



# **Profiles of Perpetrators of Terrorism in the United States, 1970-2013**

*Final Report to Resilient Systems Division,  
DHS Science and Technology Directorate*

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**National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to  
Terrorism** A Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Center of  
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## About This Report

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This report is part of a series in support of the Prevent/Deter program. The goal of this program is to sponsor research that will aid the intelligence and law enforcement communities in assessing potential terrorist threats and support policymakers in developing prevention efforts.

## About START

The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) is supported in part by the Science and Technology Directorate of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security through a Center of Excellence program 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, contact START at [infostart@start.umd.edu](mailto:infostart@start.umd.edu) or visit [www.start.umd.edu](http://www.start.umd.edu).

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## Executive Summary

This report presents descriptive analyses of the Profiles of Perpetrators of Terrorism in the United States (PPT-US) database. PPT-US is a comprehensive dataset including structured data collected from unclassified sources on 143 organizations that carried out terrorist attacks in the United States between 1970 and 2013. Here we describe the development and validation of the database, which contains more than 100 variables pertaining to the organizations' historical contexts and philosophical motivations, ideologies, goals, operations, structures, and funding sources. PPT-US also includes references to source materials and confidence levels for each data point to allow users to better assess the validity of information that is often difficult to verify. The PPT-US data and supporting documentation are made available to the public to provide analysts with a resource for investigating the characteristics of perpetrator groups that have carried out terrorist attacks in the United States.

Our initial descriptive analyses reveal several key findings:

- More than 70% of perpetrator organizations that carried out terrorist attacks in the United States between 1970 and 2013 carried out attacks for one year or less.
- Eleven perpetrator organizations carried out attacks in the United States between 2000 and 2013. Approximately half of these organizations carried out attacks for less than one year.
- The majority (88%) of perpetrator groups that carried out attacks in the United States were based in the United States. The remaining groups were based in 10 other countries. Those groups that were based in the United States had headquarters in 19 different states, including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.
- Nearly three-quarters of the groups that carried out terrorist attacks in the United States had fewer than 100 members at their peak. Twelve groups had more than 1,000 members at their peak.
- Perpetrators of terrorist attacks in the United States were ideologically diverse. Historically, the majority of emergent groups were ethnonationalist/separatist or left-wing extremists. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century (2000-2013) far fewer groups have emerged than in any of the previous three decades; however, these emergent groups are divided fairly equally between religiously-motivated groups and those focused on more narrowly-defined single issues.
- The most commonly observed types of goals among groups in the database were political (identified for 84% of groups), followed by social goals (49% of groups), economic goals (40% of groups), and religious goals (13% of groups).
- Organizations that carried out terrorist attacks in the United States often engaged in other types of legal and illegal behavior. Seventy-nine of these groups participated in non-violent political activities, and 55 carried out conventional crimes in addition to terrorist violence.
- Although information on the financing of terrorist organizations is sparse, more than half of the groups for which we identified a type of funding source appeared to draw on multiple strategies for funding their activities.

## Introduction

In 2009, START researchers designed a new dataset, known as Profiles of Perpetrators of Terrorism in the United States (PPT-US), to integrate with the event data, court case data, and individual data that comprise the Terrorism and Extremist Violence in the United States (TEVUS) database. The PPT-US dataset currently includes extensive, systematically codified information on the attributes and behaviors of perpetrator organizations that were responsible for terrorist attacks in the United States between 1970 and 2013. In this report we briefly discuss the development of the PPT-US database and present a descriptive analysis of the data.

### Inclusion in PPT-US

Groups are included in PPT-US if they have conducted at least one terrorist attack in the United States (including Puerto Rico) since 1970 based on the definition of terrorism used in the Global Terrorism Database (GTD).<sup>1</sup> That is, any group identified in the GTD as a perpetrator of an attack targeting the U.S. homeland is included in PPT-US.<sup>2</sup> Note that groups thought to be suspicious, dangerous, or known to espouse extremist ideology but that have never carried out a terrorist attack against the United States are omitted from PPT-US. Also PPT-US includes only named organizations. Individual perpetrators of terrorist attacks not affiliated with a named organization are not included in the dataset. Finally, groups that have targeted U.S. interests abroad, but not carried out attacks on U.S. soil, are not included.

Additional criteria were developed for including an organization in PPT-US: First, the GTD includes a variable that indicates if there is doubt among the coders about whether that incident should be classified as terrorism or, instead, whether it would be more properly classified as another type of violence (e.g., insurgency, inter- or intra-group conflict, or conventional crime). Twelve percent of the 2,664 U.S. terrorist attacks in the GTD between 1970 and 2013 have been identified by the GTD team as incidents in which the necessary inclusion criteria are most likely satisfied yet the designation of terrorism is not clear due to insufficient or conflicting information. If such uncertainty exists for all of a particular group's activities, the group is excluded from PPT.<sup>3</sup> In addition, when attributing responsibility for specific

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<sup>1</sup> The GTD defines terrorism as “the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion or intimidation. Specifically, incidents reflect the following three attributes: (1) the incident must be intentional; (2) the incident must entail some level of violence or threat of violence; and (3) the perpetrators of the incidents must be sub-national actors. In addition, at least two of the following three criteria must be present for an incident to be included in the GTD: (1) the act must be aimed at attaining a political, economic, religious, or social goal; (2) there must be evidence of an intention to coerce, intimidate, or convey some other message to a larger audience (or audiences) than the immediate victims; and (3) the action must be outside the context of legitimate warfare activities insofar as it targets non-combatants.

<sup>2</sup> The time frame of PPT-US corresponds with that of the GTD, which is currently updated from 1970 through 2013. It should be noted that the GTD is missing data on terrorist attacks in 1993. However, START researchers reviewed all supplemental data collection efforts for 1993 to identify any perpetrator groups that satisfy the PPT-US inclusion criteria. Only one additional entity, the Liberation Army- Fifth Battalion, which claimed responsibility for the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, qualified for inclusion and was subsequently added to PPT-US. As GTD data collection continues, PPT-US will be updated accordingly.

<sup>3</sup> This parameter eliminated five groups associated with GTD incidents from PPT-US.

incidents in the GTD to organizations, the GTD team records whether there is high confidence that an organization is, in fact, responsible for the attack or, conversely, whether the group is only the suspected perpetrator. Only GTD groups for which there is high confidence of responsibility for at least one attack are included in PPT-US.<sup>4</sup> By applying these selection criteria, 143 groups responsible for more than 1,250 terrorist attacks in the United States between 1970 and 2013 have been included in PPT-US. (Please see Appendix I for a list of these groups.)

## Developing the PPT-US Codebook

In addition to identifying groups to include in this database, START researchers worked to identify the appropriate set of information to collect for each included group. This effort involved the development of a structured codebook that would define the full set of variables to be coded for each group.<sup>5</sup> The 100 variables included in the codebook reflect organizational characteristics identified in the terrorism literature, as well as in research in criminology, political science, and psychology regarding factors that may be relevant to the behaviors—especially violent behaviors—of organizations. The codebook contains 12 sections related to groups': (1) attack locations/dates and locations of headquarters; (2) historical contexts; (3) philosophical contexts; (4) dates formed; (5) notable events; (6) ideologies; (7) major goals; (8) other (political/criminal/social) activities; (9) relationships with other groups, key leaders, and number of members; (10) group structures; (11) recruitment strategies; and (12) financial strategies.

