



# National Counterterrorism Center

## Country Reports on Terrorism 2005, Statistical Annex

April 7, 2006







## FOREWORD:

Consistent with its statutory mission to serve as the U.S. Government's knowledge bank on international terrorism, the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) is providing the Department of State with required statistical information to assist in the satisfaction of its reporting requirements under Section 2656f of Title 22 of the U.S. Code. The statistical information included in this Annex to the *2005 Country Reports on Terrorism* is drawn from the data NCTC maintains on the [www.nctc.gov](http://www.nctc.gov) website. This Annex includes:

- this Foreword, which provides important context for the contents of this Annex;
- a methodology section that explains how the data was compiled and the inherent limitations of the data;
- content boxes intended to summarize and, where appropriate, break down the aggregate number of incidents of terrorism in 2005, more information about which is found on the [www.nctc.gov](http://www.nctc.gov) website.

Section 2656f(b) of Title 22 of the U.S. Code requires the State Department to include in its annual report on terrorism "to the extent practicable, complete statistical information on the number of individuals, including United States citizens and dual nationals, killed, injured, or kidnapped by each terrorist group during the preceding calendar year." While NCTC keeps statistics on the annual number of incidents of "terrorism," its ability to track the specific groups responsible for each incident involving killings, kidnappings, and injuries is significantly limited by the availability of reliable open source information, particularly for events involving small numbers of casualties. The statistical material compiled in this Annex, therefore, is drawn from the number of incidents of "terrorism" that occurred in 2005, which is the closest figure that it is practicable for NCTC to supply in satisfaction of the above-referenced statistical requirements. In deriving its figures for incidents of terrorism, NCTC applies the definition of "terrorism" that appears in the 22 U.S.C. § 2656f(d)(2), i.e., "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents."

The figures in this Annex are not directly comparable to statistics reported in pre-2005 editions of *Patterns of Global Terrorism*, or to the figures NCTC reported in 2005. Those figures were compiled on the basis of a more limited methodology tied to the definition of "international terrorism," which is also contained in 22 U.S.C. § 2656f. Subject to changes in reporting statutes, NCTC anticipates that future statistics provided by NCTC for the *Country Reports on Terrorism* will (like this year's report) be tied to the broader definition of "terrorism."

To establish the repository for the U.S. Government's database on terrorist incidents, in 2005 NCTC unveiled the Worldwide Incidents Tracking System (WITS), a data management system with a more comprehensive dataset than those used in previous years. The NCTC website, available on the Internet at [www.nctc.gov](http://www.nctc.gov), allows public access to WITS to facilitate an open and transparent look at the NCTC data. NCTC will ensure that data posted to the website is updated as often as necessary. Thus, the NCTC website must be viewed as a living document, regularly incorporating information about prior incidents as well as current events. As information on specific incidents is revealed through court cases or criminal investigations, for example, NCTC reviews its files and updates the relevant incident data.



NCTC cautions against placing too much weight on any set of incident data alone to gauge success or failure against the forces of terrorism. For a number of reasons, NCTC does not believe that a simple comparison of the total number of incidents from year to year provides a meaningful measure:

- Approximately one half of the incidents in the NCTC database involve no loss of life. Note also that an attack that damages a pipeline and a car bomb attack that kills 100 civilians may each count as one incident in the database. Thus, an incident count alone does not provide a complete picture.
- The nature of this exercise necessarily involves incomplete and ambiguous information, particularly as it is dependent on open source reporting. The quality, accuracy, and volume of such reporting vary significantly from country to country. Thus, determining whether an incident is politically motivated can be difficult and highly subjective, particularly if the incident does not involve mass casualties.
- As additional information sources are found, and as more information becomes available, particularly from remote parts of the globe, NCTC will continue to enrich the database, revising and updating the tabulation of incidents as necessary. Thus, this data cannot be meaningfully compared to previous years since it suggests that attacks on civilians may have been occurring at a substantially higher rate than was reflected in previous years' reporting and accounting.
- Counting protocols inevitably require judgment calls. Events identified as simultaneous and coordinated, for example, would be recorded as one incident, as would be attacks that subsequently targeted first-responders. For instance, on August 17, 2005, there were approximately 450 small bomb attacks in Bangladesh. Because they were coordinated, NCTC counted them as one incident; an argument could be made that they represented 450 separate attacks.

