



THE
TERRORISM RESEARCH
CENTER

***Terrorist Intentions
to Target Hotels and Resorts:
A TRC Decision Support Brief***

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The Terrorism Research Center (TRC) is pleased to present this decision support product.

Terrorist groups seek targets that are rewarding from their point of view.¹ With that maxim as its premise, this analysis focuses on terrorist intentions as they relate to hotels and resorts.

Hotels and resorts have identifiable features setting them apart as unique facilities. These features may be incentives or disincentives for terrorists groups to attack. This study surveys the broad features inherent in hotels and resorts, particularly from the terrorist adversary perspective.

Different terrorist groups have differing objectives that shape how they conduct violence. This report also examines the utility of attacking hotels or resorts for five types of terrorist organizations: ethno-nationalist/separatists, revolutionary, far-right, new age (single-issue), and religious.²

Finally, to derive its findings, this report cross-references the unique features of hotels and resorts with basic terrorist groups' objectives to derive a matrix that yields terrorist group types most likely to consider attacking hotels or resorts.

This product is not a threat or risk assessment, it is a tool for assessing intentions.³ Additional refinement of hotel and resort features is suggested to enhance or alter future findings in the conclusion.

For the purpose of this product, "hotels and resorts" are defined as prominent lodging and/or leisure facilities maintaining Western-style accommodations and being owned by significant national or transnational commercial interests.

¹ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*

² Adapted from Martha Crenshaw and John Pimlott, eds. *The Encyclopedia of World Terrorism, Vol. 1*

³ Additional work on assessing the capabilities of specific terrorist groups and cross-referencing those values with terrorist intentions would allow for the refinement of overall threat by specific group (Intentions + Capability = Threat). Finally, cross-referencing group threat with the relative vulnerabilities of specific hotels and resorts would yield the overall risk to a given facility (Threat + Vulnerability = Risk).

Summary of Findings

This study surveyed relatively unique features of hotels and resorts and compared these features to the goals and intentions of six terrorist group types to derive a matrix of terrorist incentives and disincentives for attacking these locales.

Religious extremist terrorist groups, such as Al-Qaida, are judged to have the highest number of incentives and least number of constraints to attack hotels or resorts.

Special interest terrorist groups, such as anti-abortion extremists or animal rights activists, scored second in terms of the number of incentives to attack hotels and resorts, their score being relatively high based primarily on a relative absence of constraints.

Left-wing terrorist groups, such as the Philippine New Peoples' Army, and nationalist/separatist terrorist groups, such as the Basque ETA group in Spain, are also a potential threat to hotels and resorts.

Right-wing terrorist groups, such as neo-Nazi skinheads, were least likely to attack hotels and resorts.

The presence of foreign forces or security personnel in a hotel or resort provided four out of six terrorist group types with an incentive to engage in attacks.

Hotels and resort perceived as prominent corporate symbols provided three out of six terrorist group types with an additional incentive to attack.

The presence of locally-hired employees in a hotel or resort was a constraint for four out of six terrorist group types.

The majority of terrorist group types appeared to be incentivized or constrained more by personnel associated with a hotel or facility than by the activities or presence of the facility itself.

Part One: Hotels/Resorts Features and Terrorist Groups

Hotels and resorts have been, and will continue to be, viable targets for terrorist groups. Hotels and resorts are primarily commercial establishments, but by their nature, they are unique institutions and a number of factors set them apart from other forms of commercial activity. These special features can play a significant role in shaping terrorist groups' incentives or disincentives to attack, affecting their intentions.

I. Special Features

A. Hotels and Resorts as Facilities

*Financial
Hub*

Hotels and resorts are economic centerpieces in many countries, particularly in nations dependent on tourism for a substantial part of their revenues. In these instances, hotels and resorts are core pieces of the nation-state infrastructure. In some cases, hotels and resorts also represent the key financial component of a town, city, or region's economic well-being. Finally, some hotels and resorts starkly highlight differences in prevailing economic conditions between local, impoverished populations and wealthy, traveling elites.

*Corporate
symbols*

Hotels and resorts often symbolize multinational corporate interests or foreign investment in a country. Many have significant name recognition, and many are products of first-world business practice and significant corporate investment. Prominent corporate names and logos, incongruent with local populations' customs or expectations, can provoke a sense of separateness or inferiority.

*National
icons*

Hotels and resorts also frequently reflect the prestige, history, or power of a nation-state. A few facilities feature unique attributes, innovative architecture, opulent cosmetics, and well-groomed grounds that define not only the hotel or resort, but reflect favorably on the nation-state that built or hosts the facility. Hotels and resorts of this kind are present in the United States, United Kingdom, Persian Gulf, and Southeast Asia, in particular.

