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Counterterrorism Intelligence:

Law Enforcement Perspectives

The George Washington University Homeland Security Policy Institute

CTISR

Counterterrorism Intelligence Survey Research

Parati! **Be Ready!**

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Founded in 2003, ***The George Washington University Homeland Security Policy Institute (HSPI)*** *is a nonpartisan "think and do" tank whose mission is to build bridges between theory and practice to advance homeland security through an interdisciplinary approach. By convening domestic and international policymakers and practitioners at all levels of government, the private and non-profit sectors, and academia, HSPI creates innovative strategies and solutions to current and future threats to the nation.*

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2001

"The September 11 attacks demonstrate that the war on terrorism must be fought and won at home as well as abroad. To meet this new threat and to prevent future attacks, law enforcement officials at all levels of government — federal, state, and local — must work together, sharing information and resources needed both to arrest and prosecute the individuals responsible and to detect and destroy terrorist cells before they can strike again."[1]

— John Ashcroft,
Attorney General

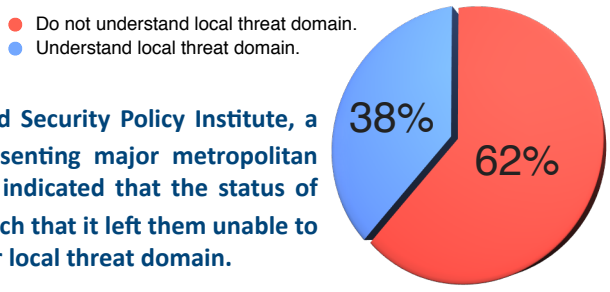
"State and local law enforcement agencies are the forces on the ground that represent, inhabit, and patrol America's communities...Partnerships with state, local, tribal, and territorial agencies affect DHS's ability to identify threats and bolster preparedness before an incident...Information sharing between DHS and state and local governments is particularly critical to our security."[2]

— Janet Napolitano,
Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security

2009

2011

In survey data collected by the Homeland Security Policy Institute, a majority of the intelligence chiefs representing major metropolitan police departments in the United States indicated that the status of the national intelligence enterprise was such that it left them unable to develop a complete understanding of their local threat domain.



Preface

In the United States local law enforcement is not the only line of defense against terrorism, but given its ability to detect threats within our communities and its first responder function — it is often both the first and last line. Yet the ability of American officials to effectively support those on the front line is an open question. Among the police intelligence commanders for the fifty-six largest cities in the United States, there is a consensus that the US lacks an adequate understanding of the intelligence enterprise as it relates to counterterrorism. As a result, intelligence capabilities are lacking, collection is haphazard, resources are underutilized, and the US has a limited ability to develop anticipatory knowledge concerning future attacks, mitigate risks, or respond to emerging threats.

The effects of this inadequate understanding extend beyond America's cities. As the quotes from John Ashcroft and Janet Napolitano illustrate, in the decade since the attacks of September 11, 2001, it has become accepted wisdom that the weaving together of national efforts at the local, state, and federal levels is critical to US counterterrorism. Today, that wisdom rings truer than ever. The US increasingly faces a blended terror threat that unites foreign directed or inspired attacks with homegrown elements and operators. In this evolving environment, intelligence is the lifeblood of any successful counterterrorism effort and the counterterrorism activities of local law enforcement take on increased importance.

Little empirical research, however, has been done to study the weaving together of local, state, and federal counterterrorism efforts. Even less work has been done to routinely and systematically collect, measure, and evaluate how local law enforcement perceives the terrorism threat domain or their role in countering it. This empirical blind-spot significantly weakens the ability of policymakers to provide the leadership, resources, and support necessary to unify American counterterrorism efforts and effectively leverage whole of society strengths, expertise, and assets. Furthermore, in an era of increasingly constrained budgets it is increasingly important to identify the most significant operational gaps and shortfalls. Only then, can the limited resources that are available be targeted to the programs and policies that will yield the greatest benefits to American security.

To reduce the size of this empirical blind-spot and to support efforts to evaluate counterterrorism practices and policies, the Homeland Security Policy Institute at The George Washington University has begun a long term **Counterterrorism Intelligence Survey Research (CTISR)** program. This program represents the first attempt to systematically collect data from counterterrorism professionals at all levels of government. CTISR will measure *practitioner* perceptions of the threat and the systems by which they gather and evaluate information about it. With such practitioner-level data, it will be possible to reach an empirically derived understanding of the evolving threat posed by terrorism, its relationship to criminal activities and other societal dangers, and the status of collaborative and cooperative efforts to combat it. In short, with such data it will be possible to bring a little science to the art of counterterrorism intelligence.

CTISR is, at its core, interested in the national counterterrorism intelligence enterprise of the United States — by which, is meant the processes and mechanisms through which counterterrorism relevant information is collected and analyzed by government entities and practitioners at the local, state, tribal, regional, and federal levels. Such processes and mechanisms, as well as the individual and organizational behaviors that develop and sustain them, represent a network of activities that attempt to determine threat domains by detecting and evaluating risks to the safety and security of the people of the United States — while at the same time protecting the civil rights and civil liberties that Americans cherish and that define the political culture of the United States.

Bottom Line Up Front

An HSPI poll of section chiefs from the intelligence units of major metropolitan police forces in the United States found the following:

- Homegrown and foreign-directed jihadi terrorism and radicalization are perceived as a real threat by local law enforcement in the United States.
- Nearly a decade after the attacks of September 11, 2001, there continue to be gaps in the types of intelligence products to which local law enforcement has access.
- A majority of those polled cite the need for increased analytical capabilities at the local, state, and federal levels.
- At the local level, citizens and traditional police work continue to be the primary source for counterterrorism information.
- Intelligence collection is viewed as a shared responsibility between local and federal officials.
- There is significant support for the nationwide suspicious activity reporting initiative (NSI).
- Among federal partners, the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Forces are viewed as the most important source of counterterrorism information.
- There is an untapped willingness for increased information sharing (even the sharing of confidential informants) among local law enforcement.
- Local law enforcement values well trained and skilled individuals more than technology, and given the choice would invest more in people and less in gadgetry.

HSPI's initial CTISR survey found that there exists the potential for a more robust national intelligence enterprise — one that could enhance the counterterrorism efforts of the United States at the local, state, regional, and federal levels.

Background

Local and state law enforcement agencies employ some 800,000 individuals — more than 730,000 of which are sworn officers with the ability to make arrests. These individuals, as members of the communities they police, have great familiarity and thus great capacity for detecting emerging threats within their jurisdiction, including terrorism.[3]

This familiarity and this ability to detect emerging threats, are products of the problem solving and partnership principles that inform community policing doctrine. These principles are, and should continue to be, the foundational cornerstone of American police work.

Yet, the changing, converging nature of threats faced today — especially those from terrorism, transnational crime, and the use of technology to carry out criminal behavior — make it imperative that intelligence led policing be integrated into the decentralized police structures and community policing principles of the United States.

Intelligence led community policing and the US' traditional approach to counterterrorism fit together quite naturally. American counterterrorism has traditionally stressed early detection and the use of active partnerships as a means for countering threats.

It is, however, becoming increasingly important that the policing and counterterrorism activities of the United States be integrated through the use of intelligence. The terror threat faced by the United States is evolving. It increasingly blends foreign and domestic events, resources, direction, and operators.[4]

This evolutionary shift is evidenced by the discovery of more than fifty-two homegrown plots since September 11, 2001. The numbers themselves do not capture the true significance of the blending of

foreign and domestic terrorism activities. It is the observed operational trend that warns of the growing threat and signals the increasingly important role local law enforcement will play in countering it.

