Developing an Alternative, More Effective Strategy

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By David Cortright

I. Introduction

This essay is by David Cortright, President of the Fourth Freedom Forum, and a visiting faculty fellow at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame. Dr. Cortright argues that the US must be careful about its response to the September 11 attacks, lest it further enflame anti- American sentiment. He suggests a number of alternative approaches to military action that focus on multilateral actions to mount an international criminal prosecution.

II. Essay By David Cortright

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A viable alternative is needed to the strategy of responding to the September 11 terrorist attacks with military force. The United States is preparing for unilateral military strikes that could make matters worse by killing innocent people, further enflaming anti-American hatreds.

To punish the perpetrators and prevent future terrorist attacks, the United States should cooperate with other nations to mount an international criminal prosecution. The response to the September 11 attacks should be multilateral not unilateral. It should be under the authority of the UN Security Council and in accordance with the principles of international law.

The alternative strategy would include the following actions:

* Seeking Security Council action to create a special international criminal court that would indict and try those responsible for or accessory to the attacks against the World Trade Center and the

Pentagon;

* Seeking Security Council adoption of a resolution demanding that states in which these terrorists operate turn over suspects and close down bases, and that all states cooperate to eliminate the transnational criminal and financial networks that sustain terrorism and participate in anti-terrorism police and intelligence operations;

* Mobilizing police forces internationally for a coordinated effort to hunt down and apprehend all those responsible for committing, supporting, harboring, or in any way assisting these and other international terrorist attacks;

* Enlisting the active support and leadership of Arab and Islamic nations, including the Palestine National Authority, in the global campaign against terrorism;

* Seeking Security Council support for targeted and selective financial, travel, military and other sanctions against organizations and countries that are accessory to or that support the terrorist networks responsible for the September 11 attacks;

* Seeking the support of other governments, the Security Council and international financial institutions for incentives and rewards to organizations and states that cooperate with international anti-terrorism efforts;

* Cooperating with other nations to ratify and implement the provisions of the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism and other UN conventions intended to eliminate the threat of international terrorism.

The United States has an unprecedented opportunity now to work in cooperation with other nations to mobilize an effective multinational campaign to apprehend those responsible for the September 11 attacks and eliminate the threat of future terrorist attacks. Unilateral or excessive use of military force may erode the sympathy and goodwill that the United States has received and impede the international cooperation that is essential to stamp out terrorism.

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