



# Department of Justice

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ADDRESS

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OF

THE HONORABLE EDWIN MEESE III  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

BEFORE

THE AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN BELGIUM  
THE AMERICAN CLUB OF BRUSSELS  
THE AMERICAN AND COMMON MARKET CLUB  
THE ASSOCIATION BELGO-AMERICAN

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THE PALACE HOTEL  
BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

NOTE: Because Mr. Meese often speaks from notes, the speech as delivered may vary from this text. However, he stands behind this speech as printed.

Good afternoon. It's a pleasure to be here in Brussels, an old city of charm and elegance, yet a city with a modern and cosmopolitan side, with the headquarters of the European Community as well as of NATO.

I'd like to talk with you for a while this afternoon about a subject that has been a major concern throughout the world for the past several years, but which is equally current today. More than any other threat to the peace and security of the free nations of the West, it ranks as a spector that can strike at any time. It can result in the death or serious injury of innocent men, women and children doing nothing more than going about their daily business. It can be, and often is, brutal in its conception and execution. Its victims are nearly always selected at random, and suffer simply because some group wants to attract attention of the most horrible sort to their cause. The subject, of course, is terrorism.

I don't have to tell anyone here about the way in which the fear of terrorism can affect one's daily life. At various times in recent years, terrorist incidents have at once horrified the civilized world, caused upheavals in travel patterns and tourism, and in at least one instance, that of Lebanon, have reduced an entire country to a state of anarchy almost unimaginable to those of us in the West. But terrorism has also moved us to take steps to protect society from its horrors, even if we have in the past sometimes moved a bit slowly.

In the United States, we have seen a significant decline in terrorist activity in recent years. Our geographical isolation,

together with strengthened laws and practices governing entry into the U.S. and a strong domestic counter-terrorism program conducted by the FBI, have all combined to give us a sharply diminished rate of terrorist incidents in recent years.

Here in Europe, the number of terrorist incidents occurring in 1986 was down significantly, thanks in large measure to the greatly improved security measures that have been taken, and the closer cooperation that exists among members of the European Community.

Nevertheless, the problem remains severe. A terrorist bombing campaign in France last year took a dozen lives and caused the injuries of hundreds of innocent bystanders. The Red Brigades in Italy, the Red Army Faction in West Germany, and dozens of smaller, less well-known terrorist groups continue to pose a deadly threat. Middle Eastern terrorist groups, moreover, are responsible for many of these attacks, and their origins and sponsors are often murky at best. Their ruthlessness, however, is not in doubt.

Our response to the terrorist threat must include many steps. Today I would like to discuss some of these measures under three basic categories. First, we must emphasize education. The world must understand the true nature of terrorism before we can develop the popular support necessary to combat it. Second, we must enhance the anti-terrorist capabilities of law enforcement agencies in every nation of the

West. Third, we must establish effective cooperation among all of the affected nations, so that terrorists have no place to hide.

Education may not seem like an especially important measure to take when compared with some of the more sophisticated counter-terrorist techniques we employ. But it is fundamental. If, for example, our citizens accept the terrorists' claim that they are only utilizing some sort of legitimate methods of advancing political goals, we will never be able to bring a halt to the threat it presents.

It is crucial that we, and our citizens, view terrorism for what it is. I think that Israel's Ambassador to the United Nations, Benjamin Netanyahu, has perhaps the best definition that I've heard. He has personal knowledge of the toll that terrorism can take; his brother was the courageous lieutenant colonel who led the raid on Entebbe and who was killed during that raid. He defines terrorism as "the deliberate and systematic murder, maiming and menacing of the innocent to inspire fear for political ends." Ladies and gentlemen, there can never be ends sufficiently noble to justify means such as these.

Terrorists do not threaten just a nation or a people or an individual. They are literally at war with the rule of law, with the norms and ideals of civilization itself.

I believe that you will all appreciate that the rule of law is our common heritage, not just in matters of law enforcement or

terrorism, but in political institutions, commerce and daily activity among our citizens. In all that we do, it is the basis for the peaceful conduct of our daily lives, and it is basic to our strength, our prosperity and our happiness. It is essential to the freedom that we enjoy. Without the rule of law we would have chaos in every segment of our lives. It is a legacy we may trace all the way back to the popular assemblies of ancient Greece. It is fundamental to the free, democratic governments that guarantee our liberties, in Belgium, in the United States, and the other nations of the free world. It is a promise we make to generations of our children yet unborn. It is a promise we seek to make to democracies just being born, struggling through their infancy, as well as to democracies whose birth still lies in the future.

