TOM DAVIS, VIRGINIA,
CHAIRMAN

CHRISTOPHER SHAYS, CONNECTICUT
DAN BURTON, INDIANA
ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, FLORIDA
JOHN M. McHUGH, NEW YORK
JOHN L. MICA, FLORIDA
GIL GUTKNECHT, MINNESOTA
MARK E. SOUDER, INDIANA
STEVEN C. LATOURETTE, OHIO
TODD RUSSELL PLATTS, PENNSYLVANIA
CHRIS CANNON, UTAH
JOHN J. DUNCAN, JR., TENNESSEE
CANDICE MILLER, MICHIGAN
MICHAEL R. TURNER, OHIO
DARRELL ISSA, CALIFORNIA
VIRGINIA BROWN-WAITE, FLORIDA
JON C. PORTER, NEVADA
KENNY MARCHANT, TEXAS
LYNN A. WESTMORELAND, GEORGIA
PATRICK T. McHENRY, NORTH CAROLINA
CHARLES W. DENT, PENNSYLVANIA
VIRGINIA FOXX, NORTH CAROLINA

ONE HUNDRED NINTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515–6143

MAJORITY (202) 225–5074
FACSIMILE (202) 225–3974
MINORITY (202) 225–5051
TTY (202) 225–6852

http://reform.house.gov

HENRY A. WAXMAN, CALIFORNIA,
RANKING MINORITY MEMBER

TOM LANTOS, CALIFORNIA
MAJOR R. OWENS, NEW YORK
EDOLPHUS TOWNS, NEW YORK
PAUL E. KANJORSKI, PENNSYLVANIA
CAROLYN B. MALONEY, NEW YORK
ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS, MARYLAND
DENNIS J. KUCINICH, OHIO
DANNY K. DAVIS, ILLINOIS
WM. LACY CLAY, MISSOURI
DIANE E. WATSON, CALIFORNIA
STEPHEN F. LYNCH, MASSACHUSETTS
CHRIS VAN HOLLEN, MARYLAND
LINDA T. SANCHEZ, CALIFORNIA
C.A. DUTCH RUPPERSBERGER, MARYLAND
BRIAN HIGGINS, NEW YORK
ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

BERNARD SANDERS, VERMONT,
INDEPENDENT

April 29, 2005

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Madam Secretary:

I commend you and the Administration for making public the data on international terrorist attacks in 2004. The American people have a right to this data, and its disclosure better informs the debate over the effectiveness of the Administration's counterterrorism.

I have questions, however, about statements made by senior Administration officials upon the release of the data this week. The terrorism data showed that the number of significant terrorist attacks tripled last year from 175 in 2003 to 651 in 2004. Yet when asked whether global terrorism increased in 2004, John Brennan, the Acting Director of the National Counterterrorism Center, argued that the increase in the number of attacks reported "does not necessarily mean that there has been a growth in actual terrorist incidents."[1]

Philip Zelikow, the State Department Counselor, also denied any significant increase in terrorist attacks. When asked whether the Administration agreed that there was an increase, Mr. Zelikow responded bluntly, "No. We don't."[2]

This position is at odds not only with the Administration's own data, but also with the data of other organizations that study terrorism in detail. According to a report from the Congressional Research Service, which I received yesterday, as well as reports by three independent organizations, global terrorism increased in 2004. Each organization reporting terrorist attacks uses different methodologies, but the findings form a consistent pattern: there was a sharp increase in terrorism around the world in 2004.

---

[1] U.S. Department of State, *Remarks on Release of "Country Reports on Terrorism" for 2004* (Apr. 27, 2005).

[2] *Id.*

The argument of Mr. Brennan and Mr. Zelikow is that the 2004 data was derived using a different methodology and a greater level of effort, so it is not comparable to the 2003 data. But their methodological point is wrong: in both 2003 and 2004, the same statutory criteria were used to determine what counts as a significant international terrorist attack. And while there may have been increased level of effort devoted to the data in 2004, it seems inconceivable that the Administration missed two-thirds of the international terrorist attacks that occurred in 2003.

Congress and the American people should know whether terrorism is increasing or not. Given the billions of dollars being spent on military, law enforcement, and intelligence operations throughout the world, this is surely information that the government must possess. I urge you to address this issue definitively and without equivocation.

