

12/5/84

Terrorist Acts In U.S. Fall to 8, Webster Says

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The number of terrorist incidents in the United States has declined dramatically from 51 in 1982, and 31 in 1983, to eight during the current year, FBI Director William H. Webster said at a news conference yesterday.

"This is one of the things that pleased me the most about this past year," Webster said.

The decline was a result of FBI arrests during the past several years of members of terrorist groups, including terrorist Armenians, Croatians and the group FALN (Puerto Rican Armed Forces for National Liberation), Webster said. The arrests, in turn, were partly a result of help from a computer system known as the "Terrorism-Research and Analytical Center" that analyzes terrorist incidents, finds patterns, traces connections between terrorist groups and assesses their threat, Webster said.

In response to questions, Webster said the 20 bombings at abortion clinics around the nation are not counted as terrorist incidents because an organized group has not been identified as being responsible for the bombings.

He said that while people claiming responsibility for the acts use the name "Army of God," that name may be "a nice name to be used" but may not have anyone behind it.

"I'm trying to hold the line and not call everything terrorism," Webster said. "We have a lot of activities in civil rights cases that you might want to call terrorist. But bombing a church would be a major civil rights violation."

Webster also said he would ask Congress to amend the Federal Tort Claims Act, which makes law enforcement officials liable when defendants claim that they were beaten or otherwise harmed.

FBI stance draws criticism

F Post 12/6/84
ANNAPOLIS (AP)—Comments by FBI Director William Webster that bombing of abortion clinics is not a top priority item for his agency drew criticism Wednesday from members of the Governor's Task Force on Violence and Extremism.

The task force will send Webster a letter expressing concern over his statement and asking for a clarification of the meaning of his remarks.

Webster said in Washington Tuesday that the attacks are not terrorist acts and receive a lower priority than do acts of violence by political groups on the right and left.

He said the objectives of those who bomb abortion clinics are social, not political, and don't meet the agency's current definition of terrorism.

Paula Hollinger, a task force member

who is also a member of the House of Delegates from Baltimore County, said she was concerned about the way Webster's remarks will be interpreted.

"The message was, 'Go out and continue what you are doing. It's a low priority,'" Mrs. Hollinger said.

She said one reason for writing Webster is to ask: "Is this what you really meant to say?"

She also said she believes the statements by the FBI director represent the thinking of President Reagan as well.

"He (Webster) is a presidential nominee. To come out with that kind of statement, I can not believe it was done without direction," she said.

Webster's comments also drew criticism from Planned Parenthood officials in Maryland.