National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism

A DHS Center of Excellence

Based at the University of Maryland

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.

START research contributes to homeland security efforts in the areas of:

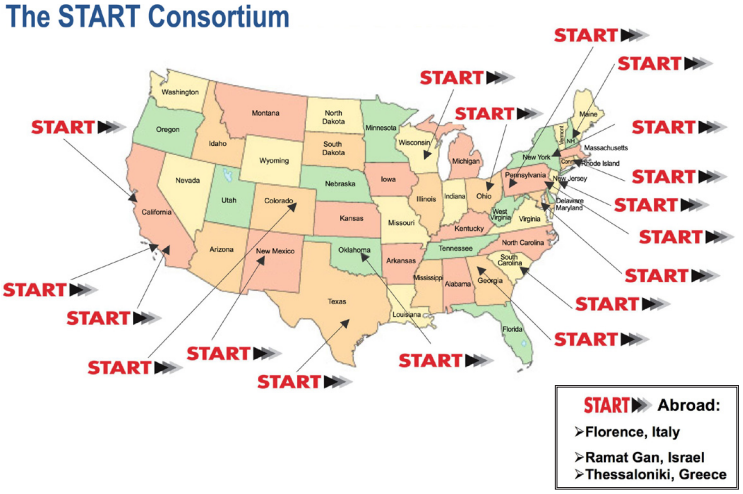
- Terrorism Prevention
- Threat Detection
- Preparedness and Response
- Community Recovery
- Risk Communication

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

Research Area 1: *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.

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.

The START Consortium



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.

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.

Education and Outreach 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 and curriculum materials
- Training workshops for homeland security professionals
- Brownbag seminars for DHS officials
- Research Symposia

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