



START

Patterns of Terrorism in the United States, 1970-2014

*Report to the Office of University Programs,
Science and Technology Directorate,
U.S. Department of Homeland Security*

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National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism
A Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Center of Excellence
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About This Report

The author of this report is Erin Miller at the University of Maryland. Questions about this report should be directed to Erin Miller at eemiller@umd.edu.

The initial collection of data for the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) data was carried out by the Pinkerton Global Intelligence Services (PGIS) between 1970 and 1997 and was donated to the University of Maryland in 2001. Digitizing and validating the original GTD data from 1970 to 1997 was funded by a grant from the National Institute of Justice in 2004 (PIs Gary LaFree and Laura Dugan; grant number: NIJ2002-DT-CX-0001) and in 2005 as part of the START Center of Excellence by the Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Directorate (DHS S&T), Office of University Programs (PI Gary LaFree; grant numbers N00140510629 and 2008-ST-061-ST0004). Data collection for incidents that occurred between January 1998 and March 2008 and updates to the earlier data to make it consistent with new GTD coding criteria were funded by the DHS S&T Human Factors/Behavioral Sciences Division (HFD) (PIs Gary LaFree and Gary Ackerman; contract number HSHQDC-05-X-00482) and conducted by database staff at the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) and the Center for Terrorism and Intelligence Studies (CETIS). For GTD data collection from April 2008 to October 2011, START partnered with the Institute for the Study of Violent Groups (ISVG), headquartered at New Haven University. These efforts were funded by a grant from DHS S&T Office of University Programs, (PI Gary LaFree; grant number 2008-ST-061-ST0004).

Beginning with events that occurred in November 2011, the START Consortium headquartered at the University of Maryland began collecting all data for the GTD independently. Since then, all GTD collection has been jointly funded by DHS S&T Office of University Programs (PI Gary LaFree; grant number 2012-ST-061-CS0001) and by the U.S. State Department (PIs Gary LaFree and Erin Miller; contract number SAQMMA12M1292). The GTD now includes information on 141,966 terrorist attacks from around the world from 1970 through 2014 and can be accessed directly from the START [website](#).

In addition to ongoing data collection, efforts to review and update information on terrorist attacks in the United States have been supported through funding from the DHS S&T Resilient Systems Division (PI Gary LaFree, grant number # 2009ST108LR0003). Beginning in 2009, efforts to supplement GTD data for the United States have included systematically reviewing numerous chronologies of terrorism and political violence to identify cases that qualify for inclusion in the GTD, as well as updating existing GTD cases with new information. This report focuses on the U.S. segment of the Global Terrorism Database. An earlier version of this report was published in 2014.

About START

The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) is supported in part by the Science and Technology Directorate of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security through a Center of Excellence program based at the University of Maryland. START uses state-of-the-art theories, methods and data from the social and behavioral sciences to improve understanding of the origins,

dynamics and social and psychological impacts of terrorism. For more information, contact START at infostart@start.umd.edu or visit www.start.umd.edu.

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Executive Summary

Although terrorist attacks occur worldwide, aggregated global trends mask important variation at the regional, national, and local level. Recognition of these nuances is critical for understanding the broader causes and consequences of terrorism. In particular, patterns of terrorism in the United States are unique, characterized by especially distinctive trends in the number of attacks over time, the lethality of attacks, and the diversity of perpetrators, weapons, and targets. In this report we examine patterns of terrorism in the United States from 1970 to 2014 based on analysis of the Global Terrorism Database (GTD).¹

Attack Patterns and Lethality

- More than 2,600 terrorist attacks took place in the United States between 1970 and 2014; 56 percent of these attacks took place in the 1970s.
- More than 3,500 people were killed in terrorist attacks in the United States; however the vast majority of deaths (85%) took place on a single day—September 11, 2001. An additional 5 percent of all deaths were a result of the 1995 attack on the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City.
- Ninety percent of terrorist attacks in the United States between 1970 and 2014 were not lethal.
- The percentage of all attacks in the United States that were lethal ranged from a minimum of zero (in 2000, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2007, and 2011) to a maximum of 58 percent in 2014.
- The amount of property damage caused by non-lethal attacks in the United States between 1970 and 2014 totaled more than \$224 million. The damage amounts associated with each attack ranged from \$50 to \$45 million.
- Between 1970 and 2014, 18 percent of the attacks that took place in the United States were unsuccessful, meaning the perpetrators were either on their way to carry out the attack or had attempted to carry out the attack, but either failed or were thwarted by authorities. This was twice the prevalence of unsuccessful attacks worldwide (9%).

Perpetrators of Terrorism in the United States

- Information about the perpetrators of attacks was available for 82 percent of all attacks in the United States between 1970 and 2014. Of these, 60 percent were attributed to more than 160 named organizations; 32 percent were attributed to perpetrators described using a generic identity (e.g., “student radicals”); and 8 percent were attributed to unaffiliated individuals. For 18 percent of all attacks in the United States, no information on the perpetrator was available.
- When examining patterns of perpetrator activity by decade, we can observe shifts over time.
 - Terrorist attacks in the 1970s were predominantly carried out by left-wing extremists and Puerto Rican nationalists.
 - In the 1980s, attacks by left-wing extremists decreased, and attacks by perpetrators motivated by anti-abortion extremism became much more common.
 - In the 1990s, terrorist violence targeting abortion providers continued, and violence motivated by environmental extremism became more prevalent while attacks by left-wing extremists and Puerto Rican nationalists became extremely rare.

¹ The GTD defines terrorism as “the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to achieve a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation.”

- From 2000 to 2014, the perpetrators of attacks were very diverse with respect to their ideological motivations, and 29 percent of attacks were conducted by unaffiliated individuals.

Spatial Patterns of Terrorism in the United States

- Terrorist attacks occurred in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico; however they have been especially prevalent in certain locations. Half of all of the attacks in the United States between 1970 and 2014 took place in California (22%), New York (19%), and Puerto Rico (9%).
- This pattern shifted over time, however. While attacks consistently occurred in California and New York, the location of the remaining attacks has become increasingly diffuse and somewhat unpredictable.

Weapons Used in Terrorist Attacks in the United States

- The weapons used in terrorist attacks in the United States differed distinctly from worldwide trends. Perhaps most notably, the use of incendiaries was 3.75 times as prevalent in the United States compared to global patterns. In contrast, the use of firearms was 2.63 times as prevalent globally as it was in the United States.
- Between the 1970s and 2000s, the percentage of weapons that were incendiaries more than doubled, while the percentage of weapons that were explosives decreased by two-thirds and the percentage of weapons that were firearms increased more than 10 percent.

Targets of Terrorist Attacks in the United States

- Terrorist attacks in the United States targeted a wide variety of entities, but the most common targets between 1970 and 2014 were businesses (28%), followed by non-diplomatic government targets (13%) and private citizens and property (12%).
- Despite a decrease in the number of terrorist attacks, the targets of the 289 attacks between 2000 and 2014 remained diverse—18 different types of targets were attacked.

The threat of terrorism in the United States is far from uniform. In the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, certain patterns emerged regarding the perpetrators of terrorism, the movements they represented, and the tactics they adopted. In the first 15 years of the 21st century, perpetrators and targets in the United States were especially varied and less predictable. Attacks were frequently carried out anonymously, and perpetrators were often either unidentified or unaffiliated with a formally organized group. Terrorist attacks in the United States between 2000 and 2014 were relatively infrequent compared to earlier decades, but they were especially varied with respect to lethality, perpetrator motivation (based on either the identification of the perpetrator or the symbolism of the target), location, types of weapons used, and types of targets attacked.

Introduction

Although terrorist attacks occur worldwide, aggregated global trends mask important variation at the regional, national, and local level. In-depth analysis reveals important nuances in patterns of terrorism for a particular place or time period, which is largely shaped by the characteristics of perpetrators and perpetrator groups responsible for the attacks. Recognition of these nuances is critical for understanding the broader causes and consequences of terrorism. In particular, patterns of terrorism in the United States are unique, characterized by especially distinctive trends in the number of attacks over time, the lethality of attacks, and the diversity of perpetrators, weapons, and targets. In this report we examine patterns of terrorism in the United States from 1970 to 2014. We begin by describing the data collection methodology for the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) and conclude with general observations about the implications of this analysis for additional research and policy.

Data Collection Methodology²

The Global Terrorism Database is the result of multiple data collection efforts carried out since 1970 that have relied on publicly available, unclassified source materials, mainly media articles and electronic news archives. The data that originally comprised the core of the GTD from 1970 to 1997 were collected by Pinkerton Global Intelligence Services (PGIS) on handwritten index cards. Beginning in 2001, a team of researchers at the University of Maryland obtained these original records and digitized them. By 2006 the maintenance of this dataset had become a key component of the research portfolio developed by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), and the GTD team began partnering with other organizations to carry out ongoing data collection for events that took place after 1997. Throughout this period, START researchers conducted supplemental data collection projects to systematically compare the GTD to other sources of data to improve its completeness and worked to update historical event details when possible. In 2012, the GTD team at START moved the primary data collection effort to START headquarters at the University of Maryland. Since then, START has assumed sole responsibility for all aspects of the collection and maintenance of the GTD. To accomplish this, we developed an innovative data collection methodology for the GTD that is based on more than 10 years of experience and lessons learned with respect to the complexities and challenges of systematically collecting valid data on terrorist attacks worldwide.

Processing Source Documents

Within the evolving framework of news media and technology, START's objective is to enhance the efficiency, accuracy, and completeness of GTD collection. We accomplish this by combining the strengths of both automated and manual techniques. The data collection process draws on more than one million media articles on any topic published daily worldwide. The process of identifying the relatively small subset of these articles that describe terrorist attacks begins with applying customized keyword filters to the "fire hose" of media articles available through a subscription to the Metabase Application Programming Interface (API) provided by Moreover Technologies, Inc. We supplement the English-language content from Metabase with articles downloaded from the Open Source Center (www.opensource.gov), which includes English-language translations of sources from more than 160

² Additional information about the data collection methodology can be found on the GTD [website](#) and in the GTD [codebook](#).

countries in more than 80 languages. The initial filters isolate a pool of potentially relevant articles, approximately 200,000 per month. We reduce this subset using more sophisticated natural language processing and machine learning techniques to remove duplicates and score the likely relevance of the articles. The GTD team manually reviews this second subset of articles, approximately 20,000 each month, to identify the unique events that satisfy the GTD inclusion criteria. Finally, the coding team reads the articles that are linked to specific events and records the details of each event according to the specifications of the GTD Codebook.

Defining Terrorism

The GTD defines terrorism as “the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to achieve a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation.” To operationalize this definition, GTD researchers include in the database those incidents that satisfy each of the following mandatory inclusion criteria:

- The incident must be intentional, i.e., the result of a conscious calculation on the part of a perpetrator.
- The incident must entail some level of violence or threat of violence, including property violence as well as violence against people.
- The perpetrators of the incidents must be sub-national actors. The database does not include acts of state terrorism.

