



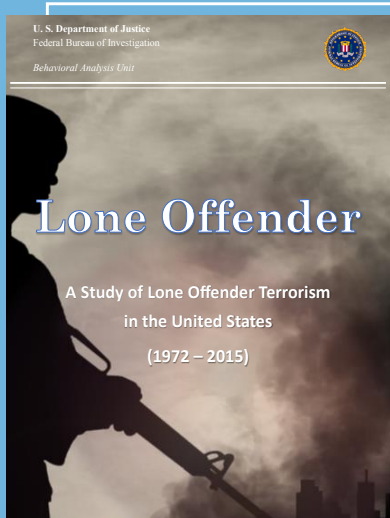
الائتلاف العسكري لمحاربة الإرهاب
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International Reports

12

LONE OFFENDERS



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Lone Offenders

Lone offender, or alternatively lone wolf is an extremist who conducts acts of violence independent of any directives from a terrorist group and represents a serious challenge to security and law enforcement agencies around the world. Although this type of crime has been used for hundreds of years, it remains a source of great concern, especially in areas where “lone” attacks continue to increase. Terrorism of a lone offender seems to remain a source of threat as long as violent ideological groups and terrorist organizations depend to a large extent on the attacks carried out by such lone offenders, who are seen as inspiring people. Sadly enough, many individuals see violence as a fashion to achieve ideological goals through independent mobilization that incites more violence.



In the United States

The “lone offender” attacks are the deadliest in the United States, while the mass attacks are still the deadliest around the world. In November 2019, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Conduct Threat Assessment Center released a local report monitoring such a type of crime; the number of attacks in the United States was reported to be 52 between 1972 and 2015.

The FBI’s Center counters terrorism and violence, by using behavioral support applications, research and training. It provides the FBI with services in investigating terrorism issues, assessing terrorist threats and supporting law enforcement agencies at the local and federal levels and at the community leadership level, aimed at preventing violence and managing threats. The Center is also engaged in research studies conducted by the National Center for Violent Crime Analysis, together known as the Critical Incident Response Group, and is based at the FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia.

It is difficult but not impossible to predict terrorist incidents of lone offenders; terrorist incidents can be avoided when we are armed with early knowledge of the behavior of such lone offenders.

The report analyzes a set of demographic and ideological data and background on lone offenders along with the time trajectory of extremism. The report provides a well-detailed description of the history of lone offenders, their general behavior before the attacks were carried out and the most important events that they experienced in their lives before they veered off onto terrorism. More meticulously, the report also includes observations of the extended family members of such lone offenders or anyone of their circle of peers who might have observed some suspicious behavior. The observations of everyday life are also taken into account about any terrorist acts witnessed by chance in that such people might have withheld such information or felt uneasy to report and whistle-blow or just felt like more reticent about the whole gamut of the situation.

The Report only includes cases in which lone offenders attempted to carry out a terrorist act, or actually carried out such terrorist acts driven by a specific political, ideological or social goal within the United States. The Report excludes cases of offenders affiliated with an extremist movement or a terrorist organization, or offenders who received assistance from others at some point of time during planning or carrying out such terrorist attacks in that one of the characteristics of lone terrorism is that an extremist offender is lone in planning, preparing and carrying out such terrorist acts.

The Report emphasizes that it is difficult but not impossible to predict terrorist incidents of lone offenders; terrorist incidents can be avoided when we are armed with early knowledge of the behavior of such lone offenders. To this end, the Report aims at enhancing awareness among witnesses and supporting the efforts of law enforcement agencies and the groups of multidisciplinary threat assessment. “Prevention efforts are greatly enhanced by early knowledge of suspicious behaviors,” states Christopher Wray, Director of the FBI.

The Report comprises of 80 pages that fall into three sections: lone terrorist offenders, terrorist attacks carried out by lone offenders and witnesses or “passersby”. The Report draws on FBI case files, police reports, detention records, academic research, media reports and interviews with people who can recognize lone offenders.

Report Introduction

In the introduction, the Report discusses the definition of a lone offender, or a “lone terrorist”, which is a serious challenge. The Report spells out that the dispute over classifying violent acts as terrorism is still unsettled, and that the FBI is constantly calling for a clear-cut and commonly agreed definition of terrorism.

John Wyman, Unit Chief of BAU Center for Behavioral Threat Assessment, believes that “a more comprehensive analysis of the individuals involved along with a whole host of factors that drive them to use violence to achieve their goals or solve their personal issues given the lack of a checklist

Sections of Report



that anyone can use to determine whether or not a given person poses a threat. There is a plethora of information that supports the need to exactly identify the timing and reporting of potential threats. This does not mean law enforcement agencies only; the data shows that friends and families of the attackers are the people who can best monitor their potentially threatening actions. In the same vein, driving these actions into the right context requires that the people watching from a distance realize that history has proven that it is better to raise than to ignore fears when rising to surface. Everyone, including entities, parents, brothers, colleagues, friends, local law enforcement agencies and mental health counselors, has a function that helps us prevent these actions, and creating groups of people able to assess and manage threats appropriately is of great importance”.

