Monterey Terrorism Research and Education Program (MonTREP)

The Monterey Terrorism Research and Education Program (MonTREP) is an “outside-the-Beltway” resource for terrorism and counterterrorism related research and policy guidance.

MonTREP’s scholars, researchers, and students focus on 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 chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) weapons. 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 policy makers and to enhance the level of public knowledge about how and why such actors make strategic and tactical decisions.

MonTREP experts also focus on “countering” violent extremism in its varied forms. For example, U.S. and other nations’ counterterrorism policies, practices, tactics, and strategies are reviewed for effectiveness and viability. In an effort to apply theory to practice, successful and unsuccessful counterterrorism case studies are analyzed so that counterterrorism best practices can be developed for the interagency organizations responsible for countering violent extremist activities and operations.

MonTREP is one of several important future-oriented programs at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey. MonTREP’s faculty teach courses in the Institute’s Master of Arts in Nonproliferation and Terrorism Studies program, which is the world’s first graduate degree combining the knowledge and skills needed to curtail the spread of CBRN weapons and respond effectively to other forms of violent extremism. This program draws upon the Institute’s world-class interdisciplinary curriculum and integrates policy analysis, international security, science and technology, and history to prepare students for careers in combating violent extremism and CBRN proliferation.

MonTREP has also organized student-run conferences in recent years on topics such as the terrorism-trafficking link and special operations in counterterrorism. In March 2014, numerous experts spoke at a conference on terrorism and counterterrorism in Africa, with a keynote address by former Arizona Congressman Jim Kolbe.

Since its inception, MonTREP has supported the work of a wide range of private and public institutions, ranging from government agencies to international organizations to academic foundations. MonTREP’s objective is to undertake projects that adhere to the highest scholarly and academic standards, but also have the potential to contribute to effective security and counterterrorism policies.

Recent MonTREP-sponsored events have included an April 2015 seminar on U.S. counterterrorism policy by LTC Michael Davis of the U.S. Army Special Forces, who spent the 2014-15 academic year as a U.S. Army War College Fellow at the Middlebury Institute.
Nonproliferation and Terrorism Studies Degree

The Master of Arts in Nonproliferation and Terrorism Studies (MANPTS) degree program at the Monterey Institute for International Studies 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 MANPTS degree program in 2010 reflected 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.

“Relevance is a major theme of the Institute’s curriculum,” notes Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Institute Jeff Dayton-Johnson. “As a professional graduate school that’s also a research institution, we aim to provide training that’s both academically rigorous and very, very practical, and the Nonproliferation and Terrorism Studies program is both.”

“The widespread threat posed by violence and terrorism, jihadist and otherwise, is likely to persist for the foreseeable future,” adds MonTREp Senior Research Fellow Jeffrey M. Bale. “Hence it is of vital importance that national and international policy makers 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 nonmilitary means.”

In 2013 the Institute launched a new initiative on cyber security that complements the work of MonTREp, providing new curricular options for students in the MANPTS degree program, and creating new opportunities for researching the cyber threats to business, government, and individuals.

MonTREp Faculty Biographies

Sharad Joshi, PhD (University of Pittsburgh) Interim Director, MonTREp, and Assistant Professor Dr. Joshi’s teaching and research focuses on terrorism and CBRN weapons issues in South Asia and Southeast Asia. Formerly a postdoctoral fellow with the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, he has been a visiting fellow at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis in New Delhi. At present, he is also an associate fellow in international security at Chatham House, UK.

Jeffrey M. Bale, PhD (UC Berkeley) Professor and Senior Research Fellow, 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, PhD (Boston University) Adjunct Professor 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.

Brigadig General (RET) Russell D. Howard Senior Visiting Scholar, MonTREp General Howard is the former director of the Jебsen Center for Counterterrorism Studies at the Fletcher School, and head of the Department of Social Sciences and founding director of the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. General Howard’s previous positions include Army Chief of Staff Fellow at the Center for International Affairs at Harvard University, and commander of the 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) at Fort Lewis, Washington. He holds a Master of Arts in international management from the Monterey Institute, and a Master of Public Administration from Harvard University. General Howard is the coauthor/editor of seven terrorism-related books (the Howard series) published by McGraw Hill.

Student Profiled bin Laden Hideout in 2009

Middlebury Institute student Erika Mariano MANPTS ’13 recently earned a master’s degree in nonproliferation and terrorism studies, with the long-term goal of becoming an intelligence analyst—a goal she is well on her way to achieving, thanks in part to the remarkable prescience of a study she coauthored 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.