NIJ Research for the Real World
The Changing Threat Landscape of Terrorism and Violent Extremism

January 18, 2022 | 1:00 PM ET

The webinar will begin shortly
Important Notification

The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed here are those of the presenters and do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the National Institute of Justice of the U.S. Department of Justice.
Research For the Real World
The Changing Threat Landscape of Terrorism and Violent Extremism

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Haroro Ingram, Ph.D.
The Changing Threat Landscape of Terrorism and Violent Extremism

Bill Braniff
Director, START
Professor of the Practice, UMD
January 2022
**NIJ FUNDED START PROJECTS**

  - Datasets: PIRUS-D3

  - Datasets: PIRUS, PIRUS-Plots

- **A Multi-Level Approach to the Study of Violent Extremism,** Gary LaFree and Michael Jensen. 2019-2022
  - Datasets: PIRUS, SoNAR (Social Networks of American Radicals)

- **A Pathway Approach to the Study of Hate Crime Offenders,** Michael Jensen and Gary LaFree. 2019-2021
  - Datasets: BIAS

- **Social Learning and Social Control in the Off and Online Pathways to Hate and Extremist Violence**, Gary LaFree, Joshua Freilich, Steven Chermak, Thomas Holt, and Brandon Behlendorf. 2016-2019.
  - Datasets: PIRUS

  - Datasets: PIRUS

  - Datasets: PIRUS, PIRUS-D3

  - Datasets: PIRUS
Salient Sub-Ideologies/Groups Motivating U.S. Terrorism 2000-2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Umbrella Category</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2009</th>
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<td>Violent Far-Right</td>
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<td>Violent Single Issue</td>
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<td>Violent Religious</td>
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<td><strong>29</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>57</strong></td>
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</table>

Source: Global Terrorism Database

- Increasingly Diverse
- Increasingly Misogynist
- Increasingly Xenophobic
- Increasingly Revolutionary (vs Reactionary)
- Increasingly Conspiratorial
- Increasingly Partisan
Perpetrators by Ideology, U.S. 2000-2018

Source: Global Terrorism Database
Source: BIAS (Bias Incidents and Actors Study) dataset
Weapons used in terrorist attacks in the U.S by decade, 1970 - 2019

Source: Global Terrorism Database

*Includes Biological, Chemical, Radiological, Fake Weapons, Sabotage Equipment, and Vehicles as Contact
Use of Firearms in Terrorist Attacks in the U.S., Worldwide, and Western Europe, 2010 -- 2019

Source: Global Terrorism Database
Extent of Violent Plots in the US by Ideology, 2000-2018

Source: PIRUS dataset
COVID-19 EXACERBATES INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL RISK FACTORS OF MOBILIZATION

• H1: Individuals with job security concerns are at a higher risk
• H2: Individuals with substance abuse concerns are at a higher risk
• H3: Individuals with mental health concerns are at higher risk
• H4: Individuals with a history of trauma are at higher risk
• H5: Individuals whose educational attainment is negatively affected are at higher risk
• H6: The durations of radicalization processes are shortening during the COVID-19 pandemic
A TRAGEDY IN FIVE ACTS:
COVID-19 AND COMPOUNDING CRISES

Act 1: Anti-Lockdown Protests Energize:
– Anti-govt, Xenophobic and Conspiracy Theory extremists

Act 2: George Floyd Protests Energize & Create Opportunity for:
– Add Anti-law enforcement, Anarchist and Racist extremists

Act 3: The U.S. General Election and 6 January Insurrection
– Add Partisan extremists

Act 4: US Withdrawal from Afghanistan
– Exacerbates Anti-govt and Xenophobic extremists
– Add specter of increased threat from Muslim extremists

Act 5: eg., DoD Vaccine Mandate
– Exacerbates Anti-govt, Xenophobic, Conspiracy Theory extremists
OVERLAPPING, NOT SEPARATE THREATS

- Great Power Competition
- Proxies
- Influence Ops
- “International” Terrorism
- International - ization
- Hate Crime and “Domestic” Terrorism
KEY TAKE-AWAYS

