



The Combating Terrorism Center educating future leaders and informing policymakers

By **CPT Bill Perkins '01**

GEN (RET.) WAYNE DOWNING '62 began his afternoon lecture by reviewing the past 50 years of U.S. experience combating terrorism and then sketched out the current terrorist threat to America, along with our government's response and policies since 9/11. As a former commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, Deputy National Security Advisor for Combating Terrorism in 2001, and now Distinguished Chair of West Point's Combating Terrorism Center, his measured tones held the attention of every cadet in the room. His lecture and the class discussion that followed hit particularly close to home, as these cadets know that many of them soon will be on the ground executing those policies in Afghanistan, Iraq, or elsewhere. Through a variety of courses and guest lectures, the faculty and staff of the CTC are committed to providing cadets with opportunities to improve their understanding of contemporary security issues.

Who We Are. Situated within the Department of Social Sciences, the CTC was founded in February 2003 through the

generous donation of Mr. Vinnie Viola '77, former Chairman of the New York Mercantile Exchange. Without dedicated government backing, the CTC is funded almost entirely through private donations. Initially led by BG (Ret.) Russell Howard, a Special Forces officer and Head of the Department of Social Sciences at that time, the CTC and early projects were managed by MAJ Joanne Moore '91 and MAJ Reid Sawyer '92. The center subsequently has grown to include eight full-time staff members, including two military officers and six civilian professors and staff. Senior fellows of the center include BG Howard, renowned terrorism expert Dr. Bruce Hoffman, and bioterrorism expert Dr. David Franz.

As Distinguished Chair, GEN Downing employs his extensive knowledge of terrorism along with his background working at the highest levels of government to provide vision and guidance for the center's activities.

Above: GEN (Ret.) Wayne Downing, Distinguished Chair of the Combating Terrorism Center, speaks with cadets on current terrorism challenges and the U.S. response.

LTC Joe Felter '87, Ph.D., a career Special Forces and Foreign Area Officer, serves as director of the center. Educational initiatives are managed by Dr. James Forest, a former assistant academic dean at West Point, and research initiatives are led by Dr. Jarret Brachman, whose publications focus on Islamic extremist ideology and the use of multimedia by jihadi terrorist groups. The newest additions to the faculty and staff include Mr. Brian Fishman, an instructor in American politics who brings three years of experience as a Congressional staffer; Mrs. Lianne Kennedy-Boudali, an instructor in comparative politics and international relations who served with the Peace Corps in Niger; and Ms. Thalia Tzanetti, a Fulbright Scholar from Greece and instructor in international relations. All these academic professionals teach courses in the Department of Social Sciences and manage a variety of research projects for the CTC. Rounding out the team are Mr. Clint Watts '95 and CPT Bill Perkins '01, executive and operations officers, respectively, who handle administrative duties such as budgeting, contracting, and web development.

What We Do. The Combating Terrorism Center arms current and future leaders with the intellectual tools they need to understand and combat global terrorism. The CTC pursues its mission through three complementary activities: education, research, and policy analysis. In the realm of education, it offers several courses on terrorism, counterterrorism, and homeland security. In 2005, the Academy inaugurated its first-ever minor in Terrorism Studies, through which cadets majoring in any field of study can take five terrorism-related courses to gain this certification on their official transcript. In addition to two core courses, SS474: Terrorism—New Challenges and SS464: Homeland Security, the CTC also offers a seminar in advanced terrorism studies, and cadets can pursue independent study and thesis projects on a number of relevant topics. CTC faculty members also provide curriculum and teaching support for the four-session terrorism block in the core course SS307: International Relations, ensuring that all cadets benefit from the center's expertise.

Each semester, cadets enrolled in the introductory terrorism studies course (SS474) travel to Washington, DC, to meet with senior policy makers. On recent visits, cadets have met with Vice President Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Defense Intelligence Agency Director Vice Admiral Lowell

Jacoby, National Counter Terrorism Center Director Vice Admiral (Ret.) Scott Redd, and LTG William Boykin, Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence. The center also coordinates Academic Individual Advanced Developments (AIADs) during the summer for cadets with agencies such as the New York police and fire departments.

