Patterns of Terrorism in the United States, 1970-2013

Final Report to Resilient Systems Division, DHS Science and Technology Directorate

October 2014

About This Report

The author of this report is Erin Miller at the University of Maryland. Questions about this report should be directed to Erin Miller at eemiller@umd.edu.

The initial collection of data for the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) data was carried out by the Pinkerton Global Intelligence Services (PGIS) between 1970 and 1997 and was donated to the University of Maryland in 2001. Digitizing and validating the original GTD data from 1970 to 1997 was funded by a grant from the National Institute of Justice in 2004 (PIs Gary LaFree and Laura Dugan; grant number: NIJ2002-DT-CX-0001) and in 2005 as part of the START Center of Excellence by the Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Directorate (DHS S&T), Office of University Programs (PI Gary LaFree; grant numbers N00140510629 and 2008-ST-061-ST0004). Data collection for incidents that occurred between January 1998 and March 2008 and updates to the earlier data to make it consistent with new GTD coding criteria were funded by the DHS S&T Human Factors/Behavioral Sciences Division (HFD) (PIs Gary LaFree and Gary Ackerman; contract number HSHQDC-05-X-00482) and conducted by database staff at the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) and the Center for Terrorism and Intelligence Studies (CETIS). For GTD data collection from April 2008 to October 2011, START partnered with the Institute for the Study of Violent Groups (ISVG), headquartered at New Haven University. These efforts were funded by a grant from DHS S&T Office of University Programs, (PI Gary LaFree; grant number 2008-ST-061-ST0004).

Beginning with events that occurred in November 2011, the START Consortium headquartered at the University of Maryland began collecting all data for the GTD on its own. Since then, all GTD collection has been jointly funded by DHS S&T Office of University Programs (PI Gary LaFree; grant number 2012-ST-061-CS0001) and by the U.S. State Department (PIs Gary LaFree and Erin Miller; contract number SAQMMA12M1292). The GTD now includes information on 125,087 terrorist attacks from around the world from 1970 through 2013 and can be accessed directly from the START website.

In addition to ongoing data collection, efforts to review and update information on terrorist attacks in the United States have been supported through funding from the DHS S&T Resilient Systems Division (PI Gary LaFree, grant number # 2009ST108LR0003). Beginning in 2009, efforts to supplement GTD data for the United States have included systematically reviewing numerous chronologies of terrorism and political violence to identify cases that qualify for inclusion in the GTD, as well as updating existing GTD cases with new information. This report focuses on the U.S. segment of the Global Terrorism Database.

About START

The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) is supported in part by the Science and Technology Directorate of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security through a Center of Excellence program based at the University of Maryland. START uses state-of-the-art theories, methods and data from the social and behavioral sciences to improve understanding of the origins, dynamics and social and psychological impacts of terrorism. For more information, contact START at infostart@start.umd.edu or visit www.start.umd.edu.

Citations

To cite this report, please use this format:

Miller, Erin. Patterns of Terrorism in the United States, 1970-2013: Final Report to Resilient Systems Division, DHS Science and Technology Directorate. College Park, MD: START, 2014.

Contents

Executive Summary

Although terrorist attacks occur worldwide, aggregated global trends mask important variation at the regional, national, and local level. Recognition of these nuances is critical for understanding the broader causes and consequences of terrorism. In particular, patterns of terrorism in the United States are unique, characterized by especially distinctive trends in the number of attacks over time, the lethality of attacks, and the diversity of perpetrators, weapons, and targets. In this report we examine patterns of terrorism in the United States from 1970 to 2013 based on analysis of the Global Terrorism Database (GTD).[1]

Attack Patterns and Lethality

- More than 2,600 terrorist attacks took place in the United States between 1970 and 2013; 55 percent of these attacks took place in the 1970s.
- More than 3,500 people were killed in terrorist attacks in the United States; however the vast majority of deaths (85%) took place on a single day—September 11, 2001. An additional 5 percent of all deaths were a result of the 1995 attack on the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City.
- Ninety-one percent of terrorist attacks in the United States between 1970 and 2013 were not lethal.
- The percentage of all attacks in the United States that were lethal ranged from a minimum of zero (in 2000, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2007, and 2011) to a maximum of 45 percent in 2009.
- The amount of property damage caused by non-lethal attacks in the United States between 1970 and 2013 totaled more than $227 million. The damage amounts associated with each attack ranged from $50 to $45 million.
- Between 1970 and 2013, 18 percent of the attacks that took place in the United States were unsuccessful, meaning the perpetrators were either on their way to carry out the attack or had attempted to carry out the attack, but either failed or were thwarted by authorities. This was twice the prevalence of unsuccessful attacks worldwide (9%).

Perpetrators of Terrorism in the United States

- Information about the perpetrators of attacks was available for 82 percent of all attacks in the United States between 1970 and 2013. Of these, 60 percent were attributed to more than 160 named organizations, 33% were attributed to perpetrators described using a generic identity (e.g., "student radicals"), and 8 percent were attributed to unaffiliated individuals. For 18 percent of the attacks, no information on the perpetrator was available.
- When examining patterns of perpetrator activity by decade, we can observe shifts over time.
    - Terrorist attacks in the 1970s were predominantly carried out by left-wing extremists and Puerto Rican nationalists.
    - In the 1980s, attacks by left-wing extremists decreased, and attacks by perpetrators motivated by anti-abortion extremism became much more common.
    - In the 1990s, terrorist violence targeting abortion providers continued, and violence motivated by environmental extremism became more prevalent while attacks by left-wing extremists and Puerto Rican nationalists became extremely rare.

---

[1] The GTD defines terrorism as "the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence to achieve a political, social, religious, or economic goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation."

o   From 2000 to 2013, the perpetrators of attacks were very diverse with respect to their ideological motivations, and 31 percent of attacks were conducted by unaffiliated individuals.

Spatial Patterns of Terrorism in the United States

- Terrorist attacks occurred in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico; however they have been especially prevalent in certain locations. Half of all of the attacks in the United States between 1970 and 2013 took place in California (22%), New York (19%), and Puerto Rico (9%).
- This pattern shifted over time, however. While attacks consistently occurred in California and New York, the location of the remaining attacks has become increasingly diffuse and somewhat unpredictable.

Weapons Used in Terrorist Attacks in the United States

- The weapons used in terrorist attacks in the United States differed distinctly from worldwide trends. Perhaps most notably, the use of incendiaries was more than four times as common in the United States compared to the global trend. In contrast, the use of firearms was nearly three times as common globally as it is in the United States.
- Between the 1970s and 2000s, the percentage of terrorist attacks involving incendiary weapons more than doubled, while the percentage of terrorist attacks involving explosives decreased by two-thirds and the percentage of terrorist attacks involving firearms decreased by one-fourth.

Targets of Terrorist Attacks in the United States

- Terrorist attacks in the United States targeted a wide variety of entities, but the most common targets between 1970 and 2013 were businesses (28%), followed by non-diplomatic government targets (13%) and private citizens and property (12%).
- Despite a decrease in the number of terrorist attacks, the targets of the 270 attacks between 2000 and 2013 remained diverse—18 different types of targets were attacked.

The threat of terrorism in the United States is far from uniform. In the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, certain patterns emerged regarding the perpetrators of terrorism, the movements they represented, and the tactics they adopted. In the first 14 years of the 21st century, perpetrators and targets in the United States were especially varied and less predictable. Attacks were frequently carried out anonymously, and perpetrators were often either unidentified or unaffiliated with a formally organized group. Terrorist attacks in the United States between 2000 and 2013 were relatively infrequent compared to earlier decades, but they were especially varied with respect to lethality, perpetrator motivation (based on either the identification of the perpetrator or the symbolism of the target), location, types of weapons used, and types of targets attacked.

Introduction

Although terrorist attacks occur worldwide, aggregated global trends mask important variation at the regional, national, and local level. In-depth analysis reveals important nuances in patterns of terrorism for a particular place or time period, which is largely shaped by the characteristics of perpetrators and perpetrator groups responsible for the attacks. Recognition of these nuances is critical for understanding the broader causes and consequences of terrorism. In particular, patterns of terrorism in the United States are unique, characterized by especially distinctive trends in the number of attacks over time, the lethality of attacks, and the diversity of perpetrators, weapons, and targets. In this report we examine patterns of terrorism in the United States from 1970 to 2013. We begin by describing the data collection methodology for the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) and conclude with general observations about the implications of this analysis for additional research and policy.

Data Collection Methodology[2]

The Global Terrorism Database is the result of multiple data collection efforts carried out since 1970 that have relied on publicly available, unclassified source materials, mainly media articles and electronic news archives. The data that originally comprised the core of the GTD from 1970 to 1997 were collected by Pinkerton Global Intelligence Services (PGIS) on handwritten index cards. Beginning in 2001, a team of researchers at the University of Maryland obtained these original records and digitized them. By 2006 the maintenance of this dataset had become a key component of the research portfolio developed by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), and the GTD team began partnering with other organizations to carry out ongoing data collection for events that took place after 1997. Throughout this period, START researchers conducted supplemental data collection projects to systematically compare the GTD to other sources of data to improve its completeness and worked to update historical event details when possible. In 2012, the GTD team at START moved the primary data collection effort to START headquarters at the University of Maryland. Since then, START has assumed sole responsibility for all aspects of the collection and maintenance of the GTD. To accomplish this, we developed an innovative data collection methodology for the GTD that is based on more than 10 years of experience and lessons learned with respect to the complexities and challenges of systematically collecting valid data on terrorist attacks worldwide.

Processing Source Documents

Within the evolving framework of news media and technology, START's objective is to enhance the efficiency, accuracy, and completeness of GTD collection. We accomplish this by combining the strengths of both automated and manual techniques. The data collection process draws on more than one million media articles on any topic published daily worldwide. The process of identifying the relatively small subset of these articles that describe terrorist attacks begins with applying customized keyword filters to the "fire hose" of media articles available through a subscription to the Metabase Application

---

[2] Additional information about the data collection methodology can be found on the GTD website and in the GTD codebook.

