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MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

IMAGINING A SHIFT TOWARD SERIAL TERRORISM

by

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September 2018

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IMAGINING A SHIFT TOWARD SERIAL TERRORISM

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
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ABSTRACT

Most terrorist attacks in recent years have resulted in the quick death or capture of the suspect. This thesis examines the hypothesis that terrorism in the United States, from groups such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS, changes in tone, scope, and scale to obtain multiple attacks from each individual adherent. While historically most serial killers try to conceal their crimes, some have taunted the government and the populace with their acts and, in so doing, engendered tremendous fear in large groups of people over significant periods. This thesis examines three cases of well-known serial killer events—the Zodiac killer, BTK, and the D.C. Beltway snipers—and compares them to three recent cases of terrorism—in Boston, San Bernardino, and Orlando. It employs a comprehensive comparison of these six incidents to study the congruency, differences, discourse, patterns, and effects of each to examine the possible impacts and implications of terrorists who use tactics similar to serial killers. The output provides key takeaways pertaining to possible policy implications for the law enforcement community and its situational awareness.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The U.S. government—including the military, intelligence agencies, law enforcement, and homeland security communities—and its allies have helped neutralize many threats posed by Al-Qaeda and ISIS. However, these groups, as well as other global and national terrorist organizations, are far from being eliminated, and many still pose a significant challenge. Seeking new ways to do harm, terrorist leaders have begun calling for simpler strikes on “soft targets,” meaning those with minimal or absent security. These new threats, changing tactics, and security concerns pose a knowledge gap in current efforts to predict, stop, and counter dangerous attacks.

Recent years have witnessed more frequent terrorist attacks in countries around the world. What was once a smattering of infrequent events has now become commonplace—and almost normalized. Seriously compounding the problem of terrorism has been the proliferation of technology. This rapid increase has made it easier for terrorist organizations to recruit, motivate, and launch seemingly autonomous and random attacks by lone attackers or small groups.

What almost all of the attacks since 9/11 have in common is that they come at a price for the sponsoring organization or individual, as most attackers are killed or captured during or shortly after the event. As a result, it could be argued that this deficit may lead to difficulties in terrorist organizations perpetuating frequent attacks and seemingly demands a shift in tactics to continue to carry out their missions. For some terror organizations, the difficulty in recruitment and the losses in the field have led to a decline in numbers.¹ Thus, terrorist organizations may rethink their strategies for obtaining multiple attacks from individual adherents.

In 2016, the ISIS magazine *Rumiyah* published an article in which terror leaders ordered jihadis to begin using serial killer tactics, so their efforts could be repeated over

¹ Charlie Winter and Colin P. Clarke, “Is ISIS Breaking Apart?,” *Rand Blog*, January 31, 2017, <https://www.rand.org/blog/2017/01/is-isis-breaking-apart.html>.

and over again.² The benefit of this shift for the organization—or even the “lone wolf” for that matter—lies in the individual terror suspect’s ability to attempt multiple attacks rather than just one, effectively turning Islamist terrorists into serial killers. Such serial terrorism, coupled with modern-day technology and social media, could allow the sponsoring organization or individual to create widespread fear and panic as yet unknown.

Historically, while most serial killers have tried to conceal their crimes in an effort to sustain their conduct, some have actually taunted the government and the populace with their acts—such as by writing letters to local newspapers—and in so doing, engendered tremendous fear in large groups of people over significant periods. One way that terrorist groups could be effective with fewer terrorists on the ground is by copying the methods of serial killers in an overt manner and then using technology to greatly enhance the public’s fear.

This thesis examines the hypothesis that terrorism in the United States, from well-known terrorist organizations, will begin to change in tone, scope, and scale. If these types of organizations call for more lone wolf and small group attacks, the United States will have to change its focus to prevent and respond to these new threats, specifically those posed by serial terrorism.

Methodologically, this thesis uses a systematic comparative case study method that examines three well-known serial killer cases against three recent terrorist acts. A comprehensive comparison of these six incidents allows a study of the congruency, differences, discourse, patterns, and effects of each. In turn, this analysis then provides the opportunity to develop some key takeaways as they pertain to possible policy implications. The serial killer events discussed here are those of the Zodiac killer, BTK (bind, torture, kill), and the D.C. Beltway snipers. The three terrorist events are ones that occurred in Boston, Massachusetts; San Bernardino, California; and Orlando, Florida.

This study examined how tactics might change with the use of new technology to allow individual terrorists to sustain their attacks over longer periods, thus causing an

² Al-Hayat Media Center, “Just Terror Tactics,” *Rumiyah*, September 2016, 12.

impact greater than that of any single lone wolf or small group attack. The output of this study demonstrates that serial killer events cause a much more substantial impact and sustained fear to a community or region over a significantly longer period than found with the examined terror cases. This finding is extremely important on its own but, given that the use of serial killer tactics requires little in the way of training or resources, suggests the probability these tactics will begin to appear in terrorist attacks.

As the study demonstrates, the longevity of serial killer attacks was found to be significant. In the Zodiac case, there was a confirmed series of murders over a multi-year period. For the BTK serial killer, the period was 31 years, from the first murder to his capture. Lastly, the Beltway snipers continued their spree for 23 days (plus 10 months). These time frames can be contrasted with the approximate 102 hours in the Boston bombing, four hours in the San Bernardino killings, and just over three hours in the Pulse Nightclub attack in Orlando.

The case studies also suggest that the delayed apprehension of perpetrators significantly favor the serial killer. The Zodiac killer, who claimed to have killed 37 people, was never identified. The BTK killer, Dennis Rader, was successfully prosecuted after 31 years and 10 confirmed murders. Malvo and Muhammad killed 10 in the Beltway attacks before they were arrested and convicted for their crimes. These apprehensions and their prosecutions took years—sometimes decades—to complete whereas, in the terrorism cases, all but one of the suspects, Boston bomber Tamerlan Tsarnaev, were killed during their apprehensions. These facts are critical.

In their most recent iterations, terrorist attacks have largely been conducted by either suicide bomb or mass casualty incidents. These forms of terrorism create a large impact in terms of the number of casualties, but typically, the attacker is often killed or captured during or shortly after the attack. This type of terrorism works well for creating fear and trauma, but it is not especially effective at keeping attackers on the battlefield to cause additional acts of terror. Over time, the use of these tactics may affect an organization's cadres and, without replenishment, reduce its recruiting capacity through attrition, rendering it less effective in launching frequent attacks. This problem necessitates

an increase in recruitment or a solution that allows terrorists to complete multiple attacks instead of only one.

On the other hand, a dedicated terrorist following the example set by serial killers could stay at-large for much greater lengths of time than in the three terrorism cases examined in this thesis. This could allow him the opportunity to continue terrorizing a community or multiple communities over an extended period. This constant state of terror and fear can greatly increase the psychological effects—forcing communities to alter their daily lives—which favor the serial killer model.

Following a serial terrorism model allows a terror suspect to strike repeatedly before capture. This point is crucial because a terrorist at-large could slowly and insidiously activate others to follow the same terrorist–serial killer path, propagating fear among many different communities over the course of years. In some respects, this is a far more harrowing prospect than enduring an isolated attack—even if a major attack is more massive in scope. Additionally, successes achieved in this type of campaign could be used as a recruitment tool or help reinforce the members’ confidence in the terrorist organization, thus bolstering group cohesion.

Finally, with the analysis complete, this thesis suggests some areas in which adaptations in policy may help prove effective. It provides several recommendations for consideration and debate. Some of the key policy areas in need of review are related to the definition of terrorism and the effectiveness of information sharing among homeland security organizations. With a shift toward serial terrorism, the sharing of information among local law enforcement organizations and their local, state, and federal partners becomes critical. Thus, policies relative to inter-jurisdictional communication and information sharing, participation in joint terrorism task forces, and the purpose, design, function, and use of fusion centers become paramount.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Recent years have witnessed terrorist attacks becoming more frequent in countries around the world. What was once a smattering of infrequent events has now become commonplace—and almost normalized. Seriously compounding the problem of terrorism has been the proliferation of technology. This rapid increase has made it easier for terrorist organizations to recruit, motivate, and launch seemingly autonomous and random attacks by lone attackers or small groups. What almost all of the attacks since 9/11 have in common is that they come at a price for the sponsoring organization or individual, as most attackers are killed or captured during or shortly after the event. Arguably, this deficit may lead to difficulties in the terrorist organizations perpetuating frequent attacks and would seemingly demand a shift in tactics to continue to carry out their missions.

In 2016, the Islamic State (ISIS) magazine *Rumiyah* published an article in which terror leaders order jihadis to begin using serial killer tactics, so their efforts might be repeated over and over again.¹ The benefit of this shift for the organization—or even for the “lone wolf” for that matter—lies in the individual terror suspect’s ability to attempt multiple attacks rather than just one. It effectively turns Islamist terrorists into serial killers. Such serial terrorism, coupled with modern-day technology and social media, could allow the sponsoring organization or individual to create widespread fear and panic as yet unknown.

Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, much of the U.S. focus has been on preventing terrorist acts from occurring. The strategies employed and the work being done by the U.S. government—including the military, intelligence agencies, law enforcement, and homeland security communities—and its allies have helped neutralize many threats posed by both the Al-Qaeda and ISIS terrorist organizations. However, these groups as well as other global and national terrorist groups are far from being eliminated, and many

¹ Al-Hayat Media Center, “Just Terror Tactics,” *Rumiyah*, September 2016, 12.

still pose a significant challenge. Seeking new ways to do harm, terrorist leaders have begun calling for simpler strikes on “soft targets,” meaning those with minimal or absent security. These new threats, changing tactics, and security concerns pose a knowledge gap in current efforts to predict, stop, and counter dangerous attacks.

A September 2014 speech by then-ISIS spokesman Abu Mohammed al-Adnani confirms this change, which calls for “lone actor attacks against the West.”²

If you are not able to find an IED or a bullet, then single out the disbelieving American, Frenchman, or any of his allies. Smash his head with a rock, or slaughter him with a knife, or run him over with your car, or throw him down from a high place, or choke him, or poison him. If you are unable to do so, then burn his home, car, or business. Or destroy his crops.³

Based on this statement, terrorist organizations are working to adapt their attack methods to suit their needs and to circumvent preventive measures. One method these groups have used to stay relevant and to remain engaged in the fight has been to seek out new territories, such as the Philippines, in which to get a foothold and to expand their operations.⁴ One conclusion found in a 2011 report by the Strategic Foresight Initiative claims that with increased frequency, terrorists are choosing “attack methods that exploit perceived vulnerabilities, such as adopting active shooter tactics and finding new methods of concealing dangerous materials.”⁵ What has typically occurred following an attack, however, is that, in most instances, the police response has been so swift and robust that

² Mi5 Security Service, “Terrorist Methods,” accessed June 30, 2017, <https://www.mi5.gov.uk/terrorist-methods>.

³ Anti-Defamation League, “ISIS Spokesman Blames Jews for Conflict & Calls for Lone-Wolf Attacks, Terrorist Propaganda Encourages Attacks with Common Items,” September 24, 2014, https://www.adl.org/blog/isis-spokesman-blames-jews-for-conflict-calls-for-lone-wolf-attacks?_ga=2.36411808.1637465516.1499113867-251398686.1499113867. See also Anti-Defamation League, “Terrorist Propaganda Encourages Attacks with Common Items,” July 15, 2016, <https://www.adl.org/blog/terrorist-propaganda-encourages-attacks-with-common-items>; and Kyle Shideler, “ISIS’s New Threat Is Anything but New: Free Fire, Counterterrorism, Understanding the Shariah Threat Doctrine,” Center for Security Policy, September 22, 2014, <https://www.centerforsecuritypolicy.org/2014/09/22/isiss-new-threat-is-anything-but-new/>.

⁴ Richard Paddock and Felipe Villamor, “Destroying a Philippine City to Save It from ISIS Allies,” *New York Times*, June 13, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/13/world/asia/marawi-philippines-islamic-state.html>.

⁵ Strategic Foresight Initiative, “Evolving Terrorist Threat: Long-Term Trends and Drivers and Their Implications for Emergency Management,” September 2011, https://www.fema.gov/pdf/about/programs/oppa/evolving_terrorist_threat.pdf.

the attacker or attackers are killed or captured. It appears that terrorist leaders have begun to realize that encouraging their members to conduct the aforementioned types of smaller attacks have helped them launch more frequent strikes, but this method has cost them some of the human capital needed to sustain their efforts. In other words, their recruitment is insufficient to replenish their losses.

According to a study published by RAND Corporation in 2004, groups that can sustain a series of successful attacks can turn their successes into recruitment campaigns or use them to reinforce their members' confidence in the group, thus bolstering group cohesion.⁶ Nevertheless, losses on battlefields all around the world have hampered this ability to recruit. The need for increased recruitment, cohesion, and sustained attacks can easily translate into a change of tactics that appear more serial in nature. A likely model for terrorist groups to follow is one that has been in the United States for decades in the form of serial killers. The societal concern over terrorism is a valid one even though in most cases the panic and fear are relatively brief. When terrorist acts are compared to particular prominent serial killer events in history—in terms of inciting fear and changing people's daily behaviors—the effects of serial killers seem to last longer lasting and have a greater impact.

B. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This thesis intends to answer several research questions relating to the potential shift of terrorists toward serial killer tactics. The research questions are as follows:

1. Has terrorism been defined too narrowly relative to the international and political nature of most terrorism definitions?
2. What would a change in terrorism strategy and definition mean to the homeland security enterprise in terms of policy implications?

⁶ Kim Cragin and Sara Daly, *The Dynamic Terrorist Threat: An Assessment of Group Motivations and Capabilities in a Changing World* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2004), 26.

3. If alterations in homeland security policies (secondary to a change in terrorism tactics and definition) were to occur, how might these changes impact law enforcement strategies, policies, and procedures, as well as local law enforcement and its situational awareness?

This thesis and these research questions invite additional questions and answers, some of which may be addressed briefly. This thesis does not intend to provide conclusive proof that new tactics will be used but rather provides a starting point for discussion if it becomes a reality.

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review focuses on the definitions of terrorism and the definitions of serial killing, as well as the psychology and characteristics of terrorism. Additionally, it briefly touches on the difference between crime and terrorism as well as explores what experts and scholars have forecasted regarding changes in terrorism. Understanding the literature of these subjects is critical for the analytical work presented later in this thesis.

1. Definition of Terrorism

The definition of terrorism has long been debated, and it continues to be contested. Walter Laqueur warns that due to its rapidly changing nature, categorizing terrorism is essentially an exercise in futility.⁷ Over the last couple of decades, Salafi Islam has greatly influenced terrorism and, thus, many definitions of terrorism are vulnerable to the influence of this movement. However, with recent changes in ideology, methodology, and tactics, some literature suggests that the definition must be made sufficiently flexible to include these changes.⁸

⁷ Walter Laqueur, "Terror's New Face," *Harvard International Review* 20 (May 2006), <http://hir.harvard.edu/article/?a=307>.

⁸ John Mueller and Mark Stewart, *Chasing Ghosts: The Policing of Terrorism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 246.

Laqueur notes there are over one hundred different definitions of terrorism in use.⁹ He defines terrorism as “the use of covert violence by a group for political ends . . . usually directed against a government, but . . . also used against other ethnic groups, classes or parties.”¹⁰ Similarly, Boaz Ganor proposes the following definition: “Terrorism is a form of violent struggle in which violence is deliberately used against civilians in order to achieve political goals.”¹¹ Many of the definitions of terrorism put forward in the past rely heavily on actors engaging in behavior to achieve political objectives.

Bruce Hoffman dedicates the first 40 pages of his book *Inside Terrorism* to exploring reasons for the changing definition over the years. Hoffman characterizes terrorism as follows:

- ineluctably political in aims and motives;
- violent—or, equally important, threatens violence;
- designed to have far-reaching psychological repercussions beyond the immediate victim or target;
- conducted either by an organization with an identifiable chain of command or conspiratorial cell structure (whose members wear no uniform or identifying insignia) or by individuals or a small collection of individuals directly influenced, motivated, or inspired by the ideological aims or example of some existent terrorist movement and/or its leaders; and
- perpetrated by a subnational group or nonstate entity.¹²

Some of Hoffman’s definition is consistent with the work of other experts, specifically pertaining to the use or threat of violence to obtain an effect beyond the immediate victim or victims of the violence. While Hoffman’s definition is thorough and detailed, it—like many others—leans heavily on political motives and the necessity of a structured organization. Significantly, as addressed in the problem statement, this position

⁹ Walter Laqueur, *The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 5.

¹⁰ Walter Laqueur, *The Age of Terrorism* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1987), 72.

¹¹ Boaz Ganor, *The Counter-Terrorism Puzzle: A Guide for Decision Makers* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2005), 17.

¹² Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia Press, 2006), 1–40.

stands in stark contrast to what terrorist leaders worldwide are encouraging their followers to do. Hoffman wrote his book in 2006, and much has changed since then, including the use of technology and the internet as a means of communication, radicalization, recruitment, and proliferation of self-launching actors.

Author and terrorism expert Marc Sageman puts the debate about the definition of terrorism into clearer context when he writes, “Until recently, a large part of the literature on terrorism concentrated on definitions of terrorism, but without reaching consensus on what that definition is. Thus we have the common refrain that one man’s freedom fighter is another man’s terrorist.”¹³ This issue is one that remains unresolved. Sageman illustrates his point by suggesting that the British would have likely branded the America’s founding fathers “terrorists” had the word existed in the 1700s.¹⁴ To conclude, Sageman offers a common notion regarding the definition of terrorism, proposing that even though it is difficult to define, most people believe they know it when they see it.¹⁵

Matthew Morgan raises several points that may help explain how recent changes in terrorism tactics and strategies make it difficult to align current practices with former definitions. Most notably, he suggests terrorists have realized that harming soft targets, such as innocent civilians, reduces the risks they face during an attack. He also observes a shift toward a more “vengeful and hard-line fanatic” perpetuating these attacks, versus what was once more politically motivated violence.¹⁶ He explains, “Terror has evolved from being a means to an end, to becoming the end in itself.”¹⁷ These evolutionary changes in the definition of terrorism should be noted, as previous ones have relied heavily on the notion that terrorism must always be politically motivated.

¹³ Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 15.

¹⁴ Sageman, 15.

¹⁵ Sageman, 15.

¹⁶ Matthew Morgan, “The Origins of the New Terrorism,” *Parameters: U.S. Army War College Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 30.

¹⁷ Morgan, 30.

David Brannan, Kristen Darken, and Anders Strindberg caution their readers that the term *terrorist* inherently contains negative connotation, bias, and perceived guilt.¹⁸ In their work, they argue that the biases are “the enemy of critical thought and objective analysis.”¹⁹ This thought invites the discussion of what, exactly, the definition of terrorism should be. In fact, there is no simple answer. In their most recent published work on the subject, these authors acknowledge that the definition they chose to use is “imperfectly defined, recognized to be politically charged,” and “highly subjective.”²⁰ Despite this caution, they define terrorism as

- the threat or use of force;
- with the intent to influence political or social situations;
- by affecting an audience beyond those directly targeted by the violence;
- targeting those traditionally perceived as non-combatants in an effort to create fear.²¹

This 2014 definition is indeed useful, as it helps explain the transformation of terrorism and better frames the contemporary reality of what types of terrorism are occurring.

Martha Crenshaw provides a broader, more holistic definition of terrorism that relies on no specific objective. Rather, she looks at the acts in totality. Crenshaw defines terrorism as “a conspiratorial style of violence calculated to alter the attitudes and behavior of multiple audiences. It targets the few in a way that claims the attention of the many.”²² However, the problem with this definition is the use of the word *conspiratorial*, as many lone actors have perpetrated modern attacks with no such conspiracy. Nevertheless, the definitions provided by Brannan, Darken, and Strindberg as well as Crenshaw allow for a growing, changing, and adapting terrorism threat landscape. These definitions provide

¹⁸ David Brannan, Kristen Darken, and Anders Strindberg, *A Practitioner’s Way Forward: Terrorism Analysis* (Salinas, CA: Agile Press, 2014), 3.

¹⁹ Brannan, Darken, and Strindberg, 3.

²⁰ Brannan, Darken, and Strindberg, 43.

²¹ Brannan, Darken, and Strindberg, 43.

²² Martha Crenshaw, ed., *Terrorism in Context* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 4.

sufficient structure to frame the problem but do not necessarily lock down the language so tight as to eliminate the consideration and possibility of some unforeseen circumstances that may necessitate inclusion.

This thesis thus uses a broad definition of *terrorism* that removes the requirement for the acts to be ideological, religious, or amorphous. It is more focused on actions that frighten and substantially affect Americans. This thesis accepts a definition that combines the definitions put forward by Crenshaw, Brannan, Darken, and Strindberg:

1. A method of violence that is intended to “alter the attitudes and behavior of multiple audiences.”²³
2. An act that “targets the few in a way that claims the attention of the many.”²⁴ Thus, it is the threat or use of force, and has the potential to influence political or social situations by affecting an audience beyond those directly targeted by the violence.
3. Attacks that target those traditionally perceived as non-combatants, which may create fear.²⁵

2. Definition of Serial Killing

Although serial killers have been active for well over a century, a clear definition emerged only within the last 50 years.²⁶ Much like the definition of terrorism, the definition of a *serial killer* and what constitutes *serial killings* has invited much debate. Defining the concept is imperative in this thesis for comparing and contrasting it with acts of terrorism.

Over the course of the last 30 years, there have been many definitions applied by academics, clinical practitioners, researchers, and law enforcement personnel to the act of

²³ Crenshaw, 4.

²⁴ Crenshaw, 4.

²⁵ Brannan, Darken, and Strindberg, *A Practitioner's Way Forward*, 43.

²⁶ Mike Aamodt, “Serial Killer Statistics,” Radford University, September 4, 2016, <http://maamodt.asp.radford.edu/Serial%20Killer%20Information%20Center/Project%20Description.htm>.

serial killings. Unfortunately, these definitions vary significantly enough to cause unintended consequences and significant ramifications when categorizing various events. Nonetheless, there are enough similarities in the general concept to extrapolate a solid definition. In 1998, there was at least one formalized attempt to develop a cohesive definition by way of legislation. This occurred when the Protection of Children from Sexual Predator Act of 1998 (18 *U.S. Code* §1111) was passed by the U.S. Congress. The law was intended to protect children from harm and, in this aim, required a definition of serial murder. Its brief definition of serial murder events reads as follows: “The term ‘serial killings’ means a series of three or more killings, not less than one of which was committed within the United States, having common characteristics such as to suggest the reasonable possibility that the crimes were committed by the same actor or actors.”²⁷ However, as providing a strict definition of serial murder was not its primary intention, experts have disputed this definition since the Act was put in place. Moreover, the Act was never intended to define serial murder but rather to establish the criteria needed for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to assist local law enforcement in serial killing cases.²⁸

It is important to examine how the definition has differed among various groups. Some of the most significant discrepancies revolve around motivational and psychological factors as well as the temporal aspects of a series of murders.²⁹ The 1998 book *Contemporary Perspectives on Serial Murder* uses the long-held belief that the definition of serial killings comes down to three independent events over three locations in which three or more victims are killed, with each event including a so-called cooling-off period between the murders.³⁰ This definition has been used for decades to distinguish serial killers from those committing mass or spree murders. However, since this book’s publication, the definition has changed to the one currently used by the FBI. Recognizing

²⁷ Robert J. Morton and Mark A. Hilts, eds., *Serial Murder: Multi-disciplinary Perspectives for Investigators*, NCJ 223848 (Quantico, VA: National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime, 2008), <https://www.ncjrs.gov/App/Publications/abstract.aspx?ID=245787>.

²⁸ Morton and Hilts.

²⁹ Morton and Hilts.

³⁰ Ronald Holmes and Stephen Holmes, *Contemporary Perspectives on Serial Murder* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 1998), 2.

that the former definition was problematic, writer Berit Brogaard points out an example that clarifies the problem: “Suppose a gang member ends up shooting three people in street fights with members of other gangs over a 10-year period with plenty of cooling down periods. Strictly speaking, this gang member is a serial killer by the above definition, but he would not fit the common conception of what a serial killer is.”³¹ Unfortunately, the newer definition adopted by the FBI in 2005 does not sufficiently resolve the confusion.

In 2005, a symposium was held in which attendees—consisting of 135 serial-murder experts—examined past definitions to develop a new, mutually agreed-upon definition.³² During this five-day symposium, the experts were able to develop a single definition that is still in use by the FBI. It states that serial killing is “the unlawful killing of two or more victims by the same offender(s), in separate events.”³³ While concise and straightforward, unfortunately—much like the example Brogaard put forward—this definition leads to confusion; it does not address some of the acts or circumstances that inadvertently falls under the definition. During the symposium, the attendees revisited all previous definitions and debated the merits of each. In their final analysis, the consensus was to focus on creating a relatively simplistic yet broad-enough definition that members of the law enforcement community could generally use.³⁴

The risk of using the 2005 definition for academics would be in studying the motivations and patterns of serial killers, but not having enough clarity to determine which individuals to include in a study. In other words, the varying definitions of a serial killer, as posed by the members of the academic and law enforcement communities, create difficulties because of their vagueness.³⁵ It is apparent that—much like the definitions put

³¹ Berit Brogaard, “What Defines a Serial Killer?: Analyzing the Concept of a Serial Killer,” *Psychology Today*, May 31, 2017, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-superhuman-mind/201705/what-defines-serial-killer>.

³² Morton and Hilts, *Serial Murder*.

³³ Morton and Hilts.

³⁴ Morton and Hilts.

³⁵ Chelsea Van Aken, “The Use of Criminal Profilers in the Prosecution of Serial Killers,” *THEMIS: Research Journal of Justice Studies and Forensic Science* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 130.

forward for terrorism—there is no single, agreed-upon definition of a serial killer that fits all situations.

Thus, in 2005, the symposium attendees attempted to give local law enforcement more flexibility by lowering the number of murders from the previous definition. However, this became problematic in several respects. As Chelsea Van Aken points out in a 2015 article,

By defining serial killers based upon known victims, many individuals can be either mistakenly identified as serial killers, or dangerous serial killers can be left undetected because they have no murder conviction. Ultimately, the current definition used by the FBI may not fully encompass all serial killers because it is extremely vague, and it requires two victims, whereas most scholarly definitions require many victims to determine a repetitive pattern.³⁶

At the symposium, the academics and researchers attempted to establish a baseline threshold as clear demarcation criteria for the inclusion in studies.³⁷ Defining serial killings was an important step toward establishing a benchmark for comparison; however, the aforementioned definitions are imperfect, fail to mention motivation, and are still subject to broad interpretation.

The FBI acknowledges that serial killings are fairly rare:

Although it's impossible to quantify the number of active serial murderers nationwide or how many murders they commit, academic and law enforcement research suggests that the numbers of homicides carried out by serial offenders in a given year are a small fraction of the total number of murders that occur in the U.S.³⁸

However, even though the incidents of serial killings are low relative to murders overall, their impacts can be great. Retired FBI Special Agent Bob Morton, who was involved in investigating dozens of serial killer cases throughout his career, supports this sentiment.

³⁶ Van Aken, 138.

³⁷ Morton and Hilts, *Serial Murder*.

³⁸ Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Serial Killers, Part 8: New Research Aims to Help Investigators Solve Cases," October 10, 2014, <https://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/serial-killers-part-8-new-research-aims-to-help-investigators-solve-serial-murder-cases>.

