Release Event

“Public Response to Terrorism: Findings from the National Survey of Disaster Experiences and Preparedness”

Briefing by report co-authors
Dr. Linda Bourque and Dr. Dennis Mileti

Followed by discussion with officials from
The U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Date: Monday, December 15, 2008
Time: 2:00pm – 3:00pm
Location: First Amendment Lounge
13th Floor
National Press Club
529 14th Street NW
Washington, DC 20045

RSVP requested to dhawkins@start.umd.edu.

Event Overview: Public readiness for terrorist and other hazardous events is reported for the nation as a whole, New York City, Los Angeles County, and the Washington, D.C., area, as well as for major racial/ethnic groups. Data are from one of the largest household surveys designed to focus on how public education and information influence public investment in both preparedness and avoidance activities. Multivariate modeling identifies consistent pathways through which policy and programs can increase and enhance readiness for terrorism and other hazards throughout the United States.

Note: Dr. Bourque and Dr. Mileti are available for interviews immediately prior to the event. Please contact Danielle Hawkins (dhawkins@start.umd.edu or (301) 405-6600) to arrange a session with the authors.

This event is sponsored by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). While START receives funding from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed at this event or in the report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect views of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.
Agenda

“Public Response to Terrorism: Findings from the National Survey of Disaster Experiences and Preparedness” Release Event

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2:00pm – 2:05 pm  Welcome & Introduction
Dr. Gary LaFree,
~ Director of START
~ Professor in the Department of Criminology, University of Maryland

2:05pm – 2:25 pm  START National Survey of Disaster Experiences and Preparedness
Dr. Linda Bourque
~ Professor in the Department of Community Health Sciences, UCLA
~ Associate Director of the Center for Public Health and Disasters, UCLA
~ Associate Director of the Southern California Injury Prevention Research Center, UCLA

Dr. Dennis Mileti
~ Professor Emeritus at the University of Colorado at Boulder

2:25pm – 2:35 pm  DHS / FEMA Perspective on Research Findings and How Research is Translated into Practice
Mr. Corey Gruber
~ Assistant Deputy Administrator, National Preparedness Directorate, FEMA, DHS

2:35 pm – 3:00 pm  Q&A

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Public Response to Terrorism
Findings from the National Survey of Disaster Experiences and Preparedness

Under funding from the Department of Homeland Security and the National Science Foundation and as part of the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), the University of California, Los Angeles, conducted a survey of a representative sample of 3,300 households in the continental United States. Three high visibility areas were over-sampled so that generalizations could be made to them as well as to the nation as a whole. These areas were New York City, Los Angeles County, and the greater Washington, D.C. area.

The survey answered four questions.

- What have Americans done to prepare for terrorist acts and disasters?
- What steps have Americans taken to avoid or reduce exposure to terrorism?
- What motivates Americans to prepare for terrorism in particular, to prepare for disasters in general, and to avoid terrorism risk?
- How can policy and programs to increase public readiness for terrorism accomplish more?

Based on research and theory about what motivates household readiness behavior, data were collected on the many factors that might explain public readiness, including past events experienced; the types, sources and channels over which information had been received; activities that respondents had observed others do; the perceived effectiveness of different preparedness and avoidance activities; self-reported knowledge about terrorism preparedness; perceived future risk of disasters that could affect the home, community and nation; perceived resilience of self, community and nation to future disaster events; perceptions of the completeness and honesty of information provided by agencies at the local, state and national level; and standard demographic characteristics.

The findings describe the state of preparedness and risk avoidant behavior throughout the nation, in New York City, the Washington, D.C. area, and Los Angeles County, and among the nation’s major racial/ethnic minority groups. Strong and clear evidence was discovered about the fundamental processes that motivate Americans to prepare. The same process holds across all geographic areas and subpopulations, and is now available for policy and program managers to use to increase public readiness in the nation.

Study documents (cited below) are available for download at www.ph.ucla.edu/sciprc/.

Linda B. Bourque, Ph.D., is a professor in the Department of Community Health Sciences and an associate director of both the Center for Public Health and Disasters (www.cphd.ucla.edu) and the Southern California Injury Prevention Research Center (www.ph.ucla.edu/sciprc/) in the School of Public Health at the University of California, Los Angeles. Trained as a sociologist, she teaches courses on research design with an emphasis on the design, data processing, and data analysis of questionnaires and community-based surveys. Her research during the last twenty years has focused primarily on community response to disasters. A public website (http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/issr/da/earthquake/erthqkstudies2.index.htm) contains all of the raw data, codebooks, questionnaires, publications and related material from surveys conducted on California earthquakes since 1971 by Leo Reeder, Ralph Turner, Dennis Mileti and Linda Bourque.


