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# Libraries in the War on Terrorism

By Brad Robison and Greta E. Marlatt

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While terrorism has existed in the world for a very long time, until recently, the U.S. had been extremely fortunate to have had limited experience with such attacks within its own borders. These two very deadly events served as major wake-up calls for Americans that we are, in fact, vulnerable. The bombing of the Murrah federal building in Oklahoma on April 19, 1995, and the multiple events of 9/11 showed us that we are susceptible to the desires of evil men and women who wish to do us harm, and that we can, and will likely again, be attacked on American soil. Many lessons have been learned about raising our awareness to better protect ourselves and our borders from internal and external threats.

Out of the ashes of both of these horrific events have come many changes, new and stronger policies, and some very positive strides forward in establishing better security. Paramount is the recognition that we need to be better prepared, better organized, and better educated about threats to our national security and where these threats are coming from. As far as possible, we want to prevent more terrorist acts. However, since some will likely occur despite our best efforts, we also need to know how to minimize the damage and losses in order to deal with the aftermath as efficiently as possible.

Two specific organizations were established to help set the course for new directions in antiterrorist education and response: the Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT) in Oklahoma City [[www.mipt.org](http://www.mipt.org)], and the Center for Homeland Defense and Security (CHDS) in Monterey, Calif. [[www.chds.us](http://www.chds.us)]. Each organization created a library to collect, organize, and preserve information so that those in emergency management and emergency response roles could become more informed and better prepared for future attacks or disasters of any kind. The MIPT established a physical and digital library and the CHDS developed the Homeland Security Digital Library (HSDL). These libraries, with similar yet distinct roles, chose different paths to further and to support the missions of their respective institutions.

## Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT)

Shortly after the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, family members, survivors, and rescuers came together along with other members of the Oklahoma City community to examine ways to memorialize and honor those who lost their lives that beautiful spring morning. Out of the rubble and sorrow of this tragedy came the vision of a three-component memorial, one component of which was a "living memorial." The MIPT performs this function by conducting counterterrorism research and serving as a clearinghouse of information for the emergency response community, policy makers, students, and the general public.

Since its creation in September 1999, MIPT has become one of the premier U.S. centers of open source or publicly available material related to terrorism and homeland security. In serving the counterterrorism community, the MIPT Terrorism Information Center offers access to a wealth of information resources and services. The Center creates and provides access to numerous terrorism-related documents and serves as a conduit to materials located in the Oklahoma City National Memorial Archive. The MIPT Terrorism Information Center was the first authoritative repository of information related to terrorism. Through early congressional language, MIPT was called upon to "serve as a national point of contact for antiterrorism information sharing among Federal, State and local

preparedness agencies, as well as private and public organizations dealing with these issues.”

Over the past 6 years, nearly 2.5 million visitors have accessed the Center’s collection of resources. The Terrorism Information Center houses several thousands of books and provides access to hundreds of thousands of electronic reports, studies, and articles. Among the various electronic resources made available are EBSCO’s International Security & Counter-Terrorism Reference Center (ISCTRC), the Open Source Center (formerly the Foreign Broadcast Information Service), the Open Source Information System (OSIS), Nexis, and the Thomson/Gale E-encyclopedias.

On-site research is possible by visiting the historic Journal Record Building, heavily damaged by the bombing. Since many individuals are not positioned to take advantage of the physical information center, MIPT provides access to many of the materials electronically. The Terrorism Information Center also provides an individual book-lending program. A user can simply request the book directly by e-mail and the book will be sent to the requestor with return postage included. An online catalog directs users to all materials, both electronic and print. An annotated bibliography, a calendar of events, and a course and training database are also valuable informational tools. A Yahoo! daily newsfeed keeps visitors and researchers current with terrorism-related news from around the globe.

The Web site is organized by topical categories to provide access to hundreds of sources of information—associations; equipment; government and homeland security sites; information for travelers; memorial organizations; other libraries, think tanks, and centers; training information; wanted terrorists; and terrorism victims assistance. Another aspect of the “living memorial” is the growing MIPT terrorism bibliography that currently identifies more than 2,000 books on terrorism spanning many decades. MIPT plans to have the most comprehensive book and journal collection on terrorism in the world.

## **CREATING TERRORISM DATABASES**

Early in its infancy, MIPT realized the number-one need for terrorism research in the U.S. was the creation of authoritative and accessible databases. Therefore, some of the first research projects undertaken by MIPT were to create and maintain comprehensive electronic databases on terrorism-related subjects, including lessons learned and best practices.

The Lessons Learned Information Sharing System [<https://www.llis.dhs.gov>] is a national online network of lessons learned and best practices designed to help emergency response providers and homeland security officials prevent, prepare for, and respond to terrorism. By bringing information and first responders together in an electronic forum, LLIS.gov is intended to improve preparedness nationwide by allowing emergency responders to tap into a wealth of validated frontline expertise on effective planning, training, and operational practices for homeland security. LLIS.gov offers knowledge and experience derived from actual incidents such as the Oklahoma City bombing and the 9/11 attacks with observations, historical operations, training, and exercises. Other types of LLIS content include Best Practices, which are peer-validated techniques, procedures, good ideas, or solutions that work. These are solidly grounded upon actual experience in operations, training, and exercises. Good Stories is another source that may provide useful information to other communities and organizations but has not been peer-validated.

Another of the “lessons learned” from the Murrah building disaster was a demonstrated need for a database related to the standardization of equipment, protective clothing, and training. The Responder Knowledge Base (RKB) [[www.rkb.mipt.org](http://www.rkb.mipt.org)] has been designed to provide the emergency response community with a single source for integrated information on current equipment, including organizing lists such as the InterAgency Board’s Standardized Equipment List (SEL) and the Authorized Equipment List (AEL). The RKB has become a “go-to” site for the responder community to begin answering important questions such as these: What equipment is out there? Has it been certified? If so, to what standard? What training is needed to use it? How do I pay for it? Who has used

it that I can talk to?

Finally, MIPT also created the Terrorism Knowledge Base (TKB) [[www.tkb.org](http://www.tkb.org)], the one-stop resource for comprehensive research and analysis on global terrorist incidents, terrorist organizations, and terrorism-related trials. TKB covers the history, affiliations, locations, and tactics of terrorist groups operating across the world. The database covers nearly 40 years of terrorism incident data and features more than a 1,000 group and leader profiles. Providing in-depth information for researchers, policy makers, emergency responders, and the general public, the TKB integrates incident data from the Rand Corporation, research on terrorist organizations from DFI International, materials from the MIPT Terrorism Information Center, and U.S. indictment and prosecution data from the American Terrorism Study. The TKB system represents the most advanced, Web-based tool of its kind. Users can search using dynamic maps, directories, keywords, and more. Country profiles provide thorough background information, and group profiles describe bases of operations, founding philosophies, and current goals. The site also contains Quick Facts, offering a snapshot of vital data and a "baseball card" of statistics for side-by-side comparisons. Profiles of terrorist leaders include brief biographies, legal cases against them, and photographs when available. Most importantly, TKB offers highly interactive maps and sophisticated analytical tools that can be used by searchers to create custom graphs and tables. No other terrorism Web site provides such user-friendly features for free.

## Homeland Security Digital Library (HSDL)

As a result of the tragic events of September 11th, the (then) Department of Justice's Office for Domestic Preparedness (ODP) saw a need to re-educate middle management first responders and emergency managers to think and prepare them for new ways of viewing emergencies and disasters at a strategic level. ODP set a goal of empowering a new breed of leaders who would have the knowledge and skills to do the following:

- Develop strategies, plans, and programs to prevent terrorist attacks within the U.S. and reduce America's vulnerability to terrorism
- Build the organizational arrangements needed to strengthen homeland security, including local/state/federal, civil-military, and interagency cooperation
- Help mayors and governors make improvements in homeland security preparedness by conducting real-world actionable policy development work

A partnership was established between the Naval Postgraduate School's Center for Homeland Defense and Security (CHDS) and the (now) U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Grants and Training (G&T) to offer the first master's degree program in homeland security [[www.chds.us/?masters/overview](http://www.chds.us/?masters/overview)].