We have to search for reactions that go beyond watching someone leave his or her bag somewhere unattended without moving a finger. We need to report and expose these things, and avoid the risks as early as possible.

Wyman concludes that the Report specifies the public function of protecting and preventing lone offenders, and that “we have to search for reactions that go beyond watching someone leave his or her bag somewhere unattended without moving a finger, and not wait for such a person to leave away then attempt to track him or her down; very much like ‘shutting the barn door after the horse has bolted’ – it is too late! We need to report and expose these things, and avoid the risks as early as possible”.

The Report calls for improving the level of cooperation and coordination between law enforcement agencies and stakeholders in society in such a way as to identify and address these attacks before they take place. The Report considers that the terrorism of a lone offender is not limited to a specific religion, culture or political affiliation. The Report includes terrorist attacks by lone offenders who were extremists within the United States, and carried out their attacks on targets in the United States. The Report also provides an overview of the lone offenders and their family background, behavioral characteristics, social networks, extremism and planning to attacks along with the testimonies of witnesses. It eventually dawns that most of lone offenders did not carry out these violent attacks in the service of certain ideologies or for a clear reason!

Sections of Report

Section One: Lone Offenders and Demographic Characteristics

The fifty-two offenders in the Report differ widely in terms of demographic variables such as gender, age, race, marital status and education, as shall be seen:

Gender: The research study reveals that the salient demographic characteristic is that masculinity is dominant across lone offenders, simply because all the offenders are men. Although women could carry out acts of violence, there is not a single woman among the lone offenders.

Age: The samples of the research study included in the Report show that most of the attackers (21%)

range between 30 and 34 years old. The youngest terrorist included in the Report is 15 years old, while the oldest is 88 years old.

Race: The results reveal that 90% of the lone offenders were born in the United States: 8% of them are naturalized citizens; 65% Caucasian whites; while the rest of the lone offenders (35%) belong to five ethnic groups: 13% from the Middle East, 8% are blacks, 8% from hybrid ethnicities, 4% are Asians and 2% of Hispanic origin.

Marital Status: Most of the lone offenders (73%) have no emotional attachment at the time of the attack, and they are not married: 48% of them are single; 23% divorced, 2% widowed and 2% their social status is unknown. Only 4% have a relationship, while married couples form 21%. Seventeen of the lone offenders (33%) have children, of whom only six prove that their children are under their care during the year before the terrorist attack. The remaining eleven do not have any contact with their minor children.

Education: Most of the lone offenders (75%) have completed their undergraduate studies, or at least their college; 37% have Bachelor Degree or a higher degree; 12% are still students.

Work: More than half of the lone offenders (54%) do not have work at the time of the attack; only three of them (6%) are retired; 12% are unemployed due to a disability; nineteen of them (37%) have financial self-sufficiency and fifteen (29%) are dependent financially on their families, while the main financial source is not clear to eleven (21%) of the lone offenders.

Religious Affiliation: 26 lone offenders are known to be religious: 13 lone offenders, making up (50%) Christians, and 9 lone offenders, accounting for (35%) Muslims, and one lone offender was Jewish (4%) and 3 lone offenders, or (12%) who have other religious affiliations, or had no religious affiliation.

Military Service: The number of lone offenders who have served in the army is nineteen (37%), five of whom (26%) participated in combat areas, and five have tried to join the army but were rejected for unknown reasons.

Criminal Record: Most of the lone offenders (70%) were arrested at least once before their last attack, 37 of them (52%) were previously arrested, and 51% spent time in a correctional facility, and at least 15 of the lone offenders (29%) were arrested on charges of violent crimes, and more than 30 lone offenders (58%) have previously been involved in violence.

Psychological Health: More than 25% of lone offenders are diagnosed with one or more types of mental disorders in the pre-execution phase of the attack. Mood disorders, such as depression and bipolar disorder, were the most common diagnoses, followed by psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia. Some of the disorders diagnosed include adjustment disorder and ADHD.

Mental Health: It was suspected that 18 cases (35%) show symptoms of one or more mental illnesses, without an official diagnosis. However, the data indicate that some people within the lone offenders have noticed actions or symptoms that could be a sign of mental stress.

Suicidal Ideation: 21 of the lone offenders (40%) before the attack was carried out revealed suicidal ideation. It was found that three of them had attempted suicide at previous times, and that seven out of twenty-one (33%) had a history of attempting suicide and had died while carrying out the attack. While 13 out of 20 (65%) of those who died during the attack did not have a history with a suicide attempt.

Drug Addiction: At least 26 lone offenders (50%) show signs of drug addiction earlier to carrying out a terrorist attack, including those who took marijuana, while nearly half of them (52%) used other types of drugs. Those who suffer from mental illnesses have addicted to narcotics before taking drugs.

Extremism is the condition whereby an individual goes into a transformational metamorphosis, so to speak, from a non-violent belief to a violence-fueled belief, which calls for the use of violence as a necessary and justifiable measure to most influence and bring about social or political changes.

