



ACTIVE MEASURES



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Spring 2019 – Volume IV

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Inquiries should be directed to journal.activemeasures@gmail.com or:

Active Measures, c/o The Institute of World Politics

1521 16th Street NW

Washington, D.C. 2003

Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters in Germany: An Assessment of the Threat and Strategy Options

Tobias Brandt

In the wake of the Arab Spring, nearly one thousand German citizens traveled to Syria and Iraq to join Islamist terrorist groups. About a third of these are now back in the Federal Republic. Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) present a tremendous challenge for the German authorities, as many of them are combat experienced, can radicalize others, and recruit them to conduct attacks. Officials have mainly aimed at speedy incarceration proceedings in order to avoid public pressure and contain the immediate security risk. This only postpones the threat because prison sentences are typically short and, therefore, do not represent a long-term solution. To prevent returning FTFs from conducting attacks in Germany and undermining the social fabric, the country should tailor its approach for each case and reassert the legitimacy and relevance of the state using the legal system. Germany must further strengthen its intelligence and surveillance capabilities, improve border controls, and enhance its deradicalization and reintegration programs. Finally, to avoid falling into a “counter-terrorism fatigue,” Germany must develop a National Counter-Terrorism Strategy to address all dimensions of the challenge of Islamist terrorism.

According to the *International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation*, by 2018, a total of 41,490 citizens from 80 countries became affiliated with the terrorist organization Islamic State (IS).¹ As of July 2018, 7,366 (20%) of these Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) have returned to their

¹ Joana Cook and Gina Vale, “From Daesh to ‘Diaspora’: Tracing the Women and Minors of Islamic State,” *International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation*, July 23, 2018: 3, accessed November 5, 2018, <https://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ICSR-Report-From-Daesh-to-%E2%80%98Diaspora%E2%80%99-Tracing-the-Women-and-Minors-of-Islamic-State.pdf>.

countries or are currently in repatriation processes.² Germany, for its part, has seen a total of 960 citizens leave for Syria and Iraq to join Islamist terrorist groups, about a third of whom (303) are now back in the Federal Republic.³ Returning FTFs present a serious problem for German law enforcement and national security officials because a significant number of them (at least 80) have experienced armed combat or, at a minimum, undergone some type of military training.⁴ Thomas Hegghammer has found that the presence of returning FTFs, who are more effective than “non-veterans,” increases the effectiveness of attacks in the West.⁵ While research shows that, historically, relatively few returning FTFs have posed a direct threat, those that did, were “responsible for some of the most lethal terrorist attacks carried out over the past three decades.”⁶ For example, the group of operatives that attacked Paris in November 2015, killing 129 people, was comprised of nine individuals, seven of whom were returning FTFs who had been sent to Europe by IS to conduct a large-scale attack.⁷ A

² Joana Cook, “From Daesh to ‘Diaspora,’” 3.

³ *Ibid.*, 16, 17.

⁴ Daniel Heinke, “German Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq: The Updated Data and Its Implications,” *CTC Sentinel* 10, no. 3 (March 2017): 17, accessed November 4, 2018, https://ctc.usma.edu/app/uploads/2017/03/CTC-Sentinel_Vol10Iss330.pdf; Thomas Renard and Rik Coolsaet (ed.), “Returnees: Who Are They, Why Are They (Not) Coming Back and How Should We Deal with Them? Assessing Policies on Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters in Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands,” *Egmont – The Royal Institute for International Relations Publications*, February 6, 2018: 44, accessed November 7, 2018, http://www.egmontinstitute.be/content/uploads/2018/02/egmont.paper.s.101_online_v1-3.pdf?type=pdf.

⁵ Thomas Hegghammer, “Should I Stay or Should I Go? Explaining Variation in Western Jihadists’ Choice between Domestic and Foreign Fighting,” *American Political Science Review* 107, no.1 (February 2013): 11, accessed November 6, 2018, http://hegghammer.com/_files/Hegghammer_-_Should_I_stay_or_should_I_go.pdf.

⁶ “The Challenge of Returning and Relocating Foreign Terrorist Fighters: Research Perspectives,” *United Nations Security Council, Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) Trends Report*, April 11, 2018: 3, accessed October 31, 2018, <https://www.un.org/sc/ctc/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/CTED-Trends-Report-March-2018.pdf>.

⁷ Kim Cragin, “The November 2015 Paris Attacks: The Impact of Foreign Fighter Returnees,” *Orbis* 61, no. 2, (Spring 2017): 218, accessed November

lesser-acknowledged threat posed by returning FTFs is that they are also able to recruit others to conduct attacks locally.⁸ Germany faces the challenge of determining who these returnees are, what specific risk they pose, and, most importantly, what action to take to protect the public from potential harm.⁹

Germany's Approach So Far

It must be said that Germany has not yet found an adequate way to address the problem of returning FTFs. While progress has been made since 2016, especially by limiting the number of refugees arriving in the country, Germany has improved neither the centralization nor the structure of its security architecture significantly enough. Thus, authorities remain overwhelmed due to the high number of cases.¹⁰

As in most other European countries, the German government unofficially prefers that foreign fighters would not return, without formally preventing them from returning.¹¹ Generally, when FTFs return, they go to provisional detention to await trial. If convicted and put in prison, different detention regimes are applied, from isolation to dispersal among other detainees.¹² But at a closer look, the situation is much more precarious. Thus far, the German government has failed to design and maintain a coherent approach to the multifaceted challenge that FTFs represent.

Most officials aim for speedy incarceration proceedings in order to avoid public pressure and contain the immediate

1, 2018, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2017/03/november-2015-paris-attacks-impact-foreign-fighter-returnees/>.

⁸ Cragin, "2015 Paris Attacks," 221.

⁹ "Challenge of Returning," United Nations, 11.

¹⁰ Guido Steinberg, "Islamist Terrorism in Germany: Threats, Responses, and the Need for a Strategy," *American Institute for Contemporary German Studies* Policy Report 66, December 20, 2017: 18, accessed November 1, 2018, <https://www.aicgs.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/PR-66-DAAD-Steinberg-Terrorism.pdf>.

¹¹ Thomas Renard, "Returnees: Who Are They," 4.

¹² *Ibid.*

security risk.¹³ On average, verdicts tend to impose sentences of “three to four years for the active support of the Islamic State rather than on more concrete charges of murder.”¹⁴ Critics of this approach have argued that this will likely only delay the threat for a relatively short period of time until detainees are released.¹⁵ Even more significantly, while the prosecuting authority does open a criminal investigation in every case of a returning FTF, evidence rules under German criminal law often mean that a returnee is not convicted of a criminal offense at all.¹⁶ Accordingly, most of the men and women who have returned from the war zones in Syria and Iraq, are at large.¹⁷ For instance, out of the 80 individuals who left Hamburg for IS, 25 have returned – but only one is in custody.¹⁸ In many cases, there is simply no evidence that the departed were, in fact, members of or supported a terrorist group.¹⁹

In 2016, five terrorist attacks hit Germany, and seven more were foiled. This figure includes the first successful mass casualty attack on December 19, 2016, wherein Anis Amri, a Tunisian refugee, drove a truck into a popular Christmas market in Berlin, killing twelve and wounding nearly a hundred civilians.²⁰ Amri had been known to the authorities for more than a year but was eventually categorized as a minor threat by the Federal Criminal Police (“Bundeskriminalamt,”

¹³ Eva Entenmann, “Why ‘Amnesty’ Should Not Be Considered for Returning Foreign Fighters: A Response to Wells and Gurski,” *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague* Publications, January 20, 2017, accessed November 6, 2018, <https://icct.nl/publication/why-amnesty-should-not-be-considered-for-returning-foreign-fighters-a-response-to-wells-and-gurski/>.

¹⁴ Daniel Heinke, “German Foreign Fighters,” 20.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Thomas Renard, “Returnees: Who Are They,” 50.

¹⁷ Martin Knobbe, “Die meisten Rückkehrer sind auf freiem Fuß“ (“Most Returnees Are at Large”), *Der Spiegel*, January 12, 2018, accessed November 1, 2018, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/islamischer-staat-die-meisten-syrien-rueckkehrer-sind-auf-freiem-fuss-a-1187460.html>.

¹⁸ Martin Knobbe, “Most Returnees at Large.”

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Guido Steinberg, “Islamist Terrorism in Germany,” 7.

BKA).²¹ For nearly two years since then, however, Germany has seen few attacks of comparable magnitude, one perhaps being the July 28, 2017 stabbing of civilians at a supermarket in Hamburg that killed one and injured seven.²² Furthermore, as of late 2017, the FTFs returning to Germany are not reported to have plotted another attack in Germany – in sharp contrast to those returning to France, who have executed dozens of attacks since 2014.²³

This relative decrease in attacks, coinciding with the collapse of IS in Iraq and Syria, could easily make for a “counter-terrorism fatigue” that, experts assert, is looming.²⁴ As the focus shifts to other, seemingly more urgent, problems in society, there is a danger of assessing the threat of returning FTFs incorrectly and repeating the mistakes of the past. Whatever their reason for returning to Germany, all returnees “will continue to pose some degree of risk,”²⁵ especially when considering the potential of their joining up with those individuals within Germany who hold extremist views but were prevented from joining IS or other jihadist organizations in person.²⁶

To address the challenge in all its dimensions, Germany must establish a coherent national counter-terrorism strategy that effectively incorporates successful practices of other nations, makes the best use of the German legal system, and, most importantly, counters the contributing factors that provide the breeding ground for terrorism in the first place (non-kinetic counterterrorism). As for the focus of this paper, the following

²¹ *Ibid.*, 17.

