

Counterterrorism Under the Trump Administration

A Fractured Response to a Diversified Threat

by [Matthew Levitt \(/experts/matthew-levitt\)](/experts/matthew-levitt)

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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The administration's achievements were counterbalanced by a striking lack of alignment among three U.S. national security strategies and the discouraging rapid rise of far-right extremism at home.

The Trump administration has a mixed record on counterterrorism, overshadowed by troubling trends. On the positive side, it continued the Obama administration's efforts to defeat the Islamic State on the battlefield while pressuring other jihadist groups in Syria and aggressively pushing back on Iran and its terrorist proxies. But these achievements were counterbalanced by a striking lack of alignment among the U.S. National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy, and Counterterrorism Strategy, hobbling effective policy execution. Still more discouraging has been the rapid rise of far-right extremism at home, a development President Trump has refused to denounce and even stoked.

The ninth volume of The Washington Institute's Counterterrorism Lecture Series, edited by Matthew Levitt, covers the period November 2018 to March 2020. Its pages include the assessments of officials and experts seeking to understand the full scope of the CT challenge and develop sophisticated methods to address it. (*The speakers are listed below; positions are those held at the time of the lecture.*)

- **Matthew Alcock**, deputy assistant director, FBI Counterterrorism Division
- **Amarnath Amarasingam**, assistant professor, School of Religion, Queens University, Ontario
- **John Fernandez**, assistant special agent in charge, Counter-Narcoterrorism Operations Center, DEA Special Operations Division
- **Edmund Fitton-Brown**, coordinator, UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team Concerning the Islamic State, al-Qaeda, and the Taliban

- **Matthew Levitt**, Fromer-Wexler Fellow and director, Reinhard Program on Counterterrorism and Intelligence, TWI
- **Devorah Margolin**, senior research fellow, Program on Extremism, George Washington University
- **Elizabeth Neumann**, assistant secretary for threat prevention and security policy, Department of Homeland Security
- **Farah Pandith**, former U.S. representative to Muslim communities, State Department
- **Nathan Sales**, ambassador-at-large and coordinator for counterterrorism, State Department
- **Russell Travers**, acting director, National Counterterrorism Center
- **Jacob Walles**, nonresident fellow, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, former ambassador to Tunisia
- **Juan Zarate**, former deputy assistant to the president and former deputy national security advisor for combating terrorism, George W. Bush administration
- **Aaron Zelin**, Richard Borow Fellow, TWI, visiting research scholar, Brandeis University



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