Programming Interface (API) provided by Moreover Technologies, Inc. We supplement the English-language content from Metabase with articles downloaded from the Open Source Center (www.opensource.gov), which includes English-language translations of sources from more than 160 countries in more than 80 languages. The initial filters isolate a pool of potentially relevant articles, typically approximately 200,000 per month. We reduce this subset using more sophisticated natural language processing and machine learning techniques to remove duplicates and score the likely relevance of the articles. The GTD team manually reviews this second subset of articles, typically 12,000 to 18,000 each month, to identify the unique events that satisfy the GTD inclusion criteria. Finally, the coding team reads the articles that are linked to specific events and records the details of each event according to the specifications of the GTD Codebook.

Defining Terrorism

The GTD defines terrorism as "the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence to achieve a political, social, religious, or economic goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation." To operationalize this definition, GTD researchers include in the database those incidents that satisfy each of the following mandatory inclusion criteria:

- The incident must be intentional, i.e., the result of a conscious calculation on the part of a perpetrator.
- The incident must entail some level of violence or threat of violence, including property violence as well as violence against people.
- The perpetrators of the incidents must be sub-national actors. The database does not include acts of state terrorism.

In addition, incidents recorded in the GTD must meet at least two of the following inclusion criteria:

1. The act must be aimed at attaining a political, economic, religious, or social goal.
2. There must be evidence of an intention to coerce, intimidate, or convey some other message to a larger audience (or audiences) than the immediate victims.
3. The action must be outside the precepts of International Humanitarian Law insofar as it targets non-combatants.

Given that it can be difficult to unambiguously determine if an event satisfies these inclusion criteria, the post-1997 GTD records also include a variable indicating whether or not there is specific doubt that the inclusion criteria are satisfied. Such doubt is typically a result of incomplete or conflicting reports about the circumstances of the attack. These attacks are included in the analysis presented in this report. In addition, inclusion in the GTD requires that some kinetic action has been taken on the part of the perpetrators to carry out the attack. We informally refer to this as the "out the door" rule, in that the perpetrators must be on their way to carry out the attack to be included in the GTD. Once the perpetrators are "out the door," if the attack fails or is otherwise thwarted we include it in the database and mark it as unsuccessful. The GTD does not include plots, conspiracies, or hoaxes that were not actually attempted. The GTD does not include violence that occurs spontaneously, such as rioting or

violence precipitated by the actions of authorities (e.g., police raid, traffic stop, or arrest). The GTD also does not include non-violent activity such as peaceful protests, vandalism, or civil disobedience.

Variables and Coding

The GTD coding strategy relies on six coding teams that each specializes on a particular domain of the GTD Codebook. The domains include location, perpetrators, targets, weapons and tactics, casualties and consequences, and general information. Each team is comprised of three to six undergraduate or graduate student interns led by a research assistant, and is responsible for coding the domain-specific variables for each event in the GTD. The domain team leaders are responsible for the training and supervision of team members, and ensuring the quality of the coded data. This approach guarantees that each piece of information is coded and reviewed by someone who is familiar with the particular coding guidelines for the domain, as well as the relevant context. For example, the perpetrator domain team will have greater familiarity with active perpetrator organizations, their naming conventions, aliases, spelling variations, factions, and splinter organizations, making them well-suited to systematically record information on the organizations attributed responsibility for an attack.

Methodological Consistency

Although the data collection process recently developed at the University of Maryland has improved the internal consistency and comprehensiveness of the GTD, as with any shift in data collection methodology it is critical to recognize the implications for analysis. The first year of data collected under the new process, 2012, represents a nearly 70% increase in the total number of worldwide terrorist attacks over 2011. The magnitude of this change is far from uniform across countries and the increase likely reflects recent patterns of terrorism in certain locations. However, it is also partly a result of the improved efficiency of the data collection process. The ongoing rapid growth of the internet, and news archives and aggregators in particular, makes a product like Metabase available to researchers, implicitly improving access to a greater variety of national and local sources. The use of automated approaches to document classification allows the GTD team to focus more time reviewing only those source articles that are classified as "relevant" by machine learning algorithms.

As a result, we have the resources to leverage a much broader and deeper pool of media sources from around the world. Despite consistency in our definition of terrorism and inclusion criteria, this exponential growth in available source materials has allowed us to collect more comprehensive data on terrorism than any previous effort. The GTD research team will continue to evaluate the impact of source availability on trends in the database to better advise users on important implications for analysis. We will also continue to work to supplement the GTD "legacy" data on terrorist attacks since 1970 to further improve its completeness. In general, comparisons of aggregate statistics over time and between locations—and their implications for the state of international security and global counterterrorism efforts—should be interpreted with caution due to considerable variation in the availability of source materials.

START ▶▶

National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism
*A Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Center of Excellence*

However, because the availability of source information pertaining to the United States has always been relatively robust, and the GTD team has conducted extensive supplemental data collection efforts for incidents occurring in the United States, we expect that the methodological artifacts described here have a minimal impact on analysis described in this report.

Terrorism in the United States

Attack Patterns and Lethality

Between 1970 and 2013, 2,664 terrorist attacks took place in the United States. Perhaps the most remarkable observation about trends in terrorism in the United States over time is the fact that the majority of these attacks (55%) occurred in the 1970s.[3] The peak frequency of terrorist attacks in the United States recorded in the GTD was in 1970, when more than 460 attacks were carried out. In the early 1970s the number of attacks each year declined dramatically, first dropping below 100 in 1972. After a slight increase in the mid-1970s, terrorism continued to decrease steadily in the 1980s and 1990s, and the average number of attacks each year throughout these two decades was less than 50. Since 2000, the frequency of terrorist attacks in the United States has continued to decrease, averaging fewer than 20 attacks per year between 2000 and 2013. During this time period, the United States was ranked 28th among countries in terms of total number of terrorist attacks.

Figure 1: Total terrorist attacks and lethal terrorist attacks in the United States by year, 1970-2013

---
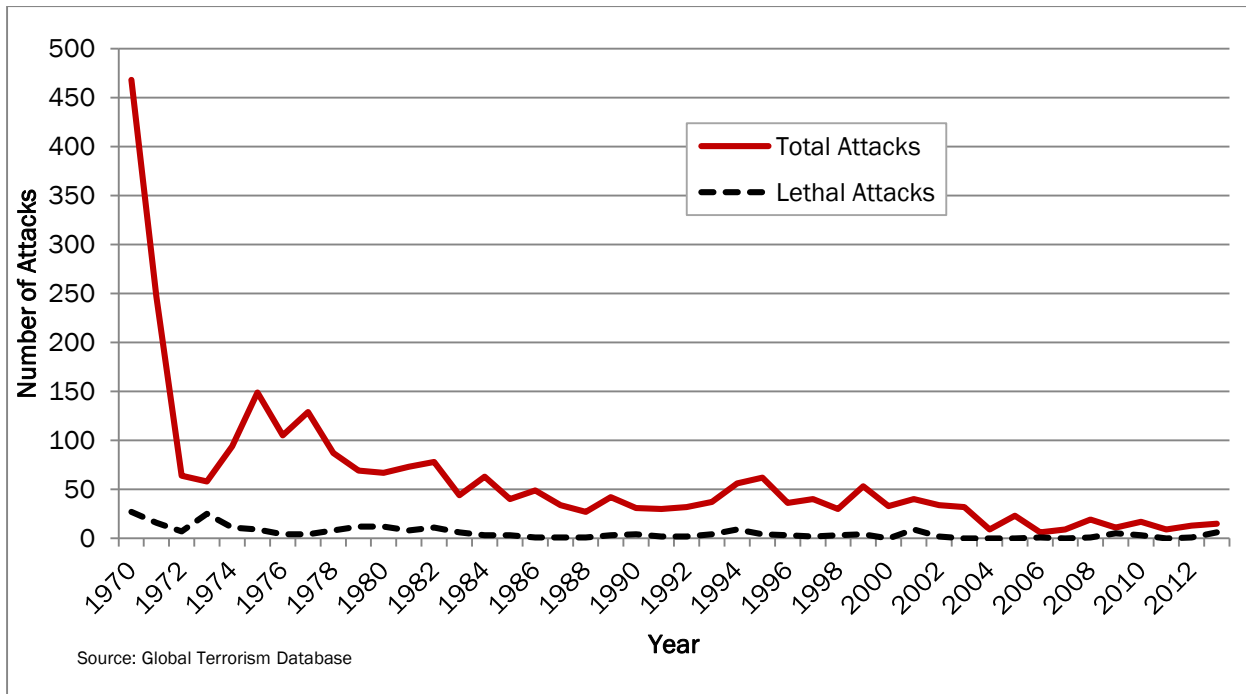
[3] Data from 1993 are typically not included in the GTD because the original records were lost in an office move before the data were transferred to START. However, the supplemental data for terrorist attacks the United States in 1993 are sufficiently robust and are included in the statistics in this report. Collection and revision of the data are ongoing, and the exact numbers of attacks presented in this report may change slightly as new data become available.

START ▶▶

National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism
A Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Center of Excellence

The number of terrorist attacks a country experiences represents only one dimension of the overall threat. It is also important to examine the lethality of attacks. More than 3,500 people (including perpetrators) were killed by terrorist attacks in the United States between 1970 and 2013. What is remarkable is that 85 percent of all deaths from terrorist attacks in the United States during this time period resulted from the four coordinated attacks on September 11, 2001. An additional 5 percent of fatalities were the result of the 1995 attack on the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City.

In contrast, 91 percent of terrorist attacks in the United States between 1970 and 2013 were not lethal. The prevalence of lethal terrorist attacks in the United States varies considerably over time, but does not appear to follow a particular trend. The percentage of all attacks that were lethal ranges from a minimum of zero (in 2000, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2007, and 2011) to a maximum of 45 percent in 2009. Note, however, that the variation in percentages is especially extreme since 2000 due to the particularly low frequency of attacks. During the 2000-2013 time period, the United States ranked 9th among countries in terms of total number of fatalities due to terrorist attacks. If the unprecedented casualties that resulted from the 9/11 attacks were not included, the United States would have ranked 57th.

