
LONE ACTOR TERRORISM AS A MODERN SECURITY THREAT

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Abstract: The appearance of individuals who carry out brutal attacks around the world on their own without formal membership in a terrorist organization has alarmed all security services.

These popularly called Lone Wolf terrorists have forced all the world's intelligence and security agencies to develop a completely different approach to this type of terrorism.

Lone Actor terrorism as a form of violence has become accepted across the planet by a wide variety of radical groups, rightists, leftists, radical Islamists and has become the number one security issue.

The paper will present the historical development of Lone Actor terrorism in order to make recommendations based on the hitherto known facts on how to control this way of endangering security.

Keywords: Terrorism, security, Lone Wolf, Lone Actor, security agencies

1. INTRODUCTION

The terrorism of individual attackers in the media, popularly called lone wolves, is a nightmare of the modern world and thus of all world security services. Created in the middle of the last century, it did not capture the attention of modern researchers or security agencies until the tragic events in the United States on September 11. Only after that unprecedented terrorist attack did the US security services start dealing with this problem in a serious and systematic way due to the reform of the entire security apparatus and the formation of the Ministry of Homeland Security.

After several public announcements of the highest state officials of the USA about the threats posed by Lone Actor, terrorists and the academic community are moving to deal with this problem. The focus is no longer on global terrorist organizations, for which we should thank the US-led Anti-Terrorist Coalition, which managed to largely destroy Al Qaeda and later ISIS, but on individual attackers who are self-radicalized and not formally part of a terrorist organization.

Such individuals, who are called Lone Actor terrorists by official security agencies, are seduced, radicalized and unknowingly used to commit the most serious crimes, most of them liquidated during the commission of crimes. In the end, their crime, but also their victim, is used and appropriated by extremist and terrorist organizations that are behind numerous sites, chat rooms on the dark web or incendiary speeches broadcast on some of the social networks.

2. HISTORICAL REVIEW

From 1940 through 2000, the 38 lone wolf terrorists committed 171 attacks, claiming 98 lives and injuring another 305. An array of firearms and homemade bombs were used in the attacks. Roughly 60% of the lone wolves committed a single attack and 40% committed multiple attacks, including such prolific terrorists as Unabomber Theodore Kaczynski who committed 16 bombings over a 17-year period, the racist serial killer Joseph Paul Franklin responsible for an estimated 23 attacks over four years, and Muharem Kurbegovic, the “Alphabet Bomber,” who launched ten attacks in two years. From 2001 through 2013, the 45 lone wolves committed 45 attacks, killing 55 people and injuring another 126.⁴² These attacks involved not only firearms and bombs but also airplanes, biological weapons, knives and construction equipment. In short, lone wolves have expanded their arsenal of weaponry in the post-9/11 era. While the multiple attackers were prominent in the pre-9/11 era, the single attacker rose to prominence after 9/11. They include such lone massmurderers as Nidal Hasan who killed 13 and injured 30 in the 2009 Fort Hood shooting, Jared Laughner who killed six and wounded 13 in the Tucson shooting of 2011, and Wade Page who killed six and wounded four in the 2012 shooting at the Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin. Strictly in terms of lethality, the data indicate that lone wolf terrorism in America is not on the rise. Moreover, no decade has been bloodier than the 1990s when lone wolves left 212 victims, killing 30 and wounding 182 others.⁴³

⁴² Mark Hamm and Ramon Spaaj, Lone Wolf Terrorism in America: Using Knowledge of Radicalization Pathways to Forge Prevention Strategies, page. 4-5, February 2015

⁴³ ibid

Criminologist Grant Duwe identified 845 mass shootings in the United States between 1976 and 2018. However, only 158 of these met the criteria for a lone actor shooting which occurred in a public setting.⁴⁴

3. DEFINING THE TERM

The term terrorist lone wolves refers to terrorist acts committed by an individual against those committed by terrorist organizations or the state sponsored terrorism.⁴⁵ The element of terrorism that stands out in this distinction - namely, the entity that commits terrorist violence (individual) dominates the tradition of researchers defining the lone wolf as "a person who acts on his own without orders or links to a particular organization."⁴⁶

radicalization is defined as a process in which individuals adopt extreme views, including the belief that violent action should be taken for political or religious purposes. Although acting independently, the lone wolf is still a political creature that does not pursue purely egocentric goals.⁴⁷

