

David Brannan reflects on the impact of CHDS theses by Candice Wright, Richard Fleece, David Heller, Gary Settle, Devon Bell, and Michelle Mallek

By David Brannan

I'm passionate about practitioners merging street savvy with methodologically sound and analytically honest functional knowledge. I was working at the DC office of RAND on 9-11 and thought then, as I do now, that we must put practical action with academically-grounded insights, for greatest effect. Here are just a few of the theses that effectively merged rigorous academics with deep practitioner knowledge.

For instance, Long Beach Police Detective, Candice Wright (MA 2006) recognized the intelligence-sharing challenge in the LA/Long Beach Harbor and melded her knowledge of the various entities involved with her new understanding of Network Theory to revolutionize the way public/private collaboration occurs in this busy port.¹

Another example is Richard Fleece (MA 2012), who coupled his Secret Service experience protecting our nation's leaders with Social Identity Theory and Intergroup Relations to look critically at suicide terrorism in the U.S. When most authorities assumed extended suicide terrorism campaigns would be *easy* for terrorists to perpetrate in the U.S., Rick's research appropriately situated the tactic on the threat continuum in relation to the complex social conditions required.²

In this post-January 6th world, it's obvious CHDS students recognized the evolution of domestic groups which are once again pushed to the fore of security concerns. FBI Agent David Heller (MA 2010) was considering how, or if, the USG could designate individuals or groups as domestic terrorists long before it was in the national discourse.³ Gary Settle (MA 2012),⁴ Devon Bell (MA 2016)⁵ and Michelle Mallek (MA 2016)⁶ each considered parts of the Sovereign Citizens Movement (SCM) that plagued Americans in the 80's, 90's and 2000's, and served as a seditious philosophical forerunner for the dangerous *QAnon*⁷ conspiracies that currently threaten the country.

In my 17 years with CHDS, our unique practitioner/scholar students have unpacked and investigated what was needed to make us safer while simultaneously building the field of Homeland Security.

About the Author

David Brannan holds a Joint Honours MA in International Relations and Theology as well as a PhD in Theology from the University of St. Andrews, Scotland. His dissertation was entitled, Violence, Terrorism and the role of Theology. David publishes in academic journals, tactical journals, edited books and government reports on issues related to his education and experience. His co-authored work, *A Practitioner's Way Forward: Terrorism Analysis* was a result of 15+ years of working with practitioner students at the Naval Postgraduate School. He is currently working on a second edition for publication in September 2021.

Notes

1. Candace Wright, "Bridging the Gap in Port Security: Network Centric Theory Applied to Public/Private Collaboration," (master's thesis, Center for Homeland Defense and Security, Naval Postgraduate School, March 2007), <https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=471883>.
2. Richard Fleece, "Suicide Terrorism in America: The Complex Social Conditions of This Phenomenon and The Implications for Homeland Security," (master's thesis, Center for Homeland Defense and Security, Naval Postgraduate School, December, 2012), <https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=732023>.
3. David Heller, "Designating Domestic Terrorist Individuals or Groups," (master's thesis, Center for Homeland Defense and Security, Naval Postgraduate School, September, 2010), <https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=16048>.
4. Gary Settle, "The Emerging Domestic Threat: What the Law Enforcement Community Must Know and Prepare for in Regards to the Sovereign Citizen Movement," (master's thesis, Center for Homeland Defense and Security, Naval Postgraduate School, December, 2012), Access Restricted.
5. Devon Bell, "The Sovereign Citizens' Movement: The Shifting Ideological Winds," (master's thesis, Center for Homeland Defense and Security, Naval Postgraduate School, December, 2016), <https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=792306>.
6. Michelle Mallek, "Uncommon Law: Understanding and Quantifying the Sovereign Citizens' Movement," (master's thesis, Center for Homeland Defense and Security, Naval Postgraduate School, March 2016), <https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=798893>.
7. Kyler Ong, "Ideological Convergence in the Extreme Right," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 12, No. 5 (September 2020), 1-7 (7 pages) https://www-jstor-org.libproxy.nps.edu/stable/26954256?seq=2#metadata_info_tab_contents.

Copyright

Copyright © 2021 by the author(s). Homeland Security Affairs is an academic journal available free of charge to individuals and institutions. Because the purpose of this publication is the widest possible dissemination of knowledge, copies of this journal and the articles contained herein may be printed or downloaded and redistributed for personal, research or educational purposes free of charge and without permission. Any commercial use of Homeland Security Affairs or the articles published herein is expressly prohibited without the written consent of the copyright holder. The copyright of all articles published in Homeland Security Affairs rests with the author(s) of the article. Homeland Security Affairs is the online journal of the Naval Postgraduate School Center for Homeland Defense and Security (CHDS).