



Will Trump-Branded Properties be Targeted by Terrorists?

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A quick look at the list of Trump's properties reveals that several of them are located in countries with significant serious civil unrest and instability. Trump Tower in Istanbul, for example, probably seemed like a pretty safe bet five or 10 years ago as Turkey was working toward membership of the European Union. But today, thanks to spillover from the Syrian civil war, the failed Turkish military coup and the recent assassination of the Russian ambassador to Turkey, the neighborhood seems much less secure than it used to.

Trump properties in Muslim-majority nations may present the greatest risk of attack, given Trump's hard-line rhetoric toward the Islamic State militant group (ISIS) and toward Muslims and Islam more generally. Trump Tower Manila, for example, sits within easy striking distance of Abu Sayyaf, a Philippine Islamist group that has pledged allegiance to ISIS and has a history of bombing attacks.

Trump also owns high-visibility properties in Azerbaijan, the United Arab Emirates and India, all of which house one or more jihadi groups. Even Trump Tower in Seoul might not be safe: ISIS has recently labeled South Korea an enemy of the caliphate and is attempting to incite attacks on U.S. installations in South Korea. In all of these locales, Trump Towers might prove to be an irresistible target.

Trump's properties clearly present a new kind of Achilles's heel for the United States, but what exactly should be done about the potential threat?

One position might be to argue that the United States should do nothing. After all, the U.S. government bears no legal responsibility for providing security at these private establishments. But practically speaking, it seems obvious that a major attack on one of Trump's towers would have political and security implications that go well beyond the legal question.

Attacks on American embassies, from Tehran to Benghazi, for example, have always provoked anger and support for retaliation among U.S. citizens. Aware of the symbolism of an attack on a

Trump Tower, Americans would likely feel similarly, putting pressure on the U.S. government to respond.

Perhaps one of the most critical aspects to consider along these lines is the reaction of the president himself. How would Trump respond if Trump Tower in Istanbul went up in smoke, killing hundreds of people?

From everything we have seen since he began his presidential campaign, it seems likely that Trump would take such an act extremely personally. And given his hawkish rhetoric about dealing with terrorism, it is possible that Trump would respond emotionally, using his executive authority to take extreme measures beyond those dictated by a cool calculation of costs and benefits.

Unfortunately, not only might such a response be dangerous and counterproductive for the United States, but it might also play right into the hands of attackers seeking to provoke just such an overreaction.

A second possibility is for Trump to divest his private holdings and begin to take the necessary steps to rename his associated properties. This would have the benefit of dramatically reducing the symbolic value of the properties as targets while simultaneously reducing the potential emotional impact on Trump himself. An attack on a hotel that “used” to bear Trump’s name is less likely to offend his ego and provoke him to an overreaction.

If Trump is unwilling to do this, he must come up with an alternative plan to ensure that his privately owned properties and those bearing his name do not expose him to potential blackmail or provocation once he becomes president. Unfortunately, Trump’s reluctance to divest his businesses, or even to acknowledge the potential for conflicts of interest, strongly suggests that he will not come up with such a plan or even admit that such a plan is necessary.

If so, Trump will be choosing to leave the United States vulnerable on a new front in the battle against extremists’ violence.

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