Terrorism involves criminal acts, pure and simple. Terrorist incidents must be treated as the violent crimes they are and must be punished as such. Kidnapping, murder, assault: all of these are criminal acts in every civilized nation. They cannot be made more palatable, or less criminal, by the spurious claim of political motivation.

Our determination to treat terrorism as clearly criminal behavior is reflected in the efforts to limit the "political exception" in our bilateral extradition treaties with other nations so that it will not apply to terrorist acts. This was an especially sensitive problem in the last year or two between the

United States and Great Britain. Despite the best efforts of our Justice Department attorneys, in four separate cases, U.S. courts had ruled that Irish Republican Army terrorists could not be sent back to Britain to stand trial because of a claim that their motives were political. It was necessary to clarify the difference between terrorist crime and legitimate political activity. Last year, the United States and the United Kingdom completed changes to our extradition treaty that eliminate the so-called political offense exception for violent crimes.

Yesterday, here in Brussels, I had the privilege of signing a new extradition treaty between the United States and Belgium. It, too, takes an important step toward diminishing the availability of the political exception by imposing limits contained in the Supplementary Extradition Treaty to Promote the Repression of Terrorism, which I signed with Minister Gol in Washington a little more than a month ago.

The underlying premise of these efforts is an important one: where there is democracy and a responsive judicial system, we do not, and we must not, accept violence as a legitimate method of achieving political change. We reject the notion that there may be "good causes" that justify violent acts against a democratic government.

Our second weapon against terrorism is somewhat technical in nature, but extremely important. In the United States in recent years, we have worked hard to expand the resources and

capabilities of our legal and law enforcement agencies to combat terrorism. This effort has been very broad. It includes not only the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Secret Service and the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, but also local agencies such as city and state police and sheriff's departments, working together with federal agencies to be prepared for an effective response to terrorist incidents.

Follow-through by prosecutors is every bit as important as investigation. We have expanded the role of lawyers in our criminal division even as we have enhanced training for investigators and law enforcement personnel. We have had legal experts developing their expertise in dealing with terrorism cases, and have made good use of them both at home and abroad.

As a result of these efforts, and frankly, a little luck as well, the number of terrorist incidents occurring within the United States dropped from 112 in 1977 to just 7 in 1985 and 17 in 1986. In 1985 alone, the FBI, through its efforts, detected and prevented 23 separate terrorist acts within the borders of the United States and U.S. agencies prevented more than a hundred incidents abroad. Similar preventive actions continued throughout 1986.

Ultimately, however, the threat of worldwide terrorism cannot be halted without the third element I mentioned earlier: international cooperation. There must be no haven for the perpetrators of terror anywhere in the civilized world.

The bilateral extradition treaties I mentioned earlier are a crucial part of the picture. We have devoted considerable energy in recent years to putting into place the necessary legal framework to accomplish the arrest, indictment, extradition and prosecution of terrorists who have been captured abroad. Over the past decade, our Congress has passed a variety of important legislation expanding our jurisdiction over terrorist acts committed against our citizens overseas. We do this in a way that does not conflict with or interfere with the legitimate law enforcement activities of other countries, but rather in a manner that complements their efforts.

The United States has strongly supported the modification of Interpol regulations to allow this international police organization of 142 countries to enter the fight against international terrorism.

We have been very happy to see other international efforts made in the counter-terrorism arena, especially among the nations of the European Community, where closer cooperation in areas of intelligence, communication, and immigration control has contributed to the effectiveness of the anti-terrorist effort. We are especially pleased at efforts undertaken by the Trevi Ministers, the organization of European Community law enforcement ministers, during the chairmanship of Justice Minister Gol this year. Jean Gol has been an effective leader in dealing with the terrorist threat within Belgium for some time. He has been

influential among his peers within the EC, with solid and positive accomplishments.

As Attorney General of the United States, I am grateful for the opportunity to have continuing, informal contact with the Trevi Group. My trip here this week marks the third consecutive occasion on which I have had the privilege of consulting with the Trevi leaders and to meet with individual ministers who are members of the group during their regular semi-annual meeting. We place a high value on these contacts, and believe strongly in the sort of international cooperation these gatherings foster.

