Day 1- April 3, 2006

Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism - Robert Pape, Department of Political Science, University of Chicago

Pape discussed the Chicago Project on Suicide Terrorism and provided an overall analysis of its findings, which support the notion that suicide terrorist attacks are not conducted to serve some religious fundamental goal, but rather have a secular and political goal of compelling modern democracies to withdraw their military forces from territories that the perpetrators view as their homeland. Based on this, he maintains that solely military responses are not the answer. Though such operations may result in some "success" in the short term, they do not address the underlying root cause of the attacks, and can perpetuate such occurrences in the long term (i.e. revenge). A response will need to be multi-faceted to include improved homeland security, greater involvement in nation building, and increased energy independence.

Pape also refuted some other common misconceptions about suicide terrorists. Suicide terrorism is not primarily a product of Islamic fundamentalism. The Tamil Tigers, a secular group with a Marxist ideology, for example, has conducted more attacks than any other group. 95% of the attacks since 1980 are part of a larger campaign by militant organizations with significant public support. Every suicide terror campaign has had the goal of compelling modern democracies to withdraw their military forces from a territory. For example, Al Qaeda-affiliated suicide terror attacks in Saudi Arabia fit this profile (expulsion of forces from Persian Gulf). Suicide terrorism is on the rise because terrorist have learned it's effective. The US, among other democracies, makes concessions to suicide terrorists. Suicide terrorists are not mainly men who are poor and uneducated. They are largely politically active, from middle class backgrounds, with high school or college educations (some in fact, are teachers). Some are also women (examples were given from India, the IRA and Palestine).

His source for these conclusions is a review of his 400+ entry data set of all suicide terrorist attacks since 1980 until 2004, which leverages such diverse sources as terrorist

group documents/literature, lists of terrorist groups from US and foreign governments, government publications, media reports, and international field research in Beirut and Cairo. Each source of information had to be verified and corroborated by at least two other sources for it to be included into the data set.

Interesting insights from the Q/A includes:

- Suicide terrorism database and analysis can aid in threat anticipation in two ways:
    - help ground troops, the COCOMs (Combatant Commanders) and others to better understand some of the possibly threatening conditions in their AOR (Area of Responsibility), based on historical precedence of suicide terrorism
    - help predict campaigns (but not single attacks)

- The case was made that suicide terrorism with WMD is unlikely. If a group acquires one or a few nuclear weapons, they will still be a rare asset that the group may or may not want to strategically use.