



The Roles of Media and Technology in Terrorism

The History of Terrorism
as a Strategy of Political
Insurgency

March 2011

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Most credit goes to

Hoffman, Bruce Inside Terrorism New York, Columbia University Press 2006

I'll note other sources as I come to them, but this is really driven by Chapter 6 "Old Media" and Chapter 7 "New Media" from Hoffman's excellent book (buy it, read it)

Terror Goals and Publicity

Different Groups use Terror to achieve different goals

- Remake Society
- Divinely inspired Millennialism
- Ethnic homelands (Separations)
- Reunification of a homeland
- Specific issue oriented actions

Actions are NOT random or senseless

- Maximum publicity
- Terror as theater
- Communication through shock

Media plays a vital role

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Media and Terrorism

Different Groups use Terror to achieve different goals

- Remake Society along fundamentalist or politically doctrinarian lines
- Divinely inspired Millennialism imperatives
- Ethnic homelands
- Reunification of a divided homeland (perceived or otherwise)
- Specific issue oriented actions (Abortionist, Environmentalists, animal rights)

Actions are NOT random or senseless

They want Maximum publicity – violence draws attention to generate publicity to communicate a message

Terror as theater - they are playing to an audience, and will tailor the message for that audience.

Communication through shock

The Media plays a vital role in reaching their target audiences, and they will fashion the event to meet the needs of the media.

They also can provide intelligence to terrorists through their coverage of events.

Walter Lacquer's view

Terrorism is violence for effect – not directed at individuals, but at audiences

Terrorism is theater, and involves the conscious manipulation of media

Media is competitive and profit motivated

Publicity creates a tacit endorsement

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Walter Lacquer comments

Terror actions can be seen as broadly symbolic, and intended to generate publicity
-Publicity enhances the effectiveness of violence through emotions, ultimately impacting behavior.

-attracts attention to influence actions

Terrorism is violence for effect – not directed at individuals, but at audiences

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TWA Flight 847 (1985)

Three Hijackers Initially
153 Passengers
Seized after Athens stop, diverted to Beirut, 19
passengers dropped
On to Algiers, 20 passengers released, then back to
Beirut
US Navy Diver Robert Dean Stethem beaten then shot
in the head and dumped on tarmac
Approximately a dozen new hijackers got on the plane,
went back to Algiers
\$5,000 credit card charge to Stewardess Uli Derickson,
for gas
Back to Beirut with 40 Americans, dispersed
throughout the city to block rescue attempts
Greece released 8 terrorists
Israel released 700+ shi'ite militia (shortly after and
NOT in response)



Rewards for Justice

WANTED
Hijacker Izzat al-Din
Up to \$5 Million Reward



Date of Birth: 1950
Place of Birth: LAOIS, LAOS
Height: 5'7" to 5'11" (1.70 - 1.80 m)
Build: Slim
Hair: Black
Eyes: Black
Sex: Male
Citizens: LAOS
Aliases: IZZAT AL-DIN, IZZAT AL-DIN



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Example from Hoffman, Bruce Inside Terrorism New York, Columbia University Press
2006 Page 174

References in popular culture from Wikipedia

The 1986 film [The Delta Force](#) was loosely based on this event.

The 1988 made-for-TV film [The Taking of Flight 847: The Uli Derickson Story](#) was directly based on this event.

The [Nitzer Ebb](#) song "T.W.A." (from the 1988 album [Belief](#)) appears to be inspired by this event, as it contains samples of someone saying "TWA flight 847" and "We must land at Beirut."

The [Zoviet France](#) song "They're Eating the Passengers" (from the 1986 album *Misfits, Loony Tunes and Squalid Criminals*) extensively samples a recording of the radio conversation between Captain Testrake and air traffic controllers during the second stop in Beirut, in which one of the hijackers can also be heard. The most prominent excerpts have Testrake saying that the hijackers were beating and threatening to kill the passengers, and another man (presumably co-pilot Maresca) reporting that that a hijacker said that he would "kill an American that he has tied up in the cockpit" if the plane wasn't refueled in three minutes. Parts of the recording are also cut backwards into two of the audio collage tracks entitled "Signal" on the same album.