In addition, incidents recorded in the GTD must meet *at least two* of the following inclusion criteria:

1. The act must be aimed at attaining a political, economic, religious, or social goal.
2. There must be evidence of an intention to coerce, intimidate, or convey some other message to a larger audience (or audiences) than the immediate victims.
3. The action must be outside the precepts of International Humanitarian Law insofar as it targets non-combatants.

Given that it can be difficult to unambiguously determine if an event satisfies these inclusion criteria, the GTD records also include a variable indicating whether or not there is specific doubt that the inclusion criteria are satisfied. Such doubt is typically a result of incomplete or conflicting reports about the circumstances of the attack. These attacks are included in the analysis presented in this report. In addition, inclusion in the GTD requires that some kinetic action has been taken on the part of the perpetrators to carry out the attack. We informally refer to this as the “out the door” rule, in that the perpetrators must be on their way to carry out the attack to be included in the GTD. Once the perpetrators are “out the door,” if the attack fails or is otherwise thwarted we include it in the database and mark it as unsuccessful. The GTD does not include plots, conspiracies, or hoaxes that were not actually attempted. The GTD does not include violence that occurs spontaneously, such as rioting or violence precipitated by the actions of authorities (e.g., police raid, traffic stop, or arrest). The GTD also does not include non-violent activity such as peaceful protests, vandalism, or civil disobedience.

Variables and Coding

The GTD coding strategy relies on six coding teams that each specializes on a particular domain of the GTD Codebook. The domains include location, perpetrators, targets, weapons and tactics, casualties and consequences, and general information. Each team is comprised of three to six undergraduate or graduate student interns led by a research assistant, and is responsible for coding the domain-specific variables for each event in the GTD. The domain team leaders are responsible for the training and supervision of team members and ensuring the quality of the coded data. This approach guarantees that each piece of information is coded and reviewed by someone who is familiar with the particular coding guidelines for the domain, as well as the relevant context. For example, the perpetrator domain team will have greater familiarity with active perpetrator organizations, their naming conventions, aliases, spelling variations, factions, and splinter organizations, making them well-suited to systematically record information on the organizations attributed responsibility for an attack.

Methodological Consistency

Although the data collection process recently developed at the University of Maryland has improved the internal consistency and comprehensiveness of the GTD, as with any shift in data collection methodology it is critical to recognize the implications for analysis. The first year of data collected under the new process, 2012, represents a nearly 70 percent increase in the total number of worldwide terrorist attacks over 2011. The magnitude of this change is far from uniform across countries and the increase likely reflects recent patterns of terrorism in certain locations. However, it is also partly a result of the improved efficiency of the data collection process. The ongoing rapid growth of the internet, and news archives and aggregators in particular, makes a product like Metabase available to researchers, implicitly improving access to a greater variety of national and local sources. The use of automated approaches to document classification allows the GTD team to focus more time reviewing only those source articles that are classified as “relevant” by machine learning algorithms.

As a result, we have the resources to leverage a much broader and deeper pool of media sources from around the world. Despite consistency in our definition of terrorism and inclusion criteria, this exponential growth in available source materials has allowed us to collect more comprehensive data on terrorism than any previous effort. The GTD research team will continue to evaluate the impact of source availability on trends in the database to better advise users on important implications for analysis. We will also continue to work to supplement the GTD “legacy” data on terrorist attacks since 1970 to further improve its completeness. In general, comparisons of aggregate statistics over time and between locations—and their implications for the state of international security and global counterterrorism efforts—should be interpreted with caution due to considerable variation in the availability of source materials.

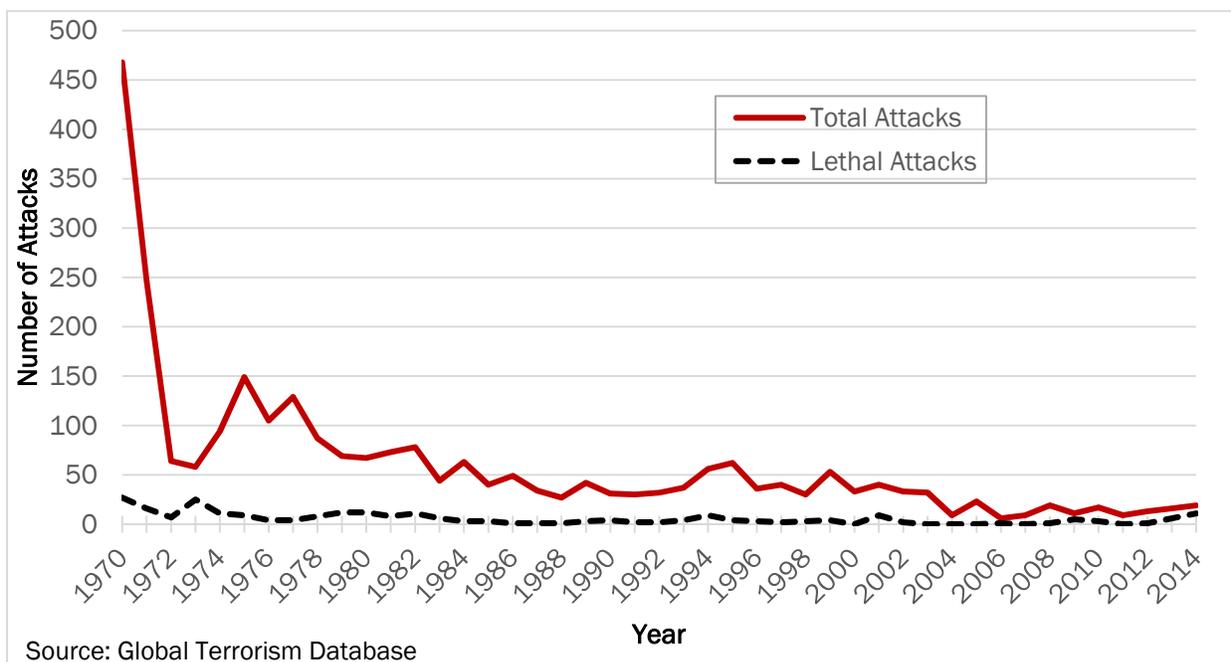
However, because the availability of source information pertaining to the United States has always been relatively robust, and the GTD team has conducted extensive supplemental data collection efforts for incidents occurring in the United States, we expect that the methodological artifacts described here have a minimal impact on analysis described in this report.

Terrorism in the United States

Attack Patterns and Lethality

Between 1970 and 2014, 2,683 terrorist attacks took place in the United States. Perhaps the most remarkable observation about trends in terrorism in the United States over time is the fact that the majority of these attacks (55%) occurred in the 1970s.³ The peak frequency of terrorist attacks in the United States recorded in the GTD was in 1970, when more than 460 attacks were carried out. In the early 1970s the number of attacks each year declined dramatically, first dropping below 100 in 1972. After a slight increase in the mid-1970s, terrorism continued to decrease steadily in the 1980s and 1990s, and the average number of attacks each year throughout these two decades was less than 50. Since 2000, the frequency of terrorist attacks in the United States has continued to decrease, averaging fewer than 20 attacks per year between 2000 and 2014. During this time period, the United States was ranked 32nd among countries in terms of total number of terrorist attacks.

Figure 1: Total terrorist attacks and lethal terrorist attacks in the United States by year, 1970-2014

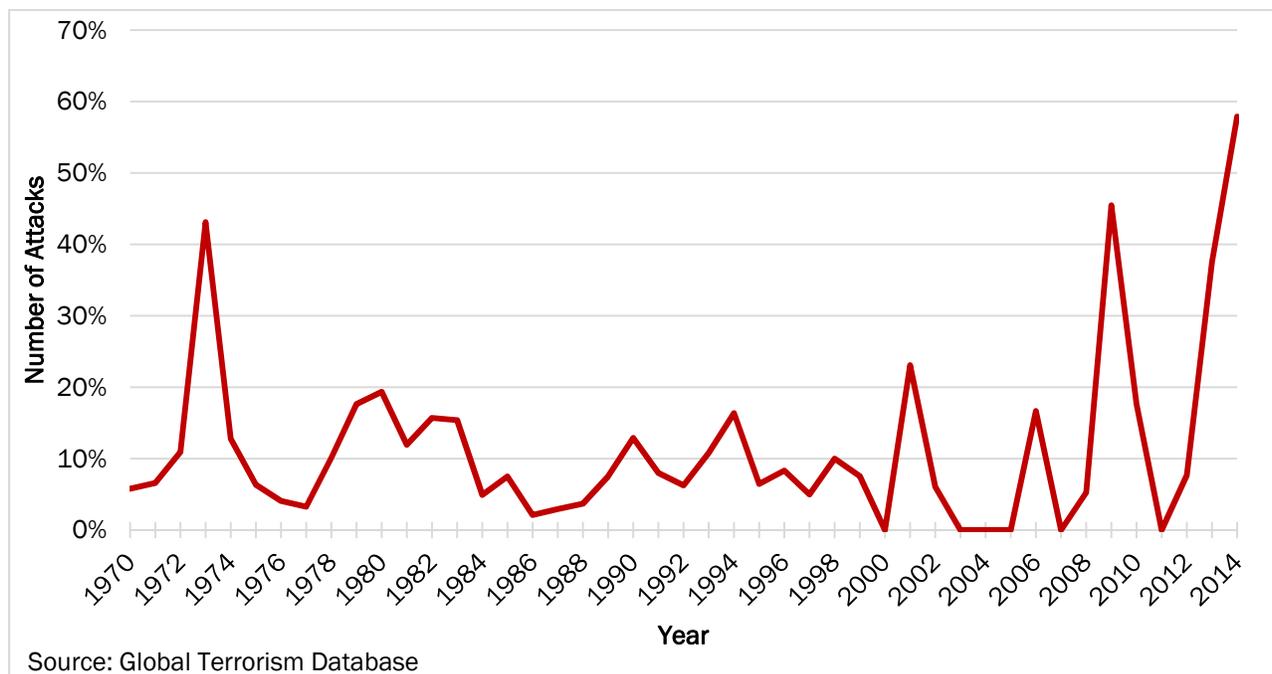


The number of terrorist attacks a country experiences represents only one dimension of the overall threat. It is also important to examine the lethality of attacks. More than 3,500 people (including perpetrators) were killed by terrorist attacks in the United States between 1970 and 2014. What is remarkable is that 85 percent of all deaths from terrorist attacks in the United States during this time period resulted from the four coordinated attacks on September 11, 2001. An additional 5 percent of fatalities were the result of the 1995 attack on the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City.

³ Data from 1993 are typically not included in the GTD because the original records were lost in an office move before the data were transferred to START. However, the supplemental data for terrorist attacks the United States in 1993 are sufficiently robust and are included in the statistics in this report. Collection and revision of the data are ongoing, and the exact numbers of attacks presented in this report may change slightly as new data become available.

In contrast, 90 percent of terrorist attacks in the United States between 1970 and 2014 were not lethal. The prevalence of lethal terrorist attacks in the United States varies considerably over time, but does not appear to follow a particular trend. The percentage of all attacks that were lethal ranges from a minimum of zero (in 2000, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2007, and 2011) to a maximum of 58 percent in 2014. Note, however, that the variation in percentages is especially extreme since 2000 due to the particularly low frequency of attacks. During the 2000-2014 time period, the United States ranked 11th among countries in terms of total number of fatalities due to terrorist attacks. If the unprecedented casualties that resulted from the 9/11 attacks were not included, the United States would have ranked 54th.