Figure 2: Percent of terrorist attacks in the United States that were lethal by year, 1970-2013

Source: Global Terrorism Database
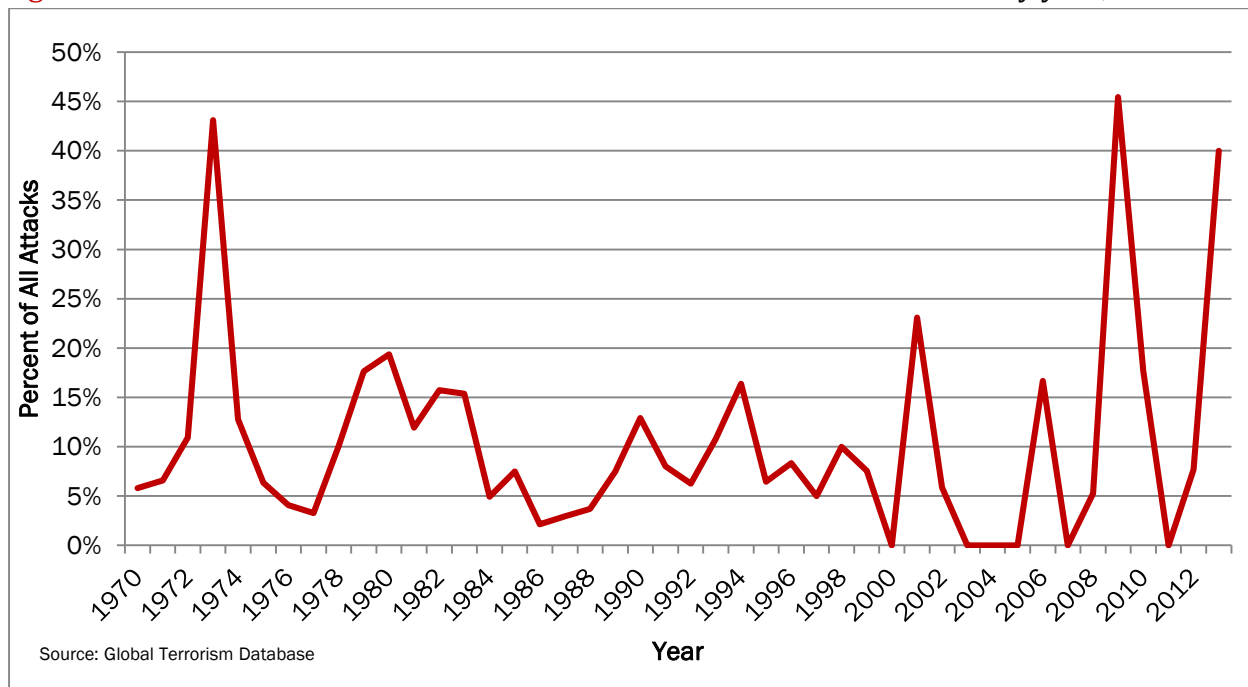
There are a number of reasons that a terrorist attack might not cause any fatalities. One possibility is that the attack was never intended to harm people, but instead was focused on causing only property damage. In some cases groups call authorities in advance to prompt an evacuation. While this strategy was a hallmark of groups active in the 1970s, like the Weather Underground, it has rarely been practiced in the United States in recent years. In many cases perpetrators target unpopulated areas or infrastructure, or target spaces that are typically occupied, but they do so at night when the area is vacant. Although these attacks are non-lethal, they have the capacity to cause extensive property damage and have lasting economic impacts. In fact, the amount of property damage recorded in the GTD for non-lethal attacks in

START ▶▶

National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism
A Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Center of Excellence

the United States totals more than $227 million. The damage amounts ranged from $50 in damages caused when perpetrators ignited fires at a Planned Parenthood clinic in California in 2008 to $45 million in damages caused when the Macheteros attacked Muniz Air National Guard base near San Juan, Puerto Rico in 1981, destroying eight fighter jets to protest draft registration.

A second reason an attack may not cause any deaths is that the intent was to harm people, but for some reason it failed. In these cases it is possible that the attack itself never materialized—perhaps a bomb failed to detonate or was defused by authorities—or that it was successfully carried out but did not hurt anyone, or caused only injuries rather than fatalities.

Figure 3: Percent of terrorist attacks in the United States that were unsuccessful by year, 1970-2013

Source: Global Terrorism Database
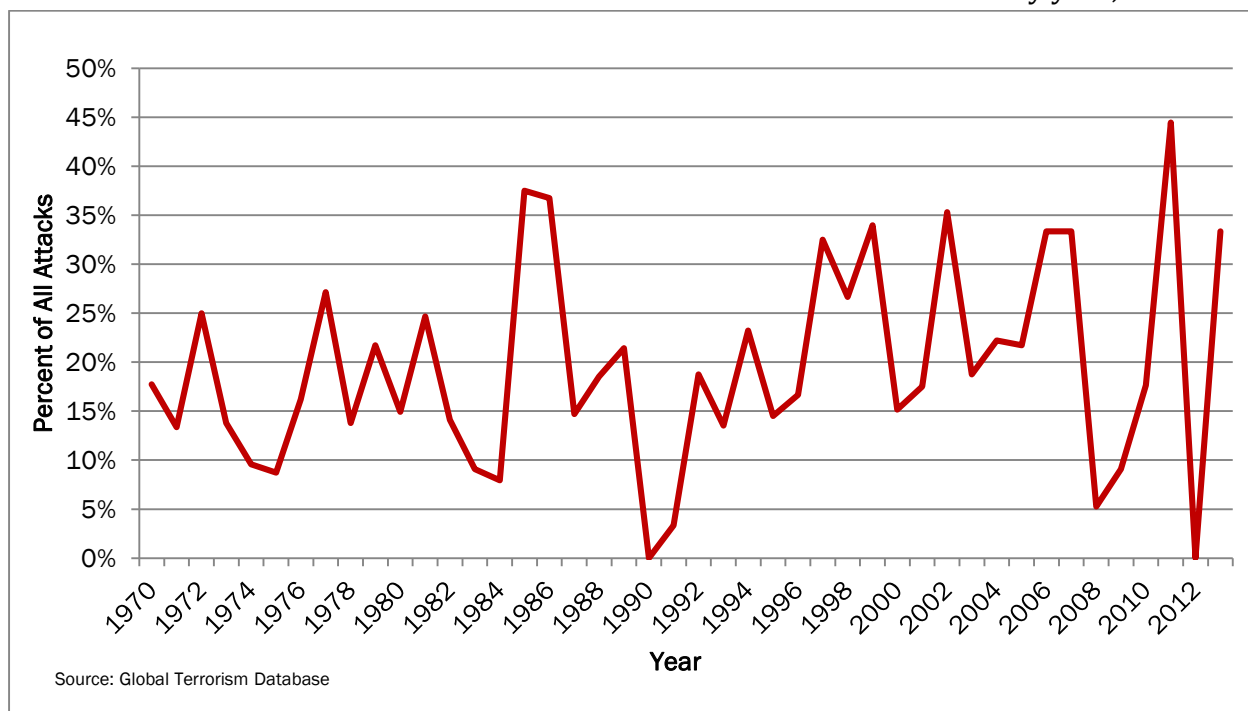
Unsuccessful attacks—those that failed or were thwarted either while their perpetrators were on the way to or in the process of carrying them out—were not uncommon in the United States. Between 1970 and 2013, 18 percent of the attacks that took place in the United States were unsuccessful. This is twice the prevalence of unsuccessful attacks worldwide (9%). This proportion increased somewhat in the 21st century, as one-fifth of the attacks in the United States between 2000 and 2013 were unsuccessful, while the global rate of unsuccessful attacks during the same period remained stable at 9 percent. Well-publicized examples of unsuccessful attacks in the United States include the 2010 attempt to detonate explosives in Times Square in New York City and the 2009 attempt to detonate explosives onboard Northwest Airlines flight 253 as it approached Detroit, Michigan. In 2012 and 2013, the most recent years for which data are available, five attacks (18%) were unsuccessful. Three of these involved ricin but caused no illness, one involved an explosive device that was defused at a Nebraska airport, and another involved an explosive device that was mailed to Sherriff Joe Arpaio in Arizona but was defused before it detonated. This remarkable pattern—a relatively low and declining frequency of terrorist attacks, and

START▶▶

National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism
A Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Center of Excellence

especially rare lethal terrorist attacks, punctuated by devastating events with far-reaching implications—raises particular challenges for those trying to understand the potential threat of terrorism in the United States.