Terrorism in 2004

Recently, there have been five separate reports on terrorism in 2004. All show a significant increase in activity compared to 2003 and previous years.

This week, as you know, the Administration released data showing that the number of significant international terrorist attacks in 2004 tripled the existing 20-year record set in 2003. According to the data, there were 175 attacks in 2003, compared to 651 in 2004.[3] The number of attacks in Iraq in 2004 was nine times higher than in 2003, increasing from 22 to 201, while the number of attacks in Afghanistan doubled, and the number of attacks in Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank also doubled.[4]

The number of fatalities and injuries also dramatically increased, according to the Administration's data. In 2004, there were 1,907 deaths and 6,704 injured, up significantly from 625 deaths and 3,646 injured in 2003.[5] In fact, the combined total of deaths and injuries in 2004 exceeded the number of deaths and injuries in 2001, when the September 11 attacks occurred, as well as the number of deaths and injuries in 1998, when the U.S. embassies in Africa were attacked.

A report I received yesterday from the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service looked at the specific issue of terrorist attacks known to have been committed by al Qaeda and associated terrorist groups. CRS concluded that attacks, deaths, and injuries by al Qaeda and its associated groups increased in 2004. In 2003, CRS identified four attacks by al Qaeda or associated groups that killed at least 104 and injured at least 400. In 2004, CRS identified seven attacks that killed at least 220 and injured 1,426 others. CRS also analyzed the 3½-year periods

---

[3] National Counterterrorism Center, *A Chronology of Significant International Terrorism for 2004* (Apr. 27, 2005). *See also* U.S. Department of State, *Patterns of Global Terrorism — 2003* (Revised June 2004).

[4] *Id.*

[5] *Id.*

before and after the September 11 attacks, identifying two attacks in the time period before September 11, 2001, and 16 attacks since then.[6]

In addition to these reports from the Administration and CRS, three surveys by independent organizations reach similar conclusions:

- **The Aon Corporation:** On April 18, 2005, the British-based Aon Corporation issued its detailed annual assessment of global terrorism. Aon is a global insurance firm that conducts research on international terrorism as part of its risk management portfolio. According to Aon's 2004 report, "increased terrorist activity is making the world a riskier place in which to do business."[7] Specifically, the company listed more than 6,500 incidents of terrorism in 2004, warning that more than half of the 31 countries receiving higher terrorism ratings this year are in Western Europe.[8] The company also noted that Iraq climbed to first in the rankings, with 2,922 terrorist attacks last year.[9]

- **National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism:** The Memorial Institute also observed a higher number of terrorist attacks in 2004. This nonprofit organization was established after the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City and is funded through the Department of Homeland Security's Office for State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness. It operates the Terrorism Knowledge Base, which integrates terrorism research from the RAND Corporation, DFI International, and the University of Arkansas. For 2004, this database listed 2,498 terrorist incidents, up from 1,893 in 2003 — a 32% increase.[10]

- **Terrorism Research Center:** The Terrorism Research Center is an independent institute founded in 1996 to study international terrorism. It maintains the website www.terrorism.com, which provides another source of data on international terrorist attacks. The Center observed that "American citizens, interests, and military forces continue to find themselves in areas of increasing political instability. This makes them vulnerable to anti-American, anti-Western, or other extremist acts."[11] The Center listed

---

[6] Congressional Research Service, *Terrorist Attacks by Al-Qaeda,* 2004-2005 (Apr. 28, 2005); *see also* Congressional Research Service, *Terrorist Attacks by Al Qaeda* (Mar. 31, 2004).

[7] Aon United Kingdom, Ltd., *European Businesses Face Increasing Terrorism Risk* (Apr. 18, 2005) (online at www.aon.com/uk).

[8] *Id.*

[9] Aon United Kingdom, Ltd., *2005 Terrorism Risk Map* (April 2005).

[10] National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism, *Terrorism Knowledge Base* (accessed Apr. 26, 2005) (online at www.tkb.com).

[11] Terrorism Research Center, *Frequently Asked Questions* (accessed Apr. 26, 2005) (online at www.terrorism.com).

642 terrorist attacks in 2004, up from 355 in 2003, 254 in 2002, and 165 in 2001.[12] This represented a 40% increase since last year and a 289% increase since 2001.