The Trevi Group, founded more than a decade ago, has expanded its meetings and its activities so that today it is a very hard-working group of top officials dedicated to coordinated action against terrorism.

Considerable progress has been made throughout civilized nations during the past few years in several critical areas of anti-terrorist activity. Border control, including the control of visas and travelers, has been improved. Not more than a few years ago, it was easy for a terrorist suspect to be excluded from one western European country, only to find it simple to gain entry into other countries nearby. Today, cooperation has reached the point where a person barred from one country is likewise barred from the rest. This development is the product of a systematic sharing of intelligence and exchange of information about terrorist suspects, as well as information

about terrorist tactics and methods, including the means of funding terrorist activities.

We have seen important progress in this area recently. On January 12, Italian authorities arrested a Lebanese terrorist as he tried to smuggle explosives through the Milan airport. He was subsequently tried and sentenced to 13 years in jail.

The next day, German authorities, acting on a U.S. international "wanted" notice, arrested another Lebanese terrorist, Mohammed Hamadei, as he arrived from Lebanon with explosives. Hamadei is wanted by the United States for his alleged participation in the hijacking of TWA flight 847 two years ago. He is accused of the brutal murder of an American citizen during that incident. We have formerly asked the Federal Republic of Germany to extradite Hamadei to the United States for trial on charges of murder, hijacking, and other serious criminal charges.

While talking about the progress that has been made, I certainly do not intend to underestimate the problem or the work yet to be done. The fact that terrorist incidents continue to occur -- that they continue to cost innocent lives and pose a significant threat to nations throughout the world -- is proof enough that we still have much to do. As terrorist organizations change their targets and shift their tactics, we cannot simply be content with our past successes. We must be ready to counteract new threats and new means of attack.

Perhaps the most important requirement of democratic governments in our fight against terrorism is the necessity of protecting the public without violating fundamental principles of liberty. Totalitarian regimes can choke off more readily any threat to order and security, since repressive measures are common to their way of life.

In a free and open society, such measures are not only intolerable, but would serve to advance the terrorist cause by providing the source for dissention, disaffection, and ultimately, disloyalty.

Preserving the freedom and guaranteeing the protection of human rights is a political as well as a moral imperative.

In a free society, it will always be possible for the ruthless and unprincipled to take advantage of our freedoms in order to commit lawless acts. Our response must be measured, and must be carefully considered in a way that protects liberty while protecting the safety of our citizens.

Such a response requires a critical element: political will. This is something that is easy to talk about, yet difficult sometimes to employ. The terrorist, we must remember, is betting that he can dissolve our will to resist in a wave of fear. To prove him wrong requires determination and courage.

I spoke earlier about the fact that terrorism is a serious threat to the rule of law. It is important to remember that the converse is also true: that the rule of law is a serious threat

to the practice of terrorism. But the rule of law will prove an effective weapon only to the degree that we have the political will to make use of it.

The good news is that the rule of law has proven more and more effective in the fight against terrorism, as democratic governments start using it.

- In October, British courts found Nazir Hindawi guilty of trying to blow up an El Al aircraft. He was sentenced to 45 years in prison.
- In November, Hindawi's brother was sentenced to 14 years in jail by a Berlin court. He had bombed a German-Arab Friendship Society office in Berlin.
- A Canadian court sentenced two Sikh terrorists to life imprisonment in January for attempting to bomb an Air India plane flying from New York to London. By the way, this case was a good example of excellent international cooperation, in this case between the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the FBI.
- In March, a French court found the notorious Lebanese terrorist George Ibrahim Abdullah guilty of murdering American and Israeli diplomats. He was sentenced to life in prison.
- Last month, the Japanese Supreme Court upheld death sentences against terrorists convicted of conducting a bombing campaign ten years ago.

During 1987, there will be more trials of terrorists throughout the world -- in Vienna, Madrid, Rome, Ankara and Karachi. In all of these cases, we trust that the rule of law will continue to prove a vital and effective tool in the war on terrorism.

Ultimately, our battle against terrorism will be won through the exercise of this heavy responsibility in a way that ensures that terrorism will have no refuge in a civilized world; that through patience, skill, determination and unswerving loyalty to the rule of law we will prevail over those who seek to destroy us and our legacy.

Thank you.