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International Terrorism In 1978

A Research Paper

*RP 79-10149
March 1979*



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International Terrorism in 1978

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*Information as of 14 January 1979 has been used
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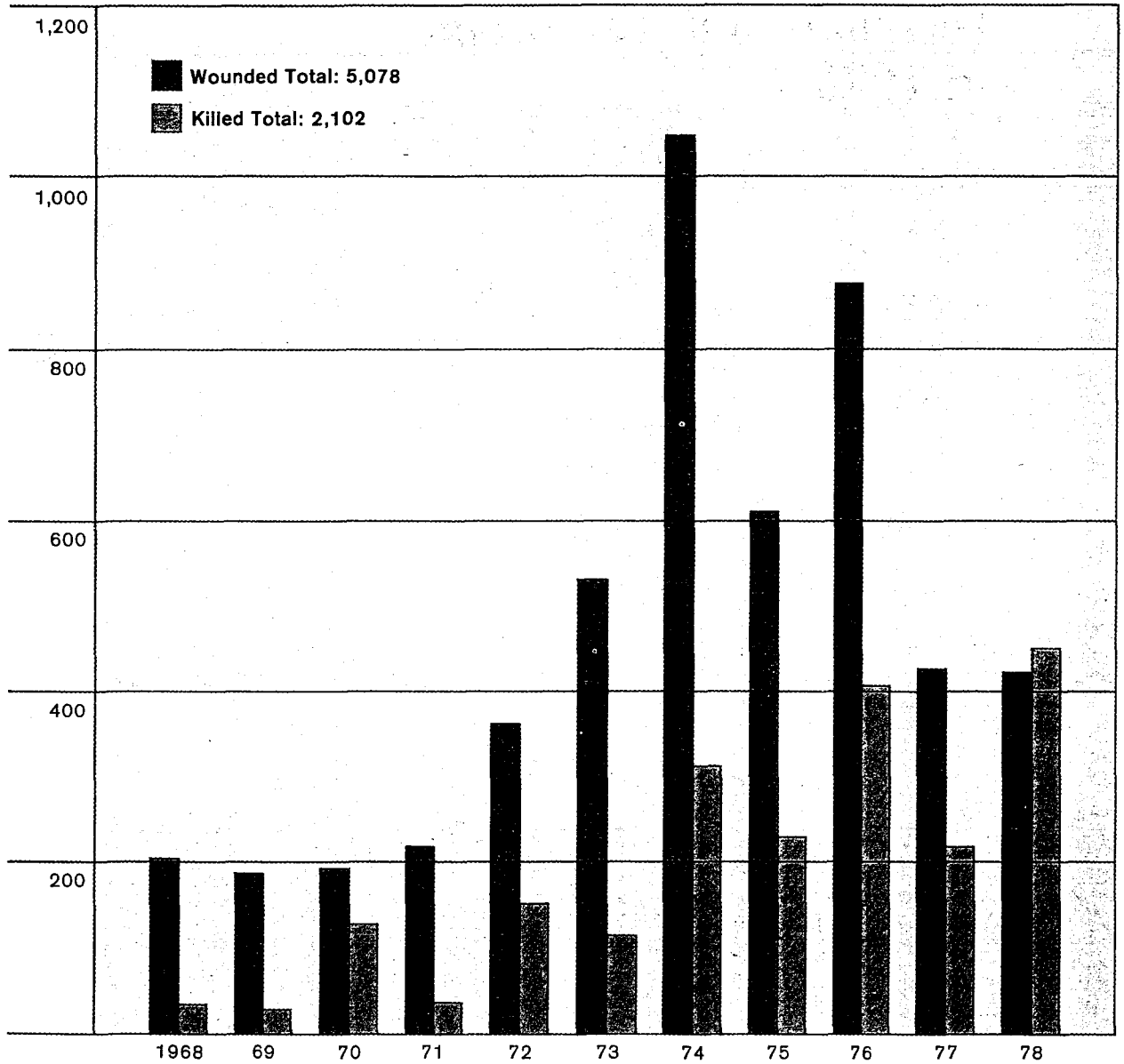
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Deaths and Injuries Due to International Terrorist Attacks,¹
1968-78

Figure 1



1. Casualty figures are particularly susceptible to fluctuations due to inclusion of especially bloody incidents, e.g., exclusion of the 1978 explosion at a Beirut building housing Palestinian guerrilla organizations, which some reports credited to rival terrorists, would subtract 150 deaths from that year's total. Inclusion of the mass suicide/murder by the Peoples' Temple members in Guyana in November 1978 would add more than 900 deaths.