From September 11, 2001 through May 2009, a span of ninety-two months, there were twenty-one such blended or homegrown terror plots. In the eighteen months that followed, from June 2009 until November 2010, there were more than twenty-three. Since November 2010, there have been eight more homegrown terrorist plots.[5]

From the national perspective each of these cases, including the June 2011 arrest of two Seattle men who were planning to attack a US military recruiting and processing station, the November 2010 plot to blow up a van at a Christmas tree-lighting in Portland, the May 2010 attempted Times Square bombing, and the recruiting of young men in Minneapolis to fight for al-Shabaab, were viewed as relatively minor events (because the plots were successfully intercepted by authorities).

Nonetheless each highlights a trend toward internationally-fused, locally-realized terrorism, and each represents major events with long lasting ramifications for the local communities in which they occurred — a fact that should not be forgotten.

"Our state, city, and region are active as it relates to terrorism related activities."

— survey respondent

Two additional examples provide quick illustration of the important role local law enforcement plays (and will increasingly play) in combating terrorism. One example is the case of the 2005 Jamiyyat Ul-Islam Is-Saheeh (JIS) plot to attack targets in Southern California. Another example is the 2011 arrest of two men from Queens who stand accused of undertaking a plot to attack a Manhattan synagogue and the Empire State Building.

The JIS plot was detected though traditional police efforts when the conspirators dropped a cell phone at a gas station they had robbed. The robbery was a criminal effort to generate the funds needed to plan, equip, and carry out attacks against the Israeli Consulate, Los Angeles International Airport, and US military recruiting stations in Southern California.[6] Investigation of the robbery produced intelligence about the attacks.

The plot undertaken by Ahmed Ferhani and Mohamed Mamdouh was intercepted by the New York Police Department. This plot was uncovered by NYPD's intelligence division after intelligence was pieced together from information gathered as a result of the two's previous arrest for robbery, and Ferhani's arrest on narcotics charges — Ferhani was reportedly attempting to sell drugs so he could purchase the weapons needed for the attacks.[7]

In addition to highlighting the blended nature of homegrown terrorism, these two cases, demonstrate the overlap and interconnection between what might be labeled traditional crime and terrorism. It is this overlap, that if properly exploited through the collection of information, may provide vital intelligence about the terror threat domain faced by local police departments — as well as the threat faced by the United States as a nation. It is local law enforcement that is most likely to come into contact with, and thus collect, such information.

There is another reason, one that supports the point above, to believe local police departments are well placed to collect key intelligence. Local law enforcement officers operate under wide constitutional and statutory mandates for preventing

and investigating crime, maintaining order, as well as patrolling among and providing services to the constituent communities and neighborhoods of their districts. With their powers regarding search, seizure of evidence, and arrest, American law enforcement is positioned to compliment the counterterrorism intelligence enterprise. In regard to counterterrorism, these important, yet underutilized powers grant local police departments greater opportunity and wider latitude in the ability to observe and collect key pieces of information than federal authorities. Furthermore, the nature of police power in the United States provides local authorities with a lower threshold (relative to federal agencies) at which they may engage in counterterrorism-related activities and prevent attacks.[8]

Their broad mandates, combined with community and problem-oriented policing strategies, place local law enforcement in a position to develop and maintain a keen awareness of the terror threat — one that could prove critical to the US' ability to detect and prevent terrorist attacks.[9] The integration of intelligence led community policing and traditional counterterrorism efforts would leverage multi-jurisdictional multi-agency efforts, to build a redundant network of tripwires to determine whether individuals or enterprises represent an active threat that warrants intelligence exploitation, investigation, or disruption.

Yet there exists another reason why local police departments play a vital role in American counterterrorism efforts — the size of their collective resources dwarf those of the federal government. Although policymakers, the news media, and general public continue to conceptualize terrorism and counterterrorism as an activity best addressed by national resources — the potential personnel and material resources of local and state law enforcement far exceed those of Washington. As noted earlier, local law enforcement in the United States is comprised of more than 730,000 sworn officers. The FBI has approximately 12,000 agents — only a small portion of which are detailed to counterterrorism operations.[10] The implications of this disparity are self-evident, federal authorities will never have the number of eyes and ears available to counterterrorism that local police do.

Local law enforcement, especially the police departments of the US' major metropolitan areas, have a wide legal mandate for counterterrorism. It grants them significant authority and responsibility. The current model is case oriented with an eye toward threat mitigation. There exists, however, the potential for developing anticipatory intelligence and contributing to the development of a better understanding of the domestic threat domain. Whether, and how well this is done, depends on the perceptions of the practitioners themselves.

The perceptions held by local law enforcement personnel affect our national security by providing a bottom-up rich picture of the terror threat faced by the United States. How police intelligence commanders and the departments they support conceptualize and perceive of the threat is of vital importance. Their perceptions affect which threats are detected and when.

Methods

On April 19th, 2011, a forty-four question survey was administered by the Homeland Security Policy Institute (HSPI) to representatives from the intelligence sections of several major American cities, sheriffs' departments, and state departments of homeland security or public safety.[11]

The survey took place at a meeting of the Intelligence Unit Commanders Group of the Major

Cities Chiefs Association. The respondents were selected by their departments to attend the meeting without prior knowledge that the survey would be conducted or any knowledge of its contents. The Major Cities Chiefs Association "is a professional organization of police executives representing the largest cities in the United States and Canada."[12]

The data collected is intended to provide a description of how local law enforcement personnel perceive both the threat of terrorism and their role in countering it — particularly in regard to intelligence collection and analysis.

Before presenting HSPI's findings, two methodological points need to be made — both of which affect the interpretation of this initial survey.

First, the sample size and number of responses for each question comprise a *small-N* dataset. The results discussed below represent the perspectives of a relatively small population — approximately forty-two individuals (not every respondent answered every question). From a purely statistical standpoint, such a sample raises questions about the generalizability of HSPI's findings. Nonetheless, the respondents represent a vitally important constituency. As senior members of their respective intelligence sections, these individuals are positioned to provide the best small-N sample of how local law enforcement views the intelligence enterprise as it relates to counterterrorism. These individuals understand the divergent demands on their police forces and represent expert opinions about the relative threat posed by terrorism and the importance of counterterrorism activities. Furthermore, the Major Cities Chiefs Association and the Intelligence Unit Commanders Group represent an institutional network that connects not only the major cities of the United States, but connects to other local, tribal, and state law enforcement throughout America. For that reason, the Intelligence Unit Commanders Group was judged to be the best target audience for this initial survey. Given this, and given that the goal of this CTISR survey is the collection of descriptive statistics about perceptions, the relatively small-N nature of this first dataset does not represent a significant methodological flaw.[13] Nonetheless, future CTISR surveys will expand the sample size and allow for more robust discussions about the future findings and greater analytical confidence in any conclusions drawn from the data.

Second, the data collected represents the perceptions of local law enforcement personnel. As such, it represents a valuable tool for interpreting the threat domain, the nature of the intelligence enterprise in the United States, as well as measuring and evaluating the level of local, state, regional, and federal cooperation that is occurring. Yet, the data cannot be taken "as is" — it must be placed into context and interpreted with care. For example, many respondents reported that the information they received from their local fusion center often lacks value. It would be a mistake to draw from this a direct conclusion about the utility of the fusion centers. Instead the data must be taken as a perception of the fusion centers or of the relationships the respondents have with those centers. Such raw information cannot be taken as an out of context objective measure of fusion center performance.