Despite these limitations, tracking incidents of terrorism can help us understand some important trends, including the geographic distribution of incidents and information about the perpetrators and their victims. Year-to-year changes in the gross number of incidents across the globe, however, may tell us little about the international community's effectiveness in preventing these incidents, and thus reducing the capacity of terrorists to advance their agenda through violence against the innocent.



## Methodology Used to Compile NCTC's Database of Terrorist Incidents

Over the course of the past year, NCTC, working with a panel of terrorism experts, has revised the methodology for counting terrorist incidents, basing it on the broader statutory definition of “terrorism” rather than that of “international terrorism,”<sup>1</sup> on which the NCTC based its incident counting in previous years. The broader definition and revisions in cataloging have resulted in a larger, more comprehensive set of incident data, all of which can now be found on NCTC's website, [www.nctc.gov](http://www.nctc.gov).

The data provided on the website are based on the statutory definition set forth in the Foreword to this Annex. Accordingly, the incidents NCTC has catalogued in the database are those which, based on available open source information, meet the criteria for “premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents.” Determination of what constitutes an incident of terrorism, however, is sometimes based on incomplete information and may be open to interpretation. The perpetrator's specific motivation, whether political or otherwise, is not always clear, nor is the perpetrator's identity always evident. Moreover, additional information may become available over time, affecting the accuracy of initial judgments about incidents. Users of this database should therefore recognize that expert opinions may differ on whether a particular incident constitutes terrorism or some other form of political violence.

NCTC has made every effort to limit the degree of subjectivity involved in the judgments. In the interests of transparency NCTC has adopted counting rules which require that terrorists must have initiated and executed the attack for it to be included in the database; foiled attacks, as well as hoaxes, are not included in the database. Spontaneous (i.e., non-premeditated) hate crimes without intent to cause mass casualties are excluded to the greatest extent practicable.

### What is a “noncombatant”?

Under the statutory definition of “terrorism” NCTC uses to compile its database, the victim must be a “noncombatant.” However, that term is left open to interpretation by the statute. For the purposes of the WITS database, the term “combatant” was interpreted to mean military, paramilitary, militia, and police under military command and control, in specific areas or regions where war zones or war-like settings exist. Further distinctions were drawn depending on the particular country involved and the role played by the military and police, e.g., where national security forces are indistinguishable from police and/or military forces. Noncombatants therefore included civilians and civilian police and military assets outside of war zones and war-like settings. Diplomatic assets, including personnel, embassies, consulates, and other facilities, were also considered noncombatant targets.

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<sup>1</sup> Users who wish to determine the number of incidents of “international terrorism” (i.e., incidents that involve the territory or citizens of two or more countries) will find these incidents included in the WITS database.



Although only acts of violence against noncombatant targets were counted as terrorism incidents, consistent with the statutory definition of terrorism, for purposes of the WITS database, if those incidents also resulted in the death of combatant victims, all victims (combatant and noncombatant) were tallied. In an incident where combatants were the target of the event, non-combatants who were incidentally harmed were designated “collateral” and the incident excluded from the posted data set. For example, if terrorists attacked a military base in Iraq and wounded one civilian bystander, that victim would be deemed collateral, and the incident would not be counted.

In the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan, it is particularly difficult to gather comprehensive information about all incidents and to distinguish terrorism from the numerous other forms of violence, including crime and sectarian violence, in light of imperfect information. The distinction between terrorism and insurgency in Iraq is especially challenging, as Iraqis participate in the Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and other terrorist network as well as in tribal and sectarian violence. Therefore, some combatants may be included as victims in some incidents when their presence was incidental to an attack intended for noncombatants. We note, however, that because of the difficulty in gathering data on Iraq and Afghanistan, the dataset may not provide an accurate account of all incidents of terrorism in these two countries.

### **What is “politically motivated violence”?**

The statutory definition also requires the attack to be “politically motivated.” NCTC has adopted a series of counting rules to assist in the data compilation. Any life-threatening attack or kidnapping by any “Foreign Terrorist Organization” or group appearing on the list of “Other Organizations of Concern” is deemed politically motivated. Similarly, any serious attack by any organization or individual against a government/diplomatic official or a government/diplomatic building is deemed politically motivated and is therefore considered terrorism. On the other hand, any attack that is primarily criminal or economic in nature or is an instance of mob violence is considered not to be “politically motivated.” Similarly, any terrorist organization actions that are primarily intended to enable future terrorist attacks (robbing a bank or selling narcotics for the purpose of raising money, for example) are not considered terrorism.