The Administration's Position

Despite this data, both Mr. Brennan and Mr. Zelikow refused this week to acknowledge that terrorism increased in 2004. As Mr. Zelikow stated, "we made a more aggressive effort to compile the data, and therefore we have a much larger data set."[13] Mr. Brennan agreed, stating that the sharp increase was not a result of more attacks, but "a result of much more rigorous research and identification."[14] Mr. Brennan also stated, "the data you will see today represent a break from previous years, and the numbers can't be compared to previous years in any meaningful way."[15]

Their position is hard to understand. Both Mr. Zelikow and Mr. Brennan conceded that the Administration applied the identical methodology in 2004 and previous years. Mr. Zelikow stated that the 2004 data "was compiled using the old statutory criteria, the old counting rules and past practices."[16] Mr. Brennan confirmed this, reporting that they analyzed the 2004 data just as they had the 2003 data, "using the statutory criteria found in Title 22, Section 2656-f of the U.S. Code."[17]

In essence, their position seems to be that the Administration found more terrorist attacks in 2004 because it looked harder. Perhaps the hiring of additional staff could explain a small increase in terrorist attacks, but Mr. Brennan and Mr. Zelikow are arguing in effect that Administration officials missed two-thirds of the global terrorist attacks in 2003.

The initial 2003 terrorism data did have significant problems, which I and others pointed out.[18] Your predecessor, Secretary Colin Powell, responded by directing a thorough review of the data. When the final data was released, Secretary Powell stated as follows:

> Shortly after the report was issued in late April, it came to our attention, principally through the efforts of Congressman Henry Waxman and his staff, that they saw data errors in some of the tables that were in the report and some of the trends that were

---

[12] Terrorism Research Center, *Terrorist Attack Archives* (accessed Apr. 26, 2005) (online at www.terrorism.com).

[13] U. S. Department of State, *supra* note 1.

[14] *Id.*

[15] *Id.*

[16] *Id.*

[17] *Id.*

[18] Letter from Rep. Henry A. Waxman to Secretary of State Colin L. Powell (May 17, 2004). *See also* Professors Alan B. Krueger and David Laitin, *Faulty Terror Report Card,* Washington Post (May 17, 2004).

> divined from those data tables. When I asked my staff about it and we began looking into it, we discovered that Congressman Waxman and his staff was correct; there were errors.
>
> For the past two weeks now, we have had a major effort underway within the State Department and within the Terrorist Threat Information Center, the Center which accumulates this data .... [T]he TTIC, and my staff have been hard at work for the past two weeks to get to the bottom of the data error and determine what corrections were appropriate and to make those corrections so we could show those corrections to the American people ....
>
> [F]rankly, we have spent the last two weeks going back through years and years of data, and assembling not only the data, but how were things categorized, what system was in place, so to see if we could have solid trend analysis over time .... [a]nd over the last two weeks, and this is working seven days a week, all of the analysts have come together and agreed ....
>
> We have only one goal with this report, and that is to accurately reflect the pattern of terrorism that existed throughout the world during the period of the report.[19]

At the time, Mr. Brennan, who was then the director of TTIC, emphasized the Administration's efforts to ensure that data for 2003 was thorough and accurate. As Mr. Brennan stated, "Over the past several weeks, TTIC personnel have conducted rigorous review of the database, computer technology, procedures, interagency process, methodology, criteria and definitions that have been used to compile international terrorism statistics over the past 20 years."[20] Cofer Black, the former Coordinator for Counterterrorism at the State Department, stated that the revised report was "a result of a thorough and constant review over the last two weeks and the analysts involved have scrubbed all of this information."[21]

I expect that the final data from 2003 and previous years was not perfect. But it is not conceivable that it missed the vast majority of terrorist attacks. The primary example of new attacks in 2004 cited by Mr. Brennan and Mr. Zelikow are terrorist attacks in India or Pakistan related to the disputed Kashmir area. Yet even if all of these attacks are eliminated from the 2004 data, the number of worldwide terrorist attacks in 2004 would still be two times greater than the 2003 levels.[22]

Mr. Brennan cited several specific examples of "anomalies and misleading results" in his remarks this week. But the incidents he cited were incidents he believed should have been included, but were not. For example, he cited a bombing of a Vietnamese dormitory in Moscow;

---

[19] U.S. Department of State, *Remarks on the Release of the Revised Patterns of Global Terrorism* (June 22, 2004).

