

Catching Terrorists in America

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*From Martin Luther King Jr.'s
Murder to the Boston Marathon
Bombing*

By

Christopher Hewitt

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PREFACE

Terrorists can be “caught” in one of three situations. They can be caught after having carried out a terrorist act or they can be caught while plotting to carry out a terrorist act. If they are foreign terrorists trying to enter the USA, they can be caught by border security. This book looks at these three situations in turn. The first chapters look at how terrorists have been identified and apprehended after carrying out a terrorist act. This analysis is based on police investigations of twenty-five important cases of terrorism from the late 1960s to the present. All cases fit the FBI’s definition of terrorism and resulted in one or more deaths. The first chapter describes the twenty-five cases in detail noting the nature of the terrorist act(s), and the perpetrators and victims involved. The difference between investigating regular homicides and terrorist homicides is pointed out. Hopefully, the descriptions will not only indicate the diverse nature of terrorism in America but serve as a useful aid to the reader. The reader, rather than trying to remember the details of each case, can refer back to them as needed when reading the later chapters.

In the second chapter, the question examined is the extent to which terrorist murders receive media and political attention. According to Richard Lundman, a professor at Ohio State University, “homicide detectives work aggressively to clear all homicides, regardless of the race, sex, or social class of the victims involved.” (Manning, 2013). While this may be true, as Simon (2002: 20-21) notes in his study of the Baltimore homicide squad, some cases because of political pressure receive much more attention than others. Terrorist murders - like serial murders - often receive significant media attention and often generate public fear. Part of the attention that a given murder receives is because groups have an interest in publicizing certain kinds of murders in order to make political propaganda. Jenkins in *Using Murder* describes how serial murder was “constructed” as a social problem. Feminists, for example, argued that serial murder was a “subset of male sexual aggression towards women” and a form of “gender terrorism” while black activists denounced what they saw as a neglect by police of serial murder cases in which black children were the victims (1994: 139, 142, 161-5).¹

Chapter 3 looks at the overall pattern of involvement by Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs); which LEAs were involved, and what roles they played in each case. The amount of effort put into each case is likely to affect the likelihood that the perpetrators will be caught. How much is this linked to the visibility of the case in the media and the amount of political attention it receives? In turn how much of this is affected by who carried out the crime and who were the victims? Since terrorist crimes frequently involve many different law enforcement agencies, what was the extent of - or lack of - cooperation and coordination between agencies?

In chapter 4, we turn to the question of what law enforcement agencies did in order to apprehend the terrorists. These actions include crime scene and forensics, questioning and interrogation, surveillance, appeals for public cooperation, routine policing; with each category examined separately. What clues and leads did these actions generate? Was there a typical sequence of events which led to the capture of the terrorists?

In chapter 5, the overall success of law enforcement in solving and capturing terrorists is measured in various ways. For example, what percentage of the perpetrators was captured, and how long did it take to capture them? What police tactics led to successful outcomes and what mistakes were made by law enforcement agencies? A separate analysis is made of the two cases which remain unsolved.

Chapter 6 examines what happens to the captured terrorists. What are they charged with and what evidence is brought against them? What defense strategies are used by the lawyers defending them? In some countries terrorists refuse to recognize the authority of the courts to try them as was standard practice in Northern Ireland with IRA members, who declared themselves to be political prisoners. This politicization of some trials took place in America but was usually prevented by the judges.

Chapter 7 considers an alternative strategy as to how police and security agencies might deal with terrorism, by arresting potential terrorists before they carry out their criminal actions. Such 'preventions' as they are termed have been increasingly used since 9/11, particularly by the FBI. The strategy is controversial with critics arguing that many of the terrorist plots are manufactured by police agents and informers.

In chapter 8, our findings as to the importance of public cooperation and routine policing and their implications for current policies are considered. Chapter 9 examines the dramatic changes in counter-terrorism policies

after 9/11, such as the creation of the Department of Homeland Security and the passing of the Patriot Act. The effectiveness of current policies and the extent to which they are responsible for the fact that no major terrorist attack has occurred on American soil is evaluated.

Notes

¹ Many black leaders saw the Atlanta child murders as being carried out by white racists and claimed that there were no black serial killers. Jenkins, however, notes that “the percentage of black serial killers is closely comparable to the proportion of blacks in the U.S. population as a whole” (1994: 169).

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The first part of this book is an analysis of how law enforcement agencies investigate terrorist cases in the United States. It is based on twenty-five important cases of terrorism from the late 1960s to the present and includes examples of terrorism by both domestic and foreign groups. In deciding whether a case should be classified as “terrorist,” the FBI’s definition of terrorism is adopted. The FBI defines terrorism as “the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives.” This definition focuses on the motivation behind the violent act and serves to distinguish terrorist crimes from other crimes.¹ A terrorist case was considered important if one or more innocent persons were killed in the terrorist act.