B. The Human Dimension

Apart from considering hotels and resorts as commercial entities, they also uniquely blend numerous elements of one or more similar or dissimilar societies, peoples, and/or socio-economic classes. Hotels and resorts are gathering places and can uniquely take on the prominence or prestige—or lack thereof—of the officers, staff, and the customers who work in, or patronize, them. This human dimension influences terrorist targeting intentions.

*Enclaves
/property of
the wealthy*

Hotels and resorts can be enclaves for a society's wealthiest elites and prominent foreigners, serving as a hub or cluster of local and wealthy people. The cost of patronizing hotels and resorts often lies outside the ability of lower and middle-income members of local/indigenous populations. Finally, in some cases, the hotel or resort itself is owned and operated by a local elite who may enjoy far higher living standards or come from a different ethnic, religious, or linguistic community than his/her fellow citizens.

In many cases, overseas, foreign-owned hotels are centers where wealthy tourists congregate and mingle. In some cases, hotels and resorts engage in costly and opulent practices that are alien or taboo to many in local populations—particularly concerning the preparation and consumption of food and beverage or featured entertainment. In the eyes of some locals, then, hotels and resorts can appear to be enclaves where “bunkered-in” foreigners, and even some local residents, can engage in alien or forbidden activities outside--or in defiance of--common customs.

*Hotels and
resorts
employ local
persons*

Hotels and resorts often employ local nationals as staff. Wages, training, and general opportunity often outpace local work options. Overall, hotels and resorts not only reflect the privileged status of their owners and prominent patrons, but also starkly contrast with the more modest livelihoods of locally-hired maintenance crews, kitchen staff, and housekeeping personnel.

Foreign elites

Some hotels and resorts periodically host world leaders and international elites on official business or leisure travel. The presence of prominent or controversial persons, at a hotel or resort is a temporary phenomenon but nonetheless fundamentally alters, albeit temporarily, the facility's value as a potential target to some terrorist groups.

Foreign "occupiers"

Similarly, hotels and resorts can serve as billeting for foreign military or security personnel temporarily assigned overseas. In these instances, the hotel or resort can be viewed by the local population as a foreign base for intervention or, at least, a sanctuary for potential foreign interference. The presence of foreign forces in hotels and resorts may persist for extended periods, making the site an attractive target.

III. Terrorist Groups: Goals and Objectives

Dozens of terrorist groups operate worldwide and have different goals and objectives. Terrorists target the things or people that they deem plausible and achievable. Therefore, the most effective method of examining such a diverse set is to survey the terrorist groups' objectives to identify their likely targets.

In the following section, five types of terrorist groups are examined based on their relative objectives, which are identified as: nationalist/separatist terrorists; left-wing terrorists; right wing terrorists; issue-based terrorists; and religious terrorists.

A. Nationalist/Separatist Terrorists

NS groups seek autonomy, land, recognition

National/separatists (NS) terrorist groups seek political autonomy, recognition of grievance, compensation from a society or nation-state, and/or a significant piece of geography based on identity, ethnicity, or kinship. Prominent NS groups include: the Basque ETA in Spain; the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) in the United Kingdom, various Palestinian terrorist groups; the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) in Turkey; and the Liberation Tamil Tigers of Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka.

NS groups
court
external
and local
support

*NS groups
can behave
differently
based on
where they
are*

NS groups use threats or violence to compel states or other governing bodies to accede to their demands by increasing the political or economic cost of not doing so. In general, most NS groups target government or lucrative commercial interests or resources. In July 2003, as part of a campaign to achieve statehood for the Basquelands, Basque separatists in Spain bombed a hotel, injuring 12 including six foreigners, as part of a summer terrorism campaign.

NS groups may threaten or attack foreign states, people, organizations, or interests that they believe are supporting their enemy. But, most NS groups also seek international recognition for their cause that can constrain NS attacks against foreign facilities or personnel.

Finally, based on their need to preserve support among their sympathizers and constituency and preserve their prospective homeland, NS groups are hesitant to risk harming their own people inside their own proclaimed territory. NS terrorists will operate differently based on whether they are inside or outside their homeland.

B. Left Wing Terrorists

Left wing (LW) terrorists seek to change governments violently as part of a broad program to transform society. LW groups are revolutionary and seek to redistribute wealth by attacking any foreign military presence or capitalist personnel/facilities.

LW terrorist groups have targeted persons and facilities having symbolic significance, particularly those representing icons of state control, capitalism, and imperialism. In November 2002, beachfront hotels were the targets of two simultaneous bomb explosions in Santa Marta, Colombia. Two people were killed and 10 were wounded in the attack attributed to Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

Prominent LW groups include: Italy's New Red Brigades; Japan's Red Army; and the Philippine's New People's Army. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, LW revolutionary movements have declined in number and capability.