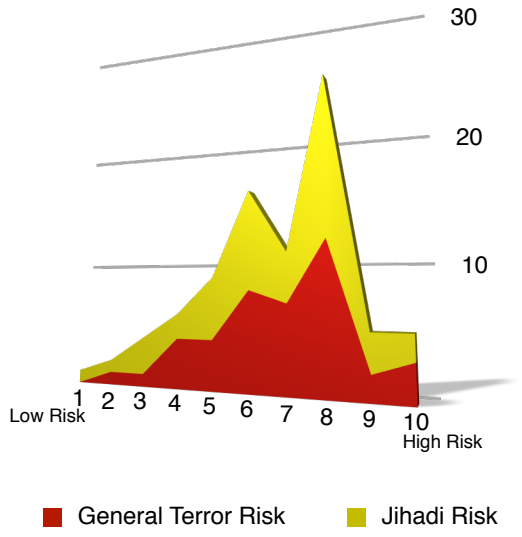
Results

The results of HSPI's initial CTISR survey provide insights into the perceptions of local law enforcement in regard to five key counterterrorism-relevant areas: *the level of threat* posed by homegrown or foreign-directed jihadi terrorism, *information sharing*, *intelligence collection*, *intelligence analysis*, and *the quality and availability of intelligence products*.

The Terror Threat

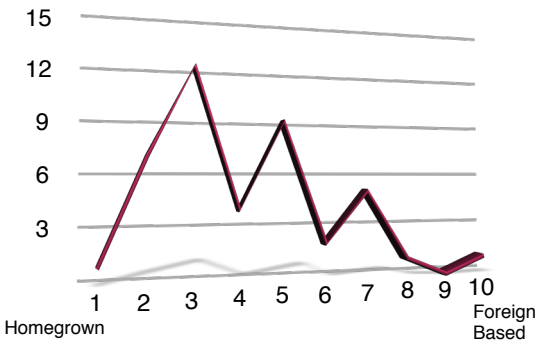
HSPI's CTISR data indicates that the intelligence unit commanders of the US' major metropolitan areas continue to perceive terrorism as a real threat to the safety of their communities. When asked to rate the risk terrorism poses to *their* jurisdiction on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 equals no threat and 10 equals high threat — twenty-seven out of forty-two respondents rated the threat as either 6, 7, or 8. Concerning the specific nature of the terror threat they face, a majority of respondents indicated they believed it to be motivated by Islamic radicalism (FIGURE 1). Furthermore, respondents indicated that they believed the threat now manifests itself via homegrown individuals or organizations (FIGURE 2).

FIGURE 1: Perception of the Risk Terrorism Poses to Your Jurisdiction.



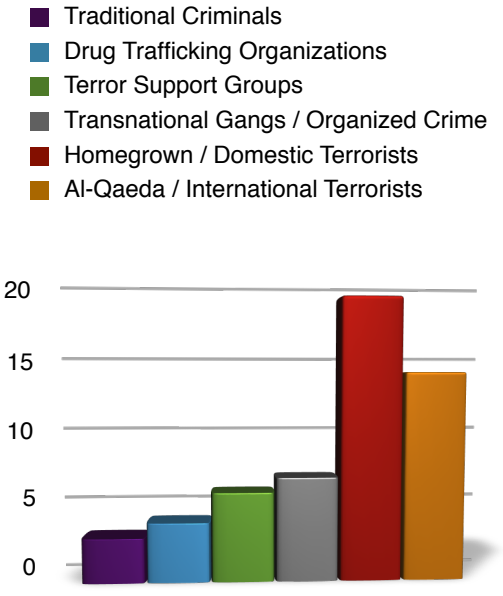
"Most likely AQAP due to their decentralized outreach capabilities and ability to recruit via social media campaigns (i.e. Inspire)."
— survey respondent on likely terror threats facing their jurisdiction

FIGURE 2: *"On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 equals 'homegrown individuals or organizations' and 10 equals 'foreign based individuals or organizations,' from where do you think today's jihadi terror threat originates?"*



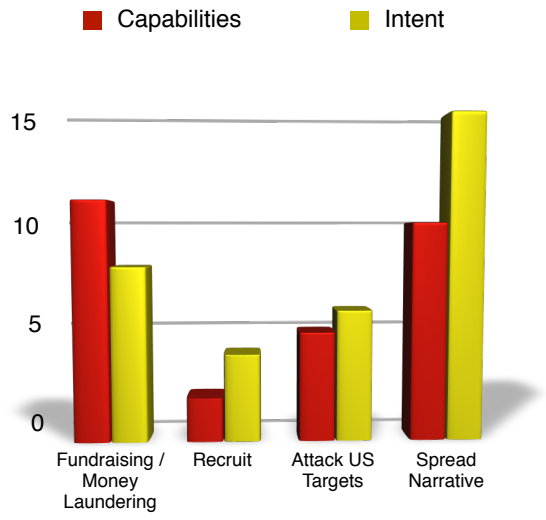
When asked to compare the relative threat of homegrown terrorism to that posed by other terrorists or traditional criminal activity, a majority of respondents indicated that homegrown extremists posed the most significant danger (FIGURE 3).

FIGURE 3: Individuals, Groups, or Organizations Posing the Greatest Threat in Your Jurisdiction



When asked about the operational capabilities and intent of the individuals, groups, or organizations that pose the greatest threat to their jurisdictions, survey respondents indicated that at present, fundraising, money laundering, and spread of the entity's narrative are the central activities that concern officials most (FIGURE 4).[14] Many respondents commented that they believe terror organizations are currently intent on using the United States as an environment for building support and raising recruits. In addition, a few respondents expressed concern for the potential of small arms attacks against targets within the United States potentially including "large venues/schools/ transportation critical choke points." In addition, respondent comments suggest that major metropolitan intelligence chiefs in the US are cognizant of the fact they may not have a clear or full appreciation of their adversaries' capabilities or intent. Several stated that they needed to collect against perceived capabilities and intentions to gain a richer picture of both. In short, they expressed concern about what they potentially do not know.

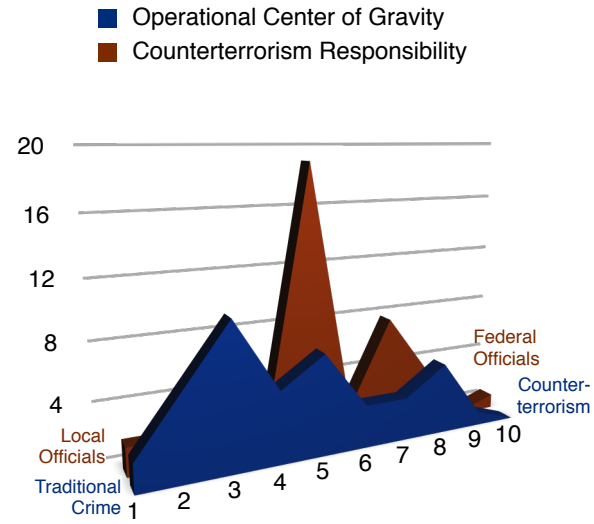
FIGURE 4: Capabilities and Intentions of Adversarial Individuals, Groups, or Organizations within Your Jurisdiction.



The findings from HSPI's initial CTISR survey suggest that there is an interesting divergence regarding the perceived threat posed by terrorism and the operational pressures faced by local law enforcement.

As noted above, survey results suggest that the commanders of the intelligence units of America's major metropolitan police departments perceive terrorism as a real threat to their communities. Furthermore, those same individuals recognize that counterterrorism is a shared responsibility between local and federal authorities. Nonetheless, survey respondents indicated that their operational center of gravity continues to lean more in the direction of traditional law enforcement (FIGURE 5).

