



Homegrown Violent Extremism, CCICADA Distinguished Lecture by Dr. Erroll G. Southers

On November 1, 2013, CCICADA hosted Dr. Erroll Southers for a “Distinguished Homeland Security Lecture” on Homegrown Violent Extremism. The lecture was based on his recent book by that title and was accompanied by a book signing. The large and enthusiastic audience included many CCICADA researchers and students, as well as the former President of Rutgers and the Chief of the Rutgers.

Dr. Southers is the Associate Director of Research Transition at the Department of Homeland Security National Center for Risk and Economic Analysis of Terrorism Events (CREATE). He was President Barack Obama’s first nominee for Transportation Security

Administration Assistant Secretary, and he was also California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger’s Deputy Director for Critical Infrastructure of the California Office of Homeland Security. Dr. Southers also previously enjoyed the distinction of FBI Special Agent and SWAT team member, as well as Santa Monica Police Officer.

In the aftermath of the Boston Marathon terrorist attack, the U.S. homeland security effort is at a crossroads. Even as foreign terrorists seek ways to harm U.S. citizens and interests, there is a growing threat from domestic extremists able to execute lethal attacks while eluding much of the U.S. homeland security apparatus. In this talk, Dr. Southers discussed the Boston Marathon attack, offering a wider discussion of the many extremist ideologies that threaten national security while also providing a detailed exploration of the nexus between ideology, radicalization and homegrown terrorism.

Dr. Southers argued that to address the broader challenge of preventing terrorist attacks that originate with citizens and residents (rather than foreign adversaries), we must take on a more nuanced, thoughtful and intelligent perspective of homegrown violent extremism, its origins, and the methods for interrupting those on a pathway to violence. Part of this strategy includes focused efforts to counter the extremist ideologies and messages that propel individuals through the radicalization process.

Dr. Southers argued further that the emerging phenomenon of homegrown violent extremism necessitates a more robust and interdisciplinary understanding of how individuals progress through radicalization and engage in violent activity, revealing the factors and motivations that can lead to domestic acts of terror. The talk also discussed how counterterrorism should evolve in professional practice and offered a detailed description of a new community engagement counterterrorism model designed to address and overcome this growing 21st century threat.

The lecture reflected the continuing collaboration/interaction between the CCICADA and CREATE Centers. Dr. Southers has been a key player in developing that relationship.