



Bimonthly updates to Congress on RAND's work in terrorism and homeland security

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HOT TOPICS

When Terrorism Hits Home: Are We Ready?

As our nation moves forward with efforts to improve preparedness against terrorism, law enforcement will continue to play a critical role in deterring, preventing, and responding to terrorist attacks within the United States. While the creation of the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Office of State and Local Government Cooperation and Preparedness (SLGCP) has improved domestic preparedness coordination among and with state and local first responder/law enforcement agencies, DHS and SLGCP still need to thoroughly understand these groups' threat perceptions, critical support needs, and overall approaches to terrorism preparedness to fulfill their mandate of improving programmatic efforts at the local, state, and federal levels.

To help DHS/SLGCP meet these responsibilities, the RAND Corporation, with support from the National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism, conducted a nationwide survey completed in 2003 aimed at assessing how state and local law enforcement agencies are meeting the challenges of their new terrorism-related responsibilities. The survey addresses (1) the response experience of law enforcement and threat perceptions; (2) the steps law enforcement has undertaken to counter the threat and to shore up vulnerabilities; (3) law enforcement's support needs; (4) how law enforcement is resourcing preparedness activities; and (5) the relationship between perception of risk, funding, and preparedness. The survey provides an important benchmark that DHS and policymakers can use to gauge future improvements in preparedness and to better target federal funding.

READ MORE: [How Prepared Are State and Local Law Enforcement for Terrorism?](#)

Connecting the Dots: Intelligence Assistance

Since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the problem of "connecting the dots," or selecting and assembling disparate pieces of information to produce a general understanding of a threat, has been under tremendous scrutiny. Obvious approaches to prioritizing data, such as looking for patterns similar to those of previous attacks, can easily lead to missing the signals indicating the next, different attack. Moreover, when analyzing uncertain and messy (i.e., real-world) data, time and situational pressures often force analysts into making uncertain conclusions while existing legal, technological, procedural, and cultural barriers to sharing and linking information further complicate these challenges.

This RAND report develops a concept for a new computer network and database that can serve as a central clearinghouse for intelligence data and better assist the U.S. intelligence community in "connecting the dots." The conceptual Atypical Signal Analysis and Processing (ASAP) network and database apply

some of the same mental rules intelligence analysts use to quickly analyze large volumes of information in order to identify unusual and suspicious activity. Since system designers would collaborate with analysts to develop the rules and patterns an ASAP network would use to identify out-of-the-ordinary behavior, the ASAP network would perform the same initial highly repetitive review functions that analysts must do today, only much more quickly and thoroughly. Implementation of this conceptual network and database would thus lead to greater efficiency by freeing analysts to focus on intelligence examinations that demand more of their subject matter expertise.

READ MORE: [Out of the Ordinary: Finding Hidden Threats by Analyzing Unusual Behavior](#)

Security of the Global Containerized Supply Chain

In November 2002, Congress passed the Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2002 in order to improve overall U.S. port and maritime security. While this legislation, as well as other various actions and policies, has been adopted to facilitate security along the global container supply chain (GCSC), the question still remains as to how successful have these efforts been.

This report outlines a framework for assessing and managing supply chain security and efficiency by viewing the GCSC as three interdependent and interacting networks: (1) a physical logistic system, (2) a transaction-based system, and (3) an oversight system. Using this framework of analysis, the report contends that security and efficiency are distinct yet inseparable properties of the same system and makes recommendations on what policies and technological efforts should be pursued to improve overall GCSC security.

READ MORE: [Evaluating the Security of the Global Containerized Supply Chain](#)

FORTHCOMING REPORT

U.S. government decisionmakers face a number of challenges as they attempt to form policies that aim to divert youths from joining terrorist groups, persuade leaders of states and nongovernmental institutions to withhold support for terrorists, and dissuade terrorists from attacking the United States. This forthcoming RAND report, titled *Dissuading Terror: Strategic Influence and the Struggle Against Terrorism*, attempts to help these decisionmakers see the potential use of influence campaigns in the war on terrorism by gauging the lessons learned from past experiences.

For over 30 years, RAND has been a world leader in terrorism research and analysis. To view RAND's terrorism and homeland security research, go to http://www.rand.org/research_areas/terrorism/.

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