²² “GTD ID: 201707280023 – Incident Summary,” *National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START)*, 2018, Global Terrorism Database, accessed November 13, 2018, <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtid=201707280023>.

²³ Guido Steinberg, “Islamist Terrorism in Germany,” 15.

²⁴ Thomas Renard, “Returnees: Who Are They,” 76.

²⁵ Richard Barrett, “Beyond the Caliphate: Foreign Fighters and the Threat of Returnees,” *The Soufan Group*, October 31, 2017: 5, accessed October 31, 2018, <http://thesoufancenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Beyond-the-Caliphate-Foreign-Fighters-and-the-Threat-of-Returnees-TSC-Report-October-2017-v3.pdf>.

²⁶ Joana Cook, “From Daesh to ‘Diaspora,’” 61.

assessment will identify the most crucial tasks to efficiently counter the threat of returning FTFs. The strategic objective must be to prevent returning FTFs from conducting attacks in Germany and undermining the social fabric. The following five lines of effort represent the means for achieving this objective:

1. *Tailor the Approach for Each Case*
2. *Reassert the Legitimacy and Relevance of the German State Using the Legal System*
3. *Strengthen Intelligence and Surveillance Capabilities*
4. *Improve Border Controls*
5. *Deradicalize and (Re)-Integrate*

1. Tailor the Approach for Each Case

The issue of returning FTFs is demonstrably too multifaceted to use a “one-size-fits-all”-approach. Richard Barrett of *The Soufan Group* has shown that broadly, returnees fall into five categories, each presenting a different level of risk:

- “(i) those who left early or after only a short stay and were never particularly integrated with IS;
- (ii) those who stayed longer, but did not agree with everything that IS was doing;
- (iii) those who had no qualms about their role or IS tactics and strategy, but decided to move on;
- (iv) those who were fully committed to IS but forced out by circumstances, such as the loss of territory, or were captured and sent to their home countries; and
- (v) those who were sent abroad by IS to fight for the caliphate elsewhere.”²⁷

But even this categorization has flaws. As Rukmini Callimachi of *The New York Times* revealed in an interview with a returnee who is now in prison in Bremen, IS was aware that authorities are more likely to be lenient with those returnees who came back after only a short stay: “When they go back to France or

²⁷ Richard Barrett, “Beyond the Caliphate,” 18.

Germany, they can say, ‘I was only on holidays in Turkey,’ [...] The longer they stay in the Islamic State, the more suspicious the secret service in the West gets, and that’s why they try to do the training as quickly as possible.”²⁸ Accordingly, a short stay does not necessarily equal innocence. It is especially worrisome that merely 10%, according to data collected on the motivation for returning to Germany, returned because they actually wished to abandon the Islamic State.²⁹ Most FTFs returned because they grew disillusioned and frustrated with their situation, followed calls by family and friends, or for health or logistical reasons, such as “to procure supplies, raise funds or rest.”³⁰

Additionally, there are age and gender distinctions to be made. Prosecutors, prior to a change in policy in December 2017, were hesitant to open criminal investigations against women, for instance.³¹ And while some women may, indeed, have been coerced by their husbands into traveling to Syria, most will have gone there willingly, and “must be assumed to have known what they were doing.”³² Another question is how to deal with minors. In Germany, the age of criminal liability is 14,³³ but, since six-year-olds will have been exposed to jihadi indoctrination and nine-year-olds will have received military training (the “Cubs” of IS), not even children can safely be assumed to not represent any threat.³⁴ Therefore, Germany

²⁸ Rukmini Callimachi, “How a Secretive Branch of ISIS Built a Global Network of Killers,” *The New York Times*, August 3, 2016, accessed November 1, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/04/world/middleeast/isis-german-recruit-interview.html>.

²⁹ Thomas Renard, “Returnees: Who Are They,” 44.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, 50.

³² *Ibid.*, 23.

³³ “The Return of Foreign Fighters to EU Soil,” *European Parliament Research Service Study*, May 5, 2018: 51, accessed November 5, 2018, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/621811/EPRS_STU\(2018\)621811_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/621811/EPRS_STU(2018)621811_EN.pdf).

³⁴ Thomas Renard, “Returnees: Who Are They,” 74. See also, for instance, Mia Bloom, John Horgan, Charlie Winter, “Depictions of Children and Youth in the Islamic State’s Martyrdom Propaganda, 2015-2016,” *CTC Sentinel* 9, no. 2 (February 2016): 29-32, accessed November 20, 2018,

must look at each case individually and apply the correct measures. In some cases, it may be possible to completely re-integrate women, teenagers, and even men; in others, it may not, which is when incarceration is the (immediate) answer. This approach also avoids basing the severity of state repression solely on the duration of the time spent abroad. Where it applies, the Federal Republic must not be afraid to take strong action against terrorists, with all confident authority of the rule of law.³⁵ In short, the German response to returnees needs to be “both multifaceted and specific,”³⁶ a tailored approach to each sub-group and individual.

2. Reassert the Legitimacy and Relevance of the German State Using the Legal System

Some counterterrorism specialists, like David Wells, have argued that because it is so difficult to adequately deal with returning FTFs, European countries should repatriate foreign fighters who have been prevented from returning home by fear of a long prison sentence. Returnees would be expected “to plead guilty to one or a range of terrorism offences in exchange for a reduced prison sentence.”³⁷ While others, such as Phil Gurski, have pointed out that this would likely cause a backlash in public reaction, there are even more relevant arguments that speak against this type of “amnesty” arrangement.³⁸ First of all,

<https://ctc.usma.edu/app/uploads/2016/02/CTC-SENTINEL-Vol9Iss214.pdf>.

³⁵ Peter Neumann, “Eine bundesweite Präventionsstrategie gegen den gewaltbereiten Islamismus: Öffentliche Anhörung, Innenausschuss des Deutschen Bundestages” (“A Nationwide Preventive Strategy against Violent Islamism: Public Hearing, Interior Committee of the German Federal Parliament”), June 26, 2017, accessed November 1, 2018, <https://www.bundestag.de/blob/512960/9128d2155a7f760d450621003906d96b/18-4-922-f-data.pdf>.

³⁶ Daniel Heinke, “German Foreign Fighters,” 17.

³⁷ David Wells, “Could Repatriating Foreign Fighters Make Europe Safer?” *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague* Publications, November 25, 2016, accessed November 1, 2018, <https://icct.nl/publication/could-repatriating-foreign-fighters-make-europe-safer/>.

³⁸ Phil Gurski, “Should Governments Offer Amnesty to Returning Foreign Fighters?” *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague* Publications, November 4, 2016, accessed November 6, 2018,

it is highly unlikely that radicalized returnees would even agree to strike a deal with a legal system they fundamentally reject.³⁹ Secondly, it would be nearly impossible for Germany to logistically ensure the repatriation of individuals from conflict zones, and thirdly, settling for shorter sentences during plea-bargaining procedures is in direct contradiction with the increased criminalization of terrorism-related offences, as United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2178 has called for.⁴⁰ Most importantly, however, the German legal system includes certain mechanisms that prevent methods like plea agreements altogether. Germany has no “common law,” which means that defendants instead confess to charges made against them.⁴¹

Another approach that will not work in Germany is to hold “in absentia” trials. In cases in the Netherlands and Belgium, authorities have begun trials in absence of the defendant to send a strong message: “These people think they have said farewell to our legal system, but we have not said farewell to them.”⁴² According to German law, however, prosecutions in absentia are not permitted because of the “immediacy principle,” which requires individuals to be present in court.⁴³ In light of this reality, some German politicians have argued for the revocation of citizenship of those who left to join IS, and the issue has been debated publicly. Here again, however, the law complicates things: Article 16 of the German “Grundgesetz” (Basic Law or Constitution) does not allow for the deprivation of citizenship of German FTFs.⁴⁴

<https://icct.nl/publication/should-governments-offer-amnesty-to-returning-foreign-fighters/>.

³⁹ Eva Entenmann, “Why ‘Amnesty’ Should Not Be Considered.”

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Christophe Paulussen and Kate Pitcher, “Prosecuting (Potential) Foreign Fighters: Legislative and Practical Challenges,” *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague* Research Paper, January 30, 2018: 21, accessed November 6, 2018, <https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/ICCT-Paulussen-Pitcher-Prosecuting-Potential-Foreign-Fighters-Legislative-Practical-Challenges-Jan2018.pdf>.

⁴² Christophe Paulussen, “Prosecuting (Potential) Foreign Fighters,” 23.

⁴³ “The Return of Foreign Fighters,” *European Parliament*, 44.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 41.

Given these circumstances, Germany must find other ways to adequately address the challenge of returning FTFs. UNSCR 2178, a legally binding document, prescribes that Germany is obligated to prosecute and convict not just travelers themselves, but also the recruiters and facilitators.⁴⁵

Additionally, refusing to hand down harsh sentences (as in the suggested amnesty arrangement), even though the evidence would permit it, has the opposite effect of deterring potential future fighters. Legal authorities should consider leniency only in rare cases.

