Saban Center for Middle East Policy Symposium
How To Win the War Against Terrorism

**Thursday, September 22, 2005**
**9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.**
The Brookings Institution

Second Keynote Speaker:
**Daniel L. Byman**
Saban Center Nonresident Senior Fellow; professor Georgetown University

Daniel Byman, a Nonresident Senior Fellow at the Saban Center, gave the concluding remarks of the symposium. Byman is the author of recently published *Deadly Connections: States that Sponsor Terrorism*.

Byman argued that the real challenge for the United States was not how to end the state sponsorship of terrorism, but rather how to reduce it. He began by clarifying the nature of the problem. Byman observed that there is an important distinction between supporters of anti-American terrorism and enemies of the United States. According to Byman, hostile regimes like North Korea or Cuba must be separated off from sponsors of terrorism such as Iran or Pakistan, because these two categories have distinct motivations and goals. Consequently, the United States must develop different approaches to dealing with them.

Byman then differentiated between active and passive sponsorship of terrorism. Active sponsors are usually linked to terrorist groups and assist the terrorists with resources such as training, funding and equipment. Paradoxically, active state sponsorship of terrorism has a positive aspect, because it often helps to keep the level of violence in check. Usually sponsoring states fear retaliation and for that reason they impose some limits on the violence that their proxies are allowed to inflict. Removing a state sponsor from a terrorist group may actually lead to an increase in violence, because once the state imposed restrictions on the terrorist groups are eliminated, these groups become more deadly.

Passive supporters, by contrast, do not openly support terrorists, but at the same time, Byman argued, they do not object to the activities of terrorist groups. The complex nature of passive sponsorship makes its prevention difficult. For instance, passive support does not pose direct threat to the passive sponsor. Many groups involved in the support of terrorism operate under the cover of humanitarian organizations. In other cases, the terrorist groups enjoy support of domestic constituents of a passive state sponsor even though the government of that state opposes them. To complicate matters, there is no consensus on how to identify passive support. This is clear from cases where terrorist groups support a legitimate cause, as for instance in Chechnya. It is hard to draw a line defining where support for Chechnya's independence evolves into encouragement of terrorism.

From an intelligence perspective, it is hard to prevent passive support of terrorism because it requires almost a net assessment of what a sponsor state does not do and therefore needs to do in order to prevent terrorist activities. Prevention of passive support also requires comprehensive information on terrorist activities in a sponsor country, and therefore necessitates investment in local intelligence capabilities and partnership with such agencies. The difficulty, however, lies in the fact that many developing countries have limited capacity to absorb such assistance from the outside.

Byman also analyzed the factors that make it difficult to prevent both active and passive sponsorship of terrorism. States sponsor terrorists for various reasons. Terrorist groups sometimes help states advance their strategic interests or ideology. Terrorists offer states a means of influencing other states in the region. Very often states that sponsor terrorism do not have alternative means of exerting such influence and therefore agree to sponsorship of groups that help to promote their strategic objectives. States sponsor terrorists because in their view support for terrorism helps them to counter more powerful states like the United States. In addition, many instruments available to governments for ending terrorism are deficient and counterproductive. The limits of policy instruments, such as economic sanctions or military force, complicate the struggle against sponsorship of terrorism.

Byman discussed several such policy instruments available to states for fighting sponsorship of terrorism. These instruments can be described as political, economic, military, and diplomatic in nature. Political pressure may come in the form of adding a state to the list of state sponsors of terrorism, or delivering a warning to a sponsoring state that relations with that state will deteriorate if support of terrorism continues. Byman argued that political pressure had not usually been effective in the sense that damaged reputation or poor diplomatic support could be less important to a sponsoring state than the strategic or ideological considerations that encouraged it to support terrorism in the first place. Byman recommended that political pressure can be improved by making the list of terrorism sponsor states accurate, transparent and flexible. The list must be accurate so that it includes only states that supporting terrorism. The list must be transparent, so that it is known which states are on the list. The list must be flexible, so that states can get off this list. In addition, Byman argued, it is important that when sponsoring states cooperate that they are rewarded.

With regard to economic pressure, Byman argued that economic sanctions were usually effective when a sponsoring state's strategic and ideological calculations were outweighed by the damage that economic sanctions imposed. However, Byman feels that economic sanctions are limited in their effectiveness because usually sponsoring states have already calculated the implications of their cooperation with terrorists. In addition, the effect of sanctions is often blunted by the fact that states that sponsor terrorists are usually autocratic and, therefore less responsive to the needs of their people. Most dangerously, economic sanctions can backfire. For instance, hostile regimes can use economic sanctions to strengthen their grip domestically, by giving only the regime supporters access to goods and services and weakening the regime's opponents.

Byman then discussed the effectiveness of military force as an instrument of coercion. Traditionally, military force is effective for removing a hostile regime or threatening such a regime. The use of military force against terrorists, however, entails complications and ambiguities and raises questions about when to use military power, or how many casualties caused by terrorists are sufficient to trigger military action. Byman argued that military strikes on terrorists are not effective because terrorists are elusive and do not possess material resources vulnerable to military strikes. It is particularly difficult to eliminate individuals, because such a task requires extremely accurate intelligence and an extremely quick reaction. Military force can be counterproductive because strikes by an outside power may alienate the population in the targeted country, and thereby increase the population's support for the terrorism sponsoring government or for terrorist groups in that country.

With regard to public diplomacy, Byman noted that much effort had been invested in making the United States look good to the people in the Arab world who did not know much about the United States. However, he argued, an effort should also be devoted to making *jihadists*, with whom these people have experience, look bad.

Byman concluded that in order to effectively fight state sponsorship of terrorism, the United States must first and foremost ensure that there is no support for terrorism within the territory of the United States.