He says that when serial killings do occur, “it can be overwhelming to a community and its law enforcement agencies.”³⁹ With this statement in mind, consideration must be given to the potential impact of terrorists behaving like serial killers, and how much this shift might increase the difficulty in stopping them. By following the examples set by serial killers, there are templates for serial terrorists to follow that would make it difficult for law enforcement to intervene.

Regardless of the debates surrounding the number of required killings over a particular length of time, and irrespective of the length of the cooling-off period, the three serial killer cases discussed in this thesis fit the FBI’s criteria of serial killer events. However, since it is still the prevailing and generally accepted definition, this thesis considers serial murder to be “the unlawful killing of two or more victims by the same offender(s), in separate events.”⁴⁰ This definition will be applied for the case analysis.

3. Psychology and Characteristics of Terrorism

Some experts predicted that America would see an increase in suicide bombing incidents after the events of 9/11. Hoffman made this assessment in 2005, espousing that suicide bombings were the ultimate “smart bomb” and that the suicide component of the 9/11 attacks was an essential component to their success.⁴¹ Thankfully, this supposition has not come to fruition. Richard Fleece, a terrorism scholar, has argued that the security measures enacted after 9/11 enhanced the nation’s resiliency and precluded the foreign suicide terrorist attacks that Hoffman had predicted.⁴² However, while suicide attacks have been few in the United States, they have occurred frequently across the globe. One could also argue that while most terror suspects in the United States have not necessarily set out

³⁹ Federal Bureau of Investigation.

⁴⁰ Morton and Hilts, *Serial Murder*.

⁴¹ Bruce Hoffman, “Defending America against Suicide Terrorism,” in *Three Years After: Next Steps in the War on Terror*, ed. David Aaron (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2005), 21–22.

⁴² Richard Fleece, “Suicide Terrorism in America?: The Complex Social Conditions of This Phenomenon and the Implications for Homeland Security” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2012), 1, <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=732023>.

to kill themselves in their attacks, they are often killed or captured during, or shortly after, perpetuating their acts of violence.

As some have pointed out, to support his use of terror, there often needs to be an underlying structure to help the actor follow through on the planning and completion of his mission. Ami Pedahzur argues that, historically, most suicide attacks are directed by a terror organization, and the individual attackers merely act in service of their group.⁴³ Further, he writes that the attacker is often compelled by the terrorist group to go through a process of socialization and integration to put the interests and needs of the group ahead of his own.⁴⁴ When the psychological importance of terrorism has been examined, in most cases, successful attacks have led to the death of the attacker, thus making it impossible to determine the individual's thinking leading up to the moment of attack. Pape and Bloom agree that there is no single profile of a suicide attacker, and no one specific factor leads to his or her decision.⁴⁵ Working to develop an alternate framework to understand suicide terrorism, Fleece argues that the increase in this mode of attack is driven by the lack of basic personal opportunities in the individual's sociocultural systems.⁴⁶

Much research has been conducted on the psychology of terrorism, but few scholars agree on a particular psychological profile of an attacker. Brannan, Darken, and Strindberg warn, "Individual psychology is not an explanation of terrorism; it is rather, an analytical trap that seems appealing because it looks scientific."⁴⁷ For his part, Jeffrey Lewis suggests that it is not a personality trait that enables attackers but the sponsoring terrorist organization's creation of a model that has made it socially acceptable to transform oneself into a weapon.⁴⁸ Lewis writes that it is fundamentally due to the simple effectiveness of

⁴³ Ami Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism* (Cambridge, MA: Polity, 2005), 261.

⁴⁴ Pedahzur, 261.

⁴⁵ Robert Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 3 (2003): 343–361; and Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 88.

⁴⁶ Fleece, "Suicide Terrorism in America?," 4.

⁴⁷ Brannan, Darken, and Strindberg, *A Practitioner's Way Forward*, 29.

⁴⁸ Jeffrey Lewis, *The Business of Martyrdom: A History of Suicide Bombing* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2012), 346.

the method that suicide terror is used today.⁴⁹ Mohammed Hafez agrees with this assessment, stating that suicide bombs are probably the most accurate bombs ever created, which is the primary reason they are used.⁵⁰ However, as discussed in the literature, no single proven belief leads one to the act of suicide terrorism and no known personality traits or belief systems are necessary.

The loss of a terrorist during an attack—whether by death or arrest—necessitates a change in tactics by some terrorists to a model that allows more than one attack to sustain a campaign. This significant and necessary change leads directly to the hypothesis and the research questions addressed in this thesis.

4. Perceived Difference between Crime and Terrorism

The analysis in this thesis warrants a discussion of the perceived differences between traditional crime and terrorism. The various comparisons in academia among experts and scholars help to explain the debate. Currently, there is significant work being done to categorize the differences among terrorist, criminal, and political actors to help identify a framework that will give homeland security and law enforcement practitioners the ability to apply solutions to what they describe as a phenomenon of “convergence of terrorism, crime, and conflict.”⁵¹ One significant step forward is work being undertaken by international and national institutions to allow them to become better at detecting and monitoring individual criminal acts associated with the precursors of terrorism.⁵² According to Ganor, defining terrorism requires determining the context in which acts are committed. Furthermore, he states, “Researchers are divided in their opinions of whether terrorism should be considered a criminal act or a political-military act.”⁵³ This debate,

⁴⁹ Lewis, 80.

⁵⁰ Mohammed M. Hafez, “Dying to Be Martyrs: The Symbolic Dimensions of Suicide Terrorism,” in *Root Causes of Suicide Terrorism: The Globalization of Martyrdom*, ed. Ami Pedahzur (New York: Routledge, 2006), 56.

⁵¹ Britt Sloan and James Cockayne, “Terrorism, Crime, and Conflict: Exploiting the Differences among Transnational Threats?” (Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation, February 2011).

⁵² Sloan and Cockayne.

⁵³ Ganor, *The Counter-Terrorism Puzzle*, 8.

then, invites discussion of whether—and to what degree—criminal courts, rules of evidence, and jurisdictional issues are relevant in terror investigations and arrests. Additionally, it brings the importance of a clear-cut definition of terrorism to the forefront.⁵⁴ This lays the foundation for exploring key differences between what is considered terrorism and what is considered everyday crime, not to mention how they might be interrelated.

Several experts find that terrorism and ordinary crime are frequently linked. Gary LaFree, for example, acknowledges that crime and terrorism have much in common, but he also recognizes that each poses unique challenges for police and their responses to either circumstance.⁵⁵ His main concern regarding the challenges terrorism poses for law enforcement is the national or international aspects of it, which can quickly drain local law enforcement resources.⁵⁶ Others have similar concerns, specifically that terrorism has become a local law enforcement and community matter and that law enforcement organizations will have to increase their deployment of resources for counterterrorism efforts.⁵⁷

LaFree further suggests that, over the last 50 years, there has been such a shift in terrorism that it most closely resembles gang, hate, or drug crimes.⁵⁸ In many of these cases, the primary purpose of the crime is to help fund the activities of larger organizations. Laqueur supports the suggestion that terrorism has begun to invade the criminal world via more traditional crime such as drug trafficking.⁵⁹ LaFree indicates that terrorist attacks are frequently connected to cells within an organizational structure, which work to sustain their

⁵⁴ The Global Terrorism Database defines terrorism as "the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by nonstate actors, in order to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation." Gary LaFree, "Policing Terrorism," *Ideas in American Policing*, no. 15 (July 2012), 2, https://www.policefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Ideas_15_LaFree_1.pdf.

⁵⁵ LaFree, "Policing Terrorism," 1.

⁵⁶ LaFree, 1.

⁵⁷ Lois Davis et al., *Long-Term Effects of Law Enforcement's Post-9/11 Focus on Counterterrorism and Homeland Security* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2010), 1, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG1031.html>.

⁵⁸ LaFree, "Policing Terrorism," 2.

⁵⁹ Laqueur, *The Age of Terrorism*, 305.

major campaigns of violence over the course of many years, or even decades.⁶⁰ Thus, consideration must be given to the specific acts that a terrorist might commit and how they fit under today's laws. For example, when funding their activities, terrorists could engage in theft, extortion, or human and narcotics trafficking. In and of themselves, these are not terror-specific crimes, but they may be the precursors for terror campaigns.

LaFree has found similarities, as well as differences between terrorism and ordinary crimes.⁶¹ He argues that one commonality is that quite often they are both committed by young men. As this is a common trait, it also underscores an unfortunate fact that both terrorism and crime can erode trust and social legitimacy in communities in which they occur.⁶² The problem of common crime is already a significant struggle for society and tends to undermine confidence in the criminal justice system.

Bersani and LaFree acknowledge that, thus far, there have been few empirical comparisons between crime and terrorism in the United States. They recognize that more analysis conducted in academia needs to be done in this area. However, in a 2012 study, they conclude that the application of well-known criminology studies and frameworks could be relevant in terrorism scholarship.⁶³

When conceptualizing terrorism and crime, there is some agreement among experts. Liem, van Buuren, and Schönberger agree that terrorism and homicide are socially constructed occurrences.⁶⁴ That is to say that the social constructs of both emphasize dependence on an individual's social self. Differences in conceptual understandings include circumstances within which a terror suspect commits multiple acts such as kidnapping, murder, or extortion. However, unlike typical crimes, a response to a terrorist

⁶⁰ LaFree, 6.

⁶¹ LaFree, 6.

⁶² LaFree, 6.

⁶³ Gary LaFree and Bianca Bersani, *Hot Spots of Terrorism and Other Crimes in the United States, 1970 to 2008: Final Report to Human Factors/Behavioral Sciences Division, Science and Technology Directorate, U.S. Department of Homeland Security* (College Park, MD: START, 2012), 3, 27–28.

⁶⁴ Marieke Liem, Jelle van Buuren, and Hanneke Schönberger, "Cut from the Same Cloth?: Lone Actor Terrorists versus Common Homicide Offenders," *Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism Studies* 9 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.19165/2018.1.05>.

event is likely to include local resources but is less likely to be controlled locally. This aligns with a point that LaFree and Dugan make about terrorism being a common problem in which an increase and shift toward a serial nature could overburden local law enforcement.⁶⁵ This point resonates strongly in this thesis.

5. Are Terrorists Changing Tactics?

The hypothesis of this thesis, described in the following paragraph in detail, makes it necessary to explore not only the relationship between crime and terrorism but also a potential shift in terror tactics. Ganor suggests that terrorists often make rational choices by weighing the cost-versus-benefit ratio of their actions. Frequently, terrorism is chosen deliberately because of its effectiveness and influence.⁶⁶ More contemporary iterations of terrorist acts suggest that cruelty and torture are faster and more effective in communicating the terrorists' intended message, which contrasts markedly with what Laqueur submits is regular criminal behavior. He explains, "The ordinary criminal may torture a victim but this will be the exception rather than the rule. He is usually motivated by material gain, not fanaticism."⁶⁷ This relevant point helps to underscore the fundamental difference between the motivations of regular crime and those of terrorism, and it can aid in explaining the terrorists' shift in mindset.

While in many instances terrorists may be idealists and have the utmost belief in their respective causes, there is a growing concern regarding a shift in the underlying reasons for terrorism and the strategies used. Laqueur addresses this change: "The early terrorists abstained from acts of deliberate cruelty. But with the change in character of terrorism, decent and humane behavior is no longer the norm."⁶⁸ It is debatable whether terrorism has ever been considered "decent" or "humane," but Laqueur's point is that, from

⁶⁵ Gary LaFree and Laura Dugan, "How Does Studying Terrorism Compare to Studying Crime?," in *Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism* (Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing, 2015), 58–60, 71, [https://doi.org/10.1108/S1521-6136\(2004\)0000005006](https://doi.org/10.1108/S1521-6136(2004)0000005006).

⁶⁶ David Weisburd et al., *To Protect and to Serve: Policing in an Age of Terrorism* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 2011), 15.

⁶⁷ Laqueur, *The Age of Terrorism*, 305.

⁶⁸ Laqueur, 304–305.

the terrorists' perspective, violent acts are carried out for the betterment of the cause and that the ends justify the means. Furthermore, he describes terrorists as idealists who exhibit increased intelligence and are more humane than ordinary criminals.⁶⁹ While this may have been true in 1987 when his work was published, much has changed since then. Thus, what was perhaps once true may no longer be the case today. Adding to Laqueur's observations, Dugan and LaFree suggest that the majority of terrorists—compared to most typical criminals—have an altruistic view of themselves.⁷⁰ Jerome Bjelopera confirms this sentiment: "Domestic terrorism cases differ from ordinary criminal activity in key ways. Most importantly, unlike ordinary criminals—who are often driven by self-centered motives such as profit and tend to opportunistically seek easy prey—domestic terrorists are driven by a cause or ideology."⁷¹ Stanton Samenow suggests that the reasons for terrorism may just begin with criminal motives whereas the criminal adds a cause to enhance legitimacy.⁷²

Jeffrey Johns helps to demonstrate the change in mindset and tactics. In a 1999 strategic research project, he writes, "The United States faces an unprecedented and increasingly dangerous threat from asymmetrical organizations. These groups have the potential to inflict unprecedented damage to U.S. citizens, property, and vital interests."⁷³ Johns is correct in his assessment although he could not have predicted the attack that would occur just two years later. In his paper, he acknowledges that the threat is changing, as are the breed of terrorist and the acts they are willing to conduct.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Laqueur, 304.

⁷⁰ LaFree and Dugan, "How Does Studying Terrorism Compare to Studying Crime?," 60.

⁷¹ Jerome P. Bjelopera, "Sifting Domestic Terrorism from Other Illegal Activity," *CRS Insights*, June 24, 2015.

⁷² Stanton E. Samenow, "Terrorism: Criminality in Search of a Target," *Psychology Today*, August 31, 2016, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/inside-the-criminal-mind/201608/terrorism-criminality-in-search-target>.

⁷³ Jeffrey F. Johns, "The Changing Face of Terrorism" (strategy research project, U.S. Army War College, March 10, 1999), 1.

⁷⁴ Johns, 1.

Johns makes the argument that after the end of the Cold War and the Soviet support of terror, there was a substantial decline of terrorism in the period of the early 1990s. He explains that terrorism—its nature and tactics—has remained roughly the same over the last half century, in that terror suspects have typically utilized assassinations, bombings, assaults, kidnappings, and hostage-taking as their primary tools of choice.⁷⁵ However, he predicts that in the next 50 years, the world would face a different kind of terrorism. In the new millennium, he writes, “terrorism will be the greatest threat facing U.S. security in the coming century because it has evolved into something new and different. Specifically, its changes in capabilities and personality will create a unique species of terror more deadly than America ever combated in its past.”⁷⁶ While Johns does predict an increase in the use or attempted use of chemical, biological, and radiological weapons, he suggests that advances in communication and technology may enhance even small attacks to make them more spectacular and destructive.⁷⁷ Further, he acknowledges a shift toward indiscriminate killing by any possible means, even without political goals. Johns foresees “new terrorism dimensions . . . through the extremely violent acts of small groups.”⁷⁸ Although Johns wrote this piece in 1999, he was accurate in his prediction of the modern terrorist mindset and the goal of indiscriminate killing by any means.

In a 2009 article, John Picarelli discusses Bruce Hoffman’s and Marc Sageman’s thoughts on how terrorism is evolving. Picarelli writes that Hoffman, a terror expert, believes that the main terrorism threat still comes from groups like al-Qaeda while Sageman, another expert in the field, thinks that terrorism is in the process of changing to a bottom-up model—through communities and enhanced by social networks and the internet.⁷⁹ Additionally, Sageman suggests that the U.S. response to the terror attacks of 9/11 broke up the larger terror groups, thus forcing a change in their organizational

⁷⁵ Johns, 17.

⁷⁶ Johns, 17.

⁷⁷ Johns, 18.

⁷⁸ Johns, 22–23.

⁷⁹ John T. Picarelli, “The Future of Terrorism,” *National Institute of Justice Journal*, no. 264 (November 2009): 27–28.

structure, tactics, and methodologies. He points out that the global Salafi jihad movement evolved to entail would-be terrorists in a radicalization process of self-selection, identification, and a personal desire to act for jihad.⁸⁰

Hoffman acknowledges the change in terrorism among the new generation of terror suspects. He describes them as being “less cohesive organizational entities, with a deliberately more diffuse structure and membership with distinctively more opaque command and control relationships.”⁸¹ This translates into a different type of terrorist, who possibly represents a more lethal and elusive threat.⁸² It appears that both Sageman and Hoffman agree on this point. While each has differing opinions on how terrorism will change, they both may be correct about the significance of the threats. Hoffman generally believes that the main threat of terrorism will come from a center-periphery model, where the main force and leadership will remain in distant safe havens while planning additional significant, large-scale attacks.⁸³ Sageman, on the other hand, predicts that the threat will come from small groups of individuals who are loosely linked to larger terror organizations yet able to support themselves and remain more autonomous in their preparations and executions of attacks.⁸⁴ Neither of these two experts could have predicted with certainty what would occur between 2009—when the Picarelli article was written—and more recent times. While history has shown that Sageman was correct, this does not mean that Hoffman was wrong. To the contrary, the threats Hoffman predicted remain a valid concern. However, Sageman’s thinking on the nature of the threats is more in line with what this thesis explores.

⁸⁰ Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 52–54.

⁸¹ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 271.

⁸² Hoffman.

⁸³ Picarelli, “The Future of Terrorism,” 28.

⁸⁴ Picarelli, 28.

D. HYPOTHESIS

This thesis examines the hypothesis that terrorism in the United States, from groups like Al-Qaeda, ISIS, and others, will begin to change in tone, scope, and scale. If these types of organizations call for more lone wolf and small group attacks, the United States will have to change its focus to prevent and respond to these new threats. These terror organizations, as well as other terrorist groups, have seemingly begun to realize that they cannot field enough followers to continue the tactics they have been encouraging in the past. For some terror organizations, the difficulty in recruitment and the losses in the field have led to a decline in their numbers.⁸⁵ Thus, a newer approach may cause the terrorists to begin to rethink their strategies to obtain multiple attacks from an individual adherent. Historically, while most serial killers have tried to conceal their crimes to sustain their conduct, some have taunted the government and the populace with their acts—such as by writing letters to local newspapers—and, in so doing, engendered tremendous fear in large groups of people over significant periods. One way that terrorist groups could be effective with fewer terrorists on the ground is to copy the methods of serial killers overtly and then use technology to augment the public’s fear.

E. RESEARCH DESIGN

This thesis examines three cases of well-known serial killer events and compares them to three recent cases of terrorism. In so doing, this work considers the following for its case study analysis:

1. The inherent nature of serial killer events (once identified and publicized) causes great fear and panic in the local population affected by the event. These effects are similar to those suffered by victims of terrorism. This similarity requires a rigorous comparison of the two. If serial killer events are similar in effect but do not meet the definition of terrorism, the definition of terrorism may need to be modified to include such acts.

⁸⁵ Charlie Winter and Colin P. Clarke, “Is ISIS Breaking Apart?,” *Rand Blog*, January 31, 2017, <https://www.rand.org/blog/2017/01/is-isis-breaking-apart.html>.

2. If serial killer events are included in the definition of terrorism, there will be implications for the homeland security enterprise, including for local law enforcement.

This thesis also examines the possible impacts and implications of terrorism that use tactics similar to serial killers. These tactics, coupled with technology, could create substantial obstacles for homeland security practitioners as they pertain to both prevention and response.

Methodologically, this thesis uses a systematic comparative case study method. The main analytical focus discusses the choice of selection and the details of six prominent cases or events. Each case has been selected to demonstrate the interrelationship between what is occurring in terms of terrorist acts in the United States and what has occurred in the past pertaining to serial killer events. Each case utilized in this work was chosen for its significance and its relative impact on the community in which it occurred. The three examples of terrorism are well-known modern cases that have been widely reported in the United States. The three serial killer cases are also well known, but they are not commonly considered acts of terrorism. They include the Zodiac killer, the BTK killer, and the D.C. Beltway snipers. The three terrorist events are ones that occurred in Boston, Massachusetts; San Bernardino, California; and Orlando, Florida. A comprehensive comparison of these six incidents allows a study of the congruency, differences, discourse, patterns, and effects of each. In turn, this analysis then provides the opportunity to develop some key takeaways as they pertain to possible policy implications. The discussion of each case raises the same questions for all six, allowing a full comparison and analysis as well as the cases' similarities and differences.

This study examines how tactics might change with the use of new technology to allow individual terrorists to sustain their attacks over longer periods, thus causing an impact greater than that of any single lone wolf or small group attack. However, this work does not delve into specific motivating factors, such as ideology, religion, or disenfranchisement, nor does it focus on any one terrorist organization.

This work uses information and data synthesized from books and journal articles—both scholarly and political—as well as publications produced by various organizations and think tanks. Other critical sources of information include the publications of the terrorist organizations themselves and the writings produced by some serial killers. Few documents in academia relate to terrorists operating like serial killers as a terrorist tactic; thus, this methodology necessitates including recent news articles and other publications to support the hypothesis.

The output of this analysis better frames the scope of a potentially emerging threat and provides the basis for recommendations on how the homeland security enterprise might prepare to meet and mitigate this new type of threat. This thesis, thus, provides a better understanding of the risks posed by the use of serial terrorism as a way for attackers, terror groups, and similar organizations to sustain their efforts over longer periods while still having as great an impact as using a single large-scale terror act.

Resulting from the two enumerated focal points, the following are key propositions raised in this analysis, and they serve as the analytic components for the case comparisons. These propositions consider the effects of a new definition of terrorism with a particular focus on domestic terrorist events.

1. **Comparative Demographics:** How do the demographics of serial-killer terrorist events compare to the demographics of traditional terrorist events? Here, the thesis assesses the characteristics of the individuals involved in the various events (i.e., age, social status, political and ideological beliefs, and the location of terrorist event).
2. **Policy Implications:** How do serial killers and traditional terrorist events correspond, and how do they differ? What are the implications of the similarities and differences for both local and national policing policies?
3. **Size of Attack Force (Two or More):** What are the inherent implications of events perpetrated by a single person versus those perpetrated by a group? Did the event(s) in question involve a single perpetrator or multiple co-conspirators?

4. **International Terror Influence, Difference:** How do the events perpetrated by an international terrorist organization differ from those perpetrated by a single possibly psychologically impaired individual?
5. **International Terror Influence, Used as a Tool:** What are the implications of an international terror organization's influence regarding an event? Did previous acts inspire the event, or did it inspire others to act similarly? Was the event used as a recruitment tool by its architects? Did it encourage copycat acts?
6. **Length of Attack and Alteration to Daily Living:** What are the implications of the length of the attacks and the number of events? Did the event sequence cause people in the region to alter their patterns of daily living? Did the event sequence cause people outside the local area (i.e., other parts of the nation) to alter their patterns of daily living?
7. **Psychological Impacts:** What was the impact of the event(s) relative to the loss of security and the sense of fear? Did the event(s) affect people regionally, nationally, or internationally?
8. **Regional Impacts Due to Continuation (over 72 Hours):** What were the temporal aspects of the event(s) relative to the length of the attack or fear of at-large suspect(s)? Did the event(s) in question continue for more than 72 hours?
9. **Use of Technology or Communication:** Did technology or other communication tools heighten or prolong the fear experienced by the population? Did the perpetrator or perpetrators use technology to complete their attack or communicate with the authorities or the public to prolong or heighten the public fear?
10. **Fits the New Definition of Terrorism:** Does the event(s) fit with the new definition of terrorism as laid out in this thesis?

The criteria for this study were developed to aid in the identification of the acts conducted by serial killers and terrorists to explicate similarities, differences, and linkages. Additionally, this work examines how terrorists might adopt tactics that mirror those of notorious serial killers to sustain their attacks over prolonged periods. Hence, one central purpose is to examine serial killer events and to detail the differences in comparison to terrorism events that have occurred since 2001.

F. CHAPTER OUTLINE

The remainder of this thesis is organized as follows. Chapters II through VII present the details of each case discussed in this thesis. Each chapter provides a brief overview of one case, analyzes it based on the key propositions, and presents a table summarizing the analysis. Chapter VIII brings together a final analysis of how each of the six presented cases compares to one another based on the criteria matrix employed, highlights the fundamental similarities and differences of the various cases, and poses the potential threat implications revealed in this study. Chapter VIII ends with some recommendations that may become important or necessary if there is a shift toward serial terrorism. Chapter IX offers final words and areas for future study.

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II. ZODIAC

The Zodiac killer committed a series of murders in the San Francisco Bay Area in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This case is significant to this thesis because it shows how a single determined person can frighten a large population for an extended period. To heighten the terror among the populace, the Zodiac killer communicated to the public through the media. This case was chosen for the suspect's relatively simple crimes and ability to prolong fear in the region.

A. BACKGROUND

While not the most prolific serial killer in U.S. history, the self-named Zodiac killer was certainly one of the most notorious. The killer claimed responsibility for five murders between 1968 and 1969 in the greater San Francisco Bay Area, but his later public communications greatly heightened fear among the population into the mid-1970s. The elusive killer's identity remains unknown to this day, but many believe that a man by the name of Arthur Leigh Allen (1933–1992), one of the prime suspects in the case, may have been responsible.

The first confirmed Zodiac murder occurred in late 1968 when two people, David Faraday, 17, and Betty Lou Jensen, 16, were gunned down on lover's lane in Benicia, California.⁸⁶ Subsequently, in July 1969, Michael Mageau, 19, and Darlene Ferrin, 22, were also shot while sitting in a parked vehicle in Vallejo, California. Ferrin died from her injuries, but Mageau, despite being shot multiple times, survived the attempt.⁸⁷ Following that incident, in September 1969, while overlooking Lake Berryessa in Napa County, California, Bryan Hartnell, 20, and Cecelia Shepard, 22, were attacked by a lone hooded man. Initially, the man used a gun to control the pair, tying them up. Once they were bound and secured, the attacker stabbed them multiple times. Shepard died from her injuries, but Hartnell survived. Hartnell later provided a police artist with information that was to

⁸⁶ William T. Rasmussen, *Corroborating Evidence II: The Cleveland Torso Murders, the Black Dahlia Murder, the Zodiac Killer, the Phantom Killer of Texarkana* (Santa Fe: Sunstone Press, 2005), 154.

⁸⁷ Rasmussen, 161.

become the widely known sketch of the executioner's outfit belonging to the Zodiac suspect. He described the killer as wearing a black hood and a bib bearing a circle with a cross on it.⁸⁸ This symbol became a signature mark of the Zodiac killer. The last confirmed Zodiac killing occurred in the evening hours of October 11, 1969, when a cab driver, Paul Stine, 29, picked up a fare in San Francisco. Stine drove to the outskirts of the San Francisco Presidio, where the passenger then shot Stein in the head, tore off a bloodstained swatch of the cab driver's shirt, and fled the scene. Police officers responding to the call of a shooting were mistakenly given a description of a black male suspect over the police radio; however, just a short distance from the scene, officers saw a white male, later determined to be the Zodiac. They did not apprehend him due to the wrong initial description.⁸⁹

The FBI summarizes the Zodiac killer case on its website as follows: "The seemingly random brutal murders of five people in California's Bay Area in 1968 and 1969 and a series of taunting cryptic notes sent by their killer terrorized Northern California for years."⁹⁰ As is highlighted in subsequent analysis, this case posed several specific problems that are common among other serial killer cases as well. As the FBI points out, these murders did not trigger any federal jurisdiction issues, so the Bureau did not open an investigation.⁹¹ However, multi-jurisdictional issues and mistrust among the various police agencies involved hampered the case from the beginning.⁹² Trying to help in the investigation, the FBI did offer assistance by way of behavioral analysis, fingerprint analysis, criminal background checks, and cryptanalysis.⁹³

⁸⁸ Rasmussen, 164–165.

