

Date: Wed, 06 Oct 2010 10:27:18 -0400

To: "Dr. Baruch Fischhoff - Chair, National Academy Committee on Improving Intelligence" <baruch@cmu.edu>

From: Lloyd Etheredge <lloyd.etheredge@policyscience.net>

Subject: 161. Why is Deterrence Not Working? Evaluating GWOT Strategies

Dear Dr. Fischhoff and Colleagues:

One of the sobering, and perhaps alarming, challenges is to understand why deterrence - at least as the concept is currently being applied in the global War on Terrorists - seems to be failing, or at least to have limited success. The "we're making many gains, but they are smart and adaptive and spreading to new countries. . . " scenario might be, according to General Petraeus, the annual report for the next two generations, perhaps with the same rates of annual expenditures for the US + NATO. And we recently have had a heightened warning for Americans traveling in Western Europe.

Shouldn't Deterrence Work?

At one level, this is puzzling. Deterrence is an established Realpolitik theory of prevention and security: It would be worthwhile to take a serious look at all of the behavioral assumptions of deterrence theory to see whether better results could be possible. For example, look at the actual ratios of deaths resulting from the nearly 3,000 victims in the US in the 9/11 attacks. The ratios of subsequent deaths in the Islamic world linked to Western responses have been at least (actually, much greater than) 100:1 and the US has spent trillions of dollars in response; America's history from WWII, against Japan in response to the attack on Pearl Harbor (which killed fewer Americans than the 9/11 attacks) were even higher in the inflicted deaths and ought to send deterrent messages. And there is sufficient evidence (most recently in Woodward) of US covert "kill or neutralize" lists and assassination team capabilities in several dozen countries [about N=3,000 operating in Pakistan] - and apparent effectiveness for the top 100 names associated with the 9/11 attacks and beyond.

Shouldn't deterrent messages have gotten through?

- After the Munich massacre of the Israeli Olympics Team in 1972, the Israeli targeted response seems to have had a deterrent effect against future attacks. Is there something that they did, that is missing or uncommunicated in the US approach to deterrent messages?

Can Deterrent Messages Get Through More Effectively?

The situation may be hopeless. Alternatively, it could be enormously beneficial to rethink deterrent messages and how they can get through more effectively to key players and audiences, especially without creating unwanted threats and other side-effects. In addition to the Munich massacre response, the behavioral science literature during the Cold War (e.g., Pool's "Deterrence as an Influence Process" (1969)) became nuanced and sophisticated and may have useful ideas that the National Academy could identify for achieving better deterrent effects. For example, could the State Department's Public Diplomacy initiatives be partly responsible for a weakened deterrent effect?

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