Given that data on terrorist organizations, which are often clandestine entities, can be challenging to find and of varying reliability, the research team recognized the importance of including details on the information source and a confidence indicator in that information for *each* variable per group—a unique quality of this dataset. Citing the information source(s) for each variable allows users of the data to reference original source material so that they can determine whether they agree with how each variable is coded and/or extract additional information. This provides users the opportunity to have higher levels of confidence about what was measured and how, as they use and interpret the data. It also provides users with references to resources that provide additional contextual information about the organization.

The metric for measuring a coder's confidence in the value assigned to each variable per group, based on the perceived validity of relevant source information, is based on a three-level scale, in which "1" indicates that the source(s) informing this coding possesses inherent biases or reporting errors, raising questions about the reliability of the information related to the variable value; "2" indicates that the source(s) used to inform the coding of a variable is generally credible, but knowledge about the validity of the particular information is lacking (e.g., information reported by anonymous intelligence sources that cannot be confirmed); and "3" indicates a high degree of confidence in the source and the resulting information derived from the source for a variable. Other key factors are considered as well: for instance,

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<sup>4</sup> This parameter eliminated two groups associated with GTD incidents from PPT-US.

<sup>5</sup> The most current versions of the PPT-US dataset and codebook can be found on START's Dataverse page, available through: <http://www.start.umd.edu/data-tools/profiles-perpetrators-terrorism-united-statesppt-us>

the proximity of the source to the information (e.g., primary or secondary source), the quality and quantity of other research that cites the source, and the reliability of the source in past cases.

## Data Collection and Coding

We systematically collect information on identified groups using numerous unclassified materials that, based on several pilot profiles, were chosen because they provided the richest and most reliable information. In addition to academic books<sup>6</sup> and journals,<sup>7</sup> websites<sup>8</sup> and search engines<sup>9</sup> are used to identify relevant information. To indicate groups for which the only source of information is the Global Terrorism Database, a variable (NOSOURCES) was added to the codebook.

### Establishing inter-coder consistency

The original work plan for collecting information on the identified groups required that each profile be coded by one person. To ensure that data would not reflect a bias depending upon which coder collected it, the variables for three groups (al-Qa'ida (AQ), the Weather Underground Organization (WUO), and Omega-7) were coded by both primary researchers at the outset of the coding process. The percentage of agreement across all three profiles was high. For each group both coders assigned the same values for each variable the vast majority of the time: inter-coder reliability for both AQ and the WUO was approximately 95%, while for Omega-7 it was 98%.<sup>10</sup>

### Coding strategies and rules

After the coding team demonstrated high levels of inter-coder reliability, critical decisions were made concerning how best to collect temporally dynamic information. Ideally, mapping variables that are subject to fluctuations, like number of members per group, over time would enhance the richness of the profile. However, this project did not include sufficient resources to allow for annual or semi-annual coding of group characteristics. As such, the team made explicit decisions regarding coding characteristics that could change over time.

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Atkins, Stephen E. *Encyclopedia of Modern American Extremists and Extremist Groups*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002; Hill, Sean D. *Extremist Groups: An international compilation of terrorist organizations, violent political groups and issue-oriented militant movements*. Huntsville: Office of International Criminal Justice, 2002; Jones, S.G., and M.C. Libicki. *How terrorist groups end: Lessons for countering al Qaida*. Santa Monica: RAND Corp, 2008; and Janke, Peter. *Guerrilla and Terrorist Organizations: A world directory and bibliography*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1983.

<sup>7</sup> For example, *Terrorism and Political Violence, Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, and the *American Journal of Political Science*.

<sup>8</sup> For example, Globalsecurity.org; Opensource.gov; State & CIA websites; the Congressional Research Service; Newslibrary.com; and the National Counterterrorism Center's website.

<sup>9</sup> For example, Lexis-Nexis, Proquest, Infotrac, World Quest, Yahoo, Google (general, scholar and books), All the Web, and Infomine. Note that some of these platforms have been discontinued or consolidated since the start of this project.

<sup>10</sup> While the coders were not given a pre-defined list of sources to draw from, they did end up using several of the same sources. Additionally, while both the historical and philosophical narratives were not figured into the percentages, these two variables proved to be substantively similar, yet stylistically different.

When capturing a group's goals and ideology, the "has ever" rule applies – that is, if the group has ever demonstrated allegiance to a distinct ideology or goal, that ideology or goal is coded as present for the group under consideration. In addition, coding the number of members in a group is a difficult task because membership size ebbs and flows throughout a group's existence. To mitigate these difficulties, the "measure at the peak of violent activity" rule instructs coders to record group size during the period in which the group committed their highest frequency of terrorist attacks. When conflicting accounts of group size are found, coders are instructed to report the highest value while also recording in the notes section all other findings. Like group size, a group's structural composition tends to evolve in light of circumstance and need for survival. Coders adopt a dual strategy: for active groups,<sup>11</sup> they assess group structure at the most recent point in these groups' existence; for defunct groups, they assess it at the groups' peak of activity.

For those attributes that are coded as present or absent—for example, an allegiance to a specific ideology—unless otherwise indicated an attribute is coded as present only if sources positively confirm the existence of this attribute for the group. Due to the inherent difficulty of positively confirming the absence of a given characteristic, a characteristic is coded as not present if it is positively confirmed as absent for the group, or if information about the broader domain is available for a group, but there is no indication of that particular attribute. Finally, if uncertainty about the value of the variable exists after consulting all available sources, if conflicting information is found, or if no source information for the broader domain can be identified, then the variable is coded as missing.

## **Data Validation and Updates**

The initial coding of all identified groups by PPT-US researchers took place between February and June 2010. Upon completion, START implemented two separate evaluations of this coding effort. The first validation strategy, which took place in June 2010, involved comparing the new PPT-US data to the Big, Allied, and Dangerous (BAAD) database, an independent group-level data collection effort led by START investigators Victor Asal and Karl Rethemeyer.<sup>12</sup> The second evaluation, which began in July 2010, was a more rigorous effort to evaluate the validity and reliability of the data by re-collecting random subsets of PPT-US using either the original source materials or newly collected source materials. This evaluation focused especially on the clarity of the codebook and the source identification process. While the results of both evaluations were largely positive, START staff took the opportunity to identify problematic variables, clarify their operational definitions in the codebook, and review the coding of these variables for all of the PPT-US groups.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> A group is considered "active" if sources confirm that the group (up to the date of coding) still maintains some base of operation and is actively engaged in some level of violent or non-violent, legal or illegal, activities.

<sup>12</sup> For more on BAAD, see Victor Asal; R. Karl Rethemeyer; Ian Anderson, 2009, "Big Allied and Dangerous (BAAD) Database 1 - Lethality Data, 1998-2005," <http://www.start.umd.edu/data-tools/big-allied-and-dangerous-baad-database-1-lethality-data-1998-2005>.