FIGURE 5: Counterterrorism Responsibility and Operational Center of Gravity



This apparent discrepancy is in part explained by the comments that accompanied responses to the question about operational center of gravity. A majority of the respondents stated that local politics, community concerns, and even the reports of local media influence their operational focus. In addition,

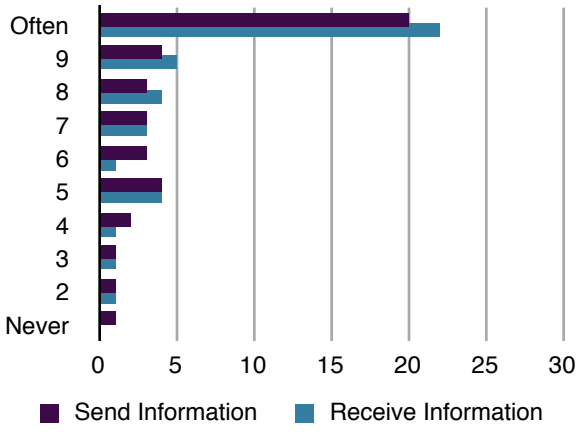
overlaying such comments was an expressed perennial need to balance the risk of potential (yet unrealized) terror threats against the daily occurrence of prevalent (yet relatively insignificant) criminal activity.

> *"Public perception — city council — trends — overseas activity."*
> *— survey respondent on the factors that shape their operational center of gravity*

Information Sharing

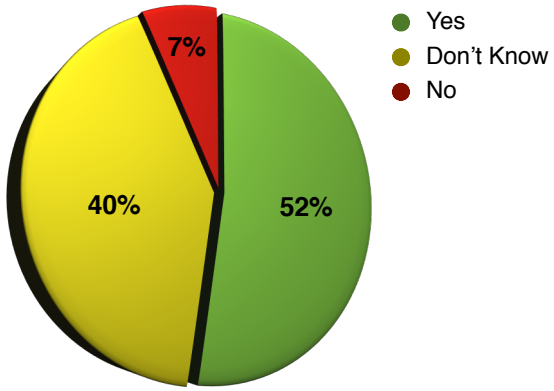
After a decade of proselytizing by policymakers regarding the importance of information sharing, respondents expressed a strong appreciation of and support for such. For example, as indicated in FIGURE 6, when asked how often they exchange information with their local fusion center, most reported that there was routine sharing of information. Furthermore, the vast majority of respondents (forty out of forty-two) indicated that they had personal contact with the director of their local fusion center.

FIGURE 6: "*How often do you exchange information with your local fusion center?*"



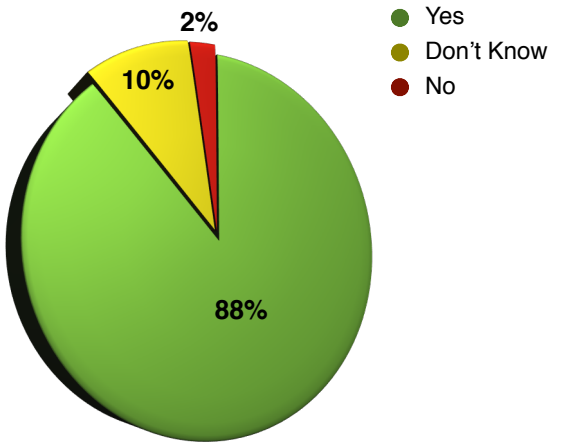
In general, survey respondents indicated a willingness to participate in several protocols for information sharing, including the FBI's National Data Exchange (N-DEx) program that gathers incident and case reports, bookings and incarceration data, and parole or probation information from law enforcement agencies throughout the United States (see FIGURE 7).[15]

FIGURE 7: "*Do you now, or in the near-term plan to, participate in the **National Data Exchange (N-DEx)** program?*"



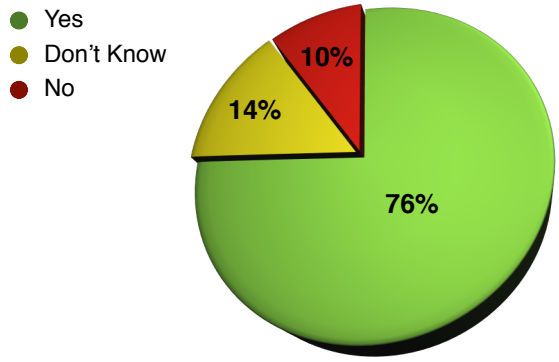
A sizable majority of survey respondents indicated that their departments participate in the Department of Justice led nationwide suspicious activity reporting initiative (NSI) which seeks to establish a unified process for reporting, tracking, and accessing information while protecting civil rights and civil liberties (see FIGURE 8). The indicated high levels of participation are not a particularly surprising finding given that in addition to the Department of Justice and the Department of Homeland Security, NSI partners include the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the Major Cities Chiefs Association, the Major County Sheriffs' Association, and the National Sheriffs' Association.[16]

FIGURE 8: "*Do you now, or in the near-term plan to, participate in the **nationwide suspicious activity reporting initiative (NSI)**?*"



Like N-DEx and NSI, a majority of respondents reported that their departments either did or would in the near term utilize the FBI's online eGuardian system for sharing sensitive information — including suspicious activity reports (see FIGURE 9).[17]

FIGURE 9: "*Do you now, or in the near-term plan to, utilize the **eGuardian** system?*"



Respondent comments about N-DEx, NSI, and eGuardian were generally favorable. Many respondents wrote that these systems provide mechanisms for the type of threat tracking and nationwide awareness needed to protect their communities.

> *"Crime has gone regional, which requires a regional/national info sharing approach to address it."*
> *— survey respondent*

However, respondents also indicated some concerns regarding how these existing systems were, or might be, used. Regarding the NDEx system, one respondent wrote: "We are still waiting for clear guidance on the process and full value of the program. There is some concern that the federal level contribution will not be as inclusive as is the expectation for state and local input." Another wrote about the NDEx system: "Our state has not been able to come to an agreement on the personnel that needs to be in place to audit the system. No access will be granted until this worked out." Another respondent, this time commenting about eGuardian, explained their department's choice not to participate this way: "Bad policy, or lack thereof to protect privacy rights. Terrible, inconsistent marketing of program. Inconsistent policies and procedures. Poor leadership, as indicated by frequent turnover. Lack of coordination with fusion centers."

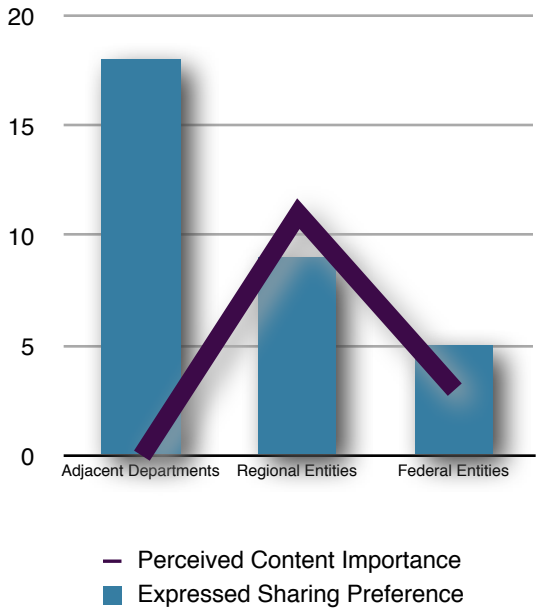
In addition to the mechanics of sharing, the survey data also provides insights into both the content of what is being shared and preferences regarding with whom it is respondents prefer to share information.

Survey respondents indicated a preference for sharing information first with their adjacent departments, then regionally, and finally with federal authorities. Interestingly, however, is that although a

local preference was indicated in terms of sharing — most of the respondents placed greater importance on the information provided by federal authorities.