*LW groups
have targeted
symbols of
local wealth
and foreign
power*

C. Right Wing Terrorism

Right wing (RW) terrorist believe other races or ethnicities are inferior, and certain groups either pollute or erode an otherwise functioning race-centric society. Examples include: skinheads; neo-Nazi's; violent fascist groups; and pro-White militias.

RW groups believe in superiority and a pure society

Hatred of socialism or communism and a tendency toward authoritarianism are common traits among RW extremist groups. Anti-Semitism and fear of impending government warfare against the common population are other common themes. RW terrorism often consists of low level beatings and arsons, but the most extreme groups, such as the Nazis and modern Italian neo-fascists, see violence as an inoculating and purifying activity for society.

In October 1998, dozens of skinheads on a rampage following the conviction of an arrested member entered a hotel in Sevastopol, Russia and beat numerous dark-skinned patrons.

D. Special Interest Terrorism

Special interest (SI) terrorist groups use violence to compel change in a fairly narrow or esoteric slice of political or social activity. SI terrorists include anti-abortion, animal rights, and environmental activist groups.

SI terrorists want narrow change and are limited to modern societies.

SI terrorists often feel social change is occurring too slowly, is being ignored, or that SI "constituents" have no effective political voice of their own--for instance the unborn, animals, or plants—and, thus, need a champion. SI terrorist groups are seldom found outside prosperous, first-world social contexts. In October 1998, Earth Liberation Front (ELF) terrorists attacked ski resort facilities in Colorado, cause \$12 million in damage. An ELF communiqué stated:

"On behalf of the lynx, five buildings and four ski lifts at Vail were reduced to ashes on the night of Sunday, October 18th. Vail, Inc. is already the largest ski operation in North America and now wants to expand even further. The 12 miles of roads and 885 acres of clearcuts will ruin the last, best lynx habitat in the state. Putting profits ahead of

Colorado's wildlife will not be tolerated. This action is just a warning."

E. Religious Extremist Terrorism

Since 1992, the number of religious terrorist groups has increased to include several major world religions as well as obscure sects and cults.⁴ Despite its recent ascent, religious terrorism is one of the oldest and most enduring forms of terrorism.

Religious extremist (RE) terrorists believe they have a mandate and mission from a divine authority to use violence in defense of, or on behalf of, their faith. RE activities can include killing nonbelievers, driving out nonbelievers from sacred lands, transforming society into a pure or holy community, defending coreligionists, and promulgating the faith.

Many RE groups support or revel in the sacrifice of coreligionists who conduct suicide attacks. Some RE terrorists believe the collateral casualties involved in an attack—the inadvertent death of other non-terrorist faith members—is acceptable considering the higher purpose of attacking the enemy.

Al-Qaida, Lebanese Hizballah, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad are prominent Islamic RE terrorist groups and have targeted and killed hundreds of US citizens. Terrorist groups claiming affiliation with other faiths include: the Jewish Kahane Chai; the Christian Lord's Resistance Army in Sudan and Uganda; the Sikh Saheed Khalsa Force in India; and the Aum Shirikyo cult (renamed Aleph in 2000) in Japan.

Given their divine inspiration, RE terrorist groups have the least ideological constraints against attacks causing mass casualties. Many resist expansion of commercial activities in countries of their faith, believing commercial activities bring dilution of local values and distract believers from focusing on religious activities.

In August 2003, the Islamic fundamentalist group Jemaah Islamiyah bombed the JW Marriott in Jakarta's downtown business district killing 13 and injuring over 140. The Indonesian group known to have links to Al-Qaida was also

RE terrorists are divinely inspired, can view violence as a duty and have few constraints

⁴ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*

behind the October 2002 bombing of a Bali resort killing nearly 200 and injuring over 400 more.

Part Two: Decision Matrix and Findings

Based on variable hotels and resort features--permanent and temporary--identified in Part I and terrorist goals and objective also identified above, the following decision matrix yields a basic overview of potential terrorist intentions by group type.

Key:

FC = Financially Significant

CS = Corporate Symbol

NI = National Icon

WE = Wealthy Enclave

EL = Employs Locals

FE* = Foreign Elites

FI* = Foreign

"Occupiers"

* = Temporary

Condition

() = Temporary

Value

+ = More Incentive

o = Neutral

- = Less incentive

Hotel/Resort Features Affecting Targeting								
Terrorists	FS	CS	NI	WE	EL	(FE* FO*)		
NS Groups								
In homeland	-	o	-	o	-	o	+	-3(-2)
Outside homeland	+	o	o	o	-	o	o	0(0)
LW Groups	o	+	o	+	-	o	+	+1(+2)
RW Groups	-	-	-	-	-	o	+	-5(-4)
SI Groups	o	+	o	+	o	+	o	+2(+3)
RE Groups	+	+	+	+	o	+	+	+4(+6)

I. Terrorist Group Findings

RE terrorist groups are judged to have the highest number of incentives to attack hotels or resorts, in particular. RE terrorist groups' score was bolstered by the absence of negative (constraints) scores due to RE groups' divine mandate, which absolves them of most ramifications associated with attacks. The only hotel and resorts feature having an attribute scored below "More Incentive" was EL, which yielded a neutral value. While RE terrorist do not actively pursue collateral damage, past RE attacks against hotels and other public-type institutions demonstrate collateral damage is not a significant constraint.