International Terrorism In 1978¹

Most established patterns of international terrorist behavior in 1977 continued into 1978, including attacks on Western diplomatic and business facilities, an emphasis on simple types of operations, and a preference for striking targets in industrialized democracies. Significant changes have included the escalation of international terrorism in Central America and setbacks to some European and Palestinian terrorist organizations. The year also ushered in some East European antiterrorist cooperation with the West and the first international antihijacking agreement with potentially effective enforcement measures.

Trends

Developments relating to international terrorism in 1978 showed several major patterns and trends:

- For the year as a whole, there was an increase in the number of international incidents and their attendant casualties (see figures 1 and 2), matching the levels observed in the latter part of 1977. Much of the increase can be attributed to the export of Middle Eastern conflicts to Western Europe. Israeli oranges were found poisoned in a dozen European cities, while Iraq and Fatah battled each other in European capitals.
- Terrorists continue to prefer operations in the industrialized democracies of Western Europe and North America. More than half of all incidents were recorded in these regions (see table 1, in appendix).
- In Latin America the geographic locus of terrorism shifted. While guerrilla violence has declined in its historic arena—the Southern Cone—it has increased in Central America, most notably in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. Kidnapings in San Salvador of Swedish, British, Japanese, and local business executives have severely diminished corporate confidence in El Salvador. In Nicaragua, the Sandinista National Liberation Front's takeover of the National Palace in August was that group's greatest success. It

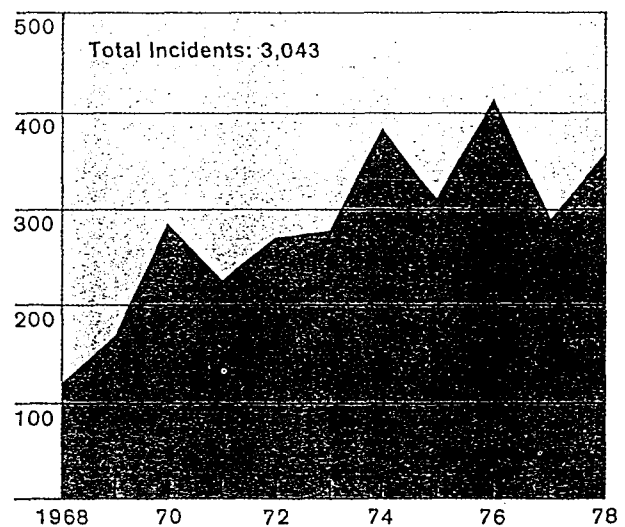
¹ This paper draws upon a conceptual framework developed in three earlier studies: *International and Transnational Terrorism: Diagnosis and Prognosis* (PR 76-10030, April 1976); *International Terrorism in 1976* (RP 77-10034U, July 1977); and *International Terrorism in 1977* (RP 78-10255U, August 1978).

secured the release of imprisoned comrades, obtained \$5 million in ransom, and directed enormous international attention to FSLN activities and to the Nicaraguan political situation. The new round of civil violence that was sparked by the incident presented the Somoza government with its most serious challenge.

- There were more attacks than the previous year, both in relative and absolute terms, on US citizens and property (see table 2). Most of this increase was due to the deteriorating security situation in Iran, in which antiforeign—and especially anti-US—sentiment was translated into scores of firebombings and threats against individuals and facilities.

- Officials and businessmen—especially individuals who are symbols of Western power and wealth—are still the primary targets. Tourists and other private citizens are victimized only incidentally (for example, as passengers on a hijacked airliner).

International Terrorist Incidents, Figure 2
1968-78

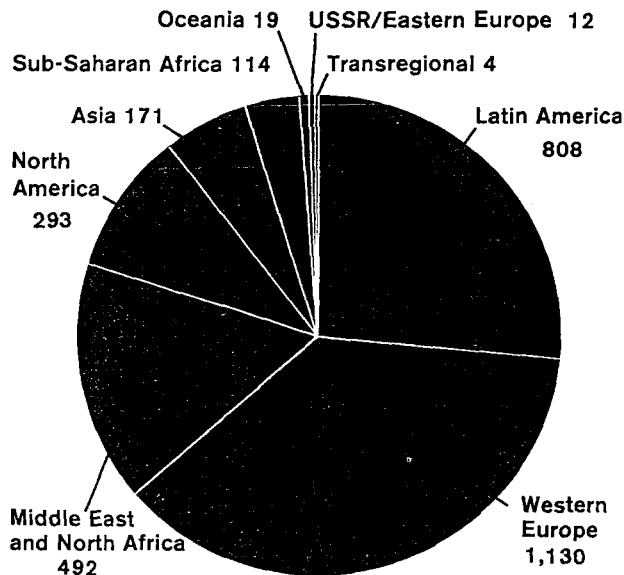


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Geographic Distribution of International Terrorist Attacks, 1968-78

Figure 3

Total: 3,043



• Despite the publicity given to occasional sophisticated operations (such as the kidnaping of Italy's Aldo Moro, the reciprocal assassination campaign between Fatah and the Iraqis, and the Sandinista takeover of Nicaragua's legislative chambers), most terrorist attacks continue to be simple bombings, arsons, snipings, or threats.

