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The U. S. Department of Homeland Security Center of Excellence, Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Directorate Center of Excellence through the Borders, Trade, and Immigration Institute, held a Homeland Security Symposium titled: **“Disrupting and Dismantling Transnational Criminal Networks.”**

Although successful in a number of contexts, illicit smuggling and trafficking networks, like many businesses, fail quite often. Smugglers are arrested, corrupt officials are removed from power, and front companies are seized, all in an effort to disrupt the complex infrastructure that many of these networks operate. Alternatively, leadership is contested, operatives commit errors, and brokers have heart attacks, each of which carries the potential for group failure. In this symposium, we explore the myriad reasons why transnational criminal networks fail, focusing on existing and innovative strategies for law enforcement to disrupt and dismantle these organizations. Drawing from a multitude of research efforts recently completed, the presentations will highlight relevant topics including: 1) targeting strategies for network leadership; 2) capacities (and limitations) of tactical and organization adaptation to law enforcement interdiction; and 3) key distinctions between supply chain and organizational dependencies for network survival. Insights from failed networks across many illicit commodities will be highlighted, including drug, human, wildlife, and weapon smuggling. The symposium will close with a new proposal for accelerating the tactical, operational, and strategic disruption of transnational criminal networks through innovative, data-driven researcher-practitioner partnerships.

Instructor’s Biography

Dr. Brandon Behlendorf – University of Albany

Brandon Behlendorf is an Assistant Professor in the College of Emergency Preparedness, Homeland Security, and Cybersecurity. Dr. Behlendorf’s research utilizes interdisciplinary approaches to address policy-relevant problems within homeland and national security, drawing on theories and methods from social and computational sciences. Funded by a number of federal agencies (Departments of State, Justice, and Homeland Security; National Science Foundation) his research focuses on a number of themes, including: geospatial modeling of criminal and terrorist activity; network vulnerabilities of illicit trafficking networks; game theoretic approaches to border security; public perceptions of security-related authorities; and criminal decision-making processes of violent non-state actors. His work has been published in *Policing*, *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* and *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, as well as numerous government reports. He received his PhD in Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of Maryland, College Park. Previously, he served as Assistant Research Director for Development and a Senior Researcher at the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), as well as an operations analyst for the Ohio State Highway Patrol.

Topics Covered

1. Introduction to the research
2. What Science Knows & Mostly Knows
3. What Science is Learning & How We Move Forward

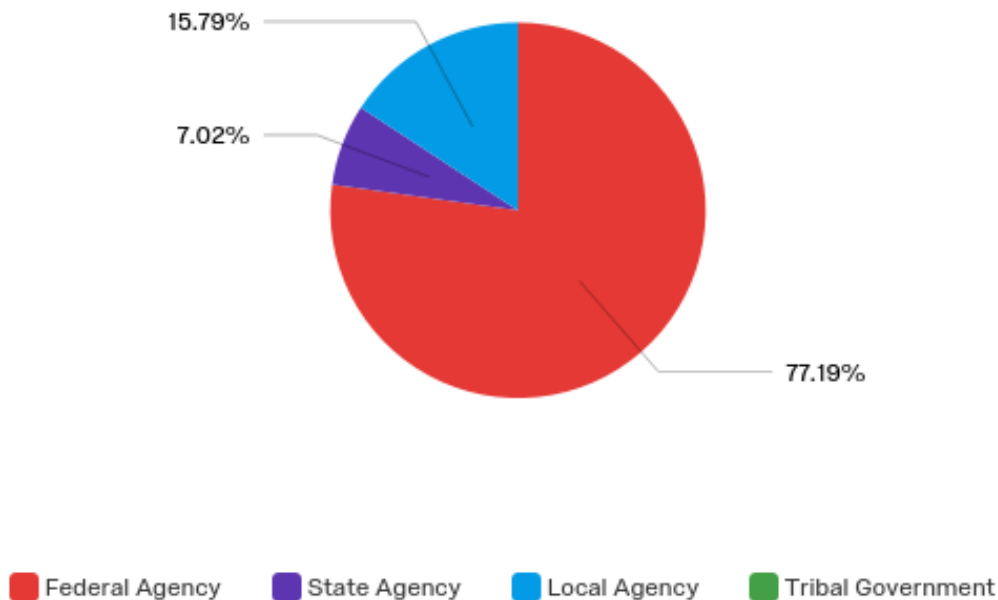
Analysis of Symposium Feedback

The symposium was well-attended with a total of:

- **102 Confirmed RSVPs**
- 64 Attendees (Approximately **63%** of RSVP total)

A total of **12** government agencies organization was represented by the symposium attendees. Attendees from El Paso, TX, attended this event. The following table displays each of the agencies/organizations with the total number of representatives in attendance.