The Media Response to TWA 847

17 Days of coverage!

500+ news segments (29 @ day)

2/3rd of nightly news broadcast dedicated to the event

85 personnel representing the 3 networks sent to
Beirut

Human Interest stories to fill the slow time

News makers as negotiators

Terrorists and Guerillas somehow become = hostages

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In 17 days, 500+ new segments were released. The nightly news was dominated by this, and BREAKING NEWS bulletins interrupted many of my favorite shows. Since the show minutes were basically overridden, i.e., I lost my shows story, I hoped they were short interruptions. They were really exciting the bulletins I mean, but horrible if they came in the last ten minutes of a show.

Interviews were held with terrorists, sometimes bordering on negotiations (not news reporters now, but new makers).

Broadcasts with hostage family members had a delightfully maudlin feel to them, and were darn good TV. And cheap.

And what was really twisted is that we saw media try to somehow try and see the other sides view, which would be fine and balanced except they end up at times equating the actions of people who deliberately take up arms to fight their enemies, with those who seek a holiday with their families.

So let's make a point here "Tourists are not morally operating on the same level as terrorists"! THEY ARE NOT THE SAME THING. Most countries want to increase tourism. Never have I heard of a country that wanted to increase terrorism. So stop trying to rationalize killing kids. It is just wrong.

And we should also note that bombing villages and killing kids that way is wrong too. Calling dead kids collateral damage is just wrong too.

So other examples would be

-the kidnapping (and murder) of former Italian Prime Minister Aldo Moro in 1978.

-1994 to 1996 IRA Media reporting that seemed to suggest the IRA's return to terrorist actions was somehow the British Governments fault (as opposed to an IRA decision)

Technology, Terrorism, and Reporting

Technology Changes

- 1830 Steam Printing Press
- 1870 Electrical Press, and printing on both sides of the paper
- 1968 First TV Satellite
- 1970s Minicam and Video tape

The News Cycle Changes

- Speed of news impacts speed of policy
- Reality TV is darn good TV
- Cost is amortized if you can spread more broadcasts and breaking new points over the life of the story

The Death of the Newspaper

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The early mass circulation press included both official newspapers, and seditious pamphlets and political statements. Mass circulation, and the use of public places to allow the “recycling” of pamphlets were major changes. The 1870 cost change led to the “Read All About It” increase in sales, and the increasing commercialization of media and news.

In 1968, the PLO emerged, and the first TV Satellite was launched. As a US satellite, it made the US the forefront of TV coverage, and the target of choice for publicity seeking groups. Combined with mini cameras, video tape, and the signal conversions of the 1970s, and live breaking news became major media events. It is significant in how they sped policy cycles as well. In order to be “in control”, politicians often had to stake out positions, very very quickly, and these could harden into policy, quickly.

Media's need to have news scoops, and to maintain audiences, led to a certain “breathless pace”, featuring often irrelevant human interest angles, or interviews with the terrorists themselves, that had further repercussions on the public and policy makers. Playing out the string for news/media was often just darn good, and profitable, TV.

Profits come into this too. Most major newspapers are dead now, recycling stories from other sources, over and over, with very limited investigative abilities. The London Sunday Times had 150 investigative reporters in the 1950's, but was down to

8 by the 1980's. In their place are media, which maybe news, but is not investigated or analyzed as much as it is spun to extend its life. Extending the life of a story is a lot like running a high volume production line-the more you report and sustain the story, the lower your costs. Quantity trumps quality.

Shaping the Message

Terrorists “get” the news and publicity cycle

- Excellent Terrorists structure their terror to exploit the media (they make it convenient)
- Governments do not like a lot of coverage
- Hostages do like coverage

How does coverage affect policy?

How does coverage affect the Public?

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Terrorists employ graduates of US Media Colleges.

Terrorists are going for publicity

-They will wait (1970 in Jordan) to blow up a plane.

-They will wait to escape a building – 1975 OPEC seizure, Carlos the Jackal waited for TV cameras before fleeing the building

-In 1979, for Canadian TV, Iranian Mobs waited for the CBC to set up, they shouted “Death To Carter” for 2 minutes, before obligingly shifting on cue to “Mort a Carter” for their Quebecois viewers

Heavy Terrorist coverage does force the policy makers to deal with terrorists, and may benefit hostages. Of course, it may also cause Terrorists to take more hostages...