• One innovation in technique and targeting that caused widespread alarm was the poisoning of Israeli oranges in Western Europe. This operation—believed to be the work of Arab terrorists—showed an unusual willingness to relinquish control over the choice of individual targets. The Abadan, Iran, theater fire in which at least 377 persons died—an equally indiscriminate operation—may indicate that at least some groups are becoming less worried about harming potential supporters or innocent bystanders.²

Fortunes of Major Groups

The Italian Red Brigades succeeded in generating international publicity by kidnaping Aldo Moro, Italy's leading political figure. Terrorists also carried out less dramatic attacks against judges, newsmen, police officers, employees of large industries, and middle-level political figures, including attacks on Italian executives of American firms, a target that had generally been spared. Despite press speculation, it is still uncertain whether foreign intelligence services or non-Italian terrorist groups were involved in these actions.

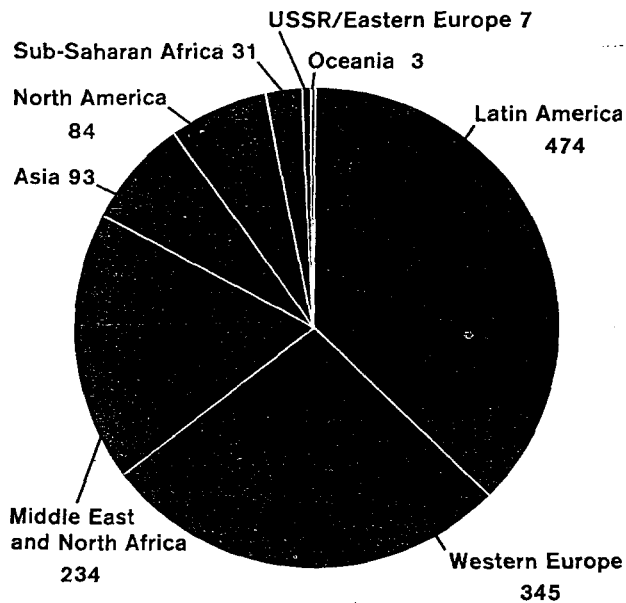
Other major groups have been less successful than the Red Brigades. West German radicals, while embarrassing government officials by conducting a daring prison escape, suffered severe setbacks when various of their members were arrested in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Switzerland, France, the Netherlands, and even one in the United States. While still a potential threat, these terrorists have not mounted a major international attack since the Schleyer-Lufthansa episode in late 1977.

² The mass murder/suicide of 900 members of the Peoples' Temple in Guyana, while paralleling the fanatic devotion to a cause demonstrated by many terrorist groups, is not considered an act of international terrorism in this study.

Geographic Distribution of International Terrorist Attacks Directed Against US Targets, 1968-78

Figure 4

Total: 1,271



Fatah, generally believed to be the most moderate Palestinian guerrilla group, made headlines because of its feud with Iraq and the Black June organization, headed by Fatah dissident Abu Nidhal. Both sides mounted attacks on each other in capital cities on three continents during the summer. The vendetta's violence decreased from the daily battles in early August, although verbal barrages from both sides continued during the fall. Fatah denounced the Baghdad regime almost daily, while Abu Nidhal, already under a 1974 Fatah death sentence, pledged to assassinate PLO leader Yasir Arafat. Recent public statements seem to indicate an Iraqi-Fatah rapprochement, although Black June's position remains unclear.

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine was dealt a setback with the death by natural causes of Wadi Haddad, noted planner and organizer of transnational terrorist operations. Although individuals claiming PFLP membership mounted bloody attacks at Paris's Orly Airport, and on a London street, the future of the Haddad faction remains unclear. The majority of the PFLP, led by George Habash, has not been successful in wooing the Haddad wing back into the fold.

Revolutionaries around the world, including terrorists, mourned the assassination of Henri Curiel, leader of a Paris-based support apparatus that funneled money, arms, documents, training, and other services to scores of leftist groups. While his organization will probably continue to function, no successor has emerged with the contacts and charisma Curiel was able to muster.

The Japanese Red Army continued to be relatively quiescent. The JRA sent reminders of its exploits to its former hostages, but has not mounted an operation since its September 1977 Japanese Airlines hijacking, during which it freed imprisoned comrades, obtained a \$6 million ransom, and embarrassed the Japanese Government. Although authorities feared that the JRA would seize upon local Japanese political issues—such as the Narita Airport controversy—to forge links with domestic radicals, no local operations have occurred.