To be able to have a tailored approach for each case, Germany must gain better access to intelligence that could lead to more evidence-based convictions. Therefore, the state should consider incentivizing individuals to come forward with relevant information. There are few returnees who serve as credible witnesses in court, and the handful that do, have generally not benefited from their testimonies. An example is a returnee from Bavaria who assisted the authorities but still received a prison sentence of eleven years.⁴⁶ German Islamic scholar and terrorism expert Guido Steinberg, while understanding the judge's motivation, believes the verdict sent the wrong signal to the Islamist community: Cooperation will not be rewarded.⁴⁷

In either case, it is crucial that Germany reassert the legitimacy and relevance of the state. In this regard, it is not necessarily a bad thing that Germany cannot revoke the citizenship of its returning FTFs. By taking ownership of even its "worst" citizens, the Federal Republic can demonstrate its own validity and discredit that of the so-called Islamic State. While not incentivizing dangerous actors to return home via short prison sentences that only postpone the problem, authorities should justly punish those returnees who defy the liberal democratic order, yet also work with those individuals who are sincerely remorseful and assist the state by providing valuable information. Returnees must be made aware that the state will

⁴⁵ Christophe Paulussen, "Prosecuting (Potential) Foreign Fighters," 15.

⁴⁶ Martin Knobbe, "Most Returnees at Large."

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

use its legitimate powers to constrain those who aim to undermine it.

3. Strengthen Intelligence and Surveillance Capabilities

As the legal dimension has shown, it is difficult to consistently convict and incarcerate returnees due to the lack of clear evidence of crimes committed. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that the German intelligence apparatus strengthen its capabilities and effectively monitor those persons posing a potential threat to public safety. It is unacceptable that many returnees who were not imprisoned have simply disappeared from view.⁴⁸

To this end, it is vital to develop a system in which intelligence is shared effectively. In 2004, Germany established a fusion center for jihadi terrorism, the “Joint Counter-Terrorism Center” (GTAZ, “Gemeinsames Terrorabwehrzentrum”) in Berlin, to coordinate efforts and provide a platform for intelligence sharing.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, there is no central authority, as the “Länder” (states) each have the prerogative to develop their own solutions.⁵⁰ Steinberg has made the case that the country’s intelligence services need “a complete overhaul,”⁵¹ and that the police and intelligence offices of the individual states should be put under the control of the respective federal institutions.⁵² The current arrangement epitomizes the lack of a holistic strategy, and the government itself has articulated the need to better coordinate the efforts of the federal, state, and local governments.⁵³

⁴⁸ Richard Barrett, “Beyond the Caliphate,” 5.

⁴⁹ Thomas Renard, “Returnees: Who Are They,” 51.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁵¹ Guido Steinberg, “Islamist Terrorism in Germany,” 7.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 26.

⁵³ “Bundesregierung Beschließt Strategie zur Extremismusprävention“ (“Federal Government Enacts Strategy on the Prevention of Extremism”), *Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community*, Press Release, July 13, 2016, accessed November 5, 2018, <https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/kurzmeldungen/DE/2016/07/praeventionsstrategie-gegen-extremismus-mit-bmfsfj.html>.

In the same way, international cooperation must be strengthened. The Schengen system, through which border checkpoints have mostly been eliminated, makes it easy for travelers to move from one European country to the next. This fact contributes to the need for an effective European intelligence sharing system. Long-term international cooperation is crucial and in line with UNSCR 2396 (2017), which calls on Member States to “improve the collection and sharing of information and evidence,”⁵⁴ as well as a 2017 European Parliament directive.⁵⁵

4. Improve Border Controls

To ensure that no returning FTFs can enter the country undetected, Germany has to re-establish control over its borders.⁵⁶ Essentially, the Schengen borders must function “like national border controls of better-organized European states.”⁵⁷ Accordingly, all 26 signatories (including non-EU members) and their security authorities must have access to the data coming from the state of initial entry.⁵⁸

Additionally, the refugee problem calls for a “soberer approach.”⁵⁹ It has been a good step to limit the number of people coming in since 2015, a year in which Germany allowed over a million of refugees to enter the country, initially without even vetting them.⁶⁰ It is absolutely necessary to submit newcomers to strenuous vetting processes,⁶¹ to prevent harm to society at the first point of contact and not overwhelm authorities. To this end, the European Border and Coast Guard

⁵⁴ “Challenge of Returning,” United Nations, 3.

⁵⁵ “The Return of Foreign Fighters,” *European Parliament*, 6.

⁵⁶ Guido Steinberg, “Islamist Terrorism in Germany,” 7.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶⁰ Georg Blume, “The Night Germany Lost Control,” *ZEIT Online*, August 30, 2016, accessed November 16, 2017, <https://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/2016-08/refugees-open-border-policy-september-2015-angela-merkel>.

⁶¹ Guido Steinberg, “Islamist Terrorism in Germany,” 7.

Agency (known as “Frontex”) must be given more resources and public support.

5. Deradicalize and (Re-)Integrate

Even those FTFs that are imprisoned upon their return to Germany will eventually have to be released, as prison sentences so far have rarely been longer than 10 years. In light of this reality, it is paramount that Germany begin the re-integration process as soon as possible. The more correct term in this regard is “integration,” because most returnees were never integrated to society in the first place, as their choice to join IS clearly demonstrates.⁶² Integration efforts must begin in prison, especially to prevent returnees from recruiting other inmates, like prior to the attack on Paris in 2015.⁶³ Authorities should also consider making participation in integration and de-radicalization programs, as well as a public renunciation of IS and its radical ideology, a requirement before release, and continue this process once individuals are free again.⁶⁴

Most importantly, any new or revamped integration programs must be built upon the fundamental understanding that if one wants to combat terrorism at its roots, one has to deal with the societal issues that allow jihadists to gain access to hearts and minds.⁶⁵ As David Ucko and Thomas Marks have so eloquently put it, “the government should concern itself intimately with the drivers of alienation and the roots of its own illegitimacy.”⁶⁶ The fact that those German Muslims who left for IS were open

⁶² Richard Barrett, “Beyond the Caliphate,” 27.

⁶³ Nasser Weddady, “Why Westerners Who Joined Islamic State Don’t Deserve an Automatic Death Sentence,” *The Washington Post*, October 26, 2017, accessed November 1, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/democracy-post/wp/2017/10/26/why-westerners-who-joined-islamic-state-dont-deserve-an-automatic-death-sentence/?utm_term=.4941e3b7e8f8.

⁶⁴ David Wells, “Repatriating Foreign Fighters.”

⁶⁵ Peter Neumann, “Eine bundesweite Präventionsstrategie.“

⁶⁶ David Ucko and Thomas Marks, “Violence in Context: Mapping the Strategies and Operational Art of Irregular Warfare,” *Contemporary Security Policy* 39, no. 2 (February 2018): 224, accessed October 28, 2018, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13523260.2018.1432922>.

to an ideology that required them to radically turn against their own society, demonstrates that they did not consider themselves part of it.⁶⁷ Ultimately, then, integration is about creating the feeling of belonging to the community.⁶⁸ In this regard, it was a welcome sign that Germany established a National Strategy on the Prevention of Extremism⁶⁹ in July 2016, pledging to increase funding for integration and prevention programs.

Conclusion

Germany has made steps in the right direction in countering the threat that returning FTFs represent to the national security. Nevertheless, much work remains to be done. If the country implements the aforementioned lines of effort, it will be much more likely to achieve the strategic objective of preventing FTFs from conducting attacks in the country and undermining the nation's social fabric. As a matter of course in addition to the National Strategy on the Prevention of Extremism, Germany must develop a holistic National Counter-Terrorism Strategy that includes a comprehensive approach to countering totalitarian Islamist ideology. This includes integrating the various agencies and means available to the German government. Only if this is done can the country hope to successfully deal with all the dimensions of the threat, which include returning FTFs, homegrown terrorists, and other potentially violent extremists. Germany must avoid falling into a "counter-terrorism fatigue" – now is the time to develop and adopt policies that are needed to deal with the

⁶⁷ Peter Neumann, "Eine bundesweite Präventionsstrategie."

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ "Strategie der Bundesregierung zur Extremismusprävention und Demokratieförderung" ("Strategy of the Federal Government to Prevent Extremism and Promoting Democracy"), *The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany*, July 13, 2016, accessed November 1, 2018, https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/veroeffentlichung/en/2016/strategie-extremismuspraevention-und-demokratieforderung.html;jsessionid=EF7901BAFB7ABEAA99356B492FD6CF85.2_cid295.

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current threat and prevent new generations from mobilizing, if and when a new opportunity for mobilization arises.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Thomas Renard, "Returnees: Who Are They," 76.

Mexican Transnational Criminal Organizations' Exploitation of the Sonoran Desert and the Tohono O'odham Nation

Alejandro Ahumada

This paper will discuss the Mexican Transnational Criminal Organizations' (TCOs) use of the Sonoran Desert in order to smuggle illegal drugs across the United States-Mexico border, specifically between the Tohono O'odham Nation's portion of the Arizona and Sonora borders.

