Executive Summary

America’s first line of defense against terrorism is found well beyond its borders and safety at home requires collaboration with our foreign law enforcement partners. One component of the U.S. strategy is to promote practical knowledge of terrorism and counterterrorism among national police forces around the globe. This requires sharing knowledge and capabilities to effectively combat the threat while respecting the human rights of citizens served. To accomplish this, the Counterterrorism Practicum team was tasked by the Department of Justice’s International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP) to develop a comprehensive curriculum that would enable foreign law enforcement agencies to address terrorism locally.

This 30-40 hour flexible and interactive counterterrorism course is designed to educate mid-level police officers in practical counterterrorism skills and is divided into four modules. Designed to follow the lifecycle of terrorist attacks, the course begins by helping students understand the threat of terrorism: who terrorists are, their goals, strategies, and tactics. The course then proceeds to focus on prevention and security. Students learn to harden valuable targets, gather intelligence, and work with the community. The course concludes by teaching participants best practices for responding to a terrorist attack. Upon completion of the course, students will have the tools necessary to effectively combat terrorism in their home jurisdiction.

The curriculum deliverables include:

- 197 page Lesson Plan, which the instructor will use as a guide to teach the curriculum
- 203 page Participant Guide that the students can use to follow along, take notes, and receive additional information
- 217 slide PowerPoint as a visual supplement to the curriculum
- Pre- and Post-Tests to measure success

The curriculum is not merely an academic or theoretical introduction to terrorism and counterterrorism; it emphasizes real-world application for officers on the ground. Specifically, the course addresses methods for mid-level police officers to apply the information being taught to everyday decision-making. Interactive exercises prompt the officers to think about how to apply their knowledge to counterterrorism contingency plans in their own jurisdictions. To this end, the lessons include lectures, discussions, handouts, activities, case studies, and scenarios. The modular course allows the instructor to tailor the information to individual countries or regions to account for variations in police practices, customs, languages, cultures, and histories. The instructor can adapt all curriculum components to the realities on the ground.

The curriculum covers:

- Historical trends in terrorism and counterterrorism practice
- Key theories about the motivations and goals of terrorists and terrorist groups
- Systems to harness intelligence to better combat terrorism
- How to assess community vulnerabilities and high value targets
- Counter radicalization and community engagement
- Anticipating the impact of an attack
- Best practices for emergency management and crisis communication
- Maintenance of the integrity of the scene of an attack
- International case studies examining Mali, the Philippines, Kosovo, and Bangladesh to compare and contrast strategies and take theoretical concepts to a practical level

This curriculum was produced by a diverse group of twelve graduate students at the American University’s School of International Service as the capstone to their studies. The practicum program is intended to give graduate students a practical alternative to the traditional theory based Master’s thesis and offers real world experience in project management and consulting. Team members went through a standard application process and were hand-selected based on their unique professional and academic backgrounds. Each student brought to the table a wide range of skills and expertise including: policing, terrorism studies, counterterrorism, law enforcement training, “train the trainer,” course development, and regional studies.

As a leader in the international community, the U.S. is regularly the target of international terrorism. Countering terrorism is critical to its national interest. Assisting foreign nations in their efforts to combat terrorism in their respective jurisdictions is the tip of the spear as the U.S. attempts to degrade terrorist activities around the world. This curriculum is one of many tools that can be used to implement this strategy. The goal of Department of Justice international training programs is to improve the probability of peace and stability in the international community and, by extension, the United States.

The practicum team would like to thank ICITAP and the Department of Justice for this opportunity, which will be exponentially valuable in future endeavors.