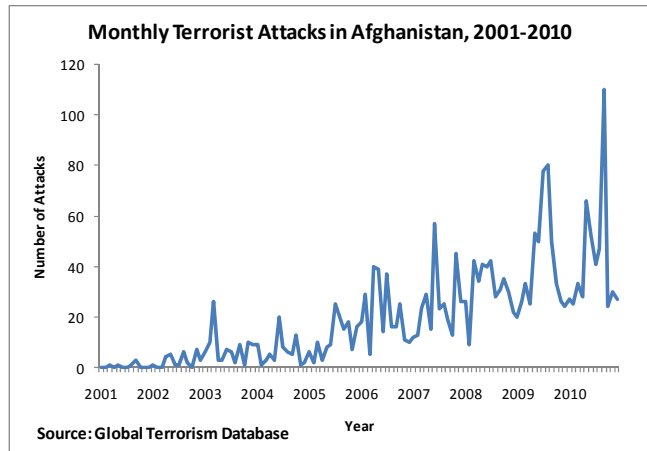
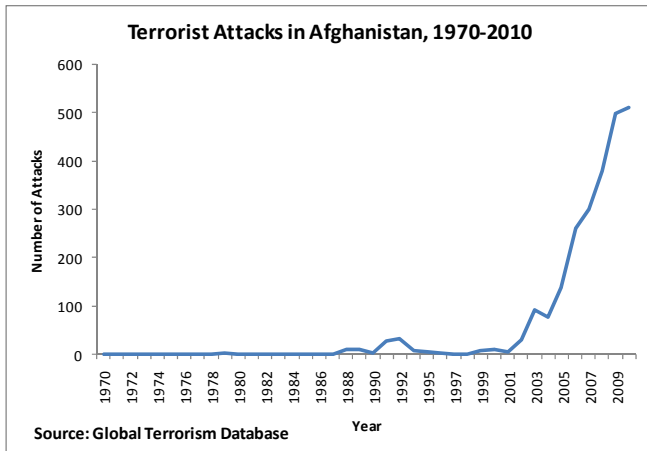




**Background Report: Suicide Attack on Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul, Afghanistan
June 28, 2011**

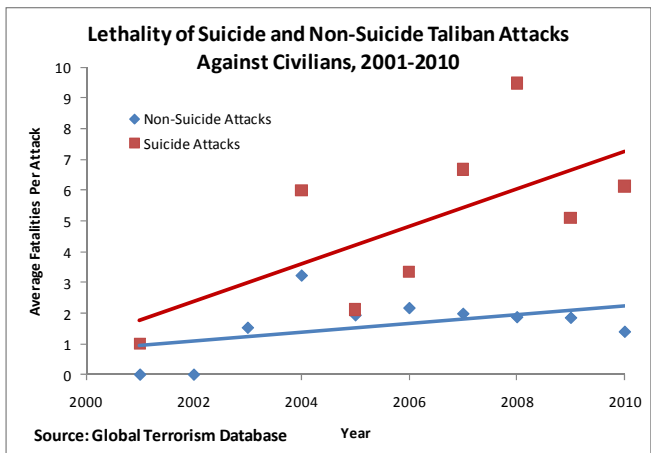
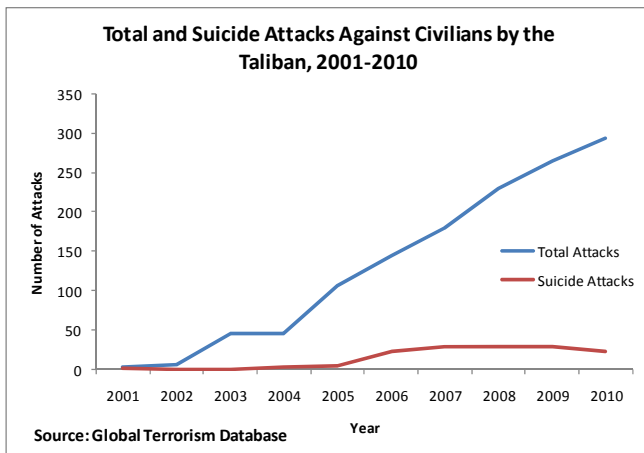
Following yesterday's coordinated attack by the Taliban on the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul, Afghanistan, START has compiled background information on terrorist activities in Afghanistan, attacks by the Taliban, attacks using complex tactics, and attacks by terrorist groups against hotels. The attack on the hotel late Tuesday night used a complex strategy of both vehicle- and person-borne suicide bombs alongside automatic weapons. Suicide bombers are believed to have entered the premises of the hotel by detonating a vehicle-borne Improvised Explosive Device (IED) at the hotel's front gate, while subsequent bombers detonated explosives on the second floor and at the back of the hotel. Firefights between the Taliban and Afghan security forces continued into the night, as the event finally terminated with a joint NATO-Afghan effort. Initial reports suggest eleven victims died in the attack, along with up to 10 terrorists. As many media sources confirm, this incident is not the first coordinated attack against a hotel in Kabul, nor by the Taliban. The coordinated attack is a strategy long used by terrorist organizations, but one that has become increasingly effective in the past five years.

