

Terrorism in Taiwan, Republic of China

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Abbreviations:

AEC = Atomic Energy Council
CDC = Center for Disease Control
DMAT = Disaster Medical Assistance Teams
DOH = Department of Health
EMS = Emergency Medical Services
EMT = Emergency Medical Technician
EPA = Environmental Protection Agency
HazMat = hazardous materials
KMT = Kuomintang (Nationalist Party)
MND = Ministry of National Defense
NDMAT = National Disaster Medical Assistance Teams
NFA = National Fire Administration
NSB = National Security Bureau
PR China = People's Republic of China
ROC = Republic of China
US = United States of America
USAR = Urban Search and Rescue

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Abstract

The Republic of China on the island of Taiwan has experienced at least 20 terrorist events since 1979, including 13 aircraft hijackings and five bombings. Factors responsible for the relatively small burden of terrorism on Taiwan in the past include tight military control over political dissent until 1987, a warming relationship with the People's Republic of China in the 1990s, political inclusion of major internal cultural groups, geographic isolation, and a lack of other significant international enemies. Nevertheless, today Taiwan faces a new prospect of terrorism by adversaries of the United States and its allies and by an international paradigm shift in the types of weapons used by terrorists.

National emergency management has been enhanced significantly since the Ji Ji earthquake in 1999, including the assignment of lead government agencies to the planning and preparedness for specific types of terrorist events involving nuclear, biological, and/or chemical releases. Other significant improvements at the operations level, include the establishment of two national disaster medical assistance teams, four urban search and rescue teams, 13 local disaster medical assistance teams, and eight chemical emergency response hospitals. Future challenges include improving the coordination of inter-agency response at the national level and the quantity and quality of local disaster response assets.

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Introduction

The Republic of China (ROC), with a current population of 23 million, is located on the island of Taiwan, 185 km (112 mi) off the southeast coast of mainland China, across the Taiwan Straits (Figure 1).¹ The island, formerly known as Formosa, was a colony of Japan after 1895, and was returned to Chinese sovereignty in 1945 at the end of World War II. In 1949, it became the last refuge for the government of the Republic of China under General Chiang Kai-Shek and the Kuomintang (KMT; Nationalist party), when Communists took over mainland China and proclaimed the People's Republic of China (PR

China). During the next 40 years, Taiwanese politics were colored heavily by ongoing conflict between the mainland and the island. As a result, Taiwan was ruled by the military until 14 July 1987, when martial law was formally lifted by Chiang Ching-Kuo, eldest son of Chiang Kai-Shek. As the Cold War abated in the early 1990s, cross-strait tensions eased, and today, Taiwan, ROC is enjoying a period of relative peace.

Burden of Terrorism in Taiwan, Republic of China

Taiwan has experienced at least 20 terrorist events since 1979, including



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Figure 1—Map of Republic of China (Taiwan) (printed with permission)

13 aircraft hijackings and five bombings (Table 1).² Few victims were killed or injured in these events, underscoring the relatively small impact that terrorism has had on the country. Several reasons exist for the relatively small burden of terrorism in Taiwan: (1) Tight military control over political dissent until 1987; (2) A democratic government that has included the two major cultural groups in Taiwan since 1988; (3) Cooling of tension between Taiwan and the PR China since the early 1990s; and (4) Geographic isolation with a lack of other significant international enemies.

Prior to 1987, terrorism was largely a consequence of internal political strife in Taiwan and the ongoing conflict between the Communists and the KMT. During this early period, Taiwan was ruled under martial law, and terrorist acts were committed primarily by exiled political dissidents or secret police from the ruling regime. Little information about these incidents is available in the open literature.