Sonoran Desert

This section will cover the geographical, meteorological, hydrological, and anthropological characteristics of the Sonoran Desert. Purposeful omissions from the overabundance of information gathered will be discussed in the conclusion of this paper.

Geographical and Meteorological Characteristics

According to the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum (ASDM)¹ (2018):

“(t)he Sonoran Desert as currently defined covers approximately 100,000 square miles (260,000 sq. km.) and includes most of the southern half of Arizona,

¹ Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum quote attributions will be abbreviated to ASDM.

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southeast California, most of the Baja California peninsula, the islands of the Gulf of California, and much of the state of Sonora, Mexico.” Refer to *Figure 1- The Sonoran Desert Region*.

The Sonoran Desert is particularly interesting in its representation of all the world’s biomes². Tundra, coniferous forest, temperate deciduous forest, grassland, chaparral, desert, thornscrub, and tropical forest can all be found in the Sonoran Desert³. Forrest Shreve, an internationally renowned botanist, divided the Sonoran Desert into multiple vegetative subdivisions⁴. The currently accepted subdivisions are the Lower Colorado River Valley, Arizona Upland, Plains of Sonora, Central Gulf Coast, Vizcaino, and Magdalena subdivisions⁵. The Lower Colorado River Valley and the Arizona Upland subdivisions occupy the Arizona-Sonora border region of the Sonora Desert. Refer to *Figure 2- Subdivisions of the Sonoran Desert*.

Lower Colorado River Valley. The Lower Colorado River Valley is the largest, hottest, and driest subdivision of the Sonoran Desert⁶. The landscape is composed of “mostly broad, flat valleys with widely-scattered, small mountain ranges of mostly barren rock”⁷. The temperatures in this subdivision can exceed 120°F (49°C), with surface temperatures approaching 180°F (82°C)⁸. There is “intense solar radiation from cloudless skies on most days” and very low humidity⁹.

Arizona Upland. The Arizona Upland subdivision “contains numerous mountain ranges, and valleys narrower than those of the Lower Colorado River Valley subdivision”¹⁰. The Arizona Upland subdivision “is the highest and coldest part of the

² ASDM.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Bowers, 1988; ASDM.

⁵ ASDM.

⁶ ASDM.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Sonoran Desert”¹¹. The Arizona Upland is the only Sonoran Desert subdivision which experiences frequent hard winter frosts¹².

Hydrological Characteristics

Lower Colorado River Valley. The Lower Colorado River Valley subdivision follows the Lower Colorado River into the Gulf of California¹³. According to the ASDM (2018), the driest locations of the Lower Colorado River Valley average less than three inches of rain per year (76mm), where other localities have gone three years with no rain.

Arizona Upland. The Arizona Upland subdivision has two equal rainy seasons which can amount to a total of twelve inches per year on average¹⁴. The Gila, Salt, San Pedro, and Santa Cruz rivers flow through the north and northeast of this subdivision.

Anthropological Characteristics

The large territorial expanse of the Sonoran Desert encompasses many towns, cities, and native lands within it. The Tohono O’odham Nation and its issues with Mexican TCOs’ illegal drug smuggling will be the focus of this section.

Tohono O’odham Nation. According to the official web site of the Tohono O’odham Nation (2018), “(t)he lands of the Nation are located within the Sonoran Desert in south central Arizona. The largest community, Sells, functions as the Nation’s capital”. The Tohono O’odham Nation’s “(b)oundaries begin south of Casa Grande and encompass parts of Pinal, Pima and Maricopa Counties before continuing south into Mexico”. The Tohono O’odham Nation includes approximately 28,000 members, with a federally-recognized reservation of 4,460 square miles¹⁵. The Tohono O’odham Nation straddles a 75 mile-long portion of the Arizona-Sonora

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Encyclopedia Britannica

¹⁴ ASDM.

¹⁵ About Tohono O’odham Nation.

border, which accounts for almost four percent of the United States-Mexico border¹⁶. Refer to *Figure 3-Arizona High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area*.

Drug Smuggling Issues. The Tohono O’odham Nation is “increasingly becoming ground zero for the Border Patrol on the Arizona-Mexico border”¹⁷. The National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC) (2010), a now-defunct intelligence agency whose responsibilities were absorbed into the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in 2012, took notice of the issues arising in the Tohono O’odham Reservation. The NDIC (2010) observed, the Tohono O’odham Reservation as:

“a primary entry point and transit zone for illicit drugs and related criminal activity in the... region. Vast stretches of remote and sparsely populated desert on the reservation are mostly unprotected and difficult for law enforcement to adequately patrol. As such, it is expected that Mexican DTOs¹⁸ will expand their use of tribal lands to facilitate cross-border drug smuggling operations”.

According to the Tohono O’odham Department of Public Safety (2017)¹⁹, “(f)rom 2002 to 2016 the Tohono O’odham Police Department and US Border Patrol working together have seized on average over 313,000 pounds of illegal drugs per year”. This has led the Tohono O’odham Nation to spend an average of \$3 million annually for nearly two decades; all the while spending approximately 60% of its police force’s time on border-related issues²⁰. This is supported by seizures statistics of the Lukeville and Sasabe Ports of Entry (POE)²¹,

¹⁶ Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) 2017 National Drug Threat Assessment (NDTA); National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC), 2010.

¹⁷ Todd Miller, “Ground Zero: The Tohono O’odham Nation”, *North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA)*, <https://nacla.org/blog/2012/11/2/ground-zero-tohono-oodham-nation>

¹⁸ See footnote 1.

¹⁹ Tohono O’odham Nation’s YouTube video quoted its Department of Public Safety.

²⁰ Tohono O’odham Department of Public Safety, 2017.

²¹ Arizona has six land POEs on the US-Mexico border (CBP, 2018). They are, from west to east, San Luis, Lukeville, Sasabe, Nogales, Naco, and

the POEs to the west and east, respectively, of the Tohono O’odham Nation. Between 2004 and 2008 Lukeville POE seized 19,000 kilograms of marijuana, Sasabe POE seized less than 2,000 kilograms, while the Tohono O’odham Nation seized more than 416,000 kilograms in the same time period²². According to the DEA (2017), Mexican TCOs exploit not only the vast remoteness of the Tohono O’odham Nation but the “highways that connect the reservation to major metropolitan areas”²³. However, Mizutani (2013) states the United States federal government attributes 30% of the drug trafficking between 2004 and 2009 to have been committed by Tohono O’odham Nation members²⁴.

Composition of Mexican TCOs smuggling through the Sonoran Desert. The Sinaloa Cartel²⁵, and its subsidiaries like the Guzman-Loera and the Zambada-Garcia Organizations, control approximately ninety percent of the drugs that cross the border into Arizona²⁶. The Sinaloa Cartel maintains “cell heads in Phoenix, Arizona to oversee the distribution of illegal drugs in the region”²⁷. The cell heads “also coordinate the transportation from Phoenix to various U.S. cities where cell heads are responsible for receiving and distributing the shipments in each city”²⁸. The Sinaloa Cartel employs different methods of smuggling, from the basic backpack, to concealing illegal drugs within produce, using drones, catapults, even to the use of their infamous tunnels²⁹.

Analysis

The Tohono O’odham Nation’s population was split by the 1853 Gadsden Purchase between the United States and

Douglas (NDIC, 2010). The most trafficked is the Nogales POE (DOT, 2018).

²² NDIC, 2010, pp 6.

²³ Pp 139.

²⁴ pps 174-175

²⁵ According to Steller (2011), the last remaining “true” cartel is the Sinaloa Cartel.

²⁶ NDIC, 2011, pp 4.

²⁷ DEA, 2017, pp 2.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pps 6, 7, 80, and 112.

Mexico³⁰. However, the line in the sand didn't prevent its members from coming and going for sustenance, employment, and even practicing their religion³¹. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the proactive stance taken by the United States Government began hindering the easy access of members to their lands within the United States³². Mizutani (2013) notes the difference of the Tohono O'odham Nation and the Pascua Yaqui Tribe which gives an "Enhanced Tribal Card (ETC)" to its members³³. According to Mizutani (2013), the ETC "...allows registered members of the tribe to cross the border without a passport..."³⁴. However, "...issuance of this ID does not fully enable all Yaqui people to visit the other side of the border"³⁵. Furthermore, "(t)he Yaqui people of the Mexican side do not receive benefits from this ETC system" and "...individuals with Yaqui identity reside on the U.S. side yet are not eligible for tribal enrollment..."³⁶. To compound the issue, there is no equivalent for Tohono O'odham Nation members that are living in Mexico, essentially isolating Tohono O'odham Nation members in Mexico without access to their families, religious ceremonies, and their federally recognized lands.

President Donald J. Trump's call for a wall between the United States and Mexico in order to prevent illegal immigration and illegal drug smuggling is a deeply personal and impactful matter for the Tohono O'odham Nation and its members. The already difficult passage between the United States and Mexico for Tohono O'odham Nation members in Mexico will become an almost impossible exercise. Enrollment in the ETC program, as the Pascua Yaqui Tribe has done, will alleviate the travel challenges to an extent. However, as there is no equivalent documentation in Mexico for its dozens of recognized indigenous groups, the problem will require a

³⁰ Tohono O'odham, 2017, YouTube video.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Pps 172-173.