- **WHAT ARE THE TRENDS OF TERRORISM AGAINST CIVILIANS OVER TIME IN AFGHANISTAN?** Since 1970, there have been 2,417 terrorist attacks in Afghanistan, although the majority of those have occurred since the fall of the Taliban in 2001. The monthly number of terrorist attacks in Afghanistan has continuously increased since 2001, with peak activity occurring during the fighting season between April and September of each year, when Taliban members return from replenishing their supplies in Pakistan. Security and diplomatic forces in Afghanistan have heightened their vigilance over concerns about escalating terrorist activity in the wake of the U.S. killing of Osama Bin Laden in May, 2011. The Kabul Intercontinental, popular with Western and wealthier visitors, was enhanced as an attractive Taliban target by the presence of a conference to discuss increasing areas of responsibility for Afghan security forces. Records show the occurrence of previous attacks against this hotel, including rocket attacks in 2003 and 2006, and on multiple occasions from 1992-1996.



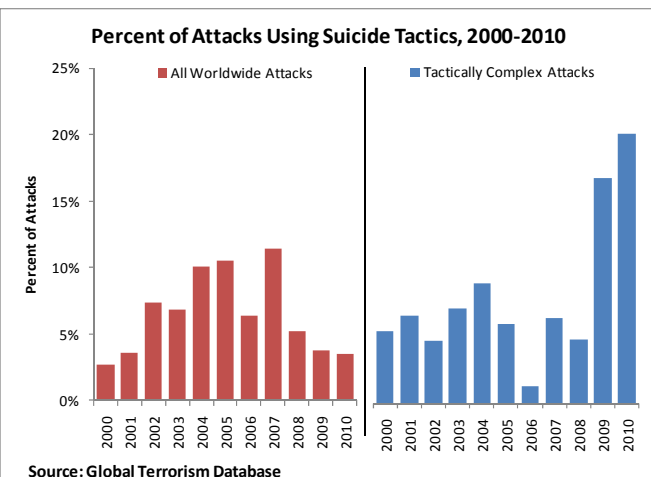
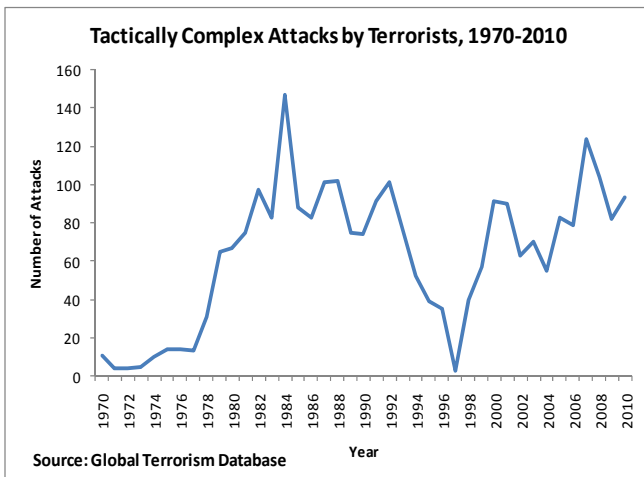
- TERRORIST ATTACKS AGAINST CIVILIANS BY THE TALIBAN**

Beginning in 1996, after years of instability and civil war following the 1989 withdrawal of the Soviet occupation, the Taliban controlled large parts of Afghanistan. Noted for their extreme Islamic fundamentalism and severe repression of women, the Taliban controlled Afghanistan during the period that Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda terrorist network planned the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States. Subsequently, they were ousted by U.S. military forces that same year. Having relocated their operations to remote, lawless parts of Pakistan, the Taliban are now the most active terrorist organization in Afghanistan, accounting for 1,323 attacks against civilians, or 57.7% of all attacks in Afghanistan since 1970. While their use of suicide tactics has not escalated at the same rate as their general increase in violence over the past 10 years, the lethality of their suicide tactics against civilians has dramatically increased. In 2001, the Taliban killed an average of one victim per suicide attack; in 2010 that average increased to over six victims killed per attack, a six-fold increase in lethality. Comparatively, their more conventional attacks (armed assaults, remote-detonated IEDs, etc.) increased in lethality from no fatalities in 2001 to an average of two persons killed per attack in 2010. Suicide attacks still account for less than 10 percent of the Taliban's terrorist attacks against civilians, but account for almost 30 percent of the fatalities attributed to them.