FIGURE 10, generated using data from several different questions, illustrates the sharing-versus-importance divide uncovered by the survey.

FIGURE 10: Preference Regarding Information Sharing and Perceived Importance of Content

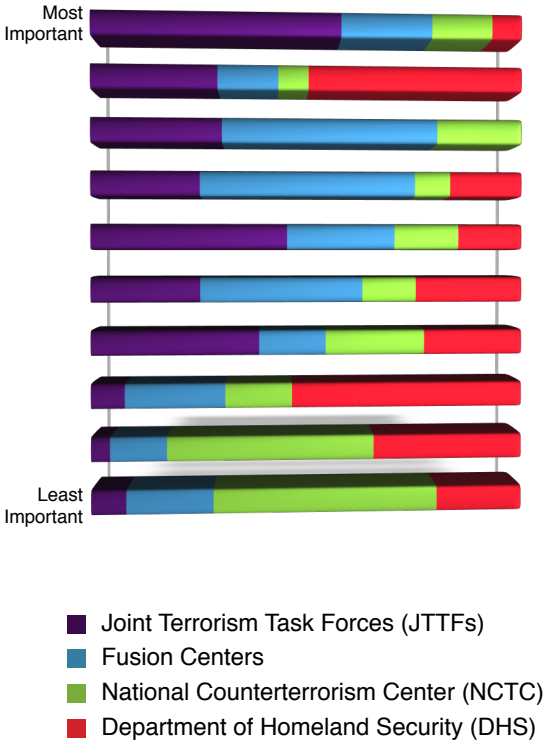


When asked to rank the importance of the information provided by their regional and federal partnerships, respondents indicated that information from the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Forces (JTTFs) was of greatest value — followed by information from fusion centers. Respondents indicated that information received from the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) was less valuable than that from either the JTTFs or fusion centers (see FIGURE 11).[18]

FIGURE 11 should be read such that the top line indicates which of the four entities was listed as the most important by respondents. The bottom line indicates which was listed as the least important.

Based on comments provided by respondents, judgements of importance appear to have been based on the perceived analytical value of what was being provided. Several respondents made comments that suggest the FBI is seen by local law enforcement as providing the most valuable (i.e. useful) information.

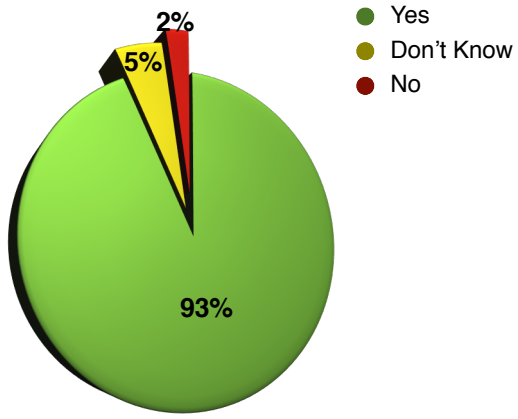
FIGURE 11: Importance of Information Received from Regional and Federal Partners.



Finally, the data suggests that although there is significant support for information sharing — untapped potential remains. As illustrated in FIGURE 12, the vast majority of respondents indicated that their departments would be willing to go beyond the sharing of information and share the sources from

which that information originates (including confidential informants).

FIGURE 12: *"Would your department be willing to share intelligence sources with other agencies? (For example, would you be willing to ask your sources and informants for information to fulfill intelligence requests from other agencies or entities?)"*



Intelligence Collection

In regard to the collection of counterterrorism relevant information, survey respondents expressed the belief that collection represents the highest priority of the intelligence enterprise (see FIGURE 13). Respondents also indicated that collection is a shared responsibility between local and federal authorities (see FIGURE 14).

Respondents indicated that they turn primarily to federal officials or agencies for guidance in the collection of intelligence (twenty-one out of forty-two respondents). Smaller numbers reported that they look to local officials or agencies (nine out of forty-two), professional organizations (seven out of forty-two), or state officials or agencies (five out of forty-two). The FBI was most often cited (by twenty-two respondents) as the federal agency or organization to which local law enforcement representatives most often look to as a model for their own collection efforts. Four respondents reported that DHS was their primary model for collection, while five others listed some combination of the CIA and military intelligence as who they emulate in their structures and efforts.

FIGURE 13: "*Please rank from 1 to 6, where 1 equals 'the highest priority' and 6 equals 'the lowest priority,' the following items in order of importance."*

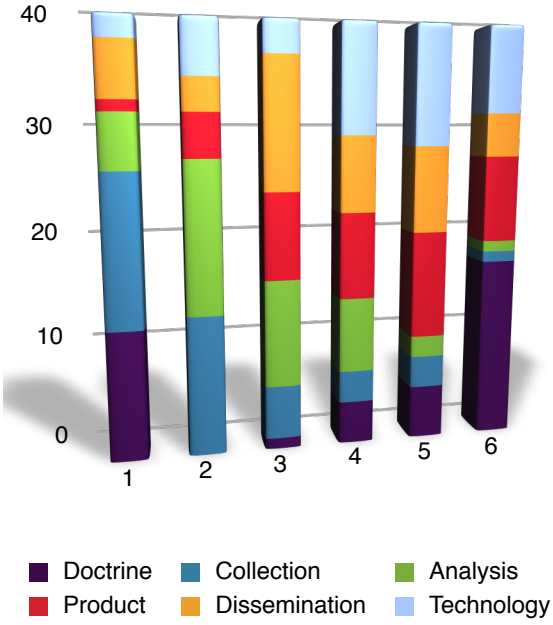


FIGURE 14: "*On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 equals 'local responsibility' and 10 equals 'federal responsibility,' where does primary responsibility for intelligence collection rest?"*

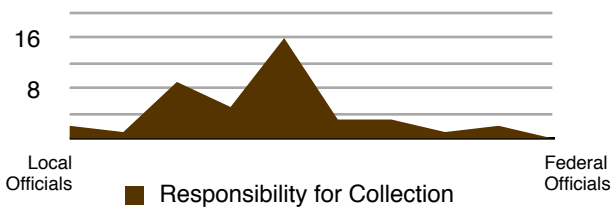
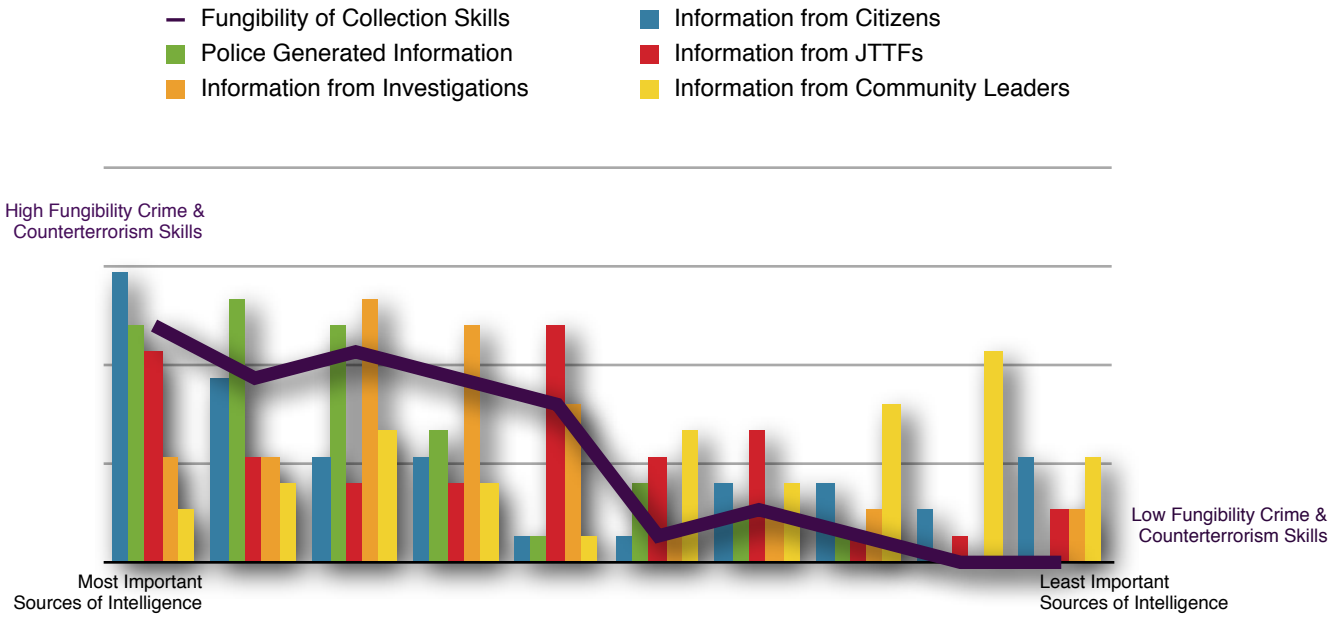


