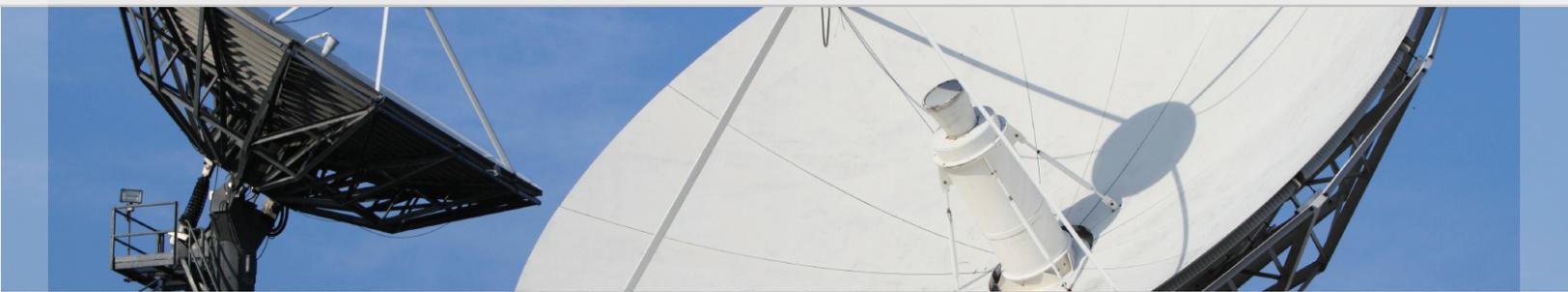


CONFRONTATION OR COLLABORATION?  
CONGRESS AND THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY



TERRORIST SAFEHAVENS AND THE  
INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY

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# TERRORIST SAFEHAVENS AND THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY

The attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup> highlighted that certain areas of the world without direct state control pose a direct threat to national security. These ungoverned areas—commonly referred to as safehavens—can provide terrorists and other adversaries with the space necessary to plot and train for attacks.

This memo provides new members of Congress with an overview of safehavens, as well as potential ways in which the Intelligence Community can support U.S. policymakers to mitigate the threat from these areas.

## What are Safehavens?

The German political theorist Max Weber defined a nation-state as “a community that claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory.” However, there are sections of certain countries that for one reason or another lie beyond the reach of that nation’s security forces. These parts of the world remain ungoverned or under-governed, potentially allowing extremists to organize, plan, raise funds, communicate, recruit, train, and operate in relative security.

Ungoverned spaces have long challenged U.S. interests. Despite the efforts of the local security forces, areas nominally controlled by Lebanon, Algeria, and Colombia have sheltered extremist groups that have attacked U.S. interests in the past. Pakistan, Indonesia, the Philippines, and large swaths of Africa present similar challenges today.

- The World Bank has labeled 26 countries as “fragile” or fertile ground for terrorism, armed conflict, and epidemic disease.
- Small sections of otherwise stable states could also be added to this list: for instance, the “tri-border region” between Argentina, Paraguay and Brazil remains an area where extremist groups such as Hizballah operate relatively openly.

## Case Study: Pakistan

A closer look at northwestern Pakistan in particular sheds light on the complexity of dealing with the safehavens.

Northwest Pakistan has been considered a safehaven for terrorists since December 2001, when the fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan pushed many of its members, along with members of al-Qaeda, across the border into Pakistan. Specifically, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in Pakistan—a politically chaotic area that mostly functions beyond the reach of Pakistani civil and military forces—have become the center of activity for al-Qaeda and other militants seeking not only to attack U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan, but also to launch operations in other countries as well.

- Most significant terror plots in Great Britain since 9/11 have had a Pakistan-based connection.

- Sovereignty concerns—and the perceived political fallout associated with violating Pakistani national borders—have prevented U.S. forces based in the region from mounting a systematic campaign to eradicate the extremist presence inside the FATA.

The Pakistan case also illustrates the predicament of relying upon local security services.

- Recent news reports suggest a growing body of evidence linking Pakistani intelligence to militant groups, some of which are responsible for attacks on U.S. interests in Afghanistan and elsewhere.
- Despite U.S. efforts to train and equip Pakistan's military to counteract the threat posed by extremists in the FATA, Pakistan has had little success in bringing the area under control.

## **The Intelligence Community's Role in Eliminating Safehavens**

The U.S. Intelligence Community (IC) plays an important role in penetrating and denying safehavens to our adversaries in several ways:

### **Partnering with Liaison Services**

The IC maintains liaison relationships with numerous other intelligence and security services around the world. In some cases, working with local services generates significant benefits for the U.S., as local services will have detailed knowledge, assets, and resources that the U.S. requires to pursue its national security interests.

- For example, the U.S. has worked with Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI) for many years—first against the Soviets during the 1980s in Afghanistan, and more recently against al-Qaeda. ISI's local knowledge of Pakistan and Afghanistan has proved invaluable and has led to the capture or killing of numerous al-Qaeda fighters within these and other safehavens.

### **Building Local Capacity**

The IC has long worked with other countries' intelligence and security services to help make them more capable of monitoring and tracking terrorist activities within their borders. These efforts have led to several successful disruptions of terrorist attacks, such as in Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Such training programs can also help to ensure that governments can exercise legitimate control over their territories.

- For example, the Colombian government, with extensive U.S. cooperation, freed a group of hostages held by the leftist group Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC) in an ungoverned part of the country.

### **Establishing Persistent Surveillance of Ungoverned Spaces**

Advances in Imagery, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) platforms in the past decade have enabled the IC to monitor denied areas more effectively than in previous eras. Long loiter times and live video feeds—as well as the ability to identify, designate, and engage ground targets—allow unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to monitor areas normally beyond U.S. and local government control.

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