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Attacks Against Missions Database (AAMD), 1945-2020

Introduction to the Database

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I. About the Database

I.1. Parts of the AAMD

The database consists of four parts: the 'Introduction' (the present document) which serves as a guide to the three data tables of 'Incidents', 'Sources' and 'Reactions'. The latter are rendered in comma-separated values (.csv) format in UTF-8 encoding, semicolons used as separators.

- The 'Introduction' describes how to use the other files and contains a summary of methodology (the elaboration of the methods can be found in the publication of the research).
- The 'Incidents' table enumerates the attacks and provides basic data.
- The 'Sources' table lists the sources used for the compilation of the other two tables.
- The 'Reactions' table comprises replies given to the incidents.

I.2. Methodology and Coverage

I.2.1. The Notion of 'mission'

The premises of the mission include the buildings and parts of buildings used for purposes of the missions, including the residence of the head of the diplomatic mission (cf. Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations 1961 Art. 1(1)i); Vienna Convention on Consular Relations 1963 Art. 1(1)j)).

The database does not include attacks that were directed against diplomatic or consular personnel outside of the mission, nor the attacks against the buildings used for work or living by honorary consuls, neither attacks against the offices of international organizations, which enjoy immunity.

I.2.2. Gravity Criterion

Only those attacks were included which entailed a realistic possibility of inflicting significant damage to the premises or hindering its operation - that is, failed attempts of grave attacks also included. For example, RPG (rocket propelled grenade) or Molotov cocktail attacks and attempts are included (even if the missile missed the building), but incidents involving tearing down flags, hurling eggs or stones, or spraying paint are not covered.

I.2.3. Temporal and Spatial Dimensions

The database is a collection of attacks against diplomatic and consular missions, which had taken place between 24 October 1945 (the creation of the United Nations) and 30 June 2020. The research was not narrowed down to certain geographical regions.

I.2.4. Range of Coverage

The creation of the AAMD was a subsidiary project of a research aimed at the evaluation of the possibility of self-defence (in the terms of public international law) in case of attacks in missions. The principal goal was to identify incidents when self-defence was invoked and cases of comparable gravity. Therefore, the database is not intended to encompass every attack that took place during the examined time period, but based on the selection of source we assume that it contains all significant attacks of the given period.

I.2.5. Sources

Multiple sources (when they were available) were used to verify and improve the accuracy of records incorporated in the database.

I.2.5.1. U.N. Documents

(a) Reports of self-defence

In order to single out the incidents with the invocation of self-defence, the self-defence reports of states were analysed. These reports are required by Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. The source for the reports was the 'Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council', which also provides a compilation of these reports. At the time of the research, the volumes from 1946 to 2017 were available.²

(b) Reports of Attacks Against Missions

Based on the initiative of the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1980, states are yearly called on by the GA to report attacks against their missions and missions of other states situated in their territory. The state reports are compiled and published under the aegis of the Secretary General of the United Nations under the title 'Consideration of Effective Measures to Enhance the Protection, Security and Safety of Diplomatic and Consular Missions and Representatives'.

I.2.5.2. Newspaper Reports

The above-mentioned state reports on attacks against missions are only an incomplete source for incidents, since only small proportion of states file reports, which are generally restricted to very brief descriptions of the events. Newspaper reports are generally more detailed and may contain state reactions as well. Preference was given to major newspapers and publication of press agency reports by smaller newspapers. Press agencies in general do not maintain accessible archives, that is why it was necessary to cite their reports via second-hand reports. We relied mainly on sources in English, however, in the case of paucity of resources, articles in other languages were used as well.

I.2.5.3. Miscellaneous

In order to ensure the best coverage of incidents, the database was cross-checked with incidents of at least 4 deaths or 10 injuries from two major compilations, the RAND Corporation's 'Database of Worldwide Terrorist Incidents', containing 40.000 attacks between 1968 and 2009, as well as the 'Global Terrorism Database' from the 'National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism', consisting of 180.000 attacks between 1970 and 2017.

Besides the foregoing, occasionally other sources were also cited, such as compilations by states or books by professionals.

II. Using the Database

II.1. Structure of the AAMD

The data is organized in three interrelated sub-databases, three tables.

- In the 'Incidents' table, a unique identifier (contained by the 'AID' column) is assigned to every incident.
- In the 'Sources', there are two numbers of orientation for every record: a unique code for identifying the source (which can be found in the 'SID' column) and the 'AID' of the incident to which the source belongs. Almost all records in the 'Incidents' table are connected to several other records in the 'Sources'.
- In the 'Reactions' table, similarly, records have a unique identifier ('RID') references to other tables' records.
- The 'AID', 'SID' and 'RID' may also be used as a citation when citing data from the AAMD.

² <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/repertoire/structure>

II.2. Columns of the ‘Incidents’ Table

II.2.1. AID

Unique identifier for reference (‘attack ID’). The numbering is not continuous, some numbers are missing intentionally, not by the fault of the database. The same ID-s were kept during the whole research to avoid the confusion of the records, therefore when a record was deleted (for example, because of being a duplicate or lacking reliable sources), the corresponding ID was removed as well.

