

## Strategic Security as a New Academic Discipline

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## Strategic Security as a New Academic Discipline

### Abstract

The creation of Henley-Putnam University was an effort to create an academic institution for the purpose of offering degree programs in intelligence management, counterterrorism, and personal protection; subjects that arguably did not exist as academic disciplines when the school was conceived. The experience of two of the co-founders of the school, Nirmalya Bhowmick and Dr. Michael Corcoran, indicated that the training of officers tasked with vital security and intelligence work was carried out by partnering young officers with a training officer to help the new officer learn on the job. The effectiveness of this training depended to a great extent on the competence or interest of the training officer, as well as the types of jobs the new officer was given. The resulting training often lacked consistency and proper coverage. When Bhowmick began comparing notes with colleagues in similar agencies from other countries, he discovered that their experiences mirrored his. By contrast, Corcoran's experience with the US Secret Service included months of training at the Treasury School and additional training at Quantico, VA, that included training usually given to FBI and Green Beret personnel—training that did not map neatly to the needs of a Secret Service agent. But once the new agents finished this training, they were not a training officer or officers as they began their new assignments. This meant that they were often left to their own devices when it came to figuring out how to manage tasks, such as intelligence collection, that had not been fully covered by their training. The experiences of Bhowmick and Corcoran were key to conceiving and writing the curricula for the university. The curricular development was also informed by a reassessment of the needs of the intelligence, counterterrorism, and protection officer, which continues to this day.

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**Sheldon Greaves, Ph.D.**

The creation of Henley-Putnam University was an effort to create an academic institution for the purpose of offering degree programs in intelligence management, counterterrorism, and personal protection; subjects that arguably did not exist as academic disciplines when the school was conceived. The experience of two of the co-founders of the school, Nirma-lya Bhowmick and Dr. Michael Corcoran, indicated that the training of officers tasked with vital security and intelligence work was carried out by partnering young officers with a training officer to help the new officer learn on the job. The effectiveness of this training depended to a great extent on the competence or interest of the training officer, as well as the types of jobs the new officer was given. The resulting training often lacked consistency and proper coverage. When Bhowmick began comparing notes with colleagues in similar agencies from other countries, he discovered that their experiences mirrored his.

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In this paper, I will examine some of the insights that have emerged from this process. The process of planning the university has taken many twists and turns since it was originally conceived in 1993. The threat environment, the marketplace, shifts in legislation and policy related to intelligence and terrorism and, of course, the 9/11 attacks have created an environment of profound and radical changes in how Americans and their government view security issues. One of the most important changes is the post-9/11 establishment of "Homeland Security" as an academic proto-discipline whose scope and definition remain a matter of debate.

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This paper will suggest that the time has indeed come for a new academic discipline, but one that is more encompassing than the terrorism-centric understanding of "Homeland Security" as it is currently understood by the US Government and defined in its National Strategy for Homeland Security. We are calling this new discipline "Strategic Security," which consists of three sub-disciplines of intelligence, counterterrorism, and protection. We will further suggest, as others have done, that the creation of an educational standard is essential to improving the nation's ability to respond intelligently and appropriately to security threats. The curriculum behind that standard should be based on those aspects of intelligence and its allied fields that will equip practitioners to address the full range of security issues.

The founding and development of Henley-Putnam University<sup>1</sup> grew out of a number of insights regarding common methods of training clandestine officers worldwide, as well as the changing overall threat picture of the post-Cold War world. In the early 90's, these insights gradually coalesced into the clear need for establishing a set of three academic disciplines with their own distinct degree programs: Intelligence Management, Terrorism/Counterterrorism Studies, and Personal Protection Management. Creating these degree programs would have the effect of defining these academic disciplines independent of larger, tributary subjects such as management, criminal justice, public administration, area studies, political science, etc.