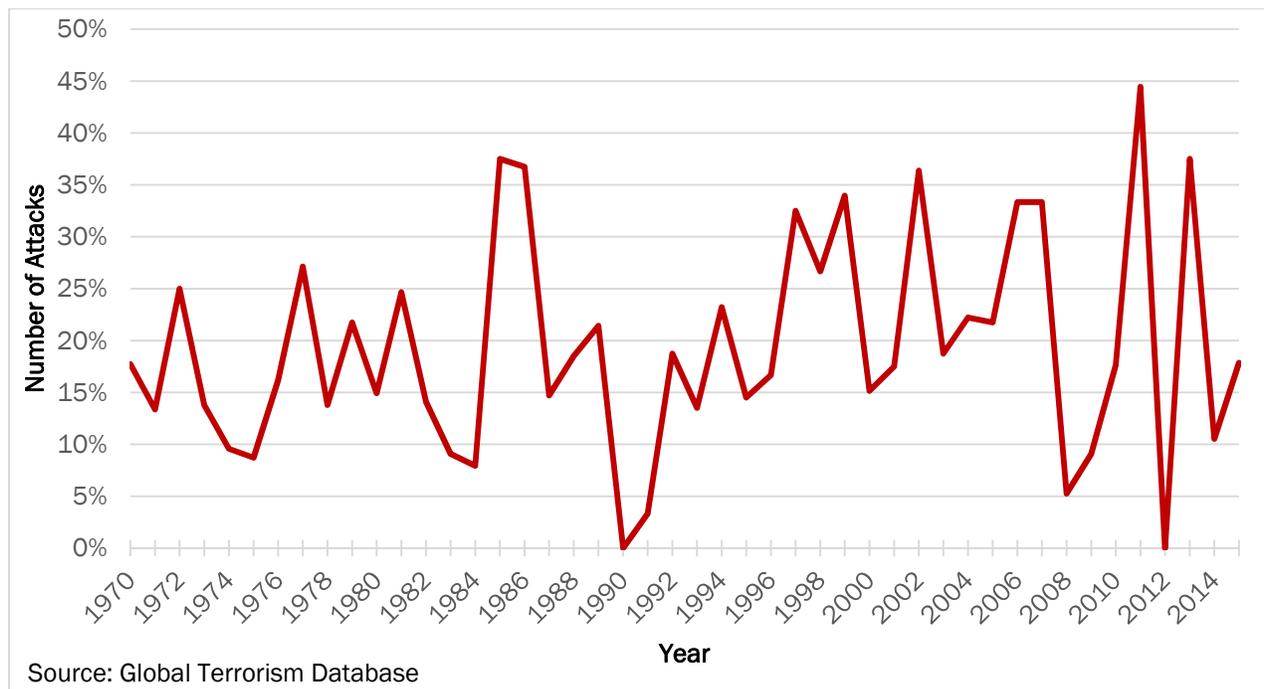
Figure 2: Percent of terrorist attacks in the United States that were lethal by year, 1970-2014



There are a number of reasons that a terrorist attack might not cause any fatalities. One possibility is that the attack was never intended to harm people, but instead was focused on causing only property damage. In some cases groups call authorities in advance to prompt an evacuation. While this strategy was a hallmark of groups active in the 1970s, like the Weather Underground, it has rarely been practiced in the United States in recent years. In many cases perpetrators target unpopulated areas or infrastructure, or target spaces that are typically occupied, but they do so at night when the area is vacant. Although these attacks are non-lethal, they have the capacity to cause extensive property damage and have lasting economic impacts. In fact, the amount of property damage recorded in the GTD for non-lethal attacks in the United States totals more than \$233 million. The damage amounts ranged from \$50 in damages caused when perpetrators ignited fires at a Planned Parenthood clinic in California in 2008 to \$45 million in damages caused when the Macheteros attacked Muniz Air National Guard base near San Juan, Puerto Rico in 1981, destroying eight fighter jets to protest draft registration.

A second reason an attack may not cause any deaths is that the intent was to harm people, but for some reason it failed. In these cases it is possible that the attack itself never materialized—perhaps a bomb failed to detonate or was defused by authorities—or that it was successfully carried out but did not hurt anyone, or caused only injuries rather than fatalities.

Figure 3: Percent of terrorist attacks in the United States that were unsuccessful by year, 1970-2014

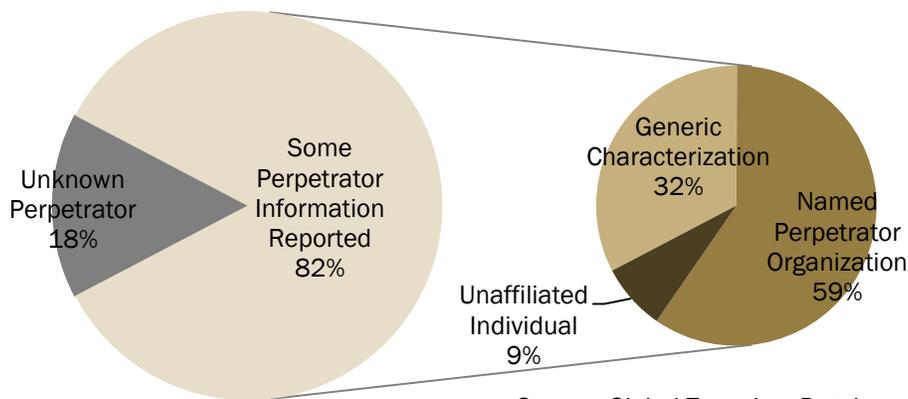


Unsuccessful attacks—those that failed or were thwarted either while their perpetrators were on the way to or in the process of carrying them out—were not uncommon in the United States, as shown in Figure 3. Between 1970 and 2014, 18 percent of the attacks that took place in the United States were unsuccessful. This is twice the prevalence of unsuccessful attacks worldwide (9%). This proportion increased slightly in the 21st century, as one-fifth of the attacks in the United States between 2000 and 2014 were unsuccessful, while the global rate of unsuccessful attacks during the same period remained stable at 10 percent. Well-publicized examples of unsuccessful attacks in the United States include the 2010 attempt to detonate explosives in Times Square in New York City and the 2009 attempt to detonate explosives onboard Northwest Airlines flight 253 as it approached Detroit, Michigan. In 2013 and 2014, the most recent years for which data are available, eight attacks (23%) were unsuccessful. Three of these involved the use of ricin but caused no illness; three involved explosive devices that were planted but defused— at a Nebraska airport, a prayer chapel in Oregon, and a West Virginia municipal building; one involved an explosive device that was mailed to Sherriff Joe Arpaio in Arizona but was defused before it detonated; and another involved an attempted siege on a courthouse in Georgia in which the perpetrator was killed before he was able to enter the courthouse. This remarkable pattern—a relatively low and declining frequency of terrorist attacks, and especially rare lethal terrorist attacks, punctuated by devastating events with far-reaching implications—raises particular challenges for those trying to understand the potential threat of terrorism in the United States.

Perpetrators of Terrorism in the United States

We can begin to explore the context of these patterns by considering the information that we have about the perpetrators of attacks. For more than 80 percent of the attacks that occurred in the United States between 1970 and 2014, some information about the perpetrator(s) responsible for the attack was available from the open-source reports. Fifty-nine percent of these attacks were attributed to 163 named organizations, while for 32 percent the information we have about the perpetrator is generic, rather than referencing a specific organization.⁴ For example, the generic identifiers used most frequently to describe perpetrators of attacks in the United States between 1970 and 2014 are “anti-abortion activists” (8% of all attacks in which perpetrator information was reported) and “left-wing militants” (8% of all attacks in which perpetrator information was reported). An additional 9 percent of attacks for which perpetrator information was reported were specifically attributed to unaffiliated individuals, although it is important to note that this designation has only been systematically used in the GTD when coding attacks that have occurred since 1998.⁵

Figure 4: Information on perpetrators of terrorist attacks in the United States, 1970-2014



Source: Global Terrorism Database

⁴ It is important to note that because generic designations do not represent discrete entities, they often overlap (e.g., “student radicals” and “left-wing militants” may describe the same people). As a consequence, statistics about perpetrators described using only generic identifiers are not exhaustive and should be interpreted with caution. In addition, these labels do not refer to cohesive groups. The violent behavior discussed in this report was carried out by extremist subsets of broader ideological movements and is not representative of the behavior of these broader movements more generally. For many attacks, generic identifiers are the only information available about the perpetrators; because of this they are included in the tables that follow to provide context.

⁵ This designation is used when sources identify a named perpetrator or perpetrators who are not known to be acting on behalf of a larger organization. Although this category is potentially useful, it is important to note that terrorist activity perpetrated by unaffiliated individuals may sometimes be attributed to generic or unknown perpetrators, particularly if the individuals are not named in source materials.

Table 1: Most active perpetrators of terrorist attacks in the United States by decade

1970s			1980s		
Perpetrator	Attacks	Percent of Attacks	Perpetrator	Attacks	Percent of Attacks
Left-Wing Militants	169	13%	Anti-Abortion Activists	74	16%
Fuerzas Armadas de Liberacion Nacional (FALN)	106	8%	Macheteros	31	7%
New World Liberation Front (NWLF)	86	7%	Jewish Defense League (JDL)	30	7%
Black Nationalists	82	6%	Omega-7	25	6%
Student Radicals	71	6%	Organization of Volunteers for the Puerto Rican Revolution	23	5%
Weather Underground, Weathermen	45	4%	Unaffiliated Individuals	23	5%
Jewish Defense League (JDL)	44	3%	United Freedom Front (UFF)	19	4%
White Extremists	42	3%	Army of God	15	3%
Black Liberation Army	34	3%	May 19 Communist Order	14	3%
Chicano Liberation Front	31	2%	Fuerzas Armadas de Liberacion Nacional (FALN)	13	3%
Armed Revolutionary Independence Movement (MIRA)	31	2%			
1990s			2000s ⁶		
Perpetrator	Attacks	Percent of Attacks	Perpetrator	Attacks	Percent of Attacks
Anti-Abortion Activists	83	26%	Unaffiliated Individuals	83	36%
Unaffiliated Individuals	55	17%	Earth Liberation Front (ELF)	59	26%
Animal Liberation Front (ALF)	42	13%	Animal Liberation Front (ALF)	42	18%
Earth Liberation Front (ELF)	17	5%	Anti-Abortion Activists	15	7%
Aryan Republican Army	16	5%	Coalition to Save the Preserves (CSP)	8	4%
The Justice Department	13	4%	Al-Qa`ida	4	2%
World Church of the Creator	7	2%	Revolutionary Cells-Animal Liberation Brigade	2	1%
Army of God	6	2%	Neo-Nazi Group	2	1%
Anti-Government Group	6	2%	Sovereign Citizen	2	1%
Popular Liberation Army (Puerto Rico)	4	1%	White Extremists	2	1%
Aryan Liberation Front	4	1%	Veterans United for Non-Religious Memorials	2	1%
Pedro Albizu Campos Revolutionary Forces	4	1%	Minutemen American Defense	1	0%
White Extremists	4	1%	The Justice Department	1	0%
			Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)	1	0%
			Revenge of the Trees	1	0%
			Anarchists	1	0%
			Al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)	1	0%
			Ku Klux Klan	1	0%

⁶ Includes 2000-2014 throughout the report.