Perpetrators of Terrorism in the United States

We can begin to explore the context of these patterns by considering the information that we have about the perpetrators of attacks. For more than 80 percent of the attacks that occurred in the United States between 1970 and 2013, some information about the perpetrator(s) responsible for the attack was available from the open-source reports. Sixty percent of these attacks were attributed to 162 named organizations, while for 33 percent the information we have about the perpetrator is generic, rather than referencing a specific organization.[4] For example, the generic identifiers used most frequently to describe perpetrators of attacks in the United States between 1970 and 2013 are "anti-abortion activists" (8% of all attacks in which perpetrator information was reported) and "left-wing militants" (8% of all attacks in which perpetrator information was reported). An additional 8 percent of attacks for which perpetrator information was reported were specifically attributed to unaffiliated individuals, although it is important to note that this designation has only been systematically used in the GTD when coding attacks that have occurred since 1998.[5]

Figure 4: Information on perpetrators of terrorist attacks in the United States, 1970-2013

---
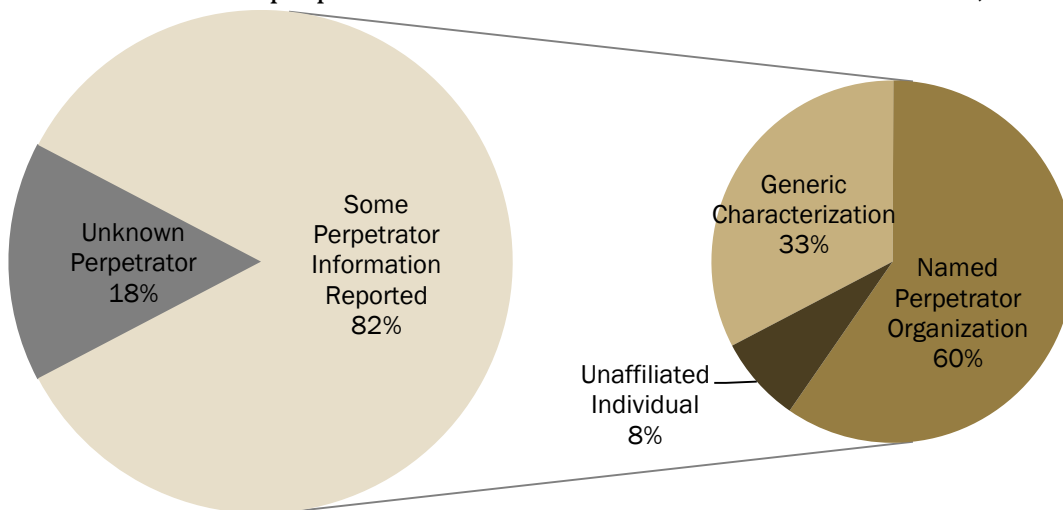
[4] It is important to note that because generic designations do not represent discrete entities, they often overlap (e.g., "student radicals" and "left-wing militants" may describe the same people). As a consequence, statistics about perpetrators described using only generic identifiers are not exhaustive and should be interpreted with caution. In addition, these labels do not refer to cohesive groups. The violent behavior discussed in this report was carried out by extremist subsets of broader ideological movements and is not representative of the behavior of these broader movements more generally. For many attacks, generic identifiers are the only information available about the perpetrators; because of this they are included in the tables that follow to provide context.

[5] This designation is used when sources identify a named perpetrator or perpetrators who are not known to be acting on behalf of a larger organization. Although this category is potentially useful, it is important to note that terrorist activity perpetrated by unaffiliated individuals may sometimes be attributed to generic or unknown perpetrators, particularly if the individuals are not named in source materials.

START ▶▶

National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism
A Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Center of Excellence

Table 1: Most active perpetrators of terrorist attacks in the United States by decade

1970s			1980s		
Perpetrator	Attacks	Percent of Attacks	Perpetrator	Attacks	Percent of Attacks
Left-Wing Militants	169	13%	Anti-Abortion Activists	74	16%
Fuerzas Armadas de Liberacion Nacional (FALN)	106	8%	Macheteros	31	7%
New World Liberation Front (NWLF)	86	7%	Jewish Defense League (JDL)	30	7%
Black Nationalists	82	6%	Omega-7	25	6%
Student Radicals	71	6%	Unaffiliated Individuals	23	5%
Weather Underground, Weathermen	45	4%	Organization of Volunteers for the Puerto Rican Revolution	23	5%
Jewish Defense League (JDL)	44	3%	United Freedom Front (UFF)	19	4%
White Extremists	42	3%	Army of God	15	3%
Black Liberation Army	34	3%	May 19 Communist Order	14	3%
Armed Revolutionary Independence Movement (MIRA)	31	2%	Fuerzas Armadas de Liberacion Nacional (FALN)	13	3%
Chicano Liberation Front	31	2%			

1990s			2000s[6]		
Perpetrator	Attacks	Percent of Attacks	Perpetrator	Attacks	Percent of Attacks
Anti-Abortion Activists	83	26%	Unaffiliated Individuals	64	31%
Unaffiliated Individuals	55	17%	Earth Liberation Front (ELF)	60	29%
Animal Liberation Front (ALF)	42	13%	Animal Liberation Front (ALF)	42	20%
Earth Liberation Front (ELF)	17	5%	Anti-Abortion Activists	15	7%
Aryan Republican Army	16	5%	Coalition to Save the Preserves (CSP)	8	4%
The Justice Department	13	4%	Al-Qa'ida	4	2%
World Church of the Creator	7	2%	Neo-Nazi Group	2	1%
Army of God	6	2%	Revolutionary Cells-Animal Liberation Brigade	2	1%
Anti-Government Group	6	2%	White Extremists	2	1%
Aryan Liberation Front	4	1%	Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)	1	0%
Pedro Albizu Campos Revolutionary Forces	4	1%	Anarchists	1	0%
Popular Liberation Army (Puerto Rico)	4	1%	Ku Klux Klan	1	0%
White Extremists	4	1%	Minutemen American Defense	1	0%
			Revenge of the Trees	1	0%
			Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)	1	0%
			The Justice Department	1	0%
			Veterans for Non-Religious Memorials	1	0%

[6] Includes 2000-2013 throughout the report.

These aggregated statistics mask the fact that the same types of perpetrators were not continuously active for the entire 1970 to 2013 time period. To provide a better understanding of the types of perpetrators active in the United States between 1970 and 2013, Table 1 shows the most active perpetrators, including named organizations, those described using generic identifiers, and unaffiliated individuals (as a category), by decade.

In the 1970s, nearly 1,500 terrorist attacks were carried out in the United States. During this decade, more than 100 perpetrators were identified; including both named organizations and those described using generic identities. The list of perpetrators that carried out the most attacks during the decade is marked by left-wing extremist groups, including organizations like the New World Liberation Front (NWLF), the Weather Underground, the Black Liberation Army, and the Chicano Liberation Front, as well as left-wing militants and student radicals not affiliated with a particular named organization. These perpetrators emerged as radical elements of the civil rights, feminist, and anti-war movements of the 1960s. They carried out attacks in 35 states and the District of Columbia in the 1970s, but were most active in California. The appearance of perpetrators identified as "black nationalists" and "white extremists" on the list further illustrates the prevalence of violence that took place in the context of racial conflict. The Fuerzas Armadas de Liberacion Nacional (FALN) and the Armed Revolutionary Independence Movement (MIRA) were among the most active organizations using violence in their efforts to secure Puerto Rican independence. Finally, the Jewish Defense League (JDL), which was founded in Brooklyn in 1968, carried out dozens of attacks in the 1970s, primarily in New York.

The list of perpetrators that carried out the most attacks in the 1980s shows a marked shift in the volume and ideological underpinnings of terrorism in the United States. The total number of named organizations and perpetrators identified using generic designations that were attributed responsibility for attacks in the United States in the 1980s dropped below 75, and the number of attacks decreased by nearly two-thirds (from nearly 1500 in the 1970s to just over 500 in the 1980s). Although FALN was still active, the frequency of its attacks decreased from more than 100 in the 1970s to 13 in the 1980s; however, violence carried out by other Puerto Rican independence groups became more common, including the Macheteros and the Organization of Volunteers for the Puerto Rican Revolution. Omega-7, an anti-Castro Cuban group that appears among the most active perpetrators of terrorist attacks in the United States in the 1980s, was just as active in the 1970s, but the frequency of its attacks was relatively low in comparison to other groups active in the 1970s. The JDL also remained engaged in violence in the 1980s, although the frequency of its attacks declined somewhat. In general, the sharp decline in the number of terrorist attacks in the United States in the 1980s was largely driven by decreases in attacks by left-wing perpetrators, although the May 19 Communist Order emerged from the remnants of the Weather Underground and the Black Liberation Army. Likewise, the United Freedom Front (UFF), a Marxist group formed in the mid-1970s, intensified its use of violence. In contrast to the 1970s, the perpetrators that carried out the most terrorist attacks in the 1980s were anti-abortion activists, including those not affiliated with a named group as well as those affiliated with the Army of God. Although unaffiliated individual perpetrators were among the most active perpetrators of terrorist attacks in the 1980s, they were not actually active at a higher rate than they had been in the 1970s.

In the 1990s the landscape of perpetrators of terrorist attacks in the United States continued to evolve as the total number of attacks declined further to just over 400 and became concentrated among fewer than 50 total named organizations and perpetrators described using generic identities. In fact, more than half of the attacks carried out in the 1990s were attributed to only six perpetrator designations. The number of attacks attributed to unaffiliated individuals and generically identified anti-abortion activists increased, while the environmentalist groups Animal Liberation Front (ALF), Earth Liberation Front (ELF), and the Justice Department appear among the most active perpetrators of terrorist attacks for the first time. In 1995 in Oklahoma City, Timothy McVeigh carried out the deadliest attack in the United States up until that point. Several white supremacist groups were among the most active perpetrators of terrorist attacks in the 1990s as well, including the Aryan Republican Army, the Aryan Liberation Front, and the World Church of the Creator. The violent activity of the Puerto Rican separatist groups like FALN, MIRA, and the Macheteros declined to the point that they no longer appear on the list of most active perpetrators in the 1980s. However, the Pedro Albizu Campos Revolutionary Forces remained on the list, albeit with four attacks, all of which took place in 1990 in Puerto Rico.

For six of the attacks that occurred in the 1990s, the only information available about the perpetrators is that they were anti-government extremists. While perpetrators of terrorist attacks often maintain anti-government views to some degree as they relate to a particular grievance or policy, the identity of the perpetrators of these attacks was marked by strong opposition to the federal government, based either on the nature of the target or statements they made. Three of these attacks targeted Internal Revenue Service office buildings (one in California in 1992 and two in Colorado in 1997 and 1999), and two occurred in the context of tensions over government regulation of land, targeting the Bureau of Land Management in 1993 the and United States Forest Service in 1995. The sixth attack, which targeted a United States Department of Labor employee in California on April 12, 1996, was preceded by an anonymous phone call to the victim's office in which the caller reportedly stated, "you guys are all [expletive] dead. Timothy McVeigh lives on."