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1 The idea and concept of Henley-Putnam University was conceived in 1993 after the first terrorist attack on the World Trade Center Towers. The planning and design of the curriculum began in 1995. An interim, CA State approved, postsecondary college was applied for and was granted, followed by State approval in 1998 for non-degree vocational education programs. The same year the founders of the school applied for a degree granting University under the name of California University of Protection and Intelligence Management (CUPIM). The University was registered with the Secretary of the State of CA on August 20th, 2001. CUPIM received its approval to operate shortly thereafter. The Protection Management, Intelligence Management and Terrorism/Counterterrorism Studies degrees were approved by the State of California in 2003. CUPIM changed its name to Henley-Putnam University in 2007, which was the same year it was nationally accredited by the Distance Education and Training Council (DETC).

The end of the Cold War brought a moment of confusion as to what would replace the vanished Soviet threat. The first bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993 along with other acts of terrorism suggested that disrupting terrorism, increasingly by non-state actors, should become the primary focus of major powers such as the United States. The period of transition that followed was not an easy one. The calls for a "peace dividend" had to be balanced against the emergence of a new, unfamiliar kind of enemy. Indeed, it is harder to imagine a starker contrast than that of a giant, strongly secular, nuclear Soviet superpower compared with a much smaller, deeply religious, non-state actor such as Al Qaeda. In retrospect it is not surprising that Western intelligence and counterterrorism agencies found the transition difficult. One could argue that the continued strong reliance on large-scale military force in the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) indicates persistent vestiges of Cold War thinking.

The GWOT as conducted up to this point embodies a number of object lessons, some positive, and some negative. The attacks of 9/11 and the aftermath of the invasion of Iraq in 2003 were marked by accusations of failure on the part of several entities involved in national security and defense. Intelligence failures were blamed both for the success of the 9/11 hijackers and for the negative outcomes in Iraq. The need for law enforcement to talk to intelligence and vice versa has led to improvements along those lines, along with a furious debate about the preservation or sacrifice of civil liberties as the price of added security. The value of diplomatic, cultural, and economic tools, so-called "soft power," is reasserting itself as the U.S. relearns the counterinsurgency lessons of Vietnam and applies them not only in Iraq, but against the larger Islamist insurgency worldwide. The problems of national image and the need to secure the moral high ground became particularly apparent as the Abu Ghraib torture scandal emerged and replicated itself in other U.S. military installations and the CIA "extraordinary rendition" program.

The current thinking among most intelligence agencies is that the GWOT is far from over, and that the United States has yet to gain a decisive advantage over terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda, which has managed to reconstitute itself. Likewise the Taliban are resurgent in Afghanistan, exerting increasing pressure on the Karzai government.

A full discussion of those lessons and the history behind them is beyond the scope of this paper. However, an important take-away point for our purposes here is the immutable truth that the conduct of such a war will not be any better than the intelligence and practices used to inform the policy and decision makers. The quality of intelligence can be said to

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constitute an upper bound on the average quality of decisions made.<sup>2</sup> Equally important for our purposes is that there were and are people in the government military, law enforcement, and intelligence apparatus whose expertise would have allowed us to avoid the mistakes that have set back our efforts against terrorism.

## The Evolving Security Marketplace

Other developments, particularly in the wake of 9/11, have further complicated the intelligence education picture. One of these is the establishing of the office of the Director of National Intelligence, whose task is to exercise oversight of the sixteen government agencies involved in the collection of intelligence. In order to properly staff this large new organization, senior intelligence officers—most of them from the CIA—were brought in. This created a dearth of experienced officers and seriously weakened the institutional memory at the CIA, such that as of 2007 roughly 40% of all the employees at the CIA had been hired since 9/11.<sup>3</sup>

Another complication grew out of the creation of the Department of Homeland Security. This post-9/11 agency has as its mission the prevention of and recovery from terrorist attacks. However, by linking "homeland security" and "counterterrorism" this has raised the concern that other equally salient threats to national security are being de-emphasized. This concern has been playing itself out in numerous arenas in an attempt to redefine Homeland Security more comprehensively and will be treated later.