The whereabouts of Carlos—the notorious Venezuelan terrorist who led the PFLP-West German team in the 1975 OPEC raid—remains a mystery.

The Ananda Marg—an India-based religious group that first appeared on the international scene in 1977—seems to have been mollified with the release of its spiritual leader, Prabhat R. Sarkar, from an Indian prison. During 1977, activist members of this group conducted attacks against Indian nationals on several continents, but were relatively inactive in 1978.

Patron State Support

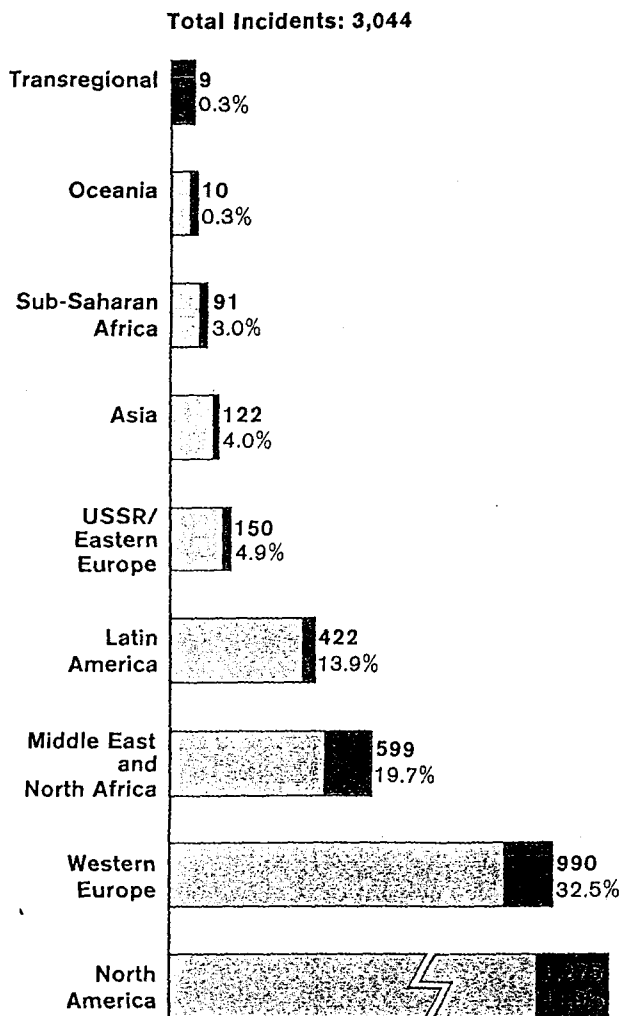
Radical Arab states opposed to a political settlement with Israel have continued to work closely with extremist Palestinian terrorist groups. Iraq's use of Black June as surrogates in battling the moderate Fatah was particularly noteworthy.

Libya, often characterized as a major patron of various terrorist groups throughout the world, has recently taken steps towards improving its image in the West. In November Colonel Qadhafi met with the West German Interior Minister to discuss closer cooperation against terrorists. In December the Libyan Interior Minister vowed to arrest and extradite any German terrorists seeking refuge.

After having previously used support for national liberation movements as an excuse for footdragging in antiterrorist efforts, East European governments have shown some signs of cooperation in combating terrorism. The Bulgarians, clearly with Soviet approval, allowed a West German team to arrest Red Army Faction member Till Meyer and his anarchist associates. The Yugoslavs also arrested four West German terrorists, but allowed them to travel to an undisclosed country in retaliation for Bonn's denial of Belgrade's request for the return of several Croatian terrorists. Finally, tourists have noted photographs of terrorists being checked against incoming passengers by East European guards at border checkpoints. Despite these favorable signs, it is not clear whether the Soviet and East European governments will expand their concern beyond West German radicals and also help to curb Arab terrorist activities.

**Nationality of Victims
of International Terrorist Attacks,¹
1968-78**

Figure 5



1. The percentage of the total number of incidents around the world appears under the total number of incidents involving victims from that region. Percentages sum to more than 100 due to incidents in which victims were from several regions.

1978 proportions are represented by red sections of bars.

Antiterrorist Countermeasures

Businesses continued to search for defensive methods tailored to their own needs. Several multinational corporations preferred to pay off terrorist ransom and publicity demands rather than cooperate in government-declared "no concessions" policies. Many organizations were formed solely to advise executives on how to cope with political violence. Representatives of other nongovernmental organizations, including educational institutions and the media, explored ways of cooperating with governmental efforts to combat terrorism.