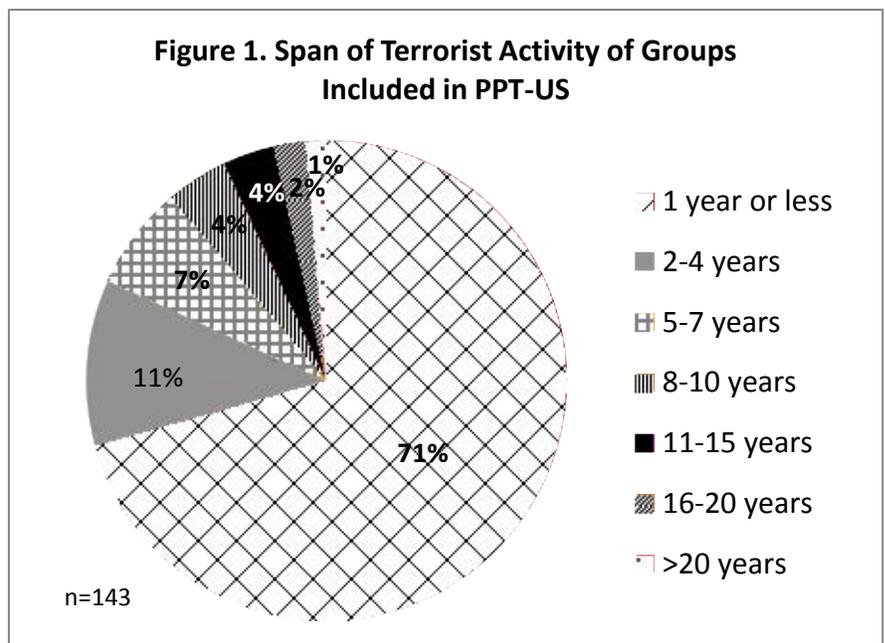
<sup>13</sup> The full details of these evaluations and their results are described in the interim project report: Miller, Erin E., and Kathleen Smarick, Joseph Simone, Jr. "Profiles of Perpetrators of Terrorism in the United States (PPT-US): Data Collection and Descriptive Analysis," Interim Report to Human Factors/Behavioral Sciences Division, Science and Profiles of Perpetrators of Terrorism in the United States, 1970-2013

Each year since the initial collection of PPT-US, START staff conduct a three-part update to the data. The first step involves fully re-evaluating the organizations in PPT-US with respect to the inclusion criteria. The GTD is updated annually, including the addition of new data as well as revisions to historical data. Both of these functions can potentially impact the organizations that comprise PPT-US, either by identifying new information that changes the inclusion or attribution of responsibility for an historical terrorist attack in the GTD, or adding new groups identified as perpetrators of terrorist attacks in the ongoing data collection. As a result of this first step, groups are both added to and removed from PPT-US as appropriate. The second step of the annual review involves updating the profiles of PPT-US groups that remain active with new information. As many of the groups in PPT-US are defunct, this effort is isolated to those that have carried out a terrorist attack within the past 10 years. The third step of the update requires creating new profiles for any groups, either historically active or currently active, that have been added to PPT-US as a result of updates to the GTD and re-evaluation of the inclusion criteria.

## Findings

### Organizational Demographics

The PPT-US data reveal a number of interesting patterns regarding the longevity and location of groups that have carried out terrorist attacks in the United States between 1970 and 2013. Figure 1 presents the duration of the groups' terrorist activity in the United States, bounded by the years of their first and last known attacks, which spanned from 0 to 38 years with an average duration of 2.4 years. The vast majority of the groups (71%) carried out terrorist attacks for one year or less, and only two groups—the Animal Liberation Front and the Ku Klux Klan—carried out attacks for more than 20 years.

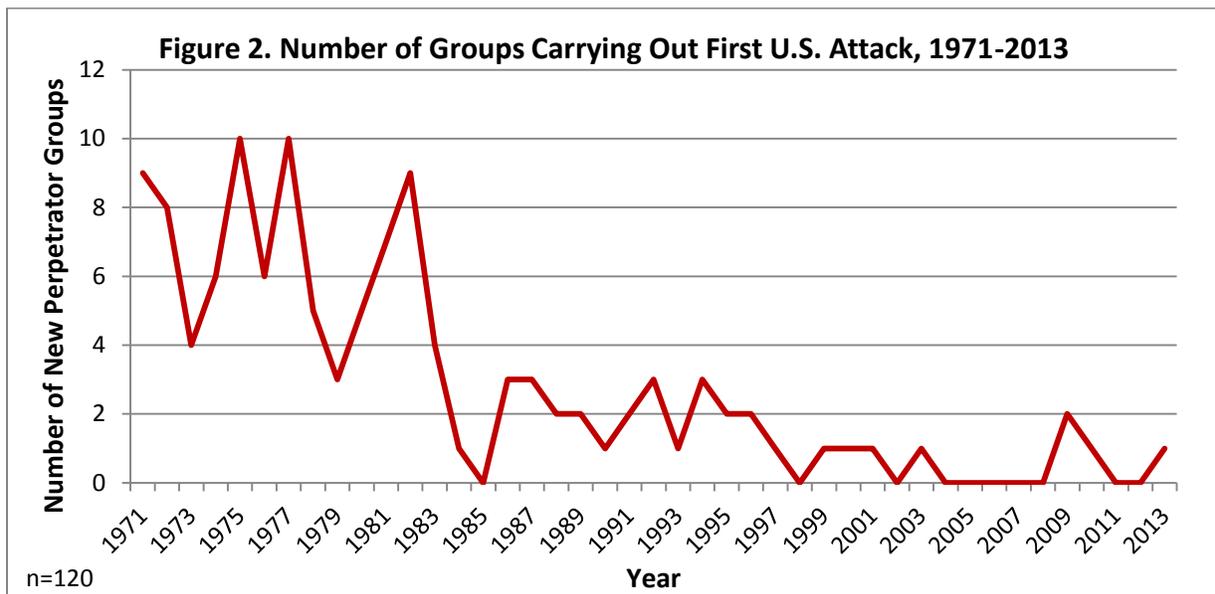


Eleven groups, shown in Table 1, carried out attacks in the United States in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Approximately half of these groups (n=6) carried out attacks for less than one year, while the other half (n=5) carried out attacks for between four and 38 years.

Table 1. Perpetrator Organizations that Carried Out Terrorist Attacks in the United States, 2000-2013

Organization Name	Year of First Attack in the United States	Year of Last Attack in the United States	Span (in Years)
Ku Klux Klan	1970	2008	38
Animal Liberation Front (ALF)	1987	2011	24
Earth Liberation Front (ELF)	1995	2009	14
The Justice Department	1999	2010	11
Revolutionary Cells-Animal Liberation Brigade	2003	2007	4
Al-Qa`ida	2001	2001	0
Al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)	2009	2009	0
Minutemen American Defense	2009	2009	0
Revenge of the Trees	2000	2000	0
Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)	2010	2010	0
Veterans United for Non-Religious Memorials	2013	2013	0

Between 1971 and 2013, an average of three emergent groups carried out attacks in the United States for the first time each year. Per Figure 2, the 1970s and early 1980s saw the greatest number of new groups launching attacks per year,<sup>14</sup> while there were ten years between 1970 and 2013 in which no group launched a first attack on the United States—including eight of the years following 2001.



PPT-US includes information on the known locations of headquarters for 83 groups,<sup>15</sup> of which 88% (n=73) were located in the United States while 12% were based abroad.<sup>16</sup> Of the 73 groups with

<sup>14</sup> Because the GTD begins tracking terrorist activity in 1970, all groups active in 1970 carried out their first recorded attack in 1970, regardless of whether or not they were previously active. To minimize bias due to statistical censoring that over-counts the number of “new groups” in 1970, we excluded these groups (n=23) from Figure 2.

<sup>15</sup> A group’s headquarters is defined as the place where attacks are planned, members are trained and/or public relations/marketing tools (e.g., written statements, audio and video broadcasts) are produced. Our coding strategy was to capture the location of any headquarters that a group operated from at some point in its operational existence.