As others have pointed out, the full acceptance of a subject such as Homeland Security by academia is a sine qua non for considering it as an academic discipline. That has not yet taken place. Much of the resistance to accepting Homeland Security as a new discipline grows out of the fuzzy boundaries surrounding it. Critics point out that many of the courses featured in Homeland Security programs were imported from other disci-

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2 An excellent discussion of the recovery of the Intelligence Community in the wake of these failures is provided by the remarks of Dr. Thomas Fingar "Remarks and Q&A by the Deputy Director of National Intelligence For Analysis & Chairman, National Intelligence Council" at the 2008 INSA Analytic Transformation Conference, Orlando, Florida, September 4, 2008. The text of his remarks can be found at [http://www.dni.gov/speeches/20080904\\_speech.pdf](http://www.dni.gov/speeches/20080904_speech.pdf).

3 Fred Rustmann, "The Reorganization of the Intelligence Community". Teleconference Briefing, 15 June 2007. Audio file downloadable from [http://www.henley-putnam.edu/templates/hpu/downloadables/audio/Rustmann\\_15June2007.mp3](http://www.henley-putnam.edu/templates/hpu/downloadables/audio/Rustmann_15June2007.mp3)

plines and that there has not, as yet, been a fully agreed-upon set of core foundation courses upon which the discipline can build. Others consider Homeland Security a passing fad out of which a more serious program will emerge, probably as a subdiscipline of National Security.<sup>4</sup>

Another major change is the rise of the Chief Security Officer in private corporate boardrooms.

There is a growing recognition among corporate leadership that security is not just an overhead cost. It is a critical part of a company's competitiveness. In addition, recent legislation such as the USA Patriot Act and the Sarbanes-Oxley Act has created a new regulatory environment for corporate America in areas ranging from information security to the storage and sale of chemicals—all intended to improve security in America's corporate and commercial sector.

Other indicators of increased interest in security among the corporate sector include the rise of periodicals to serve this market. CSO magazine began five years ago and already has over 25,000 readers. A growing number of private organizations provide training and certification in private security. ASIS International is the largest of these, with over 35,000 members. They hold hundreds of conferences and events related to corporate security, and offer educational resources for members wishing to recertify as Certified Protection Professional (CPP), Professional Certified Investigator (PCI), and Physical Security Professional (PSP).

The growth in security awareness at the boardroom level is also found at levels of business and government that in years past would never have considered security as part of their mandate. Local police departments are starting to form counterterrorism units and intelligence bureaus. This has created not only a demand for more training, but an evolving debate about the propriety of using the tools of intelligence in a law enforcement context.

Finally, there is the rapid rise of the independent contractor in carrying out intelligence functions once performed by the Government. This development is probably the most controversial, as it raises many questions regarding the qualifications of contractors, ethics and accountability, as

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4 Robinson, Randall L. *The Homeland Security Academic Environment. A Review of Current Activities and Issues for Consideration*. A report prepared for NORAD and USNORTHCOM J7, Homeland Security and Defense Education Consortium, 26 September 2007. Contract No. SPO-700-00-D-3180, CBRNIAC Task No. 498, Delivery Order 378. See footnote 3, page 12.

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well as their ability to protect classified information and resist penetration or suborning by opposition. Much of what is being reported on the privatization of intelligence activities focuses on the high cost of such contractors. Furthermore, this new trend fragments the conduct of intelligence, security, and related activities into sectors of varying—or absent—accountability to the standard mechanisms of government oversight. In such circumstances, it is reasonable to question the training and qualifications of persons hired to perform these duties.

## The Problem: The Making of an Intelligence Officer

The founder of Henley-Putnam University, Nirmalya Bhowmick, had enjoyed a successful career in intelligence and counterterrorism operations in India and other parts of South Asia. A large fraction of his training was done on the job, carried out by a more senior officer to whom he had been assigned. Although training in the field like this kept the focus on the pragmatic rather than the theoretical, it took longer to create a truly well-trained officer. Moreover, sometimes there is a real need for the theoretical and abstract in the education of someone engaged in the activities of intelligence, counterterrorism, or protection, to say nothing of the value of learning in an environment where "rookie mistakes" will not have dire consequences.

