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# Terrorism primer stops short of mark

**BOOK REVIEW/Harry G. Summers Jr.**

**L**ike counterinsurgency in the 1960s, terrorism has become the growth industry of the 1980s. In 1971, then Harvard researcher J. Bowyer Bell noted (in words that apply to terrorism today) that "guerrilla-revolution had become a fashionable challenge to be met in elegant and complex ways but which needed the talents, the scope, the capabilities, and the experience of various available careerists."

Most of these "careerists," drawn from academia and from the various "think tanks," had an educated incapacity to see "guerrilla-revolution" as a form of war. Thus, the strategies devised to counter such wars — strategies that came to ultimate grief on the battlefield — were formulated almost exclusively from the perspectives of social and political science. We are in danger of

repeating that same disastrous mistake. Although widely acknowledged as a form of war, terrorism is rarely analyzed from the perspective of military science.

One of the reasons is that today, as during the Vietnam era, the Pentagon remains dominated by systems analysis, budgeting, and cost accounting. Instead of doing their own thinking on operational strategies, plans, and policies, the military farms it out to "Beltway Bandits" heavily staffed with academic analysts, who, not surprisingly, concentrate on what they know best. *Terrorism as State-Sponsored Covert Warfare* is a case in point, for it was originally commissioned by the Department of the Army's Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans.

It is not that the authors are unqualified. Georgetown Professor Ray S. Cline was the CIA's deputy director for intelligence and has written extensively on intelligence matters. His co-author, State Univer-

sity of New York Professor Yonah Alexander, has written, edited, and co-edited some 25 books, most on terrorism and terrorism-related topics. And it is not that their work is without value. After sketching the historical background of state-sponsored terrorism, they rigorously define the nature of the problem. They then address the question of what to do about it.

Recommended countermeasures include improved intelligence, increased cooperation with allies, economic and security assistance to those threatened by terrorist activities, political and diplomatic pressures and economic sanctions against terrorist sponsors, information campaigns and foreign broadcasts to bring public opinion to bear, and, as a last resort, employment of military force.

Such military force would range from clandestine counterterrorist infiltrations, to covert support of foreign counterterror military operations, to overt U.S. military pre-

emptive operations, to overt U.S. military operations against identified terrorist bases and forces.

The authors round out their study with a bibliography and a collection of documents, illustrations, and charts, including the translation of an Iranian top secret directive creating an independent brigade to carry out terrorism abroad.

As a handbook, *Terrorism as State-Sponsored Covert Warfare* is a useful work. But because it is an academic work, it misses the import of the fact that, as a form of warfare, terrorism has a tactical and a strate-

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gic dimension. A terrorist bombing, hijacking, or assassination is much the same, no matter who is behind it, and common tactical defenses can be devised. But, at the strategic level, policies must be individually tailored for each specific terrorist group. The political objectives of the Palestine Liberation Organization, for example, are fundamentally different from the goals of the Puerto Rican terrorists of the Boricua Popular Army, and policies must take these differences into account.

The authors conclude that "state-sponsored terrorism is such a fundamental challenge to the security and strategic interests of the United States that a major effort must be launched to adopt clear definitions and doctrine to establish an active counterterrorism policy and a deterrent strategy that imposes a high cost to terrorists."

This book is a beginning in that effort, but lacking a coherent and comprehensive follow-on military analysis, it is only a beginning.

Col. Harry G. Summers Jr. is a senior military correspondent for U.S. News and World Report. His recently published Vietnam War Almanac (*Facts on File*) was voted one of the outstanding reference sources of 1985 by the American Library Association.