[20] U.S. Department of State, *Remarks on the Release of the Revised Patterns of Global Terrorism 2003 Annual Report* (June 22, 2004).

[21] *Id.*

[22] Letter from Rep. Henry A. Waxman to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice (Apr. 26, 2005).

the sinking of a ferry in the Philippines killing over 100 people; Iraqi insurgent attacks against Iraqi officials; an attack against a government building in Uzbekistan; and the bombing of an Aeroflot flight by Chechen suicide bombers in Russia. All of these examples were excluded, according to Mr. Brennan, because they did not meet the statutory definition for "international" terrorist attacks.[23]

Indeed, both Mr. Zelikow and Mr. Brennan further acknowledged that if they had applied a different methodology, the annual terrorism numbers for 2004 would have been even higher. As Mr. Zelikow stated, "the implications of the counting rule problems are mostly about things that are excluded," and a different methodology would have resulted in the data being "significantly enlarged."[24] Mr. Brennan agreed, stating that "many incidents are not viewed as terrorism and are not reflected in our numbers."[25]

The Relevancy of the Data

A final argument put forth by Administration officials is that the data on terrorist attacks is irrelevant to determining the actual threat. This was the argument used by Karen Aguilar, the Acting Coordinator for Counterterrorism at the State Department, during her briefing to congressional staff last Monday. She made this claim in an attempt to justify why the data was not included in the State Department's annual report on terrorism. She said that State Department officials charged with writing the report would not be adversely affected by failing to review the terrorism data, and she saw no link between the data and the Administration's counterterrorism policies.

Administration officials embraced this position at the press briefing on Wednesday. When asked what a huge increase in terrorist attacks meant for the Administration's war on terrorism, Mr. Zelikow stated, "the short answer is, it doesn't tell us anything about the war on terror."[26] He added: "The statistics are simply not valid for any inference about the progress, either good or bad, of American policy."[27]

These statements contrast sharply with the Department's approach last year, when officials believed the data showed an all-time low in terrorist attacks. In discussing the data for 2003, Administration officials argued that it was "clear evidence that we are prevailing in the fight" against terror and marked the "great progress" attributable to Administration policies.[28]

---

[23] U.S. Department of State, *supra* note 1.

[24] *Id.*

[25] *Id.*

[26] *Id.*

[27] *Id.*

[28] U.S. Department of State, *Statement of Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage on the Release of the 2003 "Patterns of Global Terrorism" Annual Report* (Apr. 29, 2003); Letter

These statements were subsequently withdrawn when the Department conceded that the 2003 seriously undercounted the number of terrorist attacks in the year.[29]

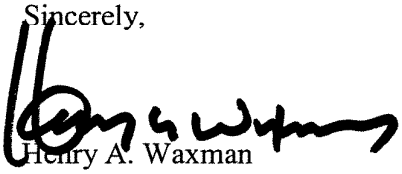
Administration officials took a similar approach last month. Defense Department officials touted terrorism statistics when they claimed a drop in terrorist attacks in Iraq. As reported by the *American Forces Press Service,* Defense Department officials disclosed that "there are between 40 and 60 incidents each day in the country, ... sharply down from the terrorist effort in the week of the Iraqi elections."[30]

Obviously, terrorism statistics are not relevant only when they show a drop in attacks. As the State Department Inspector General concluded, "The accuracy of the report is dependent on accurate and complete data."[31]

Conclusion

I urge you to address this matter without the equivocation that characterized the remarks of Mr. Zelikow and Mr. Brennan. The Administration is spending billions of dollars on the war against terrorism. Surely, the Administration knows whether terrorist attacks increased last year or not. Congress and the American public need to know the realities on the ground, even if they may be politically uncomfortable for the Administration.

Sincerely,



Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Minority Member

---

from Assistant Secretary of State for Legislative Affairs to Members of Congress (Apr. 29, 2004).

[29] U.S. Department of State, *Press Statement: Correction to Global Patterns of Terrorism Will be Issued* (June 10, 2004) (noting that a "May 17th letter from Congressman Waxman added impetus to our efforts").

[30] *Iraq Attacks Lowest Since March 2004, Officials Say,* American Forces Press Service (Mar. 31, 2005).

[31] Office of Inspector General, U.S. Department of State, *Review of the Department's Patterns of Global Terrorism — 2003 Report* (Sept. 2004) (SIO-S-04-18).