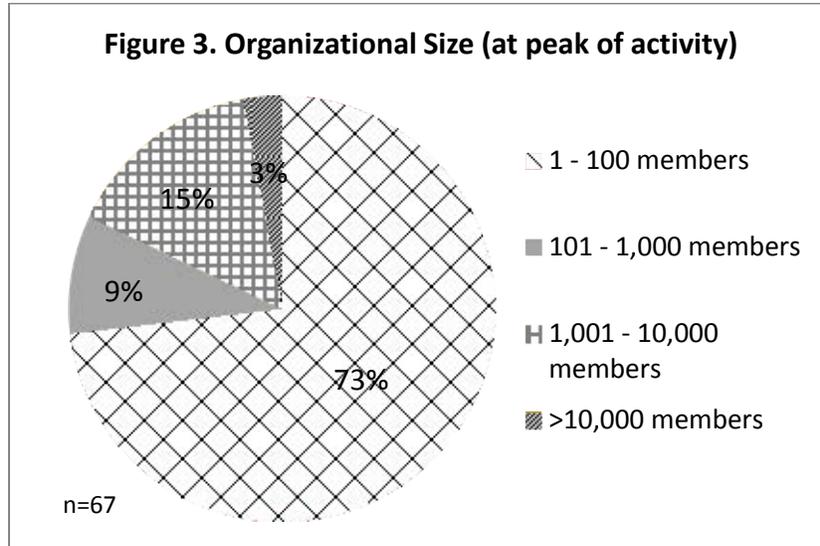
headquarters in the United States, PPT-US includes information on the state or states in which the group was based for 54 groups. Nine of these groups (17%) were known to have headquarters in more than one state. The headquarters of the perpetrator groups in PPT-US were located in 19 different states (including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico), which are shown in Table 2; however, 43% of headquarters were located in California, New York, and Puerto Rico.

Table 2. States in which Headquarters of Terrorist Groups Active in the United States were Located

State	Number of Groups
California	13
New York	9
Puerto Rico	7
Florida	5
Oregon	5
Illinois	4
Idaho	3
Washington	3
Arkansas	2
District of Columbia	2
Michigan	2
New Jersey	2
Texas	2
Wisconsin	2
Colorado	1
Mississippi	1
Missouri	1
North Carolina	1
Oklahoma	1

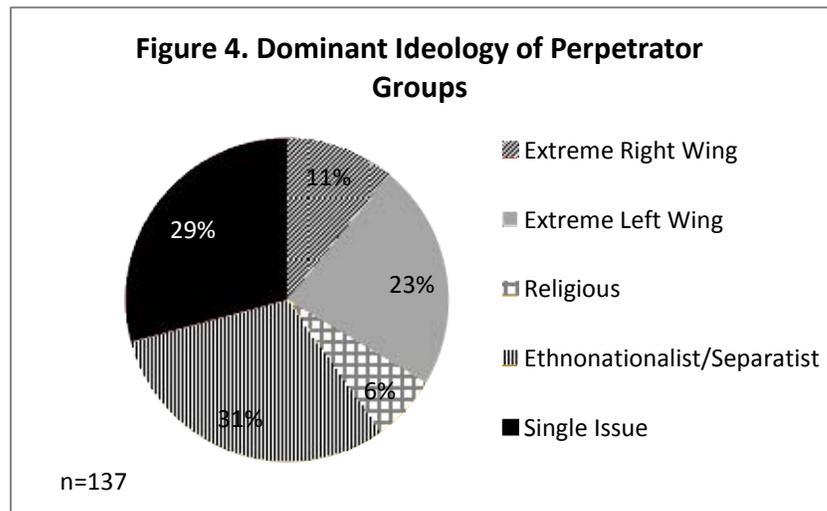
PPT-US includes data on organizational size, measured by the number of members at the organization’s operational peak, for 67 groups, of which the clear majority had fewer than 100 members at their peak, as reflected in Figure 3. Only two of the organizations that carried out terrorists attack in the United States were reported to have more than 10,000 members—the Ku Klux Klan and the anti-government Posse Comitatus network. In contrast, there are three “groups” included in PPT-US that researchers have determined to be “one-man groups”— named organizations with only one member. The names used in communiqués by these individuals to give the appearance that an organization was behind their attacks were Americans for a Competent Federal Judicial System, Continental Revolutionary Army, and Up the IRS, Inc.

<sup>16</sup> International groups targeting the United States were based in Afghanistan (n=1 group), France (n=1), Great Britain (n=1), Haiti (n=1), Iraq (n=1), Jordan (n=1), Lebanon (n=1), Northern Ireland (n=1), Pakistan (n=1), and Yemen (n=1).



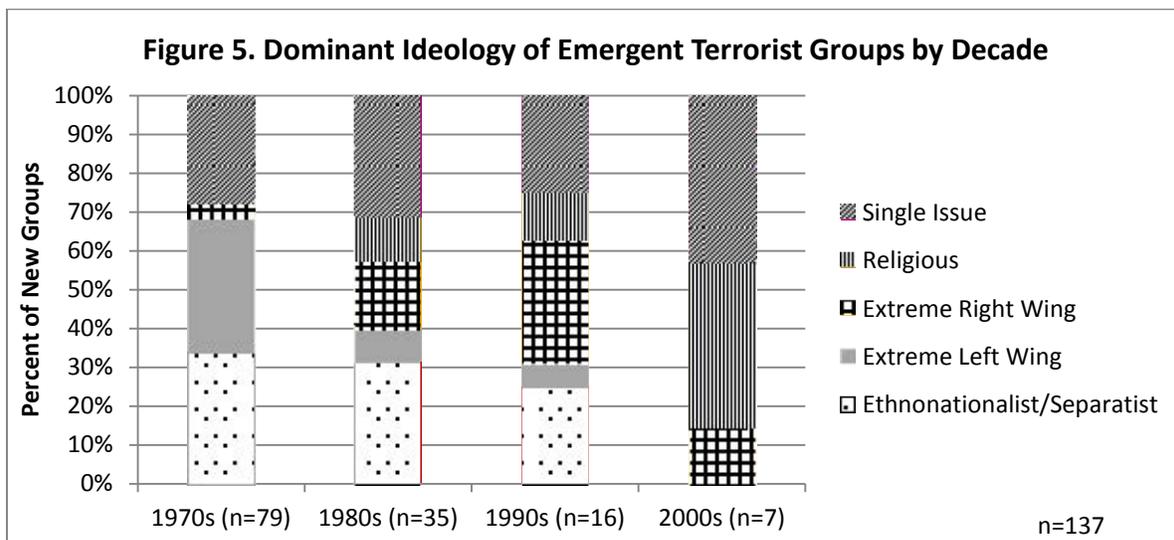
**Ideology**

Figure 4 shows the dominant ideology category for 137 terrorist groups in the dataset.<sup>17</sup> (The ideology of 4% of PPT-US groups is unknown.) Of the groups that attacked United States between 1970 and 2013, 31% (n=42) pursued an ethnonationalist/separatist agenda. Many of these were Puerto Rican nationalist groups that carried out attacks in the 1970s and 1980s. Forty groups (29%) carried out violence in the name of a single issue or narrowly defined cause such as environmentalism or opposition to abortion. Extreme left-wing groups comprise 23% (n=31) of the groups in PPT-US, including the Weather Underground and the New World Liberation Front, both active in the 1970s. Extreme right-wing groups, such as The Order and the Ku Klux Klan, make up 11% of the groups that carried out terrorist attacks in the United States between 1970 and 2013. Six percent of groups that attacked the United States (n=9) were motivated by a religious ideology; however, this small set of organizations includes the group that has inflicted the greatest amount of damage on the United States through terrorism, al-Qa’ida.



