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 policymakers 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 nation’s 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 Monterey Institute of International Studies. 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 Monterey 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.

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. MonTREP specialists are also called upon frequently by the media to offer expert commentary on religious extremism, terrorism, counterterrorism and related national security policy topics.

Student Profiled bin Laden Hideout in 2009

Monterey 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 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.
Nonproliferation and Terrorism Studies Degree

The Master of Arts in Nonproliferation and Terrorism Studies (MANPTS) 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 MANPTS 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 Senior Research Fellow 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.”

In 2013 the Institute launched a new initiative on cyber security that will complement the work of MonTREP, provide new curricular options for students in the MANPTS degree program, and create new opportunities for researching the cyber threats to business, government, and individuals.

MonTREP Faculty Biographies

Brigadier General (RET) Russell D. Howard
Director and Senior Research Fellow, MonTREP

General Howard is the former director of the Jebsen 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 degree in International Management from the Monterey Institute, and a Master of Public Administration degree from Harvard University. General Howard is the co-author/editor of seven terrorism-related books (the Howard series) published by McGraw Hill.

Jeffrey M. Bale, Ph.D. (UC Berkeley)
Associate 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, Ph.D. (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.

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

Dr. Joshi teaches courses on terrorism and weapons of mass destruction in South 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 and an adjunct instructor at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. He has also done consulting work on terrorism financing and proliferation issues in South Asia.