Current research includes the California Survey of Earthquake Preparedness being conducted for the California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services, the California Seismic Safety Commission, the Institute for Building and Home Safety, and Southern California Association of Governments.
Dr. Dennis S. Mileti is Professor Emeritus at the University of Colorado at Boulder where he served as Chair of the Department of Sociology and as Director of the Natural Hazards Center—the United States’s clearinghouse for social and behavioral science research on hazards and disasters.

Dennis is author of over 100 publications. Most are on the societal aspects of hazards and disasters. His book, *Disasters by Design*, summarized our nation’s effort to assess knowledge and national policy for hazards and disasters. He was the founder and Co-Editor-in-Chief of the all-hazards, all-disciplines journal the *Natural Hazards Review*.

He has served on a variety of advisory boards including as: (1) Chair of the Committee on Natural Disasters in the National Research Council, (2) Chair of the Board of Visitors to FEMA’s Emergency Management Institute, (3) the Board of Directors of the Earthquake Engineering Research Institute, (4) the Advisory Board to the U.S. Geological Survey’s Research Program on Earthquakes and Volcanoes, (5) the National Institute of Standards and Technology’s Expert Advisory Panel for the study of evacuation of the World Trade Center towers on September 11th, and (6) the American Society of Civil Engineers Expert Panel overseeing the Army Corps of Engineers assessment of the New Orleans levee failures and consequences—he was given the Outstanding Civilian Service Medal in 2007 for that work by the Department of the Army.

Dennis is currently a member of: (1) the START Center at the University of Maryland which is a Department of Homeland Security National Center of Excellence for research on terrorism, (2) the California Seismic Safety Commission, (3) the National Research Council’s Committee to Evaluate the National Tsunami Warning Program and (4) he also serves on the Board of Directors of the Southern California Earthquake Center.
Effective counterterrorism strategies need to account for the “human element” that is an inherent piece of the terrorism puzzle. Terrorism is a tool used by individuals and is a phenomenon that has a direct effect on citizens in every community. Applying the theories and methods of the behavioral and social sciences, START provides policy-makers and practitioners with empirically grounded findings on this human element of terrorism, exploring why individuals turn to terrorism, as well as the impact that the threat of terrorism has on individuals throughout the United States.

Why is START important?
Improved understanding of the motivations and behavior of terrorists and terrorist groups will assist efforts to establish priorities regarding tools and strategies for counterterrorism. Similarly, better knowledge about how people and communities respond to threats and risks will inform policies and practices related to preparedness and response. Reliable information about behavioral considerations is also essential to the development of effective tools and technologies for threat detection and mitigation.

What is START’s research strategy? START brings together leading researchers from throughout the social and behavioral sciences, including criminologists, political scientists, sociologists, psychologists, geographers, and economists, as well as experts from the fields of history, psychiatry, and public health. START’s research benefits from the range of perspectives and research methods included in this interdisciplinary consortium. All START researchers are engaged in the collection and analysis of data related to START’s three core research areas, as well as training a next generation of scholars to carry on this crucial research agenda in the future.

Research Area 1: Terrorist Recruitment and the Formation of Terrorist Groups. Work in this area explores the phenomenon of radicalization, and examines conditions under which individuals and groups become engaged in terrorism, exploring such factors as personal values, organizational ideologies, and links between terror and other behavior (including crime). START is also exploring mechanisms that facilitate individual and group radicalization, including traditional media and the Internet.

Selected Deliverables
- Database on the use and non-use of terrorism by organizations representing ethnic minority groups around the world
- Analyses of personality characteristics and likely support for terrorism through surveys and experimental studies
- Database of right-wing extremist crime in the U.S. and analyses of links to terror activity
- Survey data on support for terrorism, especially terrorism that targets the U.S. from Pakistan, Egypt, Indonesia, and Morocco

Research Area 2: Terrorist Group Persistence and Dynamics. This area focuses on sources of support—domestic as well as international—
for terrorist groups, targeting and weapon selection, and impacts of local, national, and international counterterrorist strategies on terrorist behavior.

Selected Deliverables
- Detailed assessments of activities of terrorist groups considered to pose a threat to the United States
- Impact studies of counterterrorism efforts, looking at short- and long-term effects
- Early warning indicators of group use of CBRN weapons
- Network analyses of relationships among terrorist groups around the world

Research Area 3: Community Resilience Against Terrorist Threats and Attacks. Work in this area examines perceptions of, preparations for, responses to, and recovery from terrorist attacks, focusing on the United States, and on the characteristics of resilient communities. This research relates to START’s goal of providing guidance on enhancing preparedness and resilience at the individual, community, and national levels.