FIGURE 15: Fungibility of Collection Skills aimed at Traditional Crime and those aimed at Counterterrorism — and — Most Important Sources for Counterterrorism Intelligence.



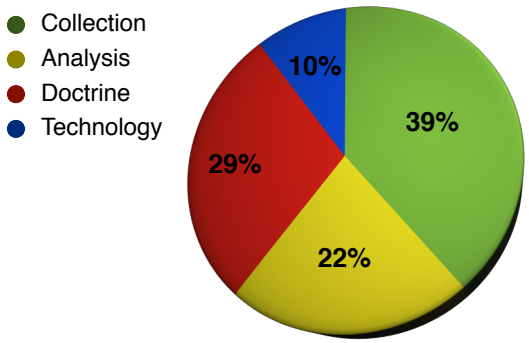
When asked about the fungibility of collection skills, most respondents stated that they viewed traditional criminal intelligence and counterterrorism intelligence capabilities as interchangeable. In fact, information generated by normal police functions, including the daily activities of local police officers and detectives were listed as the most important source of counterterrorism intelligence (see FIGURE 15).

Many of the respondents indicated that collection represented the area where they would like to see the most improvement in their department's capabilities (see FIGURE 16). Such a response seems, at first glance, to be at odds with the results from other questions within the survey.

For example, respondents expressed the belief that their departments' had a strong understanding of the communities within their jurisdictions (thirty out of forty-two rating their understanding at 7 or higher on a 10 point scale where 10 equals complete understanding); and the threat domain they faced (twenty-eight out of forty-two rating their understanding at 7 or higher on the same 10 point scale).

One plausible, yet untested, explanation is that the intelligence chiefs that comprise local law enforcement in the United States expect the terror threat to continue to evolve — thus generating the need for greater collection skills and capability.

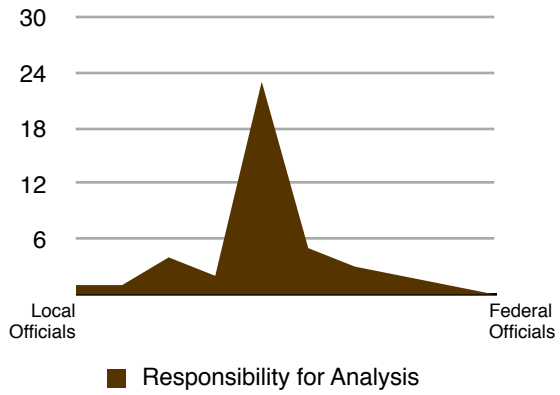
FIGURE 16: Highest Priority for Improvement within Your Department



Intelligence Analysis

As was the case with collection, survey respondents expressed the belief that the analysis of counterterrorism data was a shared responsibility between local and federal agencies (FIGURE 17). The data however suggests a slight difference between responsibility for collection and responsibility for analysis. In regard to collection, respondents expressed the belief that the responsibility was slightly weighted toward local police departments (FIGURE 9). In regard to analysis, respondents indicated that analysis is a more fully and equally shared responsibility between local and federal entities.

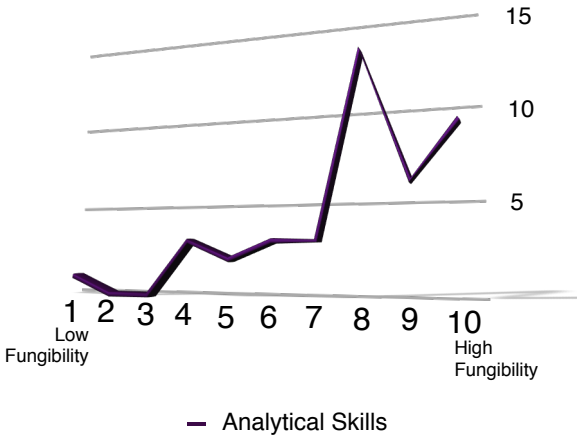
FIGURE 17: "*On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 equals 'local responsibility' and 10 equals 'federal responsibility,' where does primary responsibility for intelligence analysis rest?"*



Despite the view that analysis is a shared responsibility, many respondents reported a lack of standardization in terms of how that responsibility is being operationalized and managed. Comments indicate that US counterterrorism analysis is currently the product of an ad hoc patchwork of organizations and relationships between local, regional, and federal agencies including municipal police departments, DHS, FBI, fusion centers, national guards, professional organizations, and private contractors.

Analytical skills, again like collection skills, were viewed as generally fungible between traditional police work and counterterrorism (FIGURE 18). However, respondents reported concerns about the training and skill level of analysts. Twenty-six out of forty-two respondents indicated that increased analytical capability was either their first or second most important area of needed improvement within their department.

FIGURE 18: "*On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 equals 'not interchangeable' and 10 equals 'highly interchangeable,' how interchangeable are intelligence analysis skills in terms of the role they play in crime prevention, criminal prosecution, and counterterrorism?"*



"Currently, we have leveraged military, federal agencies (domestic), and private agencies (IALEIA) for guidance and training. But it is wholly inadequate — not from the provider standpoint, but from our own agency standpoint. There is no standardized certification process for officer-turned-analyst."

— survey respondent

Intelligence Products

When asked about intelligence products, survey respondents indicated that there exists a serious gap in the types of information and resources to which they have access (FIGURE 19). Those taking the survey self-identified four factors that contribute to such gaps: lack of analysis, lack of detailed information, lack of sharing, and an intelligence enterprise that is plagued by stale or useless data and information saturation (FIGURE 20).[19]

FIGURE 19: *"Are there gaps in the types of intelligence products to which you have regular access?"*

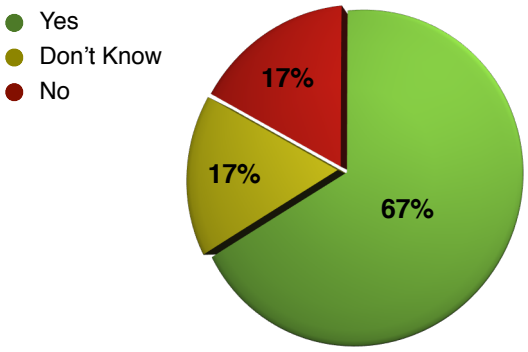
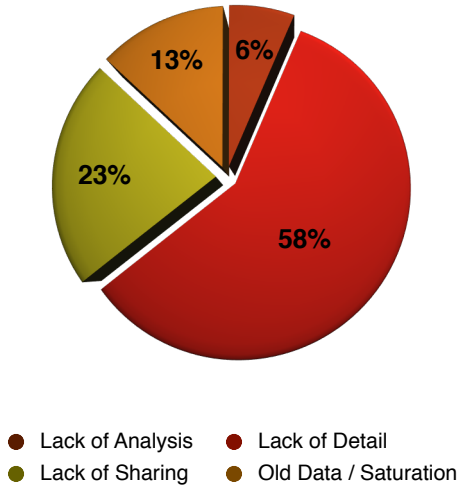
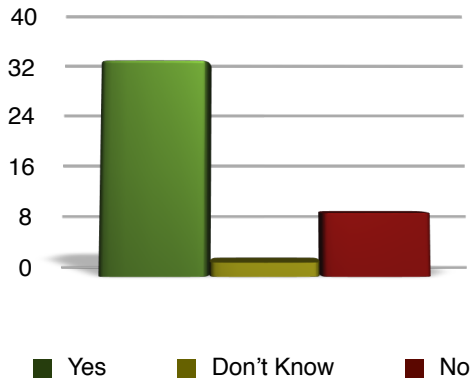


FIGURE 20: Factors that contribute to gaps in intelligence products.