The development of antiterrorist paramilitary squads may have deterred terrorists from holding groups of hostages for prolonged periods, a type of incident that has been comparatively rare this year. The one instance in which a rescue team was used, however, resulted in dismal failure. An apparent breakdown in communication between Cyprus and Egypt led Cypriot troops to fire on an Egyptian commando contingent that was storming a hijacked airliner at Larnaca Airport.

Regional cooperation was especially evident among European countries faced by terrorism. The European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism came into force for 18 of 20 Council of Europe members, with only Ireland and Malta remaining outside the agreement. The convention calls for extradition or prosecution of individuals suspected of certain offenses, whatever their motivation. In October the European Economic Community Justice Ministers announced a supplementary agreement among the Nine that solves some technical legal difficulties of the European Convention. The Nine pledged to consider more far-reaching French proposals to establish a "common judicial zone." Also during the fall, European ministers met in Vienna to establish procedures for sharing information on terrorists and to unify antiterrorist training programs.

The most notable development in international cooperation to combat terrorism was the antihijacking proposal made at the Bonn economic summit conference in July. The seven participants agreed to cut off air commerce with nations refusing to extradite or prosecute hijackers and/or to return hijacked planes.

This is the first antihijacking agreement that includes an enforcement mechanism. Although many technical legal questions regarding implementation remain to be answered, the international response has been generally favorable.

Implications for 1979

Several patterns seen in 1978 are expected to carry over into the new year:

- Regional patterns of victimization and location of operations are likely to remain virtually unchanged. Representatives of affluent countries, particularly government officials and business executives, will remain attractive targets. Western Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East again are likely to be the main trouble spots. American persons and property will continue to be attacked on occasion, although improvements in US official and corporate security should deter many potential attacks.
- Acts of terrorism related to the Palestinian issue will almost certainly continue. Despite recent statements by moderate Palestinian leaders on the possibility of living in peace with Israel if a Palestinian state is created, extremists can be expected to demonstrate their rejection of a political solution of the Arab-Israeli dispute. Attacks within Israel, at times victimizing nationals of third countries, were undertaken even by the moderates during 1978.
- The vast majority of incidents will continue to involve bombings and incendiary attacks, in part because neither poses great risk to the perpetrators. Although added security precautions at sensitive facilities, a business exodus from unstable areas, and paramilitary rescue squads may deter spectacular confrontational attacks, these measures clearly cannot protect all potential—if less sensitive—targets from simple hit-and-run operations.
- The development and implementation of more effective international countermeasures will continue to be impeded by differing moral perspectives among states, and a natural reluctance on the part of many states to commit themselves to any course of action that might invite retribution—either by terrorist groups or by states sympathetic to the terrorists' cause. Regional

cooperation by like-minded governments faced with similar problems, however, is expected to expand. West European successes may set an example for governments in other regions.

The coming year is expected to be characterized by some new developments as well.