³⁴ Mizutani, 2013, pp 172.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

transnational solution. But, an important matter to also consider is Mizutani's (2013) research showing that 30% of the drugs seized on the Tohono O'odham Nation between 2004 and 2009 were smuggled by Tohono O'odham Nation members³⁷. This issue is exacerbated by the 31.6% unemployment on the reservation (AZDHS, 2018).

Possible Courses of Action and their Ramifications.

The current emphasis on southern border security raises many potential "fixes" with minimal efforts to understand the long history of the region and the long-standing effects that may rise. The following are possible courses of action and their ramifications that take into consideration the geographical, historical, and cultural factors.

Port of Entry Aboard the Tohono O'odham Nation. The Tohono O'odham Nation is currently flanked by the Lukeville and Sasabe POEs, to the west and east respectively. However, there is no legal POE across the border from Mexico into the United States on the Tohono O'odham Nation. The construction of a POE close to the Papago Farms area could be used as a centralized location for only tribal members to enter for tribal affairs. This POE could be used to develop the infrastructure further and help create jobs as well. However, a POE in this area may draw illegal smuggling from those claiming Tohono O'odham Nation membership living in Mexico.

Enhanced Tribal Card for Tohono O'odham Nation. Implementing an Enhanced Tribal Card (ETC) for Tohono O'odham Nation registered members, in conjunction with a POE aboard the Tohono O'odham Nation, or in its own right, will increase legal traffic in and out of the reservation. This will lead to a decrease in unemployment and the impetus of Tohono O'odham Nation members to assist Mexican TCOs in their drug smuggling.

Tribal recognition in Mexico. The recognition of tribal affiliations in Mexico is currently not practiced. However, if there is to be

³⁷ Pps 174-175.

an ETC to be given to Tohono O’odham Nation members in the United States then members in Mexico would also require ETCs. However, if ETCs are given to one tribe then the Mexican government would need to increase its recognition, preservation, and assistance to the indigenous peoples of Mexico.

Use of Tohono O’odham Nation members as Auxiliary Reservation Police Officers. The issue of unemployment on the Tohono O’odham Nation is a key factor leading members to participate in drug smuggling. Tohono O’odham Nation members who are unable to secure work on or off the reservation could be extended the opportunity to work as Auxiliary Reservation Police Officers to assist with securing the border with Mexico. The Tohono O’odham Nation would be able to decrease the smuggling into its tribal lands and gainfully employ its members by offering the opportunity to qualifying volunteers.

Status Quo. The current state affairs, while unpleasant and potentially dangerous, retains the sovereignty of the Tohono O’odham Nation. The Tohono O’odham Nation has had to bear the brunt of countless man-made changes to their tribal lands. The possibility of cutting off tribal members living in Mexico from their religious sites in Arizona will only inflame the members of the reservation and create an easily avoidable issue. The building of a wall crossing the 75-mile long border it shares with Mexico will further isolate its members from their lands.

Ramifications. Mexican TCOs will find innovative ways to penetrate the United States’ and the Tohono O’odham Nation’s security to export their products. The addition of a POE could potentially give Mexican TCOs a centralized point to blackmail or threaten tribal law enforcement in order to cross through. Also, Mexican TCOs could use ETC carrying Tohono O’odham Nation members in Mexico to continue smuggling their drugs.

Conclusion

Mexican TCOs will exploit every weakness in the drug interdiction efforts of US law enforcement entities. Exploiting the high unemployment rates and below-poverty-line members of the Tohono O’odham Nation will continue. The issue of preventing illegal smuggling by these members may not be as simple as providing gainful employment. The current border system exacerbates an environment ripe for criminality by not providing lawful Tohono O’odham Nation members entry into their lands in the United States. Walton (2018) reports that on February 15, 2018, 48 pounds of cocaine and 204 pounds of methamphetamine all worth over \$1 million were seized at the Nogales POE, 40 miles east of the Sasabe POE. Though the problem is exacerbated by tribal members aboard the Tonoho O’odham Nation, illegal smuggling continues to be strong in other areas of the Arizona-Sonora border. Ultimately, this issue may become another status-quo matter which will not reach a resolution one way or the other.

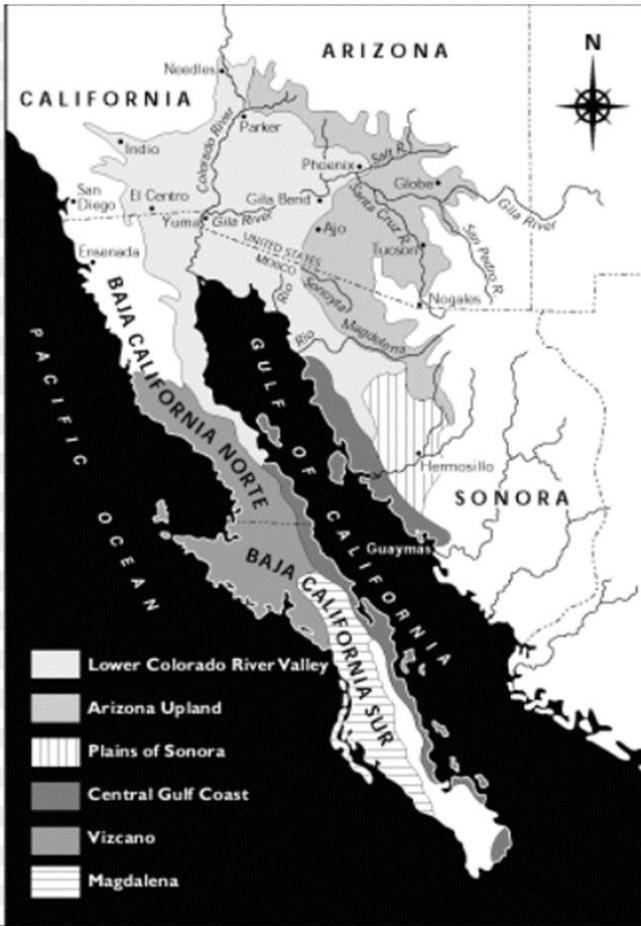


Figure 2- Subdivisions of the Sonoran Desert.
Retrieved from the Arizona-Sonoran Desert Museum.

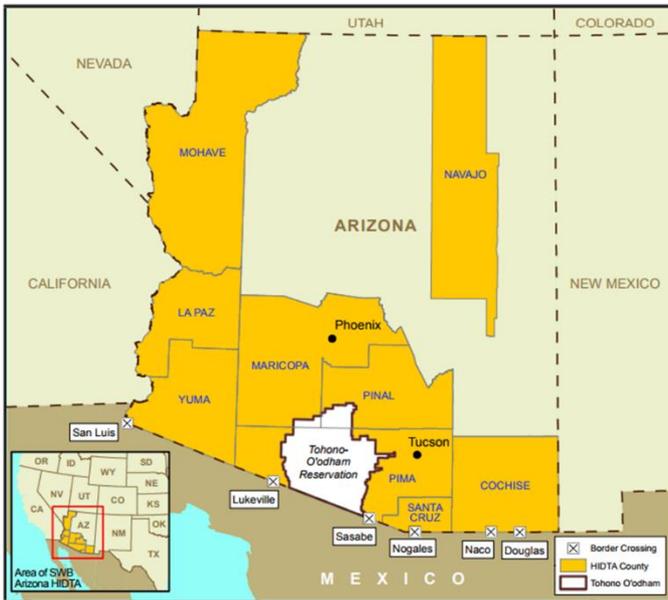


Figure 3- Arizona High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area.
Retrieved from Drug Market Analysis 2011.

Upsetting the Balance of Deterrence: The Vulnerabilities Leading to Potential War Between Israel and Hezbollah

Michael Frigon

The high level of tension between Israel and Hezbollah since the conclusion of the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war has convinced experts on the conflict that another war between the two parties is all but certain. Yet, thirteen years later Israel and Hezbollah have yet to engage in another full-scale war. A reluctance to get involved in a destructive war has resulted in the tacit establishment of a “balance of deterrence” between the two sides. However, this paper identifies a number of neglected vulnerabilities on both sides of the Israel-Hezbollah conflict which, if exploited, would upset the “balance” and cause a full-scale destructive war in the Levant.

Although the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War was one that neither side wanted, it was not unexpected. More than twelve years after its conclusion, no conflict of similar magnitude has erupted between the two mortal enemies. Throughout this period, however, the concept of another major war between Israel and Hezbollah has been viewed as a matter of *when*, not *if*. Yet, if the assumption has been for so long that war between Israel and Hezbollah is nearly inevitable, then why has there been no war? If the many potential escalatory events that have occurred between the two sides (some of which were far deadlier than the ambush that ignited the 2006 war) have not resulted in full-scale war, then what will? There has been extensive scholarship on the nature of tensions between the two parties, the potential destruction a future war might bring, and the policies various parties involved must consider in relation to the anticipated conflict. However, there have been

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few attempts by scholars when analyzing the current environment to identify specific events that are most likely to cause a war to erupt.

