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The NCITEr Newsletter: January 2021

National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center

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JANUARY 2021

Dear NCITE community,

Welcome to our latest edition of The NCITER. This newsletter describes research addressing one of the most pressing threats of the day: disruptive violence in America.

The National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center, a Homeland Security academic center of excellence, is headquartered at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. We are halfway through our first year of operations, and all 16 of our research and education projects are underway to support operations against terrorism and targeted violence in the U.S.



NCITE Director Gina Ligon

Below, we shine a light on the people behind this work. Keep reading to learn about an NCITE board member who is scheduled to deploy to California soon to assist COVID-19 rescue missions, a DHS senior leader who has spent the past few months at NCITE before heading to a new post where she will lead a team of 1,100 people for United States Citizenship and Immigration Services and the new Omaha-based regional prevention coordinator for DHS's Office for Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention. Plus, you'll see a student who is hungry for a career in counterterrorism, eager to use her degree in criminology to make a difference in national security.

A brand-new year brings hope and fresh plans, but in this challenging time, flipping the calendar page doesn't clear problems.

Last week, our U.S. Capitol was attacked by mobs of angry Americans. NCITE researchers across our consortium quickly responded. They shared their expertise on domestic terrorist groups involved. They created a database to track individuals charged in federal and D.C. courts in connection to criminal actions at the Capitol. They gave news interviews to help make sense of what had happened.

Our nation still fights a pandemic that has changed how we collectively live and work more than any time since WWII. Issues over race, policing, inequality, and our presidential election remain unresolved. Any one of these problems could portend continued violence in our country, as rhetoric and risk factors heat up all around us.

What steels NCITE's resolve is knowing that now, perhaps more than ever, the counterterrorism and violence prevention work we do is vital and the people doing this work are inspiring. Come learn about it and them. Our virtual door is open to you through this newsletter. Come in. Learn about NCITE. Be an insider or, as our newsletter says, NCITER.

Stay safe,



ASK A RESEARCHER

Pete Simi

Q. How do we best understand the violence that occurred at the U.S. Capitol?

A: Given the long track record and open chatter online about their plans, we should understand what happened as completely predictable, much like the violence in Charlottesville in 2017. We should not see the insurrection as either new or an aberration. [Read more.](#)

Pete Simi is an NCITE research theme lead, sociologist and associate professor at Chapman University.



Salina Greene of OTVTP meets her UNO MBA "consultants."

MBA capstone projects help DHS

The client met her consultants the way practically everyone has had to do in 2020. On a computer screen. One by one, faces popped up on Microsoft Teams screens on a recent morning, and the client, Salina Greene, gushed: "I'm seeing my consultants for the first time. This is exciting!" [Read More.](#)



COURTESY/ PENN STATE. Penn State students engage in a prior interdisciplinary project on enhancing creativity.

RESEARCH ROUNDUP

Can you change a terrorist's mind?

Terrorism and targeted violence are complex problems that require complex thinking. Take the work of NCITE researchers — psychologist **Sam Hunter** and engineer **Scarlett Miller**, both of Penn State. They come from different fields but have teamed up to test this contention: that violent thinking can be interrupted, limited, and essentially reengineered. [Read more.](#)



NCITE's quick turn on CWMD need shows capability

John Waters

John Waters, deputy assistant secretary at the DHS Office of Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction (CWMD), needed information NCITE could get it. An analyst in his office wanted to know which terrorist or violent extremist groups could get their hands on weapons of mass destruction. And he had to know this quickly to paint an accurate picture of current threats.

[Read more.](#)



SPOTLIGHT

NCITE board member Rik Legault

Rik Legault has a lot of titles. Criminologist. DHS S&T senior advisor. NCITE board member. U.S. Navy veteran. U.S. Air National Guard medic. This last title will take Legault from the D.C. area to California to assist COVID-19 efforts. [Read more.](#)



New DHS violence prevention coordinator

Meet Salina Greene

Salina Greene has been a costume designer in New York City, a research assistant in San Francisco, a graduate student in St. Louis and Oxford, England, and an equal opportunities investigator in Chicago. But for the past eight years, the Delaware native with a master's degree in international relations has built a career with the Department of Homeland Security. During her tenure, she has been an asylum officer, policy practitioner, senior immigration officer, and most

recently, a regional prevention coordinator for the Office for Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention (OTVTP). [Read more.](#)



Career path to DHS front door not a straight line

The photos hanging on an office wall in Lincoln, Nebraska, offer a window into a past globe-trotting life for a Department of Homeland Security leader, **Mary Beth "MB" Brennan Seng**, who has done part of her leadership training at NCITE.

[Read more.](#)



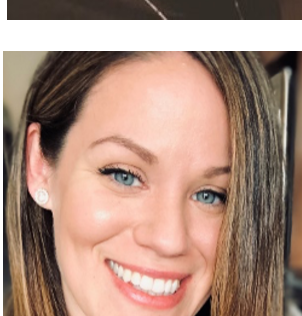
Student's eyes opened to counterterrorism future

Liz Bender has intellect, drive, and curiosity — all important traits for any college student. But gut instinct and exposure are what have led her, so far, down a career path for counterterrorism. "I showed up to a meeting," she said. "Since then, I jumped on board." [Read more.](#)



NCITE theme lead graduate assistant earns spot on national board

UNO criminology doctoral student **Clara Braun**, who helps NCITE coordinate research, recently won a spot on the executive board of the American Society of Criminology, Division on Terrorism and Bias Crimes. Braun will serve a one-year term as a non-voting student member. She will help coordinate professional development events.



NCITE welcomes new DHS program manager

NCITE welcomes **Dana Saft** as new program manager from the DHS Office of University Programs (OUP). Saft replaces **Jeff Brownsweiger**, who is returning to his duties at DHS Intelligence and Analysis. Brownsweiger, senior advisor to the DHS executive director for intelligence training, has helped shepherd NCITE from the time the NCITE team was applying for the federal grant through its first year of operation.

Saft brings experience in program management in both private and public sectors. In her role at OUP, she manages NCITE, advises OUP leadership on strategic and multi-year planning, and analyzes current research and development projects to find prospects for commercialization. She also likes to look for joint collaboration between centers of excellence. Saft holds bachelor's and master's degrees (chemistry pre-health, Radford, and biodefense, George Mason) and she currently is working toward her Master's in Business Administration degree at George Washington University.

INSIDE NCITE

- ◆ **SAVE THE DATE: NCITE's first annual meeting and conference, June 28-30**
The executive-level meeting will be held in Omaha on **June 28** for members of the NCITE board of directors and internal advisory board. A ribbon cutting on the new NCITE headquarters, scheduled to open this spring at Mammel Hall's Rod Rhoden Business Innovation Center, will be on **June 29** with in-person and virtual attendance options. On **June 30**, NCITE will hold a virtual conference. More details to come!
- ◆ **COE SUMMIT:** NCITE is helping plan another annual academic event, a virtual summit in May that brings together all the DHS Office of University Programs Centers of Excellence.
- ◆ UNO's political science department, with the U.S. Strategic Command, will host a virtual conference with a panel on deterring terrorism. The conference will feature a national security career fair and an experiential learning component for students. Open to the public. **Deadline for paper submission is Feb. 5. Deadline to register is March 15.**
- ◆ NCITE just wrapped up its Year 2 RFP application invitation to Year 1 researchers.

Website

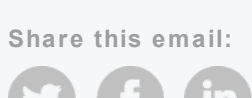


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