



National Strategy for Combating Terrorism: Background and Issues for Congress

Raphael F. Perl

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National Strategy for Combating Terrorism: Background and Issues for Congress Raphael F. Perl On September 5, 2006, the White House released the 2006 National Strategy for Combating Terrorism. This report examines the Strategy in the context of its predecessor, released in 2003, and identifies issues and options for consideration by Congress.

The 2006 National Strategy for Combating Terrorism provides a framework for protecting the United States and its allies from terrorist attacks. Core components of the Strategy are to disrupt and disable terrorist networks across the globe, and foster international cooperation in these efforts. Creating a global intolerance of terrorism is central as well.

The 2006 Strategy differs from the 2003 version primarily in that it sets different priorities for the strategic elements designed to achieve its goals. Perhaps most significant of these differences is a major increase in emphasis on democratization as a method of combating terrorism.

Additionally, the 2006 strategy places greater emphasis on denying terrorists sanctuary in underdeveloped, failed, and rogue states. The use of economic and political tools to strengthen nations vulnerable to the spread of terrorist influence appears to receive less emphasis in the 2006 Strategy than in the 2003 version. Inherent in the National Strategy are a number of issues for Congress. These include (1) democratization as a counterterrorism strategy; (2) the validity of the Strategy's assumptions about terrorists; (3) whether the Strategy adequately addresses the situation in Iraq including the U.S. presence there as a catalyst for international terrorism; (4) the Strategy's effectiveness against rogue states; (5) the degree to which the Strategy addresses threats reflected in recent National Intelligence Estimates; (6) mitigating extremist indoctrination of the young; and (7) the efficacy of public diplomacy. To the degree that the 2006 National Strategy for Combating Terrorism may not adequately address the importance of these and other relevant factors, some adjustment of the strategy and its implementation may be warranted.

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