Another problem with this method of training was that the education of young officers and operatives, taken together, proved to be highly uneven—with significant gaps of knowledge that varied from person to person. The quality of training depended on the teaching ability of the mentoring officer. If one happened to be assigned to an officer who was unskilled or unenthusiastic about such things, it would obviously take that person longer to become truly qualified. And the designation of "qualified" was arguably an arbitrary judgment in the absence of clearly stated educational and training standards. His inquiries of other operatives and officers in other agencies, both domestic and foreign, indicated that his was not a unique experience.

In the years since the 1980s, when Mr. Bhowmick was active in the field, some changes have come about. Internal training in any given agency has improved dramatically. However, there remain significant differences and gaps when the training of one agency is compared with another, and one can still find unevenness in training within a given agency or organization. This is naturally due to differing missions and legal boundaries within which individual agencies operate. That said, there is still an underlying substratum of expertise that can and should be expected of



anyone who works in intelligence, counterterrorism, or protection. In many other fields, there are systems of certification and standards of education dictating what a legitimate practitioner of a field should know, whether it is law, medicine, plumbing, or teaching. One of the main objectives of what became Henley-Putnam University was to develop and establish that educational standard.

## The Nature of Emerging Disciplines

Fields that lack the imprimatur of academic establishments and the bodies that approve and regulate them become "emerging" as they burst into the public consciousness in various ways. This often happens as part of a larger change in society, such as the growth of a new technology, a political sea change, or socioeconomic phenomena. These fields are usually already in existence but are subsumed under a larger subject. For instance, the field of Criminal Justice used to be a sub-specialty of Sociology until it expanded into something sufficiently large and complex that it needed its own discrete field of academic study. Another example is the field of Astronomy which for a long time was considered part of Meteorology, until the pace and scope of discoveries in that field pulled it forever into a discipline of its own.

This brings us to "Homeland Security," which starts with its definition as stated in the *2002 National Strategy for Homeland Security*:

... a concerted national effort to prevent terrorist attacks within the United States, reduce America's vulnerability to terrorism, and minimize the damage and recover from attacks that do occur.<sup>5</sup>

In other words, the mission statement of the Department of Homeland Security, whose ranks many of the new academic programs seek to fill, mentions only counterterrorism as its province. Many in academia and elsewhere find this definition unsatisfactory. But while the interest in addressing terrorism is understandable given the historical context in which the DHS was brought into being, one must approach the expansion of the definition of Homeland Security with caution. As Robinson's report cited earlier states:

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<sup>5</sup> Office of Homeland Security. *National Strategy for Homeland Security*, July 2002, p. 2. PDF file is available at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/homeland/book/nat\\_strat\\_hls.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/homeland/book/nat_strat_hls.pdf).

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...one might argue that the current trend is to deem any activity that may have tangential negative societal security implications as having a nexus to homeland security. If the future of homeland security continues the trend toward a boundless view of the field, school administrators may struggle with determining the courses to be taught in a program that purports to prepare students for this new discipline.<sup>6</sup>

In other words, Homeland Security as a discipline has resisted the kind of focus needed to draw hard boundaries around it and from there, define the essence of what is to be taught to those seeking expertise. The nature of the subject tends towards an expansive, rather than a reduced and compact definition.

Our view is that such a definition becomes easier if one starts with fundamental skills, such as those found in the intelligence community. Intelligence is not a new discipline as such. It has been part of the practice of statecraft and commercial enterprise from time immemorial. So while it is irresistible to point out the irony of referring to the "second oldest profession" as part of an emerging discipline, we must also acknowledge that the development of new technologies and the rise of new types of adversaries has created an environment in which intelligence—supplemented by protection and counterterrorism—have become even more vital to the defense of national interests. We submit that these three emerging disciplines should be considered together under a new cover term of Strategic Security.

## What is Strategic Security?

Although "strategic security" is becoming a *terme d'arte* in different parts of the security world, it does not yet have a clear, agreed-upon definition. We choose not to define "security" as a state of safety or threat level. In practice, such ratings tell you little or nothing about how secure you are. Rather, we define "security" as an activity; as ongoing behaviors designed to forestall reasonable or probable threats.