Patterns of terrorist attacks among perpetrators active between 2000 and 2013 starkly illustrate the paradox of modern terrorism in the United States. Despite the fact that the United States experienced the most deadly series of terrorist attacks in modern history in September 2001, the total number of terrorist attacks in the 21st century decreased even further and became more concentrated among a relatively small number of named organizations, perpetrators described using generic identifiers, and unaffiliated individuals. During this time, the total number of terrorist attacks continued to decline to 270 attacks over 14 years. In fact, the 17 perpetrators listed in Table 1 represent all identified perpetrators of attacks that took place between 2000 and 2013.

The types of perpetrators active during this time period remained extremely diverse, and the most frequent perpetrators of terrorist attacks were unaffiliated individuals of all ideological persuasions. Environmentalist groups remained especially active, as attacks were carried out by the ALF, the ELF, the Coalition to Save the Preserves, the Revolutionary Cells-Animal Liberation Brigade, The Justice Department, and Revenge of the Trees. Anti-abortion activists remained active as well but carried out far fewer attacks than they had in the 1980s and 1990s. In addition to the deadly attacks carried out by al

Qa'ida in 2001, operatives from the associated groups Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and al Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) conducted unsuccessful attacks in 2009 and 2010.

The percentage of attacks carried out by unidentified or unaffiliated perpetrators is especially high during the most recent years for which data are available. Between 2012 and 2013, half of the 28 attacks recorded in the GTD (50%) were carried out by unidentified perpetrators, and 86 percent of the remaining attacks were carried out by individuals not affiliated with a particular group or organization. One attack, claimed by "anarchists," targeted a construction site in Seattle, Washington in February 2013. Another attack, in August 2013, was claimed by a previously unknown group calling itself "Veterans for Non-Religious War Memorials," which detonated explosives near the Mingus Park Vietnam War Memorial in Coos Bay, Oregon.

While perpetrators of terrorist attacks in the United States have evolved over the years, some patterns emerge related to longevity. Table 2 displays the 19 perpetrator designations that appear in the database for a span of longer than ten years. Unsurprisingly, the only perpetrator designation that appears for the full span of the GTD, 1970 to 2013, is unaffiliated individuals. Despite the fact that these unaffiliated individuals are not linked to each other in any way, it is worth noting that the adoption of terrorist tactics by individuals not linked to a formal organization is not a wholly recent occurrence. This list is also marked by perpetrators described using generic identifiers because they are more likely to persist over time as specific, likely unrelated individuals and groups come and go. As noted above, generic perpetrator attributions are not mutually exclusive or exhaustive, so this table provides a general understanding of their activity but is not comprehensive.

Table 2: Perpetrators of terrorism in the United States active longer than 10 years, 1970-2013

| Perpetrator	Attacks	Fatalities	Start Year	End Year	Span
Individual	168	255	1970	2013	43
Ku Klux Klan	23	7	1970	2008	38
Neo-Nazi Group	9	2	1970	2008	38
White Extremists	52	9	1970	2004	34
Anti-Abortion Activists	182	4	1977	2008	31
Cuban Exiles	21	0	1970	1996	26
Animal Liberation Front (ALF)	90	0	1987	2011	24
Jewish Extremists	8	0	1974	1997	23
Puerto Rican Nationalists	28	0	1970	1991	21
Macheteros	37	6	1978	1998	20
Anti-Castro Group	3	0	1978	1994	16
Army of God	21	3	1982	1998	16
Jewish Defense League (JDL)	74	4	1970	1986	16
Black Liberation Army	36	19	1970	1984	14
Earth Liberation Front (ELF)	77	0	1995	2009	14
Anti-Government Group	7	0	1986	1999	13
Aryan Nations	6	0	1986	1999	13
Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK)	2	0	1981	1992	11
The Justice Department	14	0	1999	2010	11

Generically identified perpetrators that have carried out attacks in the United States for at least 20 years include neo-Nazis, white extremists, anti-abortion activists, Cuban exiles, Jewish extremists, and Puerto

START ▶▶

National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism
A Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Center of Excellence

Rican nationalists. Attacks attributed to anti-Castro perpetrators spanned 16 years, and attacks attributed to anti-government perpetrators spanned 13 years. The longest-lasting named perpetrator organizations include the Ku Klux Klan, the ALF, the Macheteros, Army of God, the Jewish Defense League, the Black Liberation Army, the ELF, Aryan Nations, Mujahedin-e Khalq, and The Justice Department. Although these perpetrators share in common that they persisted in carrying out terrorist attacks for more than 10 years, the volume, concentration, and impact of their activity varies. Among these perpetrators, anti-abortion activists carried out the highest number of attacks per year (5.9), while several groups carried out very few attacks that were separated by long periods of inactivity in the United States.

Spatial Patterns of Terrorism in the United States

Although terrorist attacks have occurred in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, they have been especially prevalent in certain locations. In fact, half of all attacks in the United States between 1970 and 2013 took place in California (22%), New York (19%), and Puerto Rico (9%). Figure 5 illustrates the geographic distribution of terrorist attacks in the United States, showing in particular the relative concentration of casualties (fatalities and injuries) caused by the attacks.

Figure 5: Casualties of terrorism in the United States, 1970-2013
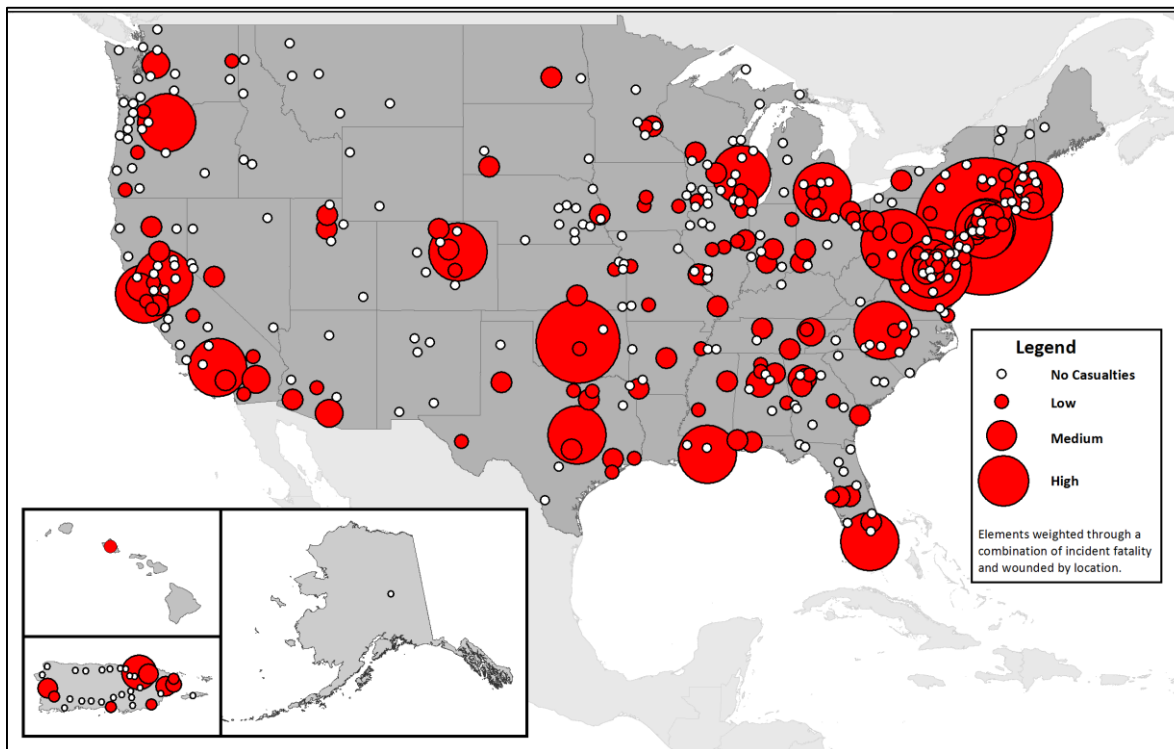
The overall geographic concentration of attacks in the United States is driven largely by patterns in the 1970s and 1980s, when the vast majority of attacks took place. In fact, as Table 3 shows, in the 1970s an even greater concentration (59%) of all attacks took place in California, New York, and Puerto Rico. Although this general pattern continued in the 1980s, when more than one-fifth of all attacks (21%) were

START ▶▶

National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism
A Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Center of Excellence

located in Puerto Rico (followed by 18 percent in New York and 14 percent in California), it changed considerably in the 1990s. As discussed above, the number of terrorist attacks carried out by Puerto Rican nationalist groups declined in the 1990s, particularly in Puerto Rico. At that time terrorism in the United States became much more geographically dispersed. Despite the fact that the number of attacks had declined dramatically, 45 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico experienced attacks. The states with the most attacks: California (18%), New York (7%), and Florida (6%) experienced less than one-third of all attacks in the United States during the 1990s. The pattern between 2000 and 2013 was similar, however aside from the long-established concentrations in California (18%) and New York (10%), the geographic concentration attacks was further diminished. The number of attacks in Florida declined by 50% between the 1990s and 2000s, while terrorism in Washington (State) became more prevalent due largely to the activity of the Earth Liberation Front (8 attacks), the Animal Liberation Front (2 attacks), and a group called Revenge of the Trees (1 attack). Because the number of terrorist attacks in the United States was relatively low between 2000 and 2013, isolated strings of related attacks in a particular state influence the overall distribution of locations considerably.

