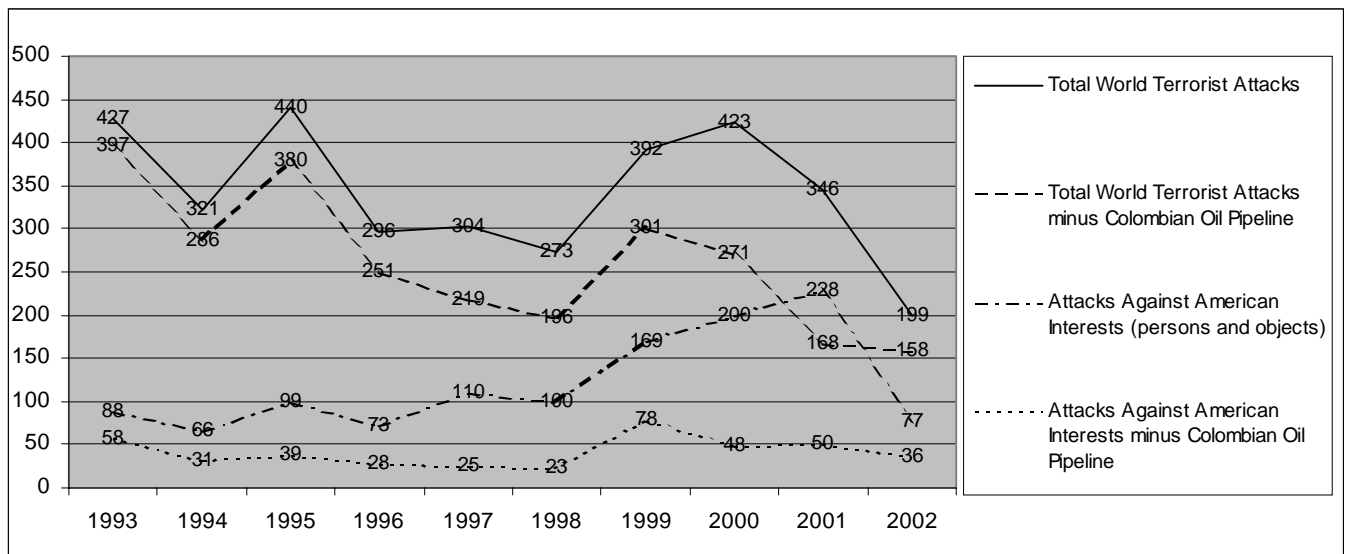


# Trends in the Incidence of International Terror Attacks on Americans After the Cold War

Charles Knight and Melissa Murphy  
 Project on Defense Alternatives *Briefing Memo #29*  
 26 June 2003

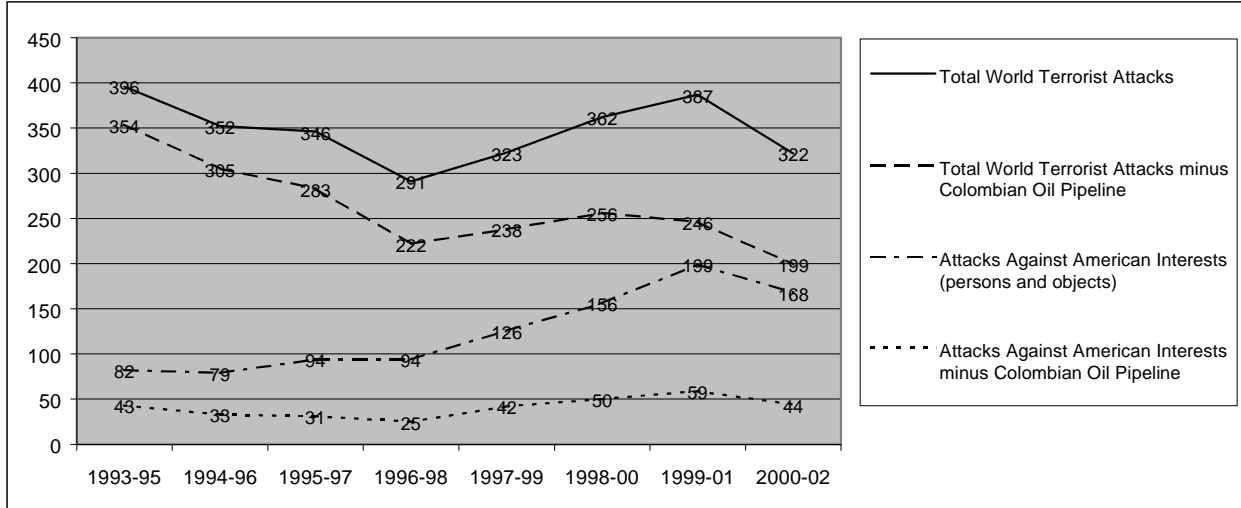
This briefing memo addresses trends in the incidence of terror in the post-Cold War period by comparing the number of international terror attacks on American interests<sup>1</sup> with the overall number of terror attacks worldwide. We present the data year by year and as three year moving averages. We use data from the U.S. Department of State<sup>2</sup> which is frequently cited as authoritative and usefully summarizes annual statistics.