Relying upon law enforcement to deal with terrorism has been standard policy in America. Almost all outbreaks of terrorism in the United States eventually stopped because the terrorists were captured or killed by police (Hewitt, 2003:117). As Coll (2004:254) notes “prosecuting and jailing a terrorist as an ordinary murderer effectively dismissed his claims to political legitimacy. This seemed to many American national security thinkers a more rational reply to terrorists than waging a paramilitary war or treating [them] with the dignity accorded to enemy soldiers.” A Rand study, after analyzing more than 600 terrorist campaigns worldwide, found that almost half of them stopped after their leaders were arrested or killed, and argues that the struggle against terrorism is better waged by law enforcement agencies than by armies (Jones and Libicki, 2008).

The Cases in the Study

The study is based on a sample of twenty-five cases drawn from the author’s published chronology of American terrorism (Hewitt, 2006), and includes both terrorist groups and individual terrorists, the so-called “lone wolves.” The cases are diverse in terms of the ideological motivations of

the terrorists and include leftists and rightists as well as black militants and Islamists.

The first two cases took place during the late 1960s, and in both cases black political leaders were assassinated. On February 20, 1965, Malcolm X was shot to death in the Audubon ballroom in Washington Heights, New York, while speaking at a meeting of his Organization of Afro-American Unity. Malcolm X joined the Nation of Islam (NOI) while in prison and rapidly rose to become a major figure in the movement. The black Muslims, as they were known, were a racist group that held that whites were devils and advocated black separatism. However, in 1964, Malcolm X left the NOI after becoming exposed to mainstream Islam and because he had become disillusioned with the sexual misdeeds of Elijah Muhammad, its leader. A series of threats and attempts on his life had preceded the shooting, and Elijah Muhammad was on record as saying that "hypocrites like Malcolm should have his head cut off." The assassination was well-organized with one man creating a diversion at the back of the hall, while others opened fire with a sawn-off shotgun and revolvers. Three black Muslims were eventually charged and sentenced for the homicide although two were later cleared.

On 1968, James Earl Ray shot Martin Luther King Jr. while he was standing on the balcony of the Lorraine motel. King had come to Memphis to support the garbage workers, all of them black, in their strike for better working conditions. King was a civil rights leader, although his Gandhi-like principles of non-violence were being challenged by the Black Power movement. His death resulted in massive rioting by inner city blacks. In response to the assassination and the riots, the Civil Rights Act of 1968 was passed, which among other clauses gave federal prosecutors increased powers to go after civil rights murders. An international manhunt for King's assassin eventually led to the capture of James Earl Ray in London, England. He was apparently trying to get to white-ruled Rhodesia. The motives of Ray, a convicted criminal who had escaped from prison, are not altogether clear. Although he was certainly a racist with a hatred for blacks, he may have expected to get paid for King's murder. There were bounties on King's head, with an attorney from St. Louis offering \$50,000. However, the FBI found no evidence of any payment to Ray.

Many of the cases involved violence by white and black leftist revolutionaries, who saw themselves as fighting against the Vietnam War, racism, and imperialism. In 1970 a group of anti-war radicals bombed a military research center at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, killing a

graduate student, and wounding five other people. The local newspaper named them the New Year's Gang for a previous attack on that day. The group consisted of two brothers, Karl and Dwight Armstrong, and their friends, David Fine and Leo Burt. Previously they had firebombed two university properties without any casualties. In what must be the first terrorist attack of its kind in the United States, the group attempted to bomb an ordnance plant by dropping explosives from a plane, but the bombs failed to explode.

The Black Liberation Army (BLA) emerged after the Black Panthers split into two groups. The larger group, led by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, favored political action, while the group led by Eldridge Cleaver advocated armed struggle. The BLA was a militant faction of the Eldridge Cleaver group and described their goal as the liberation and self-determination of black people in the United States. They saw the police as an occupation force in the black ghettos and targeted police officers. On May 21, 1971, in their first communiqué the BLA claimed credit for murdering two New York City patrolmen, Joseph Piagentini and Waverly Jones that night and for wounding two other police officers two days earlier. The killers took their guns off the dead policemen as trophies. In the subsequent investigation, the guilt of one of them was clear when Piagentini's gun was found buried on his relative's property.

According to the Department of Justice, the BLA was responsible for over 70 violent incidents, in which at least 13 police officers were killed. The brutal murder of a Black Panther member loyal to the West Coast faction was also linked to them. They supported themselves by robbing banks, and several BLA members were identified by bank security cameras.

The Symbionese Liberation Army was a group of about a dozen white men and women and their leader, Donald DeFreeze, an escaped black convict. The SLA emerged from the prison visitation program of the Venceramos, and the Black Cultural Association, who saw black prisoners as a potential revolutionary force. The ideology of the SLA was a strange mix, with their seven-headed Cobra symbol standing for the harmonious coexistence of diverse races and groups and also representing the seven principles of Kwanzaa, the black nationalist festival.