Although the global threat spectrum includes such diverse dangers as natural disaster, economic upheaval, environmental degradation, terrorism and other forms of violent extremism, crime, social upheavals, chronic political corruption, and so forth, it must be noted that these threats also apply on global, national, regional, and even personal levels.

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<sup>6</sup> Robinson, *ibid*, page 11.

The activity of Strategic Security depends on accurate, objective knowledge, obtained in a timely fashion and skillfully acted upon. The intellectual tools and tradecraft of intelligence, counterterrorism, and personal protection, properly applied, can provide the right information to the right policy makers or decision makers so that they may act in our collective best interests based upon the facts as they are seen at that moment.

But defining a field like Strategic Security and its component disciplines is not the same as establishing it in an academic or regulatory context. This kind of definition requires clear boundaries. One must clearly and cogently articulate the founding principles that inform the curricula used to train the field's experts. This establishes a consistent expectation of expertise which educational standards are designed to serve.

## Post-9/11 and the Rush to Market

The effect of 9/11 on the field of intelligence and counterterrorism is perhaps comparable to that of Sputnik on science education. Both events galvanized the nation and propelled it in directions that directly responded to those events. In the case of Sputnik, educational programs seemed to come out of nowhere, all of which were calculated to turn out more scientists and engineers that were considered necessary to preserve both national security and world prestige. By contrast the 9/11 attacks prompted a proliferation of terrorism and intelligence "experts" in the news stream, and a plethora of educational programs designed to serve the sudden demand for experts in intelligence, counterterrorism, and related fields.

The vast majority of these degree programs, however, were little more than re-tooled (and in some cases, merely re-named) programs in Public Administration, Criminal Justice, Management, and so forth with an emphasis in intelligence or counterterrorism or security.<sup>7</sup> Very few programs have actually been created from the ground up to serve the needs of the intelligence professional. Even today there are almost no programs in counterterrorism. Personal Protection undergraduate and graduate degree programs are only available from Henley-Putnam.

The hybrid degrees that make up the bulk of educational programs are very closely tied to the mission of the Department of Homeland Security. While clearly speaking to the concerns of that moment, this definition is remarkably narrow in scope. As already noted, it excludes matters of nat-

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<sup>7</sup> Robinson, *ibid*, pp. 12–13.

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ural disaster, economic upheaval, pandemics, resource disruption, and many other factors whose effects are amplified by the interconnectedness between nations and new technologies that could conceivably disrupt the security of the United States.

This overemphasis on just one aspect of national security recalls the famous dictum that generals prepare to fight the previous war. Another weakness in this approach worth noting is that many of the programs flooding the academic marketplace are based, as noted above, on disciplines derived from the Criminal Justice mentality in which one does not respond until a crime has been committed. In order to be effective, educational programs that prepare their graduates to take their places in the Intelligence Community or its allied fields must instead focus on the *prevention* of national security incidents and the deterrence of threats. Consequence management should take its place behind training in preventive measures.

Although it is impossible to ignore the attacks of 2001—or 1993 for that matter—in the creation of a curriculum dedicated to strategic security, we have tried to resist the temptation to let those events serve as a seed crystal around which the programs grew. The advantage of a field such as intelligence is that by its very nature it must expect the unexpected. Threats can take many forms, and this requires the intelligence professional to develop tools that can be applied to a wide range of information types and sources. To use a straightforward example, the tools of analysis include standard procedures and exercises designed to reveal and thereby factor out personal biases of the analyst. These are generic tools; they can be applied to just about any problem that is likely to cross an analyst's desk. Their usefulness does not go away when the problem swings away from terrorism to other kinds of threats.

## Why Create New Academic Disciplines?

Traditionally, academic disciplines have served as forums within which the issues associated with those disciplines in an open manner. The demands of secrecy associated with Strategic Security have inhibited the kind of academic discussion found in other areas of study, but they have also kept it from harnessing the full power of the educational apparatus for training purposes. The efforts to bring public and private universities into the business of training Strategic Security professionals and establishing standards of education are further constrained by the lack of textbooks and other standardized materials. Instead, educators must rely on trade press publications, which go through a different process of selection

for publication and editing from books intended for the academic market. These materials can also have an uneven shelf life. Books can go out of print after a year or so, sometimes months, requiring rapid readjustments by any professor who happened to require one of these books on a course.

