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FRANCE

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Terrorism is not a new feature in French society: in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, its most spectacular outrages included Serbian terrorists killing a French president, the assassination of a Russian Czar during a visit to Paris, and the throwing of a bomb in the National Assembly's chamber by a French anarchist. The features of the more recent upsurge of terrorism in France were assembled then, with a combination of importation on French soil of foreign conflicts and a domestically grown ideological terrorism, the latter being less resilient than the former.

During both periods, the French state had to contend with the contrasting requirements of democratic justice and efficiency, and this conflict led to a process of trial and error, with a significant measure of success being achieved in the end. In this process, and as is inevitable in a democracy, political differences emerged, reflected in successive and sometimes contradictory government attitudes. Even though France's experience is hardly unique in this respect, its long contention with modern terrorism since the mid-seventies can give an indication of some of the problems that other countries confronted with the same scourge will encounter, and the story of the successes and failures of French policy might be of interest to its partners in this difficult and inevitably lengthy process. The so-called riots that affected parts of France in November 2005 (and which in fact for the main part were car arsons) cannot be identified with terrorism. This is why they will not be mentioned in this chapter. They fit in the category of "civil unrest," not terrorism properly understood.

After describing the magnitude and variety of the threats encountered by French society and French leaders for the past thirty years, this chapter outlines the main features of French counterterrorism policies. Cooperation between the French and American authorities on fighting terrorism has been exemplary, as has been described in a number of recent articles. A discrete international counterterrorism intelligence center codenamed "Alliance Base" was set up in Paris by the CIA and French intelligence in 2002 and has remained functioning even at the height of the French-American crisis over Iraq in 2003.

Terrorism in France: Its Main Features and Its Evolution Since the 1970s

The Most Significant Terrorist Attacks in France Since the 1970s

The Rise of Terrorism in the 1970s

In the 1950s and 1960s, mainland France experienced a wave of terrorism that was closely linked to the war in Algeria. The Algerian independence movement made wide use of terrorism against Frenchmen and Algerians alike from 1954 to 1962. *L'Organisation armée secrète* (OAS), a French anti-independence group with strong links to the French population in Algeria and some elements in the French armed forces, carried out its most famous operation at Petit Clamart near Paris on July 22, 1962, when it came close to killing General Charles de Gaulle. A lull of nearly a decade and a half followed. From 1974–75 onward terrorism committed by separatist movements, international networks, and ideological groups emerged in France. In 1976, a total of 480 attacks were carried out while in 1979, more than 605 attacks were blamed on foreign organizations (e.g., Fils du sud Liban, PLO), extremists, left and right wing (e.g., Honneur de la police), and separatist movements. Separatist groups began to make their mark in 1969. The first to appear was the Liberation Front of Brittany (FLB), which deprived Brittany and Normandy of television in 1974 and 1976 by blowing up several television transmitters, and partially destroyed the Hall of Mirrors at the Château de Versailles in 1978. The FLB limited itself, however, to material damage of symbols of the so-called French colonial state. Taken into custody at the beginning of the 1980s, the members of this group ceased all activity at this time. In 1973, the Marxist-Leninist Basque group of Iparretarak commenced operations. Less violent than the Euzkadi Ta Azkatasuna (ETA), the Basque Freedom Party and main Basque terrorist grouping, its target was state property alone. Finally, the Corsicans in the form of the National Liberation Front of Corsica (FLNC) emerged in 1976, carrying out bombings of public and private sites, arson, and political assassinations. Attacks in 1974 and 1975

blamed on the famous international terrorist Carlos, who was linked to the Palestinian cause, marked the arrival of international terrorism on French soil. The worst of this form of terrorism would not come until the following decade, still the bloodiest and most destructive one in the history of France's experience of terrorism.

Bloodshed in the 1980s

This decade opened with the attack of Rue Copernic in Paris, which killed four and