



START

NATIONAL CONSORTIUM FOR THE STUDY OF TERRORISM AND RESPONSES TO TERRORISM

University of Maryland

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Research Areas

- Societal, behavioral and cultural factors that influence violent extremism
- Emergence, operations and interactions of domestic terrorists
- Collecting, coding and using data to inform decisions
- Terrorist group formation and recruitment, persistence and dynamics
- Societal impacts of terrorism
- Resilience and risk communication

“For several years START has provided the [DHS] Domestic Nuclear Detection Office (DNDO) with timely and efficient research and analysis...Specifically for DNDO, START has conducted in-depth studies on the potential nexus between organized crime and radiological and nuclear terrorism and recommendations for enhancing national and regional nuclear detection architectures in Europe. These efforts by START have provided essential decision-making tools to government leaders with the responsibility of protecting the nation from radiological and nuclear terrorism.”

– Mark Wittrock

Deputy Assistant Director
International Cooperation, DNDO

Mission: To advance science-based knowledge about the human causes and consequences of terrorism as a resource for homeland security policymakers and practitioners.

Quick Facts

- START is the national leader in cutting-edge research on the behavior of terrorists, terrorist organizations, and communities threatened by terrorism.
- START maintains the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), the world’s largest and most comprehensive open-source database on international and domestic terrorism events.
- Consortium researchers have published hundreds of homeland security-related papers and articles in leading peer-reviewed journals.
- START’s large network of premier subject matter experts is immediately accessible for responding to short- and long-term national security issues.



Partners

- Led by the University of Maryland, START directly partners with more than 50 academic research institutions and homeland security agencies.
- START collaborates across the DHS Centers of Excellence network to help law enforcement officials: 1) examine terrorist threats; 2) identify patterns of U.S. border crossings by individuals who have planned or launched terrorist attacks against the United States; and 3) understand the components of community resilience to help officials develop strategies to mitigate damage from future terrorist attacks.

Background

- Established in 2005 as a U.S. Department of Homeland Security Center of Excellence, START was tasked with using state-of-the-art theories, methods, and data from the social and behavioral sciences to improve the understanding of the origins, dynamics, and social and psychological impacts of terrorism.

Key Accomplishments

- Conducted more than 175 training events for more than 5,800 law enforcement and homeland security personnel.
- Developed a Global Terrorism Minor from which more than 80 percent of students go on to careers or graduate work related to homeland security.
- Worked with more than 2,800 students through internships on research projects and educational programs such as the Global Terrorism Minor, the Graduate Certificate in Terrorism Analysis and other sponsored research programs.
- Created more than 25 terrorism datasets that are publicly available for use in research or fact gathering.
- Enrolled more than 16,750 in the first iteration of its Massive Online Open Course about Understanding Terrorism and the Terrorist Threat.

Research Partners

START partners with leading social scientists at 50-plus academic and research institutions throughout the world, including:

American University
Bilkent University
Bowie State University
Bryn Mawr College
California State University, Fullerton
Center for Biosecurity, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center
Columbia University
Dartmouth College
Decision Path, Inc.
Florida International University
George Mason University
Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya
John Jay College,
City University of New York
King's College London
Liverpool University
Marquette University
Michigan State University
Morehouse College
National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago
Naval Postgraduate School
North Carolina Central University
North Dakota State University
Pennsylvania State University
Phoenix College,
Maricopa Community College
Rush University Medical Center
Rutgers University
Southern Illinois University
Stanford University
State University of New York (SUNY)
University of Arizona
University of Arkansas
University of Colorado
University of Haifa
University of Illinois, Chicago
University of Nebraska, Omaha
University of Oklahoma
University of South Carolina
University of Wisconsin
Villanova University
Wesleyan University

START Highlights



Global Terrorism Database

A centerpiece of START's work is the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), the world's largest open-source database on international and domestic terrorism events. Unlike many other event databases, the GTD includes systematically collected data on over 125,000 domestic, transnational and international terrorist incidents that have occurred around the world from 1970 through 2013. 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 group or individual responsible. START makes the GTD available to the public at [START-Global Terrorism Database](#) in an effort to increase understanding of terrorist violence so it can be more readily studied and defeated.

Education and Training

START trains and mentors the next generation of homeland security scholars and analysts with an in-depth understanding of the causes and consequences of terrorism, while giving current homeland security officials opportunities to expand their knowledge and skills.

- START's Graduate Certificate in Terrorism Analysis provides participants with advanced education on the causes, dynamics, and impacts of international and domestic terrorism, drawing on cutting-edge START research and data.
- START's undergraduate Global Terrorism Minor is a cross-disciplinary program within the University of Maryland's College of Behavioral and Social Sciences.
- START sponsors student research through the Terrorism Research Award and Undergraduate Research Program.
- Since its inception in 2005, START's internship program has welcomed more than 2,000 students from a wide array of institutions and academic disciplines to work on research projects and projects with government partners including the Department of State, Naval Research Laboratories and National Counterterrorism Center.

TCOTRN Project

The Transnational Criminal Organizations, Terrorists and Radiological/Nuclear Materials (TCOTRN) project identifies transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) and networks operating in the Central American Region (including the Caribbean) capable of engaging in RN smuggling. The research team determined existing or potential links between these TCOs and nuclear smuggling or terrorism; analyzed possible smuggling routes and methods that could be used by TCOs smuggling RN materials on behalf of terrorists; and explored vulnerabilities to develop recommendations for end users to enhance the Global Nuclear Detection Architecture.

