

Small Amounts for Big Bangs?: Rethinking Responses to “Low Cost” Terrorism

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This paper challenges the “myth” that terrorism is cheap and that terrorists are extremely efficient in how they use their money. Small amounts involved in carrying out a terrorist attack have led to the perception that terrorism is cheap and terrorist attacks can be inexpensively implemented. This has undermined the global and national efforts to counter the financing of terrorism (CFT). This paper argues that costs of terrorism are many and not limited to what is spent on an actual attack. Due to military and financial counter-measures, terrorists appear to have lost overall operational efficiency; they are no longer capable of carrying out large-scale and complex operations like the September 2001 attacks.

This paper is an attempt to persuade the stakeholders in the CFT community that targeting terrorist financing has been and must remain one of the most important fronts in the war against terrorism.