⁸⁹ Rasmussen, 5–6, 166–168.

⁹⁰ Federal Bureau of Investigation, "The Zodiac Killer," March 2, 2007, https://archives.fbi.gov/archives/news/stories/2007/march/zodiac_030207.

⁹¹ Federal Bureau of Investigation.

⁹² Robert Graysmith, *Zodiac Unmasked: The Identity of America's Most Elusive Serial Killer Revealed* (New York: Bently Books, 2002), viii, 33.

⁹³ Federal Bureau of Investigation, "The Zodiac Killer."

Several other unsolved homicides from the states of California and Nevada may have been related to the Zodiac killer, but their connections have never been proven. Nonetheless, it is still worthwhile to discuss these other murders, which the Zodiac killer may have committed, as some individuals believe there are probable connections. In 1966, in Riverside, California, Cheri Jo Bates, 18, was found by local police deceased with multiple knife wounds. This murder was not linked to the Zodiac series until 1969, when the killer began sending letters bearing a similar language and style to those of the later Zodiac letters. In the Bates case, there was some speculation that the killer may have been an acquaintance of the victim. The last incident attributed to the Zodiac was the kidnapping of 22-year-old Kathleen Johns and her infant daughter on March 22, 1970, which occurred along a highway near Modesto, California. While driving with Johns, the perpetrator told her that he was going to kill them both. Fortunately, while holding her daughter, Johns was able to jump from the moving vehicle and escape.

Since these crimes were committed before DNA analysis was available for law enforcement, most of the evidence collection focused on trying to use fingerprint and handwriting examinations. Over the active years, the killer corresponded in writing with the public and authorities, providing numerous difficult—if not impossible to solve—ciphers. The inclusion of these codes led many involved in the case to speculate on the intelligence and background of the murderer and to profile him. The killer's handwritten letters and ciphers were compared against samples from a multitude of suspects. At the height of the Zodiac case, law enforcement had investigated over 2,500 suspects.⁹⁴ One of the primary suspects, a man named Arthur Leigh Allen—who many experts think was the Zodiac—was linked to the case through an array of circumstantial evidence. The lack of physical evidence and the inability to link Allen's known handwriting samples to the writings of the killer appeared to be the main hurdles keeping the authorities from prosecuting him for the crimes. Moreover, many theorists do not believe Allen was the perpetrator due to the lack of direct physical evidence linking him to the murders.

⁹⁴ Graysmith, *Zodiac Unmasked*, v, 33.

B. QUESTIONS/PROPOSITIONS ADDRESSED

Table 1 applies the research propositions as a criteria matrix to case of the Zodiac killer. Note that the cell values for this table suggest whether the particular proposition is relevant, not relevant, or unknown relative to the specific case. This same table format is used throughout the analysis of each case, culminating in a single table in Chapter VIII. Table 7 serves as the basis for the comparative analysis, primarily looking for trends and patterns across all cases and types of cases (i.e., terrorist events or serial killer events).

Table 1. Criteria Matrix for the Zodiac Killer Case

Propositions	Yes	No	Unk	Notes
Comparative Demographics			UNK	No arrest made—no suspect has been identified to date. Likely chose victims
Policy Implications	YES			Each law enforcement agency conducted own investigation- Local
Difference of Size of Attack Force (Two or More)		NO		
International Terror Influence, Differences		NO		
International Terror Influence, Used as Tool		NO		
Difference in Length of Attacks and Alteration to Acts of Daily Living	YES			His acts and letters caused fear throughout the SF Bay Area
Psychological Impacts	YES			Long term and widespread fear and anxiety
Regional Impacts Due to Continuation (Over 72 Hours)	YES			These events lasted between one and 11 years
Use of Technology or Communication	YES			Cryptic messages and letters
Fits the New Definition of Terrorism	YES			

1. Comparative Demographics

In this case, the Zodiac killer was linked to at least five confirmed murders and several attempted murders in just over one year's time. The majority of his known crimes were confined to the San Francisco Bay Area—specifically, Benicia, Vallejo, Napa County, and San Francisco. There has also been much speculation—yet no conclusive evidence—that he committed other murders in and around the state and the nation. In addition to the five confirmed murder victims, as discussed, two others were injured but survived. All the victims were white, and all were between 16 and 29 years old. Of those

murdered, three were females, and two were males. Both of the surviving victims were males. All of the victims were young adults, non-professionals hailing from middle-class backgrounds. The killer has repeatedly been described as a white male, but because there has never been an arrest or subsequent interview with an identified suspect, no determination can be made as to his actual age, demographics, social status, socioeconomic standing, or political and ideological beliefs. This assessment and its complexity suggest that the value of demographics on the case is unknown, as depicted in Table 1.

2. Policy Implications

In this case, the killer targeted just a few individuals, but the manner in which he did so and the media attention it garnered caused great fear for hundreds of thousands more, much more so than for any individual event or killing. A leading author on the case, Robert Graysmith, called the Zodiac “the twentieth century version of the bogeyman.”⁹⁵ The series of murders also occurred in multiple jurisdictions, requiring interagency participation and cooperation. In the absence of an FBI mandate to take over the case, the California Department of Justice got involved to bridge the gap between agencies. Nevertheless, there is no evidence that this made a real difference, as the outcome was still a series of unsolved murders. Because none of these cases individually or collectively fit the criteria necessary for the FBI to take over as the lead investigatory agency, the killings remained within local jurisdictional silos. In fact, one of the main failures in solving this case was the lack of interagency cooperation. It is clear that the investigators—influenced by mistrust, competition, and interagency possessiveness—withheld information from one another to the detriment of the case.⁹⁶ This type of problem has arisen in many criminal investigations across the nation over the years. However, a terrorism designation prompts the FBI to get involved as the primary investigative body, with the rest of the involved parties acting in supporting roles. Although it is impossible to say whether this would have led to a different result in the Zodiac case, it is certainly worth consideration. Thus, as

⁹⁵ Graysmith, 26.

⁹⁶ Graysmith, viii, 62–63.

depicted in Table 1, there are existing policy implications relative to this case, and they greatly extend to local law enforcement and a lack of information sharing.

3. Size of Attack Force (Two or More)

Throughout the series of Zodiac murders, there was never any proof that a second actor, or any conspiracy, was involved. In fact, it is highly unlikely that anyone other than a single killer was involved in any one of the events or in the letter-writing campaign. Nonetheless, several incidents over the years prompted authorities to look into this possibility.⁹⁷ One of the main reasons for this was that there was so much circumstantial evidence against Allen, yet none of the handwriting samples matched. This led the police to consider whether a co-conspirator aiding in the murders wrote the letters, or there were two separate killers, known to each other, who inspired and encouraged one another.⁹⁸ These possibilities are highly unlikely, but because there was never an arrest or closure of the investigation, it is difficult to determine definitively.

4. International Terror Influence, Difference

During the time the Zodiac killer was conducting his crimes, there were many terrorists—both domestic and international—performing operations around the world. International terrorists in this same period frequently conducted airline hijackings and random bombings while many domestic terrorist organizations undertook attacks against law enforcement through shootings and bombings, not to mention attacks against other government establishments. These terrorist operations lie in stark contrast to what the Zodiac was doing, targeting just one or two people at a time while they were vulnerable; thus, the lack of international terror influence is noted in Table 1.

Allen was committed to the Atascadero Mental Hospital in 1975 for two years for child molestation.⁹⁹ During this time of incarceration, he received numerous psychological evaluations. The evidence is clear that whoever the Zodiac killer was, the person suffered

⁹⁷ Graysmith, 390–391, 402.

⁹⁸ Graysmith, 390–391, 402.

⁹⁹ Graysmith, 168–169, 174.

from some psychological impairment. Yet, because an arrest was never made, a psychological professional never had the opportunity to evaluate the specific mental disorder or conditions that affected the killer, thus making it impossible to determine the specific psychological issues affecting his behavior.

5. International Terror Influence, Used as a Tool

Because the case remains open and unsolved, it is difficult to determine the killer's motivations. Some inferences can be drawn from his writings, but without an in-depth interview, it is impossible to determine with certainty what made him kill in the manner he did. There is some anecdotal evidence that the main suspect, Allen, may have been guided or inspired by a short story he took to heart called "The Most Dangerous Game."¹⁰⁰ In his letters and ciphers, the Zodiac mentions this short story as a possible motivating factor. The story seems to promote the idea that man is the most dangerous prey to hunt.¹⁰¹ There is no evidence that outside terror influences inspired the Zodiac killer.

The extent to which other would-be serial killers were inspired by the Zodiac case is also unknown. A more in-depth look at serial killers, including their crimes, patterns, and motivations, might help reveal how they learn from one another, whether directly or through news accounts. However, these trends are beyond the scope of this thesis.

In the case of the Zodiac, no evidence suggests that the killer used his crimes to recruit or encourage others to follow suit, and no evidence suggests that international terror organizations used his methods in their attacks. Nevertheless, he inspired copycat killers.¹⁰² For example, in one case, a person who went by the name Zodiac was an active copycat from 1990 to 1993 in New York City.¹⁰³ The New York City Police Department eventually solved this series, which was determined to have no direct links to the San Francisco Bay Area Zodiac killings. In 1997, there was another copycat killer, dubbed the

¹⁰⁰ Graysmith, 40.

¹⁰¹ John Douglas and Mark Olshaker, *Mindhunter: Inside the FBI Elite Serial Crime Squad* (London: Arrow Books, 2017), 254.

¹⁰² Graysmith, *Zodiac Unmasked*, vii.

¹⁰³ Graysmith, 306–317.

Zodiac, who was active for two months in Kobe, Japan.¹⁰⁴ However, it is unknown whether this young man was influenced by the 1960s' Zodiac case, as he was only 14 years old when he committed his murders.

6. Length of Attack and Alterations to Daily Living

As an example of how the original Zodiac killer stirred the fear and anxiety of the region, he says in one of his 1969 letters, "I shall no longer announce to anyone when I commit my murders, they shall look like routine robberies, killings of anger and a few fake accidents, etc. The police shall never catch me because I have been too clever for them."¹⁰⁵ These two sentences not only struck fear into all who read them but also awakened the public to the possibility that many more seemingly random deaths could be attributed to the killer. The police, already feeling a great deal of pressure to solve the cases, now had an even bigger problem on their hands.

To compound the fear surrounding the killing of innocent people, the Zodiac frightened the entire region for several years with his letter-writing campaign. The communications of the killer provided a relatively "safe means of committing public terror by drawing on the credibility fostered by the murders."¹⁰⁶ For their part, the local media outlets, while concerned they were enabling him, were worried that he would kill more people if they did not publish his messages as he demanded. To prevent more bloodshed, they complied with his demands to publish his letters and hoped that the police would quickly solve the case. However, the results of publishing his letters steeply increased the number of tips the police received, forcing the police to triage the prodigious information they were receiving. Thus, instead of identifying solid sources of evidence, they were forced to wade through an ocean of less-than-reliable, loosely linked possibilities. This work took an overwhelming amount of time and resources and bore little fruit.

¹⁰⁴ Graysmith, 437–440.

¹⁰⁵ Rasmussen, *Corroborating Evidence II*, 153; and Graysmith, *Zodiac Unmasked*, vi.

¹⁰⁶ Douglas Oswell, *The Unabomber and the Zodiac* (East Sussex, UK: Gardners Books, 2007), 42.

The case eventually affected almost every citizen in the entire San Francisco Bay Area, as no one was immune to the fear. It triggered many to mistrust their neighbors, lock their doors at night, and avoid going outside. The result was that—while the known attacks lasted only a relatively short amount of time—the effects lasted for many more years. In large part, this was due to the police’s inability to solve the case and the suspect’s persistent letter writing and phone calls to the media and police.¹⁰⁷ There is no evidence that this case affected people’s patterns of daily living outside the greater San Francisco Bay Area. Table 1 represents the long-term impacts on the region and clear alterations to people’s daily living.

7. Psychological Impacts

There is clear and strong evidence that the Zodiac killer frightened the entire San Francisco Bay Area region. What started heightening fears among many was his frequent communication with the media and authorities via letters and phone calls. Through these actions, he was able to provoke a reaction far beyond his physical reach, frightening many after only harming a few. Parents were afraid to send their children to school for fear he would make good on his promise to kill them as they exited their school buses. Many communities enlisted armed police escorts following school buses full of children while others used helicopters. Some parents decided simply to keep their children home from school.¹⁰⁸ Teens were afraid to go out in public because their general peer group had been a frequent target of the Zodiac.¹⁰⁹ Additionally, during his letter-writing campaign, the Zodiac started using a scoring mechanism whereby he tallied his murders, claiming he had 37 kills to the San Francisco Police Department’s zero captures.¹¹⁰ This fear did not subside, even after he stopped claiming individual acts. In his letters, the Zodiac killer

¹⁰⁷ Mark Hewitt, *Hunted: The Zodiac Murders* (Encino, CA: Genius Book Publishing, 2016), 6.

¹⁰⁸ Graysmith, *Zodiac Unmasked*, vi, 13.

¹⁰⁹ This fear and anxiety was not isolated only to the Bay Area, as the killer of Cheri Jo Bates sent similar letters to the Los Angeles area claiming responsibility for her murder.

¹¹⁰ Rasmussen, *Corroborating Evidence II*, 201.

indicated he would stop telling authorities of his crimes and would start making his kills look like other types of deaths, such as accidents.¹¹¹

8. Regional Impacts Due to Continuation (over 72 Hours)

It is difficult to pinpoint the full temporal dimension of this fear campaign due to the nature of the events and the subsequent investigations. Many argue that the events started in 1968 with the first commonly recognized Zodiac murder reported. However, others argue that the fear of an at-large suspect became a primary concern when the Zodiac first made contact with the authorities and began to claim the murders. Still, others moved the timeline back to an earlier starting point, with the June 1963 murders of Robert Domingos, 18, and Linda Edwards, 17, both of whom were shot and killed on a beach in Santa Barbara County, California.¹¹² There is also the aforementioned possible link to the 1966 murder of Cheri Jo Bates, 18, in Riverside. In the Bates case, the killer—later believed to be the Zodiac—claimed the murder shortly after her death, but he did not use the name Zodiac, and the murder was not reported widely in the media at the time.¹¹³ Thus, while the well-established Zodiac murders occurred only in 1968 and 1969, the full impact of the events spanned 1963 to 1974, when the last letter was received. Regardless, the Zodiac killer had a profound effect in terrorizing the people of the region for multiple years.

9. Use of Technology or Communication

In the Zodiac case, the killer used a variety of tools to communicate with the authorities and the media. After several of his killings, he made calls from pay phones to alert the police to the murders. Additionally, he sent letters to the local newspapers and police departments providing information about the murders. As mentioned, some of these letters included cryptograms; once the codes were deciphered, they revealed aspects of the killer's motives. These letters and cryptograms also contained evidence proving the writer

¹¹¹ Rasmussen, *Corroborating Evidence II*, 153; and Graysmith, *Zodiac Unmasked*, vi.

¹¹² Graysmith, *Zodiac Unmasked*, 14, 75–77.

¹¹³ Rasmussen, *Corroborating Evidence II*, 214; and Douglas and Olshaker, *Mindhunter*, 145.

was the one doing the killing.¹¹⁴ In the ciphers, the killer included “over 50 shapes and symbols to represent the 26 letters of the alphabet. Ultimately the code was made public and broken by two university professors.”¹¹⁵ The killer also claimed that some of his cryptograms would reveal his identity, but these attempts have been unsuccessful, and many of the cryptograms remain unbroken today. Furthermore, in several of his letters, he claimed numerous murders that far exceeded what authorities could definitively link to him. In other letters, he mentioned additional acts that he was planning if his demands were not met. Thus, the killer’s use of the technology available to him to communicate at the time is demonstrated in Table 1.

Overall, then, the Zodiac killer used a unique signature to claim his killings, taunt the police, and instill fear in the public. In sending letters and cryptograms to the police and newspapers and by insisting that they were to be published—giving ultimatums that he would continue to kill if his demands were not met—he magnified the public’s knowledge about the murders and instilled great fear in millions of people.

10. Fits the New Definition of Terrorism

The preceding analysis patently demonstrates that the Zodiac case fits with the new definition of terrorism used in this thesis. Without question, this series of killings utilized a method of violence that altered attitudes and behaviors of multiple audiences by targeting a few innocent, non-combatant victims while claiming the attention of the masses. The incessant letter campaign employed by the killer clearly affected those who were not initially targeted by the violence. This series of brutal acts, in the midst of what was occurring in the international and domestic spheres of terrorism—to say nothing of the events of the Vietnam War, political unrest, and changing cultural dynamics—compounded the feelings of unease and torment and had the potential to influence political and social situations.

¹¹⁴ Håvard Raddum and Marek Sýs, “The Zodiac Killer Ciphers,” *Tatra Mountains Mathematical Publications* 45, no. 1 (January 1, 2010), <https://doi.org/10.2478/v10127-010-0007-8>.

¹¹⁵ Federal Bureau of Investigation, “The Zodiac Killer.”

C. CONCLUSION

The Zodiac killer case demonstrates that a sustained campaign of violence can cause an entire region of the country to fear for its safety and well-being for a prolonged period. As this analysis demonstrates, the Zodiac killer targeted relatively young people in vulnerable situations. The acts he committed caused many people in the greater San Francisco Bay Area to alter their patterns and daily living. This constant state of fear—enhanced by the killers numerous letters claiming far more killings than could be verified and coupled with the codes that could not be broken—likely had long-lasting effects on people’s perception of their safety, security, and mortality. Additionally, it might have led them to question the ability of their local law enforcement officials, resulting in a lack of trust between the community and its political and safety leadership. Finally, this case—as laid out in the preceding pages—would be considered terrorism based on the definition used in this thesis. If this case were to occur today under this definition, the FBI would become the lead investigative authority, which would likely cut through the information sharing and communication issues that law enforcement faced in the 1960s and 1970s.

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III. THE BTK KILLER

Like the Zodiac, the BTK killer frightened and threatened a large region for many years. These murders occurred in and around Wichita, Kansas. The BTK killer, Dennis Rader, also utilized the media to heighten fear and concern among the population and police authorities. This case was chosen due to the relative simplicity of the crimes and the killer's ability to prolong terror.

A. BACKGROUND

The acronym BTK stands for “bind, torture, kill,” self-styled identity of Dennis Rader, a serial killer who perpetuated a series of murders starting in 1974 and ending with his capture in 2005.¹¹⁶ This 31-year sequence of murders and terror saw the deaths of 10 innocent people in the city and surrounding communities of Wichita, Kansas. His last known killing was in 1991, but Rader admitted in his confession that at the time of his arrest, he was actively planning and stalking his 11th victim.¹¹⁷

Rader committed his first killing in 1974 when he killed four members of the Otero family. After stalking 11-year-old Josie Otero and her family for weeks, learning their patterns and habits, he planned his attack for the morning of January 15. Rader entered the house thinking that only the mother, Josie's nine-year-old little brother, and Josie would be home, but he was surprised to find Mr. Otero there, too. Using a gun, Rader was able to overpower all four family members, eventually killing them through strangulation, suffocation, and asphyxiation.

Rader's second killing was just four months later. He entered the home of a 21-year-old woman, Kathryn Bright, whom he eventually stabbed to death. As with the Oteros, he had taken his time and stalked his victim while trying to apply lessons he had learned from the previous murder. Once again, he was surprised when the victim's brother was

¹¹⁶ Norman D. Williams and Kenneth Landwehr, “Bind Torture Kill: The BTK Investigation,” *Police Chief* 73, no. 12 (December 2006): 19.

¹¹⁷ Roy Wenzl et al., *Bind, Torture, Kill: The Inside Story of the Serial Killer Next Door* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2007), 309.

home.¹¹⁸ During this event, Rader tried to kill both the intended victim and her brother, but the brother escaped after being shot several times by Rader. The escape caused Rader to panic, leading him hurriedly to kill Kathryn to avoid capture. The Wichita Police were unaware that the same person had committed Kathryn's and the Oteros' murders until the killer sent them a communique in October that year.¹¹⁹

Next, on March 17, 1977, Rader entered the home of Shirley Vian and strangled her with a rope. Later that same year, on December 8, he entered the home of Nancy Fox and strangled her with a belt. To this point, all of the killings had occurred within a 3.5-mile radius.¹²⁰ Rader then halted his killings for eight years. However, on April 27, 1985, he entered the home of his neighbor, Marine Hedge, and strangled her with his hands. Both Rader and his victim lived in Park City, Kansas, a community neighboring Wichita. Then, on September 16, 1986, he strangled Vicki Wegerle to death inside her Wichita home, using a nylon stocking. His final confirmed victim was Dolores Davis, another Wichita resident, whom he killed by strangling her with nylons on January 19, 1991. Rader admittedly stopped after this killing but said that from 1991 to 2005, he actively stalked victims and was planning to commit another murder. He was captured on February 25, 2005.¹²¹

After the 1991 murder, there were no communications from the BTK killer for several years. A news report in the early 2000s speculated that he had likely been incarcerated or was deceased.¹²² This led him to restart his correspondence. The lead investigator on the case said, "If he had just quit [killing] and kept his mouth shut, we might

¹¹⁸ Rebecca Taylor LaBrode, "Etiology of the Psychopathic Serial Killer: An Analysis of Antisocial Personality Disorder, Psychopathy, and Serial Killer Personality and Crime Scene Characteristics," *Brief Treatment and Crisis Intervention* 7, no. 2 (April 25, 2007): 151–60, <https://doi.org/10.1093/brief-treatment/mhm004>.

¹¹⁹ Tomas Guillen, "Serial Killer Communiqués: Helpful or Hurtful," *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture* 9, no. 2 (2002): 55–68.

¹²⁰ Guillen, 55–68.

¹²¹ Wenzl et al., *Bind, Torture, Kill*, 309.

¹²² Mark Hansen, "How the Cops Caught BTK: Playing to a Serial Killer's Ego Helped Crack the Case," *American Bar Association Journal* 44 (May 2006), http://www.abajournal.com/magazine/article/how_the_cops_caught_btk/?icn=most_read.

have never connected the dots.”¹²³ All told, throughout this 31-year reign of terror, Rader was responsible for 10 confirmed murder victims and one person who was seriously wounded but survived.

B. QUESTIONS/PROPOSITIONS ADDRESSED

Table 2 applies the research propositions as a criteria matrix to the BTK killer case. Note that the cell values for this table suggest whether the particular proposition is relevant, not relevant, or unknown relative to the specific case.

¹²³ Hansen, 45.

Table 2. Criteria Matrix for the BTK Killer Case

Propositions	Yes	No	Unk	Notes
Comparative Demographics	YES			Chose specific victims
Policy Implications	YES			Multiple jurisdictions involved, formation of BTK task force; local
Difference of Size of Attack Force (Two or More)		NO		
International Terror Influence, Differences		NO		
International Terror Influence, Used as Tool		NO		
Difference in Length of Attacks and Alteration to Acts of Daily Living	YES			Caused widespread alterations, some got dogs, others had alarms installed
Psychological Impacts	YES			Struck fear in the community for decades
Regional Impacts Due to Continuation (Over 72 Hours)	YES			Total time from the first killing to his capture was 31 years
Use of Technology or Communication	YES			Attempt to communicate via computer led to his identification
Fits the New Definition of Terrorism	YES			

1. Comparative Demographics

Rader's victims varied greatly in both age and ethnicity. He killed both male and female victims, old and young.¹²⁴ Except for the members of the Otero family, who were Hispanic, his victims were Caucasian. Two of the murdered Otero family members were male, and two were children. The rest of the murder victims were females ranging in age from 21 to 62. Rader intended to kill only females, but on two occasions, two adult males

¹²⁴ LaBrode, "Etiology of the Psychopathic Serial Killer," 151–160.

were present and became additional victims. Additionally, after murdering Shirley Vian, Rader was planning to kill her three children—two boys and a girl—but the home phone rang, and he decided he should leave immediately.¹²⁵ Bringing together all of the attacks, including the 10 murder victims and the four intended victims, four were Hispanic, and 10 were white. Five were males, and nine were females. The males were all incidental victims and not the primary intended targets. Five were children, and nine were adults. All victims were from middle-class socioeconomic backgrounds. The means of killing and included strangulation by rope, belts, nylons, and hands as well as asphyxiation using plastic bags, stabbing, and shooting. All of the tools Rader used were easy to acquire, and none took special training to use. As for Rader, he is a white male, born in 1945. He lived most of his life in Wichita, Kansas. He appeared to have a normal upbringing, although there have been some reports that he tortured animals in his youth, and he may have suffered a mild head injury as a child.¹²⁶ He served in the military and, after discharge, held several jobs while attending college, eventually earning his bachelor's degree in the administration of justice. Thus, the analysis demonstrates that demographics in this case were relevant as to the killer's choice of victim.

2. Policy Implications

The complexity of this case required the organization and assembly of a task force by the local Wichita Police Department. Over the course of the 31-year investigation, there were several periods when different aspects and participants of the task force ramped up or down based on activities, incidents, or leads in the case.¹²⁷ The development of the task force required the cooperation of local and federal partners as well as the implementation of special policies, memorandums of understanding, and the identification of specific funding sources. With all of these aspects in play, the investigation still yielded little until

¹²⁵ Wenzl et al., *Bind, Torture, Kill*, 39.

¹²⁶ "Dennis Rader Biography," Biography, accessed June 28, 2018, <https://www.biography.com/people/dennis-rader-241487>.

¹²⁷ Jedd Beaudoin, "Determining Factors," *The Shocker: Wichita State University Alumni Magazine*, Fall 2005, 2, <http://wsu.wichita.edu/the-shocker/story.php?eid=58&id=1513#.W2JqaLhJk2w>.

shortly before Rader's apprehension. Therefore, despite the numerous policy implications involved—like in the Zodiac case—they were isolated to the local level.

3. Size of Attack Force (Two or More)

As is common among serial killers, Dennis Rader hid his activities from everyone, including his family, colleagues, and friends.¹²⁸ Although the authorities believed the killer was acting alone, they did not know for sure until Rader was arrested and confessed. Having copycat murders or a co-conspirator would have likely caused more confusion in the investigation. Though there were incidents of similar murders over the 31 years that the authorities believe might be part of this series, the investigation revealed no linkages. Additionally, Rader was consistent in communicating with authorities to claim his kills; in some of the cases, his communications allowed the police to link cases they had not known were related. After Rader was arrested, he pleaded guilty and was sentenced to incarceration for the remainder of his natural life with no possibility for parole.

4. International Terror Influence, Difference

Rader suffered from some mental imbalance. As is common with serial killers, he was seemingly able to lead a normal life from outward appearance, but he felt no empathy or remorse.¹²⁹ No evidence suggests he was motivated by any outside influences.