The reason the 2006 War escalated so quickly was less about the fact that Hezbollah conducted a military operation against Israel and more about Israel believing its deterrent power was under attack. Kidnapped Israeli soldiers can be used as bargaining chips for Hezbollah to obtain concessions from Israel. Because of this fact, Israel believed that a certain level of military response was necessary in order to preserve a potential weakening of their deterrent power. Since then, there have been many violent altercations between Hezbollah and Israel, but none have convinced either side that a full-scale war was necessary because they did not serve as a great enough threat to the balance of deterrence. However, in the case of the volatile security environment in the Middle East, there are a variety of possible events that could certainly threaten the balance and lead to a full-scale war between Israel and Hezbollah, potentially dragging in other nations as well. This paper provides a focused analysis of both well-known and neglected vulnerabilities on both sides of the Israel-Hezbollah conflict which, if exploited, will result in full-scale destructive war in the Levant. There is no crystal ball that can provide any certainty about future events, but in a volatile environment like the Middle East, such an analysis is useful for states to understand and consider the risks when formulating strategy.

The Balance of Deterrence

Only a few years after the conclusion of the 2006 War, Hezbollah supporters seemed almost disappointed that another war had not occurred.¹ With the high level of tension ever-present between Israel and Hezbollah it might be more surprising that there *hasn't* been a war since 2006. Throughout the post-2006 war period, Hezbollah's leaders, mainly

¹ Thanassis Cambanis, "Stronger Hezbollah Emboldened for Fights Ahead," *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/07/world/middleeast/07hezbollah.html>. (October 6, 2010).

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Hezbollah's Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah, threatened war if the Israelis attacked. Reciprocally, Israel asserted it would respond to any Hezbollah attacks.² Despite the inflammatory rhetoric, no war has erupted when Israeli and Hezbollah forces have clashed over the past decade. In 2015, a top Iranian general and six Hezbollah fighters were killed in an Israeli airstrike in Syria, and Hezbollah responded by killing multiple Israeli soldiers at the Lebanese-Israeli border.³ The number of violent exchanges has increased as Iran and Hezbollah have sought to establish a military presence in Syria, while Israel has remained determined to stop that from materializing. Despite these clashes, there has been no resulting greater war.

It seems that Israel and Hezbollah have developed a successful pattern for maintaining a balance of strategic deterrence. The relationship does not constitute *balance of power*; Israel still has the overwhelming capability to destroy Hezbollah, but cannot afford to risk international condemnation if it does. Because of this fact, the term *balance of deterrence* provides a better definition of the nature of the competing relationship between the two sides. Nevertheless, as the Syrian War draws to a close and the key players in the Middle East turn their attention to Lebanon, it is unlikely that the current balance will be effectively maintained. There are certain vulnerabilities that could threaten the deterrent balance—some of which have already been widely discussed as possible threats, while others

² Benjamin Kerstein, "Hezbollah Leader: If Assad Loses, We Will See Netanyahu in Damascus," *Algemeiner*, <https://www.algemeiner.com/2018/11/10/hezbollah-leader-if-assad-loses-we-will-see-netanyahu-in-damascus/>, (November 10, 2018); Yaniv Kubovich, "Israel Told U.S. and Russia It Will Retaliate If Iran Attacks from Syria," *Haaretz*, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/israel-told-u-s-and-russia-it-will-retaliate-if-iran-attacks-from-syr-1.6040951>, (April 30, 2018).
³ See "Three Killed as Israel and Hezbollah Clash on Lebanese Border," *BBC News*, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-31015862>, (January 28, 2015); Saeed Kamali Dehghan, "Top Iranian General and Six Hezbollah Fighters Killed in Israeli Attack in Syria" *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/19/top-iranian-general-hezbollah-fighters-killed-israel-attack-syria>, (January 19, 2015).

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have been neglected due to the complexity and breadth of activities in the Middle East. These vulnerabilities include the effect of sanctions on both Iran and Hezbollah, Saudi Arabia's meddling in Lebanon, and the pressure points in both Hezbollah and Israeli defenses.

The Financial Vulnerability

It is no secret that Iran and Hezbollah have an intimate relationship. Iran invests millions of dollars a year in Hezbollah, and Hezbollah repays the debt by acting as an extension of Iran's foreign policy, which includes conducting terrorist and illicit financial activities around the globe. However, Hezbollah certainly retains a level of independence from Iran, as it conducts most of its activities on its own accord and hasn't always done what Iran wants.⁴ In a hearing before the Senate Committee on Armed Services in February 2012, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper testified that the relationship between Iran and Hezbollah is a sort of "partnership arrangement, with the Iranians as the senior partner."⁵ Whatever the exact nature of the relationship may be, it is clear that the two Shia parties are connected and that what affects one affects both. As a result, the combination of sanctions on both Iran and Hezbollah, a crackdown on Hezbollah's illicit financial network, and a reduction in Hezbollah's political power could cause an emboldened Hezbollah military to feel threatened enough financially and politically to engage in more overt military actions to assert itself.

In *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of the Party of God*, Michael Levitt discusses how Israeli intelligence estimated that Iran cut up to 40% in aid to Hezbollah as a result of the economic sanctions put on Iran in 2009. As a result, Levitt explains, Hezbollah was forced to enact austerity measures, such as

⁴ Matthew Levitt, *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of Lebanon's Party of God*, (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2013), 357.

⁵ U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Armed Services, *Worldwide Threats to the National Security of the United States*, 112th Cong., February 16, 2012, Statements by James Clapper, Available from C-Span, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?304462-1/threats-national-security>.

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cutting salaries and putting building projects on hold, causing tension within the organization. Due to the constraints suddenly thrust upon it, Hezbollah increased its illicit financial activities to generate income to maintain the social enterprises that keep it in power. Levitt argues that these activities made Hezbollah increasingly vulnerable to a concerted international effort to counter its activities. Despite the vulnerability, Hezbollah's international criminal network was able to grow, likely due to the removal of sanctions as a result of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, otherwise known as the Iran Nuclear Deal.⁶ No matter the reason, the concerted international effort Levitt predicted never effectively materialized.

Since President Trump took office, the United States in particular has increased measures to crackdown on Iran and Hezbollah's illicit financial activities. This crackdown could have a significant impact on the balance of deterrence for Hezbollah. In 2016, the United States imposed sanctions on financial institutions that facilitated transactions with Hezbollah, resulting in the closure of thousands of Hezbollah's accounts.⁶ Furthermore, the Trump administration and the U.S. Department of Treasury have more recently asserted that they will prioritize the elimination of Hezbollah's financial network, particularly in South America, Africa and the Middle East.⁷ In response to the 2016 sanctions, Secretary General Nasrallah downplayed the consequences of sanctions by saying, "As long as Iran has money, we have money."⁸ Even this once

⁶ Levitt, *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of Lebanon's Party of God*, 372.

⁶ Rouba El Husseini, "Crackdown on Hezbollah Accounts Raises Tensions in Lebanon," *The Times of Israel*, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/crackdown-on-hezbollah-accounts-raises-tensions-in-lebanon/>, (July 6, 2016)

⁷ "Treasury Targets Hizballah Financial Network in Africa and the Middle East," *U.S. Department of the Treasury*, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm0278>, (February 2, 2018).

"Hezbollah in South America: The Threat to Businesses," *Stratfor*, <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/hezbollah-south-america-threat-businesses>, (February 05, 2018).

⁸ El Husseini, "Crackdown on Hezbollah Accounts Raises Tensions in Lebanon."

reliable source of income is threatened, now that sanctions have been renewed on Iran and the Iranian economy is suffering.⁹ This could have a serious effect, not only on Hezbollah's immediate finances, but also on Lebanon's overall economy as well. Such economic pressure could have an adverse effect on Lebanese support for Hezbollah.¹⁰

These are all positive developments for the West's fight against Hezbollah and Iran, but what Western leaders may see as a victory could actually increase the chances of Hezbollah choosing war to advance its aims. Hezbollah has historically been able to retain control of Lebanon through political dominance, built with funds from Iran and its criminal networks. Hezbollah has been reluctant to use its military capabilities against Israel, given Israel's overwhelming military capabilities. However, if Hezbollah believes that it is being cornered on the political or financial front as a result of the sanctions, it is likely to be more willing to engage in military action against Israel to bolster support for itself in Lebanon and assert its control. Hezbollah's troops might be emboldened by a perceived victory in Syria, or at least proof of Hezbollah's military prowess, which might be enough to convince leaders of their readiness for another round with Israel.¹¹ Hezbollah might perceive a strike against Israel as a political show of strength to its Lebanese constituents, but military action would also increase the likelihood that an Israeli, American, or Saudi strike on Hezbollah's capabilities, particularly in Lebanon, could result in a much more dramatic or miscalculated response.

⁹ Ladane Naserri, Golnar Motevalli and Arsalah Shahla, "After Sanctions, Iran's Economy is Nearing a Crisis," *Bloomberg*, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-08-09/as-sanctions-hit-iran-s-on-the-verge-of-economic-breakdown>, (August 9, 2018).

¹⁰ Zvi Bar, "Israel and U.S. Set Eyes on Lebanon as Iran-Saudi Proxy Clash Heats up," *Haaretz*, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-israel-and-u-s-set-eyes-on-lebanon-as-iran-saudi-proxy-clash-heats-up-1.6636163>, (November 11, 2018).