RE terrorists have most incentives, fewest disincentives to attack hotels and resorts

*SI terrorists
also lack
constraints*

SI terrorists scored second in terms of number of incentives to attack hotels and resorts, their score being relatively high based primarily on the absence of negative (constraint) scores. SI terrorists have firm ideology and belief systems underpinning their violent activities and are inclined to target the economic and political center of their opponents with less regard for consequences.

*LW terrorists
may not wish
to harm hotel
working staff*

LW terrorists are a potential threat to hotels and resorts. LW groups were judged to have several positive scores (incentives to attack hotels and resorts as SI groups but less than RE groups). LW terrorists, notably, have a negative value (constraint) in the EL feature. This reflects LW groups' affinity with the working class.

*NS terrorists
have to
balance
attacks with
concerns for
external and
internal
support*

NS terrorists received two scores, based on the geographic focus of their objectives. Outside their homeland, NS terrorists are indifferent in attacking hotels and resorts. NS terrorists received an equal number of positive and negative scores (one each) with other scores judged as neutral. The NS flat-line aggregate outside the homeland reflects the complex costs benefit analysis NS terrorists must consider when weighing attacks that could pressure authorities while simultaneously eroding local and external support.

Inside their homeland, NS terrorists are less likely to attack hotels and resorts. NS terrorists inside the homeland were judged to have only one positive (incentive) score affecting attack decision-making: the FO feature. This reflects NS terrorists' desire to preserve stability, viability, and reputation inside the geographic locale of their natural constituents, while feeling the need to respond to a foreign or "occupying" presence in their homeland by attacking it.

RW terrorist groups were least likely to attack hotels and resorts. RW terrorists were judged as having the most negatives (disincentive) scores, with the only positive score appearing in the FO feature. The abundance of negative scores reflects RW groups' desire to maintain the status-quo and sustain local or national prestige and economic viability as measures of national pride. Often, victims of RW terrorism are disenfranchised and have little linkage to hotels and resorts as defined here.

The FO factor provides an incentive for four terrorist group types to attack. The EL factor provides a disincentive to attack for four terrorist group types

The most relevant variable in assessing intentions appears to be host occupants, not the facilities themselves

II. Hotels and Resorts Features Findings

When considering hotels and resorts features, the FO feature received more positive values than any other Feature across the spectrum of terrorist groups. While temporary in nature, hotels and resorts engaging in FO-type activities provide four out of six terrorist group types with an incentive to engage in attacks.

The feature receiving the second highest number of positive scores was CS, indicating hotels and resorts that symbolize multinational corporate success provide three out of six terrorist group types with an incentive to attack.

Finally, of the seven hotels and resorts factors, EL had the highest number of negative (disincentive) scores, indicating the employment of local national in hotels and resorts is a constraint for four out of six terrorist group types. No terrorist group type was judged as viewing the EL feature as an incentive to attack.

A. A Note on Method

This decision matrix and findings is the product of limited set of variables. Specifically, the findings regarding hotels and resorts features provoked an additional thought.

The two hotels and resorts features that provided most terrorist groups with either an incentive or disincentive—FO and EL respectively—are features that reflect persons *inside* the hotel or resort, not a reflection of the presence or activities of the facility itself.

This indicates more work on identifying and codifying persons associated with hotels and resorts and the development of a weighting schema to reflect uneven influence among variables would lead to refined judgments.

B. Conclusion

In sum, there are a variety of factors which lead to both the tactical and sometimes even incidental targeting of hotels and resorts:

- terrorists are targeting foreigners
- terrorists are targeting wealth & leisure class
- terrorists are targeting the economy
- terrorists are targeting a government
- terrorists are targeting individuals
- terrorists are targeting a nearby facility

It is clear that both the rationale and location of the facilities make hotels and resorts a prime target for violence. However, importantly, this study systematically reviewed the political and ideological violence which is a level far beyond the scope of small-scale criminal activity and even organized crime; for it is the terrorist attack which poses the greatest catastrophic risk to both life and property. Only by carefully considering terrorist intentions, can executives and managers make critical decisions to significantly reduce the threat of mass casualty terrorist attacks.