• It will be a long time before we understand the impact of Covid-19 on violent extremism
  – Individual-level risk factors have been exacerbated
  – Conflict zones and resource constrained countries have been and will be most greatly affected, and the US is shifting attention away from CT
  – Covid-19 exacerbates inequalities regionally between Globalization's “haves” and “have-nots”

• The duration of the pandemic will give time for compounding crises – government must plan for resilience

• Influence operations, conspiracy theories and political polarization are mainstreaming extremist ideologies on the backs of tremendous uncertainty

• Risk assessments should not artificially separate international terrorism, domestic terrorism and hate crime, as these are increasingly overlapping phenomena
  – See DoD’s CEAWG report
  – See NCTC-FBI-DHS overview of Domestic Violent Extremism
THANK YOU

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Cycles of Extreme Right Terror

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Professional Background

- 10 years in the mental health field

- 25 years studying violent groups, extremism, and hate
  - Fieldwork with active members of white supremacist, anti-government militias, and conventional street gangs
  - Intensive life history interviews with former members of violent groups (right-wing, left-wing, jihadi, and conventional street gangs)

- Legal consultation (federal & state cases; capital cases; RICO; sedition)

- Board of Directors (Life After Hate/EXIT USA)
January 6th, 2021:
How did we get here &
Where are we going?
• Conceptualizing the “What”:

• broad movement without a single central unified leadership animated by the sense that revolution is necessary in order to achieve a “national rebirth”
Four Decades of Terror (1980-2020)

**Continuity**
- Role of specific catalyst events
- Armed encampments, small splinter cells, & lone actors

**Emergent**
- Growing polarization and declining institutional legitimacy
- Viral spread of ideas & emotions
- Everyday insurgency
1980’s Wave of Terror
1990’s Wave of Terror
Key Lone Actor Attacks*

*not an exhaustive list of incidents
Four Decades of Terror (1980-2020)

Continuity
• Role of specific catalyst events
• Armed encampments, small splinter cells, & lone actors

Emergent
• Growing polarization and declining institutional legitimacy
• Viral spread of ideas & emotions
• Everyday insurgency
Emotional-Cognitive Network: A New Approach
The Need for a Multi-Dimensional Approach
Lessons learned from natural histories of ‘formers’

Promoting disengagement has ripple effects in terms of hate crime and terrorism prevention
THANK YOU
Mosul & the Islamic State
Podcast available on iTunes, Spotify, Acast, Amazon...

The ISIS Reader
Hurst / Oxford University Press

The Long Jihad
The Islamic State's Method of Insurgency
Primary Exports

- Brand association & amplification
- Strategy via *manhaj* (insurgency method)
- Ideology/Jurisprudential Framework via *aqeeda*
The Strategic Logic of State & Non-State Malign Influence Activities

The RUSI Journal

Persuade or Perish

Program on Extremism
The Strategic Logic of State & Non-State Anti-Democratic Malign Influence
Exploring the Social Networks of Homegrown Violent Extremist Military Veterans

Hazel R. Atuel, PhD and Carl A. Castro, PhD, Colonel, U.S. Army, Retired

National Institute of Justice Webinar
The Changing Threat Landscape of Terrorism and Violent Extremism: Implications for Research and Policy
January 18, 2022

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2016 Working Hypothesis

Premilitary/Civilian (Planting/Forming)
- Predispositions
  - Individual
  - Network (Influence)
  - Stressors

Military (Sharpening)
- Civilian Predispositions
- Military Life
  - Identity
  - Networks (Influence)
  - Stressors
  - Combat Training
  - Discharge Type

Postmilitary/Veteran (Triggering)
- Civilian Predispositions
- Military Experience
- Veteran Life
  - Identity
  - Networks (Influence)
  - Stressors
  - Combat Training
  - Discharge Type
  - (consider PTSD or Moral Injury)
Early Work on Mass Shootings and Violence

Lee Harvey Oswald

Charles Whitman

Charles Whitman (1966 University of Texas Shooting)

Branch: Marines
Years on Active Duty: 5
From Military Discharge to Violence: 2 years
Motive: Unstated violent impulses; recent divorce made him more fearful of his future
Criminal Record: None
Race: White
Age (when committed violent act): 26
Marital Status: Married
Religion: Catholic

Whitman was born on June 24, 1941 in Lake Worth, TX. At age 12, he received an eagle scout award and was serving as an altar boy. He confessed to a priest of his father's abuse (hit him and pushed him into the swimming pool).

