by authorities after a four-day search. Tamerlan Tsarnaev was killed in a confrontation with police and Dzhokhar was taken into custody. He pleaded not guilty to charges related to the attack on July 10, 2013.

Previous attacks on marathons have occurred at several locations around the world since 1994. In Sri Lanka, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam operatives killed 14 and wounded scores at the start of a marathon in 2008. In Pakistan, two assaults carried out by supporters of the United Action Forum coalition at a 2006 marathon in Lahore caused property damage and injuries to four people. On three occasions, in 1998, 2003, and 2005, perpetrators targeted the Belfast Marathon in Northern Ireland with mortars, a vehicle bomb, and a pipe bomb, respectively. In all three cases, the explosives were either defused or failed to detonate, causing no casualties. Finally, in 1994 assailants wounded three runners in a marathon in Bahrain, purportedly in protest of the female runners’ attire and the location of the marathon route near a mosque.

FIFA WORLD CUP

In 1994 four World Cup viewers were killed and 15 were injured in a grenade attack in Djibouti. The same year, the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) claimed responsibility for a shooting at a pub in Northern Ireland that killed six and wounded five World Cup viewers.

Even more deadly attacks on World Cup viewers occurred in Africa in 2010. Two al-Shabaab suicide bombers detonated explosives in crowds of people viewing the World Cup on outdoor screens in Kampala, Uganda. In the combined attacks, at least 75 people were killed and more than 70 were injured. The same year, several attacks against World Cup viewers in Afgoye and Mogadishu, Somalia killed at least two people, while others were taken hostage at gunpoint. The group Hizbul al Islam assumed responsibility for the attacks in Somalia, claiming that by gathering to watch the World Cup the victims had violated Islamic law.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

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The data presented here are drawn from START's Global Terrorism Database (GTD) and reports from news media. The GTD contains information on more than 113,000 terrorist incidents that have occurred around the world since 1970. For more information about the GTD, visit www.start.umd.edu/gtd.



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