



The Terror Attack at the Pulse Club in Orlando

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Too many similarities and some differences mark the terror attack in Tel Aviv on June 8 and the terror attack in Orlando on June 12.

In Tel Aviv, two cousins inspired by hateful incitement blended into the crowd with a mission to kill as many civilians as possible. They used improvised weapons (**Carl Gustav**) and were able to kill four (one apparently died from a heart attack on the scene) and injured nine. They came to Tel Aviv illegally from a small village near Hebron in the West Bank.

In Orlando, one person inspired by hateful incitement entered a crowded gay nightclub with a mission to kill as many patrons as possible. He used an **AR-15** and was able to kill 50 and injure 53 in what turned out to be the **deadliest carnage** in US history. He is a US citizen of Afghan origin, worked as a security guard and aspired to be a police officer. He had been flagged twice by the FBI. While his first wife suggested there were no signs to indicate he intended to commit a terror attack, his second wife is facing a possible grand jury investigation as a possible accessory.

The immediate apparent difference between horrendous outcomes of the two attacks is in the type of weapon and ammunition used. Had the Tel Aviv attackers used similar weapons the carnage would have been far greater than in Orlando. It took three hours to neutralize Omar Mateen and while thirty lives were saved the carnage already took place. His father's **anti-gay views** were known and he was on the FBI "**radar screen**" twice. He might have still purchased the weapons even if he was kept on the list but in that case the likelihood of thwarting his attack would have been higher. In Israel, the attack was in a relatively open area while in Orlando it was in a closed area with few exits. In Israel the public and law enforcement were well trained resulting in a quick response; in Orlando the chaos lasted a long time and it took law enforcement about three hours before moving forward with an attack.

In both cases the terrorists were mission-focused, knew what they wanted to accomplish, were familiar with the area and were adherents to violent ideologies and narratives that sanctify the killing of the infidel. Not much different than those in San Bernardino. The fact that they were guided by two different sources (Palestinian incitement by Hamas and Fatah for the Tel Aviv attackers, and Islamic State for the Orlando shooter) is less important. What is relevant is that both adhered to the notion of killing the "enemy" in order to achieve their political goals. In that sense, they aspired to accomplish the same objective albeit via different channels.

While several groups took responsibility for the Tel Aviv attack it still appears it was an "inspired" act and not one directed by a specific group. Incitement does its job without requiring an organization to carry it out. While it seems that the Orlando terrorist acted alone there are also indications (but no evidence) he might have received directives from the Islamic State. This is splitting hairs (at least at this point): Online magazines such as **Inspire** (Al Qaida) and **Dabiq** (Islamic State) provide very clear and specific "home cooking" instructions on how to commit terror acts, against whom and where. **Islamic State** was quick to **take responsibility** for this attack. Not surprising, given that part of its declared mission is to carry out terror acts by "homegrown" agents in the West.

Beyond the reaction of shock and grief in Israel there was little doubt (if any) the attack on June 8 was the work of terrorists. Israelis are all too familiar with this nefarious pattern. In the US, on the other hand, a terrorist attack would be “investigated” even though Mateen called 911 and **pledged allegiance** to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (leader of Islamic State). Obviously, the shooting spree in Orlando is a hate crime, as well. Precious time elapsed as various media outlets attempted to interpret and define the attack as either a terrorist or hate crime. It was both. Hate is an underlying element of terrorism. It is directed against those who are different, namely non-adherents to the ideology that drives the terrorists and those who dispatch them. That includes Muslims as well. Hate underlined 9-11, San Bernardino, Paris, Brussels, Tel Aviv, and now Orlando (and there are many others).

Therefore, from a public safety perspective, protection is important. But if hate is the common denominator it is important to assess the ideology and strategy so as to minimize the likelihood of further victimization by terror attacks. It is time to understand that terrorism is a tactic that serves an ideology with clear political goals and objectives.

There have been scores of terrorist attacks in the world. See for example the **Global Terrorism Database** on more than 140,000 such attacks. They may appear to be “isolated cases” but there is a common thread uniting them. And the prognosis for the foreseeable future is more of the same.

We need to mourn victims whether they are in Brussels, Istanbul, New York, Orlando, Paris, San Bernardino, or Tel Aviv (and scores of other places). But the primary responsibility of a country to its citizens is to provide for their safety. While there cannot be a full guarantee of safety, much more should be done.

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Flashpoint is designed to foster discussion and public debate about critical issues related to current developments in global antisemitism.

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