Military Life

In 1959, he enlisted in the Marines, which upset his father who called the Marines to revoke his enlistment. He was prevented to join. Shortly afterward, he was suspended from school. Whitman was accepted into the University of Texas mechanical engineering program on September 15, 1961 through a USN scholarship. His grades at the point included vectors, statics, dynamics, and history. This last hobby got him into trouble at the university, when he was involved in a ‘furry prank’ in which he shot a deer, dragged it to his dormitory, and stuffed it in his shower. As a result of this incident and subsequent grades, Whitman's scholarship was withdrawn in 1963.

Whitman was court-martialed for gambling, possessing a personal firearm on base, and threatening another Marine over a $30 loan for which Whitman demanded $30 interest. He was sentenced to 30 days of confinement and 60 days of hard labor and was demoted to the rank of Private.

Veteran Life

In December 1964, Whitman was honorably discharged from the Marines and returned to the University of Texas, this time enrolling in its architectural engineering program. Not missing his scholarship, Whitman worked part-time as a field collector for Standards Fire Insurance Company and later as a bank teller at Austin National Bank. He married Kathy Watson at this time. Fellow students described Whitman as "well liked" and "a good guy." The university advisor said he "seemed to be more mature than most people his age." Neighbors described him as a pleasant, easy-going young man. He and his wife — a former science teacher and a graduate of the university — were considered to be a happy couple.

Whitman was diagnosed with depression and prescribed with Valium. He also expressed his frustration with his parents' separation in 1966, and had a scrotal tumor in his brain. His father had asked him several times asking him to buy his mother a necklace, but Charles refused. He became abusive to his wife, but was resolved to not end up like his father and to be a good husband. He told his grandfather that he had his faith in God. He worked a temporary job with Central Freight Lines, was a traffic surveyor at Texas highway Department, and volunteered as a soundman.

Violent Act

On August 1, 1966, Whitman wrote a letter to his family and Kathy's family, killed his mother and wife, and called them in for work. (Estimates in his diary indicated that he only intended to kill his mother and wife.) He then drove to the Univ of Texas – Austin and lugged all his weapons up three floors to the observation deck. He began shooting around 11:40am, and was engaged in 2.5 hours of combat that included a force of 200 police and National Guard soldiers trying to stop the shootings by shooting out their own personal firearms and shoot at Whitman as well. His choice of victims seemed indiscriminate, with 19 dead (including an unborn child) and 11 wounded. He was killed at scene by an officer.

Whitman is considered the 1st mass shooter in American history, Lyndon Johnson called for greater gun control after this mass shooting. Whitman's sniper tactics was evoked in 2017 Mandalay Bay-Las Vegas massacre.
Military Status (N=104)

- Veteran: 79%
- Active Duty: 14%
- Training Dropout: 7%

Motives (N=104)

- Terrorism: 47%
- Revenge: 19%
- Mental Health: 15%
- Power: 9%
- Profit: 3%
- Loyalty: 7%

1Atuel & Castro, 2019
Some Historical Markers

• Civil War: Ku Klux Klan

• World War I: Friends of the New Germany

• World War II: American Nazi Party

• Vietnam War: Modern White Power Movement

• Gulf War: 1995 Oklahoma City Bombing

• OEF/OIF Conflicts
  - 2009 Fort Hood Shooting
  - 2017 Unite the Right Rally
Some Research Highlights on World War I Veterans\textsuperscript{1}

- “There is a core of anger in the soul of almost every veteran, and we are justified in calling it bitterness,….It leads one man to outbursts of temper, another to social radicalism, a third to excesses of conservatism” (p.109).

Premilitary/Civilian (Planting/Forming)

- Temperament

Military (Sharpening)

- Military Experience

Postmilitary/Veteran (Triggering)

- Transition Experience

- “…the veteran is the ready tool of the demagogue ….Rohm, Goring, Hitler, Mussolini…. [and] of the "undercover" demagogue as well….the Ku Klux Klan”(p.188).

