



START ►►

SMA / DHS / NCTC / CENTCOM / START Panel Discussion:

Terrorism and Technological Innovation: The High Tech / Low Tech Paradox

**Booklet
28 February 2018
1530-1700 EST**

**Dial (866) 712-4038; Passcode
37250264#**

Strategic Multi-Layer Assessment (SMA) provides planning support to Commands with complex operational imperatives requiring multi-agency, multi-disciplinary solutions that are NOT within core Service/Agency competency. Solutions and participants are sought across USG and beyond. SMA is accepted and synchronized by Joint Staff/J-39 DDGO and executed by ASD (EC&P).

Agenda

Session Notes:

During this session the panelists will discuss technological innovations and the dynamics of their adoption by terrorist groups. The panelists will refer to research they have undertaken that explores the use of technology by different groups, how this takes place, and how it effects the actions of the groups concerned.

Panel Moderator: Mr. Bill Braniff (University of Maryland START)

Speakers:

- Dr. Gina Ligon (University of Nebraska, Omaha)
- Mr. Don Rassler (Counterterrorism Center [CTC])

Speakers' Abstracts:

- Dr. Gina Ligon:
 - Using a dataset of over 8,000 attacks from VEOs since 2000, Dr. Gina Ligon will share how to apply concepts from business innovation literature to understand the malevolent innovation of terrorist groups. Take-aways such as under what conditions groups are most likely to use highly novel techniques and weapons, types of targets that are attractive for innovative attacks, and implications for lethality and injuries will be discussed during her part of the panel.
- Mr. Don Rassler:
 - In a short period of time the Islamic State went from filming attacks and propaganda videos with its commercial drones to using the remotely piloted quadcopters to drop small munitions in a regular and consistent fashion on its enemies from the air. To better situate the terror drone threat, this presentation will identify the main factors that contributed to the Islamic State being able to develop and deploy its drone bomb-drop capability, and to do so at scale and in a unique and effective way. It will also discuss how even though the scale of the Islamic State's Do-It-Yourself drone capabilities are currently being rolled back, the simple terror drone methods used by the group are likely here to stay. Not only will the Islamic State's use of commercial drones as weapons evolve, but the wide availability of commercial quadcopters, gaps and seams in drone countermeasure coverage, and the Islamic State's relatively easy-to-copy drone bomb-drop methods will almost certainly inspire other violent actors to either follow suit or take the terror drone threat in new directions.

Speaker Biographies

Mr. Bill Braniff

William Braniff is the Executive Director of the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) and a Professor of the Practice at the University of Maryland. He previously served as the Director of Practitioner Education and an Instructor at West Point's Combating Terrorism Center (CTC). There he led the practitioner education program, the nation's largest provider of counterterrorism education to federal, state and local governmental audiences.

Braniff is a graduate of the United States Military Academy where he received his bachelor's degree. Following his Company Command as an Armor Officer in the U.S. Army, Braniff attended the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) where he received a master's degree in international relations. Upon graduation, Bill worked in the nuclear counterterrorism field at the Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration, and as a research associate with the CTC Harmony Project at West Point.

Braniff lectures frequently for counterterrorism audiences in partnership with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Joint Special Operations University, National Defense University, the United States Attorneys' Office, the Foreign Service Institute, the Diplomatic Security Service, Defense Intelligence Agency and Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Braniff has also taken a keen interest in the field of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE). He has consulted with the Department of Justice, the FBI and the National Security Staff, playing a key role in an interagency working group dedicated to the topic. In June of 2013, Bill testified before Congress regarding American attitudes towards terrorism and counterterrorism, and in February of 2014 and again in February 2015 he testified before the House Armed Services Committee on the evolving nature of global jihadism. Also in February of 2015, Bill was asked to speak at the White House CVE Summit, to the United Nations Counterterrorism Executive Directorate, and to the Global Counterterrorism Forum Foreign Terrorist Fighter Working group.

Braniff is also heavily involved in public education. His speaking engagements include Council on Foreign Relations and World Affairs Council events in cities around the country. In May of 2010, Bill took part in the National September 11th Museum and Memorial Speaker Series and is featured in the Museum's educational webcast series. He has been interviewed on numerous occasions by National Public Radio, the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, CNN, Fox News and by a host of additional international, national and local print and radio media outlets.

Dr. Gina Ligon

Gina Ligon received her Ph.D. in Industrial and Organizational Psychology and Minor in Quantitative Psychology from the University of Oklahoma. Prior to joining University of Nebraska Omaha, she was a full time faculty member at Villanova University in the Graduate Programs in Human Resource Development. She also worked as a Director of Performance Consulting at St. Louis-based Psychological Associates. Her research program focuses on the identification and development of high level talent; she has specific expertise in innovation and leadership, and has published over 60 peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters on these subjects. Organizational structures and leadership in non-normative organizations (e.g., violent ideological) are also of interest to her.

Mr. Don Rassler

Don Rassler is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Social Sciences and Director of Strategic Initiatives at the Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. His research interests are focused on how terrorist groups innovate and use technology and understanding the changing dynamics of militancy in South and Central Asia. Rassler has advised a number of operational units and been interviewed by various media outlets. He is the co-author of *Fountainhead of Jihad: The Haqqani Nexus, 1973-2012*, a book released by Oxford University Press in 2013. He holds an M.A. in International Affairs from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs and a B.S. from the University of Oregon.