- ### TACTICALLY COMPLEX ATTACKS

In their assault on the Intercontinental Hotel, the Taliban used a combination of vehicle- and person-born IEDs, combined with small arms fire and possible rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs). While complex, the tactics employed are not new. Since 1970, terrorist groups throughout the world have conducted 2,515 tactically complex attacks (using both firearms and explosives in the commission of a single attack), including attacks in: India (242 attacks); Peru (193 attacks); Colombia (190 attacks); Sri Lanka (135 attacks); and Russia (99 attacks). While the Taliban's use of suicide bombers in this instance was distinctive (only 82 tactically complex attacks have used it), increased use of suicide attacks in complex events represents a general trend in the past few years, contrary to the relatively stable overall level of use of suicide tactics by organizations worldwide.

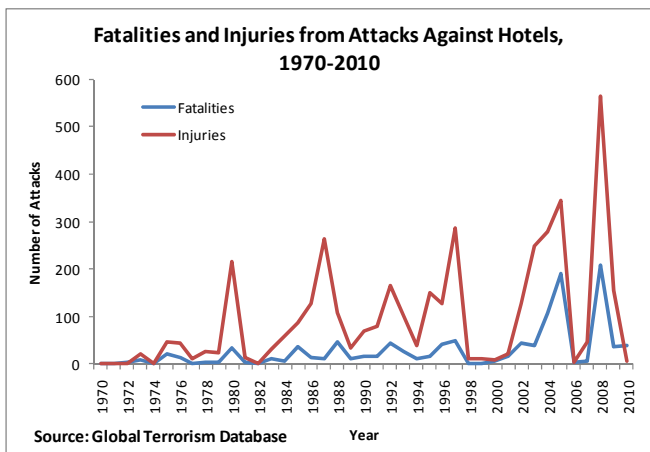
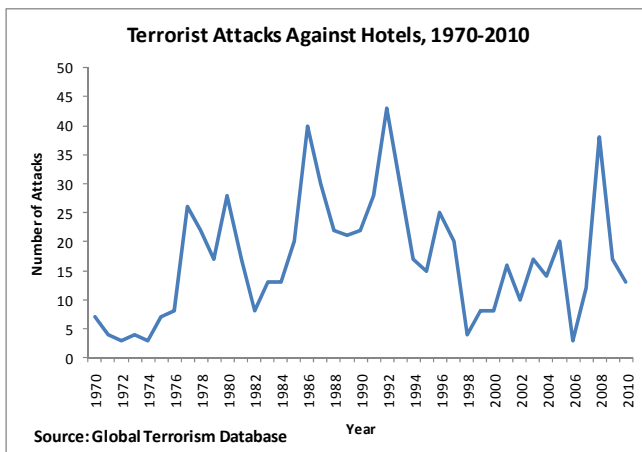


- ### HOW COMMON ARE TERRORIST ATTACKS AGAINST HOTELS?

While not as common as other targets, hotels remain a viable target for terrorist organizations around the world. Hotels are considered soft targets, with a high-level of public traffic and access points that are challenging to secure. The GTD reports over 660 attacks against hotels in the past 40 years, with at least three attacks occurring each year. Over time, these attacks have inflicted a growing number of

injuries and fatalities, peaking in 2008 with 209 killed and 563 wounded. These targets appear to be of increasing interest to terrorist organizations, which have targeted hotels in over 100 attacks since 2005 alone. Notable instances of hotel attacks include:

- March 2002 – a Hamas suicide bomber detonated an IED inside the Park Hotel in Netanya, Israel, killing 20 and wounding 72.
- July 2005 – three coordinated vehicle bombs targeted resorts and hotels in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, killing 91 and wounding over 100. The attack was claimed by the Abdullah Azzam Brigades.
- November 2005 – three bombings of hotels in Amman, Jordan, by Al Qaeda in Iraq killed 57 and wounded over 100.
- January 2008 - an attack by the Taliban using suicide bombers and gunmen targeted the Serena Hotel in Kabul, killing eight people.
- September 2008 – a truck bomb detonated at the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad, Pakistan, killing 60 and injuring more than 200.
- November 2008 – a coordinated attack by Lashkar-e-Taiba in Mumbai targeted the Taj Mahal Palace and Tower Hotel and the Oberoi Trident Hotel, among other sites, killing 171 and wounding 250.



Global Terrorism Database

These data were collected and compiled from the **Global Terrorism Database (GTD)**, www.start.umd.edu/gtd). The GTD contains information on more than 98,000 terrorist incidents that have occurred around the world since 1970. An updated version of the database, with information on incidents through 2010, was released in June 2011.

GTD is a project of the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), a Center of Excellence supported by the Science and Technology Directorate of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. START, based at the University of Maryland, College Park, aims to provide timely guidance on how to disrupt terrorist networks, reduce the incidence of terrorism, and enhance the resilience of U.S. society in the face of the terrorist threat. The material presented here is the product of START and does not express the official opinion of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

For additional information, please contact START at 301 405 6600 or gtd@start.umd.edu.