In their first action in 1973, they shot and killed Marcus Foster, the superintendent of the Oakland school district, and wounded his assistant. In 1974, the group kidnapped Patricia Hearst, the daughter of the newspaper magnate, and demanded that the Hearst family give away \$2

million worth of food to the poor. After being locked in a closet for weeks, Patti Hearst joined the SLA, and as “Tania” took part in the robbery of the Hibernia bank in San Francisco.² After six members of the SLA were killed in a fire-fight with the LAPD, the remnants of the group with a few new recruits became the New World Liberation Front, who embarked on a bombing campaign. In the Crocker National bank robbery by the NWLF, a bank customer, Myrna Opsahl, was shot and killed.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the United Freedom Front bombed the South African Consulate and corporate targets, as well as a courthouse. At least 20 bombings were carried out by the UFF and nine bank robberies. Although the group attempted to avoid casualties by phoning in a warning, 22 people were injured in the bombing of the Suffolk County courthouse. The UFF was founded by two Vietnam Vets, Raymond Luc Levasseur and Tom Manning, and consisted of their family and friends. They avoided capture for over a decade, while living undercover in middle class suburbs. Escaping from a traffic stop, Manning shot and killed a New Jersey state trooper, Philip Lamonaco.

In 1981, the M19 Communist Organization robbed a Brinks truck in Rockland, N.J., killing three police and security guards. The M19 group included both ex-members of the BLA and ex-members of the white Weather Underground. The police investigation revealed that the group had been responsible for several previous robberies and attacks.

Black and white revolutionaries often cooperated against what they saw as their common enemy. However, black anger also manifested itself in racist attacks against whites. The Zebra killings by the Death Angels in San Francisco in 1973 involved attacks against randomly-selected whites. The Death Angels were Black Muslims who to gain their ‘wings’ received points for killing ‘white devils.’ To become a Death Angel, one had to kill nine white men, or five white women, or four white children. The first acknowledged attack took place in October 1973, when Quita Hague and her husband Richard were kidnapped by three men. Quita was hacked to death with a machete, while her husband was left for dead but survived. Subsequent attacks usually involved a black man walking up to a victim and shooting them. Since the same gun was used repeatedly police were able to link the attacks.

The Death Angels killed at least 16 victims, and wounded seven, and it was alleged that another 80 or more unsolved murders in the San Francisco area were committed by this group. The killings were known as

the Zebra attacks because this was the code given to them on the police radio. The murderous attacks created widespread panic throughout San Francisco with whites afraid to frequent public places. In response, police stopped and interrogated hundreds of black men, who were then given specially-printed “Zebra cards” that they could show to police if stopped again. This tactic was ruled unconstitutional by a federal judge.

Another example of black religious terrorism involved the Nation of Yahweh. This black Hebrew cult was led by Hulon Mitchell who took the name of Yahweh ben Yahweh (literally God, the son of God). Mitchell taught that all the prophets of the bible were black as was God himself. His business success and charitable activities earned him respect from local politicians. The Seventh of October 1990 was even named “Yahweh ben Yahweh Day” by the mayor of Miami.

A month later, however, Mitchell and several of his congregation were indicted for 14 murders and two attempted murders. The cult carried out a reign of terror in Miami in the 1980s. Mitchell sent his bodyguards to kill random whites, bringing back their ears as trophies, and ordered the murder of defectors from the group. After local youths in a black neighborhood mistreated cult members several houses were firebombed in retribution, and three black men were killed.

Right-wing terrorism usually involved attacks by lone individuals. Joseph Paul Franklin was a racist serial killer active from 1977 to 1980. Since the killings took place in seven states, law enforcement did not connect the shootings for some time. He confessed to killing eleven people and wounding many others. Franklin had a special hatred for mixed race couples, but he also shot black teenagers and Jews. Most of his victims were ordinary citizens but he wounded Vernon Jordan, a civil rights leader, and Larry Flynt, the publisher of Hustler magazine. Flynt was targeted because the magazine had published an issue with photographs of inter-racial sex. Franklin received six life sentences for his crimes and a death sentence for killing Gerald Gordon. Gordon died when Franklin fired at people leaving a synagogue service.

In 1989 mail bombs were sent to five locations, and killed Robert Vance, a federal judge at his home, and Robert Robinson, a black civil rights lawyer at his office. The following week a “Declaration of War” was sent to fourteen TV stations, claiming the courts were not acting fairly in racial cases. The letter was supposedly from “Americans for a Competent Federal Judicial System” although the bomber turned out to be Roy

Moody, a petty criminal with a history of fraudulent activities. Although racial motives were suspected at first, a stronger motive may have been Moody's antipathy towards Judge Vance, who presided over the court where Moody's appeal on a previous pipe bomb explosion was held.

