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The Evolution of Terror

01.08.2008 | Culture and Society, Faculty A University of Dayton terrorism expert wrote in his newly released book that the Secret Service and the FAA conducted a video-taped simulation of a suicide attack on the White House as early as 1985.

Mark Ensalaco, a UD associate political science professor, wrote *Middle Eastern Terrorism From Black September to September 11* to trace terrorism from the first plane hijackings in the Middle East in 1968 to the Sept. 11 attacks.

The inspiration for the book came from a UD student in Ensalaco's class who asked, "Where did that come from?" on the day of the Sept. 11 attacks. Ensalaco realized there was no single, narrative account of the entire history of Middle East terrorism.

Other little-known or reported facts in Ensalaco's book include:

* The Al Dawa party in today's Iraqi parliament was a terrorist organization that attacked the United States embassy in Kuwait in 1983.

* American taxpayers paid for the honeymoon of the ringleader of Black September. Black September was responsible for the attack on Israeli athletes at the 1972 Olympics and the murder of two American diplomats in Sudan in 1973.

* Former U.S. President Ronald Reagan sent former U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to Iraq to meet with Saddam Hussein in 1983. They met hoping to normalize diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Iraq, despite certain knowledge that Iraq was using chemical weapons in its war with Iran.

* A year before the Sept. 11 attacks, two Arab men twice tried to enter the cockpit of a U.S. airliner. When questioned, the men claimed they were trying to enter the bathroom. One of those men was denied entry into the U.S. after the Sept. 11 attacks; U.S. forces in Afghanistan captured the other one.

"There is little or no work like this available to scholars, teachers and citizens at a time when an informed public should be engaged in a thoughtful discourse on this matter," said Donna Schlagheck, author of *International Terrorism: An Introduction to Concepts and Actors*.

As Ensalaco followed terrorism's evolution, he noticed its changing face. Militant Islam replaced secular Palestinian nationalism as the ideology of terror, he said. Jihad against apostates and infidels replaced the liberation of Palestine as the cause.

Al-Qaida revolutionized terror, argued Ensalaco, whom CNN, The Associated Press and Reuters, among others, have interviewed about terrorism. Ensalaco said Osama bin Laden's 1998 fatwa calling on Muslims to kill Americans as a religious obligation was tantamount to an incitement to genocide.

Ensalaco traced Bin Laden's fatwa to the "Blind Sheik," Omar Abdel-Rahman, who was convicted in connection with the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. Rahman first called on Muslims to "kill Americans wherever you find them; destroy their embassies, sink their ships, shoot down their planes."

The book's epilogue chronicled developments in the war on terror since the Sept. 11 attacks. Ensalaco concluded that victory in the war on terror will depend on the United States' ability to thwart future terror conspiracies and to maintain momentum in what is essentially a low-intensity conflict against Islamic extremism.

But ultimately, Ensalaco said, "Islamic terrorism will ebb only when the most influential Muslim clerics rule that terrorism contravenes the principles of warfare in the Quran. Only then will the belief be abandoned that the slaughter of innocent civilians is jihad in the way of Allah and suicide in the act of murdering others bestows the glories of martyrdom."

Ensalaco dedicated the book to his daughter, Sofia, "who was born just weeks before that terrible day in September. May we vanquish the evil of terrorism in her lifetime."

Ensalaco's book, published by University of Pennsylvania Press, is available through Amazon.com, Barnes and Noble, and Borders for \$39.95.

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