PREVENTING

Managing the Exit of Incarcerated Violent Extremists in the Community Handbook

PI: Erin Kearns (University of Nebraska at Omaha)

With a goal of minimizing both recidivism in general and reengagement with violent extremism, the researchers' main objective is to develop a handbook that will be shared with relevant stakeholders involved with the federal and local criminal justice systems.

Barriers to Family Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) of Mobilization Behaviors

PI: Karyn Sporer (University of Maine)

This project focuses on family members of violent extremists and the role that they can play in targeted violence and terrorism prevention (TVTP), as well as how DHS and other TVTP entities can leverage community partnerships to help prevent violent extremism. The researchers contribute to existing knowledge through in-depth interviews with family members and will use these results for research briefs, academic manuscripts, presentations, and training modules for the federal government.

Reintegrating the Returning Families of Foreign Terrorism Fighters

PI: Austin Doctor (University of Nebraska at Omaha)

This project identifies and promotes best practices for reintegrating foreign terrorist fighter families back into their home countries. This year, this project will expand in scope to develop a microcredential program for practitioners.

Public Safety and Violence Prevention Evaluations

PI: Sam Hunter (University of Nebraska at Omaha)

This project creates materials outlining best practices for prevention and intervention using lessons from the United Kingdom, law enforcement, and assessment of emerging and insider threats.

Public Safety Violence Prevention

PI: Matt Allen (University of Nebraska at Omaha)

This project will evaluate DHS-funded local prevention programs that try to help communities, nonprofits, and other institutions prevent targeted violence and terrorism. The research team will also create tools to assist with future evaluation activities.

Terrorism and Targeted Violence Prevention Programs: From What Works to How Programs Work

PI: Sarah Marsden (University of St. Andrews)
John Lewis (University of St. Andrews)

The project will create a toolkit for assessing whether and how interventions work to produce positive outcomes. This toolkit will be designed to help stakeholders in the United States evaluate the implementation of case management interventions aimed at preventing terrorism and targeted violence.

SHIELD: Secure, Holistic Infrastructure for Election Logistics and Data

PI: Benjamin Fuller, Ghada Almashaqbeh, Laurent Michel, Alexander Russell (University of Connecticut)
Gina Ligon (University of Nebraska at Omaha)

This project will develop tools and processes that harden the decentralized electoral systems, restore the trust of all stakeholders in the outcomes, and design a non-prescriptive formal process for election officials to reason holistically about the security of elections

UNDERSTANDING

Understanding Malevolent Creativity and Malign Application of Emerging Technology: How AI, the Metaverse, and Gaming Intersect

PIs: Sam Hunter (University of Nebraska at Omaha), Joel Elson (University of Nebraska at Omaha),

This project explores how emerging technologies could be used by extremists, focusing primarily on artificial intelligence (AI) and extended/mixed reality in the metaverse. The research team, made up of experts in psychology, technology, engineering, and design, aims to understand how these technologies shape terrorists' creative thinking.

Technology Catalysts for Malevolent Actors

PIs: Jessica Menold (Penn State University)
Scarlett Miller (Penn State University)

Given AI's integration into infrastructure operations, this project highlights the effect of human-machine teaming on trust in or acceptance of AI machine agents. Understanding this is crucial for identifying vulnerabilities to critical infrastructure and developing tactics to combat these vulnerabilities.

Defining the Logic and Risk of Terrorist UAS Attacks in the United States

PIs: Austin Doctor (University of Nebraska at Omaha)
Suat Cubukcu (Towson University)

This research aims to examine the underlying logic and related risk factors associated with terrorist use of drones to support or conduct attacks in the United States.

Understanding Threats to Public Officials

PI: Pete Simi (Chapman University)

This project will enhance the understanding of a broader trend in the United States toward polarization and normalization of threats of violence. The research team will collect data on U.S. federal cases of threats targeting public officials and seek to evaluate the level of support for political violence among the U.S. public.

