

Was Islam the motive for Las Vegas gunman Paddock?

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by [Randy Bright](#)

Within hours after I posted last week's article to the Beacon, Stephen Paddock conducted the worst mass murder in modern U.S. history in Las Vegas, using numerous rifles equipped with "bump" stocks. I first learned of this when I turned on the news the following morning to see the banner on the bottom of the screen announcing that a gunman had killed many people and injured hundreds more.

My first thought was that this was a Muslim jihadist that had conducted the attack. Authorities have made no such statements to that effect, though the attack certainly fits the method of operation of jihadists.

Despite there being no disclosed evidence that Paddock was a Muslim, Newsweek ran an article entitled "ISIS: Las Vegas Shooter Stephen Paddock became Muslim Six Months before Massacre."

They were referring to the ISIS weekly online magazine Al-Naba in which they had given Paddock the name Abu Abdul Barr al-Amriki. It was stated in the magazine that "A soldier of the caliphate attacked a gathering of 22,000 Americans at a concert in the city of Las Vegas, resulting in nearly 60 killed and 600 injured."

Newsweek also reported that authorities "have scrutinized ISIS's claims, but have said they don't believe the militants were involved." They are likely correct, but the attack certainly served ISIS well by giving them the opportunity to claim credit and, worse, inspire others to follow his example.

It is difficult to believe that any American of Paddock's profile could have become a self-converted, self-motivated jihadist, but it is not unprecedented.

Two years ago, Terry Lee Loewen, a 60-year aviation technician employed at Hawker Beechcraft's facility at Dwight D. Eisenhower National Airport, was sentenced to 20 years in prison for plotting, implementing, and attempting to commit a suicide attack at the airport. Loewen had been arrested two years earlier when he made the final attempt to place a van filled with explosives between two terminals at the airport in an effort to kill as many people as possible with the blast. However, the public was never in danger from the bomb because his ISIS handlers turned out to be undercover FBI agents.

In a Business Insider article that ran shortly after the arrest entitled "Why a Middle-Aged Man Allegedly Decided He Was Going to Bomb A Kansas Airport," writer Pamela Engel quoted Loewen who said, "As time goes on, I care less and less about what other people think of me, or my views of Islam. I have been studying subjects like jihad, martyrdom operations and Sharia law. I don't understand how you can read the Qur'an and the sunnah of the prophet (saw) and

not understand that jihad and the implementation of Sharia is absolutely demanded of all the Muslim Ummah...I do agree on one thing; the one thing we are doing wrong is that all 1.5 billion of us don't rise up against the rest of the world and tell THEM how it's going to be. Inshallah, it will happen soon."

Engel provided another quote from Loewen: "Brothers like Osama bin Laden and Anwar al Awlaki are a great inspiration to me, but I must be willing to give up everything (like they did) to truly feel like a obedient slave of Allah (swt)...I have become "radicalized" in the strongest sense of the work, and I don't feel Allah (swt) wants me any other way – I MUST be active in some kind of (dare I say it) jihad to feel I'm doing something proactive for the Ummah..."

Loewen was charged for one count each of three federal crimes – attempting use of a weapon of mass destruction, attempting to damage property, and attempting to provide "material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization." Loewen believed that he was dealing with al Qaeda in Yemen, and had planned to drive the van into the airport using his security pass. He intended to detonate the explosives himself and die in the attack.

So is the notion that Paddock was actually a Muslim out of the realm of possibility? Not at all, according to the Newsweek article: "ISIS has previously claimed responsibility for attacks only to be later denied by authorities, such as an apparent botched robbery in the Philippines.

Terrorism and security analysis experts, however, such as Kronos Advisory co-founder Michael S. Smith II and the New York Times correspondent Rukmini Callimachi have pointed out that the group is rarely off and such a blatantly false narrative would be out of character for the social media savvy jihadists."

Whether Paddock was a Muslim or not, the attack should serve as a warning that Islam is the problem, not guns, and not bump stocks. Attacks like this will continue unless more is done to prevent them. Unfortunately, our legislators have taken their eye off the ball yet again by focusing on the gun debate instead.



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