However, the most serious right-wing threat came from the Order, or Silent Brotherhood, founded by Robert Matthews in 1983. Recruiting members from Aryan Nations and the National Alliance, Matthews' goal was to create a white separatist homeland in the Pacific Northwest. To fund the project, members engaged in counterfeiting dollar bills, and robbed banks and armored cars. In July 1984, they robbed a Brinks truck of \$3.6 million and distributed much of the money to white nationalist groups. Their terror campaign included bombing a synagogue and a pornographic cinema, and the assassination of Alan Berg, a Jewish talk-show host in Denver. Shortly before his death in a shootout with FBI agents, Matthews declared war against a "Jewish controlled, mongrelized society which is denying white Aryans their homeland." At least 75 individuals were charged with Order-related crimes.

On April 19th, 1995, a truck bomb exploded outside the Murrah Federal building in Oklahoma City leaving 168 people dead and 680 people injured. This was the deadliest terrorist attack that had occurred on American soil up till that time. The bomber, Timothy McVeigh, was motivated by hostility towards the federal government because of the assault on the Branch Davidian compound at Waco by the FBI and BATF. The bombing took place on the anniversary of the Waco massacre, and April 19th was also the anniversary of the battle of Lexington and Concord during the war of independence. McVeigh was also influenced by the Turner Diaries, written by William Pierce, a neo-Nazi, and pages of the Turner Diaries were found in McVeigh's car. Public horror at the bombing, in which several children were killed, led to the passage of the Anti-terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act in 1996 and McVeigh was executed on June 11, 2001. Some have argued that McVeigh was not a lone wolf but was linked to right wing groups such as the Aryan Republican Army or the CSA.

Eric Rudolph bombed the Olympic Park in Atlanta in 1996, and a lesbian bar and two abortion clinics in 1997. One woman was killed in the Olympic Park bombing and a security guard was killed in the abortion clinic bombing. In addition, more than 100 people were injured in the bombings. It is claimed that Rudolph was an adherent of Christian Identity, a white racist sect but he has denied this.

Islamist terrorism has been varied in both its targets and its tactics. In 1980, an Iranian exile, Ali Akbar Tabatabai, who was an outspoken opponent of the new Islamic regime, was assassinated at his home by Daoud Salahuddin, posing as a mailman. Salahuddin, a black American convert to Islam, received \$5,000 for the killing from Iran and escaped to that country. In January 1993, a young Pakistani, Mir Amal Kansi, fired an AK-47 assault rifle at drivers waiting to enter CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, killing two persons and injuring three others. He later claimed that he was motivated by anger at US policy in the Middle East and the sufferings of the Palestinians. A month later a group of Islamic extremists placed a truck bomb in a garage below the north tower of the World Trade Center. The plan was that the north tower would fall onto the south tower collapsing them both with a massive loss of life. Although this did not happen the explosion killed six people and injured over a thousand. The plot was organized by Ramzi Yousef, the nephew of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the mastermind behind the 9/11 attack.

In 1994, Rashid Baz, a Lebanese immigrant, fired at a van carrying Hasidic students, killing Ari Halberstam and wounding three others. Initially the shooting was not characterized as a terrorist incident, but it appears that Baz wanted to take revenge for the massacre of Palestinians in a mosque at Hebron by a Jewish settler four days earlier. The most recent terrorist attack inspired by Islamist extremism which is examined is the Boston Marathon bombing of April 15, 2013 carried out by two brothers of Chechen ethnicity. The explosion killed three and injured 264.

The remaining cases are very diverse. Puerto Rican "*Independistas*" wanting independence from the United States resorted to violence in the 1950s and again after 1969. The two main organizations; the Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN), and the Macheteros were both founded by the same man, Filiberto Ojeda Rios so they are treated as a single case. The FALN were most active on the US mainland and bombed banks and the headquarters of corporations with economic interests in Puerto Rico. The Macheteros (also known as the ERB) targeted American military and police on the island. Their most deadly attack was the ambush of a bus carrying US sailors in which they killed two and wounded ten.

In 1976, Chilean political exile, Orlando Letelier, and his assistant Ronni Moffitt were killed when his car blew up in Washington DC. Letelier was a leading opponent of Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet, and it was assumed that his murder had been carried out by agents of the regime. This was a rare case of state-sponsored terrorism carried out in the United

States capital by a supposed ally. The investigation eventually identified Michael Townley, an agent of the Chilean secret police, as the mastermind behind the plot, although the remote-controlled bomb was placed and triggered by a gang of Cubans. US government pressure led to Townley being extradited from Chile to America, where he confessed to the crime.