<sup>17</sup> Although many perpetrator groups are characterized by multiple ideological influences that are recorded as secondary ideologies in PPT-US, the dominant ideology variable captures the most important or salient ideological categorization for each group.

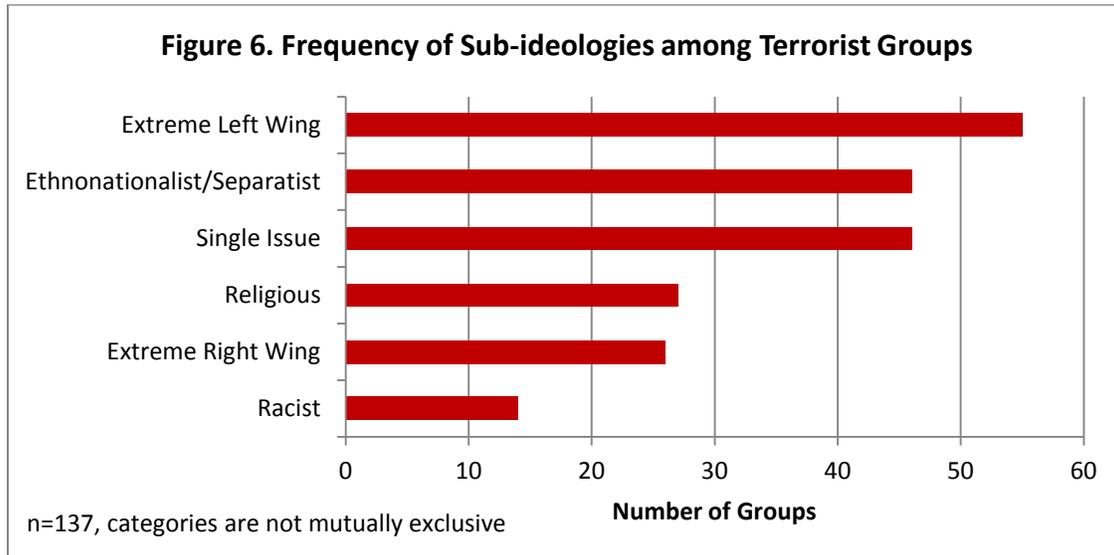
Figure 5 presents the data on dominant ideologies according to the decade in which the groups espousing those ideologies began carrying out attacks. This figure reflects the diversity of ideologies among terrorist groups that carried out attacks in the United States between 1970 and 2013, as well as a shift in dominant ideologies over time. For example, in the 1970s, the most common type of terrorist groups to emerge were ethnonationalist/separatist groups (n=27) and extreme left-wing groups (n=27).<sup>18</sup> In the 1980s, the percentage of extreme left-wing groups emerging declined dramatically, from 34% to 9%, while the percentage of religious and extreme right-wing groups began to increase. For extreme right-wing groups, this relative increase continued through the 1990s, when they comprised one-third of new groups, while only one new group was characterized by an extreme left-wing ideology. The overall number of new groups that emerged in the 2000s (including the years 2000 to 2013) was small in comparison to previous decades; however, the fact that 43% (n=3) of the groups that emerged in this period were religious and 43% (n=3) were single issue groups is a notable distinction.



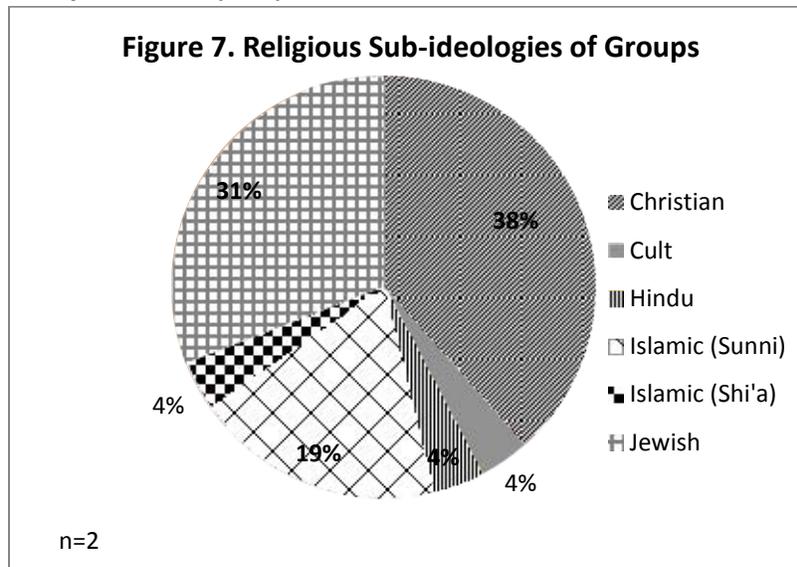
In addition to coding data on a perpetrator group’s dominant ideology, PPT-US also captures the secondary ideologies of the groups. While the dominant ideology categories are treated as mutually exclusive and represent a group’s primary vision, the secondary ideology variables are more specific and more than one may apply to each group. For instance, in addition to coding a group as having a religious ideology as its dominant ideology, the religious sub-ideology variables note whether the group is Buddhist, Christian, Islamic (Shia/Sunni), Hindu, Jewish, or a cult. A religious perpetrator group may also have secular or issue-specific beliefs that could be captured under other sub-ideological categories, including Marxist/Leninist, Maoist, anti-Castro, anti-communist, fascist, racial supremacist, anti-Semitic, animal rights/environmentalist, or black nationalist beliefs.

<sup>18</sup> Recall that GTD data collection for these groups began in 1970, so the data on earliest recorded attacks are censored at 1970, over-counting the number of groups that emerged during that decade. For Figure 5, the 1970s category represents groups that emerged in that decade or earlier.

Figure 6 presents how frequently specific sub-ideologies were present among PPT-US groups. Whereas the most common dominant ideology was ethnonationalism/separatism, the most common sub-ideology was left-wing extremism, adhered to by about 40% of groups for which ideology is known (n=55). Ethnonationalism/separatism was likely to be a dominant motivation among groups with this goal. Thirty-nine percent of ethnonationalist/separatist groups also had an extreme left-wing sub-ideology.