The other main source of materials from which educators can draw are documents issued by the Government agencies whose job it is to stay on top of developments. However, this source can be problematic due to the lack of consistent announcements and indexing of new Government documents when they are issued by their particular department or agency. Further, such documents are written for a variety of reasons, and in recent years there have been more reports of government reports being edited to remove or obscure politically difficult information. The same criticisms can also be leveled at independent research organizations and think tanks. This leaves the field of Strategic Security in great need of regular, standard educational publications that will always be around, updated as needed. This leads to a chicken-and-egg conundrum, for until you know what your curriculum is, you cannot write the textbooks needed to serve it.

## Defining the Curriculum

Describing the curriculum for a practitioner of Strategic Security is a challenging task; of all the disciplines out there, it is hard to think of one that is more encompassing, more multi-disciplinary than "intelligence." It draws upon significant slices of history, science, humanities, language, mathematics, politics, economics and other fields in crafting the finished intelligence product. To that end, one could legitimately ask what, if anything, makes intelligence, as well as its associated areas of counterterrorism and protection unique as fields of study. The answer to that can be expressed in a single word: Tradecraft.

Although traditionally "tradecraft" has referred to the nuts-and-bolts techniques more often associated with field espionage, in recent years the definition has expanded to include practices and techniques found in other related fields such as analysis, protection, and so forth. That said, tradecraft imbues the fields allied with Strategic Security their uniqueness, and defines the essential skill sets that differentiate them from more generic studies of politics, economics, history, humanities, geography, and so on. It distinguishes standard hiring practices from the ability to recruit an asset, or the development of a research proposal versus the creation of an intelligence requirement.

## Conclusions

Much of the confusion clouding the discussion of educational standards and curricula for intelligence, counterterrorism, protection, and security professionals is due to the mission assigned to the Department of Homeland Security and the definition of "homeland security" that flows from that definition. The department, understandably, is reluctant to expand that definition into realms that are already covered by other agencies and departments. Rather than attempt to untie this Gordian Knot, we propose to go around the problem and create a new cover term "strategic security" that encompasses not only the current official definition of homeland security, but also its allied fields and the professionals who work in them.

This new term informs the creation of a new educational curriculum and educational standard and hardens the boundaries around the definition of strategic security, emphasizing tradecraft over more general fields that happen to overlap areas of concern to intelligence, counterterrorism, and protection. The emphasis on tradecraft increases one's ability to respond to a wider variety of circumstances and scenarios because tradecraft has evolved out of a vast array of situations and applications. It also helps avoid the kind of rearview mirror mentality that prompts one to prepare for new threats in terms of previous ones.

Finally, by using a new concept to put homeland security at arm's length, we gain the latitude to create a clearly defined standard of education and training that will better prepare those professionals who must face the next challenges to our nation's security.

## About the Author

Dr. Sheldon Greaves is an expert in the history, language, literature, religion, and material cultures of the Near East. He has studied this region for over twenty-five years and currently teaches courses in religious radicalism and covert organizations. Dr. Greaves is a co-founder of Henley-Putnam University, joining the original team in 1997. He is currently the Chief Academic Officer. In addition to his academic studies, Dr. Greaves developed courses and degree programs for the University, as well as broke new ground by helping to articulate the philosophical basis for securing state approval for degrees in executive protection, which had never before been granted for that field as a discrete academic discipline. Dr. Greaves is an accomplished linguist, having learned more than a dozen languages. He is also an expert on non-traditional education and research methods, and has been active in many areas of adult education,

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serving on the Board of the Society for Amateur Scientists from 2001 to 2004 and briefly starting and running an educational software company. He taught his first online course in 1992 through AOL on "The Dead Sea Scrolls." Dr. Greaves is a member of the Association for Intelligence Officers. He received his Ph.D. in Near Eastern Studies from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1996.

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