

## UMD professors, student write terrorism report

[PDF](#) | [Email](#)

Montie Martin, The Examiner

Jul 27, 2006 5:00 AM (4 hrs ago)

Current rank: # **275** of 4,061 articles

**College Park** - Two professors from the University of Maryland created their own global terror database as a means of sifting through information on terrorist attacks to create a quantitative report that suggests government reactions to terrorism can be more dangerous than terrorism itself.

The report, "Terror Research: Government Deterrence Strategies of Limited Effectiveness," was headed by criminology professor Gary LaFree, professor Laura Dugan and graduate student Raven Korte as part of a works grant from the Homeland Security Department-funded National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, housed at the university.

"We know terrorist groups don't last unless there is a base of support," LaFree said. "And when governments overreact ... make false arrests and kill civilians, that fuels support."

Using multivariate regressions — a description of how multiple variables change as another variable changes — on 2,603 Irish Republican Army strikes in Northern Ireland from 1969 to 1992, the report determined whether future risk of attack during this period increased, decreased or remained the same after each of the five major policy actions taken by the British.

Of the more than 20,000 academic studies on terrorism, only seven have enough detail to test the effectiveness of government strategies using statistics.

However, the department stressed that while the LaFree report will be the eighth to be published following over a year of peer review, no U.S. policy decisions will be made until then.

"DHS has sponsored [the study] to provide original research on terrorists and terrorist groups, as well as on the responses to terrorism," department spokesman Christopher Kelley said. "These research findings are preliminary."

Meanwhile, Israeli policymakers have already contacted LaFree over the report's findings. The Hezbollah kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers, and the subsequent bombardment and retaliatory rocket attacks, all reflect on the timeliness of this report.

"Any sort of low-intensity conflict is always a challenge to figure out how much is too much and how much is enough," said John Pike, director of Alexandria-based GlobalSecurity.org.

The LaFree report suggests there is an optimal point at which the benefits of deterrence are outweighed by terrorist defiance. However, LaFree acknowledged that finding such a point in the face of domestic outcry over terrorist attacks is very difficult.

"Terrorism is theater," LaFree said. "It's a very emotional thing, but we need to do the best we can to keep our cool and stay rational."

*[mmartin@dcexaminer.com](mailto:mmartin@dcexaminer.com)*