Selected Deliverables
- Survey of household preparedness within and across communities across the U.S.
- “Best practice” guidance on cross-sector community preparedness networks and on public warning systems for specific events
- Development and delivery of a Community Assessment of Resilience Tool (CART)
- Web-based interface for measuring the social vulnerability of all geographic regions throughout the U.S.

A centerpiece of START’s work that cuts across research areas is the development and release of the Global Terrorism Database (GTD). The GTD is the world’s largest open-source database on international and domestic terrorism events, including wide-ranging data about perpetrators, target types, weapons used, geo-coded location of attacks, and scope of impacts for more than 85,000 events between 1970 and 2006. GTD was released to the public in May 2007 and is accessible at www.start.umd.edu/data/gtd.

START will release new versions of the data annually, updating the data to current year, and will continue to conduct original analyses on the data.

Educational Programs: START is a research center with an educational mission. START’s educational efforts all reflect START’s research agenda and aim to reach a diverse audience. Programs include:
- Undergraduate Minor in Terrorism Studies
- Graduate Certificate in Terrorism Analysis
- Pre- and Post-Doctoral Fellowship Awards
- Undergraduate Research Program
- Curriculum materials & syllabus repository
- Training workshops for homeland security professionals
- Brownbag seminars for DHS officials
- Public events, such as Seminar Series and Research Symposia

How does START support DHS? Individually and collectively, START research generates scientifically validated findings that inform DHS operations and policies across the department. START provides actionable information related to the following core missions:
- Terrorism Prevention by improving understanding of the conditions that foster terrorism
- Threat Detection through identification of early warning indicators related to radicalization and terrorist activities and emerging groups
- Preparedness and Response by providing guidance on realistic expectations for how individuals and communities will respond to attacks or to the threat of terrorism
- Community Recovery by developing and implementing tools for enhancing community resilience
- Risk Communication by identifying varying levels of vulnerability, preparedness, and risk perception within and across diverse communities within the country.

More information about START and its programs is available at www.start.umd.edu.
The Center for Risk and Economic Analysis of Terrorism Events (CREATE), led by the University of Southern California, evaluates the risks, costs and consequences of terrorism, and guides economically viable investments in countermeasures that will make our Nation safer and more secure. [www.usc.edu/create](http://www.usc.edu/create)

The National Center for Food Protection and Defense (NCFPD), led by the University of Minnesota, defends the safety of the post-harvest food system by establishing best practices, developing new tools and attracting new researchers to manage and respond to food contamination events. [www.ncfpd.umn.edu](http://www.ncfpd.umn.edu)

The National Center for Foreign Animal and Zoonotic Disease Defense (FAZD), led by Texas A&M University, protects against the introduction of high-consequence foreign animal and zoonotic diseases into the United States, with an emphasis on prevention, surveillance, intervention and recovery. [http://fazd.tamu.edu](http://fazd.tamu.edu)

The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), led by the University of Maryland, informs decisions on how to disrupt terrorists and terrorist groups, while strengthening the resilience of U.S. citizens to terrorist attacks. [www.start.umd.edu](http://www.start.umd.edu)

The National Center for the Study of Preparedness and Catastrophic Event Response (PACER), led by Johns Hopkins University, optimizes our Nation’s preparedness in the event of a high-consequence natural or man-made disaster, as well as develops guidelines to best alleviate the effects of such an event. [www.pacercenter.org](http://www.pacercenter.org)

The Center for Advancing Microbial Risk Assessment (CAMRA), led by Michigan State University and established jointly with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, fills critical gaps in risk assessments for decontaminating microbiological threats, such as plague and anthrax — answering the question, “How Clean is Safe?” [www.camra.msu.edu](http://www.camra.msu.edu)

The University Affiliate Centers to the Institute for Discrete Sciences (IDS-UACs) are led by Rutgers University, the University of Southern California, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the University of Pittsburgh. They collaborate with IDS, based at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, to conduct research on advanced methods for information analysis and the development of computational technologies to protect the Nation. [www.dydan.rutgers.edu](http://www.dydan.rutgers.edu)

The Regional Visualization and Analytics Centers (RVACs) are led by Penn State University, Purdue University, Stanford University, the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and the University of Washington. They collaborate with the National Visualization and Analytics Center, based at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, to conduct research on visually-based analytic techniques that help people gain insight from complex, conflicting and changing information. [http://nvac.pnl.gov/centers.stm](http://nvac.pnl.gov/centers.stm)