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The NCITEr Newsletter: May 2022

National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center

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National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center | A U.S. Department of Homeland Security Center of Excellence

MAY 2022

Dear NCITE Community,

The first few months of 2022 can be summed up in one word: growth.

We were designated the DHS Center of Excellence for counterterrorism and terrorism prevention research in 2020, but this spring we got to launch our first grant competition to distribute approximately \$1 million in new awards. After our initial call for proposals, we had 61 letters of intent to apply to join the NCITE consortium, resulting in 44 viable proposals submitted through our application portal in February.

Current NCITE consortium members got right to work conducting a thorough *scientific review*, ensuring that all selected proposals would generate new knowledge for terrorism scholars. Proposals also went to experts in the USG to conduct a *relevancy review* to determine how much each project would contribute to counterterrorism and terrorism prevention. Now the final selection task returns to us to identify and fund research projects that meet or exceed the scientific and relevancy criteria. This is a deliberate process by design. NCITE wants to be a careful steward of DHS funding for terrorism research.

Of course, we cannot fund all the outstanding proposals we received this year. However, we are hopeful this process resulted in greater exposure for every team that applied — proposals that might not have been awarded this round are on our radar. Stay tuned to our social media for an announcement of the new consortium members.

In addition to grant-funded consortium members, we have also grown through direct contracts from DHS. In this newsletter you will read about the work we are conducting through what the USG calls task orders, or direct contracts with various components of DHS to do specific work.

We plan to announce more detail on the contract-funded work, plus news on more growth in partners and projects in July.

We are in the early stages of planning for a fall NCITE research conference. We hope to invite researchers, government partners, and industry leaders to Omaha to grow in this mission together.

I hope you will find in this newsletter examples of how we are amplifying the work of the 19 institutions, 50+ researchers, and 120+ students all working to solve the most challenging issues in counterterrorism and terrorism prevention research. Thank you for sticking with us for the past two years, and I am hopeful that the next one will result in seeing you in person in Omaha!



GINA LIGON
NCITE Center Director



All about that BOA: How the Basic Ordering Agreement Taps NCITE Capabilities While Helping DHS

In the summer of 2021, DHS awarded NCITE a Basic Ordering Agreement, or BOA. A BOA is an umbrella agreement negotiated between the government and a performing institution.

NCITE's BOA allows for DHS components and other federal partners to issue task orders directly to our Center of Excellence (COE) without further competition or review. Task orders have defined deliverables, timelines, and oversight, and can be issued for research, analysis and services aligned with the COE's unique expertise.

Through the BOA, NCITE can:

- Conduct classified work
- Operate with more oversight
- Meet specific task requests and defined deliverables

Through the BOA, federal agencies can:

- Eliminate administrative burden of transferring funds within DHS
- Issue task orders directly to a COE research lead institution
- Set requirements for projects

Want to learn more?

- Contact: universityprograms@hq.dhs.gov or ncite@unomaha.edu.

The BOA-funded work requires committed people in government and academia. Below, get to know **Ajmal Aziz** from DHS, **Matt Allen**, assistant professor of management and NCITE head of business strategy, and doctoral student **Alexis d'Amato**.

DHS program manager "cares about the work as well as the people"



Ajmal Aziz

Ajmal.

It's a name you hear often at NCITE's headquarters in Omaha. At end-of-day recap huddles. In hallway chatter among researchers fresh off an MS Teams call. At the office's coffee counter as a fresh pot brews. *I just hung up with Ajmal... We've got that meeting with Ajmal ... Ajmal said ...*

Ajmal Aziz, program manager at the Department of Homeland Security's Science & Technology Directorate, is tip-of-tongue for NCITE because of the growing collaboration between NCITE and Aziz's role as federal gatekeeper for quicker-turn research tasks.

[READ MORE](#)

Insider threat expert leaves beltway for Omaha



Matt Allen

When Matt Allen and his wife Amanda packed up their Subaru with their two-year-old son and headed to Oklahoma for the holidays this past December, he felt struck by this first in many years — visiting family without catching a plane. That trip, Allen says, was one of the first times he realized Omaha could truly be home, something the NCITE head of business strategy, assistant professor of management, and I-O psychologist never thought would happen.

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Ph.D. student digs into threat landscape



Alexis d'Amato

Q: Can you tell us about your role at NCITE?

I'm a graduate assistant for Dr. Hunter's (UNO) and Dr. Miller's (PSU) project on malevolent creativity. Dr. Hunter is also my advisor, so I work closely with him on other projects.

Q: What specifically are you working on day to day?

Recently, I've been identifying training needs for the Homeland Security Enterprise, so they can stimulate creative thought when they encounter problems (e.g., novel threats, ambiguous problems). I've also been researching threats to agricultural critical infrastructure and learning more about artificial intelligence regarding malevolent creativity.

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RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

How Salafi-jihadist, white supremacist groups compare in attack planning in the U.S.

This report from George Washington University's Program on Extremism looks at tactics and targets of attack plotters in the U.S., drawing on federal court records from 2014 to 2019.



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Emerging risks in marine transportation

NCITE researcher **Iris Malone** of George Washington University looked at how maritime security has evolved since 9/11 and identified pressing threats, key vulnerabilities, and strategies to build resilience.



[SUMMARY](#)

[READ THE REPORT](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

NCITE Graduation Celebration

UNO — Mammel Hall: May 12, 5 PM to 7 PM

NCITE is excited to celebrate its first cohort of graduates this spring and grateful to plan an in-person event that can involve family members, friends, and NCITE supporters.

Global Network on Extremism and Technology Conference

Hybrid: May 18-19

- Panel 1 – Accelerationist Movements and the Manosphere
- Panel 2 – Violent Extremist Fundraising
- Panel 3 – Methods for Strategic Intervention
- Panel 4 – Trends on Alt-Tech Platforms
- Panel 5 – Future Forecasting: Violent Extremist Threats

[REGISTER](#)

International Center for the Study of Radicalization Conference Resolving the Detainee Dilemma for Men, Women, & Children of the Islamic State

Registration has opened for the first of a two-part conversation that will be hosted first at King's College London June 16-17. Information on panels and speakers to come.

[REGISTER](#)

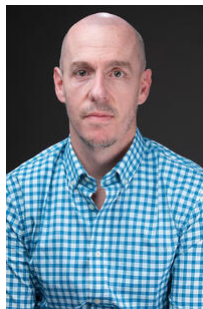
ICYMI:

Author and scholar Jason Warner on the Islamic State in Africa

Warner, assistant professor at the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, spoke about his 2021 book, "The Islamic State in Africa." **Austin Doctor**, NCITE director of counterterrorism research initiatives, moderated the discussion.

[WATCH HERE](#)

ANNOUNCEMENTS



NCITE Head of Strategic Operations Sam Hunter was named a 2022 fellow for the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology. This honor recognizes outstanding contributions in the field. Hunter is a professor of I-O psychology who joined NCITE at the University of Nebraska at Omaha last year. He is an expert in malevolent creativity. Read about his NCITE research [here](#).



NCITE Communications Team Student Member Lauren O'Malley won the UNO College of Business Administration's Stan Hille Award. Named for a former CBA dean, the award honors an outstanding business graduate student. O'Malley is graduating with her MBA. She played a major role in elevating NCITE's public image in Nebraska through state testimony and in a presentation to donors and local business leaders.

INSIDE NCITE



NCITE Excellence Fund

NCITE has established an account through the University of Nebraska Foundation as a step toward long-term sustainability. The fund will support students, researchers, and the UNO-based center as it strives to build community and national resilience against terrorism and targeted violence.

The UNO NCITE Excellence Fund (01159320) accepts funds electronically through the link below, or contributions may be mailed in name of the fund to 1010 Lincoln Mall Ste 300; Lincoln, NE 68508.

DONATE

Interesting people? Upcoming events?

Send ideas for our next NCITEr edition to NCITE's egrace@unomaha.edu.



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