Although Taiwan has three major cultural groups—Taiwanese, Mainland Chinese, and non-Chinese aborigines—cultural heterogeneity has not resulted in terrorism. Native Taiwanese descendants from Chinese immigrants in the 18th and 19th centuries, comprise about 80% of the population, and continue to speak the dialect of their ancestors from Fukien Province. “Mainlanders” and their descendants who arrived in Taiwan in 1949, form the second largest group of >2 million. This group successfully

promoted Mandarin as Taiwan’s official language. About 2% of the population are non-Chinese aborigines, who collectively speak 13 different languages, which are thought to be related to Malayo-Polynesian languages. Modern politics in the Republic of China was dominated by the mainlanders until the sudden death of Chiang Ching-Kuo in 1988. With the ascension to the presidency of Vice-President Lee Teng-Hui, a native Taiwanese, the influence of the mainlanders waned, and today, both major cultural groups share political power. Taiwan presently has a democratic government, and its people have the right to elect their own leaders, making the likelihood of indigenous terrorism remote.

The early 1990s brought an end to the Cold War. During this transition period, Taiwan experienced a multitude of aircraft hijackings, in which airplanes flying routes between mainland cities were hijacked to Taiwan by individuals fleeing the PR China. The first hijackers were welcomed as heroes against communism, but as the hijackings continued, the Taiwanese government began treating the hijackers as criminals, and routinely returned the passengers to the PR China. Closer economic ties between Taiwan and the PR China in the 1990s further reduced cross-strait tension. Today, Taiwanese citizens enjoy unlimited access to travel and commerce in the PR China. However, despite an improved relationship with the mainland, the Taiwanese government remains vigilant, as many still fear that the PR China may use terrorism as a test before waging war against Taiwan, Republic of China.

Taiwan, ROC is isolated geographically from the rest of the world, and historically has had no significant international enemies outside of the sphere of the PR China. Nevertheless, today, Taiwan faces a new prospect of terrorism brought to its doorstep by the forces of globalization. As a long-time ally of the United States of America (US), Taiwan sits as a potentially inviting target to the terrorist adversaries of the US. The recent terrorist bombing in Bali, Indonesia underscores a growing threat to pro-western countries in the region.

The Taiwanese government recognizes that there are no absolutely safe boundaries against terrorism. Accordingly, priorities in planning and preparedness against terrorism have shifted. While the historic pattern of terrorism in Taiwan has emphasized hijackings and bombings, recent international events have demonstrated that today, terrorists are capable of using or attempting to use so-called weapons of mass destruction. Accordingly, the government is most concerned about the potential for terrorist events involving biological, chemical, or nuclear releases.

Taiwan has yet to experience any real or alleged terrorist events involving weapons of mass destruction. Although “white powder” episodes were reported widely during the 2001 US anthrax letter attacks, Taiwan has had no significant events (except for a minor scare when a flight attendant mistakenly identified coffee creamer powder as anthrax on an international flight from Taiwan to Hong Kong).

The potential for a nuclear release in Taiwan has received more serious attention. Experts in Taiwan speculate that a nuclear release is most likely to stem from a direct attack or sabotage at one of the three nuclear power plants in Taiwan.