How Organizational Dynamics in a Multi-Actor Environment Shape Terrorist Threats and CT Responses

PIs: Kaitlyn Robinson (Rice University), Martha Crenshaw (Stanford University)

This effectiveness of counter-extremism and counterterrorism policies can depend on understanding the characteristics of adversarial organizations – their leadership structure, relations with a local community, choice of tactics and targets, and origin story. It's also vital to know how groups interact with each other. This research project describes a host of violent extremist organizations and maps their activities across the globe in a new website, reports, and journal articles.

How Organizational Psychology Can Contribute to a Deeper Understanding of the Evolving DVE Landscape

PI: Sam Hunter (University of Nebraska at Omaha)

This project will apply industrial and organizational (I-O) psychology to the emerging domestic extremism landscape, aiming to understand how people are drawn to and operate within extremist groups in the U.S.

Understanding the Link between the Recruitment and Operational Behavior of Terrorist Organizations

PI: Evan Perkoski (University of Connecticut)

This research project aims to enhance our knowledge of terrorist organizations' recruitment tactics and how those tactics affect a group's violent behavior. Characteristics of recruits will be compared against group capabilities.

Examining the Functional Relationship between Violent Extremist Ideologies and Conspiracy Theories
PI: Paul Gill (University College London)

This project examines the prevalence of conspiracy theories within the United States, their connection to violent extremism, and how they evolve over the course of a presidential election cycle. It will also explore the linguistic strategies used to normalize conspiracy theories on social media.

Non-Terrorism Charges for Domestic Terrorism Investigations
PI: Seamus Hughes (University of Nebraska at Omaha)

This project is focused on tracking terrorism investigations that result in non-terrorism related charges. It seeks to better understand the ways the U.S. justice system uses non-terrorism related charges to prosecute ideologically motivated violent extremism, highlighting how prosecutorial decisions affect policy and resource allocation for intelligence and law enforcement.

Current and Emerging Malign Use of Geospatial Technologies to Threaten Critical Infrastructure and Crowded Targets
PI: Austin Doctor (University of Nebraska at Omaha)

This project explores how increasingly accessible geospatial technology can be employed by terrorists to launch attacks against critical infrastructure and crowded targets. The interdisciplinary research team seeks to provide a forecast for how these technologies could be used so that authorities can better respond to emerging threats.

INNOVATING

Innovation in Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention: Developing and Testing an Intelligent Chatbot to Help Individuals Identify Threats and Improve Tips Reporting
PIs: Joel Elson (University of Nebraska at Omaha), Erin Kearns (University of Nebraska at Omaha)

The goal of this project is to improve the tips reporting process to minimize breakdowns in actions required to prevent terrorism and targeted violence. The proposed innovation project will create and test a chatbot for tips reporting that can be used either as a standalone tool or be integrated into existing tips reporting platforms.

Assessing the Benefits of Simulations and War Games for Homeland Security Enterprise Workforce Development
PI: David Schanzer (Duke University)

This project seeks to improve workforce development for the homeland security enterprise through the development, deployment, and evaluation of homeland security-focused strategic simulations.

Development and Validation of Tools for TVTP Outcome Evaluations
PIs: Matt Allen, Erin Kearns (University of Nebraska at Omaha)

This project will develop and validate two instruments suitable for assessing TVTP program outcomes, specifically focusing on two areas of interest – tolerance of violence and identifying concerning behaviors. Developing these assessments will lead to a deeper understanding of TVTP programming outcomes and provide mechanisms for government and practitioners to evaluate TVTP programs

Anticipating Terrorist Technology Adoption to Secure the Homeland (ATTASH)
PI: Gary Ackerman (SUNY University at Albany)

Using the latest threat assessment methods, this project seeks to understand what emerging technologies extremist groups may start using.

Understanding the Transition from Political Discourse to Election-Motivated Violent Extremism
PI: Adan Vela (University of Central Florida)

Using a combination of interviews with election officials and sentiment analysis of social media sites, this project intends to understand where the tipping point from election-related discourse to election-motivated violence occurs.