The CTC regularly invites guest speakers to share their experiences and expertise with cadets and faculty. Recent examples include Governor Tom Ridge of Pennsylvania, former Director of Homeland Security; BG Robert Caslen '75, J-5 Deputy Director for the War on Terrorism; Dr. Rohan Gunaratna, author of *Inside al Qaeda*; Dr. Ray Raymond, British Consul to the U.S.; and Dr. Mia Bloom, author of *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror*.

As an Academy-wide resource, the CTC coordinates with other academic departments throughout USMA and has co-sponsored numerous conferences and workshops on such varied topics as the role of Special Forces in the GWOT (Senior Conference 2005), Intelligence and Interagency Cooperation (November 2004), Bioterrorism (Academic Year 2005–06), and Public Diplomacy (Senior Conference 2006). For three consecutive years, the center has co-sponsored the Law and Terrorism Conference in conjunction with the Department of Law. Faculty members from departments such as Law, Physics, and Behavioral Sciences and Leadership regularly join us in these forums. Center faculty members also co-teach a course on Information Warfare and Cyberterrorism in the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science.

As an extension of its educational mission, the CTC also has sponsored several seminars on combating terrorism in conjunction with the Department of Defense Regional Centers. These have included collaborations with the Near East/South Asia Center and the Africa Center for Strategic Studies to educate the next generation of counterterrorism professionals. To date, 57 junior military officers from 42 countries, including Afghanistan, Egypt, Iraq, Kenya, Nigeria, and Tanzania have attended these seminars.

Research Projects and Publications. With two major research reports published in mid-February, the CTC has received a great deal of media attention. "Harmony and Disharmony: Exploiting al-Qa'ida's Organizational Vulnerabilities" used recently declassified documents from the Department of Defense Harmony database to show that al-Qa'ida, like any human organization, has weaknesses and vulnerabilities that can be exploited. "Stealing



Cadets visit the State Department during a fall 2005 SS474 trip section.



CDT Victor Basher '08, B-2, briefs Dr. Jarret Brachman and LTC Joe Felter on his analysis of jihadi videos from Iraq.

al-Qa'ida's Playbook," a joint effort by Jarret Brachman and fellow Will McCants, drew on the writings of some of the most influential jihadi thinkers to propose improvements in our strategy to counter the effectiveness and growth of al-Qa'ida and its ideology. Other projects currently underway include Brian Fishman's look at the rise and methods of Iraqi insurgent leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi; Lianne Kennedy's examination of Muslim extremism in North Africa; and Thalia Tzanetti's study of the European Muslim diaspora.

CTC faculty and staff members have published a number of widely-read books on terrorism and related topics. *Terrorism and Counterterrorism*, originally published in 2003, continues to serve as a very popular college textbook for terrorism courses taught in America. Other publications include the compilations *Defeating Terrorism, Homeland Security and Terrorism*, a three-volume set; *The Making of a Terrorist: Recruitment, Training and Root Causes*; and the newly-released volume *Teaching Terror: Strategic and Tactical Learning in the Terrorist World*. These and future publications contribute to a better understanding of terrorist groups

and movements and expand our capabilities for countering the global threat of terrorism.

The Road Ahead. In addition to the initial founding grant from Mr. Viola, the CTC has received generous support from other private donors, including MAJ (Ret.) George Gilmore, Sr., and Mr. George Gilmore, Jr. '71; the Sloan Foundation; the Class of '84; and the U.S. Institute of Peace. On occasion, the center conducts research projects sponsored by various agencies within the Department of Defense. The center continually seeks support for its teaching, research, and policy analysis efforts. The strategic vision and long-term plan to further expand the scope and longevity of its work are in place. With time and continued financial support, the CTC and its staff will consolidate its position as a world class center of excellence for terrorism studies at USMA.

Read more on the Combating Terrorism Center website at <www.ctc.usma.edu>. Contact CTC Director LTC Joe Felter at <joseph.felter@usma.edu> or contact the author of this article, CPT Bill Perkins, at <william.perkins@usma.edu>.