## World Terrorist Attacks and Attacks Against American Interests with and without Attacks on the Colombian Oil Pipeline 1993-2002



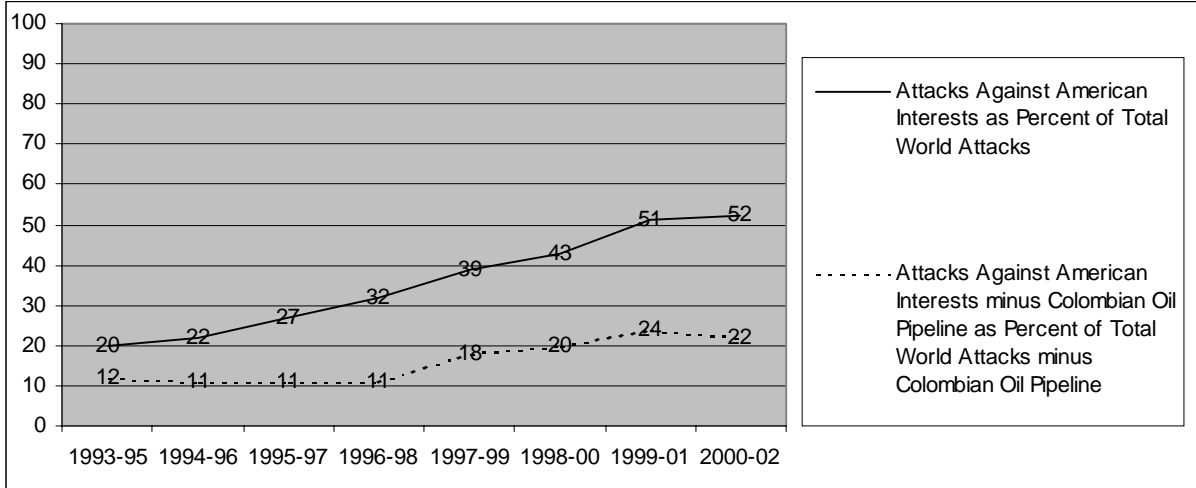
Year	Total World Terrorist Attacks	Total World Terrorist Attacks minus Colombian Oil Pipeline	Attacks Against American Interests (persons and objects)	Attacks Against American Interests minus Colombian Oil Pipeline
1993	427	397	88	58
1994	321	286	66	31
1995	440	380	99	39
1996	296	251	73	28
1997	304	249	110	25
1998	273	196	100	23
1999	392	301	169	78
2000	423	271	200	48
2001	346	168	228	50
2002	199	158	77	36

**World Terrorist Attacks and Attacks Against American Interests  
with and without Attacks on the Colombian Oil Pipeline  
3-year moving average  
1995-2002**



Year	Total World Terrorist Attacks	Total World Terrorist Attacks minus Colombian Oil Pipeline	Attacks Against American Interests (persons and objects)	Attacks Against American Interests minus Colombian Oil Pipeline
1993-95	396	354	82	43
1994-96	352	305	79	33
1995-97	346	283	94	31
1996-98	291	222	94	25
1997-99	323	238	126	42
1998-00	362	256	156	50
1999-01	387	246	199	59
2000-02	322	199	168	44

**Attacks Against American Interests as a Percentage of World Terrorist Attacks  
with and without Attacks on the Colombian Oil Pipeline  
3-year moving average  
1995-2002**



Year	Attacks Against American Interests as Percent of Total World Attacks	Attacks Against American Interests minus Colombian Oil Pipeline as Percent of Total World Attacks minus Colombian Oil Pipeline
1993-95	20	12
1994-96	22	11
1995-97	27	11
1996-98	32	11
1997-99	39	18
1998-00	43	20
1999-01	51	24
2000-02	52	22

---

<sup>1</sup> We use the phrase "American interests" as a label of convenience to encompass the wide variety of types of attacks that are included in the data source (U.S. Department of State reports.) "Interests", in the sense we use it, refers to a limited set: specifically those objects of attack included in Department of State statistics. It should be noted that the use of "interests" in this sense is significantly different from the way diplomats and international relations scholars usually talk about American interests.

<sup>2</sup> *Patterns of Global Terrorism*, annual 1993 - 2002, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, URL: <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/pgtrpt/> .

Among the types of attacks that are counted as "terrorist" by the Department of State are attacks on civilians (including hostage takings and kidnappings), assassinations, attacks on off-duty or unarmed military personnel, and attacks on objects of value to the U.S. and its commercial interests such as pipelines. The aggregation of so many different types of acts into one data set may obscure important differences, especially differences pertaining to the purposes and objectives of the attackers.

In order to explore what lies below the surface of the statistics we disaggregated and distributed to several sub-categories the 140 incidents listed in the *Chronology of Significant Terrorist Incidents, 2002*, itself a selection of the 199 total terrorist incidents reported in 2002. It should be noted that about half of the 59 incidents *not* included in the *Chronology* were sabotage attacks on the Colombian oil pipeline.

We found that 80% of the incidents in the *Chronology* appeared to be principally about a civil or intra-state conflict with their reported international aspects only coincidental. A majority of these involved the Kashmiri rebellion against Indian rule and the Palestinian rebellion against Israeli occupation. A table presenting our assignment of incidents to various categories follows. Because of either overlapping categories or ambiguous incident descriptions, some incidents have been assigned to two or more categories -- consequently percentages add up to more than 100%.

***Chronology of Significant Terrorist Incidents, 2002 -- disaggregated and distributed***

	Number of incidents	Percentage
Incidents in <i>Chronology</i>	140	100
Incidents with five or more deaths	28	20
In context of civil or intrastate conflict	112	80
Bombings or shootings targeting civilians	74	53
Bombings or shootings targeting officials	46	33
Kidnappings or hostage takings	9	6
Sabotage	6	4

---

Project on Defense Alternatives  
P.O. Box 398105  
Cambridge, MA 02139  
617.547.4474