Beginning in 1978, a series of bombings were carried out by an unknown individual. The case was named Unabom by the FBI because the bombs were usually mailed to or left at universities. Other bombs were sent to a computer store, and in one instance the bomb exploded on a plane. The first death occurred in 1985. Finally, after three people had been killed and 23 injured, the Unabomber offered to stop his terrorist activities if his manifesto "Industrial Society and its Future" - a polemic against modern society and technology - was published. With the publication of the manifesto the Unabomber was revealed to be Theodore Kaczinski.

In 1998, Dr. Barnett Slepian was murdered by James Kopp, an anti-abortion extremist. Kopp was also a suspect in three other shootings in Canada and New England. In two acts of terrorism, it is uncertain who was responsible. In the LaGuardia airport bombing of 1975, a bomb in a locker killed 11 people and wounded 75. No group claimed responsibility and the case remains unsolved. In 2001 a few days after the 9/11 attacks, letters containing anthrax spores were mailed to several news media offices and two senators, killing five people and infecting 17 others. Suspicion first centered on Stephen Hatfill, a former biodefense researcher at the Army biodefense laboratory at Fort Detrick, Maryland. Hatfill filed a lawsuit against the FBI and the Justice Department, which was settled for \$4.6 million. Later the FBI claimed that Bruce Ivins, a scientist who also worked at Fort Detrick, was responsible. However, Ivins committed suicide before being tried and doubts exist as to the largely circumstantial evidence against him.

Since the aim of the study is to examine what law enforcement agencies did, and what actions were successful in identifying and capturing the terrorists those cases have been excluded in which the perpetrators were themselves killed during the incident, surrendered to police shortly after committing their actions, or were caught after a hot pursuit. For example, Mark Essex, a member of the Republic of New Africa, who was shot by police after killing six whites in a New Orleans motel is excluded using the first of these criteria. Since they surrendered to police immediately after murdering two anti-abortionists, Paul Hill and Michael Griffin are excluded under the second criterion. The assassin of Meir Kahane, El

Sayyid Nosair, is an example of the third criterion for exclusion. He fled the murder scene, commandeering a taxicab at gunpoint, but the taxicab was unable to move due to heavy traffic and Nosair was captured almost immediately.

The primary data sources used are open source materials; books, articles and other media resources. Since terrorist murders often have unusual features, a very high percentage of the cases have been written about. In most instances one or more books has been published on the case. These accounts typically provide detailed accounts of the police investigation. A coding system was developed for examining what law enforcement agencies (LEAs) had done, which agencies were involved, how much effort was expended, and what clues and leads were produced because of each type of LEA action.³

Terrorist homicides compared to other homicides

In the FBI Report on Crime in the United States (2005) homicides are classified using two criteria; the relation between victim and offender, and the circumstances of the murder. Although the resulting table lists 17 relationships and 22 circumstances, as well as an unknown category for each, the great majority of homicides fall into one of two general types. The first type involves people who are often social intimates – family members or friends – and the murders usually involve romantic and sexual jealousies, arguments and brawls, often while under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Marvin Wolfgang in his classic study of homicides in Philadelphia classified them according to motive and found the most common type to involve an “altercation of relatively trivial origin.” The second type of killings are a result of pecuniary-motivated crimes (robberies, burglaries, theft, drug-dealing and prostitution), and in these cases the victims and offenders are typically strangers or casual acquaintances. In 2005, out of a total of 14,860 homicides, 6,203 (or 41.7 percent) appear to be of the first type, while 2,594 (or 17.5 percent) are of the second type. Of the remaining homicides, the circumstances are listed as “unknown” in 5,611 cases. Presumably if more information were to become available a large proportion of the unknown cases would be classified into one of the two types.⁴

From the point of view of the criminal investigation process, the two types present very different problems, and this is reflected in their different clearance rates. The first type has the highest clearance rate with only 19.5 percent unsolved, while for the pecuniary-related homicides the unsolved

proportion is 43.3 percent. Within this latter category, a majority of gang-related killings (52.8 percent) is unsolved. As might be expected those homicides where the circumstances were unknown had the highest rate of unsolved cases (74 percent). The highly-regarded account of the work of the Baltimore homicide detective squad (Simon, 2002) suggests the reasons behind these statistical disparities. Simon points to the problems faced by the detectives in “a drug killing with no known witnesses, no specific motives and no suspects” and contrasts this with “domestic murders witnessed by half a dozen family members.” (2002: 6,37). He later notes that:

“The vocabulary of the homicide unit recognizes two distinct categories of homicides: whodunits and dunkers. Whodunits are genuine mysteries; dunkers are cases accompanied by ample evidence and an obvious suspect. Whodunits are best typified by crime scenes where a detective is called to some godforsaken back alley to find a body and little more. Dunkers are best typified by scenes in which the detective steps over the body to meet the unrepentant husband, who has not bothered to change his bloodied clothes and requires little prompting to admit that he stabbed the bitch.” (Simon 2002:41)

There are obviously some additional types of homicides which appear to be linked to various psychopathologies of the perpetrators. Although these murders receive extensive media attention they constitute only a small proportion of the total. Jenkins (1994: 46) after examining the matter concludes that “mass, spree, and serial murders combined represent at most 2 percent of all American homicides.” Normally, terrorist murders represent an even smaller fraction but like serial murders present unique problems for law enforcement. As with serial murders, there is no relationship between the perpetrators and their victims, and since the terrorists rarely have criminal backgrounds, the usual police informants are unlikely to be of any help in identifying suspects.

