

ORLANDO: WINNING 'DIY' TERRORISM STRATEGY IS APPLIED BY ISLAMIC STATE

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On the night between June 12 and June 13, at least 50 people were killed and 53 more injured in a shooting, carried out by a lone attacker against a night club of the LGBT community in Orlando, Florida. The man, who claimed his allegiance to Islamic State, was shot dead by police.

The first elements on the incident allow to draw a provisory profile of the man responsible for the worst mass shooting in US history and the deadliest terror attack committed on US soil since September 11, 2001. **The attack, claimed by the Islamic State, will for sure have an impact on the "positioning" of the United States in the Syrian crisis.**

- Born in New York in 1986, Omar Mir Mateen Seddique has been living in Port Saint Lucie, a small Florida town situated some 200 km from Orlando, that has experienced rapid development since the 1960s and today has just over 170 000 inhabitants.
- As US citizen, Mateen is also from an Afghan family and his father Seddique Mateen claimed his support to the Taliban and a determined opposition to the Pakistani and Afghan governments. However, is not a reason to suggest a link between Afghanistan and its terrorist groups and the attack in Orlando.
- After a relatively ordinary youth and school period (some former classmates, quoted by *Orlando Sentinel*, described Mateen as a "stupid" student), he allegedly intended to become a policeman before being hired as a security guard, first in a juvenile detention center and then in a large security company.
- While some evoke a "quiet" man, others remember **a nervous person, easily angry, with a strong tendency to racist and homophobic discourses.** Indeed, it seems that Mateen has been subject to **emotional disturbances and violent outbursts.** His former wife, Sitpora Yusiufiy, who described him as "unstable", "psychologically disturbed" and "undiagnosed bipolar", left him just after four months of marriage (divorce has, however, been delivered only in 2011), and complained about being abused and beaten regularly under any excuse.

- Though Ms. Yusiufiy also referred to Mateen as a "not very religious" man, some of the people who knew him indeed emphasized that he had become very religious after his divorce and had completed the Hadj (pilgrimage to Mecca, one of the five obligations of a good Muslim). He also regularly frequented the Islamic Center of Fort Pierce, a small mosque for 150 worshipers, but there he had never showed any sign of radicalization. He frequented the mosque with family, his father and his 3-year-old son who was playing while he prayed, and his sisters were working as volunteers.
- **Relatively isolated, Mateen rarely frequented other Muslims** and appears to have few friends. It should be mentioned that most of the pictures he posted on social media were selfies of himself alone.
- His father points out that several months before the shooting, during a family trip to Miami, **Mateen had been "shocked and angry" after seeing two men kissing and flirting "in front of his son".**
- **Twice he had been the subject of an FBI investigation:**
 - In 2013, Mateen's public statements and "posts" on social media had hinted FBI that he could maintain relations with the terrorist movement;
 - In 2014, a new investigation was initiated by the FBI on Mateen's possible links with the first US suicide bomber in Syria, Moner Mohammad Abusalha, who he briefly met;

Both episodes had resulted in several interviews and even, allegedly, a short period of physical surveillance, but **no concrete links to terrorism had been identified, the file was not considered as a priority, and later classified.**

Here is "the big question": was the shooting in gay-club in Orlando a hate crime or a terror attack, inspired by Islamic State?

The available facts so far **do not indicate any structural link to the Islamic State and it seems certain that Mateen has never visited Syria or Iraq.** Computers, phones and documents seized at his home will allow to clarify quickly whether the attack was preceded by any particular contact or individual factor, but by the time we write this briefing, it is assumed that:

- Omar Mateen himself interrupted the shooting soon after 02:00 am to call 911, **to give his name and to claim the act on behalf of the Islamic State. His will, clearly expressed, was to link his act to Islamic State.**
- Few hours later, **IS-linked Amaq news agency**, which is usually used by the group to claim attacks, issued **a short statement saying that "the armed attack that targeted a gay club in the city of Orlando [...] has been executed by an Islamic State fighter."**
- **This claim was reiterated on June 13 by IS radio Al-Bayane.**

Investigation over the case is ongoing, meanwhile it is likely that **the attack was not organized or directed or even "encouraged" by Islamic State, but the ideology of this organization and its known hatred against homosexuals (horribly persecuted in areas under its control) offered to Omar Mateen "moral and political justification" for his acts**, that were possibly initially-motivated by homophobia.

The "cross-claim" (by the author of the massacre on the one hand and by Islamic State on the other hand) allows to link the attack to the Islamic State. It is absolutely coherent to the general instructions given by Islamic State to its American and British supporters not to try to go to the Middle East but to carry out attacks in their home countries, as well as to the particular call that was issued before Ramadan to commit as many attacks as possible during this month.

In its propaganda, the Islamic State clearly will pretend to be "behind" the deadliest attack committed on US soil since September 11, 2001. Meanwhile this represents also a new proof of the danger of the IS opportunistic strategy that provides, to any extremist or mentally misbalanced personality, either by encouraging or by post-clearance recovery, a "catch-all ideology" that makes IS a real "do-it-yourself" of terror.

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