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DHS Science and Technology Directorate

Terrorism Prevention Research

Terrorism Prevention Portfolio

Terrorism poses a great risk to societies worldwide, and challenges persist in our ability to prevent its threat. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) directly supports DHS' terrorism prevention mission, conducting applied research to deliver new capabilities and evaluating program and policy impacts to build the evidence base of what works.

Three strategic insights inform and motivate S&T's role in supporting U.S. government efforts to prevent terrorism: (a) understanding individuals' motives for both engaging in, and disengaging from, violent extremism; (b) developing and supporting locally tailored interventions with local partners; and (c) evaluating the effectiveness of such interventions.

Terrorism Prevention will not yield a single solution because it is a collection of problems, for which multiple, multi-faceted answers are needed.



Since 2007, S&T's investments have spurred a growth in literature addressing terrorism prevention. S&T has delivered dozens of research products, fact sheets, evaluations, and capabilities to practitioners and the general public. Furthermore, S&T has transitioned comprehensive data tools to the public, which provide unparalleled insights into the threat of violent extremism. S&T managed the development of the Terrorist and Extremist Violence in the United States (TEVUS) database that consolidates data on behavioral, geographic, and temporal characteristics of extremist violence in the U.S. dating from 1970. S&T also funded the University of Maryland National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) program, and managed the development of the Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS) database containing individual-level information on backgrounds, attributes, and radicalization processes of more than 1,800 extremists in the U.S. This database also contains detailed information on U.S.-based terrorist foreign fighters.

Current Terrorism Prevention Programs (FY17-18)

Developing Local Terrorism Prevention Capabilities

Risk Assessment Tools to Support Secondary and Tertiary Interventions of Violent Extremism: Engage a variety of stakeholders to understand whether and how individual risk assessments are currently performed, perceptions of such tools, and recommendations for the creation and implementation of successful individual assessment tools.

Text-enabled Safe Referral Call Center Protocols & Evaluation:

Creation of protocols for a safe-referral system for friends, family, and other influencers to help connect individuals with social service resources. Through coordination from DHS' Office for Terrorism Prevention Partnerships (OTPP), S&T performers have identified a domestic crisis hotline center to partner with for pilot testing of the protocols.

Evaluating Terrorism Prevention Programs and Interventions

Pilot City Evaluations in Boston and Los Angeles:

Program evaluations in cities with terrorism prevention programs aim to increase: understanding of needs; awareness of community-based interventions aimed at reducing violent extremism; and the understanding of metrics to determine the impact of the program. Findings on scalability and sustainability will be delivered to practitioners, social and community service agencies, and national policymakers.

Past Terrorism Prevention Programs (FY16-17)

Understanding Engagement in Violent Extremism

Operational Roadmap: Engage stakeholders in order to understand (1) how organizations define their terrorism prevention mission, (2) how they decide what actions to undertake, and (3) how they interact with other stakeholders.

International Expert Engagement: Engage international experts to share best practices pertaining to terrorism prevention to guide the development and implementation of safe and effective programs. Domestic government agencies and law enforcement organizations from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States have agreed to exchange information and coordinate applied research efforts under the framework of the Five Country Research & Development Network (5RD).



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To learn more about the Countering Violent Extremism and Preventing Terrorism Portfolio, email first.responder@hq.dhs.gov.