



2021 Counter-Terrorism Week SIDE EVENT



Press Release

Programming for the Future: Behavioural Insights to Counter Terrorism in the Digital Decade

New York, 24 June 2021 – The high-level side event on *Programming for the Future: Behavioural Insights to Counter Terrorism in the Digital Decade* was held on 24 June 2021 as part of the Second Counter-Terrorism Week. The event was co-organized by the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), through its Programme Office in Doha, ‘International Hub on Behavioural Insights to Counter Terrorism’, and the State of Qatar. Member States, including representatives of diplomatic missions, international and regional organizations, civil society organizations, members of the public, and the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact entities attended the virtual event.

The side event featured discussions on the role of behavioural insights in confronting new and evolving threats. It underlined that digital technologies will play an increasingly important role in terrorist planning and attacks and contributed to addressing the “transformative technology” theme of the Counter-Terrorism Week.

In his welcoming remarks, Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism, Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, highlighted that “the International Hub on Behavioural Insights to Counter Terrorism uses cutting-edge and evidence-based techniques to identify how humans think, decide and act in the context of terrorism. It then uses that knowledge to develop human rights-compliant interventions, lead the collaborative production of research, and provide practical solutions through behavioural tools to address drivers.”

Major General Abdul Aziz Abdullah Al-Ansari, Director of the Department of International Cooperation and Chairman of the National Counter-Terrorism Committee, Ministry of Interior, the State of Qatar, emphasized that positioning the Doha Hub as the global lead for the application of Behavioral Insights to counter terrorism will ensure an “all-of-UN” program delivery on the use of Behavioral Insights to counter terrorism.

Mr. Muhammad Rafiuddin Shah, Chief of the Policy, Knowledge Management and Coordination Branch, UNOCT, discussed the evolving nature of terrorists’ use of technologies such as the weaponization of social media to widen social rifts, the use of botnets to spread disinformation and the use of the Dark Net to acquire and transport terrorist finances. He further stressed that UNOCT’s partnership with the State of Qatar allows pursuing innovative and cutting-edge ideas to counter the scourge of terrorism around the world. He concluded that UNOCT, Member States and other partners will benefit from having the Doha Hub in close proximity to beneficiaries and providers of technical assistance.

The side event illustrated the limitations of counter-terrorism programming to date and demonstrated how incorporating the Behavioural Insights Approach to programme design and implementation can optimize ongoing and future programming requirements.



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The event was concluded by remarks from H.E. Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif Al-Thani, Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the United Nations, and also included statements from Dr. Fadi Makki, founder of Nudge Lebanon, Head of B4Development at the Qatar Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, Dr. Jessica White, Research fellow in the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) Terrorism and Conflict Group, Dr. Kurt Braddock, Assistant Professor of Public Communication, School of Communication, American University in Washington, DC., SOC's Center for Media and Social Impact (CMSI), Center for University Excellence's Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab (PERIL), and Dr. Simbal Khan, UNDP PVE Expert.

QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS:

Major General Abdul Aziz Abdullah Al-Ansari, Director of the Department of International Cooperation and Chairman of the National Counter-Terrorism Committee, Ministry of Interior, the State of Qatar

"The International Hub on Behavioral Insights to Counter Terrorism will identify the specific intervention requirements for each terrorism context and ensure that the right skill sets and the most appropriate expertise are employed for that specific terrorism case. This will be reinforced by quality assurance mechanisms such as capacity-building as well as monitoring and evaluation."

Mr. Muhammad Rafiuddin Shah, Chief of Policy, Knowledge Management and Coordination Branch of UNOCT

"Not only does the Behavioral Insights Approach provide a rigorously empirical means of program design, monitoring and evaluation, it also seeks maximum effectiveness by incorporating how people think, behave and make decisions."

H.E. Sheikha Alya Al Thani, Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the United Nations

"Now more than ever, the sustained success of the BI Hub depends on a collective and well-coordinated effort of Global Compact partners and Member States to invest in innovative research, programmes, projects and initiatives that integrate behavioural insights into prevention and countering terrorism across the globe."

Dr. Fadi Makki, founder of Nudge Lebanon, Head of B4Development at the Qatar Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy

"Using Behavioral Insights is the new normal for planning, implementing and evaluating PVE and CT programs!"

Dr. Jessica White, Research Fellow at RUSI's Terrorism and Conflict Group.

"In order to develop more effective and impactful programming for the future it is essential to examine what has been done thus far and learn lessons on where improvements are needed and how this can be accomplished."

Dr. Kurt Braddock, Assistant Professor of Public Communication, School of Communication, American University in Washington, DC., SOC's Center for Media and Social Impact (CMSI), Center for University Excellence's Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab (PERIL)



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“For years, researchers and practitioners have tried to identify strategies for undermining terrorist propaganda. Emerging research is increasingly showing that one counter-persuasive strategy -- attitudinal inoculation -- has promise for undermining messages that promote terrorist violence”

Dr. Simbal Khan, UNDP PVE Expert

“There is a difference between BI experimentation and using BI Insights in De-radicalization and PVE Programs”

For more information:

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 - Contacts of the press officers of the main partners

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