Table 3: U.S. States experiencing the most terrorist attacks by decade

1970s	Attacks	Killed	% Attacks	1980s	Attacks	Killed	% Attacks
California	397	46	27%	Puerto Rico	106	7	21%
New York	348	43	24%	New York	91	5	18%
Puerto Rico	122	15	8%	California	70	8	14%
Illinois	76	4	5%	Florida	41	0	8%
Florida	70	6	5%	District of Columbia	20	1	4%

1990s	Attacks	Killed	% Attacks	2000s	Attacks	Killed	% Attacks
California	72	3	18%	California	49	5	18%
New York	30	12	7%	New York	28	2764	10%
Florida	25	9	6%	Washington	19	1	7%
Oregon	22	0	5%	Arizona	13	2	5%
Washington	18	0	4%	District of Columbia	12	5	4%

Weapons Used in Terrorist Attacks in the United States

Patterns of weapon usage in terrorist attacks in the United States have also evolved over time. Table 4 shows the types of weapons used in terrorist attacks between 1970 and 2013, while Figure 6 illustrates how these trends changed by decade. Overall, the vast majority (96%) of all attacks in the United States involved explosives, incendiaries, or firearms. Of these three types of weapons, explosives were most commonly used in attacks targeting many types of targets, including utilities (82%), airports and airlines (79%), telecommunication systems (78%), and transportation (73%). Incendiaries were most commonly used in attacks against abortion-related targets (73%), non-governmental organizations (NGOs; 55%), and religious figures and institutions (44%). Firearms were used in only 13 percent of attacks, and were not the most commonly used type of weapon for any particular type of target.

START▶▶

National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism
A Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Center of Excellence

In contrast to these weapon types, which are fairly easy to access, a small number of attacks involved the use of more unusual types of weapons, including some that are fairly easy to attain and others that are more difficult. For example, 31 attacks in the United States, including those on 9/11, involved melee as the means of attack. These events typically involve some type of hand-to-hand combat, particularly including knives or other sharp objects. Of course, the extremely deadly use of melee-type weapons by the 9/11 hijackers is unique—aside from the four attacks on 9/11, seven of the attacks involving melee weapons were lethal, each resulting in one death.

Table 4: Types of weapons used in terrorist attacks in the United States, 1970-2013

Weapon Type	Attacks	% Attacks
Explosives/Bombs/Dynamite	1369	53%
Incendiary	766	30%
Firearms	333	13%
Melee	31	1%
Biological	24	1%
Sabotage Equipment	19	1%
Other	16	1%
Chemical	8	0%
Fake Weapons	5	0%
Vehicle (excluding VBIEDs)	5	0%
Radiological	1	0%

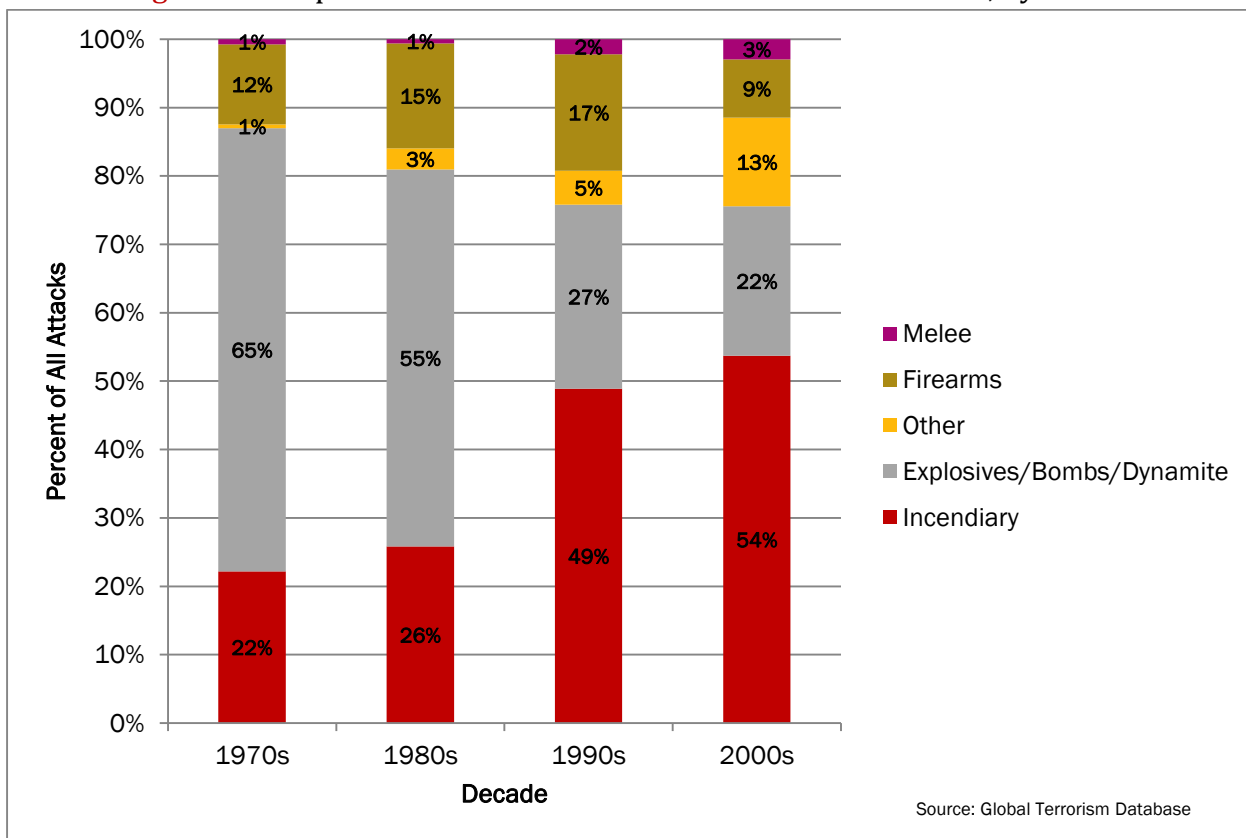Note: The type of weapon used was unknown in 2 percent of all attacks.

Like melee-style weapons, sabotage tools are relatively easy to obtain, but have been used very infrequently in terrorist attacks in the United States. Sabotage equipment, most commonly used in facility/infrastructure attacks targeting utilities, typically causes primarily economic harm but also has the capacity to cause casualties when the perpetrators intend to do so. For example, one of the terrorist attacks that caused the most injuries in the United States was carried out in 1995 when perpetrators calling themselves "Sons of the Gestapo" sabotaged train tracks causing an Amtrak passenger train to derail in Arizona, killing one person and wounding more than 75 others.

In less than 1 percent of attacks in the United States, perpetrators used vehicles themselves as weapons. This typically involves driving an automobile or flying a plane into a building or a crowd of people and does not include vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices—VBIEDs. The most recent example of this occurred in 2010, when Joseph Stack flew his privately-owned plane into an Internal Revenue Service building in Austin, Texas. The impact ignited a fire in the seven-story building, killed Stack and one IRS worker, and wounded more than 10 others.

The use of biological, chemical, and radiological weapons in terrorist attacks between 1970 and 2013 in the United States was also extremely rare. The first biological attacks during this time period took place in 1984, when followers of the Rajneesh cult attempted to impact local elections in The Dalles, Oregon by contaminating salad bars with salmonella, causing hundreds of residents to become ill. However, half of

all biological attacks in the United States between 1970 and 2013 (12 out of 24) took place in October and November of 2001 when a series of attacks involved anthrax that was sent through the mail to numerous recipients, including primarily government and media targets. Attacks involving chemical weapons took place between 1970 and 2010, and the weapons used included cyanide, nerve gas, pepper spray, tear gas, and acid. These attacks caused injuries, but no deaths. In particular, members of the Jewish Defense League carried out an attack with a tear gas grenade in 1986 at the Metropolitan Opera House at Lincoln Center in New York City, injuring approximately 30 people. Finally, the only recorded use of radiological weapons in the United States occurred in 1985 when unidentified perpetrators attempted to contaminate the water supply serving New York City with plutonium. Although officials tested the drinking water and detected increased levels of plutonium, the attack was unsuccessful because the concentration was not great enough to cause physical harm to residents.

Figure 6: Weapons used in terrorist attacks in the United States, by decade
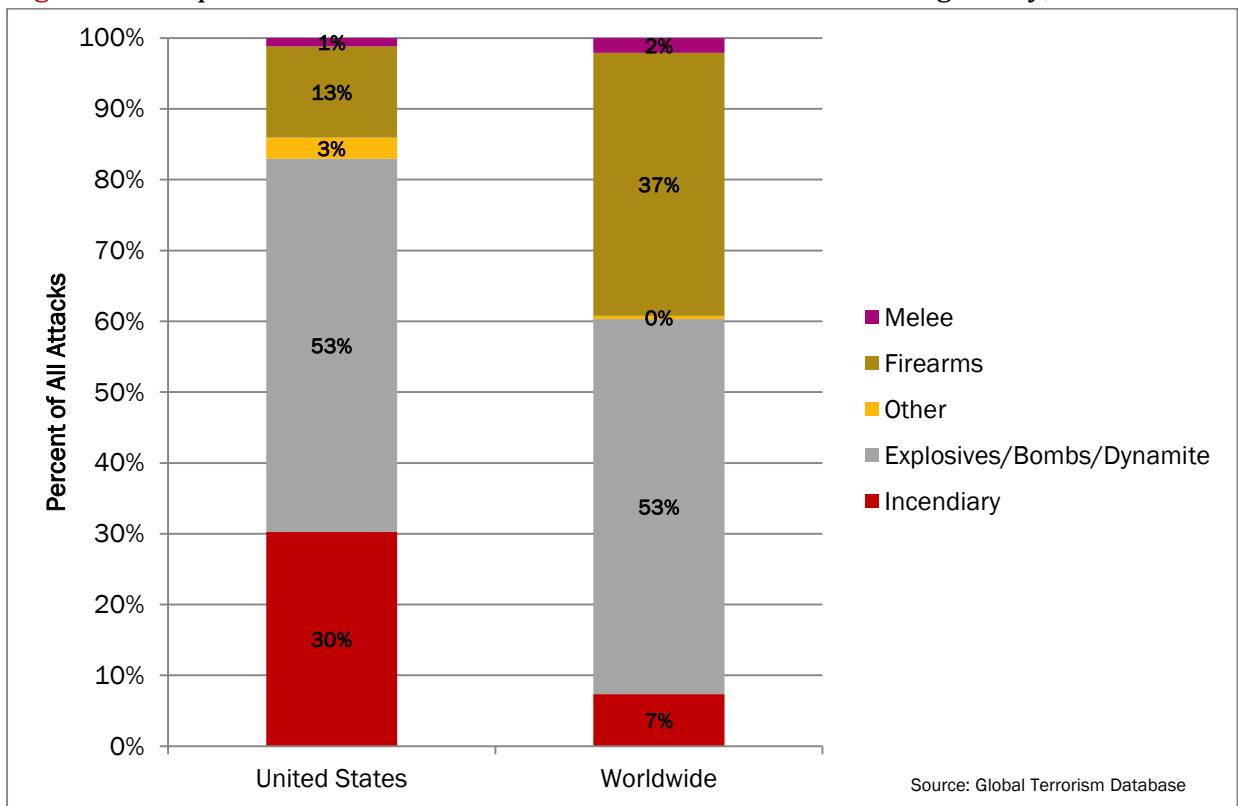

Note: The type of weapon used was unknown in 2 percent of all attacks.