These aggregated statistics mask the fact that the same types of perpetrators were not continuously active for the entire 1970 to 2014 time period. To provide a better understanding of the types of perpetrators active in the United States between 1970 and 2014, Table 1 shows the most active perpetrators, including named organizations, those described using generic identifiers, and unaffiliated individuals (as a category), by decade.

In the 1970s, nearly 1,500 terrorist attacks were carried out in the United States. During this decade, more than 100 perpetrators were identified, including both named organizations and those described using generic identities. The list of perpetrators that carried out the most attacks during the decade is marked by left-wing extremist groups, including organizations like the New World Liberation Front (NWLFF), the Weather Underground, the Black Liberation Army, and the Chicano Liberation Front, as well as left-wing militants and student radicals not affiliated with a particular named organization. These perpetrators emerged as radical elements of the civil rights, feminist, and anti-war movements of the 1960s. They carried out attacks in 35 states and the District of Columbia in the 1970s, but were most active in California. The appearance of perpetrators identified as “black nationalists” and “white extremists” on the list further illustrates the prevalence of violence that took place in the context of racial conflict. The Fuerzas Armadas de Liberacion Nacional (FALN) and the Armed Revolutionary Independence Movement (MIRA) were among the most active organizations using violence in their efforts to secure Puerto Rican independence. Finally, the Jewish Defense League (JDL), which was founded in Brooklyn in 1968, carried out dozens of attacks in the 1970s, primarily in New York.

The list of perpetrators that carried out the most attacks in the 1980s shows a marked shift in the volume and ideological underpinnings of terrorism in the United States. The total number of named organizations and perpetrators identified by generic designations that were attributed responsibility for attacks in the United States in the 1980s dropped below 75, and the number of attacks decreased by nearly two-thirds (from nearly 1,500 in the 1970s to just over 500 in the 1980s). Although FALN was still active, the frequency of its attacks decreased from more than 100 in the 1970s to 13 in the 1980s; however, violence carried out by other Puerto Rican independence groups became more common, including the Macheteros and the Organization of Volunteers for the Puerto Rican Revolution. Omega-7, an anti-Castro Cuban group that appears among the most active perpetrators of terrorist attacks in the United States in the 1980s, was just as active in the 1970s, but the frequency of its attacks was relatively low in comparison to other groups active in the 1970s. The JDL also remained engaged in violence in the 1980s, although the frequency of its attacks declined somewhat.

In general, the sharp decline in the number of terrorist attacks in the United States in the 1980s was largely driven by decreases in attacks by left-wing perpetrators, although the May 19 Communist Order emerged from the remnants of the Weather Underground and the Black Liberation Army. Likewise, the United Freedom Front (UFF), a Marxist group formed in the mid-1970s, intensified its use of violence. The perpetrators that carried out the most terrorist attacks in the 1980s were anti-abortion activists, including those not affiliated with a named group as well as those affiliated with the Army of God. Although unaffiliated individual perpetrators were among the most active perpetrators of terrorist attacks in the 1980s, they were not actually active at a higher rate than they had been in the 1970s.

In the 1990s the landscape of perpetrators of terrorist attacks in the United States continued to evolve as the total number of attacks declined further to just over 400 and became concentrated among fewer than 50 total named organizations and perpetrators described using generic identities. In fact, more than two-thirds of the attacks carried out in the 1990s were attributed to only six perpetrator designations. The number of attacks attributed to unaffiliated individuals and generically identified anti-abortion activists increased, while the environmentalist groups Animal Liberation Front (ALF), Earth Liberation Front (ELF), and The Justice Department appear among the most active perpetrators of terrorist attacks for the first time. In 1995 in Oklahoma City, Timothy McVeigh carried out the deadliest attack in the United States up until that point. Several white supremacist groups were among the most active perpetrators of terrorist attacks in the 1990s as well, including the Aryan Republican Army, the Aryan Liberation Front, and the World Church of the Creator. The violent activity of the Puerto Rican separatist groups like FALN, MIRA, and the Macheteros declined to the point that they no longer appear on the list of most active perpetrators in the 1980s. However, the Pedro Albizu Campos Revolutionary Forces remained on the list, albeit with four attacks, all of which took place in 1990 in Puerto Rico.

For six of the attacks that occurred in the 1990s, the only information available about the perpetrators is that they were anti-government extremists. While perpetrators of terrorist attacks often maintain anti-government views to some degree as they relate to a particular grievance or policy, the identity of the perpetrators of these attacks was marked by strong opposition to the federal government, based either on the nature of the target or statements they made. Three of these attacks targeted Internal Revenue Service office buildings (one in California in 1992 and two in Colorado in 1997 and 1999), and two occurred in the context of tensions over government regulation of land, targeting the Bureau of Land Management in 1993 and the United States Forest Service in 1995. The sixth attack, which targeted a United States Department of Labor employee in California on April 12, 1996, was preceded by an anonymous phone call to the victim's office in which the caller reportedly stated, "You guys are all [expletive] dead. Timothy McVeigh lives on."

Patterns of terrorist attacks among perpetrators active between 2000 and 2014 starkly illustrate the paradox of modern terrorism in the United States. Despite the fact that the United States experienced the most deadly series of terrorist attacks in modern history in September 2001, the total number of terrorist attacks in the 21st century decreased even further and became more concentrated among a relatively small number of named organizations, perpetrators described using generic identifiers, and unaffiliated individuals. During this time, the total number of terrorist attacks continued to decline to 289 attacks over 15 years. In fact, the 18 perpetrators listed in Table 1 represent all identified perpetrators of attacks that took place between 2000 and 2014.

The types of perpetrators active during this time period remained extremely diverse, and the most frequent perpetrators of terrorist attacks were unaffiliated individuals of all ideological persuasions. Environmentalist groups remained especially active, as attacks were carried out by the ALF, the ELF, the Coalition to Save the Preserves, the Revolutionary Cells-Animal Liberation Brigade, The Justice Department, and Revenge of the Trees. Anti-abortion activists remained active as well but carried out far fewer attacks than they had in the 1980s and 1990s. In addition to the deadly attacks carried out by al-

Qa’ida in 2001, operatives from the associated groups Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) conducted unsuccessful attacks in 2009 and 2010.

The percentage of attacks carried out by unidentified or unaffiliated perpetrators is especially high during the most recent years for which data are available. Between 2012 and 2014, one-quarter of the 48 attacks recorded in the GTD (25%) were carried out by unidentified perpetrators, and 86 percent of the remaining attacks were carried out by individuals who were not acting on behalf of a particular group or organization. In addition, one attack, claimed by “anarchists,” targeted a construction site in Seattle, Washington in February 2013. Two other attacks, in August and September 2013, were claimed by a previously unknown group calling itself “Veterans United for Non-Religious Memorials,” which detonated explosives near the Mingus Park Vietnam War Memorial in Coos Bay, Oregon. In 2014, two perpetrators who reportedly self-identified with the Sovereign Citizen movement carried out unrelated attacks in Texas and Georgia.

The unaffiliated individuals who have carried out terrorist attacks in the United States were influenced by a wide variety of motivations. Furthermore, unlike organizations, whose ideological rationale for carrying out a particular attack is often expressed with greater clarity, unaffiliated individuals may have motivations that were idiosyncratic, or multi-faceted and difficult to classify. It can be challenging to determine—often given limited information—if characteristics of an individual’s identity were causally related to the attack in question, or were merely coincidental. Table 2 summarizes what we know about the ideological motivations of offenders who were not acting in concert with a formal organization.

Table 2: Motives of attacks carried out by unaffiliated individual perpetrators, 2012-2014

Date	Description/Motive
1/1/2012	An unaffiliated individual carried out four attacks against different targets in New York, New York with Molotov cocktails. He indicated that his motives included "taking out as many Muslims and Arabs as possible." However, sources report that he also had personal grievances with each of the targets. ¹
4/1/2012	An unaffiliated individual set fire to a Planned Parenthood clinic in Grand Chute, Wisconsin. He indicated that his motive was to "release the souls of the children" who had died in the clinic. ²
6/18/2012	An unaffiliated individual attempted to bomb a natural gas pipeline in Plano, Texas. Sources note that the assailant identified as part of the anti-government sovereign movement. ³
7/4/2012 and 8/6/2012	An unaffiliated individual carried out arson attacks that damaged and then later destroyed a mosque in Joplin, Missouri. He confessed to the attacks, as well as two others targeting a Planned Parenthood clinic in 2013, but did not specify a particular motive. ⁴
8/5/2012	An unaffiliated individual attacked a Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin. The assailant had ties to the white supremacist movement. ⁵
8/15/2012	An unaffiliated individual opened fire on a security guard at the offices of the Family Research Council in Washington, District of Columbia. The assailant stated that he targeted the Family Research Council because of the organization's opposition to gay marriage and gay rights. ⁶
9/30/2012	An unaffiliated individual set a fire at the Islamic Center of Greater Toledo in Perrysburg, Ohio. The assailant indicated that he had acted under the influence of alcohol, "after seeing a wounded U.S. soldier on television, and blamed Muslims for the soldier’s injuries." ⁷