\textsuperscript{1}Waller, 1944
Some Research Highlights on World War II Veterans¹

• “…in Germany after the first World War…the chief promoters and followers of the anti-Semitic movement were former soldiers, unable to successfully reintegrate themselves successfully in society” (p.4.)

Premilitary/Civilian (Planting/Forming)
- Temperament
- Stereotypical beliefs of Jews and Blacks

Military (Sharpening)
- Military Experience
- More likely to report getting a ‘bad break’ in their Army career
- More likely to be embittered about Army life

Postmilitary/Veteran (Triggering)
- Transition Experience
- Reinforced stereotypic thinking with conspiracy theories

¹Bettelheim & Janowitz, 1950
Some Research Highlights on Vietnam War Veterans

- “...the war experience serves as a powerful stimulus or catalyst which develops and exaggerates previously learned attitudes and strategies for coping with stress” (p.22).

Premilitary/Civilian (Planting/Forming)
- Temperament
- Stereotypical beliefs of Jews and Blacks
- History of poor adjustment in society
- Growing sense of community alienation
- Coping strategy was to challenge community practices based on alternative principles

Military (Sharpening)
- Military Experience
- More likely to report getting a ‘bad break’ in their Army career
- More likely to be embittered about Army life
- “Found themselves betrayed by their national leaders and appalled at their own complicity as executioners” (p.355)

Postmilitary/Veteran (Triggering)
- Transition Experience
- Reinforced stereotypic thinking with conspiracy theories
- Held anti-government beliefs

1Retzer, 1976
The Military Radicalization Project: Theory and Evidence-Informed

Theories
- Quest for Significance Theory (Kruglanski and colleagues, 2009, 2013, 2014)
  - Needs, Narratives, and Networks
- Military Transition Theory (Castro & Kintzle, 2018)
  - Premilitary/Civilian to Military to Postmilitary/Veteran
  - Transition challenges (e.g., housing, employment, finances, healthcare)
- Veteran Identity Theory (Atuel & Castro, 2016, 2018)
  - Past military identity operating in present civilian space and time

Summary of Risk Factors based on NIJ-Funded Research (Smith, 2018)
- Past history of violence, criminal activity, delinquency
- Extremist ideology/grievances and extremist associates
- Skills, resources, and/or intent to commit violence
- Mental health issues
- Problems in relationships, professional, educational, and/or economic domains

- HVE Civilian
- HVE Veteran
- Risk Factors
Study 1: Variables

Sample (Indictees Data = 574)
- 52 with a military background (military group)
- 42 with no military background (civilian group)
- 474 with unknown military background (mixed group)

Demographic Characteristics
- Race (e.g., white, African American)
- Sex (e.g., male, female)
- Age (at indictment)
- Marital status (e.g., married, single)
- Educational level (e.g., less than 8th grade, GED)

HVE Characteristics
- Type of terrorist group (e.g., left wing, right wing)
- Role in group (e.g., leader, cadre)
- Primary target (e.g., government, civilian)
Study 1 Results: Demographic Characteristics

**Age Differences**
- Military group was older ($M = 46$ yrs) than Civilian group ($M = 31$ yrs)

**Sex Differences**
- 100% of Military group was male compared to 87% of the Civilian group

**Marital Status Differences**
- 48% of Military group were married or cohabitating compared to 29% of Civilian group
- 13% of Military group were single compared to 52% of Civilian group

- No significant differences found in race ($p=.29$) and education ($p=.187$).
Study 1 Results: HVE Characteristics

Type of Terrorist Group
- 60% of Military group belonged to RW groups compared to 13% of Civilian Group
- 73% of Civilian group belonged to International/Other groups compared to 35% of Military group

Role in Terrorist Group
- 48% of Military group were leaders compared to 25% of the Civilian group

Primary Target
- 36% of Military and 31% of Civilian groups targeted government buildings/officials
- Another 25% of Military group targeted social (minority) groups
Study 1: Overall Findings

Compared to civilians, people with a military background are more likely to be
- Older
- Male
- In a domestic partnership
- Belong to RW groups
- Hold a leadership position in a group
- Target government officials/buildings as well as social (minority) groups

- HVE Civilian
- HVE Veteran
- Non-HVE Veteran

Risk Factors
Quest for Significance
Military Experience
Transition Experience
Study 2: Sample and Methods

HVE Civilian (n=30)

- Family (n=30)
- Civilian (n=30)

HVE Military Veteran

- Family (n=30)
- Veteran (n=30)
- Military (n=30)

Secondary Data: Open-sources (Court Documents, Manifestos, etc.)