Table 1.1: Clearance Rates and Relationship between Victim and Offender by type of Homicide (2005)

Homicide type (number)	% Unsolved	Relationship in solved cases		
		Family/ Friend	Acquaintance	Stranger
Expressive (6203)	19.5	44.3	38.3	17.3
Pecuniary (1656)	40.7	8.1	43.9	48.0
Gang-related (850)	52.8	1.2	42.1	56.6
Unknown (5611)	74.0	19.2	42.8	28.0

Labeling the Cases

For labeling the twenty-five cases in the tables an abbreviated case name is used. The FBI gives all their cases a codeword, such as UNABOM. These are usually shortened semi-acronyms, so that UNABOM is derived from University/Airplane/ Bomber referring to the first two incidents attributed to the Unabomber. Similarly, the Army Math bombing at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin was labeled WISBOM and the Oklahoma City bombing OKBOM by the FBI. The racist killings of whites by black Muslims in Los Angeles became known as the ZEBRA killings by the LAPD. A similar system is used for the tables in the following chapters, with the aim of having no more than seven letters for each case. Fortunately, most terrorist groups go in for three or four-letter acronyms, Symbionese Liberation army (SLA), United Freedom Front (UFF), Black Liberation Army (BLA), the Puerto Rican FALN, the May 19 Communist Organization (M19CO), the rightwing ORDER and the YAHWEH cult.

For other cases, the choice is between using the victim's name, the name of the terrorist, or the name of the target site. If the victim is well-known, their name is used hence the assassinations of Malcolm X (MALCX), Martin Luther King (MLK), Orlando Letelier (LETEL), Ali Tabatabai (TABATAB), and Barnett SLEPIAN. With lone terrorists responsible for multiple attacks, such as serial racist killer Joseph Paul Franklin (JPF) or Eric RUDOLPH, the name of the terrorist is used. The CIA shootings, the World Trade Center bombing of 1993 (WTC93), the LaGuardia bombing (LAGUARD) and the Boston marathon bombing (BOSTON) are site labels. In two cases with multiple victims, the label refers to the method used by the terrorist, so the ANTHRAX letters sent by an unknown person, and Roy Moody, who killed his victims by sending bombs through the mail is MAILBOM. The Brooklyn Bridge shooting in which Rashid Baz killed Ari Halberstam is somewhat arbitrarily labeled BAZ.

Notes

¹ One of the most difficult problems in compiling a list of terrorist cases is distinguishing between genuine ideological motives and ordinary criminal or psychopathological behavior among lone wolves and small groups. I have excluded several cases as essentially criminal. For example, the anti-government militia group FEAR described by Labi (2014), (The acronym stood for "Forever Enduring Always Ready") appears to have been a collection of misfits with significant psychological problems rather than a "militia."

² All the SLA members took new revolutionary names. DeFreeze became Cinque (the leader of a slave ship revolt), while Tania was the name of Che Guevara's female companion in Bolivia.

³ In addition to one or more books on each case, I also used the New York Times Index and the internet for additional material. The bibliography includes books which were used in the research even if not cited in the text

⁴ Jenkins (1994: 61-2) points out that the number in the "unknown" category is unrealistically high and reflects the fact that at the time of completing the required paperwork the police did not know either who was the offender or the circumstances. "Weeks or months later, the situation might well change, and the correct procedure would be for the police department to submit a new report." He notes, however, that many police officers "might well feel that they have more important things to do."

CHAPTER TWO

THE CASE PROFILE

Some criminal cases receive a great deal of political and media attention, while others are virtually ignored. Such cases are likely to receive greater effort by law enforcement agencies and are perhaps more likely to be solved and solved quickly. This is true in the case of ordinary homicide cases as Simon (2002) in his study of Baltimore homicide investigations points out.¹ It is likely that a similar pattern can be observed in our sample of terrorist cases.

To characterize the case profile, two things will be examined; involvement by politicians and the amount of coverage given to the case by the media. To assess the amount of political attention each case received, I examined which politicians are reported as being involved, and what they did. Many of the cases show a high degree of political salience, with national, state, and local politicians playing a part in framing the issue. Presidents are involved in a surprising number of the cases. The cases can be classified as follows:

Political involvement in the cases

The highest attention cases are ones in which the president and his administration are actively involved; issue statements, receive briefings, initiate policy changes and make symbolic gestures. The Anthrax Letters case was the most politicized case in the sample. The investigation was “closely tracked by the Bush White House and monitored through daily phone conferences coordinated by the National Security Council” (Thompson, 2003:11). There were statements from Bush administration officials urging the public not to panic, and TV appearances by the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Vice-President, the Attorney General, and the Director of Homeland Security. The governors of New Jersey and Florida and the Mayor of New York also gave several press conferences. Efforts were made to increase the supply of Cipro, the preferred antibiotic for anthrax.