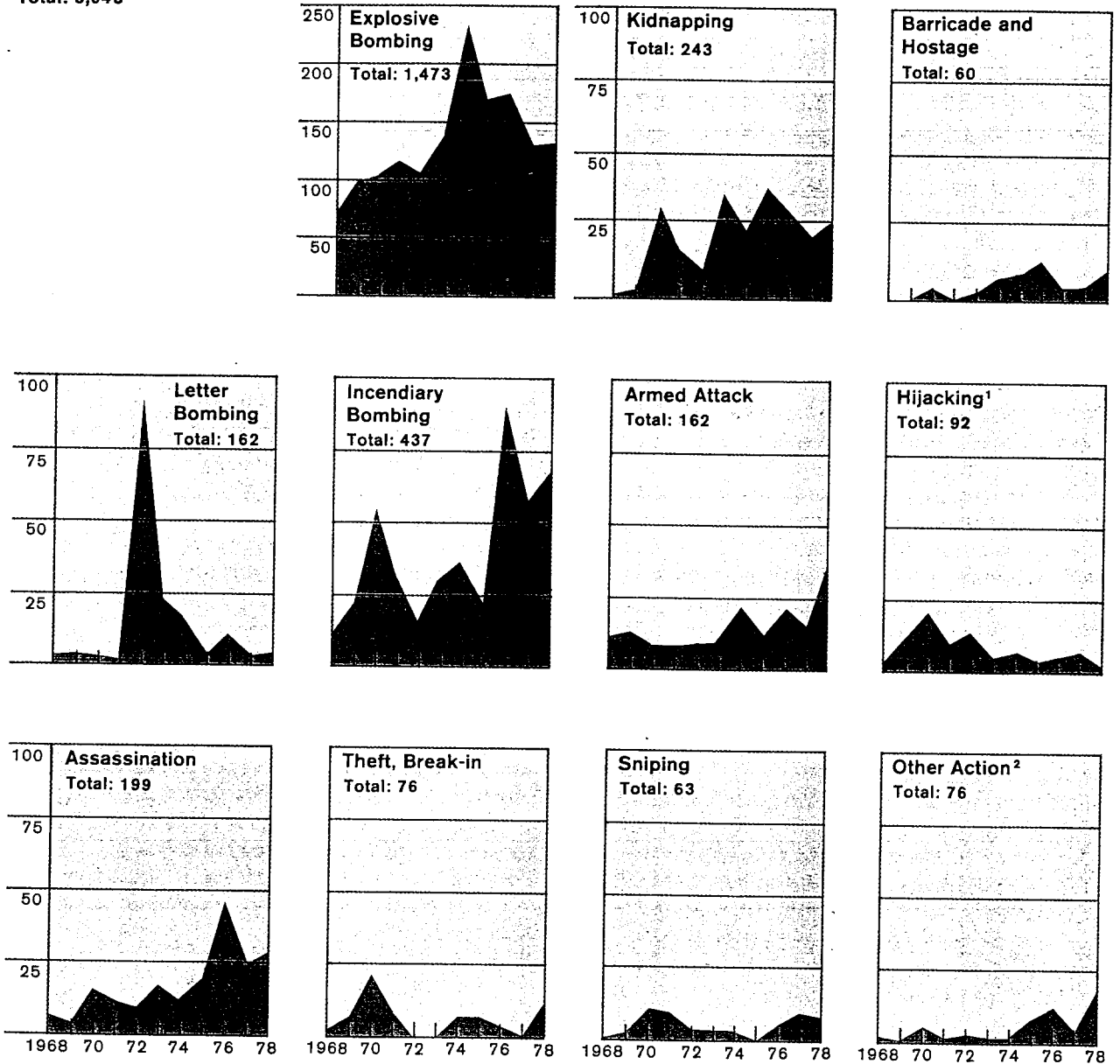
- Terrorists will try to adapt their tactical repertoire to counter the countermeasures adopted by government and private security services. These adaptations probably will include changes in target selection, improvements in terrorist planning and other aspects of tradecraft, and, possibly, an overall increase in technological sophistication (for example, use of more compact conventional explosives).
- West German terrorists, having suffered reverses during the past year, are likely to feel greater pressure to remind their domestic and international sympathizers that they remain revolutionary leaders by engaging in operations at home or overseas.

Although the oscillations in the overall level of terrorist activity in recent years render predictions hazardous, it is doubtful that there will be many more terrorist incidents in 1979 than in 1978. A cyclical pattern seems to have been established. For the typical terrorist group, a period of considerable activity lasting several weeks or months usually is followed by a lull, as governments adapt to terrorist tactics, group leaders are arrested, problems of logistics or morale arise, and popular sympathy wanes. In time new terrorist recruits may appear, new methods may be developed, and a more favorable political climate may return. Then a new cycle for that group may begin. But as new or revitalized groups arise, others become dormant, and some eventually disappear.

International Terrorist Incidents by Category, 1968-78

Figure 6

Total: 3,043



1. Includes hijacking of modes of transportation for air, sea, or land, but excludes numerous non-terrorist hijackings.

2. Includes occupation of facilities without hostage seizure, shootouts with police, and sabotage.

Appendix

Statistics on International Terrorism

This study employs computerized data based solely on unclassified material published during the past decade. While this technique promotes a historical and comparative perspective, the tallies should be treated with caution. The sharp rise in recorded terrorist incidents over the past decade may reflect not only a real increase in such activity but also more comprehensive and systematic reporting by the press. On the other hand, many incidents probably have not been reported.

In addition, there are many significant gaps in our knowledge about specific incidents and groups, and even those terrorist organizations and actions on which there is reliable information do not always fit neatly into the categories that have been created for them. Moreover, the number of incidents under review is so small that inadvertent omissions or erroneous classification could have a numerically significant impact. In many cases in which the perpetrator is unknown, attribution to terrorists may be misleading. The action may have been undertaken by criminals, psychotics, or revenge-seeking individuals with specific nonpolitical grievances.

The criteria used in the present study are unavoidably arbitrary. For the purpose of this enumeration, international terrorism is defined as the threat or use of violence for political purposes when (1) such action is intended to influence the attitude and behavior of a target group wider than its immediate victims, and (2) its ramifications transcend national boundaries (as the result, for example, of the nationality or foreign ties of its perpetrators, its locale, the identity of its institutional or human victims, its declared objectives, or the mechanics of its resolution). The statistics exclude terrorist attacks on US and allied personnel and installations during the Indochina conflict. They also exclude the assassinations and cross-border operations associated with the Arab-Israeli conflict, unless those incidents either victimized noncombatant nationals of states outside the principal area of conflict or became the object of international controversy. The figures also exclude bombings, shellings, and incursions by conventional forces. Related but separately targeted actions undertaken by a single terrorist group are counted as individual incidents, even when they were staged on the same day and in close proximity to one another. Terrorist operations that miscarried (as opposed to those that were abandoned or countered during the planning or staging phases) are counted.