Federal Agencies		State Agencies	
ICE Enforcement & Removal Operations	6	Texas Department of Public Safety	4
Homeland Security Investigations	7		
CBP - Office of Border Patrol	14		
CBP – Office of Field Operations	8	Total	4
DHS I & A	3	Local Agencies	
DHS Other	1	El Paso Police Department	6
El Paso Intelligence Center	7	El Paso County Sheriff's Department	4
Department of State	1		
Department of the Army	3		
Total	50	Total	10



Every attendee was asked to fill out a symposium evaluation. A total of 57 surveys (**56% of total attendees**) were submitted. Overall, the assessment feedback was overwhelmingly positive (listed percentages are the sum of both the “agree” and “strongly agree” percentages):

The seminar met my expectations	91.2%
The overall topics covered in this seminar were relevant and useful to my current assignment	86.0%
The seminar description accurately described the seminar content	94.7%
The seminar increased my knowledge of the subject matter	91.2%
The seminar increased my interest of the subject matter	93.0%
The overall quality of this seminar was excellent	91.0%
The instructors’ presentation style was effective	95.0%

The exit survey also contained the following question (Q3): Would you attend a second more in-depth symposium on this topic? The survey revealed that 98.3% of the symposium participants would attend a second more in-depth symposium.

Open-ended responses indicated a common satisfaction with the course with particularly positive comments regarding the competence of the instructor and the content’s utility and pertinence to their field of work. The following questions were asked in the exit survey and no edits have been made to the comments with the exception of spelling.

Q5. What other topic/subject matter would you like to see presented in similar seminars, tabletop exercises or practicums?

- *Financial Communications*
- *Terrorism and/or homegrown violent extremists*
- *A history on TCO's that have had an impact on our area. History tends to repeat, an understanding of what has happened in the past may help predict what may happen in the future.*
- *Establish methods of creating an effective network to collect info. Or TCO's TCN's - use that information to cooperatively create strategies to combat TCO TCNs.*
- *More of a transnational criminal organizations role in supplying market demands -Business models for TCO's - Theoretical models and dismantling markets*
- *Domestic terrorism*
- *Trade based money laundering by financial experts*
- *Bit coin financials Internet financial systems*
- *Current cases. Information appears to be outdated. Times and organizations are changing. Honestly the information provided is common sense for the most part.*
- *More terrorism related subjects. Especially with regional threats*
- *Trafficking*
- *Terrorism as it relates to the Southwest border*
- *Relation with topics presented and relation or comparisons to military applications*
- *How to more effectively lower demand for drugs in U.S. Financial investigations*
- *Counter terrorism, Radical Islamic groups, Cyber threats*
- *Financial investigations/Money laundering*
- *Topics of a similar nature/subject matter*
- *Mennonites: AOR, Criminal affiliations & alliances, Development of concealment technology, Role dual/tri-citizenship plays.*
- *Border criminal networks.*
- *Cyber security and effects. Nonverbal cues, patterns on how to recognize illicit operations.*

Q6. If there are any additional comments you have about the seminar topics covered please provide them below.

- *I would like more training in this subject.*
- *Great conference!!*
- *Great insight into other angles for combating TCO's*
- *Excellent presentation!*
- *Awesome topic gives a different perspective*
- *Very informative and interesting presentation*
- *The presentation was very good and informative.*
- *Great symposium*
- *Best symposium out of the previous 9*
- *Very good!*
- *I will definitely follow up on this series.*

Webcast Analytics

This symposium was the seventh effort to add a webcast feature as part of the value added deliverable of this program. All eight symposiums have been filmed and can be viewed by the public on our website and YouTube account to enhance future viewings of the symposium series. The PI will continue with simultaneous webcast broadcasting of the symposium series with efforts to increase viewership through this medium.

Total views: 63

Symposium Series Visibility

In an effort to promote the symposium series and the work of the Borders and Trade Institute (BTI) we have actively engaged on Twitter and local news media outlets.

- There were twenty-nine (29) tweets that were sent prior, during, and just after the symposium event. The tweets received a total of 3,169 impressions.

Learning

Every attendee was asked to take a Pretest Questionnaire in order to gauge the level of understanding of the topic. In addition, the participants were asked to take the same Posttest Questionnaire at the conclusion of the symposium. A total of 58 pretests/posttests (**57% of total attendees**) were returned by the participants.

Analysis: The average Pretest Questionnaire score was 70% and the average Posttest Questionnaire score was **87%**. The results of the Pretest and Posttest Questionnaires revealed a **17% increase** in learning.

Lessons Learned

As part of the program's self-evaluation process the following areas will be addressed:

- Continue to emphasize to symposium participants the importance of the Exit Surveys and Pretest and Posttest Questionnaires.
- This symposium had a high level of RSVP 'no-shows'. Although 'no-shows' are expected due to the nature of the work performed by typical attendees, the number was inordinately higher than normal. The PI has contacted the agencies with the highest number of 'no-shows' and informed them of the issue. In most

cases, the agency training departments were not aware of the ‘no-shows’. The number of ‘no-shows’ is expected to be reduced in future symposiums.

Acknowledgements

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Victor M. Manjarrez, Jr.

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Date