President Johnson reacted quickly to the murder of Martin Luther King Jr. by dispatching Attorney General Clark to Memphis to take charge of the FBI's investigation. The president cancelled a planned trip to Hawaii to confer with military leaders on the Vietnam War. He sent his condolences to King's widow and his parents and declared the next Sunday a day of national mourning. "All federal flags in the land would fly at half-staff – the first time in American history that a private citizen would be so honored in death." (Sides, 2010: 206). As rioting broke out across the nation, the president appealed for restraint but to no avail.² Many other national politicians praised King including Senator Robert Kennedy whose speech in Indianapolis was credited with preventing a riot in that city. However, Southern politicians such as Lester Maddox and Senator Strom Thurmond made unfavorable comments about King's civil rights activities implying that he got what he deserved.³

Another striking example of such high-level political involvement followed the murder of Dr. Barnett Slepian by an anti-abortion extremist. President Clinton issued a statement which said that he was "outraged by the murder of Dr. Barnett Slepian in his home last night in Amherst, New York. The Department of Justice is working with state and local authorities to find the person or persons responsible and bring them to justice." A letter from the Clintons was read at Slepian's funeral, and a few weeks later they visited his widow at her home. The killing also became an issue in New York state politics, with the Democratic candidates for Senate and Attorney General using it against their Republican opponents. Governor Pataki of New York condemned it as a "heinous act of terror" and introduced legislation to protect abortion clinics from violence.

Following the Oklahoma City bombing President Clinton held a press conference that afternoon and later made a speech to the nation in which he declared the bombing "an attack on innocent children and defenseless citizens ... an act of cowardice." Flags on government buildings were flown at half mast for the next 30 days. Clinton later flew to Oklahoma City and attended the memorial service for the victims. The bombing led to the passage of the Anti-terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act in 1996, and to greatly increased security at federal buildings throughout the country.

The LaGuardia bombing and the Letelier Assassination were two other cases which resulted in a significant political response. After the LaGuardia bombing, President Ford met with airport and government

officials and set up a task force to recommend ways to improve airport security. Not only the president but the mayor of New York and other local politicians called for action. New York Congressional representatives called for a review of the visa program. Immediately following the Letelier assassination, a protest was held with two senators and four congressmen participating in the demonstration. President Carter told the Chilean ambassador that he expected full cooperation by Chile with the investigation, and high-level negotiations between the US and Chile resulted in the handing over of one of the main suspects.

In other cases, presidential involvement was limited to verbal condemnation. President Nixon used the bombing of the Army Math Building to condemn anti-war radicals and “the cancerous disease of terrorism,” arguing that “what corrodes a society even more deeply than violence is the acceptance of violence, the condoning of terror.” He later assailed the murder of two New York policemen by the BLA. The racist attacks by Joseph Paul Franklin were ignored until he shot and wounded Vernon Jordan, the head of the National Urban League. Following this incident President Carter promptly characterized the shooting as an attempted assassination of a black leader. After mail bombs killed a federal judge and an NAACP official, President Bush said in a televised speech: “I am appalled at the recent mail bombings across the country. Every one of us must confront and condemn racism, anti-Semitism, bigotry and hate. Not next week, not tomorrow, but right now.” President Clinton denounced the bombing of the Olympic Park as “an evil act of terror aimed at innocent people...an act of cowardice.” President Obama’s response to the Boston Marathon bombing included all the now standard symbolic gestures. He spoke to the nation a few hours after the attack and again the day after. The president declared that “any time bombs are used to attack innocent civilians, it is an act of terror,” and promised that those responsible “will feel the full weight of justice.” Obama also ordered flags to be flown at half staff on all federal buildings, as well as addressing an inter-faith service in Boston Cathedral to honor the victims.

In two cases, the World Trade Center bombing, and the shooting outside the CIA headquarters, there was little or no public comment on the cases by federal politicians, and little overt government activity reported in the media. However, behind the scenes, the cases received considerable attention from policymakers. “The CIA’s Counterterrorist Center immediately established a seven-day, twenty-four-hour task force to collect intelligence about the World Trade Center bombing. It set up a similar task force to hunt for Mir Amal Kasi.” (Coll 2004: 251). Richard

Clarke, the counterterrorism czar under both Clinton and Bush, describes in his book *Against All Enemies* how, for years, various schemes had been tried to track and capture Mir Amal Kansi and Ramzi Yousef, (Clarke 1984). There was also considerable involvement by state and local politicians after the World Trade Center bombing in 1993 with the governors of New York and New Jersey calling for calm, and Mayor Dinkins flying back from a conference to meet with police.

