

Mathematics could be anti-terror tool

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PITTSBURGH, July 13 (UPI) -- U.S. researchers say those fighting the war on terrorism may soon have a new weapon to add to their arsenal -- mathematics.

Mathematicians and computer scientists have begun to develop equations and algorithms for combing through mountains of data and uncover hidden "rules" that govern terrorism behavior, ScienceNews.org reported Monday.

Each bit and byte of data about cellphone calls, Web-browsing records, e-mail messages, credit card receipts and airline passenger lists could illuminate a terrorist's movements and intentions, researchers say.

"The area has exploded, in terms of the types of techniques and technologies," says computer scientist Kathleen Carley of Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh.

"There are huge, rapid advances in this area with, of course, some very interesting challenges," she says.

Other researchers are seeking simple mathematical formulas that could describe the optimal arrangement of a secret terrorist cell and provide clues on how to destroy it.

"If you have a mathematical model that can describe the structure of a terror network -- and the model works -- then you can predict the future," says Alexander Gutfraind, a mathematician at Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico.