



BINGHAMTON SLAUGHTER: COULD IT BE AN AL-QAEDA LINKED ATTACK?

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At first sight, the Binghamton slaughter seemed to be a very “classical American tragedy”: a man, unemployed, enters a place he had ties with and kills everyone before taking his own life. End of the story.

But the claim of the responsibility for the massacre, this morning, by Baitullah Mehsud, a well known and particularly dangerous Pakistani terrorist leader gives another sense to this picture.

The facts, first:

Someone saying he is Baitullah Mehsud - and al-Qaeda linked terrorist, founder and leader of [Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan](#) - called British and other western media this morning and claimed the responsibility for the attack. **At this stage, he gave no evidence to corroborate the claim. The exact terms he used are not known.**

The analysis:

- **First question: does Mehsud have any reason or interest to attack in the U.S.?**

The answer is clearly positive. Mehsud is a **hardliner Taleban** (schools educating females, music and video are prohibited in the area he controls) and he is **extremely involved in the fight against the U.S. presence in Pakistan and Afghanistan**. For this reason, he was **targeted several times by U.S. missiles** those last years, last time not later than last February.

It must be underlined that, **in January 2007, he directly threatened to take the war to the United States**. In an interview to BBC's Haroon Rashid, he said:

“We will continue our struggle until foreign troops are thrown out. Then, we will attack them in the U.S. and Britain until they either accept Islam or agree to pay jazia”¹.

- **Second question: is the claim real or is it a hoax?**

There are basically four possibilities to examine:

- 1) Someone playing to be Mehsud called the media, but **it was not really Mehsud** and the claim was false. In this case, nothing really interesting to analyze: it's just one more hoax.
- 2) **Mehsud or one of his associates really called the media** to claim the responsibility.
- 3) In this last possibility, **it could also be a fake: a terrorist somewhere in Central Asia taking advantage of a tragedy to win a quick and cheap publicity for its group and his cause.** But even this possibility would be interesting: al-Qaeda linked organizations, in the past, have often threatened of attacks that never happened or were even never seriously planned but they rarely claimed the responsibility of an actual attack. At least, not at the level of an identified terrorist leader. **This would mean that the Global Jihad organizations are engaged in a new kind of “psy-ops” and propaganda warfare.**
- 4) **Last possibility: the man at the phone was actually Mehsud or a close associate and they really planned and executed this operation.**

This case would, obviously, be the worst. For many reasons:

- **It would be the first al-Qaeda linked attack on the American soil since 09/11 and it will have a considerable impact on the Jihadist scene;**
- It means that the **Global Jihad Movement is able to penetrate in new communities.** We already knew that the converted were of special interest for al-Qaeda, and largely used in terrorist plot, however, it would be the first time we meet an Asian converted... What drove him to embrace al-Qaeda cause will be extremely interesting to understand;
- It means that al-Qaeda linked organizations are able to **target and hit very soft targets** which are, by definition, impossible to protect. An immigrant center yesterday, what's tomorrow? A school? A hotel? A bus station?
- It would be the first application of a “Mumbai scenario” outside Asia. More precisely, it would be a **mixed Mumbai/Israeli scenario:** a pure urban jihad action, like in Mumbai in last November or in Lahore earlier this month;

¹ Jazia is a tax to be paid by non muslims living in an Islamic state.

an indiscriminate attack on civilians like it happen, regularly in Israel for years. **If proved efficient, this “new” strategy” would be a real nightmare for all the security and police agencies in the world.**

In any case, we’ll probably know very shortly if this morning’s claim is to take seriously: no doubt that within hours, New York state authorities and other U.S. authorities will communicate new information on the tragedy.

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