Primary Data: Participant Interviews
Study 2: Percentage of Ideology for HVE Sample¹

- White Supremacy/Neo-Nazi: 15 Veterans, 63 Active Duty, 44 Civilian
- Anti-Government: 15 Veterans, 69 Active Duty, 11 Civilian
- Radical Islam: 17 Veterans, 20 Active Duty, 15 Civilian
- Black Nationalism: 22 Veterans, 17 Active Duty, 15 Civilian
- Anti-Abortion: 7 Veterans, 7 Active Duty, 6 Civilian
- Hybrid: 3 Veterans, 6 Active Duty, 3 Civilian

¹Castro & Atuel, 2021
Study 2: Select Measures (Semi-Structured Interview)

Premilitary/Civilian Life
- Family relationships; childhood and school years
- Aspirations and Motivations
- Relationships (Friendships, dating, marriage (if applicable))

Military Life
- Achievements and perceived challenges; Aspirations and motivations
- Relationships (Friendships, dating, marriage (if applicable))

Veteran Life
- Achievements and perceived challenges; Aspirations and motivations
- Relationships (Friendships, dating, marriage (if applicable))

Radicalization
- Grievances
- Ideologies
Study 2 Preliminary Findings: Case Study of a Military Veteran

Premilitary/Civilian (Planting/Forming)
- Held anti-Semitic beliefs

Military (Sharpening)

Postmilitary/Veteran (Triggering)
Study 2 Preliminary Findings: Case Study of a Military Veteran

Premilitary/Civilian (Planting/Forming)
- Held anti-Semitic beliefs

Military (Sharpening)
- Civilian Predispositions
  - Military Life
    - WWII combat
    - Network

Postmilitary/Veteran (Triggering)
Study 2 Preliminary Findings: Case Study of a Military Veteran

Premilitary/Civilian (Planting/Forming)
- Predispositions
  - Held anti-Semitic beliefs

Military (Sharpening)
- Civilian Predispositions
- Military Life
  - WWII combat
  - Network

Postmilitary/Veteran (Triggering)
- Civilian Predispositions
- Military Experience
- Veteran Life
  - Identity
  - Networks (Veteran and Civilian)
  - Stressors
Study 2 Preliminary Findings: Case study of a Military Veteran

“HOLOCAUST MEMORIALS erected by ILLUMINATI all over the World intended to cast a permanent Stigma on the Aryan Race stand instead as MONUMENTS TO MANKIND'S CONGENITAL LIARS: THE JEWISH RACE.”

“HITLER was correct in his assessment of the ultimate importance of Genetics. Through applied eugenics (improvement of the Aryan gene-pool) he intended to create eugenically an Aryan Super Race.”
Future Research: A View from the Past

“If we had spent a million dollars on research in the years following World War I, or even, perhaps a hundred thousand, it would be worth billions today in money, and its value in human lives would be incalculable.”

“It would be possible to solve the veteran problem, but before it is solved, many men must study it over a period of years, and others must evaluate their results….We must build up a body of social knowledge…. which draws upon all fields of knowledge for help in solving its peculiar problems.”

1Waller, 1944, p.308
Future Research: A View from the Present

Premilitary/Civilian (Planting/Forming)
- Predispositions
  - Individual
  - Network

Military (Sharpening)
- Civilian Predispositions
- Military Life
  - Network
  - Stressors
  - Combat
  - Quest for Significance

Postmilitary/Veteran (Triggering)
- Civilian Predispositions
- Military Experience
- Veteran Life
  - Identity
  - Network
  - Stressors
  - Quest for Significance
Potential Threats

• Withdrawal from Afghanistan

• Implementation of 2021 DoD Extremism Regulations

• Discharges (Potential and Actual)
  - Non-compliance with COVID-19 vaccination regulations
  - Violation of 2021 DoD Extremism Regulations
Contact Information

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Questions?

Please enter your questions into the Q&A box

Send to All Panelists