

Background Report: ETA Ceasefires by the Numbers

In a statement released to the media on Thursday, the Basque separatist group Euskadi ta Askatasuna (ETA, Basque Fatherland and Freedom) announced a “definitive cessation of its armed activity.”¹ ETA has announced a number of ceasefires throughout its 50-year campaign of violent activity. The current cessation of violence began in September 2010. In this background report, START reviews the history of ETA’s activity with respect to ceasefire announcements over the years.

BASQUE FATHERLAND AND FREEDOM (ETA)

PATTERNS OF ACTIVITY

- ETA is known to responsible for 2005 terrorist attacks between 1970 and 2010, making them the fourth most active terrorist group in the world during this period.
- They are responsible for over 800 fatalities. The organization’s deadliest single attack occurred in 1987, when a bomb planted by the organization exploded in the parking garage of a department store in Barcelona, Spain. In all, 28% of all ETA’s attacks resulted in at least one fatality.

Rank	Top 10 Most Active Terrorist Groups, 1970-2010	Attacks	Fatalities
1	Shining Path (SL)	4517	11666
2	Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN)	3357	8508
3	Irish Republican Army (IRA)	2673	1807
4	Basque Fatherland and Freedom (ETA)	2005	810
5	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)	1888	4975
6	Taliban	1783	4710
7	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)	1599	10838
8	New People's Army (NPA)	1282	3385
9	National Liberation Army of Colombia (ELN)	1267	1451
10	Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)	1190	3570

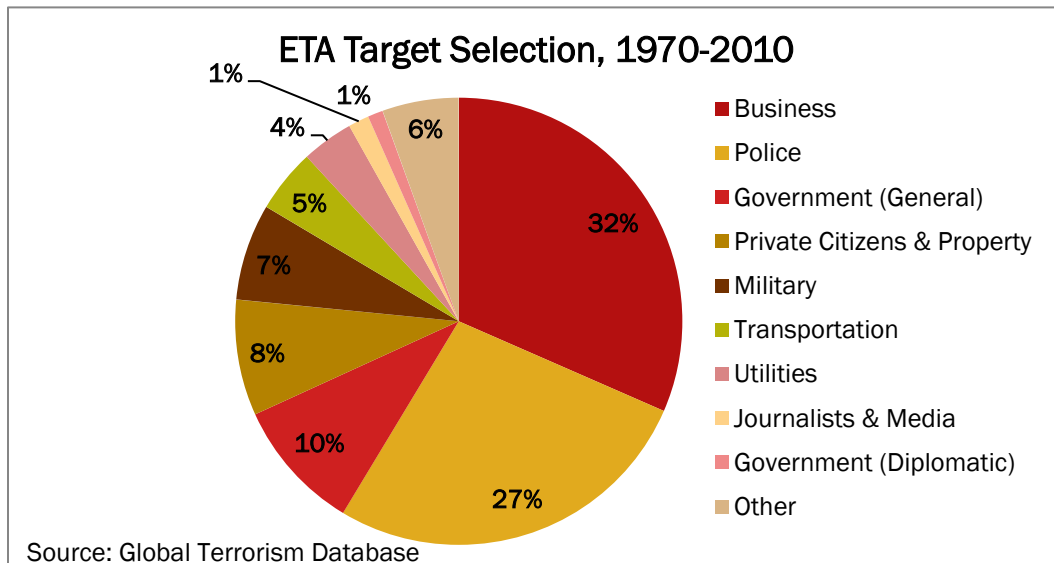
Source: Global Terrorism Database

- The vast majority of ETA attacks occurred in **Spain**, but they were active elsewhere in Europe as well as in Mexico. ETA is responsible for **61% of all known terrorist attacks in Spain** during this period.

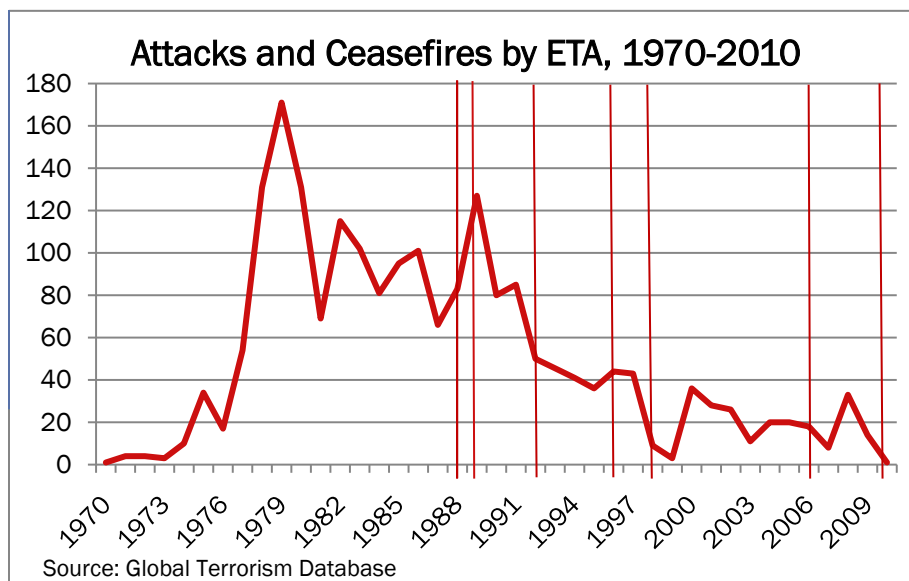
COUNTRY	# of ETA ATTACKS, 1970-2010
Spain	1959
France	25
Italy	15
Mexico	2
Netherlands	2
Belgium	1
Germany	1