According to Rader's police interrogators, he suffers from a huge ego and displays such a strong opinion of himself that he considers the police his friends and colleagues.¹³⁰ Roy Hazelwood, a retired FBI profiler, states that Rader also displays at least seven types of sexual deviations or paraphilic behaviors—most serial killers only display one or two.¹³¹ Furthermore, Hazelwood states that Rader suffers from at least two personality disorders—psychopathy and narcissism—that are common types found in serial killers.

¹²⁸ Guillen, "Serial Killer Communiqués."

¹²⁹ Wenzl et al., *Bind, Torture, Kill*, 307–309.

¹³⁰ Hansen, "How the Cops Caught BTK," 44.

¹³¹ Hansen, 44.

These two personality disorders are typically found in people who display a lack of fear, remorse, guilt, or empathy.¹³²

5. International Terror Influence, Used as a Tool

According to Rader and those working the case, he was not inspired by any particular acts of others. He first started killing while attending college, where he was working toward obtaining a degree in administration of justice. In his confession, he admitted to learning much about the forensic value of physical and trace evidence when he was in college and, therefore, was careful not to leave anything behind that could lead to his identity.¹³³ Outside of college and for much of the time he was committing his crimes, he worked as a home alarm system technician. He later became a civilian compliance officer for a local municipality. His education and his jobs taught Rader valuable lessons about police investigations and security and allowed him to practice stalking victims while on the job. Thus, he used the academic and professional knowledge he gained to prevent his arrest. There are no documented cases of copycat murders or others, including international terror organizations, being inspired by Rader's acts.

6. Length of Attack and Alteration to Daily Living

Rader used these communications to taunt the police and to frighten the public.¹³⁴ He also created a unique signature, which he utilized in his communications. As Katherine Ramsland, a forensic Psychologist, writes, Rader's signature was "sexualized to resemble a female torso. . . . [He] wanted his crimes linked and was frustrated when they weren't. He'd often call it in himself or send items to ensure that his BTK persona got credit. He crafted his signature for effect, as well as to set him apart as an elite killer."¹³⁵ Relatively

¹³² Hansen, 44.

¹³³ Vernon J. Geberth, "Crime Scene Staging and Alterations: The CSI Effect on Criminal Investigations," *Journal of Professional Investigators* 20, no. 2 (April 2007), <http://www.practicalhomicide.com/Research/PIMag0707.htm>.

¹³⁴ LaBrode, "Etiology of the Psychopathic Serial Killer," 151–160.

¹³⁵ Katherine Ramsland, "Serial Killer Signatures: Some Killers Leave Very Unique Personal Stamps," *Shadow Boxing* (blog), December 4, 2013, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/shadow-boxing/201312/serial-killer-signatures>.

common among serial killers, the creation of a personalized signature is, at times, simply for effect, but in other instances, it is part of the psychological abnormality.¹³⁶ In the case of Rader, his use of the female torso signature in his communications worked to frighten the public even more.

Rader's acts had a detrimental effect on the people of the greater Wichita area for much of the entire 31-year time span, as noted in Table 2. Many of these years, residents remained frightened because of the nature of the crimes. Many residents claimed that out of fear of the events, they were forced to alter their patterns of daily living. As the killings continued, some were even afraid of entering their own homes; some residents took security precautions such as installing security alarms, getting dogs, or purchasing firearms to better protect themselves.¹³⁷

7. Psychological Impacts

Those in the city of Wichita specifically felt the fear caused by Rader's murders. However, the fear spilled over to other communities as well, particularly after he murdered in the neighboring community of Park City. In this case, he murdered Davis in her home in Park City and disposed of her body 30 minutes south of Wichita in the community of Belle Plaine, causing fear throughout the entire region. No available data demonstrate the degree to which Rader's acts had an effect outside the local region vis-à-vis a national or international impact. Of course, during those 31 years, there were also other active serial killers in the United States. Thus, it is logical to assume that the constant news reports of additional victims may have led to greater widespread fear, as the lines blurred between particular serial killers and the murders for which they were responsible.

8. Regional Impacts Due to Continuation (over 72 Hours)

The known murders committed by Rader lasted for 17 years, yet during that long period, he occasionally sent correspondence to the police and media. This pattern lasted throughout most of the 31-year span, from his first murder to his eventual arrest.

¹³⁶ Ramsland.

¹³⁷ Wenzl et al., *Bind, Torture, Kill*, 188.

Sometimes, years went by without a murder, correspondence, or any hint of BTK's continued existence, but then, suddenly, he would communicate with the police or public, bringing the entire nightmare of the murders to the surface once again. During the lulls in the crimes and communication, many hypothesized that the killer was either dead or incarcerated before he reappeared via correspondence.¹³⁸ For instance, he communicated with authorities 11 times between mid-March 2004 and February 2005.¹³⁹ In these communications, he taunted law enforcement with drawings, letters, and bizarre poems. Some of the drawings depicted his bound or tortured victims.¹⁴⁰ As documented in Table 2, these types of continued incidents kept the people of Wichita on edge for years.

9. Use of Technology or Communication

From the outset, Rader utilized the means he had available to him to communicate with the public and the police. He did this by writing letters and leaving notes. Additionally, at different points, Rader made phone calls to authorities to claim credit for particular killings or to taunt them. He also kept souvenirs from many of the victims and took photos of them postmortem. Occasionally, Rader sent these items to the authorities to prove who he was. Toward the end of this investigation, police received information that the suspect had left a message for them in the back of a truck in a retail store parking lot. When they viewed the store's security surveillance footage, they saw a brief grainy glimpse of Rader and his vehicle. This image became significant in Rader's eventual arrest as it helped confirm the type of vehicle he drove.¹⁴¹

In late 2004, police were communicating with Rader through ads in the local newspaper. Rader asked the lead investigator of the BTK Task Force whether floppy disks could be traced and was assured they were an untraceable, secure way to communicate. Rader then wrote a test letter on a floppy disk and mailed it to the authorities.¹⁴² When the

¹³⁸ Williams and Landwehr, "Bind Torture Kill: The BTK Investigation," 17.

¹³⁹ Geberth, "Crime Scene Staging and Alterations."

¹⁴⁰ Geberth.

¹⁴¹ Wenzl et al., *Bind, Torture, Kill*, 234.

¹⁴² Williams and Landwehr, "Bind Torture Kill: The BTK Investigation," 20.

police received the floppy disk, they immediately retrieved the metadata and discovered the name “Dennis” as well as additional information about the computer on which the letter was written. The pieces of the puzzle quickly fell into place from there. Shortly thereafter, Dennis Rader was arrested and eventually confessed to all 10 murders. In total, Rader sent 19 messages over the course of the 31 years.¹⁴³ His use of technology and communication is depicted in Table 2.

10. Fits the New Definition of Terrorism

As noted in Table 2, Rader’s crimes fit the definition of terrorism used in this thesis. The series of murders affected people over the course of many years; it altered their attitudes and behaviors for the entire period, and it made people fearful that they—or their friends or loved ones—might be victimized. The increase in people installing home security alarms attested to this phenomenon. Unfortunately, unbeknownst to them, Rader was one of the area’s alarm installation technicians.¹⁴⁴

Though Rader was not the most prolific serial killer in U.S. history, his actions against the few certainly claimed the attention of many. Therefore, his violence changed not only social situations for local community members but also influenced operations of government agencies involved in the search for the killer—not to mention the political environment in the affected communities. His reign of terror impacted people’s social interactions and habits. Though no available data suggest to what extent Rader changed these acts of daily living or for exactly how long, an abundance of anecdotal evidence suggests that his acts frightened the members of the region over an extended period while he was at-large. Additionally, during the latter years of the investigation, the police task force sought DNA swabs from a vast number of local men to try to find a match to evidence from the crimes.¹⁴⁵ In just under one year’s time, between early 2004 and 2005, the BTK Task Force collected over 1,300 DNA samples from men in the community.¹⁴⁶ This type

¹⁴³ Hansen, “How the Cops Caught BTK,” 44.

¹⁴⁴ Wenzl et al., *Bind, Torture, Kill*, 32, 281.

¹⁴⁵ Wenzl et al., 190.

¹⁴⁶ Williams and Landwehr, “Bind Torture Kill: The BTK Investigation,” 16.

of mass screening was seen by many as a significant invasion of people's rights and is still a point of contention today.

C. CONCLUSION

Dennis Rader utilized his positions of trust in his community to act out his perversions on the innocent people he victimized. He sustained this campaign of stalking and violence on the people of Wichita for several decades, remaining right under the noses of police the entire time. If he was unable to attack someone for whom he had an affinity, he reacted impulsively toward another victim. During his serial murders, Rader worked alone and did not share any information about his deeds with anyone. Utilizing relatively simple acts, he was able to sustain his campaign of violence, communicate with authorities, and terrorize Wichita and its surrounding communities. There is ample evidence that his acts led many to alter their acts of daily living or take measures to protect themselves from harm. Rader's last murder was in 1991, but during the time between that killing and his arrest in 2005, he was actively stalking additional victims. After his arrest, he admitted that he likely would have killed again before stopping. This is a significant fact because, if he had indeed killed again, the people of that community—who had already lived through decades of fear and worry—would have once again felt great insecurity. Additionally, another murder would likely have frightened a whole new generation of Wichita residents. The case of Dennis Rader, then, like that of the Zodiac killer, fits the definition of terrorism utilized in this thesis. Like the Zodiac case, using this designation of terrorism would have made the FBI the lead investigative authority and brought together all the tools and resources at its disposal to search for and apprehend the killer.

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IV. D.C. BELTWAY SNIPERS

The pair of killers who would become known as the D.C. Beltway snipers caused great fear and anxiety in the Washington, D.C., region during a 23-day period in the latter part of 2002. Like the BTK killer, they were responsible for 10 murders. However, the more compact timeline and the massive media attention forced people to change their habits and daily living almost immediately. Like the Zodiac and BTK killers, the snipers found ways to communicate with authorities to heighten fear. The D.C. Beltway snipers' case was chosen due to the killers' ability to cause fear and panic through relatively simple acts of violence.

A. BACKGROUND

In October 2002, in and around the area of Washington, D.C., 10 people were murdered and three critically injured in a series of random shootings by unknown assailants over the course of 23 days. This case, known as the D.C. Beltway sniper shootings, caused great fear and panic among the residents and visitors of the area.¹⁴⁷ This series of shootings prompted a massive police investigation that, fortunately, resulted in the successful apprehension and prosecution of the killers.

The murders started on October 2, 2002, with the killing of James Martin while he was crossing a parking lot in Wheaton, Maryland, not far from Washington, D.C., The next day, October 3, five more people were killed. Four were shot in Maryland—James Buchanan, Prem Kumar Walekar, Sarah Ramos, and Lori Ann Lewis-Rivera—and one more, Pascal Charlot, was shot in D.C. On October 4, Caroline Seawell sustained a bullet injury while loading her vehicle at a Spotsylvania, Virginia, mall. Three days later, on October 7, 13-year-old Iran Brown was wounded while at school in Bowie, Maryland. On October 9, while filling his vehicle with gas, Dean Meyers was murdered near Manassas, Virginia. Two days later, on October 11, Kenneth Bridges was killed near Fredericksburg, Virginia. He, too, was killed while getting gas. On October 14, Linda Franklin was shot

¹⁴⁷ Alex Mitchell, "Social Impacts of Fear: An Examination of the 2002 Washington, DC Sniper Shootings" (Undergraduate honors thesis, Colorado State University, 2007), 6–10.

and killed in the area of Falls Church, Virginia. After five days of no shootings, the attacks resumed on October 19, when Jeffrey Hopper was wounded in Ashland, Virginia. On October 22, Conrad Johnson, the last victim of the snipers, was murdered in Aspen Hill, Maryland.¹⁴⁸ It was in Maryland two days later that authorities made arrests in the case, of John Allen Muhammad, 41, and his younger associate, Lee Boyd Malvo, 17.¹⁴⁹ Both were subsequently convicted for these shootings. Muhammad was sentenced to death and executed in 2009, and Malvo received multiple life sentences.

During the latter stages of this crime series, the suspects began to communicate with the authorities to taunt them and heighten fear and panic in the area. The D.C. Beltway sniper case is utilized in this thesis to examine how random, sporadic, and sustained violence can impact a community or region. The communication that came from the killers as well as the massive media response put tremendous pressure on government officials to solve the case and stop the killings. After exhaustive investigative efforts, investigators learned that this crime series had not been confined to the 23 days in the D.C. metropolitan area but had included at least 10 other incidents across the country—from February 2002 to September 2002—wherein additional people were either wounded or murdered. Each of these cases is believed to have been—and, in some cases, confirmed as—violent acts committed by Muhammad and Malvo.

B. QUESTIONS/PROPOSITIONS ADDRESSED

Table 3 applies the research propositions as a criteria matrix to the D.C Beltway snipers case. Note that the cell values for this table suggest whether the particular proposition is relevant, not relevant, or unknown relative to the specific case.

¹⁴⁸ Carmeta Albarus and Jonathan Mack, *The Making of Lee Boyd Malvo: The D.C. Sniper* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 3.

¹⁴⁹ Federal Bureau of Investigation, “Beltway Snipers,” accessed August 1, 2018, <https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/beltway-snipers>.

Table 3. Criteria Matrix for the D.C. Beltway Snipers Case

Propositions	Yes	No	Unk	Notes
Comparative Demographics		NO		Muslim faith-but does not appear to be a factor
Policy Implications	YES			Formation of an ad hoc task force; regional/national
Difference of Size of Attack Force (Two or More)	YES			Two killers
International Terror Influence, Differences		NO		
International Terror Influence, Used as Tool		NO		
Difference in Length of Attacks and Alteration to Acts of Daily Living	YES			Caused great changes in peoples acts of daily living
Psychological Impacts	YES			Caused great fear and panic across the region
Regional Impacts Due to Continuation (Over 72 Hours)	YES			23 days in the initial killings, over 10 months total across the nation
Use of Technology or Communication	YES			Communication was via phone calls and notes, taunting police
Fits the New Definition of Terrorism	YES			

1. Comparative Demographics

By most accounts, these incidents, collectively, would be considered the work of serial killers. As outlined and discussed in Chapter I, these killings fit the common serial killer definition.¹⁵⁰ In all of the crimes committed, there were 15 victims killed and eight injured by Muhammad and Malvo in 2002. Of those who were only injured, six were male, and two were female. Of the murder victims, nine were male, and six were female. The

¹⁵⁰ Federal Bureau of Investigation, "A Byte Out of History: The Beltway Snipers, Part 1," October 22, 2007, https://archives.fbi.gov/archives/news/stories/2007/october/snipers_102207.

murder victims' racial makeup was varied and diverse, revealing no pattern that would suggest race played a role in the murders. Because there was an arrest and a partial confession in the case, much has been learned about the suspects, including their motivations and beliefs. However, there remains a lack of full data regarding the different socioeconomic statuses or political beliefs of the victims.

For their part, Muhammad and Malvo were both black males. Originally named John Williams, Muhammad was a U.S. Army and Gulf War veteran who was discharged from service in 1994.¹⁵¹ Later, through the Nation of Islam, he converted to the Muslim faith and changed his name to Muhammad.¹⁵² After the army, he worked in a variety of jobs and divorced his wife before meeting Malvo in 2000.¹⁵³ The two struck up a friendship, with Muhammad filling the position of role model and pseudo-father figure for the 15-year-old Malvo.¹⁵⁴ Muhammad manipulated and motivated Malvo, not only throughout the entire series of shootings but also from the time they first met.¹⁵⁵ Muhammad's ex-wife, Mildred, who had recently relocated to the Washington, D.C., area just before the shootings, believes that Muhammad may have been seeking to murder her and was conducting this series of killings to make her murder look like a random act.¹⁵⁶ Although he never confessed to the shootings, during his 2006 trial, Muhammad alluded to the loss of his children in a custody battle with Mildred on August 31, 2001, as his "9/11," meaning his call to action.¹⁵⁷ Regardless of the actual motive, Muhammad never confessed to the shootings. Unlike the BTK case in which demographics of the victims mattered, there was no commonality among victims in the sniper case. As with the suspects of the terrorism cases in subsequent chapters, one of the suspects in the sniper case was

¹⁵¹ Angie Cannon, *23 Days of Terror: The Compelling True Story of the Hunt and Capture of the Beltway Snipers* (New York: Pocket Books, 2003), 39–41.

¹⁵² Cannon, 42.

¹⁵³ Albarus and Mack, *The Making of Lee Boyd Malvo*, 89.

¹⁵⁴ Cannon, *23 Days of Terror*, 54–55.

¹⁵⁵ Albarus and Mack, *The Making of Lee Boyd Malvo*, 92, 98, 104, 126–127.

¹⁵⁶ Mildred Muhammad, *Scared Silent: The Mildred Muhammad Story, a Memoir* (Largo, MD: Strebor Books, 2009), 196.

¹⁵⁷ Albarus and Mack, *The Making of Lee Boyd Malvo*, 2.

Muslim. However, unlike the other terrorist cases, there is no evidence Muhammad perpetrated his crimes based on ideology.

2. Policy Implications

This series of crimes involved multiple jurisdictions working together to stop the killings and bring a successful resolution to the case. The overall investigation was led by the Montgomery County Police Department, with cooperation from the FBI and dozens of other law enforcement and government organizations lending aid in a supporting capacity.¹⁵⁸ Bringing the case to a successful resolution required the vast efforts of many organizations and individuals across the country. In total, over 1,000 investigators worked the case nationwide.¹⁵⁹ What was initially believed to be a localized incident turned out to be a series of events that had taken place across the country. Because the onset of the killings was immediate and the shootings ongoing, there was no time for any of these various police and government organizations to develop inter-jurisdictional agreements or memorandums of understanding. Nevertheless, with surprising efficiency, all of those on the case appear to have worked well together to bring the perpetrators to justice. Thus, this case had regional and national policy implications due to its eventual scope (see Table 3).

3. Size of Attack Force (Two or More)

As discussed, this case involved two shooters working together to conduct their attacks, as shown in Table 3. There is ample evidence that they practiced well in advance of their killings.¹⁶⁰ As mentioned, Muhammad was a former U.S. Army soldier and had weapons training. Although there is no evidence that Malvo had any prior weapons training before he met Muhammad, both men practiced ahead of time with the firearms they used during their shooting spree. From his army experience, Muhammad trained Malvo in the art of conducting sniper operations.¹⁶¹ The full search of the suspects' vehicle after their

¹⁵⁸ Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Beltway Snipers."

¹⁵⁹ Cannon, *23 Days of Terror*, 62.

¹⁶⁰ Albarus and Mack, *The Making of Lee Boyd Malvo*, 115–118.

¹⁶¹ Albarus and Mack, 135.

arrest revealed common sniper and spotter equipment.¹⁶² It is clear that the pair of killers worked together in an attempt to be more effective than either could have been alone. Nevertheless, it seems quite possible that a single shooter could have had a similar degree of success in this type of attack.

In an interview, Muhammad's ex-wife, Mildred, recalled an exchange with Muhammad that lends some clarity to the man's long-held plans to terrorize many people. Mildred claims that Muhammad once said, "You know, I could take a small city, terrorize it, and they would think it would be a group of people. But it would only be me."¹⁶³ Although this statement envisions Muhammad acting alone, he found a way to involve Malvo as a willing participant in his terror plot. In time, investigators learned that Malvo, having been abused and neglected for many years as a young child, was searching for a "hero dad," and Muhammad was happy to fill that role.¹⁶⁴

At trial, Malvo's defense team contended that he had been manipulated and coached by Muhammad and that the entire series of shootings was an attempt by the older man to kill his ex-wife, so he could gain custody of his children.¹⁶⁵ Malvo gave a full confession of his involvement in the crimes from his perspective, but his statements did not provide a complete picture of the events.¹⁶⁶ In fact, there has been much speculation about how Muhammad got Malvo to go along with his plot, but no definitive answer has been forthcoming other than what Malvo provided in his statements to the police.

4. International Terror Influence, Difference

There is ample evidence that Muhammad had a violent temper, issues with anger, and fits of rage.¹⁶⁷ Based on earlier comments to his ex-wife, he believed he could use the tactics he employed to terrorize people and create large-scale fear. As noted in Table 3,

¹⁶² Cannon, *23 Days of Terror*, 249.

¹⁶³ Muhammad, *Scared Silent*, 188.

¹⁶⁴ Albarus and Mack, *The Making of Lee Boyd Malvo*, 2.

¹⁶⁵ Albarus and Mack, 8–9.

¹⁶⁶ Albarus and Mack, 13.

¹⁶⁷ Albarus and Mack, 188.

Muhammad did not intend to proclaim allegiance to any outside influence, and no evidence indicates that his conversion to the Islamic faith was a factor in his acts.

During the murders, he and Malvo left written messages for the police to find and made attempts to communicate with local authorities by calling a tip hotline and the Maryland police chief's office. Through that communication, Muhammad easily could have made his acts look like the work of international terrorism, but instead, he and Malvo claimed to be "God" and started making demands for money. Had they claimed to be Al-Qaeda or some other known terror organization, they might very well have inspired copycat acts, which would have likely made stopping them that much harder.

In an attempt to understand how Malvo came to be involved in these crimes, investigators discovered several potential key factors in his background. As a young child, Malvo had a close relationship with his biological father, but his parent's separation led to an estrangement from his father. Experts speculate that this event and significant neglect and abuse by numerous adults years later were the genesis of his clinical diagnosis of reactive attachment disorder.¹⁶⁸ Muhammad thus found an ideal subject to participate in this shooting spree.

5. International Terror Influence, Used as a Tool

As previously mentioned, there is little evidence that this incident was inspired by any foreign actors, and it does not appear that Muhammad's conversion to Islam played any factor in his behavior. Rather, there is speculation that Muhammad was seeking revenge for the removal of his children following a custody dispute. In the custody battle, his ex-wife alleged child concealment and abuse by Muhammad, which led to a judge's order granting her sole custody. Following the order, Mildred and the children secretly moved in with family in the Washington, D.C., area. Muhammad had been living near Tacoma, Washington, at the time. Almost one year after her move to the D.C. area, the sniper shootings started. Mildred believed that these killings were a way for Muhammad

¹⁶⁸ Albarus and Mack, 39–45.

to eventually kill her and disguise her death as another random murder in the series.¹⁶⁹ Fortunately, as noted in Table 3, there is no indication that any copycat crimes, especially from international terrorist organizations, occurred relative to these acts. However, this type of series could certainly be utilized by those so inclined, including terrorist organizations, as a way to sustain terror for a significant period.

6. Length of Attack and Alteration to Daily Living

As depicted in Table 3, the three-week shooting rampage had dramatic effects on the area inhabitants and visitors to D.C. An October 2002 poll conducted by the *Washington Post* showed that half of all residents had significant concern regarding the events that were transpiring and were fearful that they could become victims. Nearly half of those polled said that the shooting incidents and the fear they caused had a disruptive effect on their lives.¹⁷⁰ Over 40 percent said that they were fearful of going outside while another 28 percent said that they were at least a little concerned for their safety.¹⁷¹ A wide swath of residents in and around the entire D.C. metro region, encompassing millions of people, were so afraid of being killed that many adopted changes to their daily activities, including missing work or school, traveling in groups, and avoiding public places whenever possible.¹⁷² Mildred, Muhammad's ex-wife, said, "The sniper was taking aim at people with no thought to race, gender, or age, which terrified all of us. . . . The randomness of these shootings made every resident of the area feel as though he or she could be next."¹⁷³ Some stated that they specifically avoided parking lots, gas stations, and stores near the interstate while others said they were fearful of wooded areas or tree lines, as they might make them more susceptible to attack. Additionally, over 60 percent of

¹⁶⁹ Muhammad, *Scared Silent*, 180.

¹⁷⁰ Richard Morin and Claudia Deane, "Half of Area Residents in Fear, Post Poll Finds," *Washington Post*, October 24, 2002, https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/half-of-area-residents-in-fear-post-poll-finds/2012/09/27/85641650-08a0-11e2-858a-5311df86ab04_story.html.

¹⁷¹ Morin and Deane.

¹⁷² Mitchell, "Social Impacts of Fear."

¹⁷³ Muhammad, *Scared Silent*, 181.

parents polled said that they started keeping children from playing outside.¹⁷⁴ Some parents even suggested that the National Guard should be brought in to provide security until the sniper was caught.¹⁷⁵ The series of attacks over this 23-day period had a significant impact on the residents and visitors of the entire Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. Had authorities known at the time that the killers had been murdering people across the country over the preceding 10 months, the killings would have elevated fears and concerns even more significantly.

7. Psychological Impacts

This series of incidents—while widely believed to have been isolated to the Beltway region—had actually been occurring nationwide. The biggest impact of these events, of course, was in the greater Washington, D.C., area, which in large part had to do with the frequency of the events and the media coverage received. There is vast evidence that residents and visitors to the Beltway region were so unnerved by the snipers that they changed their habits to avoid situations where they believed they might be vulnerable. Even Muhammad's ex-wife—fearful of being a random victim herself—claimed that she had become hypervigilant in noticing suspicious persons, and during the shootings, she had seen a car that matched the eventual suspects' vehicle with two black males in it near her house.¹⁷⁶ This sighting, if accurate, lends credence to the possibility that Muhammad had been committing these crimes to eventually kill her. Regardless, as noted in Table 3, her story and others highlight the fact that people were suffering psychologically, on edge and taking notice of anything that seemed out of place.

Though there is no evidence that these D.C. events had any impact internationally, there is no doubt that the thousands of foreign visitors to Washington, D.C., every month heard press coverage of the event in their home countries before traveling. Thus, there is a possibility that some visitors chose to delay or change their travel plans to Washington, D.C., until after the police made arrests in the case.

¹⁷⁴ Morin and Deane, "Half of Area Residents in Fear."

¹⁷⁵ Morin and Deane.

¹⁷⁶ Muhammad, *Scared Silent*, 181.

8. Regional Impacts Due to Continuation (over 72 Hours)

There is ample evidence that these events caused fear among residents and visitors in the greater Washington, D.C., area. The longer the killers were at-large, the seemingly greater impact the events had on people's lives. Although the Beltway series of killings lasted 23 days, investigators later determined that the actual murders committed by Muhammad and Malvo lasted approximately 10 months (see Table 3). Considering the Beltway incidents, Mildred Muhammad said, "These shootings got the attention of everyone, including the police, since there were so many and happened within a few miles of each other. . . . The thought of an anonymous sniper, hidden from sight, terrified everyone in our region."¹⁷⁷ Mildred, of course, had no idea that she would become a central figure in this event. At the time of this statement, she was expressing how she—as a typical resident of the area—had felt during this period.

9. Use of Technology or Communication

As indicated in Table 3, there were several uses of technology that affected this case. When several people were shot and killed in different locations in the first few days, the media began reporting about a possible connection among the incidents.¹⁷⁸ This, in turn, fueled the public's concern regarding the danger. At that point, the local police had no choice but to begin to field questions and hold public press briefings. As difficult as it was, they had to navigate ongoing questions posed by journalists and community members. Here, much effort was spent trying to calm the public while not compromising the investigation by releasing too much information. The volume of media interest only grew as the days of the investigation continued. Throughout this case, there were continuous releases of information and speculation from the media, some of which were correct. Some were completely false. Of the latter category, the media began reporting that a white van was involved, which had adverse effects on the investigation, leading to many false leads, unsubstantiated tips, and wasted time, energy, and valuable resources.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ Muhammad, 181.

¹⁷⁸ Cannon, *23 Days of Terror*, 80–81.