Interesting patterns emerge with respect to the use of weapons in terrorist attacks in the United States. In the 1970s, the majority of attacks (65%) involved explosives, while slightly more than one-fifth (22%) involved incendiary weapons (e.g., arson, Molotov cocktails). The number of terrorist attacks in which explosives were used dropped dramatically from more than 900 attacks in the 1970s to fewer than 60 between 2000 and 2013. The use of firearms declined as well, though at less than half the magnitude of explosives (firearms were used in 170 attacks in the 1970s and 23 attacks between 2000 and 2013). While the use of incendiary weapons declined between the 1970s and the 1980s, it actually increased in

START ▶▶

National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism
A Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Center of Excellence

the 1990s and decreased only slightly in the 21st century. Finally, attacks carried out using "other" types of weapons were rare but increased consistently over time.[7] In particular, trends in this category are driven by the 500% increase in the use of biological weapons between the 1980s (4 attacks, involving salmonella) and the 2000s (20 attacks, primarily involving ricin and anthrax). These absolute changes in attack patterns produce the relative distributions shown in Figure 6. As the number of terrorist attacks declined in the United States, the relative frequency of attacks involving incendiary weapons more than doubled, while the relative frequency of attacks involving explosives decreased by two-thirds. The relative frequency of terrorist attacks involving firearms initially increased in the 1980s and 1990s, but decreased by 50 percent between the 1990s and 2000s.

The weapons used in terrorist attacks in the United States differ distinctly from worldwide trends. While explosives are the most common type of weapon used in terrorist attacks both in the United States and globally, perhaps most notably, terrorism in the United States is marked by a disproportionate use of incendiary weapons, such as arson and fire bombs. Specifically, the proportion of terrorist attacks in which incendiaries are used is more than four times higher in the United States than it is globally. In contrast, the proportion of terrorist attacks in which firearms are used is nearly three times higher globally than in the United States.

Figure 7: Weapons used in terrorist attacks in the United States and globally, 1970 to 2013

---

[7] The "other" category in Figure 6 and Figure 7 includes: biological weapons, chemical weapons, fake weapons, radiological weapons, sabotage equipment, and vehicular weapons (excluding VBIEDs), each of which were used in less than 1 percent of attacks in the United States.

Note: The type of weapon used was unknown in 2 percent of all attacks in the United States and 8 percent of all attacks worldwide.

Targets of Terrorist Attacks in the United States

As shown in Table 5, terrorist attacks in the United States have targeted a wide variety of entities, but the most common targets between 1970 and 2013 were businesses (28%), followed by non-diplomatic government targets (13%), and private citizens and property (12%), which comprise more than half of all targets attacked. The GTD further classifies types of targets into subtypes, which provide a more detailed summary of targeting practices. Business targets in the United States were most commonly banks/commerce (30%), retail (23%), or multinational corporations (10%). Banks were often targeted in attacks by extreme left-wing perpetrators, especially in the early 1970s. At that time, retail stores were also targeted by these groups because of their commercial symbolism and the potential impact to the economy. More recently, violent attacks against retail stores such as those that sell fur, leather, or meat were carried out by animal rights groups. A wide variety of multi-national corporations were targeted, most based in the United States, including oil companies, conglomerates, technology companies, and automotive companies.

Table 5: Targets of terrorist attacks in the United States, 1970-2013

Target Type	Number of Targets Attacked	% Targets
Business	770	28%
Government (Non-Diplomatic)	349	13%
Private Citizens & Property	321	12%
Abortion Related	262	9%
Military	185	7%
Educational Institution	172	6%
Police	161	6%
Government (Diplomatic)	143	5%
Religious Figures/Institutions	86	3%
Utilities	86	3%
Airports & Aircraft	76	3%
Journalists & Media	57	2%
NGO	30	1%
Transportation	16	1%
Tourists	12	0%
Telecommunication Systems	10	0%
Terrorists/Non-State Militia	8	0%
Food or Water Supply	7	0%
Maritime Vessels	7	0%
Violent Political Party	6	0%

Note: The type of target was unknown in 0.5 percent of attacks

The majority of non-diplomatic government targets (61%) were federal, state, local, and tribal government buildings and facilities. These targets included the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Pentagon, city halls, the Bureau of Land Management, and various other federal buildings including the Alfred P. Murrah building, attacked in Oklahoma City in 1995. The most commonly targeted government facilities between 1970 and 2013 were Selective Service offices, which were bombed and burned by anti-war perpetrators in the 1970s. An additional 13 percent of non-diplomatic government targets were associated with the judicial system (judges, attorneys, and courts), and 11 percent were politicians and political parties/functions.

The most common targets in the private citizens and property category were individuals who were attacked based on their race or ethnicity (22%). An additional 15 percent of attacks targeting private citizens and property were directed at residences. Other types of targets in this category included those related to labor unions or specific occupations (15%); public spaces such as parks, museums, monuments, or plazas (12%); vehicles (5%); political party members or political rallies (5%); and individuals targeted based on their religion (1%).

Attacks on abortion related targets comprised 9 percent of all attacks between 1970 and 2013 in the United States, and these attacks comprised 96 percent of all attacks on abortion related targets worldwide. The vast majority of attacks on abortion related targets were non-lethal (96%), and 94 percent targeted clinics or facilities, while 6 percent of attacks targeted abortion providers or personnel.

More than half of all attacks on military targets (54%) took place in 1970 and 1971, prior to the end of U.S. military involvement in the Vietnam War. However, attacks on military targets in the United States have occurred in each decade since then. Small peaks in the number of attacks on military targets took place in 1979, when Puerto Rican nationalists including members of FALN and Revolutionary Commandos of the People (CRP) carried out more than 10 bombings and assaults in Puerto Rico and Chicago, and in 1986, when the Macheteros, the Organization of Volunteers for the Puerto Rican Revolution, and the Armed Forces of Popular Resistance (FARP) attempted a series of bombings targeting recruiting offices and other military targets in Puerto Rico. These attacks, most of which were unsuccessful because the homemade devices failed or were discovered, were intended to protest plans to train Nicaraguan Contras in Puerto Rico. While eight of the ten attacks on military targets in the 1990s took place in Puerto Rico, eight of the nine attacks targeting the military between 2000 and 2013 occurred on the U.S. mainland. Perhaps most notable among these is the armed assault carried out by Major Nidal Hasan in 2009 at Fort Hood, in Killeen, Texas, which killed 13 and wounded more than 30 others.

Many of the terrorist attacks on educational institutions in the United States (64%) occurred during the 1970s and frequently involved bombings and fire bombings at universities. These attacks were typically carried out by perpetrators identified as "student radicals" and other left-wing extremists in opposition to the Vietnam War and perceived racial inequities in education. Beginning in the 1980s, attacks on educational institutions were increasingly carried out by environmental groups targeting personnel and infrastructure to protest scientific research and testing on animals and genetically modified plants.

START▶▶

National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism
A Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Center of Excellence

Between 1970 and 2013, 78 percent of all attacks on educational institutions targeted facilities, while 22 percent targeted teachers, professors, or other personnel.

Although terrorist attacks in the United States were concentrated in the 1970s overall, this is especially true of attacks targeting the police. In fact, 88 percent of all terrorist attacks against the police took place in the 1970s. More than half of these attacks, which were typically armed assaults or bombings, were specifically attributed to the Black Liberation Army, the Black Panthers, or Black nationalists not affiliated with a specific organization. Between 2000 and 2013, there were five attacks on police targets in the United States, and three of them took place in 2013. In February 2013, Christopher Dorner killed a police officer in the course of a string of attacks in California that involved both personal motivations and political motivations fueled by what he viewed as excessive force and racism in policing. Dorner died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound during a standoff with the police. In April 2013, an unknown perpetrator sent an explosive device in a letter to Sheriff Joe Arpaio of the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office in Arizona. The device was defused before it could detonate. Also in April, a Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) police officer was shot and killed by gunmen on the MIT campus in Massachusetts. The suspected assailants of the attack were later identified as Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, who were believed to also be responsible for the bomb attacks near the finish line of the Boston Marathon several days earlier.

Attacks on diplomatic targets in the United States targeted 39 different nationalities and the United Nations. Diplomatic entities from the Soviet Union experienced as many terrorist attacks in the United States (21 attacks) as the next two nationalities combined—Turkish (11 attacks) and international targets (10 attacks, all against the United Nations). These attacks on Soviet diplomatic targets, which all took place in the 1970s and early 1980s, were almost all carried out in New York by the Jewish Defense League, Jewish Direct Action, Thunder of Zion, and the United Jewish Underground. Between 1990 and 2013, six terrorist attacks in the United States targeted diplomatic entities—three targeted the United Nations, and the others targeted the South Korean consulate in San Francisco, and the British and Mexican consulates in New York. Out of all attacks on diplomatic targets in the United States, 52 percent targeted diplomatic facilities such as embassies and consulates, 31 percent targeted diplomatic personnel, and 17 percent targeted the United Nations or specific UN Missions.

