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Publisher's Note

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The U.S. campaign against global international terrorism may not end for an extended period of time, if ever. Victory will not be achieved in the traditional sense. There are too many types of terrorist players, too many vulnerabilities within open and free societies, and accessible weapons and explosives technologies (both low and high tech), to assume that low level and catastrophic acts of terrorism will not occur.

Hovering above these existential concerns is the potential for international terrorists to acquire nuclear fissile material, nuclear technology, and possession of a nuclear weapon. Thus, prevention which is based on actionable intelligence is the prime national security objective. Who is the terrorist enemy, what motivates them, and why is this a daunting array of problems for the U.S. and international counter-terrorism communities?

Intelligence acquisition is based on citizens' tips, cooperation among governments, and state intelligence agencies' cooperation which, at best, is uneven. Terrorists' motivations are based on religion, ethnicity, nationalism, politics, and pathology. There are lone wolves, loosely organized cells, insurgencies, and Al Qaeda. Another layer of concern involves finance, communication networks, and societal issues such as poverty. The role of intelligence is to acquire raw information which is synthesized and disseminated to national security operators.

The confluence of these widely varying components is the location—the field operation venue for terrorism activities. Terrorism planning and operations require insulation from interdiction. The terrorist planning and training operations need not be located in isolated places. Osama bin Laden lived for the past five years in the shadow of a Pakistan military installation. Terrorist operations thrive in areas where government interdiction is least likely to occur and where governments tend to be weak.

A good description of terrorism-friendly places is “Black Spots,” which are locations largely untouched by government control. The obvious states where Black Spots exist are Yemen, Somalia, and Mauritania. There are an estimated 600 Black Spots worldwide, and probably more. The fundamental requirement for intelligence gathering is to know where to look for terrorist operations, and, subsequently, acquire fine-focused information regarding the players, their means of communication, and how they operate.

The Global Black Spots—Mapping Global Insecurity (GBS-MGI) Program at Syracuse University since the fall of 2007 has been identifying locations and doing analyses of how Black Spots operate, their output, and predicting their future direction through a series of state case studies. We share with our readers the scope and importance of this unique program.

The theme of this issue of the *National Strategy Forum Review* is an analysis of “Black Spots”—ungoverned spaces that are the breeding grounds and operational centers for terrorism and transnational crime.

The U.S. has pledged \$20 billion for political stability in North Africa in the wake of recent dramatic regime changes in Tunisia and elsewhere in Africa. The international community has pledged \$20 billion for this purpose. We should be dubious about pledges being converted into money and whether a large expenditure that is not accompanied by clear strategic objectives and detailed plans for implementation will be effective.

The U.S. budget deficit has created the new constraint of affordability. The days of profligacy are over. Yet, the U.S. pledge of \$20 billion for North Africa suggests several U.S. policy concerns: is \$20 billion for North Africa affordable; will this money achieve its goal; what is the clearly defined strategic objective; and how will the money be spent?

The pool of available U.S. money for international political stability is finite. This requires a policy determination regarding priorities how funds will be specifically allocated. North Africa is an urgent international problem. However, there are two parallel matters to be considered: counterterrorism and the political stability of other African states which have the potential to breed the Black Spots that breed terrorism.

As an example, Guinea is located in West Africa and has borders with six states. Guinea emerged from 50 years of political turmoil in the autumn of 2010 when long-time political activist Alpha Conde became president in a fair and free election. Guinea is a fledgling democracy with strong ties to the U.S. A new cabinet and department ministers are in place. One of the first actions taken was to establish a strong anti-corruption task force.

Guinea has very limited financial resources and a hungry population. It is desperately poor, yet it is rich in natural resources. Guinea has the potential to become a stable, U.S.-oriented democracy and a beacon for other West African states. Guinea urgently needs U.S. assistance; however, assistance funds for Guinea are nil. The USAID budget has been cut by 40%, and Africa has a very low priority for U.S. assistance.

There are compelling reasons for the U.S. to re-think its \$20 billion allocation to North Africa and to elevate funding for Guinea:

- Guinea's new administration is engaged in a race against time. Guinea's people are in a desperate survival mode. If the new democracy does not meet its people's minimal expectations, it could revert to political turmoil.
- Guinea has large uranium deposits. The U.S. should consider entering into an exclusive uranium exploration and mining agreement with Guinea.

- Africa has been largely ignored by the U.S. to our detriment.
- There is an opportunity to strengthen democracies in Guinea and other West African states.

The issue is whether U.S. policymakers have acted strategically or acted to put out a fire—an example of *ad hoc*-ism.