¹⁷⁹ Cannon, 80–81.

As was the case with the Zodiac and the BTK killers, the Beltway snipers began communicating with the authorities during this time, partly to taunt them and partly to make demands. After the Bowie, Maryland, shooting, a note written on a tarot card was found near the scene. The killer, claiming to be “God,” used the note to enhance the public’s fear by demonstrating that he could take a life with impunity at any time.¹⁸⁰ A short while later, after the Ashland, Virginia, shooting, a handwritten note was found tacked to a tree. In this note, the killer demanded that \$10 million be paid as a ransom to stop the killings. The note further sought to frighten the public into compliance: “Your children are not safe anywhere at any time.”¹⁸¹

An additional way in which the killers communicated with the authorities was via telephone. There were several incidents over the 23 days where Muhammad and Malvo called the police tip line and police chief’s office to claim the murders and negotiate a financial ransom. However, because of an already inundated, overworked, and understaffed phone bank, the killers’ calls were deemed not credible and thus not made a priority.¹⁸² Had there been the availability of advanced “smart” devices as there is today, certain applications and features could have been used to heighten the fear and terror; the suspects would have been able to push their message out to the masses instantly via the internet.

10. Fits the New Definition of Terrorism

This incident fits the definition of terrorism utilized in this thesis as well as the general definition of a serial killing event. The analysis demonstrates that the method of violence altered the attitudes of multiple audiences and claimed the attention of many. Muhammad and Malvo targeted innocent non-combatants and, in so doing, affected a wide audience. Additionally, these shootings created such fear that they directly influenced people’s daily social situations, interactions, and activities. The conformity to the definition of terrorism utilized in this thesis is noted in Table 3. For their part, the government and

¹⁸⁰ Cannon, 80.

¹⁸¹ Cannon, 3.

¹⁸² Cannon, 54.

police authorities felt tremendous pressure to do everything they could to stop these killings as soon as possible. Here, they were fortunate that the cooperation they received from each other was sufficient to accomplish the arrests and the successful prosecution of the case. Nonetheless, the case strained the political environment as the judicial system prosecuted a juvenile and leveled the death penalty against Muhammad for the heinous crimes.

Overall, this particular case blurs the lines between terrorism and serial killing events. Throughout October 2002, the people of the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area certainly felt they were being terrorized.¹⁸³ As with other cases evaluated in this thesis, this case may have been equal to, or perhaps even more significant, than other terrorist attacks in terms of creating widespread fear and panic over a long period. According to an October 24, 2002, poll in the *Washington Post*, over 40 percent of D.C. metropolitan residents felt more threatened by the Beltway sniper shootings than by the anthrax scare or the 9/11 attacks.¹⁸⁴ This poll signifies the seriousness of sustained violence caused by only a few people over such a large geographical area.

C. CONCLUSION

The D.C. Beltway snipers had only two participants, as opposed to the 19 hijackers on 9/11. Additionally, the act of using a rifle to commit mass casualties does not necessitate much experience to be successful. In fact, there are hundreds of thousands of hunters in the United States who have the requisite skills and abilities to use a rifle to hit a target from a distance. Thus, a shooting rampage—one that could easily be repeated over and over—is not an overly complicated task. Furthermore, as proven by the 10-month shooting spree of the Beltway snipers, the killers can be difficult to detect and stop. If those wishing to commit relatively simple acts of terror begin to communicate and synchronize their activities with technology, their acts could easily become a force multiplier, increasing the effectiveness of their harrowing message. In this case, there is ample evidence that people in the D.C. area altered their life activities to lessen the chance they would become victims.

¹⁸³ Albarus and Mack, *The Making of Lee Boyd Malvo*, 1.

¹⁸⁴ Morin and Deane, “Half of Area Residents in Fear.”

Additionally, nothing in the literature points to an end strategy or a stopping point for Muhammad and Malvo's killing spree; they likely would have continued had they not been captured. Although Muhammad belonged to the Muslim faith, there does not appear to be any connection to a radical Islamist ideology or a formal terrorist organization, and for this reason this incident, by most accounts, is not considered terrorism. However, based on the definition of terrorism used in this thesis, it would have been considered terrorism, thus making the FBI the lead agency in the investigation, which may have sped up the capture of the killers.

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V. BOSTON MARATHON BOMBING

This chapter presents one of three relatively recent cases of well-known terrorist attacks to compare with the aforementioned serial killing cases. The analysis begins with the April 2013 Boston Marathon bombing. While not the most devastating terrorist attack in terms of fatalities, this bombing still caused hundreds of injuries, a massive law enforcement response, and a brief shelter-in-place order for the immediate region. The case involved two brothers and relatively simple homemade bombs, the recipe for which was found online.

A. BACKGROUND

On April 15, 2013, the 117th annual Boston Marathon took place, drawing over 23,000 participants and many more thousands of spectators.¹⁸⁵ At approximately 2:49 p.m., the first of two explosions occurred near 671 Boylston Street, near the marathon's finish line.¹⁸⁶ Then, about 14 seconds later, a second explosion occurred almost a block away, near 755 Boylston Street.¹⁸⁷ With these two explosions, three people—Krystle Campbell, 29; Lu Lingzi, 23; and Martin Richard, 8—were killed, and over 250 others were injured.¹⁸⁸

The immediate investigation revealed video surveillance containing footage of the suspects at the scene just before the bombings. On April 18, the FBI released still photos of the suspects in an attempt to obtain the public's assistance in identifying them. Within two hours of the release of the pictures, the suspects, Dzhokhar Tsarnaev and Tamerlan Tsarnaev, armed with a variety of weapons—five homemade improvised explosive devices, a handgun, a machete, and a knife—killed Massachusetts Institute of Technology police officer Sean Collier while he sat in his patrol vehicle. The brothers then attempted

¹⁸⁵ Complaint, *United States v. Dzhokhar Tsarnaev*, No. 13-2106 (D. Mass filed April 15, 2013), 2, <https://www.justice.gov/iso/opa/resources/363201342213441988148.pdf>.

¹⁸⁶ *Tsarnaev*, 3.

¹⁸⁷ *Tsarnaev*, 3.

¹⁸⁸ *Tsarnaev*, 3.

to steal his service weapon, carjacked another vehicle, and made their escape.¹⁸⁹ Police caught up to the terrorists in Watertown, Massachusetts, which sits just outside of Boston, shortly after midnight. A lengthy gunfight between the police and the brothers ensued, with more than 200 rounds exchanged. The brothers also used several homemade explosives during this exchange with police. Eventually, Tamerlan was killed in the confrontation but Dzhokhar escaped. Boston police officer Dennis Simmonds sustained serious injuries from one of the explosives; he died from causes related to his injuries nearly a year later.

Shortly after the shoot-out that killed one of the terrorists, much of Watertown was placed on lockdown. Police came into the area en masse, going door-to-door, searching for the remaining suspect. Later that evening, Dzhokhar was found hiding in a boat in the yard of a Watertown resident and taken into custody.¹⁹⁰ He has subsequently been charged, convicted, and sentenced to death.

In 2011, the U.S. authorities received information from Russian officials that Tamerlan and his mother were possible devotees of a radical Islamic ideology and were arranging travel to Russia to further this cause.¹⁹¹ This information was reported first to the FBI in March 2011 and then to the CIA in September. The Boston office of the FBI, in partnership with the local Joint Terrorism Task Force, investigated the Russian claim and closed their inquiry three months later, finding no links to terrorism.¹⁹² The Russian officials requested that they be kept apprised of U.S. findings.¹⁹³ When the CIA received the information, they worked with the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) to place

¹⁸⁹ Federal Bureau of Investigation, “Federal Grand Jury Returns 30-Count Indictment Related to Boston Marathon Explosions and Murder of MIT Police Officer Sean Collier,” June 27, 2013, <https://archives.fbi.gov/archives/boston/press-releases/2013/federal-grand-jury-returns-30-count-indictment-related-to-boston-marathon-explosions-and-murder-of-mit-police-officer-sean-coller>.

¹⁹⁰ Tsarnaev, 4.

¹⁹¹ Inspectors General of the Intelligence Community et al., *Unclassified Summary of Information Handling and Sharing prior to the April 15, 2013, Boston Marathon Bombings* (Washington, DC: Inspectors General of the Intelligence Community, April 10, 2014), <https://oig.justice.gov/reports/2014/s1404.pdf>.

¹⁹² Inspectors General of the Intelligence Community et al., 10.

¹⁹³ Inspectors General of the Intelligence Community et al., 8.

Tamerlan on a terrorist watch list.¹⁹⁴ Before his flight to Russia, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) received notice of Tamerlan's impending travel. However, there is a gap in the record regarding whether CBP notified the investigating FBI official about the travel plans before or after Tamerlan went to Russia.¹⁹⁵ For obvious reasons, agencies in the counterintelligence community usually work together to complete their missions and make requisite notifications to each other. In this particular case, however, there was no clear protocol at the time about how to document these notifications, so there is no way to say whether the process worked properly.¹⁹⁶ To make matters worse, the Inspectors General report indicates that there was no standard format for notifications. Both the CBP and FBI have since changed their policies to require notification via email.

Findings of the Inspectors General (IG) suggest that CBP acted properly in admitting Tamerlan into the United States after taking his photograph and fingerprints.¹⁹⁷ Such a procedure begs the question of whether fingerprinting is enough or further processes should be in place. Such processes might include obtaining DNA samples from people entering the country and storing that information in a database as a more efficient form of identification. This issue is even more vital when realizing that part of the problem in the notification and identification process was a misspelling in the subject's name.¹⁹⁸ The IG report also calls for improved information sharing among the various agencies involved in protecting the borders and the homeland.¹⁹⁹

As the FBI is the lead agency responsible for domestic counterterrorism, it was responsible for evaluating Tamerlan's activities to determine whether a nexus to terrorism or threats may have posed a national security risk.²⁰⁰ The FBI's Boston Joint Terrorism

¹⁹⁴ Inspectors General of the Intelligence Community et al., 1.

¹⁹⁵ Inspectors General of the Intelligence Community et al., 12.

¹⁹⁶ Inspectors General of the Intelligence Community et al., 12.

¹⁹⁷ Inspectors General of the Intelligence Community et al., 23.

¹⁹⁸ Inspectors General of the Intelligence Community et al., 25.

¹⁹⁹ Inspectors General of the Intelligence Community et al., 25.

²⁰⁰ Inspectors General of the Intelligence Community et al., 5.

Task Force (JTTF) investigated this information and then closed the case file.²⁰¹ There were several opportunities for officials to inquire further into the Tsarnaev brothers, especially with the explicit Russian warning about their adherence to radical Islam and their impending travel to Russia in support of that reason.²⁰² There certainly seems to be a question about whether U.S. intelligence officials missed an opportunity to connect the dots in this case. After all, the IG report highlights that Tamerlan was on a terrorist watch list but was still able to receive naturalization benefits.²⁰³

Russian officials told the FBI that Tamerlan was linked to radical Islam. After this notification, the FBI interviewed Tamerlan but did not find evidence to support further investigation. Three months after the initial correspondence between Russian officials and the FBI, Tamerlan indeed traveled to Russia, just as they had warned. However, this trip did not signal any further examination of his background or activities.²⁰⁴ This lack of follow-through remains problematic, as there may be other failures of notification and initiative going on even today.

B. QUESTIONS/PROPOSITIONS ADDRESSED

Table 4 applies the research propositions as a criteria matrix to the Boston Marathon bombing case. Note that the cell values for this table suggest whether the particular proposition is relevant, not relevant, or unknown relative to the specific case.

²⁰¹ Inspectors General of the Intelligence Community et al., 5.

²⁰² Inspectors General of the Intelligence Community et al., 15.

²⁰³ Inspectors General of the Intelligence Community et al., 16.

²⁰⁴ Inspectors General of the Intelligence Community et al., 2.

Table 4. Criteria Matrix for the Boston Marathon Bombing Case

Propositions	Yes	No	Unk	Notes
Comparative Demographics	YES			Radical Islam
Policy Implications	YES			Information sharing among federal agencies, regional/national
Difference of Size of Attack Force (Two or More)	YES			Two brothers
International Terror Influence, Differences	YES			Consumed online terrorist propaganda
International Terror Influence, Used as Tool	YES			Touted as a success by terror organizations
Difference in Length of Attacks and Alteration to Acts of Daily Living	YES			The manhunt caused a shelter in place order for the local area
Psychological Impacts		NO		Short term
Regional Impacts Due to Continuation (Over 72 Hours)	YES			102 hours transpired between the first explosion to the second capture
Use of Technology or Communication	YES			Consumed online terrorist propaganda, learned to make bombs online
Fits the New Definition of Terrorism	YES			

1. Comparative Demographics

Dzhokhar and Tamerlan Tsarnaev are of Chechen descent. They legally immigrated to the United States in 2002 and 2003, respectively.²⁰⁵ At the time of the Boston attack, Tamerlan was 26 years old, and Dzhokhar was 19. In April 2013, Dzhokhar was attending the University of Massachusetts and majoring in marine biology while his older brother, Tamerlan, a former Golden Gloves boxer, was unemployed. Tamerlan was a devout

²⁰⁵ Inspectors General of the Intelligence Community et al., 7.

Muslim, and by some accounts, he took his religion very seriously. Tamerlan's radicalization to Salafi Islam extremism is discussed in subsequent paragraphs.

The victims of the bombing attack varied in age, race, and status in life. There was no commonality beyond their proximity to the bombing on that particular day and time. Except for the police officers, all of the injured parties were either participants in the marathon or spectators. The two police officer victims were in uniform and on duty when they were attacked and killed. The brothers targeted Officer Collier because he was alone and vulnerable, and they knew he had a weapon they could steal after murdering him. Later, while trying to apprehend the Tsarnaev brothers during the Watertown gunfight, Officer Simmonds suffered a brain injury, which led to him dying months later from complications. Thus, the demographics of the victims in this case were not relevant, but the demographics of the suspects and their conversion to radical Islam was of primary importance, as indicated in Table 4.

2. Policy Implications

In this case, no specific evidence indicates that there was much thought given to creating a sustained terror campaign. Although the two brothers did make multiple explosive devices, it seems they did not have sufficient time to plan for any subsequent attacks once they committed the marathon bombing. However, the investigation also revealed that they had alternate plans to attack other locations, including Time Square in New York and Boston's Independence Day fireworks show, but because they finished their bombs earlier than expected, they saw the marathon as a target of opportunity.²⁰⁶ It is unclear from the investigation or public documents whether the brothers were planning to implement additional plans upon their escape from Boston, or they were simply considering other venues for an attack. This single incident created such a large and all-encompassing investigation that they did not have enough time to do any further damage. As it stands, within four days of the marathon bombing, they were identified and located.

²⁰⁶ *The Boston Marathon Bombings, One Year On: A Look Back to Look Forward: Hearing before the Committee of Homeland Security, House, 113th Cong., 2nd sess., April 9, 2014, 2.*

Unlike most of the serial killer cases examined in this thesis, there was no cooling-off period or time between attacks that would have allowed for contemplation or reflection about the magnitude of their attack. Many serial killers, including the three cases examined in this thesis, tend to take more time between their attacks. Had the brothers enacted a better escape plan after the Boston attack, they may have had the time and resources to travel to another location and implement subsequent attacks.

The response and investigation into this attack were immediate and intensive. They required hundreds of investigators as well as dozens of intelligence analysts and numerous prosecutors to bring the case to a successful conclusion. Then-FBI Director Robert Mueller commended the partners who worked with a “sense of urgency and purpose to find those responsible for these deadly attacks.”²⁰⁷ Attorney General Eric Holder similarly applauded the cooperation among the federal prosecutors as well as the federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies that investigated the attacks.²⁰⁸ A June 2013 FBI press release claimed that although the FBI led the investigation, there were more than 30 federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies involved, not to mention many other local emergency services and prosecutors’ offices that played key roles in investigating this bombing.²⁰⁹ As demonstrated in this case and depicted in Table 4, this type of response requires specific direction, protocols, and agreements in place regarding which agencies and personnel are responsible for which parts of the investigation process.

With any terrorism event, one of the larger issues is the information-sharing aspect of the investigation. Today, there are numerous policies in place that guide the dissemination of intelligence information. One such policy is Executive Order 12333, which outlines the information sharing procedure and responsibilities of the FBI, CIA, DHS, and NCTC and which aims to foster an open and complete exchange of information among these agencies.²¹⁰ Under this order, the FBI has the primary responsibility of

²⁰⁷ Federal Bureau of Investigation, “Federal Grand Jury Returns 30-Count Indictment.”

²⁰⁸ Federal Bureau of Investigation.

²⁰⁹ Federal Bureau of Investigation.

²¹⁰ Inspectors General of the Intelligence Community et al., *Unclassified Summary*, 4.

coordinating the clandestine collection of foreign human intelligence. Further, the order states, “The CIA has the primary responsibility to coordinate intelligence gathering activities outside the United States.”²¹¹ It also gives the National Security Agency (NSA) authorization to collect, process, evaluate, and disseminate data and signals the greater intelligence community to support individual organizations’ missions.²¹² Many of the agencies responsible for counterterrorism security have overlapping fields of responsibility, and thus, their cases do overlap. It is for exactly these instances that there are memoranda of understanding in place, guiding various parties in their responses and activities.²¹³ This system has been shown to work satisfactorily when these various organizations are cooperating on routine tasks; however, it can be problematic when an attack occurs, and local and state law enforcement officials become heavily involved.

The roles of local and state law enforcement also should not go unrecognized. As Congressman Michael McCaul explains, “State and local police have a strong role in counterterrorism. They know the streets better than anybody and they know the local threats.”²¹⁴ Congressman Bennie Thompson takes this sentiment a step further: “Information sharing between Federal, State, and local authorities needs strengthening. Since September 11, information sharing silos that the 9/11 commissioners recommended be addressed continue to be exposed after tragic events.”²¹⁵ From this statement, it is evident that while federal agencies have clear directives as to when and how they are to share information, as well as who is responsible for what, there is a much greater ambiguity and lack of clear direction when sharing information with their local and state partners. As Table 4 indicates, due to the local, state, and federal organizations involved and with the information-sharing successes and failures, this case is found to have wide-ranging policy implications across the spectrum.

²¹¹ Inspectors General of the Intelligence Community et al., 4.

²¹² Inspectors General of the Intelligence Community et al., 4.

²¹³ Inspectors General of the Intelligence Community et al., 7.

²¹⁴ H.R., *The Boston Marathon Bombing*, 3.

²¹⁵ H.R., *The Boston Marathon Bombing*, 8.

Some of the lessons learned from this bombing did help improve security measures in preparation for potential large-scale events in the future, and these lessons have now become best practices in event planning and emergency management across the nation. Organizers of many large events around the world have looked more closely at the security measures now in place to apply lessons from this incident—most notable of which are the event planners for the London Marathon, scheduled six days after the Boston Marathon. In the revised plan for the London Marathon, the London police added several hundred extra security personnel to provide a safe event. Similarly, Russian officials, who were scheduled to hold the Winter Olympics the following year, took a keen interest in learning from the incident.

Besides the economic impacts felt from loss of revenue because of the shelter-in-place order, numerous public events, such as concerts, sporting events, and entertainment activities, were canceled due to the attack. This loss of revenue directly impacted those not specifically touched by the violence. Another unfortunate side effect of this incident was the backlash against Muslims in the days and weeks following the attack. Nevertheless, a positive impact of this attack was the outpouring of money in the form of donations received. Ultimately, more than \$80 million were donated to various groups and individuals, including victims and hospitals.²¹⁶

3. Size of Attack Force (Two or More)

As noted in Table 4, this incident involved two brothers, both of whom were foreign-born but longtime residents of the United States. The older brother, Tamerlan, appeared to have guided his younger sibling in committing these acts. In their attack, they placed two pressure-cooker bombs several hundred yards apart near the finish line of the Boston Marathon. Then, they detonated these bombs remotely, and after staying in the area briefly to witness the carnage, both fled. This attack method also could have been effective with a single attacker, but having two people involved allowed them to utilize double the

²¹⁶ Alison Wade, “One Fund Boston Ceases Operations: Fund Raised and Distributed Nearly \$80 Million in 20 Months,” *Runner’s World*, December 16, 2014, <https://www.runnersworld.com/newswire/one-fund-boston-ceases-operations>.

explosives and create twice the damage. Had the two brothers separated and conducted individual bombings in different areas, for example in Boston and New York, it could have looked as if a larger group of terror suspects was involved. Spreading out attacks would have had the effect of heightening the public's fears wherever the bombs were detonated—and beyond.

The subsequent investigation into the brothers, their family, and their associates cast suspicion on a host of other people. Ultimately, no other persons were definitively linked to the bombing plot. Nevertheless, several people were arrested and charged relative to this case for actions after the attacks; these charges include aiding and abetting the Tsarnaev brothers and lying to or misleading the authorities after the fact. However, no one was charged for having prior knowledge of the plot or participating either before or during the attacks.²¹⁷ All of those arrested and indicted were friends of Dzhokhar. Robel Phillips, 19, was charged with giving false statements to FBI agents. Dias Kadybrayev, 19, and Azamat Tazhayakov, 19, were charged with conspiracy to obstruct justice and impeding a terrorism investigation. These charges were related to a text message they received from Dzhokhar, asking them to go to his dorm room to remove incriminating items.²¹⁸ Although no one else was directly linked to the attack, there were long-standing suspicions that more people were involved in the plot than the FBI was able to prove.

4. International Terror Influence, Difference

In this case, investigators later determined that the two brothers had been radicalized online and were conducting their attacks independent of any outside formal terror organization. Although not actually linked to any known terrorist organization, the two drew inspiration from Salafi Islamic extremists; the brothers sympathized with their cause (see Table 4). When interviewed after his arrest, Dzhokhar said they were upset with

²¹⁷ Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Cambridge Man Indicted for Making False Statements in the Boston Marathon Bombing Terrorism Investigation," August 29, 2013, <https://archives.fbi.gov/archives/boston/press-releases/2013/cambridge-man-indicted-for-making-false-statements-in-the-boston-marathon-bombing-terrorism-investigation>.

²¹⁸ Federal Bureau of Investigation.

the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and were seeking revenge for U.S. involvement in the Middle East.

No literature draws any conclusion regarding psychological issues affecting either of the Tsarnaev brothers; however, there was a likely link between Tamerlan and a past murder. Investigators did not learn of Tamerlan's possible connection to a 2001 triple homicide in Waltham, Massachusetts, until after his death. A subsequent investigation linked him to these murders, but an underlying motive has never been revealed. The investigation showed that he and another suspect, Ibragim Todashev, were acquaintances of the murder victims.²¹⁹ On May 22, 2013, when the FBI was interviewing Todashev in his home about his connection to Tamerlan and the triple homicide, he reportedly attacked the agent. In response, the agent shot and killed Todashev.²²⁰

During Dzhokhar's trial, Assistant U.S. Attorney William Weinreb said that both brothers were culpable in the bombing attack. He described Dzhokhar as "a soldier in a holy war against Americans."²²¹ Meanwhile, Dzhokhar's defense attorney tried to portray him as merely a follower under his older brother's heavy influence. In an FBI interview, Dzhokhar claimed he had wanted to protect Islam from the United States and believed that Muslims were being targeted in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. This statement was confirmed in a written message he left inside the boat where he was hiding just before his arrest. It read, "Retribution for U.S. military action in Afghanistan and Iraq."²²² Dzhokhar claimed that his victims were "collateral damage."²²³

²¹⁹ Casey Sherman and Dave Wedge, *Boston Strong: A City's Triumph over Tragedy* (Lebanon, NH: ForeEdge, 2015), 13.

²²⁰ Mike Schneider, "Ibragim Todashev's Family Sues Agents over His Death," *Boston Globe*, May 24, 2017, <https://www.boston.com/news/national-news/2017/05/24/ibragim-todashevs-family-sues-agents-over-his-death>.

²²¹ Associated Press, *The Boston Marathon Bombing: The Long Run from Terror to Renewal* (Miami: Mango Media, 2015).

²²² Jaspar Pharr, *Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Terrorist on U.S. Soil*. (Pittsburg, PA: Rosedogs Books, 2016), 373.

²²³ Pharr, 374.

Some experts also believe that Tamerlan may have begun planning the attacks because he felt disenfranchised from the American way of life, as he was having difficulty acculturating.²²⁴ This theory is partially supported by the fact that Tamerlan had first attended community college but dropped out and then was unsuccessful in trying to become a professional boxer.

5. International Terror Influence, Used as a Tool

The bombers obtained the skills necessary to make homemade bombs from an internet-based terrorist magazine that published the article “Make a Bomb in the Kitchen of Your Mom.”²²⁵ In the article, the authors lay out step-by-step instructions for how to build pressure cooker bombs. Once they built the devices, the suspects quietly walked to their designated locations on foot the day of the attack, set the bombs down, and left. At 10 minutes before 3:00 p.m., the first bomb detonated. Seconds later, the second bomb went off.²²⁶ These devices were simple yet quite effective, killing three people and injuring several hundred more.

The devices’ design required carrying them into the crowd in a bag and could not be used by a suicide bomber, as the bomber’s body would have taken the brunt of the blast. This design contrasts many devices seen overseas, which are much more compact and powerful because of the greater ease of getting explosive components in the Middle East and elsewhere.

There have been no known copycats directly linked to this incident. However, the acts and techniques utilized could easily be implemented or improved upon by others so inclined. A month following the Boston bombing, the magazine *Inspire* dedicated an entire issue of its pro-terror publication to the Tsarnaev brothers, commending them for their

²²⁴ Lisa Wangsness and Brian Ballou, “Islam Might Have Had Secondary Role in Boston Attacks,” *Boston Globe*, April 20, 2013, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2013/04/19/scholars-caution-against-drawing-easy-religious-conclusions-about-suspects-boston-marathon-bombings/a5lucv4ntQHgSvXchQqKOM/story.html>.

²²⁵ Inspectors General of the Intelligence Community et al., *Unclassified Summary*, 20.

²²⁶ National Security Program, *Today’s Rising Terrorist Threat and the Danger to the United States: Reflections on the Tenth Anniversary of the 9/11 Commission Report* (Washington, DC: Bipartisan Policy Center, July 2014), <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/library/rising-terrorist-threat-9-11-commission/>.

actions.²²⁷ This type of propaganda, which is regularly touted by extremists, can influence potential terror sympathizers or recruits. Thus, although there was no direct link to any specific terror organizations before their attack, after the bombing, several notable terror networks applauded the Tsarnaev brothers on their accomplishment, praised Tamerlan particularly for dying a martyr, and encouraged others to follow his lead (see Table 4).

International terror organizations may have made additional strides in their efforts to recruit in this case; that the perpetrators were not of Middle Eastern descent demonstrates an influence that may have cut across racial lines. In fact, during their search for the bombers, the police mistakenly put out a description on the police radio that the suspects were of Middle Eastern descent.²²⁸ Part of this may have been because the killers were having difficulty communicating with the person they were carjacking, as this victim was not a native English speaker. Perhaps the victim had described the suspects as Middle Eastern or the officers had equated the terrorist bombing as an act likely perpetrated by Middle Easterners.