Table 1

Geographic Distribution of International Terrorist Incidents 1968-78

Target	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	Total*
North America	35	7	23	24	18	18	38	51	37	23	19	293 (9.7)
Latin America	41	71	113	70	49	80	124	48	105	46	61	808 (26.6)
Western Europe	16	31	58	38	112	141	151	109	179	129	166	1,130 (38.1)
USSR/Eastern Europe	0	1	1	2	1	0	1	2	0	2	3	12 (0.4)
Sub-Saharan Africa	0	7	8	4	4	4	9	18	16	20	24	114 (3.7)
Middle East and North Africa	18	32	60	52	35	21	47	56	62	48	61	492 (16.1)
Asia	1	12	19	24	43	10	11	13	14	8	16	171 (5.6)
Oceania	0	5	1	2	3	1	1	0	0	3	3	19 (0.6)
Transregional	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	4 (0.1)
Total	111	166	282	216	269	275	382	297	413	279	353	3,043

* Figures in parentheses are percentages of the total accounted for by each region.

Table 2**International Terrorist Attacks on US Citizens or Property
1968-78, by Category of Target**

Target	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	Total *
US diplomatic officials or property	12	17	52	51	22	19	12	12	12	21	22	252 (19.8)
US military officials or property	4	2	38	36	11	12	12	9	33	40	30	197 (15.5)
Other US Government officials or property	26	32	57	21	20	10	16	14	2	7	2	207 (16.3)
US business facilities or executives	6	35	24	40	44	51	86	42	52	33	47	460 (36.2)
US private citizens	3	7	17	5	12	10	13	27	26	13	21	154 (12.2)
Total	51	93	188	153	109	102	139	104	125	84	122	1,270

* Figures in parentheses are percentages of the total accounted for by each category of target.

Table 3**International Terrorist Incidents,
1968-78, by Category of Attack**

	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	Total ¹
Kidnaping	1	3	32	17	11	37	25	38	30	22	27	243 (8.0)
Barricade-hostage	0	0	5	1	3	8	9	14	4	5	11	60 (2.0)
Letter bombing	3	4	3	1	92	22	16	3	11	2	5	162 (5.3)
Incendiary bombing	12	22	53	30	15	31	37	20	91	57	69	437 (14.4)
Explosive bombing	67	97	104	115	106	136	239	169	176	131	133	1,473 (48.4)
Armed attack	11	13	8	8	9	10	21	11	21	14	36	162 (5.3)
Hijacking ²	3	11	21	9	14	6	8	4	6	8	2	92 (3.0)
Assassination	7	4	46	12	10	18	12	20	48	23	29	199 (6.5)
Theft, break-in	3	7	22	10	1	0	8	8	5	0	12	76 (2.5)
Sniping	3	2	7	3	4	3	3	9	14	6	9	63 (2.1)
Other actions ³	1	3	11	0	4	4	4	1	7	11	20	76 (2.5)

¹ Figures in parentheses are percentages of the total accounted for by each category of attack.

² Includes hijackings of means of air, sea, or land transport, but excludes numerous nonterrorist hijackings.

³ Includes occupation of facilities without hostage seizure, shootouts with police, and sabotage.

Table 4

Geographic Distribution of International Terrorist Incidents, 1968-78, by Category of Attack

	North America	Latin America	Western Europe	USSR/ Eastern Europe	Sub-Saharan Africa	Middle East/North Africa	Asia	Oceania	Trans-regional	Total
Kidnaping	2	133	23	0	39	33	11	2	0	243
Barricade-hostage	6	11	23	0	2	15	3	0	0	60
Letter bombing	14	9	78	0	14	6	37	0	4	162
Incendiary bombing	29	69	249	2	4	52	28	4	0	437
Explosive bombing	198	388	575	7	10	237	46	12	0	1,437
Armed attack	2	33	34	1	21	58	13	0	0	162
Hijacking ¹	5	22	19	0	7	24	15	0	0	92
Assassination	15	56	69	0	15	31	12	1	0	199
Theft, break-in	3	44	13	0	0	14	2	0	0	76
Sniping	11	28	8	1	1	11	3	0	0	63
Other actions ²	8	15	39	1	1	11	1	0	0	76
Total	293	808	1,130	12	114	492	171	19	4	3,043

¹ Includes hijackings by means of air, sea, or land transport, but excludes numerous nonterrorist hijackings.

² Includes occupation of facilities without hostage seizure, shootouts with police, and sabotage.

