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Shootings in Iraq: A South Korean Response

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Title: Shootings in Iraq: A South Korean Response

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Abstract: This author examines statements of South Korean president, Roh Moo Hyun, in the wake of the news of the November 30, 2003 killings of two South Korean civilian electrical workers in Iraq. The nature of terrorism as well as potential interpretations of the president's statements are stressed.

As cited in *The New York Times*, the South Korean president, Roh Moo Hyun, responded to news of the November 30, 2003 killing of two South Korean civilian electrical workers in Iraq by stating "This incident is not terror against the military or a public organization, but terror against civilians....This kind of inhumane activity is intolerable." Assuming the President's words are either his own or those with which he concurs, one might conclude that his understanding of terrorism is limited and limiting.

First, the object of terrorism is not to kill, injure, or threaten to kill or injure those who are, indeed, killed, injured, or threatened. Instead, the object is to influence people who can act in a manner to achieve political objectives desired by the terrorists. In fact, killing individuals who are official members of the military, who are official members of some other public organization, or who are just civilians can all be in the service of terrorism against a specific government that is foreign to the military, public organization, or civilian being attacked.

Second, terrorism attacks people who are somehow construed as innocent, legally proscribed from being violated, or otherwise off-limits. Thus, when the President links terrorism as being against military targets, the link seems problematic. And given that the military can even constitute a government, can support government and other public organizations, and that civilians at least indirectly support the military, it is problematic to link terrorism to these targets as well. This does not make terrorism right, but only makes it coherent—to its detractors, perhaps, in a delusional fashion.

Third, a statement that "this kind of inhumane activity" (terrorism) "is intolerable" but other kinds (other activities or conditions that create the wretched of the earth) implicitly are not can easily be exploited for propaganda purposes by terrorists.

In conclusion, the President's denouncing the shootings of his countrymen may play well for domestic consumption, but may also play into the hands of those who applaud the shootings in the service of consuming lawfully constituted power. (See Perry, R W., & Lindell, M. K. (2003). Understanding citizen response to disasters with implications for terrorism. *Journal of Contingencies & Crisis Management*, 11, 49-60; Ryan, E.S. (2003). Chosinness and the theology of terror. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 30, 237-239; Sarbin, T.R. (2003). The Metaphor-to-Myth Transformation With Special Reference to the "War on Terrorism". *Peace & Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 9, 149-157; South Korean denounces Iraq shootings. (December 1, 2003). *The New York Times*, p. A11.)

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