Attacks on utilities frequently targeted electrical facilities (88%), rather than oil (9%), or gas (3%). More than 78 percent of attacks on utilities involved explosives, and although none resulted in fatalities, the value of property damages ranged from $500 when the New World Liberation Front (NWLF) carried out an incendiary attack on an electrical tower in California in 1975 to $600,000 when unidentified perpetrators destroyed an electrical transformer in Florida with dynamite in 1970.

Attacks on religious entities in the United States targeted a variety of religions, including Christian, Muslim, Hare Krishna, Hindu, Jewish, and Sikh figures and institutions. The majority of these attacks (80%) involved explosives or incendiary weapons, and 78 percent targeted places of worship or affiliated institutions, while 22 percent targeted religious figures, including imams, ministers, reverends, priests, and other religious leaders. One of the most deadly terrorist attacks in recent history in the United States occurred in 2012, when Wade Michael Page opened fire at a Sikh temple, killing seven people and

wounding four. Page, a white supremacist, was shot by a police officer in the wake of the attack and killed by a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Attacks on airports and aircraft were quite rare in the United States—comprising only 3 percent of all attacks—but they certainly have the potential to be devastating in terms of both loss of life and economic impacts. Although attacks on airports and aircraft were most common in the 1970s and 1980s (43 attacks and 23 attacks, respectively), they declined to only two attacks in the 1990s—involving an explosive device that was defused at San Francisco International Airport and a small bomb that detonated near La Guardia Airport. From the 1990s to the 2000s (2000 to 2010) the number of attacks on airports and airlines tripled, including the four attacks on planes on 9/11, a 2002 shooting at the Israeli El Al ticket counter at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) that killed two people and wounded four others, and the 2009 attempted bombing of Northwest Flight 253 from Amsterdam to Detroit, claimed by al Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). In 2013, the most recent year for which GTD data are available, there were two attacks targeting airports in the United States. In April an explosive device was defused at an airport in Nebraska, and in November a gunman targeting the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) shot and killed a TSA officer at LAX.

The kidnapping and murder of journalists outside the United States have recently raised the profile of the risks faced by media personnel in conflict regions; however terrorist attacks in the United States rarely targeted journalists and media. Attacks on journalists and media in the United States were most common in the 1970s and 1980s. In the 1970s nearly three-quarters of all attacks on media were bombings, while in the 1980s, bombings declined dramatically and incendiary attacks on media facilities and assassinations of high-profile, outspoken media targets comprised nearly three-quarters of attacks on journalists and media. The only kidnapping of a media target in the United States was the 1974 abduction of Patricia Hearst by the Symbionese Liberation Army in order to make demands of her father, head of the Hearst media corporation. During the period from 2000 to 2013 attacks on media targets took a considerably different form. Six attacks took place during this time period, five of which occurred in October 2001 during the series of anthrax attacks discussed above. The targets of these attacks included American Media, in Boca Raton, Florida; NBC, ABC, and CBS News, all in New York City; and the New York Post. The sixth attack occurred in 2010 when radical environmentalist James Lee took three people hostage at the Discovery Communications headquarters building in Silver Spring, Maryland. Lee was armed with starter pistols and crude explosive devices strapped to his body. After four hours, the hostage situation ended when police snipers shot and killed Lee.

Attacks on NGOs; transportation; tourists; telecommunication systems; terrorists or non-state militias; the food or water supply; maritime vessels; and violent political parties (defined as organizations that engage in both electoral politics and terrorism) were extremely rare. Each comprised less than one percent of attacks in the United States between 1970 and 2013.

As shown in Table 6, despite the fact that there were far fewer terrorist attacks between 2000 and 2013 than the previous three decades in the United States, the targets of these attacks were extremely diverse. More than 2,600 attacks on 20 different types of targets in the United States took place during the entire

timespan covered by the GTD, and 18 different types of targets were attacked in the 270 incidents that occurred between 2000 and 2013. The proportion of attacks targeting businesses remained fairly consistent with the general pattern; however, attacks on private citizens and property were more than twice as prevalent between 2000 and 2013, and attacks on non-diplomatic government targets were nearly 50 percent more prevalent during this time period. Attacks on abortion related targets, the military, and police were less prevalent from 2000 to 2013, while the proportion of attacks on religious figures and institutions increased slightly.

Table 6: Targets of terrorist attacks in the United States, 2000-2013

Target Type	Number of Targets Attacked	% Targets
Business	81	27%
Private Citizens & Property	70	23%
Government (Non-Diplomatic)	53	18%
Abortion Related	20	7%
Educational Institution	18	6%
Religious Figures/Institutions	14	5%
Military	10	3%
Airports & Aircraft	8	3%
Journalists & Media	6	2%
Police	5	2%
NGO	4	1%
Transportation	4	1%
Government (Diplomatic)	3	1%
Utilities	3	1%
Telecommunication Systems	1	0%
Terrorists/Non-State Militia	1	0%
Tourists	1	0%

In many cases, terrorist attacks in the United States tended to target buildings or infrastructure rather than specific people or personnel. For example, as we noted above, 78 percent of all attacks on educational targets were aimed at schools, universities, or educational buildings rather than isolated teachers, professors, instructors, or other personnel. Bearing in mind that these distinctions are somewhat loosely defined because people are often inside buildings as they are attacked, Figure 8 shows the distribution between these two general targeting strategies for attacks on those types of targets for which we could make this determination. Certain types of targets, such as the food or water supply, telecommunication systems, transportation, and utilities, were both infrequently attacked (making percentages somewhat sensitive to variation) and essentially by definition involve infrastructure rather than specific people or personnel. Therefore, 100 percent of attacks on these targets were focused on buildings or infrastructure. Of the remaining target types, only attacks on police were more likely to be aimed at people or personnel rather than buildings or infrastructure.

Figure 8: Targets of terrorism in the United States:
Buildings/infrastructure vs. people/personnel, 1970-2013

Source: Global Terrorism Database
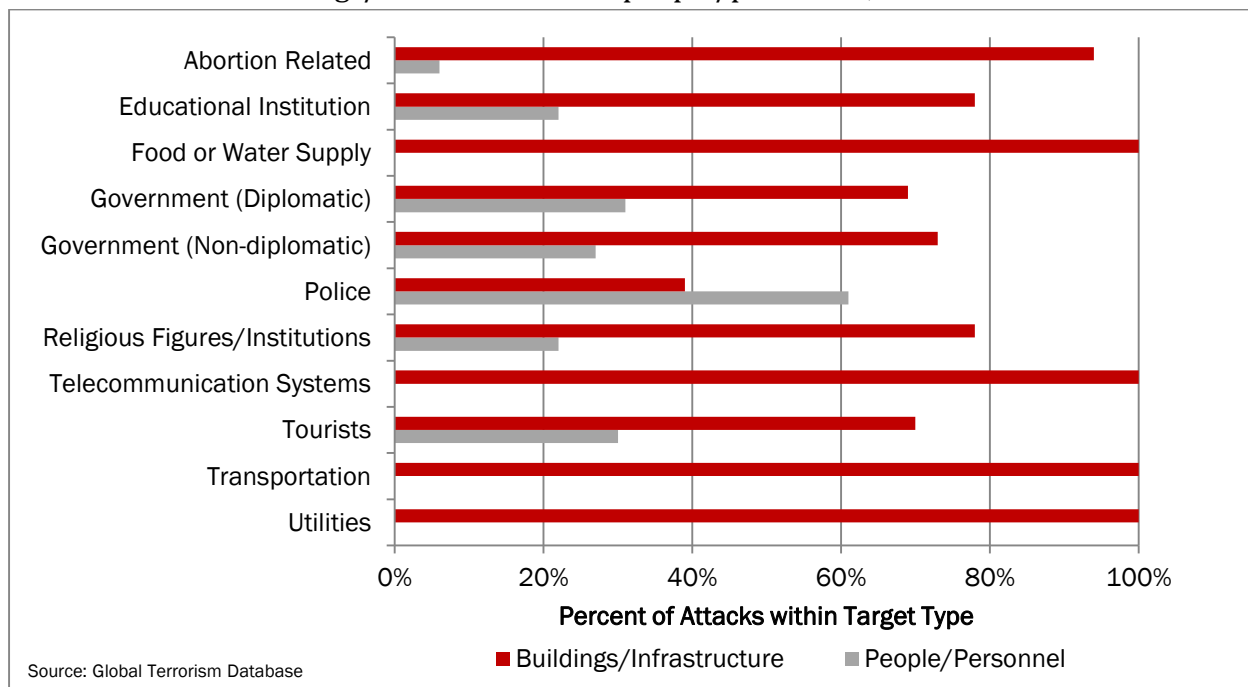
Conclusions

The patterns of terrorism in the United States illustrate that the threat of terrorism is far from uniform. Although terrorism in the United States was most common in the 1970s and is rarely lethal, there are certainly critical exceptions to this general trend, including the devastating mass casualty attacks in Oklahoma City in 1995 and in New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia on September 11, 2001. This unusual pattern, along with the fact that numerous unsuccessful attacks were attempted in the United States, presents unique counterterrorism challenges. In the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, certain patterns emerged regarding the perpetrators of terrorism in the United States, the movements they represented, and the tactics they adopted. However, in the first 14 years of the 21st century, perpetrators and targets in the United States were especially varied and somewhat less predictable. Attacks were frequently carried out anonymously, organizations rarely claimed responsibility for attacks, and perpetrators were often either unidentified or unaffiliated with a formally organized group. Terrorist attacks in the United States between 2000 and 2013 were relatively infrequent compared to earlier decades, but they were extremely diverse with respect to lethality, perpetrator motivation (which can be inferred from either the identification of the perpetrator or the symbolism of the target), location, types of weapons, and types of targets.