

## Assessing the likelihood of Hate Crime in wake of Boston Attacks

In the wake of the recent bombings at the Boston Marathon, a team of START researchers based at the University at Albany, SUNY, compiled and answered some frequently asked questions about the relationship between hate crimes and terrorism. Their answers below are based on the research from their report, "[Analysis of Factors Related to Hate Crime and Terrorism](#)," authored by Kathleen Deloughery, Ryan King, Victor Asal and R. Karl Rethemeyer. In examining the more than 500 terrorist attacks occurring between 1992 and 2008 in the United States, the researchers found that **in the weeks following a terrorist attack, the number of anti-minority hate crimes increased if the attacks were made against symbols of core American values (such as the Pentagon) or perpetrated by groups with a religious motivation.**<sup>1</sup>

### WHAT DID YOUR STUDY FIND ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HATE CRIMES AND TERRORISM?

We tested the timing of the relationship between hate crimes and terrorism in the United States. Our main finding is that hate crimes are often carried out after terror attacks as a form of vicarious retribution. That is, they seem to satisfy a desire for justice. Aggression is vicarious when a member of group A is aggressive toward an innocent member of group B for the actions of a third party who also belongs to group B. Using data from 1992 – 2008, we found evidence that anti-minority hate crimes, and anti-Arab/Islamic hate crimes in particular, tend to follow non-right-wing terror attacks in the United States.

### DID THIS HOLD FOR ALL TYPES OF TERROR ATTACKS?

No. According to our model, hate crimes such as those described above are expected to increase by 4.6 percent in the first week after a terror attack. After that initial week, hate crimes return to their pre-terror levels. However, when the terror attack is carried out, or is widely believed to have been carried out, by violent jihadist organizations or individuals, the increase in hate crimes is more substantial and lasts longer. Hate crimes spike 28 percent in the first week after this type of terror attack. Additionally, hate crimes remain elevated for an entire month. On average, hate crimes will be 17.4 percent higher in the initial month after a terror attack motivated by a violent jihadist ideology.

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- Anti-minority hate crimes, and anti-Arab/Islamic hate crimes in particular, tend to follow non-right-wing terror attacks in the United States.
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### GIVEN THE ATTACKS AT THE BOSTON MARATHON LAST WEEK, WHAT PREDICTIONS DOES YOUR MODEL MAKE?

Members of the news media are currently reporting that Dzhokhar Tsarnaev said that he and his brother were motivated to carry out the Boston Marathon Bombing because they were angry about the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. It has been widely reported that both brothers are Muslim. At the same time, neither brother claimed responsibility immediately and there was uncertainty about who perpetrated the attack for several days following the bombing. This is important because emotions are strongest in the immediate aftermath of an attack. Additionally, as it was not a suicide attack, justice through legal channels was and remains possible. Because of that, this attack is more like the 1993 World Trade Center attack than the 9/11/2001 attacks, and as such our model predicts that the United States can expect a rise in hate crimes against people appearing to be Muslim or of Arab descent for another week or two, but not to the extent witnessed after 9/11. Also, history tells us that hate crimes are not confined to the immediate geographic location of the terrorist attack. Therefore, this increase may be seen nationwide, not just in the Boston area.

### HOW CAN THIS INFORMATION BE USED?

Information is valuable. Police and local authorities should be aware that an increase in hate crimes is possible. One of the authors of our study made this information known to university police and to students on campus at the University at Albany, State University of New York, with hopes that concerned students can take extra precautions in the near term, such as walking in groups or avoiding bars or other 'crime hot spots' for a week or two. Politicians can also remind people that individuals, not entire groups, committed this act. It is our hope that increased awareness can attenuate the increases in hate crimes we've seen following past terror attacks.

<sup>1</sup> Further analysis indicates that much of this effect is driven by the 9/11 attacks.

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## ABOUT START

The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) is supported in part by the Science and Technology Directorate of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security through a Center of Excellence program based at the University of Maryland. START uses state-of-the-art theories, methods and data from the social and behavioral sciences to improve understanding of the origins, dynamics and social and psychological impacts of terrorism. For more information, contact START at [infostart@start.umd.edu](mailto:infostart@start.umd.edu) or visit [www.start.umd.edu](http://www.start.umd.edu).

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