A majority of survey respondents indicated that their respective departments had specific collection plans that could be used to produce intelligence products (FIGURE 21). The nature of these plans and the products that are being generated from them was beyond the scope of this initial survey. Future CTISR surveys, however, will make this a focus of inquiry.

FIGURE 21: *"Does your department have a specific collection plan for counterterrorism-relevant information?"*



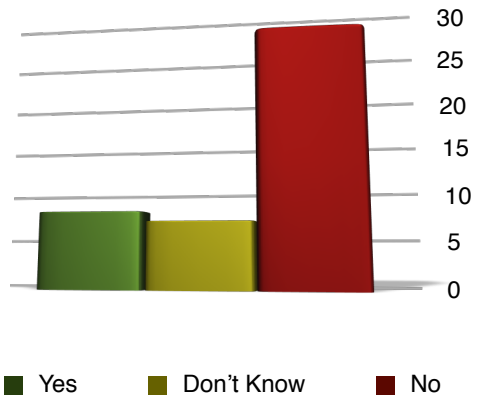
Respondents expressed concerns about the collection of key types of information — especially those related to the demographic makeup of their jurisdictions. Many expressed concerns about the political ramifications of collecting demographic data. Others commented that they chose to rely on census data from the federal government, county documents, or even information taken from local school districts. As a result, most respondents

"N/A. Concerns regarding public opinion and false allegations of intent if we were to draft such a strategy."

— survey respondent on why their department does not have a strategy for the collection of demographic data

reported that they did not have a formal strategy for monitoring demographic changes within their jurisdictions (FIGURE 22).

FIGURE 22: *"Does your department have a formal strategy for monitoring demographic changes (shifts in the ethnic, religious, social-economic, or cultural aspects for example) in your jurisdiction?"*



Conclusions

Based on HSPI's CTISR poll of section chiefs from the intelligence units of major metropolitan police forces in the United States the following conclusions can be drawn.

First, homegrown and foreign-directed jihadi terrorism and radicalization are perceived as real threats by metropolitan police in the United States.

Second, despite efforts over the last decade, members of local law enforcement organizations believe there continue to be gaps in the types of intelligence products to which they have access.

Third, the leaders of the intelligence sections of major US police departments believe there is a critical need for increased analytical capability at the local, state, and federal levels.

Fourth, at present, citizens and traditional police work continue to be the primary source for the counterterrorism intelligence used by local law enforcement — not DHS, the FBI, or any other federal agency.

Fifth, intelligence unit commanders view collection as a responsibility shared by local and federal officials. That said, survey data suggests they weight collection as slightly more of a local responsibility.

Sixth, on the part of intelligence unit commanders there is significant support for the nationwide suspicious activity reporting initiative (NSI).

Seventh, among federal partners, the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Forces are viewed by local law enforcement as the most important source of counterterrorism information.

It is important to remember that these findings represent the perceptions of the intelligence commanders of major metropolitan police departments — their perceptions and opinions should be taken seriously. Yet, they should not be taken as objective fact per se. A negative view of a particular agency or program may or may not be the result of its actual operational efficacy or value. More data, more consideration, and more analysis are needed before any informed judgments can be made.

In addition to these bottom line conclusions, a few other conclusions may be drawn.

First; local law enforcement values well trained and skilled individuals more than technology, and given the choice would invest more in people and less in gadgetry (FIGURE 23). This conclusion is supported by data from questions that asked intelligence unit commanders about areas in which they would like to see the greatest improvement in their departments.

Logically it can be assumed that this position is based on perceptions of the operational importance of technology relative to the value of intelligence doctrine, collection or analytical capabilities. When

asked, respondents indicated that technology was less important than the other three (FIGURE 24). In a time of increasing austerity, such insights should be given careful attention by state legislators and members of Congress.

FIGURE 23: Relative Importance of Technological Investments as Compared to Intelligence Doctrine, Analytical Capabilities, and Collection Training.

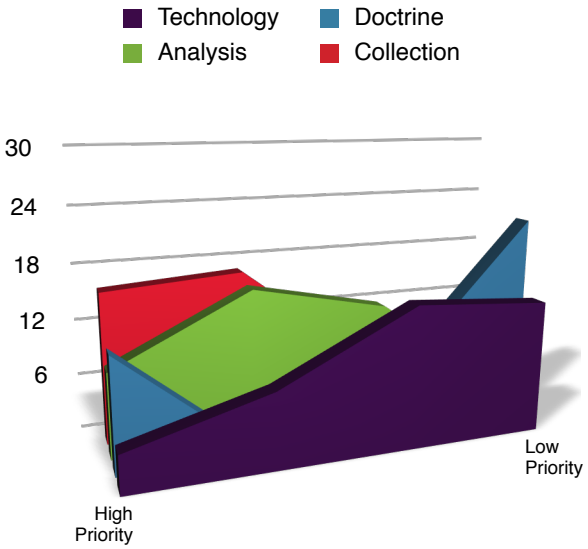
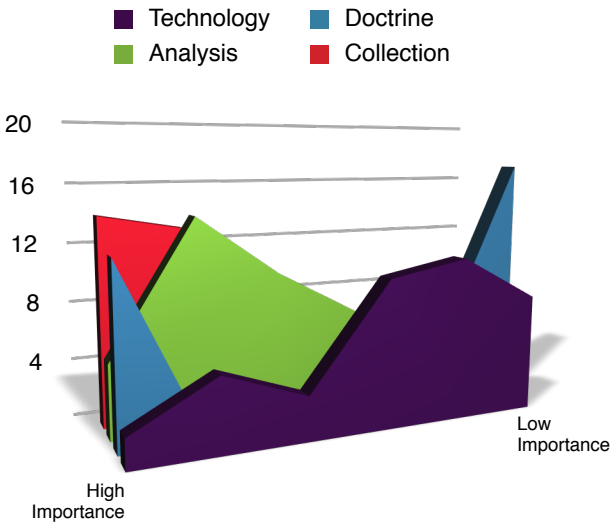
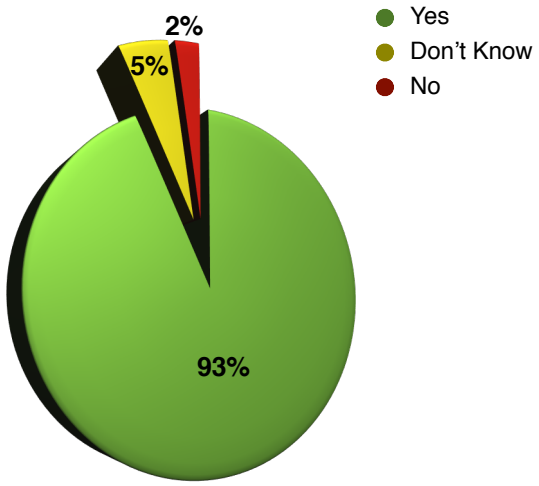


FIGURE 24: Operational Importance of Technology.