Year	Type of event	City	Site	Number injured	Number dead	Comments
1979	Bombing	Taipei	Government office	1	0	Letter bomb; victim = Governor of Taiwan
1982	Bombing	Taipei-Hualien	Train	13	4	Explosive unidentified
1982	Bombing	Kaohsiung	Department store	1	1	Mercury explosive
1983	Bombing	Taipei	Newspaper HQ	12	0	2 sites bombed
1988	Hijacking	Xiamen-Guangzhou	Aircraft	0	0	Fake grenade used; 128 on-board
1992	Bombing	Taipei	McDonald's restaurant	1	0	Mercury explosive
1993	Hijacking	Shenzhen-Beijing	Aircraft	0	0	Firearms used; 200 on-board
1993	Hijacking	Changzhou-Xiamen	Aircraft	N/A	0	Knife used, 71 on-board
1993	Hijacking	Beijing-Xiamen-Jakarta	Aircraft	N/A	0	Sulfuric acid bottle used; 150 on-board
1993	Hijacking	Jinan-Guangzhou	Aircraft	N/A	0	Knife used; 69 on-board
1993	Hijacking	Guangzhou-Xiamen	Aircraft	N/A	0	Fruit knife/bomb used; 139 on-board
1993	Hijacking	Hanzhou-Fuzhou	Aircraft	0	0	Fake bomb used; 58 on-board
1993	Hijacking	Changchun-Fuzhou	Aircraft	1	0	Scalpel used
1993	Hijacking	Qingdao-Fuzhou	Aircraft	0	0	Scalpel used; 137 on-board
1993	Hijacking	Harbin-Xiamen	Aircraft	0	0	Fake bomb used; 100 on-board
1994	Hijacking	Changsha-Xiamen	Aircraft	0	0	Fruit knife/fake bomb used; 130 on-board
1994	Hijacking	Xiamen-Fuzhou	Aircraft	0	0	Torch light and knife used; 138 on-board
1997	Hostage-taking	Taipei	South African Embassy	2	0	Firearm used; 7 hostages
1998	Hijacking	Kunming-Beijing	Aircraft	0	0	Hijacker = captain; 104 on-board
2001	Hijacking	Taipei	Tour bus	0	0	Firearm used; 13 on-board
Total				31	5	

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Table 1—Terrorist events in Taiwan since 1979 (HQ = headquarters)

Two of these plants are located on the north coast and one is on the south coast.

Emergency Management of Terrorist Events

The Ji Ji earthquake on 21 September 1999, which killed 2,347 and injured 11,305, was a watershed event for the organization of emergency management in Taiwan, ROC.³ Prior to this catastrophe, national emergency management was in the domain of the Central Disaster Council of the Executive Yuan, which met on an ad hoc basis.⁴ The Ji Ji earthquake awoke the government and the public to the importance of emergency planning and preparedness for disasters. As a result, the government sought to strengthen the response to national emergencies through legislation, funding, and the establishment of operational task forces under key government agencies. A parallel goal brought on by contemporary concerns, was to produce a system that would respond appropriately to emergencies caused by acts of terrorism. The updated structure for national emergency management post-Ji Ji earthquake in Taiwan is diagrammed in Figure 2.

In events of terrorism, the National Security Bureau (NSB) carries out threat assessment and intelligence analysis. The NSB is an independent agency that provides advice directly to the president on issues concerning

national security. The NSB is responsible for collecting and assessing intelligence of strategic importance to national security, including developments in mainland China, Taiwan, and the international community. Accordingly, the NSB is authorized by law to integrate, coordinate, and support national security-related intelligence operations conducted by various organizations within the intelligence and law enforcement community.

The Disaster Council of the Executive Yuan is responsible for the consequence management of emergencies in Taiwan, including acts of terrorism. The Disaster Council is chaired by the Premier (appointed by the president), and is comprised of delegates from key government agencies. The Council functions in a manner similar to the US presidential cabinet, with the Premier alone making executive decisions. In national emergencies, such as typhoons, aircraft crashes, or terrorist threats, the agency directors typically convene in person, and the Council organizes the initial national government response.

The National Security Council and the Disaster Council together are responsible for the coordination and management of the various agencies involved in the response to terrorist threats or events. Post-hoc analysis following the Ji Ji earthquake led to the observation that different government agencies should have different areas

Terrorist event	Lead agencies
Bombing with structural collapse	National Fire Administration*
Biological release	Center for Disease Control**
Chemical release	Department of Health Environmental Protection Agency National Fire Administration*
Nuclear release	Ministry of National Defense Atomic Energy Council
Criminal investigation	Ministry of Justice

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Table 2—Lead agencies in terrorist events in Taiwan, Republic of China (*Under the Ministry of the Interior, **Under the Department of Health)

of operational responsibility depending upon the type of emergency. Table 2 shows how the lead agencies will vary in different types of terrorist events in Taiwan. Each agency has its own assessment team that takes part in the immediate response.