11/30/2012	An unaffiliated individual detonated a small incendiary device at a Social Security Administration building in Casa Grande, Arizona. Sources indicate that the perpetrator was an Iraqi citizen; however, no motive was reported. ⁸
2/7/2013	An unaffiliated individual shot two Riverside police officers in Corona, California, killing one. In a statement posted online, the perpetrator indicated that he was motivated by both his personal frustrations regarding his dismissal from the Los Angeles Police Department as well as what he viewed as excessive use of force and racism in policing. ⁹
4/11/2013	An unaffiliated individual mailed a letter bomb to Sheriff Joe Arpaio of the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office in Arizona. The perpetrator's motive apparently involved attempting to frame a former business partner for the attack. ¹⁰
5/20/2013	An unaffiliated individual sent letters containing ricin to President Barack Obama, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, and Mark Glaze, Director of Mayors Against Illegal Guns. The sender, who threatened further action against proponents of gun control, was reportedly attempting to frame her estranged husband for the attack. ¹¹
11/1/2013	An unaffiliated individual opened fire on Transportation Security Administration (TSA) agents in a terminal at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), in California. The assailant claimed responsibility for the attack, stating that he wanted to kill and to instill fear in TSA officers. ¹²
4/13/2014	An unaffiliated individual opened fire on civilians outside a Jewish community center and a Jewish retirement home in Kansas City, Kansas. Officials arrested a former Ku Klux Klan member who shouted "Heil Hitler" following the arrest. ¹³
4/27/2014, 6/1/2014, and 6/25/2014	On three separate occasions an unaffiliated individual shot and killed a civilian, twice in Seattle, Washington and once in West Orange, New Jersey. The assailant reportedly aimed to punish the United States for its involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan. ¹⁴
5/5/2014	An unaffiliated individual planted three explosive devices around the Weirton Municipal Building in Weirton, West Virginia. The perpetrator was reportedly angry with the federal government and "wanted a shootout with the FBI." ¹⁵
6/8/2014	Unaffiliated individuals shot and killed two police officers eating at a restaurant and killed a bystander at a nearby Walmart in Las Vegas, Nevada. On social media, the assailants decried the federal government, taxes, anti-gun laws, and demanded a revolution. ¹⁶
9/11/2014	An unaffiliated individual threw two Molotov cocktails at the office of United States Congressman, Emanuel Cleaver, in Kansas City, Missouri. Police described the perpetrator as an anarchist. In a letter confessing to the crime, the assailant stated that the attack was in retaliation for deaths throughout the Middle East and Chile as well as events in Ferguson, Missouri. ¹⁷
9/12/2014	An unaffiliated individual opened fire on state troopers at the Blooming Grove barracks in Pike county, Pennsylvania, killing one and injuring another. In a letter he wrote to his parents, the perpetrator indicated that he was looking to spark a revolution against the government. ¹⁸
10/23/2014	An unaffiliated individual attacked a police patrol with a hatchet in New York City, New York, wounding two officers and a bystander. According to the assailant's social media activity, he had recently converted to Islam and was angry about perceived injustices in American society and oppression abroad. ¹⁹
11/28/2014	An unaffiliated individual opened fire on a federal courthouse, police headquarters, and the Mexican consulate in three separate attacks in Austin, Texas, on the same day. Sources indicate that the incidents were apparently fueled by Christian Identity, anti-government, and anti-immigration sentiments. ²⁰
12/20/2014	An unaffiliated individual shot and killed two New York City Police Department officers while they were sitting in their vehicle in New York City, New York. The assailant claimed that the attack was carried out to avenge the deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner at the hands of the authorities. ²¹

While perpetrators of terrorist attacks in the United States have evolved over the years, some patterns emerge related to longevity. Table 3 displays the 19 perpetrator designations that appear in the database for a span of longer than 10 years. Unsurprisingly, the only perpetrator designation that appears for the full span of the GTD, 1970 to 2014, is unaffiliated individuals. Despite the fact that these unaffiliated individuals are not linked to each other in any way, it is worth noting that the use of terrorist tactics by

individuals not linked to a formal organization is not a wholly recent occurrence. This list is also marked by perpetrators described using generic identifiers because they are more likely to persist over time as specific, likely unrelated individuals and groups come and go. As noted above, generic perpetrator attributions are not mutually exclusive or exhaustive, so this table provides a general understanding of their activity but is not comprehensive.

Table 3: Perpetrators of terrorism in the United States active longer than 10 years, 1970-2014

Perpetrator	Attacks	Fatalities	Start Year	End Year	Span
Unaffiliated Individual(s)	187	272	1970	2014	44
Ku Klux Klan	23	7	1970	2008	38
Neo-Nazi Group	9	2	1970	2008	38
White Extremists	52	9	1970	2004	34
Anti-Abortion Activists	182	4	1977	2008	31
Cuban Exiles	21	0	1970	1996	26
Animal Liberation Front (ALF)	90	0	1987	2011	24
Jewish Extremists	8	0	1974	1997	23
Puerto Rican Nationalists	28	0	1970	1991	21
Macheteros	37	6	1978	1998	20
Anti-Castro Group	3	0	1978	1994	16
Army of God	21	3	1982	1998	16
Jewish Defense League (JDL)	74	4	1970	1986	16
Black Liberation Army	36	19	1970	1984	14
Earth Liberation Front (ELF)	76	0	1995	2009	14
Anti-Government Group	7	0	1986	1999	13
Aryan Nation	6	0	1986	1999	13
Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK)	2	0	1981	1992	11
The Justice Department	14	0	1999	2010	11

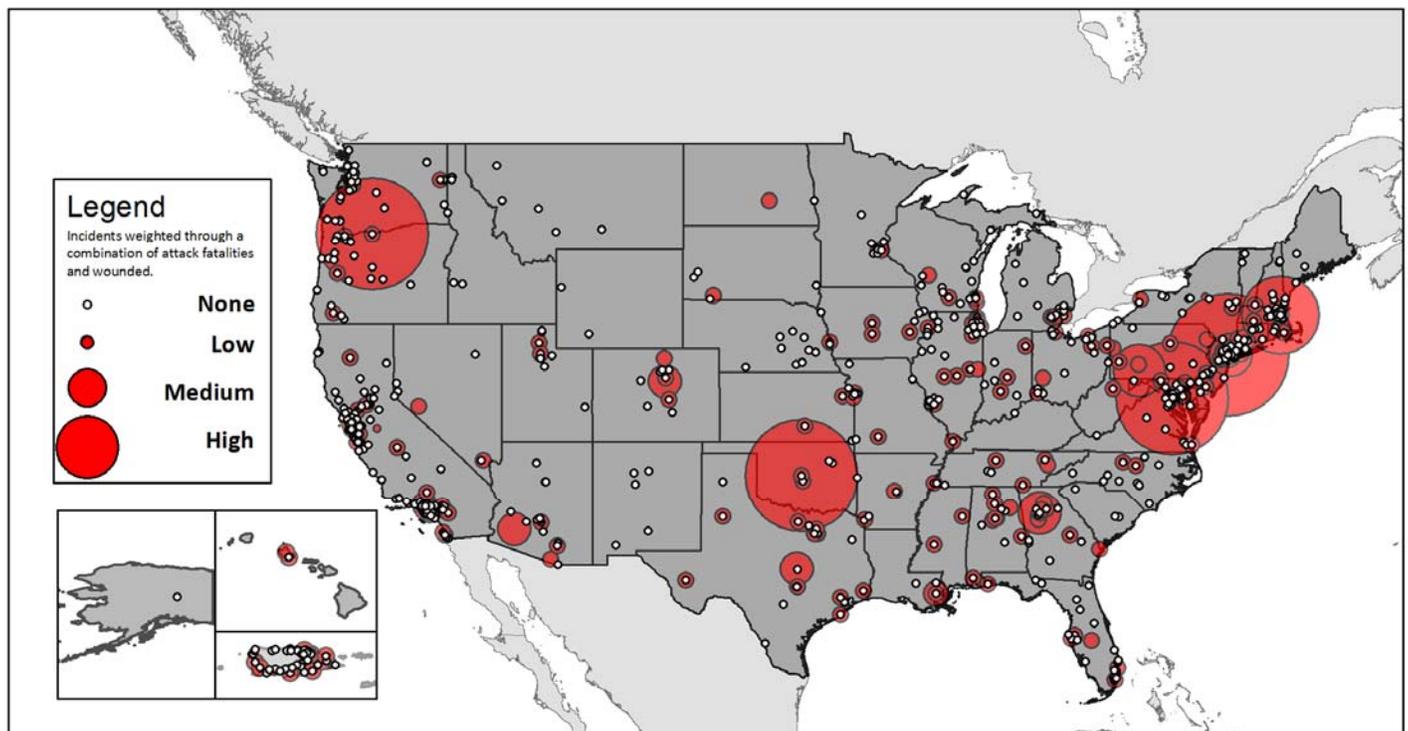
Generically identified perpetrators that have carried out attacks in the United States for at least 20 years include neo-Nazis, white extremists, anti-abortion activists, Cuban exiles, Jewish extremists, and Puerto Rican nationalists. Attacks attributed to anti-Castro perpetrators spanned 16 years, and attacks attributed to anti-government perpetrators spanned 13 years. The longest-lasting named perpetrator organizations include the Ku Klux Klan, the ALF, the Macheteros, Army of God, the Jewish Defense League, the Black Liberation Army, the ELF, Aryan Nations, Mujahedin-e Khalq, and The Justice Department. Although these perpetrators share in common that they persisted in carrying out terrorist attacks for more than 10 years, the volume, concentration, and impact of their activity varies. Among these perpetrators, anti-abortion activists carried out the highest number of attacks per year (5.9), while several groups carried out very few attacks that were separated by long periods of inactivity in the United States.

Spatial Patterns of Terrorism in the United States

Although terrorist attacks have occurred in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, they have been especially prevalent in certain locations. In fact, half of all attacks in the United States between 1970 and 2014 took place in California (22%), New York (19%), and Puerto Rico (9%). Figure 5 illustrates the geographic distribution of terrorist attacks in the United States, showing in particular the relative concentration of casualties (fatalities and injuries) caused by the attacks.

It is important to note that while fatalities are uniformly measured as loss of life, injuries can vary a great deal with respect to severity and immediacy. For example, Figure 5 includes a large red marker in Oregon because of a 1984 attack in which more than 700 individuals became ill with food poisoning after members of the Rajneesh cult contaminated salad bars in restaurants with Salmonella in an attempt to influence local elections. In contrast, the 2014 attack targeting the Boston Marathon wounded more than 260 people, and involved relatively minor injuries such as short- or long-term damage to hearing²² as well as severe injuries including loss of limbs.²³ It is especially difficult to quantify the injuries caused by the attacks on September 11, 2001 in New York City. In fact, due to a lack of a reliable estimate for the number of people wounded as a result of the attacks on the World Trade Center, the GTD records “unknown” rather than a particular value, and they are excluded from Figure 5. In addition to the injuries that occurred on the day of the attack, epidemiological analyses indicate that the long-term health impacts on first responders and other residents were considerable, particularly with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder, respiratory illnesses, heart disease, and other illnesses.²⁴

Figure 5: Casualties of terrorism in the United States, 1970-2014



The overall geographic concentration of attacks in the United States is driven largely by patterns in the 1970s and 1980s, when the vast majority of attacks took place. In fact, as Table 4 shows, in the 1970s an even greater concentration (59%) of all attacks took place in California, New York, and Puerto Rico. Although this general pattern continued in the 1980s, when more than one-fifth of all attacks (21%) were located in Puerto Rico (followed by 18 percent in New York and 14 percent in California), it changed considerably in the 1990s. As discussed above, the number of terrorist attacks carried out by Puerto

Rican nationalist groups declined in the 1990s, particularly in Puerto Rico. At that time terrorism in the United States became much more geographically dispersed. Despite the fact that the number of attacks had declined dramatically, 45 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico experienced attacks. The states with the most attacks: California (18%), New York (7%), and Florida (6%) experienced less than one-third of all attacks in the United States during the 1990s. The pattern between 2000 and 2014 was similar, however aside from the long-established concentrations in California (18%) and New York (10%), the geographic concentration attacks was further diminished. The number of attacks in Florida declined by 50 percent between the 1990s and 2000s, while terrorism in Washington (State) became more prevalent due largely to the activity of the Earth Liberation Front (8 attacks), the Animal Liberation Front (2 attacks), and a group called Revenge of the Trees (1 attack). Because the number of terrorist attacks in the United States was relatively low between 2000 and 2014, isolated strings of related attacks in a particular state influence the overall distribution of locations considerably.