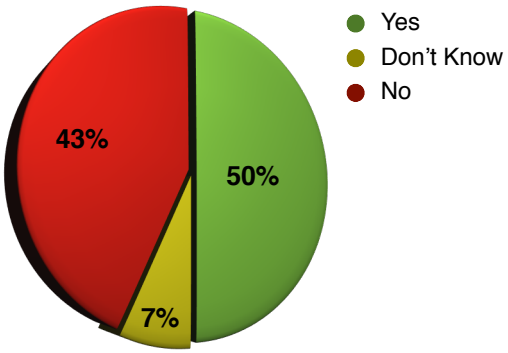
A second additional conclusion that may be drawn from the data is that there exists an untapped willingness for increased information sharing. This conclusion is based on survey responses indicating a willingness to share increasingly sensitive information — including the sharing of access to confidential informants to fulfill requests for information from other agencies or departments (FIGURE 25). If acted upon, this untapped willingness to share informants and other resources could do much to improve source coverage, highlight intelligence tripwires for increased collection, and provide for a richer picture of the threat.

FIGURE 25: *"Would your department be willing to share intelligence resources with other agencies? (For example, would you be willing to ask your sources and informants to fulfill intelligence requests from other agencies or entities?)"*



A third additional conclusion is that organic analytical capability within police departments is unlikely to improve in the short term. This conclusion is based on the fact that only half of the respondents indicated that their departments provide career paths in support of the intelligence enterprise (FIGURE 26).

FIGURE 26: *"Does the intelligence enterprise represent a viable career path within your department?"*



Data from this CTISR survey suggests that the intelligence enterprise is, and will continue to be, comprised of evolving processes and products. It also suggests that there remain identified weaknesses (particularly in regard to intelligence collection and analysis at the local level) and untapped strengths (a strong desire to correct deficiencies in collection and analysis at the local level and a strong willingness to share information and fulfill requests for information).

Future Research

As noted earlier, the Homeland Security Policy Institute's CTISR program represents the first attempt to systematically and routinely collect data from counterterrorism professionals at all levels of government.

Upcoming CTISR surveys will measure how counterterrorism and intelligence practitioners — be they analytical or operational — perceive the terrorism threat domain and their role in countering it.

Although CTISR is focused upon the national counterterrorism intelligence enterprise of the United States, some of those future data collection efforts will measure the perceptions of foreign security service and law enforcement professionals. With such data it will be possible to investigate common practices — illuminating those which work best.

Why is this research important? The short answer is that it affects the national security of the United States.

Practitioner perceptions affect US national security by providing a bottom-up rich picture of the terror threat faced by the United States. How practitioners conceptualize and perceive of the threat is of vital importance, their perceptions affect which threats are detected and when. Furthermore, their perceptions represent an empirical guide for targeting the tools needed to develop anticipatory intelligence. Whether, and how well this is done, depends on the perceptions of the practitioners themselves — as well as how often and how well those perceptions are being measured and analyzed. With CTISR, the Homeland Security Policy Institute at The George Washington University is committed to do just that.

ENDNOTES

1 Ashcroft, John. 2001. "Cooperation with State and Local Officials in the Fight Against Terrorism." Memorandum to All United States Attorneys. Washington, DC; Department of Justice. Accessed on-line at: http://www.fas.org/irp/agency/doj/agdirective5.pdf.

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3 Strom, Kevin, John Hollywood, Mark Pope, Garth Weintraub, Crystal Daye, and Don Gemeinhardt. 2010. "Building on Clues: Examining Successes and Failures in Detecting U.S. Terror Plots, 1999-2009." Durham, NC; Institute for Homeland Security Solutions. Reaves, Brian A. 2007. "Census of State and Local Law Enforcement Agencies, 2004." In *Bureau of Justice Statistics*. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice. Waxman, Matthew C. 2010. "Police and National Security: American Local Law Enforcement and

Counterterrorism After 9/11." *Journal of National Security Law & Policy* Volume 3 (Number 2): 377-407.

4 Cilluffo, Frank J., Jeffrey B. Cozzens, and Magnus Ranstorp. 2010. Foreign Fighters: Trends, Trajectories & Conflict Zones. Washington, DC; Homeland Security Policy Institute. Found online at: http://www.gwumc.edu/hspi/policy/report_foreignfighters501.cfm.

5 Bjelopera, Jerome P. and Mark A. Randol. 2010. "American Jihadist Terrorism: Combating a Complex Threat." Washington, DC; Congressional Research Service. In their report the authors cite forty-three homegrown plots. However in correspondence with the authors during August 2011, they communicated the fact that they had revised their previous count — adding one additional case to the period before November 2010, plus eight cases since their report was issued.

6 Ibid.

7 Rashbaum, William and Al Baker. 2011. "Suspects in Terror Case Wanted to Kill Jews, Officials Say." New York, NY; *The New York Times*. Accessed online at: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/13/nyregion/two-men-arrested-in-new-york-terror-case-police-say.html. Staff Writer. 2011. "Two Men Arrested for Terrorism Conspiracy On Trial in New York." New York, NY; *International Business Times*. Accessed online at http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/13/nyregion/two-men-arrested-in-new-york-terror-case-police-say.html. Candiotti, Susan and Katie Silver. 2011. "DA: One indicted in suspected terror plot against New York synagogue." Atlanta, GA; CNN. Accessed online at http://articles.cnn.com/2011-05-17/justice/new.york.terror.indictment_1_terror-plot-terror-conspiracy-police-officers?_s=PM:CRIME.

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9 Sageman, Marc and Richard Clarke. 2008. "A Strategy for Fighting International Islamist Terrorists." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. Philadelphia, PA; The American Academy of Political and Social Science. Waxman 2010.

10 Miller, Judith. 2007. "On the Front Line in the War on Terrorism." New York, NY; *City Journal*. Waxman 2010.

11 The survey was administered to some fifty-four individuals. Not every respondent answered every question. For the purposes of this report, only answers from American law enforcement personnel were examined.

12 Description taken from the Major Cities Chiefs Police Association website. Accessed online at: http://www.majorcitieschiefs.org/. Note, the survey data originally included feedback from one Canadian metropolitan area. So that the data would capture only American perspectives, this respondent's responses were pulled from the analysis of this dataset.

13 Bryman, Alan. 2004. *Social Research Methods*. Second Edition. New York, NY; Oxford University Press.

14 No categories were supplied to respondents. Categories were developed based on respondents' written responses. Not all responses fit these four categories. These four categories represent the most populous categories.

15 N-DEx description taken from the FBI's website. Accessed online at: http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/n-dex.

16 NSI description taken from the Department of Justice's National Criminal Intelligence Resource Center website. Accessed online at: http://nsi.ncirc.gov/default.aspx.

17 eGuardian description taken from the FBI's website. Accessed online at: http://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/eguardian.

18 It is worth noting that NCTC "serves as the primary organization in the United States Government (USG) for integrating and analyzing all intelligence pertaining to counterterrorism (except for information pertaining exclusively to domestic terrorism)."

19 Survey respondents were not provided these four categories (lack of analysis, lack of detailed information, lack of sharing, and an enterprise that is plagued by old data and information saturation), they were simply asked to provide comments about their perceptions in regarding such gaps (if they indeed felt such gaps existed). Based on their comments, the four categories were developed by HSPI.

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