¹ BBC. (2011, October 20). Full text: Basque ceasefire declaration. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-15395157>

- ETA's most common type of target was private business, but the organization attacked a wide variety of target types through the years.



CEASEFIRES



1988

In January 1988 ETA offered a 60-day truce for peace talks with the Spanish government.² However, in February the group kidnapped Spanish businessman Emiliano Revilla and held him hostage for eight months, demanding a multi-million dollar ransom (GTD ID: 198802230014). The kidnapping was followed by a surge of bombings, shootings, and assassinations.

1989

A similar announcement in January 1989 offered a ceasefire against government targets intended to last through March in exchange for talks with the government.³ During this period there was a dramatic decline in violence and the Global Terrorism

² The Associated Press. (1988, February 23). Reports Spain-ETA talks may open door to cease-fire.

Database reports no casualties. In March, ETA extended the ceasefire for an additional 90 days as talks continued,⁴ however a few days later talks ended abruptly and ETA declared an end to the truce, “opening the fight on all fronts.”⁵ Shortly thereafter explosive attacks targeted RENFE (the state railway) at multiple locations on a single day (GTD ID 198904080001-10), causing injuries but no fatalities. ETA claimed responsibility for these attacks and carried out additional attacks nearly every day in the weeks that followed.

1992

In the summer of 1992 the Olympic Games were held in Barcelona and ETA offered a two-month truce in exchange for talks with the Spanish government.⁶ With the exception of several attacks causing no casualties in Italy, France, and Spain for which ETA was the suspected perpetrator, this ceasefire appears to have been largely upheld through mid-August when they shot and killed two civilian guards (GTD ID 199208170002).

1996

ETA observed a one-week truce in June, but resumed attacks in July, including a bombing at an airport in Reus, Spain that wounded 35 tourists (GTD ID 199607200005).

1998

ETA’s longest period of inactivity began in September 1998 when they announced that they had “decided to make [their] contribution to the new political scenario of dialogue by adjourning [their] armed activity.”⁷ Again, with the exception of a few non-lethal events, possibly perpetrated by dissident elements of the group, this ceasefire was largely successful. In November 1999, however, they announced an end to the truce.⁸ In January 2000 ETA detonated a car bomb in Madrid killing one army officer and injuring two teenage girls (GTD ID 200001210001).

2006

In March, with advice from leaders of Sinn Fein and the Irish Republican Army, ETA announced a “permanent” ceasefire.⁹ The lull in violence lasted nine months, until a 500kg bomb at a Madrid airport killed two and wounded twelve in late December (GTD ID 200612300002).

2010-2011

In September 2010, amid declining violence and numerous arrests of leaders, ETA declared a “permanent and verifiable” ceasefire.¹⁰ In January 2011, the group re-affirmed its commitment to non-violence, stating that they decided to declare a “permanent and general ceasefire which will be verifiable by the international community.”¹¹ In October 2011, having not caused any fatalities for over two years, they underscored their intentions yet again by announcing “a definitive cessation of [their] armed activity” which “demonstrates [their] clear, firm, and definitive purpose.”¹²

³ The Associated Press. (1989, January 23). Basque separatists extend cease-fire.

⁴ BBC Summary of World News Broadcasts (1989, March 29). Spain ETA announces extension of cease-fire.

⁵ The Independent. (1989, April 5). Spain braced for violence as ETA calls off ceasefire.

⁶ The Guardian. (1992, July 11). ETA offers to lift Olympics terror threat.

⁷ Agence France Presse (1998, September 16). ETA Basque separatists announce open-ended truce.

⁸ The Associated Press. (1999, November 27). Armed group announces end of year-long truce.

⁹ Agence France Presse. (2006, March 22). Basque separatists announce ceasefire.

¹⁰ Reuters (2010, September 25). Basque guerrillas say ready to prove truce real.

¹¹ Reuters (2011, January 10). Spanish government rejects ETA ceasefire move.

¹² BBC. (2011, October 20). Basque group Eta says armed campaign is over.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

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The data presented here are drawn from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD). The GTD contains information on more than 98,000 terrorist incidents that have occurred around the world since 1970. For more information about the GTD, visit www.start.umd.edu/gtd.

The GTD is a project of the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). START aims to provide timely guidance on how to reduce the incidence of terrorism and disrupt terrorism networks, as well as enhance the resilience of society in the face of terrorist threats at home and abroad. Additional information about START is available at www.start.umd.edu.