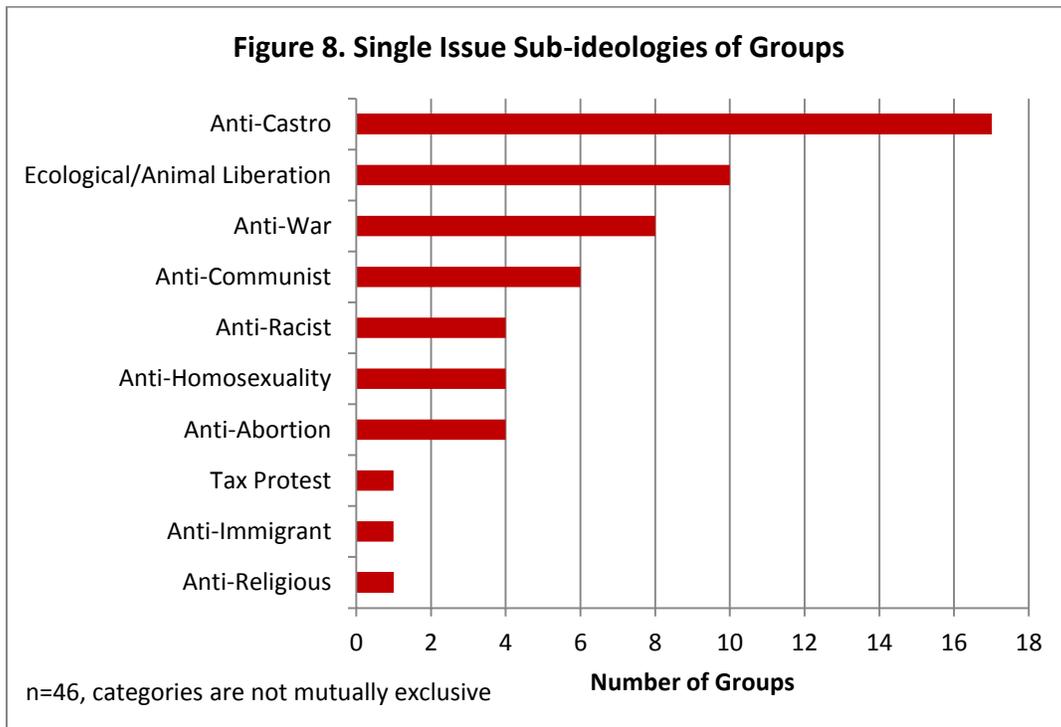


While 6% of all PPT-US groups had a religious ideology as their dominant perspective, 20% of the groups (n=27) maintained some religious perspectives in their belief system. Figure 7 reflects which religions were relevant to these groups, with Christianity being the most frequently occurring religious sub-ideology (n=10), followed by Judaism (n=8).<sup>19</sup>



<sup>19</sup> PPT-US coders also considered whether groups' ideologies reflected advocacy of other religious denominations, including Buddhism, Sikh, Pagan/Polytheistic, and Occult (including Satanist). No groups were found to hold ideologies based on these religions.

Sub-ideology data also provides more insights into the goals of those groups who were focused on a particular issue. Figure 8 presents the number of perpetrator groups that aligned themselves with each of 10 key policy and/or social issues. The most common cause among single issue perpetrator groups was opposition to the Castro government in Cuba (37%), followed by ecological/animal liberation causes (22%), and opposition to war (17%).



## Goals

PPT-US includes information to further unpack perpetrator groups’ sometimes broad-brush ideologies and identify their specific goals. In particular, PPT-US includes information on different political, social, economic, and religious goals pursued by these terrorist groups. Per Table 3, the perpetrator groups had a variety of specific goals, and individual groups had multiple objectives within each category.

Table 3. Perpetrator Groups’ Political, Social, Economic, and Religious Goals

Type of Goal	Number of Groups (%)	Number of Groups with Multiple Goals in this Category
Political	120 (84%)	75
Social	70 (49%)	31
Economic	57 (40%)	31
Religious	19 (13%)	7

PPT-US provides more detailed information on perpetrator groups' goals within each of these four categories. Figure 9 shows the types of political goals pursued by terrorist groups active in the United States between 1970 and 2013. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the most common political goal among the groups—and, in fact, the most common goal overall—was to protest government policies and/or laws. This was relevant to 69% of all PPT-US groups (n=99). Beyond this, PPT-US does reveal other shared types of political goals among sometimes ideologically divergent terrorist groups: 39% of all groups were opposed to a ruling political party or incumbent political officials, and 33% of groups espoused territorial goals, including changing existing national borders or gaining an independent territory for a people. Fewer groups (23%) were seeking overall regime change—for instance, moving a country from democracy to autocracy (or from a dictatorship to democracy)—and only five groups (3%) sought to influence a particular election.

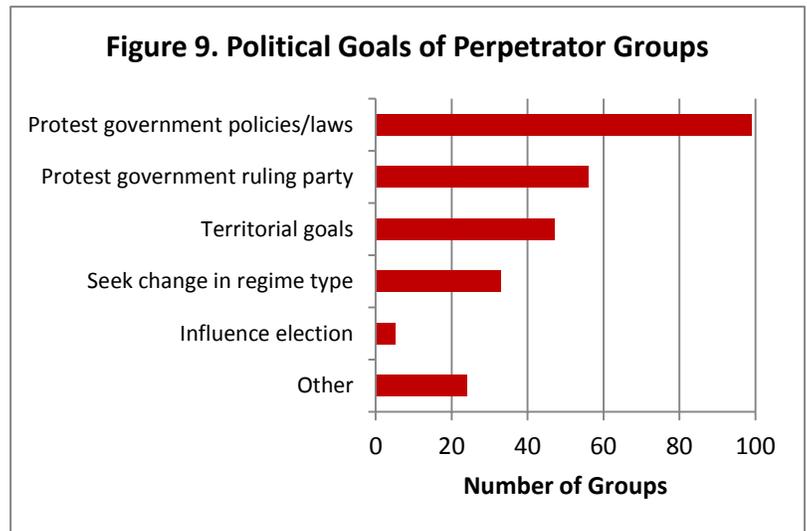
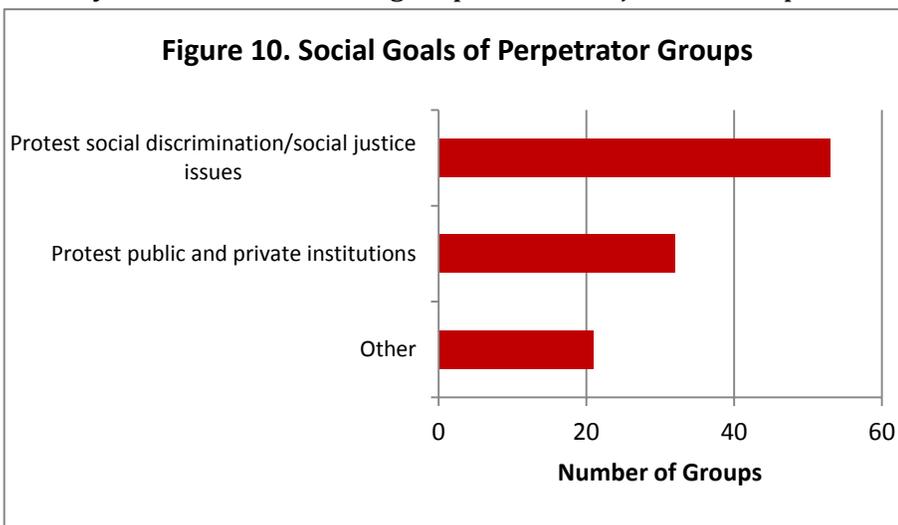
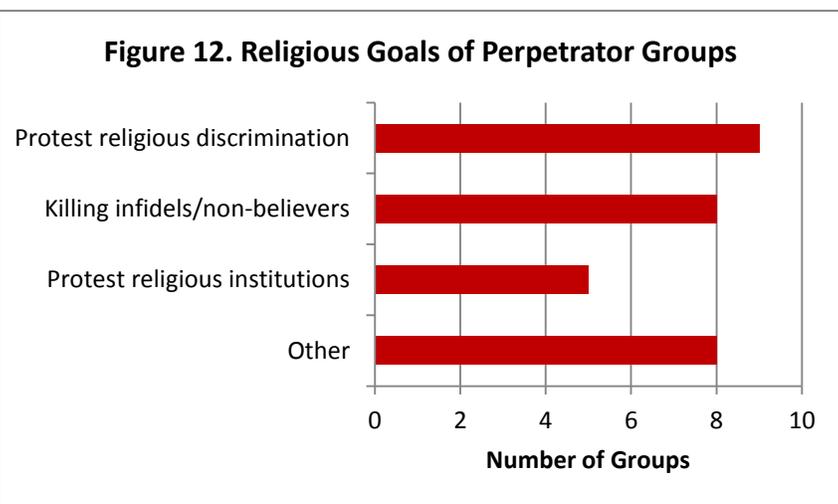
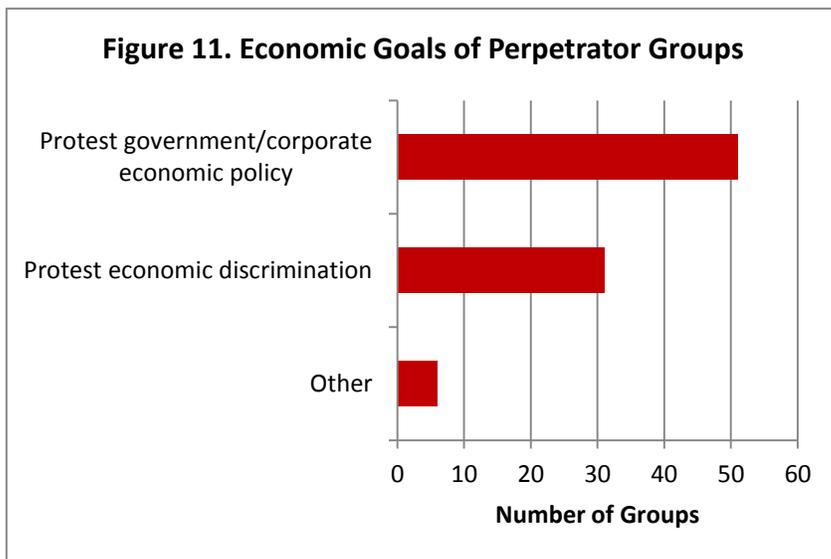