6. Length of Attack and Alteration to Daily Living

This bombing attack and the events that transpired during the manhunt comprised the entire incident. While this incident was devastating to a large number of victims and to the city of Boston, the events—when the suspects were at-large, and there was great concern over additional attacks—only lasted from April 15 to April 19, 2013. The residents of the areas surrounding Boston, Watertown, and Cambridge were asked to shelter in place after the attacks and during the manhunt, but this lasted only a short time.²²⁹ Most citizens, having never been given such an order, quickly complied, leaving these three cities essentially deserted. According to a report conducted by the National Preparedness Leadership Initiative, this was “the first such terror-related closure of a major metropolitan

²²⁷ H.R., *The Boston Marathon Bombing* (statement of Edward Davis), 39; and Anti-Defamation League, “Inspire Magazine: A Staple of Domestic Terror,” April 22, 2013, <https://www.adl.org/blog/inspire-magazine-a-staple-of-domestic-terror>.

²²⁸ Herman B. Leonard, Christine M. Cole, and Philip B. Heyman, *Why Was Boston Strong?: Lessons from the Boston Marathon Bombing* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Kennedy School, April 2014), 20.

²²⁹ Leonard, Cole, and Heyman, 24.

area in the United States.”²³⁰ In addition to the shelter-in-place order, in the early hours of April 19, a decision was made by officials to halt all buses and trains into the Boston metropolitan area, which added to the eeriness.²³¹

As noted in Table 4, there were substantial short-term impacts to these cities because of the shutdown of businesses, transit, and commerce. Additionally, this series of events did affect people’s patterns of daily living in that people were encouraged to stay home and out of specific areas until an all-clear signal was given; there were also concerns of additional bombings in the event the attacks were just the beginning of a larger series of attacks across the nation. However, these impacts were short-lived, and those not directly impacted by the violence returned to normal activities a short time later.

An article published in the *Annals of Surgery* reported that 281 injured civilians sought treatment at 26 area hospitals, severely impacting their regular flow of patients.²³² Although three people were killed in the blasts, many others were spared fatal wounds because the bombs had been placed on the ground. Thus, many of the injuries were lower-extremity shrapnel wounds consisting of small pieces of metal, including small ball bearings and nails.²³³

Although it was made clear during the investigation that there was a lack of thorough planning by the Tsarnaev brothers regarding what they would do after the attacks, many sympathetic to U.S. terror plots felt it was a resounding success in terms of its costs and benefits. These acts are an example of what others might do in pursuit of their terror goals. The simplicity with which the attack was perpetuated suggests that if it were to occur

²³⁰ Leonard J. Marcus et al., *Crisis Meta-Leadership Lessons from the Boston Marathon Bombing Response: The Ingenuity of Swarm Intelligence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 2014), 5.

²³¹ Marcus et al., 36.

²³² Jonathan D. Gates et al., “The Initial Response to the Boston Marathon Bombing: Lessons Learned to Prepare for the Next Disaster,” *Annals of Surgery* 260, no. 6 (December 2014): 960–66, <https://doi.org/10.1097/SLA.0000000000000914>.

²³³ Ira Kantor and Christine McConville, “Docs Describe Nails, BBs Viciously Blasted into Marathon Patients,” *Boston Herald*, April 16, 2013, http://www.bostonherald.com/news_opinion/local_coverage/2013/04/docs_describe_nails_bbs_viciously_blasted_into_marathon_patients.

on a more frequent basis and the general pattern was to ask residents to shelter in place, the request might start to go unheeded as time went on.

7. Psychological Impacts

The people of Boston, Watertown, and the surrounding areas were greatly affected by this attack, and many felt a loss of security and an increase in fear. However, among those not directly touched by the violence this event had serious psychological impacts only on residents with those impacts generally being relatively short term. Because there was no larger plot or conspiracy, it had little impact on people or governments on a national or international level (see Table 4).

8. Regional Impacts Due to Continuation (over 72 Hours)

The immediate impact of this event lasted only four days. However, law enforcement organizations and the public did not know until after an extensive investigation that there were no additional suspects, plots, or conspiracies involved. The event led to a massive investigation that transcended varying levels of federal, state, and local governments as well as various professional sectors.²³⁴ A follow-up study published in the *International Journal of Mental Health* examined the emotional response and the mental health of the survivors three years after the attack and found that many continue to have difficulties with invisible injuries, hearing loss, and, most significantly, post-traumatic stress disorder.²³⁵

9. Use of Technology or Communication

The suspects used minimal technology in this case. How they utilized technology was isolated to using the internet to self-radicalize and learning how to build the bombs for the attack. The items they procured for the attack were of the relatively simple, off-the-shelf variety, such as pressure cookers, remote controls, ball bearings, nails, and explosive

²³⁴ Leonard, Cole, and Heyman, *Why Was Boston Strong?*, i.

²³⁵ Richard Beinecke et al., “The Mental Health Response to the Boston Bombing: A Three-Year Review,” *International Journal of Mental Health* 46, no. 2 (April 3, 2017): 89–124, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00207411.2017.1294969>.

powder.²³⁶ There were no known attempts made by the suspects to communicate with the authorities, the public, or any larger terror organization. Thus, they are noted in Table 4 as users of technology but consumers of propaganda and direction rather than communicators or producers.

10. Fits the New Definition of Terrorism

By all accounts, this event is considered an act of terrorism, as spelled out in the indictments handed down by a Massachusetts grand jury. The indictment pointed to the bombs used in the attacks, the ideological connection to terrorism, and the intent to cause mass casualties. For these reasons, there has been no opposition to the use of the term terrorism in this case. This attack would be considered terrorism under the definition used in this thesis, as shown in Table 4.

C. CONCLUSION

Table 4 shows that nearly all of the propositions are answered in the affirmative, which does not indicate that this case was a great success but rather, as Table 7 later demonstrates, applicable to almost all criteria. The “notes” section in Table 4 helps differentiate its relevance to the propositions and proves crucial in the final case study analysis. Furthermore, this case reinforces the idea that terror suspects are being radicalized online and are susceptible to acting out as directed by foreign terrorist organizations. Additionally, it suggests that what they are being encouraged to do is often not well thought out and has little in the way of a sustainment strategy.

What started out as a beautiful day in downtown Boston ended in the deaths of several people and life-threatening injuries for hundreds more. The two brothers who plotted and executed this attack chose their victims with no rhyme or reason—just as long as innocent people suffered. In this instance, the distant influence of international terrorist organizations and their strong ideologies had a significant impact on the brothers—even though they were not commanded or controlled by any major outside terrorist group. This case is an example of what would-be terrorists are being encouraged to do from afar. To

²³⁶ Federal Bureau of Investigation, “Federal Grand Jury Returns 30-Count Indictment.”

compound this encouragement, ideologically aligned individuals can easily find examples and step-by-step instructions for how to carry out attacks.

This case saw not only the initial bombing attack but also the attack and murder of a police officer, subsequent manhunt, and shoot-out that lead to the deaths of one of the two suspects and, eventually, another officer. The mayor's request to have people shelter in place was unprecedented but critical to a lock-down of the region given the circumstances. Though this case had significant short-term impacts on the region, after the arrest of the second bomber, most people in the area—although saddened and shaken by the events—went back to their normal lives.

Although the two suspects made additional explosives and likely would have gone on to complete additional attacks, the swift investigation and response by law enforcement pushed them to shift their focus quickly to escape. This shift is significant because they were not afforded the time to plot and act out additional attacks but were forced instead to shift their attention to self-preservation. By all accounts and under the definition in this thesis, this incident is considered an act of terrorism.

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VI. SAN BERNARDINO

This chapter examines the terrorist attack at the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino, California, which combined an active-shooting event with traditional terrorist ideology. This case evaluates how a radicalized husband and wife team attacked the husband's employer during a meeting, causing death and anguish in the community and the nation—as well as fear of yet another terrorist attack. This relatively recent case was chosen because of its simplicity and its prominence among recent terrorist attacks in the United States.

A. BACKGROUND

On December 2, 2015, just before 11:00 a.m., Syed Farook and his wife, Tashfeen Malik, attacked a conference room, where a training meeting—doubling also as a holiday party—was being hosted at the Inland Regional Center for San Bernardino County Department of Public Health employees.²³⁷ Farook, a county employee, attended part of the meeting but left a short time before the shooting began. He returned with Malik—both dressed from head to toe in black—and they began a shooting attack with two rifles and two handguns. They fired nearly one hundred rounds, killing 14 people and injuring 22 others before making their escape.²³⁸ The entire incident lasted just a few minutes. Approximately four hours later, police located the suspects in their vehicle and engaged them in a gunfight, which left both Farook and Malik dead and two officers wounded.²³⁹ Whether this was a random act of violence, specifically targeted violence, or terrorism was not immediately known. Although terrorism was suspected, a definitive link was not made

²³⁷ Rick Braziel et al., *Bringing Calm to Chaos: A Critical Incident Review of the San Bernardino Public Safety Response to the December 2, 2015, Terrorist Shooting Incident at the Inland Regional Center* (Washington, DC: Community Oriented Policing Services, 2016), 1.

²³⁸ Frank Straub, Jennifer Zeunik, and Ben Gorban, “Lessons Learned from the Police Response to the San Bernardino and Orlando Terrorist Attacks,” *CTC Sentinel* 10, no. 5 (May 2017): 2.

²³⁹ Braziel et al., *Bringing Calm to Chaos*, xiii.

until two days later, when investigators discovered evidence that made their perpetrators' motives clear.²⁴⁰

B. QUESTIONS/PROPOSITIONS ADDRESSED

Table 5 applies the research propositions as a criteria matrix to the case of the San Bernardino terrorist attack. Note that the cell values for this table suggest whether the particular proposition is relevant, not relevant, or unknown relative to the specific case.

²⁴⁰ Braziel et al., xiii.

Table 5. Criteria Matrix for the San Bernardino Case

Propositions	Yes	No	Unk	Notes
Comparative Demographics	YES			Radical Islam
Policy Implications	YES			Local, national and possibly international
Difference of Size of Attack Force (Two or More)	YES			Husband and wife team
International Terror Influence, Differences	YES			Consumers of terrorist propaganda
International Terror Influence, Used as Tool	YES			Hailed as a success by foreign terror organizations
Difference in Length of Attacks and Alteration to Acts of Daily Living		NO		
Psychological Impacts		NO		
Regional Impacts Due to Continuation (Over 72 Hours)		NO		4 hours from start to finish
Use of Technology or Communication	YES			Consumers of propaganda
Fits the New Definition of Terrorism	YES			

1. Comparative Demographics

In this case, both suspects were of Pakistani descent. Farook, 28, was a U.S.-born citizen to Pakistani immigrant parents. His wife Malik, 29, was born in Pakistan and had recently moved to the United States as a legal permanent resident. Together, they had a six-month-old daughter. The two reportedly met over the internet. They married in early 2014 while Farook was visiting the Middle East. They arrived in Southern California later that year, after she was granted residency status.

For five years before the shooting, Farook worked as a food inspector for the San Bernardino County Department of Public Health. Although Farook was born and raised in

the United States, he was a devout Sunni Muslim and traveled to the Middle East several times in an effort—it is now speculated—not only to further his education about the area but also to attend a radicalization process. Although it is reasonable to assume significant links to terrorism in this case, based on open government documents, little evidence by government officials supports this assertion. Many news outlets have reported statements from government officials regarding various links between the suspects and terror groups, but no official declassified document is available to date.²⁴¹ Thus, it makes it difficult to form a sound conclusion about the motivation of the couple.

Malik was well educated and from a wealthy Pakistani family. After her death, reports surfaced that she had frequently traveled back and forth between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and went from being moderately religious to being heavily influenced by radical Islam. In a statement given at New York Police headquarters, then-FBI Director James Comey said that the husband and wife team used the internet and private electronic messages for years to radicalize and plan for jihad preceding the San Bernardino attack.²⁴²

The victims killed in the attack ranged in age from 26 to 60. Thirteen out of the 14 killed were employees of the county, and 10 were county health inspectors.²⁴³ They hailed from various cultures, backgrounds, and socioeconomic environments. They were a diverse mix of people with no one ethnicity over- or under-represented. Thus, the victims shared no commonality other than their working relationship with Farook and their presence that particular day at the company training event and holiday party. In this case as depicted in Table 5, like the Boston case, the demographics of the suspects and their adherence to radical Islam, not the demographics of the victims, were key factors.

²⁴¹ Jennifer Medina et al., “San Bernardino Suspects Left Trail of Clues, but No Clear Motive,” *New York Times*, December 3, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/04/us/san-bernardino-shooting.html>.

²⁴² Al Baker and Marc Santora, “San Bernardino Attackers Discussed Jihad in Private Messages, F.B.I. Says,” *New York Times*, December 16, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/17/us/san-bernardino-attackers-discussed-jihad-in-private-messages-fbi-says.html>.

²⁴³ Joe Nelson, “San Bernardino Mass Shooting: County Recovering Slowly but Steadily Six Months after Attack,” *Press-Enterprise*, May 29, 2016, <https://www.pe.com/2016/06/01/san-bernardino-shooting-county-recovering-slowly-but-steadily-six-months-after-attack/>.

2. Policy Implications

In this case, the violence took on a form similar to what has been seen in typical terrorist attacks in the United States and Europe. One exception is that—as far as recent terror attacks are concerned—it is unusual to have a female active shooter. Though women have been involved in terror attacks in the Middle East and Asia, their participation usually involves suicide bombings. An additional unusual fact is that they were a married couple who had recently had a child. After their rapid initial attack at the Inland Regional Center, they escaped and were on the run for well over three hours. As is common in high-profile cases, this attack launched a massive law enforcement response, leading authorities to them.

Any incident involving mass casualties, whether terrorism or not, requires a large, multi-jurisdictional response and tests those involved to solve issues related to differing policies, procedures, practices, and missions. Each emergency response organization brings with it a culture, method of communicating, and protocols.²⁴⁴ This set of often-overlapping aims frequently challenges those working on a case and can impact their ability to work effectively and efficiently.

The weapons used in this shooting were fairly common and easy to obtain. However, they were not procured by either Farook or Malik but rather purchased by an acquaintance and then given to them.²⁴⁵ Explosives devices were located at the scene of the shooting, and investigators speculated the devices had been left to harm first responders.²⁴⁶ While the devices did not detonate, experts believe they were made using instructions published online by terrorist organizations.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁴ Braziel et al., *Bringing Calm to Chaos*, ix.

²⁴⁵ U.S. Department of Justice, “California Man Agrees to Plead Guilty to Plotting Violent Attacks and Buying Firearms for Shooter in San Bernardino Terrorist Attack,” Justice News, February 14, 2017, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/california-man-agrees-plead-guilty-plotting-violent-attacks-and-buying-firearms-shooter-san>.

²⁴⁶ U.S. Department of Justice.

²⁴⁷ Richard Winton, Richard Serrano, and Corina Knoll, “San Bernardino Shooting: Attackers May Have Left Bomb Behind to Kill Police,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 8, 2015.

Investigation into this case brought with it an additional issue—the use of outside-hired foreign contractors brought in to help the government conduct their investigation. The suspects in this case utilized an Apple iPhone whose password was protected, and attempts to unlock it ran the risk of deleting all of its data. Requests to Apple Inc. were unsuccessful in gaining its cooperation. The FBI, which at that point had become the lead investigative agency due to the case’s terrorism label, tried to obtain a court order to gain Apple’s cooperation.²⁴⁸ As the case proceeded through the court system, the FBI was able to gain access to the device through an intermediary, finally resolving the access issue.

As with other large-scale and highly publicized cases, authorities affirmed what they had learned from previous after-action reports. In this case, San Bernardino officials had recently applied new response tactics and procedures—from lessons learned during the Christopher Dorner manhunt in Los Angeles and other high-profile cases—and had changed their policies, practices, and procedures to better suit a changing threat environment.²⁴⁹ These recent changes highlight the importance of after-action reports. In their estimation, policy and response changes they implemented had a direct bearing on San Bernardino’s efficiency, effectiveness, and interagency cooperation in this incident. Thus, this case had policy implications ranging from the local, to the national, to the international level (see Table 5).

3. Size of Attack Force (Two or More)

This event involved a pair of killers, which made their actions twice as effective and efficient. However, in the initial confusion of the incident, first responders were not sure whether they were trying to stop a single attacker, two attackers, or more. After a thorough investigation, investigators found no evidence that other conspirators were involved in the actual violent event, but several people were arrested and convicted for their roles in the larger conspiracy. Most significantly, Enrique Marquez, a neighbor and friend to Farook, was a central figure in the follow-up investigation conducted by the FBI

²⁴⁸ Braziel et al., *Bringing Calm to Chaos*, 86.

²⁴⁹ Straub, Zeunik, and Gorban, “Lessons Learned from the Police Response,” 5.

to determine how the attackers came to possess the firearms used in the attack. It was later determined that Marquez had purchased the two rifles and knew of the couple's plans. Marquez was arrested and charged and pled guilty to providing material support for terrorism and lying to the FBI. Additional information revealed that Marquez and Farook had previously conspired to conduct other bombing and shooting attacks but had never carried through with them.²⁵⁰ Additional evidence proves that Marquez aided the couple in procuring the parts for the improvised explosive devices left at the scene of the shooting.²⁵¹

4. International Terror Influence, Difference

It has become clear since the event that Farook and Malik were adherents to radical Islamic ideology and were intending to commit jihad in the name of the cause. This is made clear in Daniel Bryman's work for the Brookings Institute: "Had the attackers not pledged loyalty to the Islamic State (ISIS), law enforcement and the media might have described the attacks as workplace violence, not terrorism. Once officials attributed the acts to ISIS-linked terrorists, media attention—and thus the psychological impact—went through the roof."²⁵² The assignment of the term terrorism often raises the public's alarm locally and across the entire country as well.

While the investigation did not formally link the couple to any particular terrorist organization, their attack was clearly inspired by ISIS and claimed as a lone-wolf victory for the terrorist group (see Table 5).²⁵³ There is no evidence in this case that either Farook or Malik suffered from any psychological ailments that contributed to their acts of violence.

²⁵⁰ U.S. Department of Justice, "California Man Agrees to Plead Guilty."

²⁵¹ U.S. Department of Justice.

²⁵² Daniel L. Byman, "How to Hunt a Lone Wolf: Countering Terrorists Who Act on Their Own," Brookings Institution, February 14, 2017, <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/how-to-hunt-a-lone-wolf-countering-terrorists-who-act-on-their-own/>.

²⁵³ Byman.

5. International Terror Influence, Used as a Tool

Farook and Malik were influenced by international terror propaganda. This was made evident when authorities obtained access to their computers and phones after the attacks: “The lectures of the U.S.-born Al-Qaeda ideologue Anwar al-Awlaki inspired the San Bernardino killers, for example, and although they had no direct contact with ISIS, during the attack they pledged loyalty to the group’s leader (whose name they had looked up on the internet only that day).”²⁵⁴ After the attack, international terror groups seized the opportunity to claim it as a success in their jihad against the West.

While there is no direct or specific evidence that shows this attack motivated others, it is clear that other similar attacks were conducted after it, leading some to deduce that it indeed inspired subsequent attacks. This attack logically inspired others because it was hailed a success by terror organizations. Subsequent inspiration is possibly the case with the Orlando terror attack, which occurred a short time later, and is discussed in Chapter VII. An after-action report by San Bernardino’s Community Oriented Policing Service (COPS) could have easily be found online and used as a guide for developing a more productive, more efficient attack in Orlando.

6. Length of Attack and Alteration to Daily Living

As previously discussed, the San Bernardino attack lasted roughly four hours, from the time the first shot was fired until both suspects were killed. Of course, law enforcement authorities did not know the extent of the attack or whether other plots were underway until much later, as it required a massive investigation to determine all parties involved. Overall, the event included two major crime scenes: the Inland Regional Center and the location of the suspects’ final shoot-out with police. Additional crime scenes were incorporated as well: the suspects’ vehicle, home, and frequented locations.²⁵⁵ While there were several scenes involved, the authorities were able to conduct their investigations with minimal

²⁵⁴ Byman.

²⁵⁵ Braziel et al., *Bringing Calm to Chaos*, xiii, xiv.

disruption to people in the local area. As demonstrated in Table 5, no evidence indicates widespread impacts to the communities involved.

7. Psychological Impacts

This event, as with all active-shooter events across the country, generated shock, sadness, and fear. Many were left with a sense of loss, which varied depending on the person and the degree to which one was touched by the violence. Those in San Bernardino and the surrounding communities experienced the greatest impacts from this event—the sense of loss, fear, and insecurity. As noted in Table 5, no evidence indicates that others outside the region, whether nationally or internationally, were directly impacted by the violence surrounding this event. However, there is growing evidence that public backlash increases after each attack. Georgetown University’s Bridge Initiative published a 2016 report concluding that “Islamophobic political vitriol intensifie[s]” following events like the San Bernardino attack.²⁵⁶ This is concerning, of course, because of the impact it has on U.S. Islamic populations and communities.

8. Regional Impacts Due to Continuation (over 72 Hours)

As discussed, the initial shooting event at the Inland Regional Center lasted just a few minutes before the shooters fled, but the entire incident lasted approximately four hours, from the first gunshot to the last. Relatively quickly, law enforcement officials were able to identify and locate the suspects, which aided their attempt to apprehend them. After a short high-speed vehicle pursuit, the killers engaged police in a shoot-out instead of surrendering, exchanging over five hundred rounds and ultimately leaving both shooters dead.²⁵⁷ While these events were dramatic and affected the immediate community, the overall impact of fearing an at-large suspect or suspects was relatively short-lived. Of course—as is the situation in each of the terrorism cases presented in this thesis—there is

²⁵⁶ Engy Adbelkader, *When Islamophobia Turns Violent: The 2016 U.S. Presidential Elections* (Washington, DC: Bridge Initiative, Georgetown University, 2016), 34.

²⁵⁷ Straub, Zeunik, and Gorban, “Lessons Learned from the Police Response,” 3.

always concerns from law enforcement and the communities impacted that there could still be more suspects at large who have yet to be apprehended.

9. Use of Technology or Communication

Both suspects in this case used technology in several ways. The husband and wife team used the internet to look at and listen to radical Islamist propaganda. Additionally, while each of them was on an individual journey toward radicalization, it appears they connected with each other through their shared ideology on the internet. After meeting, marrying, and moving in together in the United States, they continued to radicalize while assimilating to life as newlyweds.

This case also brought a new twist to the modern era of combined terrorism and technology when the government's experts were unable to access the terrorists' private electronic data due to enhanced encryption installed by an American corporation. As discussed, this led to a legal fight that took up valuable time and resources while the public was waiting to find out whether there was a larger terrorist plot underway. As is becoming more common with criminal investigations, and more specifically with terror investigations, law enforcement officials, even when possessing legally valid warrants signed by a judge, are having difficulty accessing encrypted data that are necessary for investigation or prosecution of a suspect. This impediment is compounded even further when companies that have developed high levels of encryption are unable to access the information.²⁵⁸ While investigators later determined there was no such larger plot, this technological challenge elevated the public's fear: not only could more attacks be coming after the San Bernardino event, but terrorists could now use technology encryption to slow down the discovery of conspiracies and plots. As depicted in Table 5 and like the Boston case before it, the suspects in this case were consumers of technology and communication rather than producers of it.

²⁵⁸ Hugh McCarthy, "Decoding the Encryption Debate: Why Legislating to Restrict Strong Encryption Will Not Resolve the 'Going Dark' Problem," *Journal of Internet Law* 20, no. 3 (September 2008): 1, 18–39.

10. Fits the New Definition of Terrorism

As noted in Table 5, this event fits the former definitions of terrorism as well as the new definition used in this thesis. However, the initial violence that took the form of active shooters—while believed to be an act of terrorism—could have turned out otherwise. Under the old definition, it was not confirmed terrorism until the authorities discovered links to radical Islamic ideology. This is important because it determines who will be conducting the overall investigation as the lead investigative body. Under the new definition proposed in this thesis, whether or not there was a link to an ideology or political motive, this event would have been considered terrorism from the start.

C. CONCLUSION

While some County of San Bernardino employees were gathering to attend a peaceful holiday party and work meeting, they found themselves in the middle of a terrorist attack perpetrated by one of their coworkers. Nothing in the unclassified literature suggests why this specific group of people was targeted, so it is unclear whether they were a target of opportunity or part of a more extensive plan. Regardless, the demographics and the general makeup of the victims were mixed and diverse, with no known connection beyond being workplace colleagues. For their part, the two suspects were both of Middle Eastern descent. They were converts to radical Islam, possibly before they arrived in America, but they certainly continued their radicalization via the internet once established in the United States. As described, both terrorists were killed in a shoot-out with police shortly after the incident. It is unknown whether they had any contingency plans for further violence. This point highlights the importance that local law enforcement plays in the responses to many modern terrorist acts. Immediate identification and apprehension are paramount to prevent terrorists from regrouping and mounting additional attacks. In this particular incident, the significant worry about having at-large suspects lasted only a few hours. Thus, although the attacks were significant in terms of the casualties, the fear of long-term sustained violence did not occur. This event, like the Boston Marathon bombing, was considered a terrorist attack. Yet had no links to radical Islam been discovered, under the old definition

of terrorism, it would likely have been seen simply as an active-shooter event. However, under the definition proposed in this thesis, it would be termed terrorism regardless.

VII. ORLANDO

The terrorist attack on the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, Florida, hit the nation's LGBTQ (or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning) community with extreme shock, trauma, and sadness. The events that unfolded that evening—as in San Bernardino—involved an active shooter with a terrorist ideology, resulting in a large number of dead and wounded in a short period. This case, like the San Bernardino case, was chosen for examination because it is a relatively recent event and has been identified as a shift toward simple strategies to achieve attacks on soft targets.

A. BACKGROUND

On June 12, 2016, Omar Mateen entered the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, Florida, opening fire with a rifle and handgun. In the ensuing three-hour incident, 49 people were killed and another 53 wounded.²⁵⁹ Pulse, a nightclub frequented by the LGBTQ community, was hosting a Latin night event, as it did most Saturday nights. Thus, most of the victims of the attack were of Hispanic descent.

This incident began at around 2:00 a.m., just as the club was serving last call. Mateen drove to the venue in his vehicle and carried with him the weapons he would use in the attack. Upon Mateen's entrance to the club, a uniformed, off-duty Orlando police officer who was working security confronted him. Mateen managed to bypass the officer, entered the club, and began shooting patrons. The officer immediately called for backup, which delivered a large police response from both the Orlando Police Department and the Orange County Sheriff's Office. The first responding officers engaged Mateen, forcing him to retreat further into the establishment. While he sought cover inside the club, he actively killed innocent patrons, firing over 200 rounds of ammunition along the way.²⁶⁰ What

²⁵⁹ Frank Straub et al., *Rescue, Response, and Resilience: A Critical Incident Review of the Orlando Public Safety Response to the Attack on the Pulse Nightclub* (Washington, DC: Community Oriented Policing Services, 2017), x, <https://www.policefoundation.org/publication/rescue-response-and-resilience-a-critical-incident-review-of-the-orlando-public-safety-response-to-the-attack-on-the-pulse-nightclub/>.

