

Excerpt: United States–Canada Joint Border Threat and Risk Assessment²⁴

Terrorism

Terrorism is acknowledged as a threat to both the United States and Canada and is a high priority for both governments. To effectively combat terrorist activities, enhanced participation in joint initiatives and the sharing of information have become critical. Also crucial is the growing collaboration between agencies that seek to prevent attacks and those seeking evidence to support prosecution. Terrorists have targeted both the United States and Canada. Therefore, terrorism in one country is a national security threat to the other.

Transnational terrorist entities are present in both the United States and Canada. The political and personal freedoms enjoyed by Canadians and Americans, as well as their advanced economies, make their countries attractive venues for terrorists and their sympathizers. Both countries are at risk if they do not effectively identify and interdict (pre-empt) terrorists and counter their fundraising activities. Prior to the 9/11 attacks on the United States by al-Qa'ida, the terrorist presence in both countries chiefly involved the furnishing of logistical and financial support for terrorism abroad while recruiting resident sympathizers. Since then, al-Qa'ida has transformed itself into a global ideology, often inspiring attacks, in addition to its traditional involvement in the actual planning and execution of such attacks.

Al-Qa'ida and its affiliates pose a significant threat to the United States and Canada. While the United States has been an al-Qa'ida target since the 1990s, Canada's solidarity in combating terrorism has since prompted al-Qa'ida to identify Canada as one of its targets. Al-Qa'ida and those who adhere to its extremist ideology, despite suffering setbacks, remain intent on and capable of attacking both nations and circumventing mitigation measures. In 2006, United Kingdom (U.K.) authorities thwarted a group plotting to destroy aircraft on transatlantic flights bound for the United States and Canada by using liquid explosives disguised as soft drinks. Information revealed the conspiracy was linked to al-Qa'ida and other senior militants. The attempt by Umar Abdulmutallab to ignite explosives on a plane landing in Detroit in December 2009 was also linked to al-Qa'ida affiliates.

A new dimension in the threat from al-Qa'ida and its followers has emerged: the advent of "homegrown" terrorists inspired by al-Qa'ida ideology. Communications technology, including social networking sites, facilitates the spread of terrorist doctrine and reduces the need for face-to-face encounters. This means that terrorist planning/