Figure 10 provides more detail on the types of social goals of terrorist groups included in PPT-US. Almost 40% of all groups stated objections related to social justice issues and a desire to reduce or eliminate perceived discrimination. Of course, there is notable variation among groups about which groups they viewed as persecuted: The Ku Klux Klan, for instance, viewed affirmative action programs in the United States as discriminatory against whites and wanted them abolished. The Black Panthers, on the other hand, viewed African-Americans as subject to systematic discrimination in all aspects of American society. In addition, 22% of groups voiced objections to specific institutions they viewed as problematic



for society. Comrades in Arms, for example, aimed to stop police harassment of African-Americans. Fifteen percent of groups had social goals that could not be effectively classified, ranging from the very broad (such as the White Panther Party's goal of encouraging social revolution) to the very specific (e.g., the Armed Commandos of Liberation demanded revitalization in one region in Puerto Rico).

It was more common for PPT-US groups to have explicit political or social goals than it was for them to have economic aims, as reflected in Figure 11. For many of the groups (22%), economic goals were tied to a general social goal, as groups objected to perceived economic discrimination. It was more common, however, for groups to have more targeted economic goals, such as Cuban Action’s desire to stop all corporations from conducting business with the Castro regime in Cuba. In all, 36% of groups voiced opposition to specific economic policies.



Just as religious ideology was relatively rare among terrorist groups that targeted the United States between 1970 and 2013, groups espousing explicitly religious goals were relatively rare, comprising only 13% of all groups. Among these religious goals, the most common was to correct perceived religious discrimination, a goal held by 6% of all groups, as reflected in Figure 12. In contrast, 5% had goals related to repression of those who did not share their own religious beliefs.

**Other Political and Criminal Activities**

Terrorism is both a political and a criminal act; however, the perpetrator groups in PPT-US did not engage exclusively in terrorist violence as the only strategy to achieve their goals. As such, we sought to identify a more complete inventory of the repertoire of political and criminal activities in which these groups have engaged. Table 4 shows the types of political and criminal activities the PPT-US groups carried out in addition to terrorist attacks; however, these variables do suffer from missing data—38% of all groups have no known information about political activities, and 59% of all groups have no known information about criminal activities. Of those for whom we do have data, 90% of perpetrator groups (n=79) engaged in political activity other than terrorism, while 93% (n=55) engaged in criminal activity beyond terrorist violence.

Table 4. Political and Criminal Activities of Perpetrator Groups

Type of Activity	Number of Groups	Example
<b>Political Activity</b>	<b>79</b>	
Verbal/written opposition	73	Up the IRS, Inc issued a series of communiqués stating its grievances against the Internal Revenue Service.
Involved in political demonstrations	31	The leader of the Macheteros organized political demonstrations focused on Puerto Rican independence.
Symbolic resistance	9	Members of EarthFirst! Released a 300-foot banner down the face of Glen Canyon Dam to replicate a crack in the dam.
High-level participation in politics and existing political institutions	10	The Black Afro Militant Movement created a political party (New Party), and a BAMB leader ran for lieutenant governor of Florida in 1970.
Medium-level participation in politics and existing political institutions	4	A leader of Posse Comitatus ran for Wisconsin state senate in 1980 and the governorship in 1982.
Low-level participation in politics and existing political institutions	5	Mujahideen-I-Khalq endorsed selected politicians in Iran.
Other political activity	9	The Rajneeshees took over a local city government to try to change the town name to "Rajneesh."
<b>Criminal Activity</b>	<b>55</b>	
Participation in violent crime	39	Symbionese Liberation Army members participated in three bank robberies.
Participation in property crime	36	The Organization of Volunteers for the Puerto Rican Revolution stole explosives to use in its operations.
Participation in financial crimes	14	A counterfeiting operation was based at the compound of the leader of Aryan Nations.
Participation in public order crimes	8	The Animal Liberation Front participates in releasing animals from research facilities.
Participation in drug trafficking	6	A leader of Omega-7 had ties with major narcotics dealers, and the group was financed in part by trafficking activities.
Other criminal activity	23	Members of the May 19 Communist Order were charged with and found guilty of possession of illegal firearms.

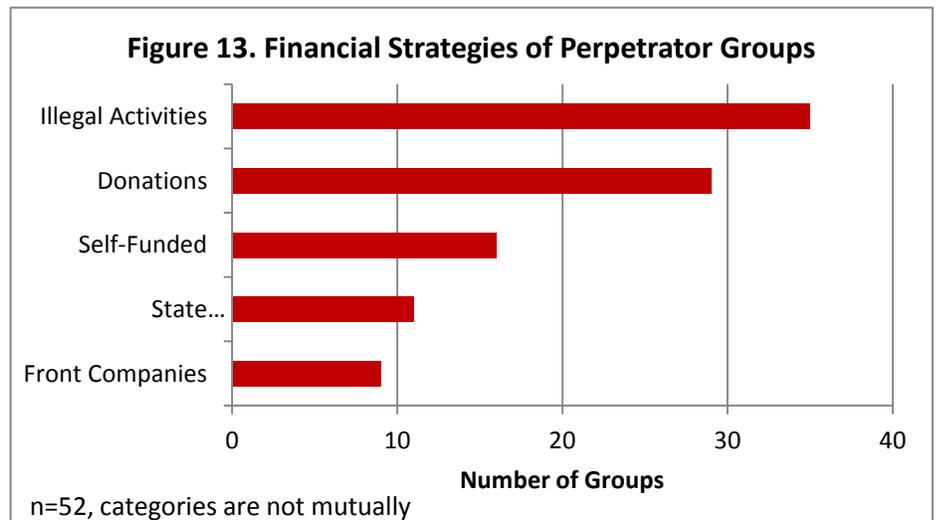
Groups’ involvement in political activities (in addition to their terrorist activities) was more commonly reported than involvement in criminal activity (in addition to their terrorist activities), with rhetorical opposition to government policies the most common form of engagement. Interestingly, though, a

number of these groups that engaged in behaviors well outside of the established political order (e.g., terrorism) were also engaged in traditional political processes, ranging from organizing protests (n=31) to establishing political parties and running candidates for public positions (n=10).