It was clear from the earliest discussions that it would be impractical for a student body of practicing emergency management/emergency responder professionals to leave their jobs for 18 months to attend school in Monterey, Calif., so the program was designed to be delivered primarily through distance learning. With considerable foresight on the part of the senior leadership, a need was identified to create a digital library to both support the curriculum as well as to collect and maintain an archive of important homeland security/defense strategy- and policy-related documents.

The HSDL [[www.hSDL.org](http://www.hSDL.org)] was begun in 2002 to "support local, state and federal analysis and decision-making needs and assist academics of all disciplines in homeland defense and security related research" by being "the nation's premier collection of homeland security policy and strategy related documents."

## COLLECTING DIGITAL TERRORISM MATERIALS

The CHDS director saw a unique opportunity for the HSDL to “preserve the current debate.” The HSDL seeks to identify and collect all iterations of major policy and strategy documents so scholars and researchers can see the changes that take place over time. This includes collecting key documents from early draft stages to the final approved product. Due to the volatility of the Internet and the ease with which Web pages and documents can be mounted, changed, and/or removed with little or no notice, one of the goals of the HSDL is to capture these important documents and preserve them for the future. As much as possible, the HSDL identifies appropriate resources and downloads them to local servers.

While U.S. government documents are not subject to U.S. copyright laws, this is not true of much of the content the HSDL would like to preserve and present. HSDL has established policies and procedures in place to seek permission from the various individuals and organizations to download their materials. Absent this permission, linking to external materials is the only alternative.

The HSDL is organized into various, easy-to-navigate sections with the most important being the highly focused and authoritative strategy- and policy-related content. A team of librarians and subject matter experts scours the Internet to find pertinent, publicly available resources. After being reviewed and evaluated for relevance and importance, team members write a summary and create metadata records before adding materials to this very specialized collection.

Another information repository within the HSDL is the content gathered by automated Web spiders that crawl important homeland security-focused Web sites and news sources. This content does not enjoy the same level of scrutiny or metadata information as the annotated content but is still highly useful to the researcher.

## **A LIVING TERRORISM TAXONOMY**

As part of the effort to add value and provide relevant search results, the HSDL team created a living taxonomy to organize resources in significant and useful categories. Continuously reviewed by subject matter experts, this taxonomy is now an essential part of the robust search and categorization capabilities of the digital library and the basis behind the Browse features of the site.

The HSDL provides a dynamic blog, *On the Homefront*, where users can see or post information about major events, news stories, and important, recently released documents. Another special section provides users with quick access to the major strategy and policy documents: Congressional Research Service (CRS) and Government Accountability Office (GAO) reports, major legislation, and executive orders and presidential directives, both current and historical. Also included is quick access to the various homeland security-related master’s theses and reports done by students and faculty at the Naval Postgraduate School.

The Homeland Security Digital Library is not open to the general public but is being made widely available to all those engaged in any aspect of homeland security and/or defense. Federal, state, and local agencies are given broad access, as are the educational institutions involved in the emerging disciplines of homeland security, emergency management, and emergency response. Individuals are given access on a case-by-case basis.

Both of these libraries provide a wide variety of tools and information to support the different needs of their respective audiences. The MIPT databases provide terrorism- and counterterrorism-related information along with Lessons Learned and equipment-specific information aimed particularly at those working at the tactical level. The HSDL focuses on collecting strategy- and policy-related materials for those who are working at the strategic planning level. Both are important resources and should be considered important tools for the toolbox of all those who are working to defeat the enemy in the global war on terrorism.

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