



National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism

A DHS Center of Excellence

A Center of Excellence of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security 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. 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.

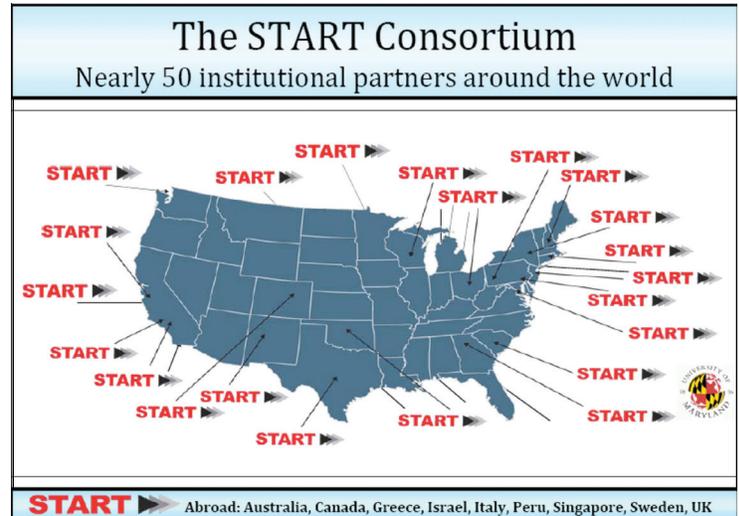
Why is START important? Improved understanding of the motivations and behaviors of terrorists assists efforts to establish priorities regarding tools and strategies for counterterrorism. Similarly, better knowledge about how people and communities respond to threats and risks informs preparedness and response policies and practices. Reliable information about behavioral considerations is also essential to the development of effective tools and technologies for threat detection and mitigation.

What is 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 supports more than 65 researchers at 50 different institutions around the United States and the world, all of whom are engaged in the collection and analysis of data related to START’s three core research areas.

Research Area 1: Terrorist Recruitment and the Formation of Terrorist Groups. This research explores the phenomenon of radicalization and examines conditions under which 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 also explores how mechanisms can facilitate radicalization, including traditional media and the Internet.

Selected Deliverables

- Database on the use of terrorism by global organizations representing ethnic minority groups
- Survey data on support for terrorism, especially terrorism that targets the U.S. from Pakistan, Egypt, Indonesia, and Morocco