It is not easy to identify the steps through which an individual is browbeaten into extremism. Simply put, extremism is not a rigid, linear process; rather, it is a self-fueled process, driven by one's own ideology and opinionatedness. As such, extremism can be triggered through different pathways.

Admittedly, extremism does not always beget violence; however, the telling signs associated with extremism can often be manifested in the statements, conversations and publications made by such lone offenders. It is difficult to set a timetable that gauges the time when an individual may slip into extremism and making such a decision to be involved in violence, although data indicate that most lone offenders adopted ideologies years before they carried out terrorist attacks. Cases of fast-paced extremism exceptions; a person is rarely involved in violent practices for one reason; rather, this is often a result of the accumulation of psychosocial issues and disorders affecting lone offenders.

Second Section: Terrorist Attacks

Of the 52 offenders, 33 carried out lone attacks, killing 258 people and injuring 982 people. The main objectives included famous figures, of whom 17% are employees of the federal government, 15% are supervisors in law enforcement agencies, 12% are activists in religious centers, 10% are accompanying in the medical sector, 8% are from the private sector, 6% are individuals from specific organizations or groups and 19% are other targets.

Planning and Preparation: Planning an attack begins with an idea, pending the decision to execute it. Planning for violence includes levels, starting

with the selection of the target and identifying the method of attack up to the most difficult levels, such as holistic preparation, careful implementation, and permanent monitoring. When selecting the target, consideration is given to ideological triggers in the first place; 38 of the offenders (73%) selected their targets according to the ideologies they adopt; for instance, they targeted a gynecology and obstetrics clinic to prevent abortion. In a similar vein, 42% of them selected their targets to attract the media attention.

Types of Attack: Firearms were the most common type of weapon among the offenders, as 35 offenders used firearms (67%) and 69% obtained firearms legally, while firearms were funneled illegally to 19%; 15% borrowed weapons; 12% stole crime weapons and 14 offenders (27%) used explosives.

Third Section: Others

A lone offender was rarely isolated completely from others as offenders often interact with family members (parents, brothers, spouses, children, uncles and aunts) and their peers (friends, acquaintances, classmates, colleagues and co-workers), even with strangers, across a variety of social networks, whether online, or in direct contact. The term "passers-by" is traditionally confined to individuals who witnessed a specific event, but some specialists in counter-terrorism and threat assessment sometimes use a wider definition of passers-by to further include everyone who witnesses or observes some related behavior or statements.

Conclusions

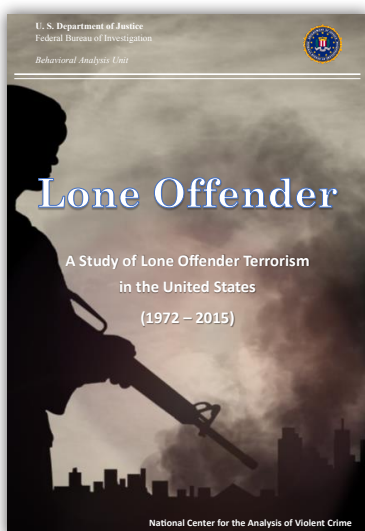
The Report concludes that there is no single factor or a specific set of factors that could be the reason for the offender to be involved in targeted violence, and that the ability to make decisions using violence to reinforce ideologies and identify a specific target is influenced by a complex mix of personal motives, internal pressures, external influences, power levels and opportunities. In addition, the offenders were not completely isolated from their surroundings, as they lived with their families, neighbors, peers and colleagues, and they maintained relationships with other contacts through websites and social media.

One of the major components of law enforcement is an approach to assessing and mitigating potential threats. Social media channels, partners and private non-governmental organizations have an important impact in managing and mitigating ideological threats based on grievances, which require concerted

practical experiences and research, ongoing cooperation between law enforcement agencies and society to cooperate and put into action coordinated plans to manage threats, disengage individuals from violent paths and reduce risk of terrorist attacks in the future.

Research and expertise highlight the importance of educating and sensitizing potential “others” and providing tools that enable them to report, inform and whistle-blow to address their concerns. The Report also confirms that the consolidation of relations between law enforcement agencies and community authorities encourages such “others” or witnesses who may be reluctant to report threats, and “passersby” who may notice some suspicious behavior to communicate. To this end, the Report suggests potential early reporting rewards that would assist in early response, gain time and avoid terrorist acts through efficient preventive measures.

In addition to law enforcement agencies, “others”, can do an essential job to monitor those prepared to carry out terrorist attacks; history has proven that it is better to confront such fears as they arise, rather than ignore them and wait sluggishly, twiddling our thumbs. The Report reveals that the active management of threats, close cooperation and coordination among the various stakeholders have ultimately been enhanced by the exchange of information, and continued communication between law enforcement agencies and other non-traditional stakeholders, such as the social services sectors, traffic and police, mental health, regular observation and conditional release (parole).



Lone Offender







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