Table 4: U.S. States experiencing the most terrorist attacks by decade, 1970-2014

1970s	Attacks	Killed	% Attacks	1980s	Attacks	Killed	% Attacks
California	397	46	27%	Puerto Rico	106	7	21%
New York	348	43	24%	New York	91	5	18%
Puerto Rico	122	15	8%	California	70	8	14%
Illinois	76	4	5%	Florida	41	0	8%
Florida	70	6	5%	District of Columbia	20	1	4%
1990s	Attacks	Killed	% Attacks	2000s	Attacks	Killed	% Attacks
California	61	3	16%	California	49	5	17%
New York	28	6	8%	New York	31	2767	11%
Florida	22	7	6%	Washington	21	4	7%
Oregon	21	0	6%	Arizona	14	2	5%
Puerto Rico	17	0	5%	District of Columbia	12	5	4%

Weapons Used in Terrorist Attacks in the United States

Patterns of weapon usage in terrorist attacks in the United States have also evolved over time. Table 5 shows the types of weapons used in terrorist attacks between 1970 and 2014, while Figure 6 illustrates how these trends changed by decade. Note that the GTD records up to four different weapons for each attack, so the number of weapons used is greater than the number of attacks. Overall, the vast majority (93%) of all weapons used in terrorist attacks in the United States were explosives, incendiaries, or firearms. Of these three types of weapons, explosives were most commonly used in attacks targeting many types of targets, including utilities (82%), airports and aircraft (79%), telecommunication systems (78%), and transportation (73%). Incendiaries were most commonly used in attacks against abortion-related targets (73%), non-governmental organizations (NGOs; 54%), and religious figures and institutions (41%). Firearms were used as the primary weapon in only 13 percent of attacks, and were not the most commonly used type of weapon for any particular type of target.

In contrast to these weapon types, which are fairly easy to access, a small number of attacks involved the use of more unusual types of weapons, including some that are fairly easy to attain and others that are more difficult. For example, 32 attacks in the United States, including those on 9/11, involved melee as the primary means of attack. These events typically involve some type of hand-to-hand combat, particularly including knives or other sharp objects. Of course, the extremely deadly use of melee-type weapons by the 9/11 hijackers is unique—aside from the four attacks on 9/11, eight of the attacks involving melee as a primary weapon were lethal, each resulting in one death.

Table 5: Types of weapons used in terrorist attacks in the United States, 1970-2014

Weapon Type	Weapon Uses	% of Weapon Uses
Explosives/Bombs/Dynamite	1402	52%
Incendiary	811	29%
Firearms	390	13%
Melee	55	1%
Sabotage Equipment	39	1%
Biological	24	1%
Other	24	1%
Fake Weapons	17	1%
Chemical	13	<1%
Vehicle (excluding VBIEDs)	9	<1%
Radiological	1	<1%

Note: The type of weapon used was unknown in 2 percent of all attacks.

Like melee-style weapons, sabotage tools are relatively easy to obtain but have been used very infrequently in terrorist attacks in the United States. Sabotage equipment, most commonly used in facility/infrastructure attacks targeting utilities, typically causes primarily economic harm but also has the capacity to cause casualties when the perpetrators intend to do so. For example, one of the terrorist attacks that caused the most injuries in the United States was carried out in 1995 when perpetrators calling themselves “Sons of the Gestapo” sabotaged train tracks causing an Amtrak passenger train to derail in Arizona, killing one person and wounding more than 75 others.

In less than 1 percent of attacks in the United States, perpetrators used vehicles themselves as weapons. This typically involves driving an automobile or flying a plane into a building or a crowd of people and does not include vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices—VBIEDs. The most recent example of this occurred in 2010, when Joseph Stack flew his privately-owned plane into an Internal Revenue Service building in Austin, Texas. The impact ignited a fire in the seven-story building, killed Stack and one IRS worker, and wounded more than 10 others.

The use of biological, chemical, and radiological weapons in terrorist attacks between 1970 and 2014 in the United States was also extremely rare. The first biological attacks during this time period were the 1984 attacks mentioned above in which followers of the Rajneesh cult attempted to impact local elections in The Dalles, Oregon by contaminating salad bars with Salmonella, causing hundreds of residents to

become ill. However, half of all biological attacks in the United States between 1970 and 2014 (12 out of 24) took place in October and November of 2001 when a series of attacks involved anthrax sent through the mail to numerous recipients, including primarily government and media targets.

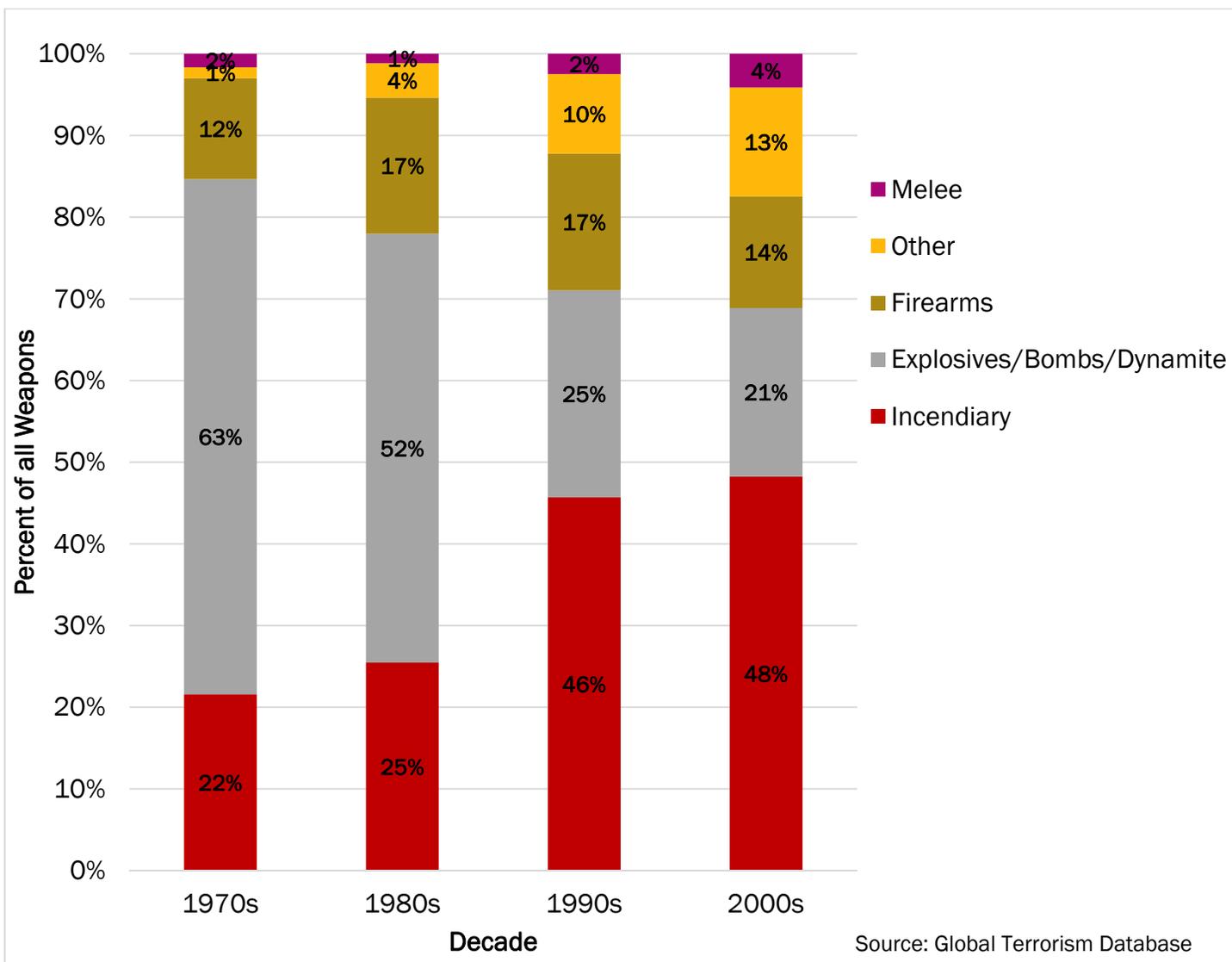
Thirteen attacks involving chemical weapons took place between 1970 and 2014, and the weapons used included cyanide, nerve gas, pepper spray, tear gas, and acid. These attacks typically caused injuries but no deaths. For example, members of the Jewish Defense League carried out an attack with a tear gas grenade in 1986 at the Metropolitan Opera House at Lincoln Center in New York City, injuring approximately 30 people. The only terrorist attack in the United States involving chemical weapons that was lethal was the 1973 assassination of Marcus Foster, the first black superintendent of Oakland Schools. Foster was shot eight times with bullets laced with cyanide; however, sources indicate that he died from the bullet wounds, not the cyanide. The Symbionese Liberation Army claimed responsibility for the attack.²⁵

Finally, the only recorded use of radiological weapons in the United States occurred in 1985 when unidentified perpetrators attempted to contaminate the water supply serving New York City with plutonium. Although officials tested the drinking water and detected increased levels of plutonium, the attack was unsuccessful because the concentration was not great enough to cause physical harm to residents.²⁶

Interesting patterns emerge with respect to the use of weapons in terrorist attacks in the United States. In the 1970s, the majority of weapons (63%) were explosives, while one-quarter (25%) were incendiary weapons (e.g., arson, Molotov cocktails). The use of explosives dropped dramatically from more than 900 uses in the 1970s to fewer than 70 between 2000 and 2014. The use of firearms declined as well, though at less than half the magnitude of explosives (firearms were used in 186 attacks in the 1970s and 43 attacks between 2000 and 2014). While the use of incendiary weapons declined between the 1970s and the 1980s, it actually increased in the 1990s and decreased only slightly in the 21st century. Finally, attacks carried out using “other” types of weapons were rare but increased consistently over time.⁷ In particular, trends in this category are driven by the 500 percent increase in the use of biological weapons between the 1980s (4 attacks, involving Salmonella) and the 2000s (20 attacks, primarily involving ricin and anthrax). These absolute changes in attack patterns produce the relative distributions shown in Figure 6. As the number of terrorist attacks declined in the United States, the relative frequency of attacks involving incendiary weapons more than doubled, while the relative frequency of attacks involving explosives decreased by two-thirds. The relative frequency of terrorist attacks involving firearms initially increased in the 1980s and 1990s, but decreased slightly in the 2000s.

⁷ The “other” category in Figure 6 and Figure 7 includes: biological weapons, chemical weapons, fake weapons, radiological weapons, sabotage equipment, and vehicular weapons (excluding VBIEDs), each of which were used in less than 1 percent of attacks in the United States.