²⁶⁰ Straub, Zeunik, and Gorban, "Lessons Learned from the Police Response," 3.

began as an active-shooter event took a turn for the worst when Mateen took hostages and barricaded himself in the restroom.²⁶¹

During the standoff, Mateen made several phone calls to police and discussed his motivations for the attack. Between approximately 5:02 and 5:15 a.m., police breached the building wall using explosives and an armored vehicle. They engaged Mateen, and in an exchange of gunfire, he was killed. According to Orlando Police Department radio recordings, there was no gunfire after the initial exchange between Mateen and police until the final police assault on the club.²⁶²

B. QUESTIONS/PROPOSITIONS ADDRESSED

Table 6 applies the research propositions as a criteria matrix to the case of the Orlando terrorist attack. Note that the cell values for this table suggest whether the particular proposition is relevant, not relevant, or unknown relative to the specific case.

²⁶¹ Straub, Zeunik, and Gorban, 3.

²⁶² Federal Bureau of Investigation, “Investigative Update Regarding Pulse Nightclub Shooting,” June 20, 2016, <https://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices/tampa/news/press-releases/investigative-update-regarding-pulse-nightclub-shooting>.

Table 6. Criteria Matrix for the Orlando Case

Propositions	Yes	No	Unk	Notes
Comparative Demographics	YES			Radical Islam
Policy Implications	YES			Local
Difference of Size of Attack Force (Two or More)		NO		
International Terror Influence, Differences	YES			
International Terror Influence, Used as Tool	YES			Hailed as a victory by foreign terror organizations
Difference in Length of Attacks and Alteration to Acts of Daily Living		NO		
Psychological Impacts		NO		
Regional Impacts Due to Continuation (Over 72 Hours)		NO		Approximately 3 hours from start to finish
Use of Technology or Communication	YES			Consumer of propaganda-phone calls to police to profess allegiance to terror
Fits the New Definition of Terrorism	YES			

1. Comparative Demographics

Omar Mateen, 29, was born and raised in the United States. His parents emigrated from Afghanistan in the 1980s, several years before his birth. Mateen attended schools in the United States and held several jobs after completing high school and attending college, where he eventually earned an associate's degree in criminal justice. At the time of the shooting, he was employed as a security guard for G4S Secure Solutions, a British-based security firm. By all accounts, he had had a normal childhood, albeit tumultuous at times, yet some reports claim he was fascinated by terrorism and was even a supporter of terror

organizations.²⁶³ Additionally, there is evidence that he had some psychological and social issues that caused him to get into numerous confrontations throughout his life, particularly during his high-school years.²⁶⁴

His victims represented a range of ages from 18 to 50. As the incident took place at an LGBTQ nightclub on Latin night, most of the victims were gay and of Hispanic origin. Until the Las Vegas mass-shooting attack on October 2, 2017, the Pulse Nightclub shooting was the largest loss of life recorded in an active-shooting event in modern U.S. history. As noted in Table 6 and as with the two terrorism cases before it, the victims' demographics did not play as an important a role as did the suspect's and his adherence to radical Islam.

2. Policy Implications

Consistent with best practices, the club even had armed security on the premises in the form of the uniformed off-duty Orlando Police officer who met Mateen at the outside door. This officer immediately engaged, but Mateen was still able to make his way inside the venue and start his shooting rampage.²⁶⁵ With the off-duty officer's radio call for help, on-duty officers immediately responded and engaged Mateen in an exchange of gunfire. Most of the police officers' actions up to this point were consistent with national policing best-practices surrounding active-shooter response protocols.

As is becoming more common, the attacker intentionally went after a soft target, meaning a venue that allows easy access and has limited security.²⁶⁶ An article published by the *CTC Sentinel* at West Point praises both the Orlando Police Department and the Orange County Sheriff's Department for their efforts in this case but also debates whether new protocols should be adopted in cases where law enforcement faces a dynamic event

²⁶³ Evan Perez et al., "Omar Mateen: Angry, Violent 'Bigot' Who Pledged Allegiance to ISIS," CNN, June 14, 2016, <https://www.cnn.com/2016/06/13/us/orlando-shooter-omar-mateen/index.html>.

²⁶⁴ David Ovalle, "Orlando Shooting Sharpens Scrutiny on Screening of Security Guards in Florida," McClatchy News, June 27, 2016, <https://web.archive.org/news/12225644/orlando-shooting-sharpens-scrutiny-on-screening-of-security-guards-in-florida>.

²⁶⁵ Joel Griffin, "Orlando Nightclub Massacre Shines Spotlight on 'Soft Targets,'" Security Info Watch, June 13, 2016, <http://www.securityinfowatch.com/article/12220438/orlando-nightclub-massacre-shines-spotlight-on-soft-targets>.

²⁶⁶ Griffin.

perpetrated by Islamic terrorists.²⁶⁷ The article discusses the point that most protocols and best practices in place today are designed to avoid the death of hostages and limit the danger to police officers, but those practices may not be as effective in Islamic terrorism instances.²⁶⁸ Thus, it opens the possibility of developing new protocols.

Concerning what arriving emergency first-responders face in terrorist events, authors Straub, Zeunik, and Gorban describe how the incidents “are marked by chaos and unimaginable devastation, with overwhelming sights, sounds, and smells of human tragedy—victims begging for help, people dying, and others who are already deceased.”²⁶⁹ Police and first responders are trained to respond to many types of crimes and incidents, but few are ever trained to respond to mass casualties of this magnitude. With respect to policy implications, if any, in this case they are largely related to local actions, their preparedness and cooperation with their federal partners.

3. Size of Attack Force (Two or More)

As noted in Table 6, in this event, Mateen acted alone. He purchased the weapons for the attack legally from a local Florida gun store. No evidence indicates there was a larger widespread conspiracy underway during this attack, and despite the confusion involved, the authorities were generally never under the assumption there was more than one attacker. This supposition reflects the account of the off-duty officer at the club who engaged Mateen—and only Mateen—in the initial moments of the attack. Nevertheless, there was always the possibility of additional attackers already inside the club when the shooting began. In his later phone calls to 9–1–1 dispatchers and hostage negotiators, Mateen claimed to have additional co-conspirators and explosives that he would utilize in the attack. These comments had a slowing effect on the police response, as the mention of additional attackers and explosives increased the degree of difficulty and the need to respond accordingly.

²⁶⁷ Straub, Zeunik, and Gorban, “Lessons Learned from the Police Response,” 5.

²⁶⁸ Straub, Zeunik, and Gorban, 5.

²⁶⁹ Straub, Zeunik, and Gorban, 1.

Erroll Southers of TAL Global, an international security consulting and risk-management firm, raised concerns over this incident and any potential change in policy: “What I hope we don’t do is go into some reactive policy or procedure that we have not engaged in previously because of what just happened. What this should demonstrate to us is just how often this can happen, where it can happen and the diversity of actors that can engage.”²⁷⁰ In his comments, Southers also commends the Orlando Police Department on their response, indicating that their ability to use military-grade equipment to breach the club wall and dispatch the gunman likely saved additional lives.²⁷¹

In a letter published in the Orlando’s formal after-action report, the director of the Community Oriented Policing Service office emphasizes, “The OPD’s response, which was appropriate and consistent with national guidelines and best practices, saved lives.”²⁷² The after-action report also reveals several lessons from this incident, which should be shared with all law enforcement agencies across the nation. The full report suggests that law enforcement needs to consider modifying the “application of current active shooter and barricaded hostage response protocols to terrorist incidents.”²⁷³ This advice is worth considering, but in many cases, it is unclear at the onset of an event whether it involves terrorism. Deciphering a terrorist event from a similar but non-terrorist situation may be difficult—if not impossible—initially, so having unique protocols for each type of incident is problematic.

4. International Terror Influence, Difference

As is common in the age of the internet, many terror suspects are being radicalized online, and this was the case with Mateen. The influence of international terrorist organizations on Mateen is noted in Table 6. He was of Afghan descent but had never visited Afghanistan and had only limited personal connections there to have known U.S.

²⁷⁰ Griffin, “Massacre Shines Spotlight on ‘Soft Targets.’”

²⁷¹ Griffin.

²⁷² Straub et al., *Rescue, Response, and Resilience*, v.

²⁷³ Straub et al., 58.

involvement. As mentioned, there is evidence that Mateen had psychological issues that caused him to become involved in many fights and confrontations during his life.²⁷⁴

According to a summary found in a 2018 study, one person's "terrorist" might be another person's "mentally ill."²⁷⁵ In detail, the study discusses how partisan bias exists in "individuals' ascriptions to violent actors of terrorist versus mental illness motives."²⁷⁶ Furthermore, it finds that the consequences of this bias are significant, relative to comprehending the polarizing impact of the bias, understanding its genesis, and ultimately combating it.²⁷⁷ These findings are helpful for pre-attack preventive measures that aid in identifying individuals susceptible to committing acts of violence.

A report by Straub, Zeunik, and Gorban highlights that homegrown—as well as Islamic extremist—terrorists generally plan their acts in secret. Today, they have a host of material readily available to create their plans and strategize the most effective attacks, developing them into more asymmetrical, violent, and effective killing operations. Additionally, they often fly under the radar of local law enforcement until the point at which the attack begins. Because of these factors, they also create a void in local law enforcement's knowledge, skills, abilities, and regular training practices. To fill this void would require a tremendous outlay of commitment and support by law enforcement leadership.²⁷⁸ As Paul Cruickshank, editor in chief for the *CTC Sentinel*, has written, "Just as the Columbine attack established new best practices for active shooter situations, the Orlando attack should be an impetus to a wholesale protocol review for hostage rescue."²⁷⁹ If these types of attacks are the way of the future, law enforcement needs to start preparing

²⁷⁴ Perez et al., "Omar Mateen."

²⁷⁵ Masi Noor et al., "'Terrorist' or 'Mentally Ill': Motivated Biases Rooted in Partisanship Shape Attributions about Violent Actors," *Social Psychological and Personality Science* (April 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550618764808>.

²⁷⁶ Noor et al.

²⁷⁷ Noor et al.

²⁷⁸ Straub, Zeunik, and Gorban, "Lessons Learned from the Police Response," 6.

²⁷⁹ Paul Cruickshank, "A View from the CT Foxhole: James A. Gagliano, Former FBI Hostage Rescue Team Counterterrorist Operator," *CTC Sentinel* 10, no. 5 (May 2017): 11.

for their greater role in the pre-attack intelligence-sharing piece to better plan its immediate action response.

5. International Terror Influence, Used as a Tool

In this case, there was no evidence to demonstrate a pre-attack link to formal terrorist training; however, Mateen did profess his allegiance to ISIS online as well as during his attacks. Further investigation after the event revealed that he had been radicalized online and consumed mass amounts of pro-ISIS propaganda.²⁸⁰ He was considered by many to be a “homegrown jihadi.”²⁸¹ His attack, while not launched by or formally connected to a specific terrorist organization, was still touted by ISIS as an example of what a willing jihadi could do for the sake of the cause—and exactly the type of attack it had been asking its followers to commit against the West. ISIS praised Mateen as a good soldier for following through in such a broad attack (see Table 6).

In the investigation following the attack, it was learned that the FBI had twice investigated Mateen, in 2013 and 2014, and determined that his actions did not rise to the level of criminal offense, nor did they merit further investigation.²⁸² This is troubling, as two of the three terrorist examples in this thesis revealed pre-attack investigations by the FBI that had concluded the subjects posed no significant threat. The cases were closed, and those same subjects eventually planned and conducted attacks.

An unfortunate effect of the current state of what is termed “the entertainment-oriented news coverage of mass shootings” is that each mass shooting—terrorism or not—gives a road map to other like-minded individuals, guiding and inspiring them in furtherance of their violent acts and offering them ways to improve on previous attackers’ successes or failures.²⁸³ The COPS after-action report on this particular incident is easily

²⁸⁰ Perez et al., “Omar Mateen.”

²⁸¹ Straub, Zeunik, and Gorban, “Lessons Learned from the Police Response,” 1.

²⁸² Griffin, “Massacre Shines Spotlight on ‘Soft Targets.’”

²⁸³ Jennifer Murray, “Mass Media Reporting and Enabling of Mass Shootings,” *Cultural Studies, Critical Methodologies* 17, no. 2 (2017): 114–24.

found online. This report could easily be used by someone wanting to plan an attack, determine a strategy, or look for gaps in law enforcement responses.

6. Length of Attack and Alteration to Daily Living

In this case—as in many other terrorist strikes around the world—there is little apparent consideration of escape after the attack. Mateen was immediately confined to the premises of the nightclub. As such, this attack was isolated to one space, one location, and one event. Despite the immediate police presence on the scene and his relative isolation, he found ample time and targets inside, killing and injuring as many people as possible before he was killed. The active violence of the event lasted approximately three hours. There were substantial impacts to the neighborhoods immediately surrounding the Pulse Nightclub, but these were largely due to the police response, follow-up investigation, and media presence. The lack of long-term alterations to daily living is noted in Table 6.

7. Psychological Impacts

At the time, it was the largest mass shooting in the history of the United States. Dozens were killed and injured. As horrific, sad, and traumatic as it was, the effects of the attack were relatively short-lived in terms of changing the actions of people outside the region or those not directly injured by the violence or impacted by the loss of life. This event affected the LGBTQ and Muslim communities most significantly, specifically due to concerns of the target of the violence as many questioned the true motivation of the killer. Author Nancy Duff, for instance, questions whether this was an act of terrorism or a case of violent homophobia.²⁸⁴ She states that many in the community faced an immediate backlash of hate speech against them, compounding their injuries further. However, the hate speech was not confined to the LGBTQ community—there was an increased backlash against Muslims as well.²⁸⁵ Many were left to wonder whether this act was a hate crime or terrorism, but few consider the possibility that it could have been both.

²⁸⁴ Nancy J. Duff, “Orlando, Political Rhetoric, and the Church,” *Theology Today* 73, no. 3 (October 2016): 193–97, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040573616658998>.

²⁸⁵ Duff, 193–197.

Some people from the LGBTQ community across the nation expressed fear that they were specifically targeted and heightened concerns for their safety in the weeks and months following the Pulse attack.²⁸⁶ Such concerns are real and have significant impacts on feelings of security when particular groups of people are targeted by terrorism.

Following this event, there was a large but relatively short-lived outpouring of anger, fear, and sadness throughout the United States; however, it was especially hard on the LGBTQ community. Because it took time for the investigation to identify the reasons for the attack, some in this community lived in fear, believing they might be attacked for who they are, what they believe, or what they represent. After it was revealed that this was an attack propagated on behalf of ISIS, those concerns were somewhat mitigated for the LGBTQ community—only to give rise to new ones dealing with fears of terrorism that could target a specific set of people or community. Despite the initial confusion as to why the attack occurred, Table 6 indicates the relatively short-term nature of the fear it posed.

8. Regional Impacts Due to Continuation (over 72 Hours)

Mateen launched his attack right at 2:00 a.m. and was killed by police shortly after 5 a.m. The police were involved in the incident from the outset, and they had concerns of additional suspects, though they found no evidence that concluded additional suspects were at large. The shock, sadness, anger, and fear that beset the community and the nation lasted for many days, weeks, months, and years after the event, but the actual incident and the immediate investigation of the crime scene was completed well within 72 hours (see Table 6).

9. Use of Technology or Communication

The only technology Mateen utilized in this case was a cell phone. During his attack and the subsequent standoff, Mateen called police several times to tell them who he was and why he was conducting this act of terrorism, indicating that he supported Abu Bakr al-

²⁸⁶ Christopher Stults et al., “Perceptions of Safety among LGBTQ People following the 2016 Pulse Nightclub Shooting,” *Psychology of Sexual and Gender Diversity* 4, no. 3 (2017): 251–56.

Baghdadi and ISIS.²⁸⁷ Furthermore, in his conversations with hostage negotiators, between 2:48 and 3:24 a.m., Mateen identified himself as an Islamic soldier and told negotiators that he was conducting this attack because of America's bombing raids in Syria.²⁸⁸

Throughout the remainder of the incident, he made numerous claims that he possessed bombs, both on his person and in a vehicle outside, and that he was going to make some of the hostages wear them. These claims, by design, had the effect of slowing down the police entry into the club and the subsequent rescue of the trapped parties. Mateen did not appear to use technology to further his attack or to heighten fear but rather to inform authorities about why he was conducting his attack. Therefore, like the two previous terrorist incidents examined, and as depicted in Table 6, it appears the suspect was generally a consumer of the terrorist propaganda.

Out of the multitude of recent active-shooter and terrorist incidents—like the Boston Marathon bombing and Pulse Nightclub attack—a new language for emergency responder communication is being created in the form of the so-called National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)-3000 standard. This new standard will provide baseline competencies for first responders who are tasked with managing and organizing rescue-and-recovery operations at active-shooter or mass-violence incidents as well as improve readiness and response.²⁸⁹ While this new initiative is not complete as of this writing, it is being drafted by experts in the field of emergency response. This project is designed to allow all first responders to standardize communications for efficiency and effectiveness at major incidents.

10. Fits the New Definition of Terrorism

Because Mateen was linked to Islamic terrorism through his comments during the attack and because the subsequent investigation showed him to be sympathetic to radical

²⁸⁷ Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Investigative Update Regarding Pulse Nightclub Shooting."

²⁸⁸ Federal Bureau of Investigation.

²⁸⁹ Angel Verzoni, "Threat Prep," *NFPA Journal* 111, no. 4 (August 2017): 10–12.

Islamic terrorism, his act fits under all past common definitions of terrorism, as well as the one presented in this thesis (see Table 6). Because it was considered terrorism, the FBI became the lead agency in the investigation. Had Mateen gone to the club and conducted the same attack for homophobic or other reasons, never claiming any ties to ISIS, this event would not have been considered terrorism under most previous definitions. If the case had not been considered terrorism, the Orlando Police Department would have remained the primary lead investigative agency. This point is crucial, as it demonstrates that definitions characterize how people perceive an event, how it is investigated, and who is responsible for that investigation.

C. CONCLUSION

Until the 2017 active-shooter incident at the Route 91 Harvest Festival in Las Vegas, Nevada, the attack at the Pulse Nightclub ranked as the deadliest active-shooting event on U.S. soil. A major difference between these two incidents, however, is that the attack at the Pulse Nightclub was considered terrorism from the outset while the Las Vegas incident was not. In the Orlando attack, a single self-radicalized person entered a crowded LGBTQ nightclub and began killing people with firearms. Police were immediately on the scene and attempted to engage the shooter. This forced the suspect to retreat further into the club, shooting at everyone he came across. He finally barricaded himself in a restroom. Eventually, the police were forced to breach the wall of the building to make entry, where they were able to engage the suspect once again, killing him. However, in the meantime, dozens were killed and injured. Unlike the San Bernardino case where there were two perpetrators, the suspect in this incident acted alone and was still able to kill many people because of the tight confines and dense congestion of the nightclub. There is little public information available to indicate that the suspect chose this establishment due to its specific clientele; rather, it appears Mateen selected it because he saw it as a soft target of opportunity whereby he could inflict heavy casualties.²⁹⁰

²⁹⁰ During the 2018 trial of Noor Salman, Omar Mateen's widow, prosecutors claimed that the intended target of the violence was the Disney Springs shopping complex but that a large police presence led Mateen to alter his plans. "Pulse Nightclub Shooter Intended to Attack Disney, Prosecutors Say," CBS News, March 28, 2018, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/orlando-pulse-nightclub-shooter-omar-mateen-intended-to-attack-disney-shopping-complex-prosecutors-say/>.

This incident significantly affected LGBTQ communities across the nation and around the world in terms of generating great sadness, but, as discussed, the concerns of additional attackers or multiple attacks were short-lived. There is no evidence published in any public document that shows Mateen's intention to perpetuate additional attacks. The investigation revealed that he was radicalized over the internet and greatly influenced by radical Islam. He was of Middle Eastern descent but was born and raised in the United States. During the attack, the killer called the police and professed his allegiance to ISIS, clearly designating the incident as a terrorist attack from the start. This fact has never been in dispute. Under the definition utilized in this thesis, the attack would be considered terrorism. Thus, as indicated in Table 6, foreign terrorist organizations hailed this attack as a great success because it caused mass casualties and used it as an example for their adherents to follow. However, like the other two terrorism cases examined, it had very little in terms of a long-term sustainment component.

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VIII. COMPARATIVE CASE ANALYSIS, FINDINGS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This thesis utilized a comparative case study analysis to evaluate six cases. Three of the cases were notorious serial killer events, and three were recent terrorist acts. The importance of the evaluation was to illustrate differences in the types of acts as well as links between them and the possible organic transition from one type to the other. One of the main suppositions of this paper was that if international terrorist organizations realize they need to field more soldiers on the battlefield, they may start to utilize different tactics in waging their wars, including varying their acts of terror, both large and small. A main reason for the potential shift in tactics would be to obtain more than a single murderous attack from each of their recruits.

A. COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

The preceding six cases underwent individual examination based on the framework provided by the 10 propositions listed in Chapter I, and the results of the analysis appear in Table 7. The rows of this table represent the explicit propositions, and the columns represent the particular cases. To appropriately compare the case study results, an answer of “yes,” “no,” or “unknown” (unk) is provided for each of the criterion. As before, the cell values for this table suggest whether the particular proposition is relevant, not relevant, or unknown relative to the specific case and compared to the others. The analysis that follows examines the cases as a group to study the congruency, differences, discourse, patterns, and effects of each.

Table 7. Criteria Matrix for All Six Cases

Propositions	Zodiac	BTK	Beltway Snipers	Boston	San Bernardino	Orlando
Comparative Demographics	UNK Possibly Victim	YES Victim	NO Possibly Suspect	YES Suspect	YES Suspect	YES Suspect
Policy Implications	YES Local	YES Local	YES Regional/ National	YES Regional/ National	YES Local/ National and Possibly International	YES Local
Difference of Size of Attack Force (Two or More)	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO
International Terror Influence, Differences	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES
International Terror Influence, Used as Tool	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES
Difference in Length of Attacks and Alteration to Acts of Daily Living	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO
Psychological Impacts	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO
Regional Impacts Due to Continuation (Over 72 Hours)	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO
Use of Technology or Communication	YES Producer	YES Producer	YES Producer	YES Consumer	YES Consumer	YES Consumer
Fits the New Definition of Terrorism	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

1. Comparative Demographics

Regarding comparative demographics, this thesis sought to identify whether there were patterns or trends in either the victims of the attacks or the perpetrators. As shown in Table 7, demographics are relevant to nearly all the cases under study. There are a variety of relevant demographics, but the most relevant finding is that in the three terrorism cases and the D.C. Beltway sniper case, the victims' demographics played only a minor role. In these cases, with the possible exception of the D.C. Beltway snipers, the demographics of the killers are most important because each killer had a specific reason for acting out with violence. In the two remaining serial killer cases—the Zodiac and

BTK—the victims were more than likely chosen for a particular reason, so the victims’ demographics are important.

In the case of the Zodiac killer, because there was never an arrest made, much is still unknown. What is known is that the killer attacked both genders equally. Most of the victims were vulnerable and in their late teens or early twenties. All were Caucasian, as was the killer. In the BTK case, the suspect started his killings in his twenties and was arrested in his fifties. He was a Caucasian as were most of his victims. However, at the time of the first killing, the Otero family, he specifically targeted 11-year-old Josie because she was Hispanic and attractive to him. The rest of his victims varied in age, but all of his intended victims were female. The male victims were unintended casualties. In the Beltway snipers case, the two suspects were black. Muhammad was in his forties while Malvo was in his teens. Muhammed was American born but a convert to Islam while Malvo was foreign born and in the country illegally. The victims of their crimes were from diverse socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds with no discernable pattern as to why they were targeted except that they were simply targets of opportunity. No information in this case demonstrates that Muhammad’s faith played a factor in his killings; however, he did make comments to his ex-wife suggesting he could terrorize a region and make it look like a group of foreign (Islamic) terrorists.

Regarding the Boston Marathon attacks, the two brothers were of Chechen origin but here in the country legally. Tamerlan was in his twenties while Dzhokhar was in his late teens. Both were of middle-class backgrounds, Caucasian—although by outward appearances they could be mistaken for Middle Eastern—and Muslim. Tamerlan was a former Golden Gloves boxer and unemployed while Dzhokhar attended the University of Massachusetts. Their victims varied in age, race, gender, and socio economic status and were harmed simply because they chose to attend the marathon that day. The two San Bernardino shooters were both of Pakistani descent and in their late twenties. The husband, Farook, was a U.S.-born citizen of Pakistani descent, and his wife, Malik, was Pakistani born and a legal immigrant to this country. Both were Muslim and considered homegrown violent extremists, who were partially radicalized over the internet. Farook was employed at the facility they would eventually choose as the location of the attack. Malik was a

relatively new mother and normally stayed home tending to her daughter. Their victims varied in age, race, gender, and socio-economic and religious backgrounds; they simply had the misfortune of working with a would-be terrorist. In the final case this thesis examined, the attack at the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, the suspect, Omar Mateen, was in his twenties, U.S. born but of Middle Eastern descent, and Muslim. He had some college education and held a job working as a security guard. He, too, was radicalized online and chose his attack location as a target of opportunity. His victims, while mostly of the LGBTQ community, did not appear to be targeted for that reason; rather, they were likely seen as soft targets whereby he could cause mass casualties. The age, gender, race, religious beliefs, and socio-economic status of the victims varied greatly and did not appear to have any bearing on why they were targeted.

An examination of Table 7 suggests that in four of the incidents—D.C. Beltway snipers, Boston, San Bernardino, and Orlando—the suspects were Muslims following Islamic ideology. Only one of these was a serial killer case. In the Beltway Sniper case, it did not appear that Islamic ideology played a factor in the attack. In the four cases, all of the victims appeared to be chosen at random and were merely victims of opportunity. This finding contrasts with the Zodiac and BTK cases, wherein it appears the victims were specifically targeted. Rader chose alternate victims when the situation demanded it, but usually he tried to stalk and attack victims with whom he was interested. Although it is impossible to say with certainty, the Zodiac killer's methodology was likely similar. Because a suspect has never been captured in the Zodiac case, it is unknown with certainty why he chose his victims. In the BTK case, the suspect had a particular target in mind every time, and he acted on those impulses. Although BTK's targets sometimes did not work out for him, he often chose an alternative target for his violence. Thus, the victims' demographics were important to his actions. In the Beltway Sniper case as well as the three terrorist attacks, victim demographics did not matter, but the suspects all shared an Islamic ideology, making their demographics an important pattern and trend. Hence, the comparative analysis presented in Table 7 suggests that demographics played a role in several of the cases, but the importance of demographics varied by case.

2. Policy Implications

This examination demonstrated that policy implications vary greatly relative to serial killer events vis-à-vis terrorism. In hindsight, this proposition is rather vague and should have been more refined before undertaking the study. However, although Table 7 demonstrates all of the cases had policy implications, they varied as to their significance and local, regional, national, or international ramifications. These differences are indicated in Tables 1 through 6 under “notes” and also in Table 7. All of the cases of terrorism examined in this thesis were designated as such because of a direct link to some known overseas Islamic terrorist organization. Thus, the FBI immediately took the lead role in case investigation and management. The Bureau directly liaised with local and state partners and through the JTTF and fusion center networks but became the chief decision-maker in how the investigation proceeded and what information was released to the public. In all three terrorism cases, the perpetrators used the internet to aid in radicalization and attack planning. In these cases and the D.C. Beltway sniper case, after-action reports highlighting successes, failures, gaps, and vulnerabilities were openly published and are easily searchable on the internet. This is not the case with the two remaining cases, Zodiac and BTK. The BTK case saw the controversial precedence of local law enforcement taking DNA samples of local-area men on a mass scale as a reaction to the violence.

