



START

National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism

Based at the University of Maryland
established Spring 2005



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 area, as well as to training a next generation of scholars to carry on this crucial research agenda in the future.

Research Area I: *Terrorist Recruitment and the Formation of Terrorist Groups.* Work in this area explores why 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
- Recommendations on deterring terror recruitment in U.S. prisons
- Database of right-wing extremist crime in the U.S. and analyses of links to terror activity

Research Area 2: *Terrorist Group Persistence and Dynamics.* Work in 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*

- International survey data on variables related to support for terrorism, especially terrorism that targets the U.S.
- 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: *Societal Responses to Terrorist Threats and Attacks.* Work in this area focuses on perceptions of, preparations for, responses to, and recovery from terrorist attacks, focusing on the United States. This research all relates to START's goal of providing guidance on enhancing 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 the development of 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 80,000 events between 1970 and 2004. The initial launch of this database is scheduled for Spring 2007, and START will continue to refine and update the data in years to come, releasing new versions of the data annually and conducting original analyses on the data.

Educational Programs: START is a research center with an educational mission. START's educational efforts include programs for a range of audiences, including students, current homeland security practitioners, and the interested public. These efforts all aim to reach out to a diverse audience. Programs include:

- Pre- and Post-Doctoral Fellowship Awards
 - Undergraduate Research Program
 - Course offerings on causes and impacts of terrorism
 - Curriculum materials
 - Training workshops for homeland security professionals
 - Brownbag seminars for DHS officials
 - Seminar Series at the University of Maryland, featuring leading terrorism scholars
 - Research Symposia open to the public, highlighting advances in knowledge generated by START's research efforts
- <http://www.start.umd.edu/>