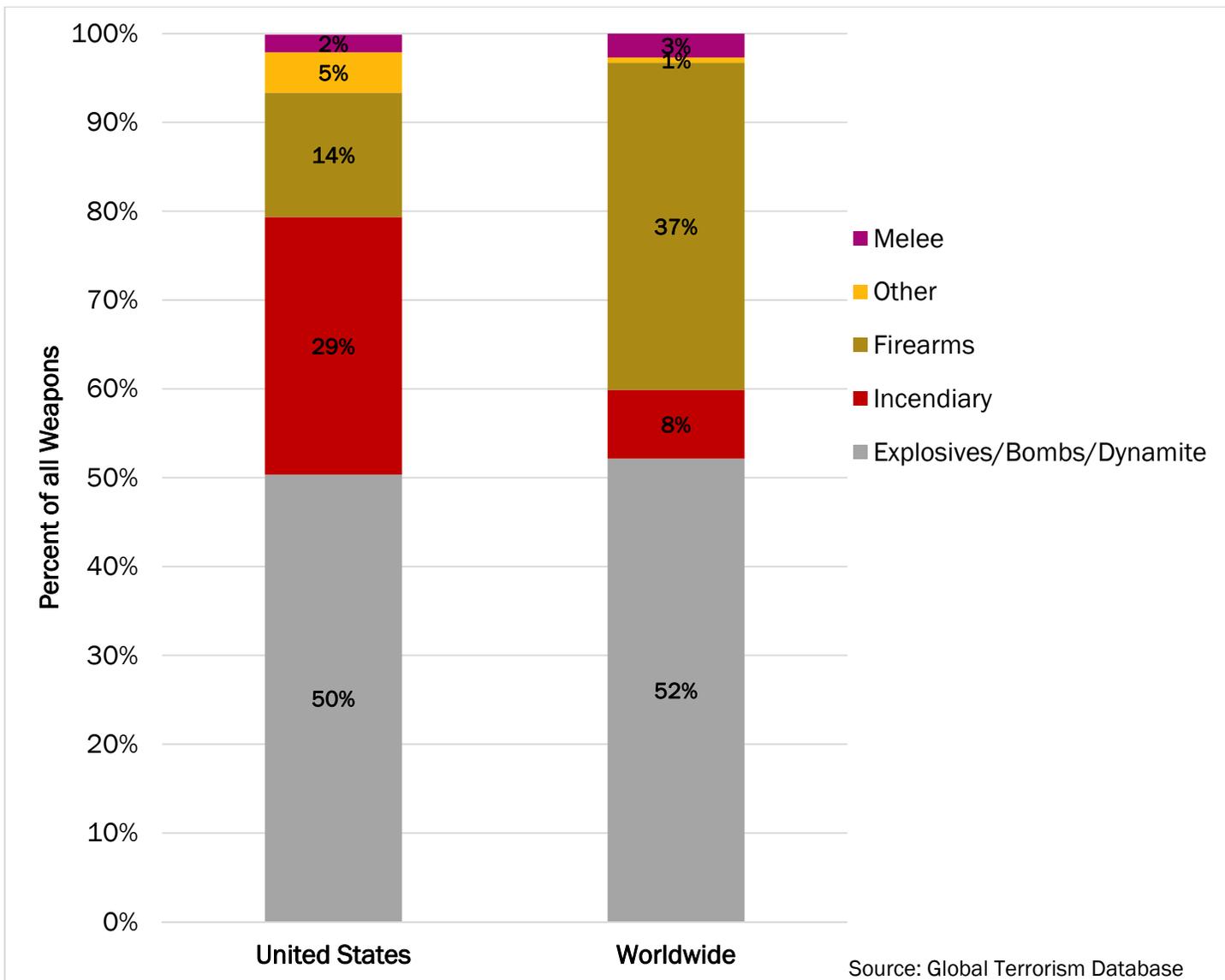
Figure 6: Weapons used in terrorist attacks in the United States, by decade



Note: The type of weapon used was unknown in 2 percent of all attacks.

The weapons used in terrorist attacks in the United States differ distinctly from worldwide trends. While explosives are the most common type of weapon used in terrorist attacks both in the United States and globally, perhaps most notably, terrorism in the United States is marked by a disproportionate use of incendiary weapons, such as arson and fire bombs. Specifically, the prevalence of incendiaries used in terrorist attacks was 3.75 times higher in the United States compared to worldwide patterns. In contrast, the use of firearms in terrorist attacks was 2.63 times more prevalent worldwide, compared to the United States.

Figure 7: Weapons used in terrorist attacks in the United States and globally, 1970 to 2014



Note: The type of weapon used was unknown in 2 percent of all attacks in the United States and 8 percent of all attacks worldwide.

Targets of Terrorist Attacks in the United States

As shown in Table 6, terrorist attacks in the United States have targeted a wide variety of entities, but the most common targets between 1970 and 2014 were businesses (28%), followed by non-diplomatic government targets (13%), and private citizens and property (12%), which comprise more than half of all targets attacked. The GTD further classifies types of targets into subtypes, which provide a more detailed summary of targeting practices. Business targets in the United States were most commonly banks/commerce (30%), retail (23%), or multinational corporations (10%). Banks were often targeted in attacks by extreme left-wing perpetrators, especially in the early 1970s. At that time, retail stores were also targeted by these groups because of their commercial symbolism and the potential impact to the economy. More recently, violent attacks against retail stores such as those that sell fur, leather, or meat

were carried out by animal rights groups. A wide variety of multinational corporations were targeted, most based in the United States, including oil companies, conglomerates, technology companies, and automotive companies.

Table 6: Targets of terrorist attacks in the United States, 1970-2014

Target Type	Number of Targets Attacked	% Targets
Business	771	28%
Government (Non-Diplomatic)	353	13%
Private Citizens & Property	326	12%
Abortion Related	262	9%
Military	185	7%
Educational Institution	172	6%
Police	167	6%
Government (Diplomatic)	144	5%
Religious Figures/Institutions	90	3%
Utilities	87	3%
Airports & Aircraft	76	3%
Journalists & Media	58	2%
NGO	30	1%
Transportation	16	1%
Tourists	12	0%
Telecommunication Systems	10	0%
Terrorists/Non-State Militia	8	0%
Food or Water Supply	7	0%
Maritime Vessels	7	0%
Violent Political Party	6	0%

Note: The type of target was unknown in 0.5 percent of attacks.

The majority of non-diplomatic government targets (61%) were federal, state, local, and tribal government buildings and facilities. These targets included the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Pentagon, city halls, the Bureau of Land Management, and various other federal buildings including the Alfred P. Murrah building, attacked in Oklahoma City in 1995. The most commonly targeted government facilities between 1970 and 2014 were Selective Service offices, which were bombed and burned by anti-war perpetrators in the 1970s. An additional 14 percent of non-diplomatic government targets were associated with the judicial system (judges, attorneys, and courts), and 11 percent were politicians and political parties/functions.

The most common targets in the private citizens and property category were individuals who were attacked based on their race or ethnicity (21%). An additional 15 percent of attacks targeting private citizens and property were directed at residences. Other types of targets in this category included those

related to labor unions or specific occupations (15%); public spaces such as parks, museums, monuments, or plazas (12%); vehicles (5%); political party members or political rallies (5%); and individuals targeted based on their religion (1%).

Attacks on abortion-related targets comprised 9 percent of all attacks between 1970 and 2014 in the United States, and these attacks comprised 96 percent of all attacks on abortion-related targets worldwide. The vast majority of attacks on abortion-related targets were non-lethal (96%), and 94 percent targeted clinics or facilities, while 6 percent of attacks targeted abortion providers or personnel.

More than half of all attacks on military targets (54%) took place in 1970 and 1971, prior to the end of U.S. military involvement in the Vietnam War. However, attacks on military targets in the United States have occurred in each decade since then. Small peaks in the number of attacks on military targets took place in 1979, when Puerto Rican nationalists including members of FALN and Revolutionary Commandos of the People (CRP) carried out more than 10 bombings and assaults in Puerto Rico and Chicago, and in 1986, when the Macheteros, the Organization of Volunteers for the Puerto Rican Revolution, and the Armed Forces of Popular Resistance (FARP) attempted a series of bombings targeting recruiting offices and other military targets in Puerto Rico. These attacks, most of which were unsuccessful because the homemade devices failed or were discovered, were intended to protest plans to train Nicaraguan Contras in Puerto Rico. While eight of the 10 attacks on military targets in the 1990s took place in Puerto Rico, eight of the nine attacks targeting the military between 2000 and 2014 occurred on the U.S. mainland. Perhaps most notable among these is the armed assault carried out by Major Nidal Hasan in 2009 at Fort Hood, in Killeen, Texas, which killed 13 and wounded more than 30 others.

Many of the terrorist attacks on educational institutions in the United States (64%) occurred during the 1970s and frequently involved bombings and fire bombings at universities. These attacks were typically carried out by perpetrators identified as “student radicals” and other left-wing extremists in opposition to the Vietnam War and perceived racial inequities in education. Beginning in the 1980s, attacks on educational institutions were increasingly carried out by environmental groups targeting personnel and infrastructure to protest scientific research and testing on animals and genetically modified plants. Between 1970 and 2014, 78 percent of all attacks on educational institutions targeted facilities, while 22 percent targeted teachers, professors, or other personnel.

Although terrorist attacks in the United States were concentrated in the 1970s overall, this is especially true of attacks targeting the police. In fact, 85 percent of all terrorist attacks against the police took place in the 1970s. More than half of these attacks, which were typically armed assaults or bombings, were specifically attributed to the Black Liberation Army, the Black Panthers, or Black nationalists not affiliated with a specific organization. Between 2000 and 2014, there were 10 attacks that primarily targeted police in the United States, and six of them took place in 2014.

In June 2014, Jerad and Amanda Miller killed two police officers and a bystander in Las Vegas, Nevada. On social media, the assailants reportedly decried the federal government, taxes, anti-gun laws, and

demanded a revolution. In August 2014, Douglas Leguin opened fire on firefighters and police officers responding to a 911 call he made in Dallas, Texas, though no casualties were reported. Sources indicate that Leguin self-identified as part of the Sovereign Citizen movement. In September 2014, Eric Frein shot two state troopers in Pike County, Pennsylvania, killing one and wounding the other. Frein indicated that he intended to spark a revolution against the government. In October 2014, Zale Thompson wounded two police officers when he attacked them with a hatchet in New York City, New York. According to Thompson's social media activity, he had recently converted to Islam and was angry about perceived injustices in American society and oppression abroad. In November 2014, Larry McQuilliams opened fire on police headquarters in Austin, Texas, causing no casualties. Sources indicate that McQuilliams was motivated by anti-government and anti-immigration sentiments. In December 2014, Ismaaiyl Brinsley killed two police officers in New York City, New York. Brinsley indicated that the attack was carried out in retribution for the deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner at the hands of police officers.

Attacks on diplomatic targets in the United States targeted 39 different nationalities and the United Nations. Diplomatic entities from the Soviet Union experienced as many terrorist attacks in the United States (21 attacks) as the next two nationalities combined—Turkish (11 attacks) and international targets (10 attacks, all against the United Nations). These attacks on Soviet diplomatic targets, which all took place in the 1970s and early 1980s, were almost all carried out in New York by the Jewish Defense League, Jewish Direct Action, Thunder of Zion, and the United Jewish Underground. Between 1990 and 2014, seven terrorist attacks in the United States targeted diplomatic entities—three targeted the United Nations, and the others targeted the South Korean consulate in San Francisco, and the British and Mexican consulates in New York and Texas. Out of all attacks on diplomatic targets in the United States, 52 percent targeted diplomatic facilities such as embassies and consulates; 31 percent targeted diplomatic personnel; and 17 percent targeted the United Nations or specific UN Missions.