PPT-US sources included fewer references to these groups being involved in criminal activity other than their known terrorist attacks. The data in Table 4 reveal, however, that groups were involved in various types of crime, both violent and non-violent. Interestingly, the least common type of criminal activity among those reviewed was drug trafficking, with sources identifying only six of 143 groups as being involved in drug trafficking.

**Financing**

Reliable information on funding sources for these groups was difficult to find in the unclassified literature. In all, PPT-US researchers were able to identify funding sources for 52 of the 143 PPT-US groups (36% of all groups). While the data in Figure 13 are not comprehensive, they do reveal that – among those groups for which financial information was available – a majority of them (54%) had multiple funding sources, including donors, criminal activity, or funding from group members/leaders. Such multipronged funding strategies are more difficult to eliminate and can allow groups to be resilient even when some funding sources disappear because of effective counterterrorism efforts, a donor’s change of heart, or some other reason.



**Conclusion**

These PPT-US data were developed to be a resource for researchers and analysts to help advance the study of terrorism by providing structured, systematically collected data on the groups that have carried out terrorist attacks in the United States. The findings presented here reflect the fact that, in the United States, terrorism has been a tactic employed by groups with widely varied ideologies, beliefs, and goals. Perpetrator groups have been based all around the country and abroad, and have ranged from short-lived groups that disappear within a year or two of their first attack, to organizations that persisted for decades. These groups have had a variety of political, social, religious, and economic goals. For some groups, their adoption of terrorist tactics has not precluded them from engaging in legitimate political

activities, as well. Others engage in a range of criminal behaviors in conjunction with their terrorist attacks. In short, there is no single “profile” of terrorist organizations that target the United States.

The collection and improvement of the PPT-US data are ongoing. The research team will update the dataset as new data become available, adding information on emergent and/or newly identified groups and reviewing information on existing groups to ensure that it is as current and complete as possible. The data and supporting documentation are also available to the public so that students, researchers, and policymakers can conduct further analysis.

## **Appendix I: PPT-US Groups**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| Action Squad   | Evan Mecham Eco-Terrorist International Conspiracy (EMETIC) |
| Al-Qa`ida  | Farm Animal Revenge Militia (FARM)                          |
| Al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)                    | Fourth Reich Skinheads                                      |
| American Indian Movement                                     | Fred Hampton Unit of the People's Forces                    |
| American Servicemen's Union (ASU)                            | Fuerzas Armadas de Liberacion Nacional (FALN)               |
| Americans for a Competent Federal Judicial System            | Gay Liberation Front  |
| Americans for Justice  | George Jackson Brigade                                      |
| Animal Liberation Front (ALF)                                | Grupo Estrella  |
| Anti-Castro Command  | Guerrilla Column 29 September                               |
| Antonia Martinez Student Commandos (AMSC)                    | Guerrilla Forces for Liberation                             |
| Armed Commandos of Liberation                                | Imperial Iranian Patriotic Organization                     |
| Armed Commandos of Student Self Defense                      | Independent Armed Revolutionary Commandos (CRIA)            |
| Armed Forces of Popular Resistance (FARP)                    | Irish Republican Army (IRA)                                 |
| Armed Revolutionary Independence Movement (MIRA)             | Jamaat-al-Fuqra   |
| Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia           | Jewish Armed Resistance                                     |
| Army of God  | Jewish Committee of Concern                                 |
| Aryan Nations  | Jewish Defense League (JDL)                                 |
| Aryan Republican Army  | Jonathan Jackson Brigade                                    |
| Black Afro Militant Movement                                 | Justice Commandos for the Armenian Genocide                 |
| Black Brigade (United States)                                | Ku Klux Klan  |
| Black Liberation Army  | Latin America Anti-Communist Army (LAACA)                   |
| Black Panthers   | Liberation Army Fifth Battalion                             |
| Black Revolutionary Assault Team                             | Lolita Lebron Puerto Rican Liberation Command               |
| Black September  | Luis Boitel Commandos                                       |
| Boricua Revolutionary Front                                  | M-7   |
| Boricuan Armed Anti-Imperialist Commandos                    | Maccabee Squad and the Shield of David                      |
| Chicano Liberation Front                                     | Macheteros  |
| Comrades in Arms   | May 15 Organization for the Liberation of Palestine         |
| Condor   | May 19 Communist Order                                      |
| Continental Revolutionary Army                               | Mexican Revolutionary Movement                              |
| Coordination of the United Revolutionary Organization (CORU) | Minutemen American Defense                                  |
| Covenant, Sword and the Arm of the Lord (CSA)                | Movement for Cuban Justice (Pragmatistas)                   |
| Croatian Freedom Fighters                                    | Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK)                                     |
| Croatian Liberation Army                                     | National Committee to Combat Fascism                        |
| Cuban Action   | National Front for the Liberation of Cuba (FLNC)            |
| Cuban C-4 Movement   | National Integration Front (FIN)                            |
| Cuban Secret Army  | National Socialist Liberation Front                         |
| Earth First!   | New Jewish Defense League                                   |
| Earth Liberation Front (ELF)                                 | New World Liberation Front (NWLF)                           |
| Earth Night Action Group                                     | New Year's Gang   |
| East Side Action Committee                                   | Ninth of June Organization                                  |
| Environmental Life Force                                     | Omega-7   |

- Organization 544
- Organization Alliance of Cuban Intransigence
- Organization of Volunteers for the Puerto Rican Revolution
- Otpor
- Pedro Albizu Campos Revolutionary Forces
- People's Brigade For A Healthy Genetic Future
- People's Liberation Army (United States)
- People's Revolutionary Party
- Phineas Priesthood
- Popular Liberation Army (Puerto Rico)
- Posse Comitatus
- Provisional Coordinating Committee for the Defense of Labor
- Puerto Rican Armed Resistance
- Puerto Rican Liberation Front
- Puerto Rican Resistance Movement
- Puerto Rican Revolutionary Movement
- Quartermoon Society
- Rajneeshees
- Red Guerilla Family
- Regulators
- Republic of New Afrika
- Republic of Texas
- Revenge of the Trees
- Revolutionary Action Party
- Revolutionary Cells-Animal Liberation Brigade
- Revolutionary Commandos of the People (CRP)
- Revolutionary Force 26
- Revolutionary Force 9
- Revolutionary Force Seven
- Revolutionary Labor Commandos
- Save Our Israel Land
- Secret Army Organization
- Secret Cuban Government
- Secret Organization Zero
- Sons of Liberty
- Sons of the Gestapo
- Students for a Democratic Society
- Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA)
- Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)
- The Jewish Execution with Silence
- The Justice Department
- The Order (Silent Brotherhood)
- The Order II (Bruder Schweigen Strike Force II)
- The Scorpion
- The World United Formosans for Independence (WUFI)
- Thunder of Zion
- Tontons Macoutes
- Tribal Thumb
- United Freedom Front (UFF)
- United Jewish Underground
- Universal Proutist Revolutionary Federation
- Up the IRS, Inc
- Veterans United for Non-Religious Memorials
- Vietnamese Organization to Exterminate Communists and Restore the Nation
- Weather Underground, Weathermen
- White Panther Party
- Young Cuba
- Youth of the Star
- Zebra Killers