

Forum: Security Council

Issue: The Question of avoiding Terrorist Attacks carried out by Isolated Attackers

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INTRODUCTION

This question is focused on terrorist attacks carried out by the so called lone wolves. These people are dangerous for the international community because they can decide to organize a low-level attack on their own; they just need a gun, or a knife or also a truck to kill common people. A lone wolf can work by himself or with a few collaborators, who are isolated too. It is difficult to prevent these attacks because these terrorists are not necessarily connected with extremist groups such as Al-Qaeda or Isis and many times they look like normal citizens; they are not suspects. Obviously not all the attacks are linked to the Islamic terrorism, but nowadays these are the most common (in addition to those in Israel linked to the Palestine question) and therefore Islamophobia is raising among the citizens. The number of isolated attackers is increasing and the attacks, too. Most of the time, terrorist groups, although they are not involved in the planning, claimed these brutal attacks. In fact, Isis has clearly encouraged any extremist group to do as much damage as possible in the West. An Isis spokesperson declared: “the smallest action you do in the heart of the West is dearer to us than the largest action by us and more effective and more damaging.”

The intent of these low-level attacks is psychological: the goal is to terrorize. To make anyone think that, at any moment, in every place, they might not be safe — that they could be next.

Moreover, Isis is losing territories so many foreign fighters are going to get back to Europe, trying to continue their terrible mission becoming new lone wolves.

KEY WORDS

Lone wolves: isolated attackers; who are not part of a group or directed by an outside organization. They carry out low-level attacks most of the time.

Low-level attacks: these kinds of attacks are pretty easy to carry out because they do not need expensive weapons or a big preparation since the attackers can use the most common firearms or instruments to kill people. For these reasons they are really difficult to prevent because everyone could have the possibility to carry out these attacks which usually kill relatively few people but have an enormous psychological and political impact.

EXPLANATION OF THE TOPIC

Lone wolves are an old problem, but in recent decades, the number of attacks by them has grown since the Islamic terrorism has become widespread. The most famous country for lone wolves are the USA, since their Constitution allows everyone to own a weapon in order to defend himself.

In the beginning, isolated attackers have emerged from fanatical movements of all stripes and often the reason was political. These attacks were designed to damage a group of people, who had different opinions about politics or religion.

Now, the isolated attackers do assaults in order to disseminate panic in the West and against the Occidental culture. These attacks are claimed by Isis, so we can deduce that the attackers are

Muslim extremists but we should remember that many of them are latching onto extremism when they are really motivated to be violent by other factors.

Often it is not clear if the attacker is isolated or connected directly with a terrorist group, indeed there are different sources with disparate views. This happens because Isis, in order to show its power, claims to have the responsibility of every attack, even if the attackers have an extremist ideology, but they are not affiliated with any terrorist group.

The most tragic and recent terrorist attacks carried out by lone wolves:

Orlando, USA- On June 12, 2016, Omar Mateen, a 29-year-old Muslim American of Afghan descent, open fired at the Pulse gay nightclub, killing 49 people and wounding 53 others. He pledged allegiance to ISIL during the attack;

Nice, France - On 14 July 2016, Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel drove a truck into crowds celebrating Bastille day in Nice, France killing 86 people;

Quebec City, Canada - On January 29, 2017, Alexandre Bissonnette, a Political Science student at the University of Laval, open fired in the Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec City and killed 6 worshippers (this is a consequence of the raise of Islamophobia);

London, UK - On March 22, 2017: Westminster Bridge Attack, 5 people, including a London police officer who was stabbed and the perpetrator, were killed in a terrorist attack. More than 40 people were injured outside the Parliament building;

Manchester, UK - On May 22, 2017 outside Ariana Grande's concert, 22 people were killed and dozens more injured by a suicide bomber, who used a rudimental explosive device;

London, UK - On June 3, 2017 7 people were killed and dozens injured by three assailants who ploughed through pedestrians on the London Bridge

Barcelona, Spain – On August 17, 2017 a van attack killed 14 people, while another person was stabbed to death by the attacker as he fled.

The UN has declared that every country should pay attention to this new kind of terrorism, and it has requested to scrutinize every suspect behavior, but there are not resolutions focused on lone wolves yet.

Also the intelligence of many countries and their departments of security are trying to intercept these lone wolves, but it is really hard since they are not connected directly to terrorist groups. Moreover, tough privacy laws and the protections enjoyed by the largely global internet and social media giants are impeding authorities in their ability to ferret out lone wolf threats.

Another crucial point is the use of the Deep Web: usually attackers use this encrypted web, where the intelligence can see some messages, but not the whole conversation. Other times they do not tell anyone about their plan or, if they do, the listeners do not take seriously their intentions.

SUGGESTIONS

The most important advice is to reinforce the intelligence and to increase controls on suspect citizens, but this means less freedom for everyone. We should be careful not to infringe the privacy laws, even if Western legislations could be adjusted in order to have a balance between protecting privacy and discovering illegal things.

The officials of the departments of security declared that in order to find the isolated attackers we would consider new approaches, with a focus on sources like social media. A more pro-active support from Facebook, Google and other online giants with the ability to conduct large-scale automated scanning of users for possible threats could be a starting point.

Furthermore, local cyber capabilities must be a priority. With so much terrorism-related activity occurring on the Internet, local law enforcement must have the ability to monitor and track violent extremist activity on the Web when reasonable suspicion exists. To make effective the local and state cyber authorities, the intelligence agencies should share more broadly with them.

Moreover, state funds should also be used to create robust community outreach capabilities in higher-risk urban areas; such capabilities are key to building trust in local communities.

The authorities have to monitor any suspect person. Focusing on the Islamic religion, any kind of extremism, which is against the rights and laws of the country taken into consideration, should be stopped with penalties. The problem is that often the authorities and the citizen do not know the difference between freedom of religion and extremism. To make understand this difference, Muslim citizens should be very supportive with the community, explaining that they are against these brutal attacks too and that they want to collaborate in any possible way to fight the terrorism.

An active involvement of Muslims is fundamental to reduce the Islamophobia.

Another important key to stop these attacks are the citizens: they must learn how to identify some suspicious behaviors. For example, a citizen should immediately call the police if he or she sees someone changing his social relations, perhaps leaving behind old friends and family and seeing new friends in their life; changing his ideas quite markedly and acting with aggression in a way that was not characteristic in the past.

CONCLUSION

Actually it is impossible to stop every isolated attacker because none of the intelligence agencies can predict what an apparently normal citizen is going to do; none can control every human being. However we can reduce the problem radically.

There has to be a huge cooperation between whole countries, the intelligence agencies, the state and local authorities and the citizens themselves to detect budding terrorists in time. Even if some states are not allied because of their politics and economy, they should put aside their disagreements since they have the same goal, that is to eliminate lone wolves and therefore these unpredictable attacks.

Warning: the topic is focused on terrorist attacks carried out by isolated attackers in general. Therefore, even if nowadays the attacks are linked mostly to Islamic terrorism, the delegates should find a solution which could fit for any kind of terrorism accomplished by lone wolves.

Useful links:

<https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/how-to-hunt-a-lone-wolf-counteracting-terrorists-who-act-on-their-own/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2017/mar/30/myth-lone-wolf-terrorist>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lone_wolf_\(terrorism\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lone_wolf_(terrorism))

https://www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/docs/2015/N1508457_EN.pdf

<https://www.vox.com/world/2017/6/5/15739168/london-attack-terrorism-counterterrorism>

<https://phys.org/news/2017-09-anti-terror-chiefs-social-media-lone.html>