II.2.2. year incident

Year of the incident for quick navigation.

II.2.3. incident start

Date of the start of the incident in yyyy-mm-dd format.

II.2.4. incident end

Date of the end of the incident in yyyy-mm-dd format. The field contains data only when the incidents lasted for more than one day. When the source indicated several attacks during a given time period without specifying the dates of the incidents, one record was registered with the start and end dates of the given period.

II.2.5. location city

City of the mission.

II.2.6. location state

State of the location of the mission. The states marked as the entities in the time of the attack, not as the current states (e.g. the USSR and its successor states are included separately). In exceptional cases, notably regarding the UN and the Holy See, when permanent missions under diplomatic protection are placed outside of the territory of the entity, the designation ‘UN’ or ‘Holy See’ is marked after the value ‘USA’ or ‘Italy’, respectively.

Abbreviations used: USA (United States of America), USSR (Soviet Union), DRC (Democratic Republic of the Congo), RoC (Republic of China/Taiwan), UAE (United Arab Emirates)

II.2.7. sending state

The state which is represented by the mission. The states marked as the entities in the time of the attack, not as the current states (e.g. the USSR and its successor states are included separately).

II.2.8. mission type

Whether the mission is a consular or diplomatic representation. Values include: ‘consulate’ (counting consulate generals as well), ‘embassy’, ‘residence’ (ambassador’s residence, considered to be part of the premises of the embassy under the VCDR).

II.2.9. perpetrator

Contains information on the attacker of the mission, whether it is presumed, proved or claimed.

II.2.10. attacker type

Additional information relating to the perpetrator. The field may contain more than one out of the following:

- ‘(alleged) foreign state involvement’
 - Present if the attack was attributed to a state other than the mission’s host or sending state.
- ‘(alleged) host state support’
 - Indicates that the host state supported the attack in a way which went beyond a mere inaction (see also ‘host state connivance/inaction’)
- ‘armed conflict (alleged perpetrator)’
 - Present when there was an armed conflict between the sending state and the alleged perpetrator.
- ‘armed conflict (other state)’
 - Present when the host state and the sending state were in an armed conflict during the attack.
- ‘from the sending state’
 - Included in the field if the attackers were from the sending state, e.g. émigrés or a criminal organization.
- ‘host state connivance/inaction’
 - Whether the host state (allegedly) overlooked the incidents or provided visibly insufficient assistance, but the attack was not coordinated or assisted in an active way.
- ‘individuals’
 - Marked when the attackers were unorganized, such as the members of a mob attack or when a lonely attacker committed the incident.
- ‘organized exterior (international)’
 - Denotes an organized perpetrator whose original centre or place of activity lies outside of the host state or operates internationally.
- ‘organized interior’
 - Reference to a group of attackers who carried out the attack in a coordinated, usually planned manner.
- ‘unknown/no information’
 - Indicates the lack of information.

II.2.11. host state weak authority

This field, which may have a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ value, shows whether the host state held effective control over its territory in the time of the incident. Typically, the value ‘false’ is present in case of civil wars or interstate armed conflict in the country.

II.2.12. sending-host relations

Provides information about the relationship between the sending and the host state of the mission before the incident. The value may be one of the following: ‘tense’, ‘neutral’ or ‘cordial’.

II.2.13. significant damage

Whether the sources of the incident considered the damage to be ‘significant’. Without common benchmark used by the sources and lacking an objective capacity to undertake the comparison, this field is subject to arbitrary qualification of the contemporaries. The value of the field may be ‘true’ or ‘false’

II.2.14. deaths

The total number of casualties resulting from the attack, including the attackers.

II.2.15. injuries

The total number of injuries resulting from the attack, including the attackers.

II.2.16. attack type

The way the attack was committed. If multiple elements were present, the most significant element is indicated. The field value may be one of the following:

- **assault:** Denotes an incident when the attacker(s) stormed the premises, in an organized, planned way.
- **shooting:** Shots fired at the embassy from a distance.
- **bombing:** Incidents of using an explosive device, an air strike or RPG/grenades/rockets/shells fired at the premises.
- **mob:** The attack was perpetrated by a crowd of people, in a spontaneous manner (typically after a demonstration).
- **incendiary:** The attack was carried out with the intent of setting fire to the building (generally by using petrol bombs).
- **occupation:** A violation of the premises, when a group of people taken control of the building (or a part of it), but refrained from more serious action.

II.2.17. hostages

Attack involving the taking of hostages. Value may be 'true' or 'false'.

II.2.18. attempt

The attack failed or was stopped before it could have reached its objective. Value may be 'true' or 'false'.

II.2.1. attacks related

Corresponding incidents, referred to by the values of the 'incident id' fields.

II.3. Columns of the 'Sources' Table

II.3.1. AID

The identifier of the attack in the 'Incidents' table.

II.3.2. SID

The unique identifier of the source record ('source ID'). In general, multiple sources are related to one incident. Moreover, the same source may be cited on more than one occasion. In that case, independent source records were created to every citation, ensuring that the fields of the rows contain the information relevant to the given attack.

