We are pleased to announce Dr. Gary LaFree as the DTBC's 2019 Distinguished Scholar Award winner for his important and innovative work on terrorism. Dr. LaFree is a member and the current Chair of the Criminology and Criminal Justice Department at the University of Maryland, College Park. He is also a former President of the American Society of Criminology (ASC), and of course the founder of our DTBC.

Dr. LaFree has been at the forefront of the effort to make the study of terrorism an integral part of the criminology and criminal justice field. As we know, historically, terrorism research was plagued by non-existent to weak research designs due to data issues. Dr. LaFree has led the effort to address these weaknesses. Working with Dr. Laura Dugan (our incoming DTBC Chair) Gary LaFree created the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) from the original Pinkerton files. Today the GTD is one of the premiere event level terrorism databases. Countless scholars and PhD students have used the GTD to publish empirical studies and PhD dissertations. The GTD has been supported by the U.S. National Institute of Justice (NIJ), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the State Department.

In recent years, Dr. LaFree has worked with Dr. Michael Jensen, Dr. Sawyer and others to create the Profiles of Individuals Radicalized in the U.S. (PIRUS) database. Importantly, PIRUS captures key constructs from leading criminology theories, and this has allowed researchers to test these models in the terrorism and radicalization contexts. And of course for over a decade Gary was the director of the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism & Responses to Terrorism (START), a DHS Center of Excellence. START has funded scores of scholars, Post-Docs, PhD students, and Undergraduate students who have collected and analyzed data on the causes of and responses to terrorism. These studies have impacted both theory and policy.

It is our pleasure to present the DTBC’s 2019 Distinguished Scholar Award to Dr. Gary LaFree.