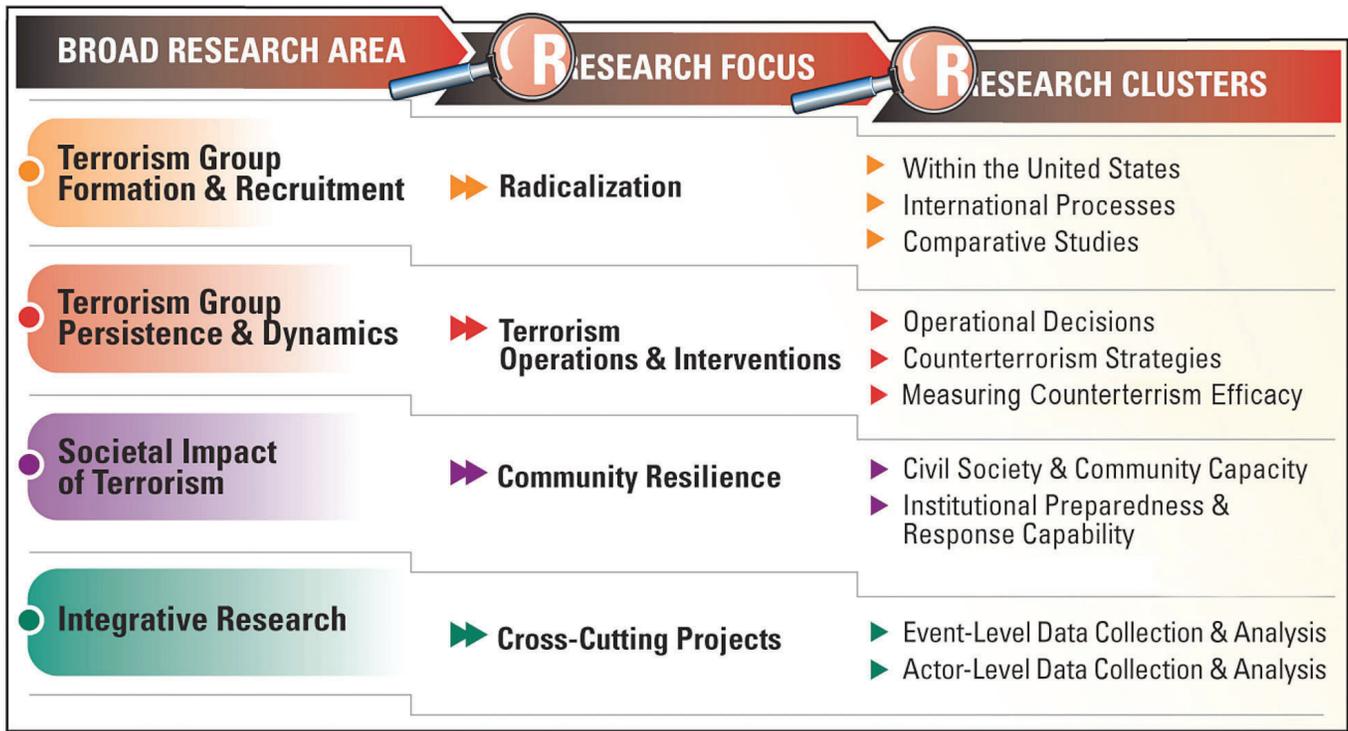
- Database of right-wing extremist crime activity in the United States and analyses of links between extremist crime and terror activity

Research Area 2: Terrorist Group Persistence and Dynamics. This area focuses on sources of support for terrorist groups, targeting and weapon selection, and impacts of local, national, and international counterterrorist strategies on terrorist behavior.

Selected Deliverables

- Assessments of terrorist groups considered to pose a threat to the United States
- Impact studies of counterterrorism efforts, looking at short- and long-term effects
- Early warning indicators of use of CBRN weapons
- Network analyses of relationships among terrorist groups around the world

Research Area 3: Community Resilience Against Terrorist Threats and Attacks. This research examines perceptions of, preparations for, responses to, and recovery from terrorist attacks, focusing on the United States, and the characteristics of resilient communities. This research relates to START’s goal of providing guidance on enhancing preparedness and resilience at the individual, community, and national levels.



Selected Deliverables

- Survey of household preparedness within and across communities across the U.S.
- Development and delivery of a Community Assessment of Resilience Tool
- Web-based interface for measuring the social vulnerability of all geographic regions throughout the U.S.

A centerpiece of START's work that cuts across research areas is 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, geocoded location of attacks, and scope of impacts for more than 85,000 events between 1970 and 2006. GTD was released to the public in May 2007 and is accessible at www.start.umd.edu/data/gtd. START regularly releases updates to the data and conducts original analyses on the data. The next release of data is scheduled for Spring 2010.

Educational Programs: START is a research center with an educational mission. START's educational efforts all reflect START's research agenda and aim to reach a diverse audience. Programs include:

- Undergraduate Minor in Terrorism Studies
- Graduate Certificate in Terrorism Studies
- Pre- and Post-Doctoral Fellowship Awards

- Undergraduate Research Program
- Curriculum materials & syllabus repository
- Training workshops for homeland security professionals
- Brownbag seminars for DHS officials
- Public events, such as Seminar Series and Research Symposia

How does START support DHS? Individually and collectively, START research generates scientifically validated findings that inform DHS operations and policies across the department. START provides actionable information related to the following core missions:

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

More information about START and its programs is available at www.start.umd.edu.