

28. INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

BACKGROUND

A general rise in the frequency of international terrorist incidents in the early to mid-1980s prompted Western states to place a high priority on adopting policies and measures to counter such acts. Their effectiveness has been evidenced in the relative decrease of overt terrorist incidents, in particular cases of air terrorism, although the problem is far from solved. Bombings continue to comprise over half of all terrorist incidents, while hostage-taking and assassination are the second and third most frequent forms.

International efforts have been generated through the strengthening of existing conventions, such as the Tokyo, Montreal and the Hague Conventions created under the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), and through the creation of new agreements and resolutions. Among the most significant of these is the 1985 United Nations General Assembly Resolution 40/61, passed by consensus, which condemns, outright, all acts of terrorism.

The new American Administration has pledged to continue the fight against international terrorism and is determined, along with other governments, to see terrorists brought to justice for their actions. Examples include the trial and conviction of the *Achille Lauro* hijackers, and the case of Fawaz Younis who was the first person convicted in March, 1989 in the United States under a 1984 law permitting US authorities to apprehend terrorists outside of US borders. Younis was convicted for the hijacking of a Royal Jordanian airliner in 1985.

Other developments over the past year include the decision of the US Government in late August 1988 not to override a Federal Court ruling allowing the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) observer mission to the UN to remain open. Congress had originally approved closing the office on the basis of a 1987 Anti-Terrorist Act. Although the US felt the PLO should not be permitted to operate on American soil because of its purported terrorist affiliations, it was decided that the Anti-Terrorist Act could not be applied to the organization. Many countries, including Canada, had found the US to be in breach of its obligations as host country under the 1947 UN Headquarters Agreement.

These same sentiments, however, did not prevent the US from denying PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat a visa entry in November, 1988, blocking him from addressing the UN General Assembly in New York. This decision came despite a UN resolution supported by 151 countries "deploring" the American denial and stating that the decision violated its obligations as host country. In December the Assembly was moved to Geneva for its annual debate on Palestine in order to hear Arafat, and, in an historic move, the Chairman personally renounced terrorism. He also declared that the PLO had rejected terrorism "in all its forms." This move led to an American decision to commence a dialogue with the PLO in December 1988. Similarly, the Canadian Government decided in March 1989 to permit the development of official, high-level talks with the PLO.

Pan American Flight 103 crashed outside of Lockerbie, Scotland in December 1988, killing all 259 passengers on board as well as an estimated eleven persons on the ground. Officials have traced the source of the crash to a bomb planted in a radio-cassette player, although the organization responsible has not yet been determined.