The National Fire Administration (NFA), under the Ministry of the Interior, is responsible for the command and control of all fire department and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) responses to disasters in Taiwan. This critical function is carried out through the "Disaster Rescue Command Center" of the NFA, which provides around-the-clock dispatch, command, control, and coordination of prehospital disaster resources. Following the Ji Ji earthquake, the NFA established four urban search and rescue (USAR) teams at one central and three local fire departments (e.g., Taipei City, Taipei, Pin-Tung Prefecture) for response to emergencies involving structural collapse. These teams were trained in countries with well-established USAR teams, such as the US, Germany, and Singapore, and gained further valuable experience during international deployment to the earthquake in El Salvador in 2001.

After the Ji Ji earthquake, the Department of Health (DOH) established two national disaster medical assistance teams (NDMAT) based at National Taiwan University Hospital in the northern city of Taipei and National Cheng Kung University Hospital in the southern city of Tainan. Funded by the DOH, these teams are modeled after the US DMATs, and are organized according to the incident command system. The NDMATs are responsible for providing island-wide disaster medical assistance and humanitarian aid within 12 hours of activation by the DOH. They also serve as an important organizational, educational, and training resource for local DMATs in Taiwan.

There are 13 local DMATs based at local hospitals throughout the country. Funded by local health departments, local DMATs also are modeled after the US DMATs, and use the incident command system. However, in contrast to their US counterparts, these local teams are comprised entirely of personnel from a single host hospital (providing efficient activation). These teams are responsible for responding to local disasters within two hours of activation. They also respond to multiple casualty incidents that occur within their jurisdiction, which provides the teams with important practical field experience. When the

Decontamination equipment
Permanent decontamination room adjacent to ED entrance
Portable mass decontamination unit
Inflatable shelter system
Personal protection equipment
Level B – full-face air purifying respirator with multi-gas and HEPA filters
Level C – full and half-face respirators with multi-gas and HEPA filters
Chemical resistant garments, gloves, boot covers
Chemical detection equipment
Chemical agent detector kit
pH level detector
Portable chemical gas detector

