The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) is a U.S. Department of Homeland Security Center of Excellence based at the University of Maryland.

START uses state-of-the-art theories, methods, and data from the social and behavioral sciences to improve understanding of the origins, dynamics, and social and psychological impacts of terrorism. For more information on START, please visit http://www.start.umd.edu/.

Contact: START • 3300 Symons Hall • University of Maryland • College Park, MD 20742
301.405.6600 • infostart@start.umd.edu
In June, Victor Asal and Gary Ackerman presented their research on Predicting Weapons of Mass Destruction Terrorism to the JASON Group Summer 2009 Study on Anticipating Rare Events in San Diego. The JASONs is a prestigious independent group of scientists that advises the United States Government on matters of science and technology. They selected Ackerman, START’s Assistant Director for Research and Communication, and Asal, a political scientist at the University of Albany, SUNY, based upon their collaborative START research for the Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment (JIPOE).

In July, Jonathan Wilkenfeld, START Investigator and University of Maryland faculty member, presented START research on Conflict, Terrorism, and Societal Resilience at the Rayburn House Office Building as part of a briefing to highlight the National Science and Technology Council report, Social, Behavioral and Economic Research in the Federal Context. The event was co-sponsored by COSSA, the Consortium of Social Science Associations.

Alex Schmid has been named the new Editor of Perspectives on Terrorism and Director of their Terrorism Research Initiative. Schmid is a START Investigator and has been at the forefront of terrorism scholarship for decades. Until the Spring of 2009, Schmid was the Director of the Center for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence at St. Andrews College.

START Director Gary LaFree, and START investigators Clark McCauley (Bryn Mawr College), Martha Crenshaw (Stanford University), and Margaret Wilson (University of Surrey) presented current START-supported research on terrorist use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and on counterterrorism efficacy at a panel at the annual conference of the International Society of Political Psychology, held in Dublin, Ireland, in July 2009. The panel was moderated by Allison Smith, program lead on radicalization research at the Human Factors/Behavioral Sciences Division in the Science and Technology Directorate of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

START Researcher, David Weisburd, was awarded the 2010 Stockholm Prize, which many consider to be the equivalent of the Nobel Prize in the criminology field. Weisburd, a faculty member at George Mason University, received his award for his experiments showing that increased police patrols at high crime areas do, in fact, reduce crime instead of simply relocating it.

Data files for START’s Global Terrorism Database are now available to the public through the GTD website, accessible at www.start.umd.edu/gtd/.

Follow us on Twitter: START_UMD.
START has released a new version of its Global Terrorism Database (GTD), with an accompanying new website. START Director, Gary LaFree, and University of Maryland faculty member, Laura Dugan, head the project. Erin Miller of the University of Maryland manages the database.

The GTD is an open-source database including information on terrorist events around the world. Unlike many other event databases, the GTD includes systematic data on domestic as well as transnational and international terrorist incidents that have occurred during this time period. For each GTD incident, information is available on the date and location of the incident, the weapons used and nature of the target, the number of casualties, and—when identifiable—the perpetrator. Over 80,000 of these incidents have been included in the updated database, and this information can be extracted from the database to provide reference data as it was after the attacks in Mumbai.

The previous versions of the database (GTD 1 and GTD 2) covered events that occurred from 1970 through 2004. The update to the GTD (http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/) synthesized previous versions and expanded the data to include events from 1970 through 2007. Annual updates will continue to be added in the future through a partnership between START and the Institute for the Study of Violent Groups at the University of New Haven.

START is making the GTD available through an online, user-friendly interface in an effort to increase understanding of terrorist violence so that it can be more readily defeated. Government officials and interested researchers may request versions of the data through the GTD website. Both are accessible at http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/.

Characteristics of the Updated GTD

- Contains information on over 80,000 terrorist attacks
- Currently the most comprehensive unclassified data base on terrorist events in the world

“Ever since we began this project more than eight years ago, our goal has been to provide the most accurate and comprehensive unclassified data on terrorist attacks that has ever been assembled. With the 2009 release we have made substantial progress in realizing this goal.”

- Gary LaFree, Director of START

- Includes information on more than 27,000 bombings, 12,000 assassinations, and 2,900 kidnappings since 1970

- Includes information on at least 45 variables for each case, with more recent incidents including information on more than 120 variables

- Supervised by an advisory panel of 12 terrorism research experts

- Over 3,500,000 news articles and 25,000 news sources were reviewed to collect GTD from 1998 to 2007 alone

For questions about the GTD, email gtd@start.umd.edu.
Research Spotlight:
Radicalization of U.S. Prisoners

Concern has been expressed that prisoner radicalization poses a threat to the safety of the United States. The START Project, “Radicalization of U.S. Prisoners,” led by Bert Useem of Purdue University and Obie Clayton of Morehouse College, involved the systematic exploration of the connections between imprisonment and terrorist recruitment through interviews of corrections officials, officers working within those correctional agencies across the country, and inmates.

