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# Cheney chides journalists for linking CIA to terrorists involved in bombing

By PAUL KRZA  
*Star-Tribune staff writer*

WASHINGTON — American journalists should not have reported allegations of CIA involvement in the training of terrorists who recently exploded a car bomb in a Beirut suburb, Wyoming Congressman Dick Cheney said Wednesday.

Cheney, a member of the House Select Committee on Intelligence, said such reporting of government intelligence efforts is "irresponsible."

Shiite terrorists who hijacked a TWA airliner last week in Athens

later killed an American serviceman and said they did so in retaliation for the alleged U.S. involvement in the Beir el-Abed bombing in Lebanon that killed 50 people.

Earlier press reports indicated the CIA trained the people who exploded the Beir el-Abed bomb. The CIA has denied any involvement in the bombing.

Cheney said he was not suggesting that the press disclosures were to blame for the murder of 23-year-old Navy frogman Robert Stethem. Stethem was one of the passengers on the hijacked Athens-to-Rome TWA flight.

"I could not link the two (but ... the terrorists had linked (them)," he said. "It was a claim by the terrorists."

He said "disclosures of those kinds of activities obviously can have consequences."

"I am suggesting there ought to be a greater sense of responsibility on the part of the press before they print things that are classified," Cheney said.

Specific government plans to use violence to counter terrorist activities should not be debated publicly, Cheney said. Instead, such plans should be debated openly

only in general terms, he said.

Prior disclosure of plans for counterterrorist attacks or of training and tactics under consideration effectively forecloses those options, he said.

Instead, decisions on tactics and what might be considered appropriate actions — even if they involve violence and death — ought to be left up to government officials, Cheney said.

"I would argue that we elect people and give them certain responsibilities," he said.

"We ought to have enough confidence and trust to allow them to operate without making it impossible (by publicly disclosing secret plans)."

The hijackers' claim of U.S. involvement in the recent bombing illustrates why the media needs to be less "irresponsible" in printing intelligence information, Cheney said.

The news media should also exercise more self-censorship in not disclosing possible tactics or options that the U.S. could or might use, even if they involve counterterrorist activities or violence, he said.

"There are occasions when you have to resort to force," Cheney said. "We live in such an era now."

Public debate about the merits of using violence, such as a "pre-emptive strike" against terrorists, is best avoided or should be carried on only in general terms, he said.

"If, for example, you would have known that this hostage crisis was planned ... (that) a group planned to capture an American airliner ... wouldn't you be justified in using a pre-emptive attack?" Cheney asked.

"I think we would have been."

Cheney said he is not about to suggest that new sanctions be legislated to keep the media from disclosing secret information. But, he said, "the media can do a better job of policing (itself)" and resist the "drive to beat others to the punch" by printing information that needs to be kept secret.

"There are some legitimate reasons ... for keeping certain activities of the U.S. government secret," he said.