In between these relatively clear-cut cases, there is a degree of subjectivity. In general, NCTC counting rules consider that attacks by unknown perpetrators against either unknown victims or infrastructure are not demonstrably political and therefore are not terrorism. However, there are exceptions to this general rule: if such an attack occurs in areas in which there is significant insurgency, unrest, or political instability, such as Iraq and Afghanistan, the attack may be considered terrorism; or if the attack occurs in a region free of such political violence but involves something more than a shooting (for instance, improvised explosive device, beheading, etc.), the attack may, depending on the circumstances, be considered terrorism. Finally, if low-level attacks against noncombatant targets begin to suggest the existence of a chronic problem, the attacks may be considered terrorism.



## NCTC Observations Related to 2005 Terrorist Incidents Statistical Material

According to the counting rules utilized by NCTC and the data available on April 7, 2006, approximately 11,000 terrorist attacks occurred in 2005 and resulted in over 14,600 deaths.

- Iraq accounted for just over 30% of the worldwide attacks (approximately 3500) and 55% of the fatalities (approximately 8300).
- Approximately 630 attacks accounted for just over 50% of the total fatalities (7450 out of 14,600); approximately 6000 attacks (almost 54% of the total) were against facilities and/or resulted in no casualties.
- Although most Sunni extremist attacks appear to have been conducted by various affiliated groups, few could be linked to what remains of the al-Qaida central leadership, according to available information.
- Muslims bore a significant share of the burden of terrorist attacks in 2005. Of approximately 40,000 individuals worldwide killed or wounded by terrorist attacks, based on a combination of reporting and demographic analysis of the countries involved, at least 10,000-15,000 victims were Muslim, most of which were in Iraq.
- Several identifiable categories of noncombatants also bore a significant brunt of terrorism in 2005. Approximately 6,600 police, 1000 children, 300 government officials, 170 clergy/religious figures, 140 teachers, and 110 journalists were killed or wounded by terrorists in 2005.
- Armed attacks and bombings accounted for the vast majority of fatalities in 2005. Suicide attacks rose in a number of countries; approximately 360 suicide bombings accounted for about 20% of all deaths (approximately 3000 fatalities).
- In Afghanistan there were 4 suicide attacks in the first half of 2005 and 16 in the last half. However, despite the growth in attacks, the number of casualties in the latter half of 2005 declined. In the last 6 attacks of 2005 only one person was killed.
- No attacks approached the sophistication of those on 9/11, and 2005 saw many attacks perpetrated by relatively unskilled operatives. Nevertheless, technology has empowered the terrorists; the use of coordinated attacks in different locations, initial attacks followed by those directed at first responders, and the novel use of traditional and improved explosives all contributed to deadly attacks in 2005.

The State Department reported that 56 Americans were killed in terrorist attacks in 2005; 47 of these fatalities occurred in Iraq.



**Incidents of Terrorism Worldwide, 2005\***

Incidents of terrorism worldwide	11,111
Incidents resulting in death, injury, or kidnapping of at least one individual	8,016
Incidents resulting in the death of at least one individual	5,131
Incidents resulting in the death of zero individuals	5,980
Incidents resulting in the death of only one individual	2,884
Incidents resulting in the death of at least 10 individuals	226
Incidents resulting in the injury of at least one individual	3,827
Incidents resulting in the kidnapping of at least one individual	1,145

Individuals worldwide killed, injured or kidnapped as a result of incidents of terrorism	74,087
Individuals worldwide killed as a result of incidents of terrorism	14,602
Individuals worldwide injured as a result of incidents of terrorism	24,705
Individuals worldwide kidnapped as a result of incidents of terrorism	34,780

**Incidents of Terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan, 2005\***

Incidents of terrorism in Iraq	3,474
Incidents in Iraq resulting in death, injury, or kidnapping of at least one individual	2,839
Individuals in Iraq killed, injured, or kidnapped as a result of incidents of terrorism	20,711

Incidents of terrorism in Afghanistan	489
Incidents in Afghanistan resulting in death, injury, or kidnapping of at least one individual	365
Individuals in Afghanistan killed, injured, or kidnapped as a result of incidents of terrorism	1,533

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\*In all cases limited to incidents targeting noncombatants.