Methodology

Conducted from 2006-2008, the project involved interviews in ten state departments of corrections and one municipal jail system. A total of 27 prisons were visited, all in either medium- or high-security prisons for men. In each jurisdiction (with two exceptions), the researchers interviewed prison officials in the central office, prison officials in each prison facility, and inmates in each prison facility visited. The two exceptions – the municipal jail system and a state department – did not involve interviews of inmates. In total, the researchers interviewed 200 prison officials (at both central office and prisons sites) and 270 inmates.

Particular attention was paid to assessing the extent and social dynamics of extremist ideologies among prisoners, and correctional agencies’ strategies for controlling such ideologies.

Conclusions

The threat of terrorism coming out of U.S. prisons is known to exist because of a nearly executed terrorist plot hatched in a state prison. However, the central finding of this research is that the probability of radicalization in prisons is modest, although it certainly exists. The reasons for only a modest probability are fourfold:

1. Order and stability in U.S. prisons have been achieved during the buildup period;
2. Prison officials have successfully implemented efforts to counter the “importation” of radicalism;
3. Correctional leadership has infused anti-radicalization into their agencies; and
4. Inmates’ low levels of education decrease the appeals of terrorism.

As of June 2008, there were 2,310,984 prisoners in federal or state prisons in the United States. This equates to 509 sentenced prisoners per 100,000 U.S. residents. 38% of this prison population is White, 46% is Black, and 16% is Hispanic.

Source: Bureau of Prison Statistics

Policy Implications

The central policy implication of this study is the need for continued and, in some cases, greater vigilance against the threat of prison-based terrorism. The prison environment permits a great deal of information to be collected on the activities and, more difficult to detect, planned activities of inmates after they are released. This requires the attentive observation by staff, collection of information from inmates, and efforts at different levels of a correctional agency to assemble, collate, and assess information, much of which will likely be false but some of which will be vital.

Forthcoming Publication

Why Foreign Terrorists Target the United States

START Investigator, Martha Crenshaw (Professor of Political Science by courtesy at Stanford University, and Senior Fellow at the Center for International Security and Cooperation (CISAC) and Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies), presented her START research to a group of Department of Homeland Security (DHS) staff at the April START Brown Bag. The START Brown Bag Series brings START researchers to DHS Science & Technology (S&T) headquarters in Washington, D.C., to share their findings and actively engage with DHS staff on their current research.

Crenshaw’s talk, titled “Why Foreign Terrorist Target the United States” drew upon her START research, “Terrorist Strategies and Tactics: When Do Terrorists Decide to Attack the United States?”. This project used data from START’s Global Terrorism Database (GTD), which was particularly useful since it is unique among event-level databases in including domestic attacks as far back as 1970. This project’s analysis of the GTD uses the U.S. State Department’s list of anti-U.S. groups in their work.

Notable findings from the research include:

- Most incidents of terrorism by anti-U.S. groups from 1970-2004 do not involve attacks on Americans or American interests (3.4%)
- 99% of attacks on the United States were not on American soil (instead, embassies, military bases overseas)
- 20% of attacks on the United States by these groups were fatal
- 90% + of attacks by anti-U.S. groups were domestic to the group’s home country, not international
- However, of 2564 total foreign attacks against the United States, 53% not attributed to any specific group

Crenshaw emphasized the importance of looking to local explanations for motives and explanations for behavior. She raised the question, “Why do organizations in the same situations behave differently?”

One can’t help but wonder, is al-Qa’ida an exception to the trends that have been found?

- 24% of al-Qa’ida attacks from 1995-2007 were against American targets, excluding Iraq and Afghanistan
- Omitting the 9/11 attacks, fatalities did not exceed 100 in any incident, and were rarely above 50

Suggested future areas of research include looking at mergers among groups, and the flip side - who do al-Qa’ida and other groups decide not to merge with?

Other START Brown Bag sessions at DHS S&T this year have included:

- Fran Norris – Assessing Community Resilience – March 2009
- Steven Kull – General Public Support for Terrorist Groups in the Muslim World – May 2009
- Frank Hairgrove & Douglas McLeod – Cell Groups & Terrorist Recruitment in Indonesia – June 2009
START Sponsorship for Terrorism Research

START recently awarded a number of students and faculty members funding for research in the field of terrorism. These awards are part of two programs; the Undergraduate Research Program and the Terrorism Research Awards.

2009-2010 Undergraduate Research Program

URP recipients are actively engaged in critical research related to the study of terrorism and responses to terrorism, consistent with the mission of START. In addition to their individual research project, URP students participate in START faculty-led research projects.

Each recipient is paid $3,000 to enhance his/her START research and professional development and receives funds to attend the 2010 START Annual Meeting in College Park, MD. After a rigorous and competitive selection process, START has selected 5 URP recipients for the 2009-2010 Academic Year.

