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Dealing with terrorism

No one can quarrel with the proposition that the United States must not use military force unless we have the means to achieve our goal of victory. But we must recognize that where our interests are clearly involved, we must take risks to protect them.

Every military operation cannot be a sure thing. The United States is a great power with worldwide responsibilities. We will not prevail against an enemy willing to take any risk to achieve victory if we are unwilling to take some risks to prevent defeat.

The same principle applies to international terrorism. Some urge restraint in retaliating against ter-

rorism because of the admittedly significant risk of casualties among civilians, hostages, and our military personnel. But while we cannot act in every instance of terrorism, we should always act decisively when we know who is responsible and where they are. Otherwise we give *carte blanche* to these international outlaws to strike again.

If one group of terrorists succeeds in intimidating the United States, others will be encouraged to try, and more lives will undoubtedly be lost as a result. Swift, timely retaliation, even if there is some risk to innocent people, will mean that other terrorists will be less likely to threaten and kill innocent people in the future. Repeated threats to retaliate that are not followed by action are counterproductive. A president of the United States should warn only once.

Terrorism, whether undertaken by states, political groups, or individuals, is one of the most insidious and deadly aspects of the Third World War. The Soviet Union and its proxies use terrorism to wage covert war against the West

and its friends and allies. It is also a tactic that our enemies use to try to drive the United States out of the Third World. We were forced out of Lebanon not by another country but

by suicidal terrorist bands whom we could barely identify and whose sponsors remain out of our reach.

Our military forces can only fight an enemy they can see. All the military power in the world is useless against shadows. If the United States wants to continue to play a role in the Third World it must attack terrorism at its source. We must hold those who inspire it and pay for it accountable for their actions.

The most powerful weapon terrorists have is the civilized world's parochial approach to combating them. If Americans are taken hostage, the world considers it solely an American problem. If most of the passengers of a hijacked jet are Kuwaitis, the hijacking is considered primarily Kuwait's problem. When a car bomb explodes in the streets of Paris, we leave it up to France to respond.

By reacting in this narrow-minded way, we play into the terrorists' hands. Terrorism today is an international challenge to international order, and it requires an international response.

The Soviet Union's record in fueling international terrorism is well-known. But it is not the only nation that does so. The Ayatollah Khomeini's Iran and Muammar Qaddafi's Libya are both international outlaws that openly praise, protect, and incite those who commit terrorist acts. Such state-supported-and-sponsored terrorism is one of the most dangerous threats to peace in the world.

Dealings within and between nations depend on order. Diplomats must be able to travel, and embassies to keep their doors open, without fear of assassinations and attacks, and businessmen must be able to go about their business without being kidnapped. Terrorism breeds fear; fear breeds insularity and suspiciousness; and these inevitably will serve to drive nations apart. When that happens, the whole world will suffer the consequences.

In most cases of state-sponsored terrorism, military reprisals, though tempting, are impractical. But what has been most pathetic about the civilized world's response to terrorism is that it has made so little use of the wide array of choices short of military action available to

it. Terrorism is a way to divide and conquer — but only if its victims allow themselves to be divided.

When terrorists act against one nation, other nations should respond as if it were an attack on them all — because, in essence, it is. The first impulse of other nations should not be relief that they were not the victims but outrage that someone was.

The civilized world must develop a unified policy for dealing with terrorism. All nations that are potential victims should pool and share intelligence-gathering and commu-

nications resources. When military retaliation is appropriate, they must be prepared to act together.

Most important, they must recognize that even nations that support terrorism depend on their victims. While neither Iran nor Libya could survive without selling oil, the rest of the world could survive without Iranian and Libyan oil. In the past, economic and diplomatic sanctions and quarantines have been justifiably criticized for being ineffective. They were ineffective, however, primarily because too few nations participated.

Terrorists will not be deterred by U.N. resolutions or expressions of outrage by leaders or legislatures. But they may be deterred once they realize that by using terror they will spark the wrath of all nations that do not want to exist in a world riven by a tiny minority who have resorted to violence in pursuit of their objectives. We will only eliminate terrorism if we choke it off by drawing the dark curtain of international condemnation around its sponsors.

And actions will speak louder than words. Unless they are willing to live peacefully in the community of nations, we cannot allow them any of the privileges of membership.

This is the fifth of 11 monthly articles by Richard M. Nixon that will appear in the Washington Times by arrangement with the News America Syndicate.