It also does pressure governments – Beirut and the TWA flight in 1985 demonstrated that fully

Public Perceptions

1988

- Automobile deaths 47,087 People
- Terrorism related deaths 203 People
- Dog Attacks 22 People

1989

- Automobile deaths 45,582 People
- Terrorism related deaths 23 People
- Dog Attacks 34 People

1985 TWA Hijacking

- 850,000 holiday trips cancelled
- 200,000 foreign trips rescheduled to US locations

6.5 million Americans travelled abroad, 6,000 died, 17 were killed by terrorists

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Dog Related Deaths in the US

Breed	1979-1980	1981-1982	1983-1984	1985-1986	1987-1988	1989-1990	1991-1992	1993-1994	1995-1996	1997-1998	Total
Purebred											
Pit bull-type	2	5	10	9	11*	8	6	5	4*	6	66
Rottweiler	0	0	1	1	3	1	3	10	10	10	39
German Shepherd Dog	2	1	4*	1	1	4*	2	0	2	0	17
Husky-type	2	1	2	2	0	2	2	1	2	1	15
Malamute	2	0	3	1	0	2	3	1	0	0	12
Doberman Pinscher	0	1	0	2	2	2	1	0	0	1	9
Chow Chow	0	1	0	0	0	2	3	0	2	0	8
Great Dane	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	7
Saint Bernard	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	7
Crossbred											
Wolf-dog hybrid	0	1	1	2	1	4	1	2	2	0	14
Mixed-breed	0	3	1	2	1	2	0	1	1	1	12
German Shepherd Dog	0	2	0	2	2	2†	0	1	2	0	10†
Pit bull-type	0	1	0	3	2†	3	1	1	0	0	10†
Husky-type	0	1	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	6
Rottweiler	0	0	0	0	1†	1	0	1	1	2	5†
Alaskan Malamute	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	3
Chow Chow	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	3
Doberman Pinscher	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Saint Bernard	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Great Dane	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1†	0†
No. deaths for which breed was known	10	20	26*	24	22	34*	24	25	26*	27	238

*Numbers differ from previous reports because police/guard dogs "at work" were excluded, and 1 new DGRF was identified as occurring in 1996. †A purebred dog and a crossbred dog of this breed were involved in a single fatality; therefore, that breed is counted only once in the total column.

Old Style versus New Style

Old Style

- Rebel Radio Stations
- Rebel Newspapers
- Conventional media



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Rebel radio and newspapers controlled content. These were early and at times effective, but tended to broadcast and appeal to the “Party Faithful”.

Conventional media gave broad exposure, but it was uncontrolled – it could actually make terrorists look bad! The message of the violence, and the propaganda value, could be lost. You reached a much wider, and varied audience, you just gave up control.

The New Media

US Airstrikes followed by pre-recorded Bin Laden message

Tools of the modern terrorist

- Minicam and video
- Video Production facilities
- Mass market CDs
- Video games
- E-mail
- Web sites
- Electronic money transfers
- Cell phones
- Children's shows



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Again, all credit to others, Hoffman especially.

Here the key points to emphasize are the product control – the message and the distribution are both targets and vertically integrated.

It is very, very affordable. No cave should be without the luxury of the internet, and Bin Laden websites.

The targeting is broad, including children's shows – LOOK AT THE CUTE BUNNY! – and video games, as well as slick fundraising sites (JUST 5 DOLLARS BUYS 10 BULLETS). There is a long range recruitment and hatred process in much of these broadcasts.

It also can help distribute “how to” knowledge on bomb-making, strategy, etc.

Show the victims of the oppressors aggression- kids killed as collateral damage, fighters immortalized for their actions, etc.

It can be really terrifying and horrible too. For example, transmission of the last words of someone who is about to be beheaded, and then broadcasting the beheading, it is pretty scary.

The New Media

Terrorists can control both creation of content and distribution

- Real time is a one second delay

Segmentation of Markets

Publicity =propaganda=legitimacy

A combination of old media and new media

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Terrorists now control the full product cycle, including production and targeted distribution over the internet. There are sites for the casual cause supporters, and for the extreme ones as well. Hardcore Islamic sites are in Arabic only. For the less dedicated, and more suspect, English and French sites are available.

Teachers tip: There are a LOT OF SITES!

First you use terror to reach the ears, then use the ears to access the minds and hearts.

Directed to a committed audience, terror and propaganda can be very, very powerful.