ABC, REUTERS PARROT DECEPTIVE STATE DEPARTMENT SPIN ON TERRORISM DATA

Yesterday, the State Department released its annual Country Reports on Terrorism and held a briefing regarding the findings. Both ABC and Reuters covered the report and crafted their stories around a single finding from it: world-wide terror attacks decreased from 11,641 in 2010 to 10,283 in 2011. Both outlets decided (as the State Department dictated to them) that this decline was due to the death of Osama bin Laden just before the midpoint of 2011. ABC chose to use "Sharp Decline in Terror Attacks After Bin Laden Death" as their headline and Reuters went with "Al Qaeda decline hard to reverse after Bin Laden killing: US".

However, even a cursory look beyond the comparison of the attack totals for 2011 compared to 2010 shows that drawing the conclusions stated by these headlines is completely unwarranted. First, take a look at the "noise" in the annual numbers for worldwide attacks. Data have only been collected for four years, 2007-2011 and the number jumps considerably from year to year:

INCIDENTS OF TERRORISM, WORLDWIDE*

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Attacks worldwide	14,415	11,663	10,968	11,641	10,283

I don't think bin Laden also died in 2008 and 2009, so there must be some other reason the worldwide attack numbers went down in those years.

Looking further into the data, we see that the NCTC did break out the attacks that could be directly attributed to al Qaeda. Neither ABC nor Reuters chose to present this information in their stories, perhaps because it directly

contradicts the narrative that the State Department wanted delivered:

> Attacks by AQ and its affiliates increased by 8 percent from 2010 to 2011. A significant increase in attacks by al-Shabaab, from 401 in 2010 to 544 in 2011, offset a sharp decline in attacks by al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI) and a smaller decline in attacks by al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

That's right. Attacks by al Qaeda actually went up in 2011, and yet the State Department and our subservient press are happily chirping that we have them on the run. From ABC

> The number of worldwide terror attacks fell to 10,283 last year, down from 11,641 in 2010 and the lowest since 2005, the State Department reported today.
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> What's made the difference? The State Department cites the May 2011 killing of Osama bin Laden and other top al Qaeda members killed last year including Atiyah Abd al-Rahman and Anwar al-Awlaki, who was the head of Yemen's Al Qaeda affiliate and had ties to the underwear bomber plot in 2010.
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> "The loss of bin Laden and these other key operatives puts the network on a path of decline that will be difficult to reverse," the report stated.

The Reuters report is just as misleading in its parroting of the preferred State Department narrative:

> Osama bin Laden's death sent al Qaeda into a decline that will be hard to reverse, the United States said on Tuesday in a report that found terrorist attacks last year fell to their lowest

> level since 2005.
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> Describing 2011 as a “landmark year,” the United States said other top al Qaeda members killed last year included Atiyah Abd al-Rahman, reportedly the militant organization’s No. 2 figure after bin Laden’s death, and Anwar al-Awlaki, who led its lethal affiliate in Yemen.
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> “The loss of bin Laden and these other key operatives puts the network on a path of decline that will be difficult to reverse,” the State Department said in its annual “Country Reports on Terrorism” document, which covers calendar year 2011.

But let’s back up just a bit here. The total number of worldwide attacks was 10,283 in 2011 and the State Department is attributing the drop in attacks compared to 2010 to the death of bin Laden. And yet, when al Qaeda attacks are broken out, we see that “al-Qa‘ida (AQ) and its affiliates were responsible for at least 688 attacks”, so only 6.7% of total worldwide attacks could be attributed to al Qaeda.

The State Department wants us to overlook the fact that only 6.7% of worldwide attacks were due to al Qaeda and the fact that al Qaeda attacks went up by 8% in 20011 so that we can accept their interpretation that the death of Osama bin Laden accounted for this year’s decline in worldwide attacks, even though the decline seems to fit within the “noise” seen so far in the four years of collecting such data.

But the State Deparment’s spin is hiding an even bigger problem for the US. The NCTC also presented data on the breakdown of terrorist attacks by country. For the 10,283 attacks worldwide in 2011, we find that 2,872 of them were in Afghanistan and 2,265 were in Iraq. That means that 50% (okay, 49.96%) of the total wordwide terrorist attacks in 2011 were in

countries that have been destabilized by the invasion of US forces.

Rather than claiming that these data show that the US has al Qaeda on the run, it seems to me that the State Department should be arguing that we can cut worldwide terrorist attacks in half by removing the US presence from Iraq and Afghanistan.