Although terrorism is conditioned by social and political contexts, it cannot be ignored nor personal characteristic, especially in this type of terrorism. Psychological aspects of gravity is understood because they are mostly individual. "Every type of terrorism is heard for itself and from each has a specific socio-political context". One of their common terrorist characteristics is their "normalcy" in the psychopathological sense.⁴⁸ But in a study by Ramón Spaai (2012) it was shown that in solitary wolves it is a degree psychological disorders (depression, schizophrenia, obsessive-compulsive disorder, anxiety, personality disorders, etc.) higher than in other terrorists. They often they also show a certain degree of social inefficiency and alienation, which is also the case can be viewed as a symptom of a psychological abnormality. In some cases such individuals were completely separated from the wider community and acted in isolation.⁴⁹

Lone wolf terrorists may sympathize with and consider themselves part of larger groups, but they are usually not active participants.⁵⁰

Lone wolves do not see themselves as lone wolves, but the exact opposite is true. Lone wolves often consider themselves part of the heroic vanguard that seeks to protect a larger group of people. It is important to understand that the lone wolf is a label attached to an individual by external forces, not by the actor himself.⁵¹

It can be argued that this in itself does not do the above criteria invalid because objectively the individual acted alone, whether he or she believes he or she belongs to an organization or takes action on behalf of a group or does not take action.

4. LONE WOLF IN THE FUTURE

The greatest danger to the security of ordinary citizens, along with the violation of cyber security through hybrid actions, which will primarily be reflected in the spread of false news, the spread of malignant influence and the use of drones, are certainly Lone (Wolf) Actor terrorists.

If we look at the number of attacks carried out by attackers of this type only on the territory of the USA and the EU in the previous 10 years, as well as the number of victims, the aforementioned thesis becomes more important.

What is particularly worrying is the structure of the attackers. The number of attackers with police or military experience is increasing, especially in the United States, where the criteria for admission to the security services from 2021 have been tightened.

Namely, in the USA, the largest number of such attacks originate from persons who were born on the territory of the USA or have US citizenship on other grounds.⁵²

⁴⁴ https://hrvwiki.net/Wikipedia_Lone_wolf_attack

⁴⁵ Tanja MILOSEVSKA, THE CONCEPT OF TERRORIST WOLF-SOLDIERS, UDC: 323,285: 179.7 (100) Original scientific paper,

⁴⁶ Burton, F., Stewart, S. (2008). "The 'Lone Wolf' Disconnect," STRAT FOR Global Intelligence. Available at: http://www.Stratfor.com/weekly/-lone_wolf_disconnect. [Accessed 5 Feb.2019]

⁴⁷ Hoffman, B. Inside Terrorism. New York: Columbia University Press. 2006

⁴⁸ Bilandžić, Mirko. Sjeme zla: uvod u studije terorizma. Zagreb: Despot Infinitus. 2014

⁴⁹ Barbara Zdravec , Socijalne Dimenzije Terorizma „Usamljenog Vuka” Udk: 323.28-051 323.28:316.647.7-051 316.647.7-051:323.28 323.28:159.97 323.23:303.433.3 Priljeno: 17. Vii. 2020. Prihvaćeno: 20. Viii. 2020.

⁵⁰ Spaaij, Ramon. Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism: Global Patterns, Motivations And Prevention. P. 18.

⁵¹ Тања Милошевска, Концептот На Терористи Волци-Самотници, Удк: 323.285:179.7(100) Изворен Научен Труд,

⁵² Global Terrorism Indeks Report 2020, The Institute For Economics & Peace (Iep), Measuring The Impact Of Terrorism, Sydney, November 2020.

This means that the Lone Actor strategy was adopted by radical Islamists, primarily right-wing radicalized Americans in the largest number, but also sympathizers of left-wing ideology as well. And in such numbers that they pushed radical Islamists and Salafists to the bottom of the statistics.

It follows that this is a threat that is yet to be developed, and it is necessary to reckon with that in the future, preparing adequate strategies so that the whole wave of such attacks would not overwhelm us in a few years.

Also, if we take into account the determined fight against global terrorism carriers such as ISIS, Al Qaeda and others, logical thinking with reference to the previous decade leads us to be careful because it has already been shown that whenever the anti-terrorist campaign against global players intensifies online content sharing, which leads to an increased effect of self-radicalization among many sympathizers. The Internet is practically from the moment when social networks became an unavoidable factor of social movements on steroids when it comes to radicalization.⁵³

5. CONCLUSION

Real connections are being replaced by virtual ones, but virtual contacts are also having catastrophic consequences.⁵⁴

Terrorists are part of society. Hence, the task of the whole society is to stop them. There is a need to develop and in this time you need solutions and future adequate strategies as we know for a few years the building is not filled with flat sheets.

And as journalist Burke put it: "Terrorism is not something one does alone, it is a social thing," "People are interested in ideas, ideologies and activities, and even horrible ones, because other people are interested in them." So, it is about becoming popular by imitating others.⁵⁵

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