In five cases, there is only local political involvement, usually consisting of statements by governors, mayors, or local Congressional representatives. Governor Cuomo and Mayor Giuliani deplored the attack by Rashid Baz in which a Hasidic student was killed and three others wounded.⁴ Although President Nixon and Attorney General Mitchell held meetings on police killings by black militants, most political activity took place on the local level. The attack on a San Francisco police station by BLA militants was condemned by Governor Reagan and a reward was offered by Mayor Alioto for information. In New York, Mayor Lindsay took a liberal position declaring that the killing of two policemen showed the need for gun control. He later criticized the police for talking of a “guerrilla campaign” by black militants. Mayor Alioto of San Francisco closely supervised the investigation into the Zebra murders and held three press conferences attempting to calm public fears. Governor Reagan offered a reward for information on the murder of Marcus Foster by the Symbionese Liberation Army. The murder of Malcolm X provoked only one comment, by a local politician. The Manhattan Borough President said that his death gives “New Yorkers a chance to engage in constructive channels of activity” – a somewhat ambiguous remark. The attacks by the Puerto Rican terrorist group FALN provoked intermittent attention from New York politicians, generally following a deadly attack such as the Fraunces Tavern bombing, which Mayor Beame denounced as a senseless act of terror. Another deadly FALN bombing in 1977 provoked Beame to call for the death penalty for terrorists.⁵ The FALN campaign was condemned by Representative Herman Badillo, a popular politician of Puerto Rican descent.⁶

In some cases, there is no reported involvement by either national or local politicians. This includes the Unabomber, Joseph Paul Franklin, United Freedom Front, Brinks robbery, the Order, Yahweh, and Tabatabai cases.⁷ What explains this variation in politicians’ involvement?

There does not appear to be a single simple principle which explains the amount of political attention that each case received. Presumably, politicians are responding to the degree of public concern evoked by the terrorist act. Public opinion poll data shows that after a major terrorist incident there is an increase in the percentage saying that they are worried that they, or someone in their family, will be the victim of a terrorist attack. A study by Lewis (2000) found that after the Oklahoma City bombing the percentage expressing such fears reached 42 percent then declined. Similar increases occurred after the 911 attacks (58 percent) and the anthrax letters (59 percent). Lewis concluded that the public has a “realistic assessment” of the dangers of terrorism.

There is certainly evidence to suggest that public concern over terrorism is selective; affected both by where the attacks are located, and by who the victims are. During the Washington sniper attacks of 2002, people living in the Washington metropolitan area were gripped by fear, while nearby communities were unaffected.⁸ Similarly, during the Zebra killings in San Francisco, when random whites were being murdered by black cult members and consequently avoided public places, blacks moved about without fear. To understand the extent to which the different attacks were likely to produce fear among the public, a focus group was used.⁹ In their discussion, it became clear that fear of becoming a victim of a terrorist attack was related to two factors; the perceived likelihood that such an attack would occur, and the risk that someone like them would become a victim. Following the discussion, the eleven participants were asked the question: “If this kind of terrorist incident occurred in your community, how worried would you be that you or someone in your family would be a victim?” Then for each of the twenty cases, they checked one of four responses. (Very worried; Somewhat worried; Not too worried; Not worried at all). The results are shown in table 2.1.

Without placing too much reliance on a small sample, certain conclusions can be drawn from these results. The public is most likely to be concerned about terrorism if the victims of an attack are people like themselves, randomly selected. On the other hand, if the victims are singled out because of their position and who they are, then there will be little public concern.

Table 2.1: Very or Somewhat worried that they or someone in their family would be a victim of a similar incident (%)

Case	Percentage worried
ZEBRA	18
RUDOLPH	12
WTC93	10
LAGUARD	9
UNABOM	9
ANTHRAX	8
YAHWEH	6
BAZ	5
JPF	4
ORDER	4
SLEPIAN	4
CIA	4
BLA	4
WISBOM	4
SLA	0
LETEL	0
UFF	0
TABATAB	0
MAILBOM	0
M19CO	0

Of the high attention cases, the LaGuardia and World Trade Center bombings were spectacular mass casualty events. The anthrax letters case, although not claiming as many lives, was especially frightening because nobody knew exactly how deadly anthrax was or how easily it could spread. The perceived threat to the public in all these three cases was such that a high-level political response was appropriate and predictable. Racially-motivated terrorism against whites in San Francisco and anti-Semitic attacks in New York produced public concern locally and a response by local politicians.

The political salience of terrorist attacks in which the victims are not ordinary members of the public must be explained in other ways. Although not evoking much public concern, attacks on government officials, important national or international political figures, and police are necessarily of concern to governments and politicians. Therefore, when a