The Monterey Terrorism Research and Education Program (MonTREP) conducts in-depth research, assesses policy options, and engages in public education on issues relating to terrorism and international security. MonTREP is part of the Monterey Institute, and faculty associated with it teach courses in the Institute’s master’s degree program in Nonproliferation and Terrorism Studies.

MonTREP defines terrorism as “the use or threatened use of violence, directed against targets chosen for their symbolic or representative value, as a means of instilling anxiety in, sending one or more messages to, and thereby manipulating the perceptions and behavior of wider target audiences…. The perpetrators of acts of terrorism can either be non-state groups or state security forces.”

The focus of the program is on the study of violence-prone extremist groups and their historical evolution, ideological motivations, organizational structure, demographic profiles, and operational methods, as well as their potential interest in carrying out mass casualty attacks (including through the acquisition and use of so-called “weapons of mass destruction”). MonTREP experts examine the motivational factors that lead terrorist groups to select designated “enemies,” choose particular targets, and resort to different types of attacks in an effort both to inform scholars and policymakers and to enhance the level of public knowledge about how and why such actors make strategic and tactical decisions.

MonTREP researchers have studied a wide variety of political and religious terrorist groups, including Islamists and jihadists, apocalyptic millenarians, neo-fascists in Europe, right-wing radicals in the United States (Christian and secular), Marxist-Leninists, ethno-nationalists, anarchists, eco-radicals, Jewish fundamentalists in Israel, and state-backed “death squads” in places such as South Africa and Latin America.

Research projects undertaken by MonTREP adhere to the highest scholarly standards, but also have the potential to contribute to the formulation of more effective security and counterterrorism policies. For that reason, MonTREP experts frequently serve as expert consultants for a variety of government agencies, as well as for international organizations. MonTREP specialists are also called upon frequently by the media to offer expert commentary in articles reporting on political and religious extremism, terrorism, and related policy concerns.

Student Profiled bin Laden Hideout in 2009

Monterey Institute student Erika Mariano (MANPTS ’13) is working on a master’s degree in Nonproliferation and Terrorism Studies with the long-term goal of becoming an intelligence analyst—a goal she seems well on her way to achieving, thanks in part to the remarkable prescience of a study she co-authored as an undergraduate.

Using bio-geographical theories and satellite imagery, Erika, four fellow UCLA students, and geology professors Thomas Gillespie and John Agnew came to the conclusion that Osama bin Laden was most likely not hiding in caves along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, but rather living in a high-walled compound in an urban area in central Pakistan. Their report, “Finding Osama bin Laden,” was published in February 2009 and initially greeted with skepticism. Although the group identified a different city about 130 miles from Abbottabad as the most likely location for the compound, in almost every other respect their description of the likely circumstances in which bin Laden was living proved almost eerily accurate.
MonTREP Faculty Biographies

Jeffrey M. Bale, Ph.D. (UC Berkeley)
Associate Professor and Director of MonTREP

Dr. Bale has been studying violence-prone political and religious extremists for nearly three decades. He has taught at several major research universities, published numerous scholarly articles on terrorism, extremism, Islamism, and covert political operations, carried out specialized archival research in the United States as well as in several European countries, and accumulated an extensive collection of primary source materials related to both extremist and terrorist groups and covert politics.

Gordon M. Hahn, Ph.D. (Boston University)
Adjunct Professor and Senior Research Associate, MonTREP

Dr. Hahn is the author of Russia's Islamic Threat (Yale University Press) and has written numerous scholarly and analytical articles on politics, Islam, and jihadism in Russia. He conducts research and teaches on Islam and politics in Russia and Eurasia, Russian domestic and foreign policy, and international relations in Eurasia. Dr. Hahn is also the editor and principal researcher of Islam, Islamism, and Politics in Eurasia Report, a MonTREP publication.

Sharad Joshi, Ph.D. (University of Pittsburgh)
Assistant Professor and Research Associate, MonTREP

Dr. Joshi teaches courses on terrorism and weapons of mass destruction in South Asia. Formerly a postdoctoral fellow with the Monterey Institute’s James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, he has been a visiting fellow at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis in New Delhi and an adjunct instructor at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. He has also done consulting work on terrorism financing and proliferation issues in South Asia.

Nonproliferation and Terrorism Studies Degree

The Master of Arts in Nonproliferation and Terrorism Studies (NPTS) degree program at the Monterey Institute is the first of its kind internationally, and builds on both the Institute’s previous certificate program in nonproliferation and the Terrorism Studies concentration that was formerly a part of its International Policy Studies degree program. Creation of the NPTS degree program reflects students’ strong interest in these vital issues, as well as increased demand in both the public and private sector for policy experts in the fields of weapons of mass destruction and the threat of terrorism.

“The establishment of the Nonproliferation and Terrorism Studies degree program in fall 2010 put an exclamation point on our commitment to providing Monterey Institute students with a graduate education that has immediate relevance in today’s world,” notes Institute President Sunder Ramaswamy. “This degree program gives our students the opportunity to be part of the solution to some of the world’s most pressing problems.”

“The widespread threat posed by violence and terrorism, jihadist and otherwise, is likely to persist for the foreseeable future,” adds MonTREP Director Jeffrey M. Bale. “Hence it is of vital importance that national and international policymakers understand the worldviews and objectives of the perpetrators of that violence and terrorism in order to develop more effective responses and countermeasures, whether these involve military or non-military means.”

Islam, Islamism, and Politics in Eurasia Report

Dr. Gordon Hahn of MonTREP publishes the Islam, Islamism, and Politics in Eurasia Report (IIPER), which is a bimonthly compendium of news and analysis on politics involving Islam in the former Soviet Union. The main focus of the report currently is on Russia’s North Caucasus region. However, IIPER seeks submissions on politics and Islam in other regions of Eurasia. The report is frequently cited by publications such as Global Security Newswire.