The main policy implications here are related to the FBI and its role in cases as it is the lead in terrorism cases but not in serial killer events. The Bureau aids greatly by providing resources and support in serial killer cases, especially those that cross state lines, but it rarely takes over case management. Thus, the individual local San Francisco Bay Area police agencies have remained as lead in the Zodiac case as did the organizations affected in the Wichita, Kansas, BTK case. The D.C. Beltway snipers case was led by a local law enforcement agency even though the incident technically crossed state lines. No open-source information explains why this happened, but the formation of an ad hoc task force in which the FBI was heavily involved is one potential answer. Thus, all of these cases and any changes made relative to a change in definition of terrorism, inclusion of JTTFs and fusion centers, or after-action reports could have significant impacts on policy implications, cause a ripple effect across the homeland security enterprise, and bring with

it unintended consequences and challenges. Thus, as indicated in Table 7, all cases were subject to policy implications; however, they varied by degree (i.e., local, national, or international, as referenced in Tables 1 through 6 under “notes.”) For clarity, the information from these notes also appears in Table 7.

3. Differences in Size of Attack Force (Two or More)

As suggested in Table 7, in two of the serial killer cases examined—Zodiac and BTK—the suspects acted alone. Their attack methods were simple and effective. In the third serial killer case examined—the D.C. Beltway case—two killers utilized the rather unique attack methods of sniping people from a distance while they hid in the trunk of a vehicle. In this case, they worked as a typical spotter/sniper team, which proved effective. In two of the terrorism cases examined—Boston and San Bernardino—the suspects also worked in pairs. Having two attackers was effective at causing casualties, but the temporal aspect was relatively short-lived, and the number of fatalities was no greater than single attacker incidents. In the last case examined, the suspect operated alone and was able to create the largest loss of life in a shooting attack in recent U.S. History—until the 2017 Las Vegas active-shooter attack. What this analysis shows is that three cases utilized a single attacker, and three utilized a pair of attackers, all of whom were successful at creating casualties and fear. The Orlando—and Las Vegas—incident demonstrates that a single attacker can cause mass casualties. Again, as Table 7 indicates, there was no discernable pattern as to whether one attacker or two were more lethal as either appeared to be effective in the cases examined.

4. International Terror Influence, Difference

The three serial killer cases examined in this thesis have no discernable links or influence from international terror organizations, and no evidence supports anything to the contrary. Although they could have been influenced by other means, the serial killers were not influenced by terror organizations. In both the Zodiac and BTK cases, the perpetrators suffered from some psychological abnormality that led them to commit their brutal acts. The psychological aspect could have also played a role in the Beltway sniper case; however, no evidence suggests one way or another. Muhammad’s comment to his ex-wife

insinuates that he may have thought he could make his acts look like terrorism, but no evidence points to him being influenced by any formal terror organization or suffering a psychologically impairment.

Of the terrorist cases examined, all three had definite informal links to foreign terrorist organizations, causes, and ideology. All three cases support the idea that the internet is being used as a recruitment tool, as all three were either partially or completely radicalized online with significant input from foreign terrorist organizations. As expected, this finding clearly contrasts with the three serial killer cases.

5. International Terror Influence, Used as Tool

Of the serial killer cases examined, none specifically appears to have been used as a model for terrorist organizations to follow, inspire adherents, or use as a recruitment tool. While the Zodiac case did inspire copycat murders, no terrorist organization followed the examples. Although in recent times, as previously discussed, foreign terror organizations have promoted serial killer methods among their followers, they are not specific in their instructions. This fact contrasts with the terrorism cases in that foreign terrorist organizations applauded all three, held them up as examples to follow, and used them as a recruitment tool to inspire would-be jihadists. The attackers who were killed in their missions were hailed as martyrs and good soldiers of jihad. Part of the reason why terrorist leaders have only referenced the terrorism cases as examples could be the timing of the attacks; all three terrorism cases occurred since 2013 while the serial killer cases occurred in the 1960s, 1970s, and early 2000s.

As Table 7 indicates, terrorist organizations celebrate the successes of those who claim attacks in their name, and they frequently use these as examples for their followers. There was no such approval or applause given in past serial killing events. However, if the changes in tactics that this thesis posits come to fruition, the terror organizations could very well have many more and long-term successes to celebrate.

6. Differences in Length of Attack and Alteration to Daily Living

Each of the events examined brought with it a different reaction in terms of the communities it impacted and how it altered people's fears and daily activities. In the three serial killer cases, the continued randomness of the crimes coupled with communication from the killers had sustained fear among the local population. With exception of the Boston case, this fear and alteration to daily living were generally not felt in the terrorism cases examined. The Zodiac killer frightened people in the nine Bay Area counties to such an extent that many started to change their habits and patterns. Parents refused to send their children to school, and many people simply stayed home. The BTK case kept the people of Wichita and surrounding communities on edge for three decades. In some cases, people chose to get a dog for protection while others purchased guns or installed home security systems to calm their fears. A similar pattern of fear was seen in the Beltway sniper case as many chose to stay indoors. It is possible, although not confirmed, that many tourists and business people in the District of Columbia, including foreign dignitaries, altered their plans during this time.

The temporal aspects of these alterations varied throughout each case. In the Boston Marathon bombing case, there was a shelter advisory issued by local officials during the manhunt for the suspect. Although short-lived, this order forced people to change their acts of daily living. In the two other terrorism cases, for the most part, the impacts were largely felt only immediately following the violence and generally in that specific location. The analysis demonstrates that the Beltway events significantly affected the region but potentially had the most significant ripple effect across national and international travel. The Zodiac, BTK, and Boston cases affected their respective regions for varying lengths of time while the San Bernardino and Orlando cases were relatively isolated to their communities. The alteration of acts of daily living is significant and demonstrates that all three serial killer cases forced people to significantly alter their lives for a substantial period. This is not seen in two of the three terrorism cases—San Bernardino and Orlando. In the case that did show significant alteration, the Boston Marathon bombing, it was largely due to the massive manhunt that was underway for the final suspect.

7. Psychological Impacts

Similar to what was examined with respect to altering daily living, the results of the analysis demonstrate that the greatest levels of long-term fear appeared in the serial killer cases. The prolonged fear created and sustained by the serial killer cases greatly outweighs the relatively short duration of all three terrorism events. This fear and panic only heightened the psychological impacts on individuals and communities. Had authorities known that Muhammad and Malvo had been killing people over the preceding 10 months, the ramifications of their acts would have been more impactful. Regardless, the Zodiac, BTK, and Beltway cases affected people's psychology on a regional basis. Arguably, the Boston case did as well, although the psychological impacts in this case were vastly shorter than in the Zodiac, BTK, and Beltway cases. However, the other two terrorism cases—San Bernardino and Orlando—were relatively confined to the communities in which they occurred. The significance of this point is extremely important in the overall argument of this thesis. Make no mistake, the psychological impacts of the serial killer cases greatly outweigh those of the terrorism cases.

8. Regional Impacts Due to Continuation (over 72 Hours)

Examination of the temporal aspects of these cases, as well as the psychological impacts already addressed, may be the most significant findings in terms of demonstrating why terrorist organizations might choose to follow the example set by serial killers. Quite significantly, the length of attacks are heavily favored in the direction of serial killer events. For example, in the Zodiac case, there were five known and confirmed murders linked to this killer over a roughly one-year period. However, the killer's letter-writing campaign and taunting lasted in upward of five years. In these letters, the killer claimed he had killed 37 people, and experts suspect numerous cases beyond the 10-year period may be linked to him. In the BTK case, it was 31 years from the first killing to the capture of the suspect. In the Zodiac case, the killer communicated numerous times with the media and authorities to enhance fear. The Beltway snipers conducted their high-profile attacks over a 23-day period, but further investigation revealed that they had conducted several other murders over the preceding 10 months across the United States. This is contrasted by the

approximate 102 hours from the time the first Boston Marathon bomb detonated until Dzhokhar Tsarnaev was taken into custody. The San Bernardino case spanned approximately four hours, from the attack to the shootout with police that ended in the suspects' death. Finally, the Orlando case lasted approximately three hours, from the first shot fired until the suspect's death. In this regard, one way to effectuate a longer campaign of terror is to follow the serial killer path.

9. Use of Technology or Communication

In all of the cases examined, there was some use of technology. In retrospect, this proposition should have been more clearly broken out before analysis, which could have been done by identifying whether the perpetrators were consumers of propaganda vis-à-vis technology or they used technology to communicate or heighten the fear of their acts. Based on the proposition as developed, technology played a role in all six cases. The differences in how technology was relevant appear in the "notes" section of Tables 1 through 6 and in Table 7.

Each case varies regarding the use of technology. Much of this variance has to do with the types of technology in use at the time of the case. During the Zodiac killing period, the killer generally resorted to using a typewriter or pen and paper in most of his communications. Much of this is true in the BTK case as well because at the start of the case in 1974, computers and cellular phones were not available. By the time the killer was captured in 2005, he was trying to move his communications to a more modern electronic platform, and this was in large part his downfall. In the Beltway case the suspects resorted to making phone calls and leaving notes for authorities. Almost a decade later, at the time of the Boston Marathon bombing, a shift is seen in how the terror suspects communicated, not only with authorities but also with terrorist organizations. In each of the three terrorism cases, the suspects used the internet to radicalize or to consume jihadist propaganda. Only in the Orlando case did the suspect reach out to authorities; in this case, it was not to prolong fear but rather to claim allegiance to the terrorist organization. The use of technology is a significant difference in how the serial killers and terrorists operated. The

serial killer suspects all used communications as a way to heighten fear while the terror suspects were simply consumers of communication or information.

10. Fits the New Definition of Terrorism

This thesis proposes a definition of terrorism that combines two from well-established experts in the field. All six cases were evaluated relative to this definition and, as Table 7 indicates, all fit within it. Of course, there are significant ramifications in changing the definition. All six of the cases executed a method of violence that altered the attitudes and behaviors of multiple audiences. While the acts varied among all six, each targeted the few and claimed attention of the many by way of a threat or actual use of force. The impact of each case brought with it the potential to influence political or social situations of an audience that were beyond those targeted by the violence. Lastly, in all of these cases, the violence was directed at people perceived as non-combatants, thus inciting great fear on a variety of levels.

With a change of definition of terrorism, the FBI would play a more significant role in cases that have generally been handled at the local level. This is an important point as all of the case examined where the FBI was the lead investigative authority—Boston, San Bernardino, and Orlando—were handled with speed and efficiency. This contrasts significantly with the two of the serial killer cases, Zodiac and BTK, which dragged on for years. A local jurisdiction handled the Beltway case, but the investigation immediately formed a task force in which the FBI played a major role.

B. FINAL ANALYSIS

The individual case studies and the culmination of all cases find several significant points and clear differences relevant to terrorist events vis-à-vis serial killer events. First, this study, as indicated in Table 7, demonstrates that serial killer events cause a much more substantial impact and sustained fear to a community or region over a significantly longer period than found with the examined terror cases. This is extremely important on its own, but when coupled with the fact that the use of serial killer tactics requires little in the way of training or resources, it suggests the probability it will begin to occur. Additionally, what might be required to be successful in terms of undetected, sustained violence could easily

be learned in books or on the internet, as there is much written not only on serial killers themselves but also on law enforcement responses to them.

The longevity of serial killer attacks is significant. In the Zodiac case, there was a confirmed series of murders over a multi-year period. For the BTK serial killer, the period was 31 years, from the first murder to his capture. Lastly, the Beltway snipers continued their spree for 23 days (plus 10 months). These time frames contrast with the approximate 102 hours in the Boston bombing, four hours in the San Bernardino killings, and just over three hours in the Pulse Nightclub attack in Orlando. These time frames are noted in the individual case tables notes (Tables 1 through 6) and although the Boston case does meet the criteria for inclusion, based on the specific time frame offered in the proposition—compared to the serial killer cases—its relevance is greatly diminished.

The case studies also suggest that the delayed apprehension of perpetrators significantly favors the serial killer. The Zodiac killer, who claimed to have killed 37 people, was never identified. The BTK killer, Dennis Rader, was successfully prosecuted after 31 years and 10 confirmed murders. Malvo and Muhammad killed 10 in the Beltway attacks before they were arrested and convicted for their crimes. These apprehensions and their prosecutions took years, sometimes decades, to complete whereas in the terrorism cases, all but one of the suspects, Tamerlan Tsarnaev, were killed during or shortly after their apprehensions. These facts are critical.

In their most recent iterations, terrorist attacks have largely been conducted by either suicide bomb or mass casualty incidents. These forms of terrorism create a large impact in terms of the number of casualties, but typically, the attacker is often killed or captured during or shortly after their attack. This type of terrorism works well for creating fear and trauma, but it is not especially effective at keeping attackers on the battlefield to cause additional acts of terror. Over time, the use of these tactics can affect the organizations' cadres and, without replenishment, could force the numbers of those they can recruit to dwindle, rendering them less effective in launching frequent attacks. This problem necessitates an increase in recruitment or a solution that allows terrorists to complete multiple attacks instead of just one. On the other hand, a dedicated terrorist following the example set by serial killers could stay at-large for much greater lengths of

time than in the three terrorism cases examined. This could allow them the opportunity to continue terrorizing a community or multiple communities over an extended period. This constant state of terror and fear can greatly increase the psychological impacts and alterations to daily living in the communities and as Table 7 depicts, greatly favors the serial killer model. Following a serial terrorism model would allow a terror suspect to strike repeatedly before capture. This point is crucial because a terrorist at-large could slowly and insidiously activate others to follow the same terrorist–serial killer path, propagating the spread of fear to many different communities over the course of years. Following this path can aid in terror organizations’ recruitment efforts, and this is not something currently done in serial killer cases. In some respects, this is a far more harrowing prospect than enduring an isolated attack, even if a major attack is more massive in scope. Additionally, successes achieved in this type of campaign could be used as a recruitment tool or help reinforce their members’ confidence in the group, thus bolstering group cohesion.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Change the Definition

Making a meaningful change in the definition of what constitutes “terrorism” is a daunting challenge. As with refining the definition of *serial killing*, refining the definition of *terrorism* may require gathering the foremost experts and hashing out an agreeable classification for all U.S. government agencies concerned. There would also be unintended, unforeseeable consequences, but a change in the definition of terrorism should include the types of acts considered in this thesis.

By applying a new broader definition of terrorism, the FBI would become the lead investigative authority in all events identified in this thesis, which would bring all of the resources of the federal government to bear on these cases. If terrorists start to use the model set forth by serial killers, the speed, efficiency, and resources of the FBI could be enhanced. A new terrorism designation could clear hurdles, improve communications, and streamline information sharing. As noted, the three terrorism cases examined in this thesis were handled efficiently, but this was not the case in two of the three serial killer events.

2. Use Facial Recognition Technology

The long concealment period of serial killers can be greatly shortened by new technology embedded within a robust security surveillance system. The next possible advance in many publically and privately owned video surveillance systems will likely be the addition of facial recognition software. This innovation can analyze a person's facial features by differentiating him or her from all others, much like a fingerprint. While this technology is relatively new in both use and adoption, it could become hugely significant. As discussed in the case of the BTK murders, the killer was briefly captured on video, which ultimately helped lead to his arrest. The quality of video has come a long way in the years since that time, but the importance lies in the fact that, once captured and analyzed, an image can be entered into a database of all known facial images and produce viable leads for law enforcement. With rapidly advancing technology, this could also be done rather quickly and efficiently—and at relatively little cost. There are still many legal hurdles before implementing a robust and thorough network of security cameras with facial recognition in the United States, but this concept will advance and will likely be significant in terms of investigating all types of crime, not just the threat of serial terrorism.

3. Share Crime Information

As previously discussed, the sharing of information among law enforcement agencies can be problematic at times. The three serial killer cases required multiple agencies to collaborate on the investigations, some with more success than others. In the Zodiac case, the lack of information sharing hampered the investigation although it is unknown whether this deficit directly contributed to the failure to identify and arrest a suspect. In both the BTK and Beltway snipers cases, the formation of a task force helped open lines of communication among all investigators and agencies involved. Although this information sharing was not perfect, it did function better than in the Zodiac case.

Because the threat of serial terrorism would likely involve multiple jurisdictions, the sharing of information will be all the more critical. As the law currently stands, there is no general requirement for agencies to share information with each other. Thus, consideration must be given to making it mandatory for all law enforcement agencies to

share basic crime information on all homicides, suspicious deaths, missing persons, and potential kidnapping incidents. Sharing this information would be relevant in any such serial terrorism event as well, allowing investigators to discover linkages and patterns, ultimately yielding immense value. However, simply sharing the information and uploading it into a database has limited utility until the data have been subjected to rigorous analysis by investigators and authorities.

4. Share Information among Fusion Centers

An investigation into a series of killings conducted by terrorists following a serial killer model would likely require the involvement of the local fusion center and JTTF. The vast network of U.S. fusion centers acts as information-sharing hubs, taking in data as well as analyzing and distributing them. These centers provide unique perspectives that help local and state partners frame the national threat picture independently from other intelligence partners. Their mission is summarized as working “collaboratively with field-based information sharing programs, serving as facilitators in crime and terrorism prevention efforts and information sharing efforts.”²⁹¹ As such, fusion centers act as the primary conduit among homeland security practitioners, state and local partners, and field staff.

5. Restrict the Release of After-Action Reports

After-action reports were written in all three of the terrorism cases examined in this thesis. The use of after-action reports is not new. However, these reports have become increasingly common, given the public nature of many high-profile incidents, whether active-shooter events—such as San Bernardino or Orlando—bombings—such as Boston—or major weather events—such as Hurricane Katrina. They do not come without problems. In many cases, an after-action report makes recommendations for policy or procedural changes, but there is often little mention regarding how to fund those changes or exactly how to go about implementing their recommendations.

²⁹¹ National Fusion Center Association, *2014–2017 National Strategy for the National Network of Fusion Centers* (Arlington, VA: National Fusion Center Association, July 2014), <https://info.publicintelligence.net/NationalFusionCenterStrategy-2014-2017.pdf>.

Furthermore, as with some of the examples cited in this thesis—including the Boston Marathon bombing as well as the Orlando and San Bernardino attacks—the after-action reports are easily found on the internet and clearly highlight law enforcement shortcomings, gaps in security, and the errors of organizations involved, as well as plainly outline examples of a terrorist’s strategies during a particular type of attack. This brings up several issues related to identifying a path a terrorist or terrorist group might take in the planning and execution of a future attack. In other words, publishing a detailed after-action report for public consumption gives would-be terrorists a road map to plan and execute a strike better than any predecessor. To keep this from happening, all after-action reports should have a public-facing component—explaining the incident in general terms—and a law enforcement-sensitive component, which identifies gaps and lessons learned.

IX. CONCLUSION

This thesis sought to determine whether there was a concern of terrorists beginning to follow an example set forth by well-known serial killers to create prolonged fear and keep combatants on the field for much longer periods than they could utilizing traditional attacks. Furthermore, it examined the term *terrorism*, as there is apprehension among experts and professionals regarding a singular stable, workable, and common definition of what it is. As identified in the literature review, there is much disagreement among scholars and experts, and this failure causes ambiguity in determining the best ways to respond to particular situations. Additionally, many of the current definitions do not take into account the changes that are occurring at this moment, not only in terrorist tactics aimed to cause mayhem but also in general methodologies and ideologies—for example, the increased use of the internet to radicalize people who do not have the time or resources to travel abroad. As has been well demonstrated, people can now become indoctrinated easily by electronic means from their own homes.

A. NEW TERRORISM DEFINITION VERIFIED

As demonstrated in the comparative analysis, culminating in Table 7, the definition of terrorism is an important factor if there is an eventual shift toward serial terrorism. Currently there are over 100 definitions of terrorism offered by experts and scholars for consideration.²⁹² To that end, the analysis demonstrates that the requirement to have an international or political component to be considered terrorism might well discount actions that follow a serial path. The single definition of terrorism must include the potentiality for terror suspects to act both in a conspiratorial style among a large group and on their own accord without anyone else's knowledge or approval. This definition must consider the use of technology—not only that of today but also the technology of tomorrow, as advances are likely to affect the way terrorists think and act. Lastly, a definition should not simply

²⁹² Alex P. Schmid, "The Revised Academic Consensus Definition of Terrorism," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 6, no. 2 (2012), <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/schmid-terrorism-definition/html>.

rely on a link to the political or ideological belief of an actor but instead should be flexible enough to take into account the totality of the circumstances.

B. HOMELAND SECURITY POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Many shifts in terrorists' strategies are possible. For example, this thesis identified one that would be simple to follow and could have a significant impact on society in terms of creating fear and anxiety. As demonstrated in the analysis and depicted in Tables 1 through 7, by following the pattern set forth by serial killers and mixing those types of killings with modern-day technology and communication, it would be easy for terror suspects to have a lasting destructive impact on society and to drain law enforcement resources quickly. Therefore, this thesis identified and briefly examined several policies that could be changed to fill this gap in terms of the collective knowledge on the subject, thus aiding U.S. defense.

An additional possibility that should be considered—although not examined in depth in the present work—is the use of DNA. Currently, there are relatively few ways in which DNA samples are taken and entered into national government databases.²⁹³ Consideration could be given to adding requirements as to when and how people must give DNA samples and when those samples should be accessed. For example, legislation could be passed that requires submitting DNA samples at birth; at entry into the United States; at the time the government issues a driver's license, state ID, passport, or marriage certificate; at the time of arrest or detention for a criminal offense; or even at death. Admittedly, tremendous privacy issues are involved in this recommendation as it is seen as controversial. This concept's full implications are outside the scope of the current thesis, but the general notion is something that could—and should—be debated.

In an essay discussing domestic intelligence and increased security needs that lead to restrictions on liberty, Erik Dahl has suggested that the events of 9/11 caused great anxiety about the lack of security in the United States. As a defensive reaction, this type of sentiment can stir up a desire for greater control, which some feel can be restored by

²⁹³ Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Frequently Asked Questions on CODIS and NDIS," accessed June 2, 2018, <https://www.fbi.gov/services/laboratory/biometric-analysis/codis/codis-and-ndis-fact-sheet>.

enhancing restrictions on privacy or liberty or both.²⁹⁴ A move toward mandatory DNA submission is one such action that would provide more security but less liberty. In his work, Dahl argues that there always needs to be a balance between security and liberty—a return to equilibrium—even after a major terrorist act.²⁹⁵

C. IMPACT ON LAW ENFORCEMENT AND ITS SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

With a change in the definition of terrorism, numerous shifts will occur in terms of the implications to the homeland security enterprise—including national policies, practices, and procedures—as well as local law enforcement. None of these changes will be helpful if they hamper or somehow reduce local law enforcement’s situational awareness. One of the main transformations here should be that the FBI becomes the lead investigative agency on all terror or suspected terror incidents. Thus, a change in the definition of terrorism, such as that offered in this thesis, will greatly expand the number of incidents that are considered terrorism, and this will require the FBI to add staffing and resources to handle the increased workload.

Making the FBI the lead agency on expanded terror cases brings all of the federal and local resources it has at its disposal to any event. This depth of resources will be extremely beneficial in the speed and reach of an investigation. Nevertheless, the FBI has not always had the best reputation of working closely with local law enforcement and sharing information, which pose challenges as much interagency cooperation will be required. This is why the incorporation of the JTTFs is so essential, for it is the relationships fostered by these task forces that can help bridge the gaps and keep the information flowing.

When a terror event occurs, it does not matter to the affected people whether the perpetrator is a lone recluse or a devotee who has pledged fidelity to ISIS, Al-Qaeda, a homegrown violent extremist group, or some other radical organization. They are left with the anguish and pain of losing loved ones as well as their personal feelings of insecurity.

²⁹⁴ Erik Dahl, “Domestic Intelligence Today: More Security but Less Liberty?,” *Homeland Security Affairs* 7 (September 2011): 6.

²⁹⁵ Dahl, 6.

The physical and emotional damage is real, and the pain, fear, and anxiety may never fade. It is to the benefit of all that experts and scholars arrive at one definition that encompasses all terror acts imaginable.

If terrorist organizations perpetuate their desire to attack the West—and there is every indication that they yearn to do so—the U.S. government and its people should remain vigilant of new ways in which an attack may occur. As identified in the *9/11 Commission Report*, there was a failure of imagination in seeing that a terrorist organization could find a way to use box cutters and fake bombs to hijack planes and use them as missiles.²⁹⁶ Following the readymade path paved by the world’s serial killers is yet another simple, relatively easy-to-achieve way for terror suspects not only to commit acts of violence against innocent civilians but also to sustain that terror. Keeping in mind the adage that “predictable is preventable,” the homeland security enterprise must never forget the failure-of-imagination lesson. It should constantly examine the risks and potentialities of any shift in tactics, working with speed, efficiency, and forcefulness to shut new approaches down before major harm is inflicted on the nation’s people once again.

D. AREAS FOR FUTURE STUDY

This thesis conducted a comparative case analysis to determine whether a shift toward serial terrorism is in fact a possibility and, if so, what some of the ramifications might be. If this change in tactic does in fact become a reality, it will be important not only to recognize it quickly but also to share information among relevant stakeholders as well as to implement a response plan. What that plan looks like and how it would work in its entirety has yet to be determined and is an area that needs further study.

Based on what this thesis has revealed, the plan must include communication among local law enforcement agencies as well as state and federal partners such as the FBI. This will most likely be accomplished through the local FBI field office and nearest JTTF.

²⁹⁶ National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), 336, 339, <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/GPO-911REPORT/content-detail.html>.

Use of the local fusion center will also be of utmost importance because it is within the relationships developed among the JTTFs and the fusion centers that a group of agencies can collaborate, share, and analyze information, intelligence, and evidence. Operating in silos, such as was done in much of the Zodiac case, only impedes a swift resolution.

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APPENDIX. GOVERNMENTAL DEFINITIONS OF TERRORISM

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) adheres to the following definition of terrorism found in Title 22 of the *U.S. Code*, Section 2656f(d): “premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents.”²⁹⁷

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) defines terrorism under Section 2 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002:

any activity that—

(A) involves an act that—

(i) is dangerous to human life or potentially destructive of critical infrastructure or key resources;

and

(ii) is a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or of any State or other subdivision of the United States; and

(B) appears to be intended—

(i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population;

(ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or

(iii) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping.²⁹⁸

The FBI defines terrorism as “the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives.”²⁹⁹

²⁹⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, “Terrorism FAQs,” accessed January 25, 2018, <https://www.cia.gov/news-information/cia-the-war-on-terrorism/terrorism-faqs.html>. The U.S. Department of State uses the same definition. See U.S. Department of State, “Chapter 1: Legislative Requirements and Key Terms,” January 25, 2018, <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/65464.pdf>.

²⁹⁸ Homeland Security Act of 2002; Public Law 107-296, *U.S. Statutes at Large* 116 (2002): 2141, http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/hr_5005_enr.pdf.

²⁹⁹ Federal Bureau of Investigation, “Terrorism Definitions,” accessed December 30, 2017, <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/terrorism>.

The National Institute of Justice defines terrorists as follows: “those who support or commit ideologically motivated violence to further political, social or religious goals.”³⁰⁰

³⁰⁰ National Institute of Justice, “Research on Domestic Radicalization and Terrorism,” last modified March 20, 2018, <https://www.nij.gov/topics/crime/terrorism/Pages/welcome.aspx>.

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