¹¹ Nour Samaha, "Hezbollah Is 'Stronger Than Ever'," *Foreign Policy*, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/06/01/hezbollah-is-stronger-than-ever-isis-syria/>, (June 1, 2015).

The Saudi Vulnerability

In November 2017, Lebanon's Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri was summoned to Riyadh by the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Upon meeting with the Crown Prince, Hariri was given a pre-written resignation letter and told to resign on public television. Despite the attempt, Hariri rescinded his resignation upon returning to Lebanon and the Saudis came under intense international criticism. *The New York Times* later wrote that it wasn't clear to Western and Arab officials what the Saudis hoped to accomplish with the episode, but that the attempt might foment unrest or even ignite war in Lebanon.¹² What is clear is that Saudi Arabia was targeting Lebanon, and more specifically Hezbollah, as part of its increasingly tense cold war with Iran. This episode further proved that the Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman continues to be a potential liability in the strategic environment of the Levant.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has proven to the international community that he is capable of sloppy foreign policy and erratic behavior, displayed by both the Hariri affair and the assassination of dissident Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi. In the climate of increasing tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran, it is much more likely that Saudi Arabia will undertake an action that would jeopardize the balance of deterrence that Israel and Hezbollah have painstakingly constructed. The Prince Mohammed might even order a strike against Hezbollah targets, an assassination of a key Hezbollah leader, or an orchestrated coup attempt against the Hezbollah-backed Lebanese government. Due to the Israeli tendency to deny covert action, it is certainly possible that a covert Saudi attack of any form on a sensitive Hezbollah target could be misperceived as an Israeli attack by Hezbollah, which could result in a "retaliatory" attack by Hezbollah on Israel that starts a war. These are the types of miscalculations that could change

¹² Anne Barnard and Maria Abi-Habib, "Why Saad Hariri Had That Strange Sojourn in Saudi Arabia," *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/24/world/middleeast/saudi-arabia-saad-hariri-mohammed-bin-salman-lebanon.html>, (December 24, 2017).

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the perceived *balance of deterrence* and lead to a war, which could drag in neighboring countries.

The Defense Vulnerabilities

Hezbollah's leadership—and even some Lebanese leaders—have repeatedly claimed that, in contrast to the Israeli military strikes in Syria, an attack on Lebanese territory would result in war.¹³ Secretary General Nasrallah stated in 2017 that the next war would be fought in Israeli territory.¹⁴ Similarly, Israel has made it clear through both words and actions that it will not tolerate an Iran-Hezbollah presence in southern Syria and will take action to prevent Hezbollah from further developing high-precision missiles. In September 2018, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu gave a speech to the United Nations in which he showcased Israeli intelligence that indicated Hezbollah was constructing underground missile factories in Beirut with help from Iran.¹⁵ Israel views the construction of these missiles as a threat that could shift the balance of deterrence in a similar way that Hezbollah views the construction of the Israeli northern border wall as a threat to its ability to deter or respond to Israeli attacks.¹⁶ These types of threats to the balance of deterrence are the most immediate factors that could lead to a direct war between Israel and Hezbollah.

¹³ Amos Harel, "Netanyahu's UN Intel Reveal Forces Hezbollah to Reconsider Beirut Missile Sites," *Haaretz*, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-between-palestinians-and-hezbollah-israel-tries-to-steer-clear-of-an-october-surprise-1.6513219>, (September 29, 2018); "Lebanon's President Vows to Confront Any Israeli Aggression," *AP News*, <https://apnews.com/8e34018e19cb4f7699c8e947ba19663f>, (October 02, 2018).

¹⁴ The Times of Israel Staff, and Associated Press, "Nasrallah: Next War with Israel Could Be Waged inside Israeli Territory," *The Times of Israel*, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/nasrallah-next-war-with-israel-could-be-waged-inside-israeli-territory/>, (May 11, 2017).

¹⁵ Harel, "Netanyahu's UN Intel Reveal Forces Hezbollah to Reconsider Beirut Missile Sites."

¹⁶ Anna Ahronheim, "Nasrallah Warns Israel against Continued Construction of Border Wall," *The Jerusalem Post*, <https://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Nasrallah-warns-Israel-against-the-construction-of-border-wall-539334>, (January 21, 2018).

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Although a vast majority of Hezbollah's missiles are believed to lack high-precision technology, Israeli intelligence has shown that missiles Hezbollah is seeking to develop may be capable of striking within 10 meters, or 32 feet, of their target.¹⁷ The potential for this new capability shows why Israel is so concerned about these projects and have attempted to thwart their construction by repeatedly striking the transportation of construction materials in Syria. However, if Hezbollah is able to construct functioning factories – some of which are buried 50 meters beneath civilian infrastructure – Israel may feel it has no choice but to risk all-out war by destroying these factories in Lebanon.¹⁸

Although it is clear that an improved missile capability will be a more effective weapon for Hezbollah in a future war, there is a more substantial reason for Israel to fear precision missile capabilities by Hezbollah. One of Israel's greater, but lesser known, weakness is its nuclear reactors, most notably its Dimona and Nahal Sorek reactors. A strike on one of these reactors could have catastrophic consequences in the surrounding region. International Atomic Energy Commission (IAEC) members have downplayed the significance of an attack on one of these reactors by arguing that even if the reactor were hit, the employees inside would be safe.¹⁹ However, the IAEC fears that an attack on the reactor could be conducted for propaganda purposes, since it is a symbol of Israeli power and might cause widespread panic in the local populace. Furthermore, a 2018 study by four Israeli scientists found that a strike within 35 meters of the reactor could result in a breach of critical systems.²⁰ With these new missile capabilities,

¹⁷ Judah Ari Gross, "IDF Releases Photos of Alleged Hezbollah Missile Sites near Beirut Airport," *The Times of Israel*, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-releases-photos-of-alleged-hezbollah-missile-sites-near-beirut-airport/>, (September 27, 2018).

¹⁸ Avi Issacharoff, "Iran Sets up Underground Rocket Factories in Lebanon – Report," *The Times of Israel*, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/iran-sets-up-underground-rocket-factories-in-lebanon-report/>, (March 13, 2017).

¹⁹ "Zachary Keck, "Israel's Great Weakness: Attack Its Nuclear Reactors," *National Interest*, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/israels-great-weakness-attack-its-nuclear-reactors-28587>, (August 2018).

²⁰ Keck, Israel's Great Weakness: Attack Its Nuclear Reactors."

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Hezbollah, already possessing the strike range almost anywhere in Israel, would have a much greater chance of accurately striking the surrounding area of the reactors.

General Secretary Nasrallah has threatened these reactors, calling this plan Hezbollah's "nuclear bomb" option. Improved accuracy of Hezbollah's missiles presents a serious threat to Israel, whether or not Hezbollah would actually go through with an attack.²¹ Israel has viewed the vulnerability of the reactors as a viable justification for a preemptive strike before, as seen in its justification for launching the Six Day War against Egypt in 1967.²² It is not difficult to see how the current environment between Israel and Hezbollah makes a similar event more likely to occur. Conversely, a strike on Hezbollah's prized missile capabilities will likely make it believe it is threatened enough to respond with a retaliatory attack significant enough to escalate the conflict into a full-scale war.

Conclusion

A war involving Israel, Hezbollah, and their allies would be a disastrous situation that would result in devastating levels of death and destruction and further destabilize the Middle East. The fact that at the present time each country has believed that it would gain little and lose much from a war has so far prevented such a calamity. However, in an environment as tense and dangerous as the Hezbollah-Israeli conflict there is a heightened risk that one party or the other could be pushed over the line and decide that war is advantageous. It is likely that the balance of deterrence will be maintained for the near future, as experts suggest, and Israel, Iran, the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Hezbollah will continue to play their dangerous game of chess.

The best thing Israel and its allies, notably the United States and Saudi Arabia, can do in this tense situation is understand how Hezbollah views its own position financially, politically, and militarily, and how any efforts to defeat Hezbollah will

²¹ Ibid.

²² Avner Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb*, (Columbia University Press, 1998), 266.

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affect those views. Israel and the United States must recognize that successful efforts to dramatically reduce Hezbollah's power have the potential to increase the threat of a Hezbollah attack, rather than decreasing the threat. Israel and Saudi Arabia will do what is necessary to protect its borders, so to prevent escalation the United States must use its unique position to signal to both Israel and Hezbollah that it will not only come to Israel's defense if it is attacked, but it will also not tolerate rogue actions by Israel or Saudi Arabia that might provoke Hezbollah when they are vulnerable. Hezbollah must be convinced that the best way to maintain and increase its power in Lebanon is *not* through military means. It will take extremely tactful diplomacy and strategy, but if Israel and its allies want to maintain the status quo or defeat Hezbollah without a full-scale war, they will need to work slowly to chip away at Hezbollah's stranglehold over Lebanon so as to not allow them to believe their only recourse is war.

Instead of assuming a future war will be started by accident, experts and analysts should work hard to identify exactly what type of events could influence the leaders involved to choose war, as well as what measures can prevent these events from occurring or escalating into war. This should include examining scenarios outside immediate military activities, such as economics and politics, and from different angles, such as Saudi Arabia's involvement in the conflict, in order to give decisionmakers the best chances to avoid war. Most importantly, as likely as war may seem, anyone involved should remember that nothing in history is inevitable.

