

Is the danger of domestic terrorism exaggerated?
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As the next anniversary of the 9/11/01 terror attack approaches, there are growing differences between people who think that the danger is still there and those who believe this is merely \223Islamophobia.\224 Those who think Muslims are the being unfairly targeted are missing the point. The vast majority of domestic and foreign terror hopefuls are Islamists, way outnumbering the lone-wolf shooters (shootings in movie theatres, universities, high schools, and places of business), as well as terrorists with other than Islamic agendas (the Norwegian mass killer, Timothy McVeigh in Oklahoma, and the skinhead murderer of Sikhs at prayer). Authorities have little success preventing terrorists who are truly only on their own.

The FBI and a panel of Commissioners comprised a Joint Terror Task Force that issued a report to the country, available on line, on the FBI and Counterterrorism Intelligence analysis of the Events at Fort Hood, Texas, on November 5, 2009. This event was the shocking murder of 13 fellow military by a military psychiatrist, Nidal Hasan, an American-born Palestinian. [FortHood,TXNov52009.pdf].

\225 Myths. \223Lone Wolf\224 Islamist terrorists are self-radicalizing. Not so. Each lone wolf radicalizes with plenty of advice from Islamist web sites, and usually has guidance from a mastermind, a guru, or explosives experts. In every case, there is the complicity of others; for Hasan, it was his mentor in Yemen, Anwar al-Awlaki, who was shortly thereafter taken out by an American drone.

\225 Myth: That terrorists are crazy (mentally ill). No, but terrorists are morally deficient and self-deluding about justifying mass murder. Islamist terrorists have a whole litany of beliefs and grievances, reinforced by others with like beliefs. Furthermore, most terrorists assume a collective identity (the group is more important than the individual), an idea alien to most of us in the modern West. These killers carefully accumulate weapons, and at the moment of the attack, shout \223Allah Akbar\224 (God is Great), an affirmation of their religious indoctrination and purpose.

The task force found that Nidal Hasan was a long-term troubled fanatic who worried his superiors that he might be a loose cannon. They didn\222t know of his support system and how far he had gone from radicalized to operational.

The FBI report notes: \223The Fort Hood shootings are a grim reminder that violent radicalization is a persistent threat to the United States and its citizens and residents. Radicalization - whether based on religious, political, social, or other causes - challenges the capability and capacity of the FBI and other members of the U.S. Intelligence Community to identify, collect, analyze, and act on accurate intelligence in time to detect and deter those who would commit violence.\224

\225 Myth: Extremism is a crime. No, extremism itself is not a crime until it becomes actual incitement to violence. This is an important exception to our generous freedom of speech; incitement to murder and/or mayhem is a crime. The difficulty is knowing when extremism becomes operational, the problem with Nidal Hasan. His colleagues failed to report him, fearing being thought Islamophobic. No one took action until too late. Europeans are even more reluctant to appear \223Islamophobic.\224 Muslim terror arrestees are not identified in the press until convicted.

It is unfortunate that many terror deniers only count deaths. They are unimpressed by those arrested before they could deploy. There is a long list of terrorist attacks foiled by Counterintelligence and FBI, ranging from planned attacks on military facilities, attacks on ordinary civilian gatherings, bombs to detonate in federal buildings or synagogues, purchases to make improvised explosive devices, and trips to Yemen and Somalia \223to learn Arabic\224 (to get suicide bomber training). Iranian operatives have been caught trying to cross the border from Mexico. Had they been successful, many more Americans would have been killed.

Although Islamism is our largest threat, we mustn\222t overlook White Supremacists, individual monsters who shoot up public places, and other zealots such as anarchists, who have destroyed property and injured police and bystanders, and will eventually draw blood. Organized terrorists are being watched, and for good reason. Zealotry of

all sorts, not madness, is the greatest danger to public safety.

678 words

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