

START Research on Societal Dimensions of Terrorism: Preparedness Networks

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Topics for Presentation

- START Overview
- START Research Areas & Working Groups
- Working Group 3 Research Foci
- START Research on Community Preparedness Networks

START Overview

- START is a DHS COE devoted to the social scientific study of terrorism and its impacts
- START is headquartered at the University of Maryland and directed by criminologist Gary LaFree
- START is closely allied with the “Human Factors” division of the DHS S&T Directorate



NATIONAL CONSORTIUM FOR THE
STUDY OF TERRORISM AND RESPONSES TO TERRORISM

A CENTER OF EXCELLENCE OF THE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
BASED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

START Working Groups:

WG#1: Terrorist Group Formation and
Recruitment

WG#2: Terrorist Group Persistence and
Dynamics

WG#3: Societal Dimensions of Terrorism
and Terrorist Events

Disciplines Represented in WG#3

- Criminology
- Communication
- Geography/GIS
- History
- Human Ecology
- Medical Anthropology
- Psychiatry
- Psychology
- Social Psychology
- Sociology

Selected WG#3 Research Questions

- How much do diverse groups within the U. S. population know about the terrorism threat, where do they get their information, and what sources do they trust?
- How well-prepared is the general public?
- To what extent do public responses to terrorist attacks resemble those seen in other extreme events?
- What strategies are effective in reducing negative mental health impacts of terrorism and enhancing community resilience?
- How are preparedness policies being implemented in local communities? Schools and school systems?

Working Group 3

Research Activities

- National Household Survey
- Survey of Schools and School Systems
- Vulnerability and Resilience Metrics for Communities
- Group-Oriented Studies on Risk Perception and Risk Communication for Terrorism Events
- Behavioral Modeling: Building and Community Evacuation
- **Field Studies on Community Preparedness Networks**

Field Studies on Community Preparedness Networks

- Conducted by research team from the University of Colorado Natural Hazards Center
- Data sources include in-depth interviews, data on “regionalism,” demographic data, documents, network data

Strategy for Hazards Center START Research on Community Preparedness Networks

- Field Work in 5 Cities in Different Regions of the U. S. (1 pilot, 2 high and 2 low on regionalism measures)
- Cities Chosen Are “Typical” UASI Cities
- Data collection completed in one city, two more scheduled for spring, 2007

Strategy for Hazards Center START Research on Community Preparedness Networks

- 30-50 face-to-face interviews in each city—depending on size, complexity of UASI networks
- Primarily qualitative data
- Interviews also include questions about inter-organizational, network relationships

Strategy for Hazards Center START Research on Community Preparedness Networks

Selected research questions addressed in field studies:

How are local community preparedness networks organized?

How are homeland security directives being implemented “on the ground” in different communities?

How are DHS directives perceived by those who are charged with implementing them?

Topics Addressed in Interviews

- Pre-UASI and regional collaborations & factors driving collaborations
- Pre-UASI levels of preparedness
- Changes brought about by UASI funding, other DHS initiatives
- Composition of preparedness networks—which organizations participate
- Strategic planning process
- Improvements in preparedness over time

Topics Addressed in Interviews

- Changes in preparedness efforts over time
- Success of regional approaches
- Influence of federal guidance on local programs
- Preparedness “balance”: terrorism vs. other extreme events
- Views on public involvement
- Inter-organizational interactions (network matrices)

Project Plans--2007

- Data collection completed in all 5 cities in calendar year 2007
- Network models developed following each field trip
- Coding and qualitative analysis to begin late spring, 2007

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