Motivations of an Ideologue: A Case Study of Cuban Spy Ana Belen Montes

Lance Moore

This paper discusses the unique motivations of spy Ana Belen Montes, former military analyst for the DIA who spied on behalf of the Cuban government for over 16 years. The paper highlights the differences between Montes and other notable American spies such as Aldrich Ames or Robert Hanssen. Montes was a leading and well-respected expert on U.S. policy towards Cuba, and was a true ideologue in the sense that she sold secrets not for money or disgruntlement towards her career, but because she was fighting the good fight against unfair perceived U.S. policy towards Cuba.

When seeking to understand why a person entrusted with secrets betrays those secrets to an adversary, the four distinct driving factors the U.S. Intelligence Community (USIC) turns to are represented in the acronym M.I.C.E.: money, ideology, compromise (coercion), and ego. America's most notorious traitors, the likes of Aldrich Ames at the CIA and Robert Hanssen at the FBI, encapsulate a trend over the last three decades of mostly middle-aged, cash-strapped, disgruntled white men who were passed over for promotion one too many times and betrayed their country. In recent history, their falls from grace enveloped various elements of M.I.C.E. As New York Times writer Scott Shane describes, "in the complex human equation that produces a turncoat, rarely is only one

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motive at play,”¹ and the act of spying for Ames and Hanssen became engrossed in the pettiness of money and anger towards a lack of recognition.

Ana Belen Montes, former military analyst for the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) and sixteen-year spy for the Cuban intelligence service, Dirección General de Inteligencia (DGI), was driven by one predominate factor: ideology. Unlike American spies before her, Ana Montes represents a new era of betrayal and differs from these previous traitors in three significant ways: the reasons why Montes spied, the tradecraft she employed to pass sensitive classified information to her DGI handlers, and her uniqueness represents the ardent danger true ideologues like Montes pose to U.S. national security for years to come.

If the framework of ideology is based on a person’s systems and values which suit their own self-image, then Montes’ reason for spying is centered around the belief that she saw herself as a heroine serving those who could not help themselves. John Irvin, in a 2015 article about Ana Montes, described the psychological elements of ideology as such, “ideology is not the driver, but rather the vehicle which we express our own self-concept and confirm our established world view,”² and concludes, “ideology is more about affirmation than enlightenment.” For Montes, this was not entirely true, as she saw herself more as a pure champion for her perceived injustice of the Reagan’s administration policies towards Latin America. This core belief was engrained during her graduate career at John’s Hopkins School of Advanced Studies, where her outspoken rhetoric got her the attention of the DGI, and she decided to accept recruitment as an agent of the Cuban government.

¹ Scott Shane. “A Spy’s Motivation: For Love of Another Country. The New York Times. April 20th, 2008

² John Irvine. *The Ideological Spy: Ana Montes and the Havana Starbucks*. National Office For Intelligence Reconciliation. <https://noir4usa.org/the-ideological-spy-ana-montes-and-the-havana-starbucks/>. January 6th, 2015.

Montes worked her way up at the DIA, becoming known as the “queen of Cuba” around the USIC. The preeminent expert on Cuban policy, she was also developing a deepened disgust of U.S. policy toward Cuba. If her motivation as a spy for the DGI was not cemented before, it became more so during her career. Retired CIA operations officer Michael Sulick highlighted her strongly held justification for spying in his novel, *American Spies*, by using her own words: “I believe our government’s policy towards Cuba is cruel and unfair, profoundly unneighborly, and I felt morally obligated to help defend the island itself from our efforts to impose our values and political system on it.”³ Her motivation turned to action and the act of spying ultimately became the crux of her mission as justifiable means to an end.

This mindset led Montes to use her seat at the head of the table of Latin American intelligence specialists in the USIC to help shape perception and U.S. policy toward Cuba from the inside, as she herself contributed to countless intelligence estimates which served her motivations as a spy for the DGI. Montes was a foot soldier for Fidel Castro. “She spied out of conviction that Fidel Castro was both the savior of the Cuban people and champion of oppressed masses across the world, particularly in Latin America.”⁴ Montes was the embodiment of her ideological belief as she carried out her duties as a Cuban spy diligently and effectively.

The DGI’s recruitment of Montes was both dangerous and critical in the sense that they recruited an asset driven by a deep-seeded ideology and developed an asset who took it upon herself to find placement in an agency which gave her unparalleled access to sensitive information. Not only was Montes close to U.S. secrets—she helped to develop them. Furthermore, her access wasn’t just limited to that of the DIA.

³ Michael J. Sulick. *American Spies: Espionage Against the United States from the Cold War to Present*. Chapter 24. Washington, DC. Georgetown University Press, 2013.

⁴ Scott W. Carmichael. *True Believer*. Chapter 19. Naval Institute Press. Annapolis MD. 2007.

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Montes was also privy to intelligence sharing that occurred daily throughout the entire USIC because of her position and status at the DIA.

This influential position provided Montes with valuable access from which she employed unique tradecraft to deliver stolen information to the DGI. First, Montes never actually took any documents from DIA headquarters, as described in an FBI report on Montes: “To escape detection, Montes never removed documents from work, electronically or hard copy. She kept the details in her head and went home and typed them up on her laptop.”⁵ Once she placed these typed up notes on an encrypted disk, the DGI would then send her instructions via short-wave radio to set meeting to acquire the disks. Second, Montes never took any significant money over the course of her espionage, except for small reimbursements for operational expenses. Montes never lived beyond her means, never made flashy purchases, or drew attention to herself.

Montes’ ideological motivations kept her free from the weaknesses of ideology-driven tradecraft exhibited by past agents, such as Ames and Hanssen, whose greed, arrogance, and inept sloppiness brought about their demise. Conversely, Montes employed tradecraft that kept a low-profile, while maintaining her influential standing in the USIC throughout the course of her tenure with the DIA.

Montes’ ability to contribute intelligence to the DGI without detection makes her former-lauded position in the USIC most alarming. This information was not just strictly in the possession of the Cuban government after her unauthorized disclosures. It is likely to have made its way into the hands of countries hostile to the U.S. that maintain close or friendly relations with Cuba: Russia, China, Iran, Libya, and even North Korea. Carmichael, in a 2007 *Spy Cast* interview at the Spy Museum with Peter Ernest, a former career operations officer for the CIA, briefly highlighted the possibility and

⁵ FBI Famous Cases and Criminals. *Ana Montes: Cuban Spy*.
<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/ana-montes-cuba-spy>.

altogether likelihood of extensive damage done by Montes not just related to what she gave to Cuba: “The issue was not just her spying for Cuba, but also who the Cubans gave the information to.”⁶ The damage done was not just solely where the information ended up, but it also revealed the identities of undercover intelligence officers, various critical intelligence projects, and U.S. strategic planning in Cuba.

What set apart Montes from others on the long list of American spies is that she had a distinguished privilege of access, ideological motivation not susceptible to a finite reward system such as money, and most importantly, was able to directly influence U.S. policy toward Cuba as the leading expert in theUSIC. Carmichael remarks upon this point in *True Believer*: “What makes Ana Montes so extraordinary is that she not only had access to the United States’ innermost secrets but also actually *created* many of the secrets—the highly classified assessments we thought we knew about Cuba.”⁷ Every decision she had ever made, every assessment she contributed too, and every time she imposed her influence as a leading expert on Cuba was questioned after her arrest and eventual incarceration. Ames and Hanssen also had privileged access that made them valuable assets, but what made Montes unique is that she was a spy from day one.

From the moment she first was recruited while at John’s Hopkins, she was both an agent of the DGI and an agent of her convictions. Montes broke the Cold War era trend of middle-aged disgruntled men needing money and appreciation due to unfulfilling work dynamics. She was a woman, accepted only a small a money, had an ideological code, and for a time was at the top of her field within theUSIC. Carmichael summed up

⁶ Spycast- Spy Museum. *Cuban Intelligence and the Ana Montes Spy Case- Interview with Scott Carmichael*. <https://www.spymuseum.org/exhibition-experiences/online-exhibits/agent-storm/listen-to-the-audio/episode/cuban-intelligence-and-the-ana-montes-spy-case/>. August 1st, 2007.

⁷ Scott W. Carmichael, *True Believer*

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Montes as a spy set apart from the rest: “Ana was not a foolish innocent who helplessly fell into someone’s trap. She did not enter the business of espionage without realizing what she was doing. Once she began spying, she was truly a master spy.”⁸

Montes represents the dire reality of penetration into the U.S. government at its highest levels. Ideologues who penetrate the U.S. government or the USIC may pose an even greater threat than those who spy for money, for feeling slighted at work, or for what they see as the thrill of spying. The Ames and Hanssen cases show two individuals who knew at some point that they would eventually get caught and were willing to risk getting caught to accept monetary rewards from their handlers. Ana Montes was an anomaly in the sense that she did not fit the mold of the standard American spy. Armed with a misguided sense of idealism and a conviction to serve those ideals she was beholden too; she became one of the most infamous espionage cases in modern times. She was the best at her craft, and she knew it. The question is: will there be another Ana Montes... and are we ready?

⁸ *Ibid*