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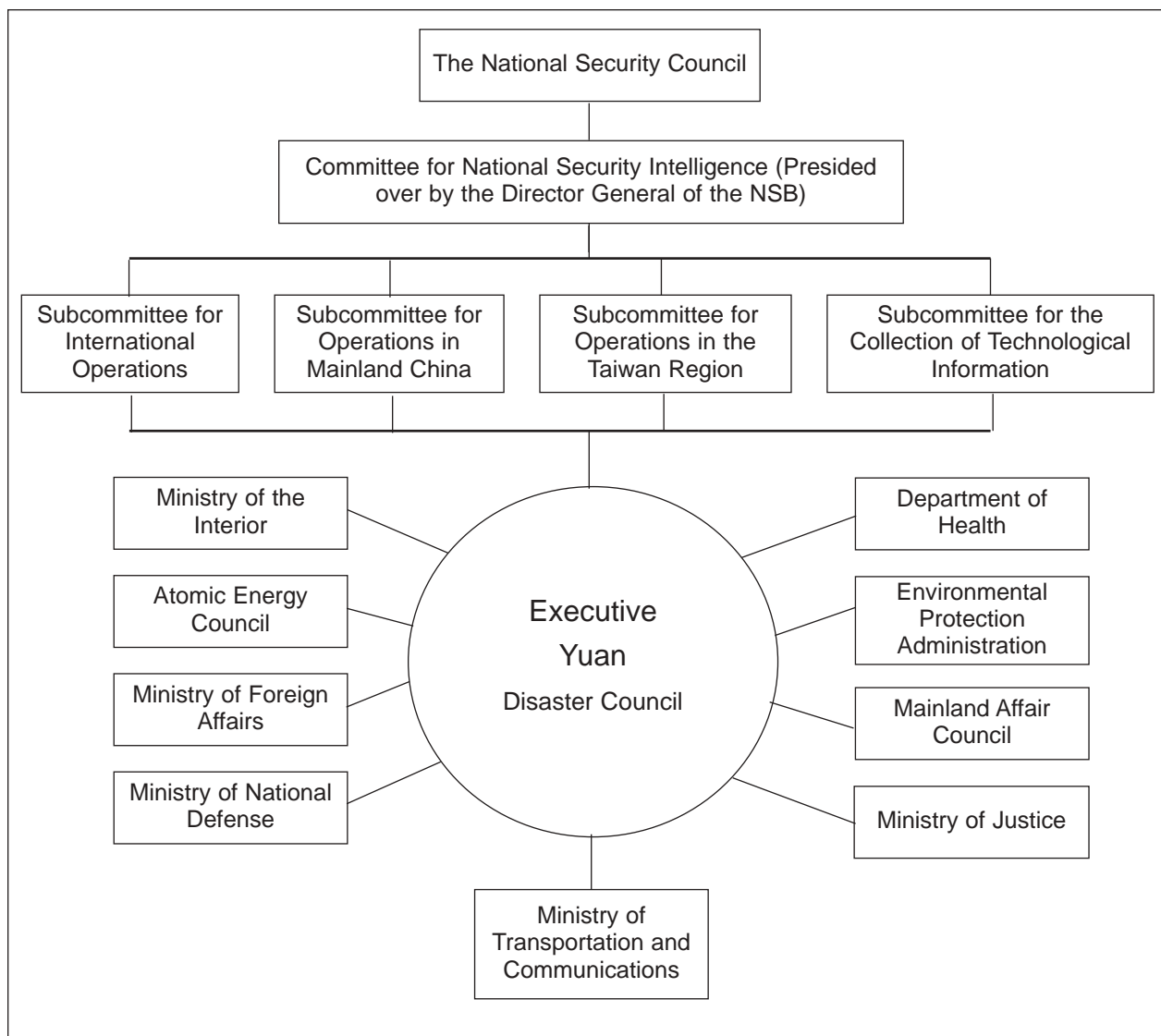
Table 3—Standard equipment at chemical emergency response hospitals in Taiwan, Republic of China (ED = emergency department)

needs for medical resources exceed the local capacity for response, the DOH will dispatch the NDMATs. Since the World Trade Center attacks, participation in local DMATs has gained popularity in the medical community in Taiwan.

The DOH is the lead agency responsible for responses to chemical releases in Taiwan. The DOH funds eight hospitals as Chemical Emergency Response Hospitals that are capable of providing specialized medical care to victims of hazardous material exposure. Strategically placed throughout the island, these hospitals include National Taiwan University Hospital, Taipei Veterans General Hospital, Mackay Memorial Hospital, Chang Gung Memorial Hospital (Linkou Branch), Taichung Veterans General Hospital, National Cheng Kung University Hospital, Kaohsiung Medical University Chung-Ho Memorial Hospital, and Hualien Tsu-Chi Hospital.

The DOH requires that each participating hospital meets certain planning, logistical, and operational standards. Participating hospitals must: (1) provide decontamination facilities including permanent showers (reinforced concrete) and a portable tent-style shower; (2) provide Level B and C personal protective equipment; (3) provide chemical detection equipment; (4) provide appropriate hazardous materials (HazMat) training to medical personnel including physicians, nurses, and Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs); (5) draft appropriate action plans for response that are subject to DOH approval; (6) conduct chemical disaster drills at least once per year; (7) maintain open telephone and radio communication lines; and (8) provide technical and medical consultation to local fire departments and hospitals.

Standard equipment for decontamination, personal protection, and chemical detection is listed in Table 3. The Chemical Emergency Response Hospitals also maintain stockpiles of key chemical antidotes, such as atropine, physostigmine, cyanide antidotes, EDTA-calcium, and methylene blue, and are responsible for distributing these antidotes to other local hospitals as needed. These Chemical Emergency Response Hospitals also are responsible for providing education and training for HazMat



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Figure 2—Structure for national emergency management in Taiwan, ROC

events to local hospital personnel (in a role similar to that of NDMATs) and serve as back-up facilities when local hospitals are overwhelmed.

