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FACT SHEET

WHAT IS MEANT BY STATE SPONSORED TERRORISM?

International terrorism would not have flourished as it has during the past few decades without the funding, training, safe haven, weapons and logistical support provided to terrorists by sovereign states

www.milnet.com/milnet/ict/counter.htm

To what degree are states involved in terrorist activity and why are they involved?

Individual states have many reasons for becoming involved in overt and covert terrorist acts and the degree of involvement varies. Usually states will become involved with 'terrorist groups' because both have common interests. State involvement is designed to further the state's strategic and political objectives in the belief that agendas will be more easily obtainable by stepping outside the parameters of the law.

LEVELS OF STATE SUPPORT

- Ideological Support - belief in similar doctrine
- Financial Support - transfer of funds to an organisation
- Military Support - provision of weapons, training & courses
- Operational Support - direct assistance in perpetrating a specific act eg. false documentation, providing safe havens, failing to extradite
- Initiating and Directing Attacks - state provides specific instructions, sets aims, initial attacks
- Direct Involvement - Highest level of state involvement whereby government agencies initiate direct attacks using defence, security and intelligence sources

Levels of state support depend on the 'cost-benefit analysis' and what price the state is prepared to pay for participation.

States involved in terrorist activity can pay a heavy penalty and the level of support is governed by the international consequences that can be imposed as a result of linking a state with terrorist activities.

Iran is one state accused of state sponsored terrorism by both the USA and Israel. Former Israeli Prime Minister, Shimon Peres, said:

'...Let it be clear – Iran finances, trains, directs, and pressures Hizballah to perform these attacks and hurt innocent victims... We know that Iran has been exerting pressure to strike targets within Israel, as well as Jewish and Israeli targets abroad'.

As a result of these accusations Iran has, at various times, been subject to US initiated diplomatic and economic sanctions. These have impacted heavily on the civilian population and the country's economic development.

There are a number of other penalties that can be imposed. These include cultural and sporting sanctions, diplomatic expulsions and boycotts, confiscation and freezing of international assets, legal sanctions (e.g. defining leaders as war criminals/ being charged with crimes against humanity), and offensive military action against the state.

Often in hindsight the consequences of state involvement outweigh the benefits that the original aims set out to achieve. Terrorism creates a conflict of interests between a state's political and economic aims. Some states, among them Iran, claim in their defence a moral argument, that when faced with a corrupt or violent regime, (their view of the Israeli government), it is seen as better to target a small group in order for an entire population to be free from oppression.



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Accusations of terrorism are regularly directed at various states by governments looking for political gain. How a state is viewed in relation to terrorist activity depends very much on the current political climate and attitudes. For example, the US lists Iraq as a state engaged in state sponsored terrorism but at certain times, for example during the Iran-Iraq war in the eighties, it did not suit the US to label Iraq as a terrorist sponsoring state, as it was seen as counter-productive to the US's ambitions in the Middle East.

Other examples of State-sponsored terrorist groups the [Abu Nidal Organization](#) (which has been backed by Syria, Libya, and Iraq), and the Japanese Red Army (which often worked on contract for Libya).

RELEVANT LINKS

www.milnet.com

www.terrorismanswers.com