2009-2010 URP Participants Include:

Celinet Duran, John Jay College, Criminology, “Extremism In and Out of Prisons”
Mentored by Joshua Freilich, “U.S. Extremist Crime Database”

Ashley Lohman, Stanford University, International Relations, “Tactical Change and Middle Eastern Terrorist Organizations”
Mentored by Martha Crenshaw, “Effectiveness of Counterterrorism Strategies”

Evan Perkoski, Wesleyan University, Government and Politics, “Counterterrorism and ETA in Spain”
Mentored by Erica Chenoweth, “Dealing with the Devil: Counterterrorism and its Impacts”

Devin Rubin, SUNY-Purchase, Psychology, “Perceptions of Suicide Terrorism: Experimental Analyses”
Mentored by Anthony Lemieux, “Turning to Terrorism: Experimental Investigations of Motivations”

Brittany Turner, University of Arkansas, Criminology, Sociology and Psychology, “Terrorist Residence v. Target Location: Improving Understanding and Conception of ‘Residence’”
Mentored by Brent Smith, “Patterns in U.S. Terrorism Events”

2009-2010 Terrorism Research Awards

Another form of research support that START provides are the Terrorism Research Awards, previously called START Fellowships.

TRA recipients are actively engaged in critical research related to the study of terrorism and responses to terrorism, consistent with the mission of START. Each recipient is paid $5,000 to enhance his/her START research and professional development and receives funds to attend the 2009 and 2010 START Annual Meetings in College Park, MD. After a rigorous and competitive selection process, START has selected 10 TRA recipients for the 2009-2010 Academic Year.

2009-2010 Post-doctoral recipients of the TRA include:

Manuela Caiani, European University Institute, Political Science, “Patterns of Right-Wing Political Radicalization Using the Internet within the United States and Europe”

Frank Foley, Stanford University, Political Science, “Comparative Analyses of British, French, and U.S. Counterterrorism”

Joseph Young, Southern Illinois University, Criminology, “Why Do Terrorist Groups Endure?”

2009-2010 Pre-doctoral recipients of the TRA include:

Colin Barnes, University of Oklahoma, Social Psychology/Sociology, “Acts of Terrorism As Offenses Against Honor”

Kurt Braddock, Pennsylvania State University, Communications, “Role of the Internet in Extremist Group Recruitment”

William Parkin, John Jay College, Criminology “Homicide Victims of Terrorism and Ideologically Motivated Crime”

Lisa Sacco, SUNY Albany, Criminology, “Counterterrorism and State Bureaucracy: An Examination of the State’s Homeland Security Responsibility”

Gabriella Sanchez, Arizona State University, Criminology, “Dynamics of Drug and Human Smuggling Organizations Operation Along US-Mexico Border”

Two additional students have received support for their research on “Strength in a Weakened State” and ‘Armed Groups’ Provision of Public Goods: Situational Bargaining in Rebel-Donor Relationships.”
START launched the Curriculum Development Grant (CDG) Program in 2008 as part of START’s mission to enhance education on the behavioral and social aspects of terrorism and responses to terrorism.

CDG recipients are members of the START consortium, either graduate students or faculty, who are actively engaged in critical research related to the study of terrorism and responses to terrorism and are dedicated to the education of the next generation of terrorism studies scholars. The $3,000 grant enables the recipients to develop curricula that can be used in a wide variety of courses.

One of START’s many strengths is the breadth of academic disciplines it involves, which is evident in the diversity of curriculum unit topics in the 2009-2010 CDG recipients. Over half of the winning curriculum units address the need for quality empirical research on terrorism and responses to terrorism. From field research, to social network analysis, to oral histories, to risk analysis, the CDG recipients are teaching techniques that will aid students in their understanding of terrorist dynamics and in their research.

2009-2010 Curriculum Development Winners Include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christine Bevc</td>
<td>PhD Student, Department of Sociology, University of Colorado</td>
<td>“Networks and Preparedness”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bidisha Biswas</td>
<td>Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Western Washington University</td>
<td>“Online Simulation Modeled on November 2008 Mumbai Attacks”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shawn Flanigan</td>
<td>Assistant Professor, Department of Public Administration, University of California-San Diego</td>
<td>“Conducting Field Research Outside the United States and in Difficult-to-Access Communities”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony Lemieux</td>
<td>Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Purchase College, SUNY</td>
<td>“Modular Approach to Radicalization and Terrorist Motivations”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeffrey Lewis</td>
<td>Lecturer, Department of History, The Ohio State University</td>
<td>“Engaging and Countering the Social and Cultural Mechanisms Used by Organizations to Motivate Suicide Attackers”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christine Muller</td>
<td>PhD student, Department of American Studies, University of Maryland</td>
<td>“What Can Oral Histories Tell Us About September 11?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian Nussbaum</td>
<td>Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Bridgewater State University</td>
<td>“Risk Management and Analytic Techniques”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

START Sponsorship for Curriculum Development

START Bulletin  Summer 2009
Recent START Publications

More START Publications available at: http://www.start.umd.edu/publications/

Book Chapters


Journal Articles & Book Reviews