The NFA and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) also share responsibility for response to chemical releases. The NFA provides first response HazMat units via local emergency medical services and fire departments, which are capable of performing initial field decontamination before transporting victims to hospitals. The EPA is responsible for assisting with identification of the hazardous material and environmental clean-up.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC), under the DOH, is the lead agency responsible for responses to biological releases, and will work closely with hospitals in cases of alleged or actual bioterrorism. The CDC has a complete information network including a reporting system for disease outbreaks or syndromes, a geographic information system for communicable disease, an on-line

disease surveillance system, and an information system for immunizations. The CDC also provides hospitals and clinicians with on-line information regarding the management of those infectious diseases associated with bioterrorism. The CDC maintains a Level 4 laboratory capability and a biological pharmaceutical stockpile, which it will deploy to local hospitals in times of need. The CDC also can deploy laboratory personnel, epidemiologists, and scene investigators to the local level.

The Ministry of National Defense (MND) and the Atomic Energy Council (AEC) are the two agencies responsible for operational responses to nuclear releases in Taiwan, ROC. Both agencies sponsor nuclear disaster preparedness activities, including periodic disaster drills. The three nuclear power plants in Taiwan fund disaster preparedness activities at nearby hospitals including annual disaster drills and medical evacuation. In the event of a nuclear release, the MND will provide operational and

logistical support to these hospitals, including personnel trained in the medical management of victims exposed to radioactive material. During a nuclear release, the AEC primarily provides nuclear technical support.

Future Challenges

Terrorism in the 21st century poses new challenges for Taiwan that will require further improvement in emergency management. Terrorist events in other countries have illustrated that terrorism frequently crosses geographical and political boundaries, necessitating local, regional, national, or even international responses.

Accordingly, policy-makers must consider ways to improve inter-ministerial cooperation. In particular, they must strengthen coordination between the National Security Council and the Disaster Council, the two decision-making bodies involved in terrorist events. They also must seek ways to unify the chain-of-command, facilitate the exchange of information, and specify how responsibilities are to be shared among responding agencies.

Because local resources will respond to acts of terrorism first, Taiwan must reinforce the local capacity for response in order to mitigate the impact of terrorism during the first several hours after an attack. This will entail further governmental funding for emergency medical personnel, training, and equipment at the local EMS and Emergency Department levels in Taiwan. Local response also will be facilitated by training the lay public in simple life-saving skills.

Policy-makers also should examine ways to involve civilian organizations, such as the Red Cross and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in planning and preparedness for terrorist events. Taiwan also needs to improve coordination between national and local levels of

response. For example, helicopters owned by the central government only are deployed when requested by the local government, making efficient communication between the two government entities essential.

Finally, the government should consider working with the international community to find ways to prevent the root causes of terrorism. This might include the funding of initiatives seeking political or economic solutions to the sources of terrorism in the world today.

Conclusions

Taiwan has experienced relatively few terrorist attacks in past decades, due to its internal political stability and geographic isolation. Nevertheless, the risk of terrorism today in Taiwan probably is greater than ever due to its continued political relationship with the United States and its unresolved political relationship with Mainland China. In addition, while terrorist events in Taiwan in the past were mainly bombings and aircraft hijackings, the 21st century has brought the possibility of terrorists using biological, chemical, or nuclear releases against civilian populations.

Taiwan has made large strides in emergency management since 1999. Many of these innovations have bolstered the capacity to respond to terrorist events, including improvements in the national emergency management structure, designation of lead government agencies for specific types of terrorist events, and the establishment of NDMAT and USAR teams. Although the challenge of terrorism in the 21st century is large, emergency management in Taiwan is adapting to this new reality.

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