THE LEGEND OF THE LONE WOLF TERRORIST

When I last wrote about this subject (Ledeen's Lair May 2013), they called them "homegrown" terrorists, the phrase of the month a year and a half ago. Back then, such imaginary monsters were bombing marathons; today they are shooting Canadian parliamentarians and security guards, and attacking NYPD guys with their jihadi axes.

It doesn't really matter what you call them, because they're figments of the "expert" imagination. The legend-mavens tell us that there are "normal" Americans (this part is very important) who somehow just go bad, and turn into murderous terrorists. There is no foreign input, no alien country or intelligence service, no global conspiracy. The terrorists are homegrown and they are on their own. They are *Lone Wolves*.

It's not so. Max Abrahms at Northeastern University has observed:

"Since the advent of international terrorism in 1970, *none of the 40 most lethal terrorist attacks has been committed by a person unaffiliated with some terrorist group,* according to publicly available data from the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, which is funded by the Department of Homeland Security and stored at the University of Maryland. In fact, lone wolves have carried out just two of the 1,900 most deadly terrorist incidents over the last four decades."

So why lone wolves? Patrick Poole answers: "It's terror agnosticism: ‘There is possibly no way to predict who will turn to terrorism, so therefore we can't be held responsible when it happens. Oh, and give us more money so we can better improve how we won't be able to predict terror attacks'."

But Abrahms' data -- that's pretty impressive, don't you think? I'd like to know the two-out-of-nearly-two-thousand real cases of lone wolves on the attack, but I'll bet you ten to one they weren't jihadis.

There are homegrown terrorists like the Unabomber, but these aren't the people we're talking about just now. Unabomber is a nut, but he's a distinctly American nut, and definitely a lone wolf. The so-called lone wolves of recent days-the killer in Canada, the axeman in New York, and, we should add, the Oklahama City decapitator - aren't loners, they're *members*. They've been inspired by local or online jihadis.

Another thing. These jihadis often turn out to be converts, even "recent converts."

Words like "convert" often slide past our active attention, but we should focus on them. The act of conversion requires the convert to join a religious community, and may require other actions.

Converts to Islam, for example, are usually required to be circumcised, although I find that some

online Muslim recruiting sites will tell you that you can avoid it if the thought is just too terrible. The sites do say that you can convert on your own; you don't have to show up at a mosque to become a Muslim, all you have to do is swear an oath to Allah.

But then you've got to participate. And since the Koran is an Arabic text, you'd best learn some Arabic. The site will guide you to the local mosque where you can pursue your Islamic education.

The point being: converts are the opposite of lone wolves because they need help (do you think they circumcise themselves? Or study Arabic alone?). They are entering a new world - it's why they are converting, after all - and it behooves us to take a careful look at the psychological dynamics of their transition.

We can learn a lot from the Nobel laureate V.J. Naipaul, who has well described the phenomenon:

"Everyone who is not an Arab who is a Muslim is a convert. Islam is not simply a matter of conscience or belief. It makes imperial demands. A convert's worldview alters. His holy places are in Arab lands; his sacred language is Arabic. His idea of history alters. He rejects his own; he becomes...a part of the Arab story....People develop fantasies about who and what they are; and in the Islam of converted countries there is an element of neurosis and nihilism. These countries are easily set on the boil."

To quote myself from a year and a half ago: "Those people are boiling, too, perhaps more so in a non-Muslim land like ours than in countries that have gone over to Islam. The same intense inner strife applies to those who join other totalitarian mass movements, whether Nazi, Fascist, or Communist."

Those boiling people are very dangerous, as we see most every day. But they aren't loners. They're members who've signed up to kill us.

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