Table 5

International Terrorist Attacks on US Citizens or Property 1968-78, by Category of Attack

	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	Total ¹
Kidnaping	1	2	17	9	2	20	8	20	7	4	5	95 (7.5)
Barricade-hostage	0	0	3	0	1	2	2	1	1	3	0	13 (1.0)
Letter bombing	2	1	2	0	3	0	1	0	2	1	0	12 (1.0)
Incendiary bombing	12	18	40	26	13	19	25	4	36	24	49	266 (20.9)
Explosive bombing	30	58	77	93	73	52	90	63	44	35	40	655 (51.5)
Armed attack	1	4	3	4	6	6	5	3	8	3	11	54 (4.2)
Hijacking ²	0	4	12	3	4	0	0	2	5	4	0	34 (2.8)
Assassination	3	2	9	2	2	3	2	7	13	5	6	54 (4.2)
Theft, break-in	0	3	15	8	0	0	3	3	1	0	8	41 (3.2)
Sniping	2	1	5	2	2	0	3	1	5	4	3	28 (2.2)
Other actions ³	0	0	5	6	3	0	0	0	3	1	1	19 (1.5)
Total	51	93	188	153	109	102	139	104	125	84	123	1,271

¹ Figures in parentheses are percentages of the total accounted for by each category of attack.

² Includes hijackings of means of air, sea, or land transport, but excludes numerous nonterrorist hijackings, many of which involved US aircraft.

³ Includes occupation of facilities without hostage seizure, shootouts with police, and sabotage.

Table 6

Geographic Distribution of International Terrorist Incidents, 1978, by Category of Attack

	North America	Latin America	Western Europe	USSR/ Eastern Europe	Sub-Saharan Africa	Middle East/North Africa	Asia	Oceania	Total
Kidnaping	0	16	3	0	5	1	1	1	27
Barricade-hostage	2	5	3	0	0	1	0	0	11
Letter bombing	1	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	5
Incendiary bombing	6	2	27	0	0	31	3	0	69
Explosive bombing	8	16	83	3	2	15	4	2	133
Armed attack	0	8	8	0	11	4	5	0	36
Hijacking ¹	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
Assassination	1	3	14	0	4	4	3	0	29
Theft, break-in	0	7	5	0	0	0	0	0	12
Sniping	1	2	3	0	0	3	0	0	9
Other ²	0	1	18	0	0	1	0	0	20
Total	19	61	166	3	24	61	16	3	353

¹ Includes hijackings by means of air, sea, or land transport, but excludes numerous nonterrorist hijackings.

² Includes occupation of facilities without hostage seizure, shootouts with police, and sabotage.

Table 7

Geographic Distribution of International Terrorist Attacks On US Citizens or Property, 1968-78, by Category of Attack

	North America	Latin America	Western Europe	USSR Eastern Europe	Sub-Saharan Africa	Middle East/North Africa	Asia	Oceania	Total
Kidnaping	0	58	1	0	14	19	3	0	95
Barricade-hostage	3	2	1	0	0	6	1	0	13
Letter bombing	3	2	1	0	2	0	4	0	12
Incendiary bombing	6	60	130	1	3	41	21	4	266
Explosive bombing	65	257	174	0	4	116	36	3	655
Armed attack	0	17	12	0	3	14	8	0	54
Hijacking ¹	5	5	11	0	0	3	10	0	34
Assassination	2	23	5	0	5	14	5	0	54
Theft, break-in	0	28	5	0	0	7	0	0	41
Sniping	0	15	3	1	0	6	3	0	28
Other actions ²	0	7	2	1	0	8	1	0	19
Total ³	84	474	245	3	31	234	93	7	1,271

¹ Includes hijackings of means of air or land transport, but excludes numerous nonterrorist hijackings many of which involved US aircraft.

² Includes occupation of facilities without hostage seizure, shootouts with police, and sabotage.

³ Figures in parentheses are percentages of the total accounted for by each region.

Table 8

**Geographic Distribution of International Terrorist Attacks
On US Citizens or Property, 1978, by Category of Attack**

	North America	Latin America	Western Europe	Sub- Saharan Africa	Middle East/North Africa	Asia	Total
Kidnaping	0	2	0	1	0	2	5
Incendiary bombing	1	1	15	0	30	2	49
Explosive bombing	3	5	23	0	6	3	40
Armed attack	0	3	4	1	1	2	11
Hijacking ¹	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Assassination	1	2	0	1	2	0	6
Theft, break-in	0	5	3	0	0	0	8
Sniping	0	1	2	0	0	0	3
Other ²	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total	5	19	47	3	40	9	123

¹ Includes hijackings of means of air or land transport, but excludes numerous nonterrorist hijackings many of which involved US aircraft.

² Includes occupation of facilities without hostage seizure, shootouts with police, and sabotage.