Developing a New Measure of Support for Violent Radicalization in the Service of Advancing the Evaluation of Targeted Violence and Terrorism Primary Prevention Programs
PIs: Heidi Ellis (Harvard Medical School) Stevan Weine (University of Illinois Chicago)

This project will establish a valid means of measuring support for, and exposure to, violent radicalization at the community level. It will build on current survey instruments that assess violent radicalization, identifying new survey items based on input from subject matter experts and practitioners. It will then pilot and validate the new instrument.

STRENGTHENING

The Needs of the Counterterrorism Workforce and the Utility of Existing Datasets
PI: Michael Logan (Kennesaw State University)

The project will draw from the academic literature and information collected from counterterrorism analysts to identify the most up-to-date datasets that the Department of Homeland Security can provide its counterterrorism workforce. Additionally, the project will administer a "needs and barriers" survey to counterterrorism analysts to capture information on data-related limitations, needs, and best practices for using the data for mission need.

Building Capacity in HSE-Focused Business Analysis Application
PI: Erin Bass (University of Nebraska at Omaha)

In this project, researchers leverage UNO's business school curriculum to develop student-centered projects that address real-time, real-world challenges for the Department of Homeland Security. Researchers are partnering with DHS practitioners in project-based courses in the MBA and Data Analytics programs. Additionally, the research team has developed a homeland security-focused Business Analytics Graduate Certificate to work on DHS end-user challenges as part of the course curriculum.

Building Capacity at Minority Serving Institutions
PIs: Eric Frost (San Diego State University), Lance Larson (San Diego State University)

This project is focused on educating the future national security workforce through San Diego State University's Graduate Program in Homeland Security. It will create clear transitions to DHS through course content, coursework, and workshops.

NTER Fusion Center Threat Assessment Using Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR)
PIs: Seamus Hughes (University of Nebraska at Omaha),
Gina Ligon (University of Nebraska at Omaha),
Jeff Gruenewald (University of Arkansas)

This project seeks to determine how threat assessment can be applied to suspicious activity reporting (SAR). The project will include a sample review of SAR reports to identify current screening practices and determine how many would need to be amended using a threat assessment strategy. It will build on these results by closely examining current operational thresholds for using a threat assessment strategy with a SAR.

Inside the Conversation: Strengthening National Security Database Development and Electoral Violence Understanding through Qualitative Interviews

PI: Steven Windisch (University of Arkansas)

The research team will interview academics who have created datasets related to terrorism and targeted violence. The team will also interview election officials who have been targeted with violence, widening the scope of interviews to the southern, midwestern, and western U.S.
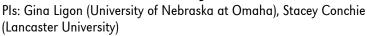
Understanding and Preparing for Terrorism and Targeted Violence Risks at Event Venues

PIs: Tin Nguyen (University of Nebraska at Omaha),
Erin Kearns (University of Nebraska at Omaha)

The project will equip event security practitioners with knowledge about threats to event venues, as well strategies used to communicate risk to key resource holders and stakeholders in the event-hosting domain.

International Academic Partnerships for Science and Security

PIs: Gina Ligon (University of Nebraska at Omaha), Stacey Conchie (Lancaster University)

This project will build an international knowledge exchange program to enhance collaboration and knowledge exchange between the U.S., U.K., and other international partners through a seminar series, an annual meeting, and an online magazine, plus the creation of Ph.D. scholarships and internship placements.

Providing Resilience to Individuals Examining Difficult Content for Their Work – Efficacy of Peer Support Programming

PIs: Joseph Young (American University)
Daisy Muibu

This study will conduct a systematic review of the literature on peer support programs that exist for law enforcement and the counterterrorism workforce to understand their effectiveness for working professionals.

NTER Office Initiatives

PI: Andrea Walker (University of Nebraska at Omaha)

NTER seeks the help of NCITE to evaluate the effectiveness of the Master Trainer Program and offer recommendations for enhancing outcomes for Certified Master Trainers. This project will assess the effectiveness of the Master Trainer Program and provide recommendations for future training and evaluation. Additionally, it will support NTER's efforts to develop knowledge about Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management program setup and implementation.