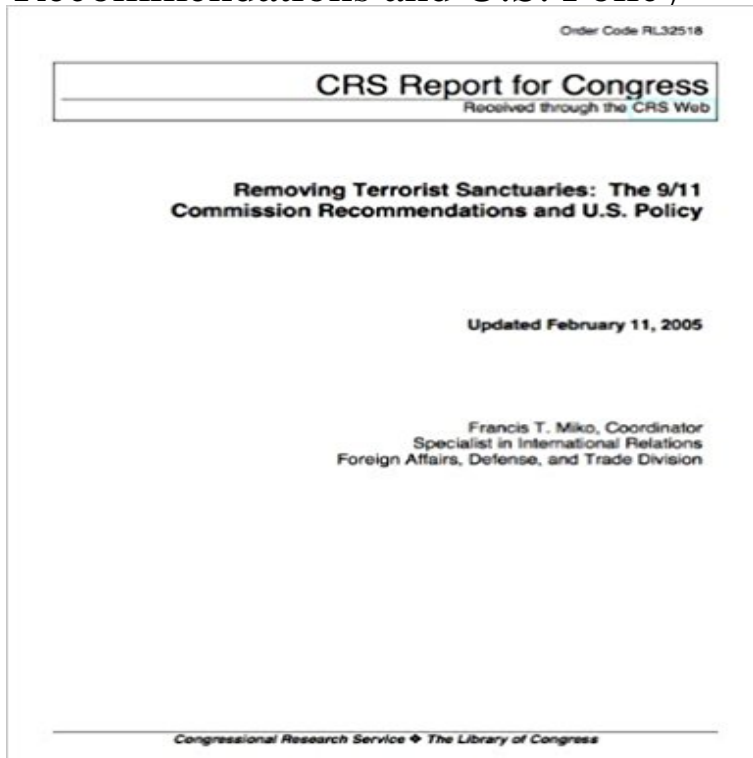


Removing Terrorist Sanctuaries: Recommendations and U.S. Policy

The 9/11 Commission



The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (the 9/11 Commission) issued its final report on July 19, 2004. A major recommendation in the report was that the U.S. government should identify and prioritize actual or potential terrorist sanctuaries and, for each, to employ a realistic strategy to keep possible terrorists insecure and on the run, using all elements of national power. U.S. strategy to combat global terrorism, even prior to 9/11, included efforts to deny sanctuary to terrorist groups by isolating and applying pressure on states that sponsor or acquiesce to terrorists on their territory and by strengthening the counterterrorism capabilities of countries that cooperate with the United States but need help. For years, U.S. officials exerted considerable diplomatic pressure on the Taliban government to expel Al Qaeda from Afghanistan. The United States also pressed the government of Pakistan to crack down on terrorist sanctuaries within its own borders and to use its influence with its then Taliban ally. These efforts were largely unsuccessful until the 9/11 attacks caused many governments to change their approach and cooperate more extensively with the United States in the fight against terrorism. After 9/11, U.S. efforts to deny terrorists sanctuary were substantially increased worldwide. The National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, released by the White House on February 14, 2003, placed strong emphasis on closing down terrorist sanctuaries, using all available instruments (military force, law enforcement, diplomacy, economic assistance, etc.). The strategy report addressed the need to eliminate conditions that produce terrorist sanctuaries, especially in failed states. The 9/11 Commission identified six primary regions that serve or could serve as terrorist sanctuaries. These included Western Pakistan and the Pakistan- Afghanistan

border region; southern or western Afghanistan; the Arabian Peninsula, especially Saudi Arabia and Yemen, and the nearby Horn of Africa, including Somalia and extending southwest into Kenya; Southeast Asia, from Thailand to the southern Philippines to Indonesia; West Africa, including Nigeria and Mali; and European cities with expatriate Muslim communities. In all of these regions, the United States and its allies have mounted campaigns to deny safe havens for terrorists. A number of bills were introduced in Congress in 2004 to implement the 9/11 Commission recommendations and related measures. P.L. 108-458, the National Intelligence Reform Act of 2004, with language regarding terrorist sanctuaries, was signed into law on December 17, 2004. The 109th Congress is likely to address terrorist sanctuaries in its authorization and appropriations legislation, as well as in its oversight of the global war on terrorism. This report analyzes U.S. policies targeting terrorist sanctuaries in countries and regions highlighted in the 9/11 Commission recommendations. It may be updated as developments warrant.

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