Growing US violent extremism by the numbers: UMD database

December 12 2011

"Our researchers have tracked over 100 foiled plots in the past decade," says UMD's Gary LaFree. "Most of these would be classified as homegrown terrorism." Credit: START

Over the past decade, attacks and plots by homegrown terrorists in the United States have increased, the work of extremists from across the political spectrum - roughly 40 percent of it by so-called 'lone wolf,' non-aligned actors - says an analysis by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) based at the University of Maryland.

The statistics underscore the threat addressed in a White House plan released Thursday: Strategic Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States - a blueprint

for "building community resilience against violent extremism."

"There have been more than 200 terrorist attacks in the United States since 9/11, but what has really increased is the total number of foiled terrorist plots," says UMD researcher and START director Gary LaFree, who has developed the largest and most comprehensive unclassified terrorism database in the world with funding from the U.S. [Department of Homeland Security](#).

"Our researchers have tracked over 100 foiled plots in the past decade," LaFree adds. "Most of these would be classified as homegrown terrorism."

The new White House plan follows up on a strategy first laid out last August, and discussed at UMD by Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano in October.

"The facts make it clear - homegrown, violent extremism is not just a problem for other countries," LaFree explains. "The administration plan confronts this reality by providing a strategy that draws heavily on local communities as the key to prevention."

FACT SHEET: VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN THE UNITED STATES

Overall Domestic Terror Stats (from the Global Terrorism Database)

- Between 2000 and 2010 there were 213 terrorist attacks in the United States. Seventeen of these, including the four 9/11 attacks, were fatal.

- Since Sept. 11, 2001, 32 people have been killed in terrorist attacks in the United States. The most lethal attack was the 2009 shooting at Ft. Hood in Texas, in which 13 people died.
- Forty percent of terrorist attacks in the United States since 2000 have involved individuals with no apparent affiliation to a known extremist group. These individuals included adherents of a range of ideologies, including anti-abortion extremists, environmental extremists, White supremacists, and Islamist extremists.
- Of the attacks in the United States for which perpetrator information is known (73 percent), the groups most frequently launching completed attacks were the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) and the Animal Liberation Front (ALF). High-profile attacks by individuals affiliated with Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) were successfully foiled.

The Global [Terrorism Database](#) is an open-source database including information on more than 98,000 terrorist events around the world from 1970 through 2010. It is currently the most comprehensive unclassified database on terrorist events in the world. For each incident, information is available on the date and location of the incident, weapons used and nature of the target, the number of casualties, and - when identifiable -the group or individual responsible.

Profiles of Islamic Radicalization in North America

START's "Profiles of Islamic Radicalization in North America Database" provides information on 211 individuals known to have radicalized in North America to the point of supporting violence from 1989 to 2011. These homegrown violent extremists started and completed a significant portion of their radicalization in North America, though not all attempted or carried out violence in North America.

- The vast majority of homegrown Islamist extremists (80 percent) began their radicalization after the events of 9/11 and the subsequent Global War on Terrorism.
- Nearly half of the identified homegrown Islamist extremists (45 percent) come from a middle class background, and the majority (59 percent) are highly rooted in their host society.
- At least 24 percent of the individuals included in this study were converts to Islam.

Extremist Crimes

START's "Extremist Crime Database" includes a systematic collection of open-source data on non-violent and violent criminal behavior in the United States associated with far-right extremist groups, far-left extremist groups, and al-Qaida-influenced groups. By developing this database, START researchers have thus far recorded thousands of criminal incidents committed by far-right extremists between 1990 and 2010 and more than one hundred by those inspired by al-Qaida. Data collection on far-left criminal activity is currently underway.

• More than 345 homicide incidents were committed by at least one far-rightist between 1990 and 2010.

• Far-rightists killed almost 50 law enforcement officials between 1990 and 2010. These incidents involved federal, state and local police officers, correctional officers, private security guards and one judge.

• Far-right extremists committed more than 350 "financial schemes" since 1990. Since data collection and coding is ongoing this number will grow.

• Almost 25 fatal incidents (in which the suspect killed others and/or was killed by police or committed suicide) have been committed by al-Qaida-

inspired extremists since 1990.

• Al-Qaida-inspired extremists committed close to 100 "financial schemes" since 1990.

Provided by University of Maryland

Citation: Growing US violent extremism by the numbers: UMD database (2011, December 12) retrieved 24 May 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2011-12-violent-extremism-umd-database.html