Attacks on utilities frequently targeted electrical facilities (88%), rather than oil (9%), or gas (3%). More than 83 percent of attacks on utilities involved explosives, and although none resulted in fatalities, the value of property damages ranged from \$500 when the New World Liberation Front (NWLFF) carried out an incendiary attack on an electrical tower in California in 1975 to \$600,000 when unidentified perpetrators destroyed an electrical transformer in Florida with dynamite in 1970.

Attacks on religious entities in the United States targeted a variety of religions, including Christian, Muslim, Hare Krishna, Hindu, Jewish, and Sikh figures and institutions. The majority of these attacks (79%) involved explosives or incendiary weapons, and 78 percent targeted places of worship or affiliated institutions, while 22 percent targeted religious figures, including imams, ministers, reverends, priests, and other religious leaders. One of the most deadly terrorist attacks in recent history in the United States occurred in 2012, when Wade Michael Page opened fire at a Sikh temple, killing seven people and wounding four. Page, a white supremacist, was shot by a police officer in the wake of the attack and killed by a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Attacks on airports and aircraft were quite rare in the United States—comprising only 3 percent of all targets—but they certainly have the potential to be devastating in terms of both loss of life and economic

impacts. Although attacks on airports and aircraft were most common in the 1970s and 1980s (43 attacks and 23 attacks, respectively), they declined to only two attacks in the 1990s—involving an explosive device that was defused at San Francisco International Airport and a small bomb that detonated near La Guardia Airport. From the 1990s to the 2000s (2000 to 2010) the number of attacks on airports and airlines tripled, including the four attacks on planes on 9/11, a 2002 shooting at the Israeli El Al ticket counter at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) that killed two people and wounded four others, and the 2009 attempted bombing of Northwest Flight 253 from Amsterdam to Detroit, claimed by al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). In 2013 there were two attacks targeting airports in the United States. In April an explosive device was defused at an airport in Nebraska, and in November a gunman targeting the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) shot and killed a TSA officer at LAX.

The kidnapping and murder of journalists outside the United States have recently raised the profile of the risks faced by media personnel in conflict regions; however, terrorist attacks in the United States rarely targeted journalists and media. Attacks on journalists and media in the United States were most common in the 1970s and 1980s. In the 1970s nearly three-quarters of all attacks on media were bombings, while in the 1980s, bombings declined dramatically and incendiary attacks on media facilities and assassinations of high-profile, outspoken media targets comprised nearly three-quarters of attacks on journalists and media. The only kidnapping of a media target in the United States was the 1974 abduction of Patricia Hearst by the Symbionese Liberation Army in order to make demands of her father, head of the Hearst media corporation. During the period from 2000 to 2014 attacks on media targets took a considerably different form. Seven attacks took place during this time period, five of which occurred in October 2001 during the series of anthrax attacks discussed above. The targets of these attacks included American Media, in Boca Raton, Florida; NBC, ABC, and CBS News, all in New York City; and the New York Post. The sixth attack occurred in 2010 when radical environmentalist James Lee took three people hostage at the Discovery Communications headquarters building in Silver Spring, Maryland. Lee was armed with starter pistols and crude explosive devices strapped to his body. After four hours, the hostage situation ended when police snipers shot and killed Lee. Finally, the seventh attack targeted a photojournalist presenting a photography exhibit on the conflict in Ukraine at an art gallery in New York City, New York.

Attacks on NGOs; transportation; tourists; telecommunication systems; terrorists or non-state militias; the food or water supply; maritime vessels; and violent political parties (defined as organizations that engage in both electoral politics and terrorism) were extremely rare in the United States. Each comprised less than 2 percent of targets of terrorism in the United States between 1970 and 2014.

As shown in Table 7, despite the fact that there were far fewer terrorist attacks between 2000 and 2014 than the previous three decades in the United States, the targets of these attacks were extremely diverse. More than 2,600 attacks on 20 different types of targets in the United States took place during the entire timespan covered by the GTD, and 18 different types of targets were attacked in the 289 incidents that occurred between 2000 and 2014. The proportion of attacks targeting businesses remained fairly consistent with the general pattern; however, attacks on private citizens and property were more than

twice as prevalent between 2000 and 2014, and attacks on non-diplomatic government targets were nearly 50 percent more prevalent during this time period. Attacks on abortion-related targets, the military, and police were less prevalent from 2000 to 2014, while the proportion of targets that were religious figures and institutions was twice as high as the trend for the full time span.

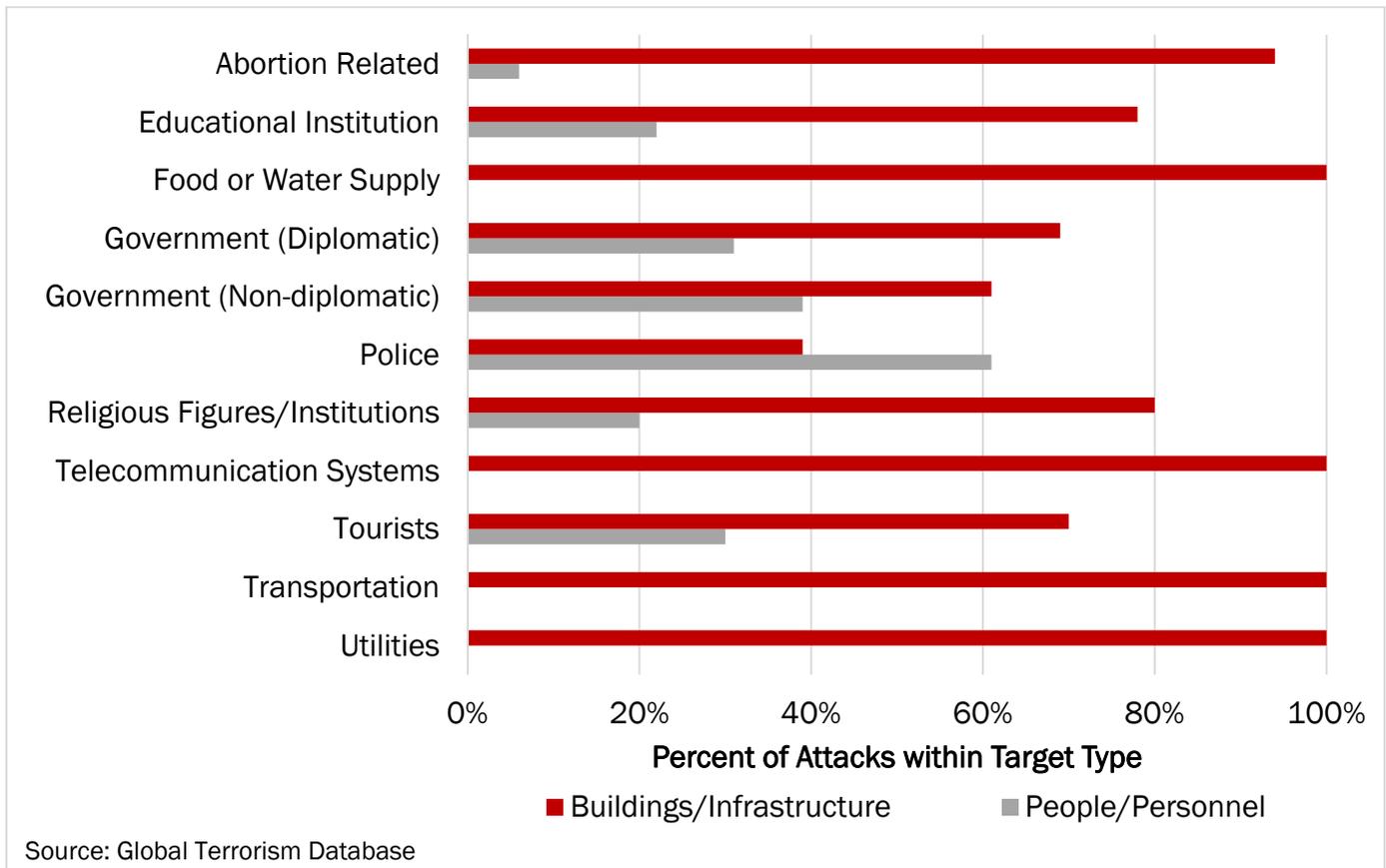
Table 7: Targets of terrorist attacks in the United States, 2000-2014

Target Type	Number of Targets Attacked	% Targets
Business	82	25%
Private Citizens & Property	75	23%
Government (Non-Diplomatic)	57	17%
Abortion Related	20	6%
Educational Institution	18	6%
Religious Figures/Institutions	18	6%
Police	11	3%
Military	10	3%
Airports & Aircraft	8	2%
Journalists & Media	7	2%
NGO	4	1%
Transportation	4	1%
Government (Diplomatic)	4	1%
Utilities	4	1%
Telecommunication Systems	1	0%
Terrorists/Non-State Militia	1	0%
Tourists	1	0%

Note: The type of target was unknown in 1.4 percent of attacks.

In many cases, terrorist attacks in the United States tended to target buildings or infrastructure rather than specific people or personnel. For example, as we noted above, 78 percent of all attacks on educational targets were aimed at schools, universities, or educational buildings rather than isolated teachers, professors, instructors, or other personnel. Bearing in mind that these distinctions are somewhat loosely defined because people are often inside buildings as they are attacked, Figure 8 shows the distribution between these two general targeting strategies for attacks on those types of targets for which we could make this determination. Certain types of targets, such as the food or water supply, telecommunication systems, transportation, and utilities, were both infrequently attacked (making percentages somewhat sensitive to variation) and essentially by definition involve infrastructure rather than specific people or personnel. Therefore, 100 percent of attacks on these targets were focused on buildings or infrastructure. Of the remaining target types, only attacks on police were more likely to be aimed at people or personnel rather than buildings or infrastructure.

*Figure 8: Targets of terrorism in the United States:
 Buildings/infrastructure vs. people/personnel, 1970-2014*



Conclusions

The patterns of terrorism in the United States illustrate that the threat of terrorism is far from uniform. Although terrorism in the United States was most common in the 1970s and is rarely lethal, there are certainly critical exceptions to this general trend, including the devastating mass casualty attacks in Oklahoma City in 1995 and in New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia on September 11, 2001. This unusual pattern, along with the fact that numerous unsuccessful attacks were attempted in the United States, presents unique counterterrorism challenges. In the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, certain patterns emerged regarding the perpetrators of terrorism in the United States, the movements they represented, and the tactics they adopted. However, in the first 14 years of the 21st century, perpetrators and targets in the United States were especially varied and somewhat less predictable. Attacks were frequently carried out anonymously, organizations rarely claimed responsibility for attacks, and perpetrators were often either unidentified or unaffiliated with a formally organized group. Terrorist attacks in the United States between 2000 and 2014 were relatively infrequent compared to earlier decades, but they were extremely diverse with respect to lethality, perpetrator motivation (which can be inferred from either the identification of the perpetrator or the symbolism of the target), location, types of weapons, and types of targets.

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