II.3.3. source reference

The bibliographical data of the cited source. Data was formatted by the following guidelines:

- Newspaper and news site articles are cited as:
 - o 'article title, newspaper title (city of the newspaper, country or U.S. state), publication date in a yyyy.mm.dd. format, source of the article, page number in a 'p. No' or 'pp. No, No' format – link when available'.
 - o sample: 'Thirty Albanians Arrested, The Manchester Guardian, Reuter, 1951.03.19, p. 5'
 - o The 'city' and the 'country or U.S. state' are only given when the newspaper's title is not sufficient in itself to unequivocally determine the journal.

- The ‘source of the article’ never refers to the journalist himself, but to the news agency or correspondent, when it is independent from the editorial staff of the newspaper, marked by the common abbreviation.
- Referred press agencies include: AP (Associated Press), UPI (United Press International), AFP (Agence France-Presse), Reuter/Reuters, dpa (Deutsche Presse-Agentur), CP (The Canadian Press), AAP (Australian Associated Press), Xinhua, Tanjug (Serbian National News Agency), Beta (a Serbian news agency)
- The RAND Corporation’s ‘Database of Worldwide Terrorist Incidents’ is referred as ‘DWTI’, the ‘Global Terrorism Database’ from the ‘National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism’ is cited as ‘GTD’. The incidents can be identified by date and place in those databases.
- Books are cited as ‘author, title, publisher, date of publication’.

II.3.4. source notes

Details of the information from the source. In cases when no additional information was provided by to source compared to the other sources, the field was left without value

II.3.5. source attack type

The ‘List of Incidents’ table’s ‘attack type’ field value according to the source.

II.3.6. source deaths

The number of people killed according to the source. The field may contain a plus sign linking values together (such as ‘3+2’), in this the first number refers to those who were subjected to the attack (employees, guards, civilians, etc.) and the second number refers to the casualties of the attackers.

II.3.7. source injuries

The number of people injured according to the source. The field may contain a plus sign linking values together (such as ‘3+2’), in this case the first number refers to those who were subjected to the attack (employees, guards, civilians, etc.) and the second number refers to the injuries of the attackers.

II.3.8. source attack related

If the source links the attack to other incidents, marked by the ‘AID’.

II.4. Columns of the ‘Reactions’ Table

II.4.1. AID

The identifier of the incident from the first table (‘attack incident’). As an attack elicited several reactions in general, the same ID may be included repeatedly in the database.

II.4.2. RID

Unique identifier of the reaction (‘reaction ID’). The numbering is not continuous due to database integrity considerations.

II.4.3. year incident

The year of the incident’s occurrence in yyyy-mm-dd format

II.4.4. incident start

The day of the incident’s occurrence, the first day, if the incident endured for several days. In yyyy-mm-dd format.

II.4.5. entity

The state or organization which produced the reaction.

II.4.6. entity role

The relationship of the entity with the mission attack. Values may be ‘host state’, ‘sending state’, ‘other state’ or ‘non-state’

II.4.7. entity organ

The person or body from which the reaction emanates. The field may contain several of the following:

- ‘P’
 - Stands for ‘President’.
- ‘G’
 - Stands for ‘Government’.
- ‘PM’
 - Stands for ‘Prime Minister’.
- ‘MoFA’
 - Stands for ‘Minister/Ministry of Foreign Affairs’.
- ‘MoI’
 - Stands for ‘Minister/Ministry of Interior’
- ‘PMUN’
 - Stands for ‘Permanent Mission to the United Nations’
- ‘MoJ’
 - Stands for ‘Minister/Ministry of Justice’

II.4.8. reaction

A relevant extract or a summary from the reaction. Whether the reaction was simple and could have been summarized by the reply field, this field is empty.

II.4.9. SID

Sources of the reaction with reference to the records in the second table (‘source ID’). The field may contain several values separated by commas.

II.4.10. reply

For statistical reasons, reactions were categorized by typical content. The field may contain several values separated by semicolons. The field may also be empty in case of lack of typical reaction. Certain replies are unique to certain entity roles, e.g. ‘threats’ were *per definitionem* only available from sending states. Values were chosen from the following list:

- ‘apology (promised/demanded)’
- ‘broken diplomatic relations’
- ‘compensation (promised/demanded)’
- ‘condemnation’
- ‘crime’
- ‘diplomatic retorsion’
- ‘extradition’
- ‘investigation/trial (promised/demanded)’
- ‘protest’
- ‘regrets/condolences/solidarity’

- ‘security increase/prevent recurrence’
- ‘self-defence’
- ‘terrorism’
- ‘threats’
- ‘violation of dipl. law/protection is obligatory’
- ‘welcomes the attack’

II.4.11. UNSC document type

This field contain information about the type of the declaration issued by the United Nations Security Council. Field value may be ‘resolution’, ‘presidential statement’ or ‘press release’. The field is empty if the record does not hold information on a UNSC document.