

**TOULOUSE :
« INDIVIDUAL TERRORIST » ARRIVES IN FRANCE**

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The prime suspect in the killings in Toulouse and Montauban is a young self-declared “salafi” French Muslim claiming to act “in the name of **al-Qaeda**”.

The shadowy trial of a neo-nazi pursued by the media and subjected to manipulation by the campaign for the presidential elections is closed and we return to the fundamentals: **yes, France is a “legitimate” target for “global jihad”** (usually **al-Qaeda**, therefore Sunni and Salafi) and the latter, though we regularly announce it, is not finished.

The modus operandi of the Toulouse terrorist is the most troubling because **here we are confronting a sort of « infra-terrorism » not one that is organized or linked to an international structure, but instead one of cells with one or more isolated individuals acting on their own** (even though they were, no doubt, trained to do this). The second is evidently much more difficult to combat than the first.

In the coming hours and days, we will know more on the suspect and his entourage, and no doubt, the support from which he benefited, but here we present a first analysis.

1) The suspect

The suspect is named **Mohammed Merah**. **He is 24 years old, and is French (of Algerian origin).**

He seems to be **estranged from his family**, especially from his mother, who, when brought Wednesday morning to where the police had identified her son, refused to participate in the negotiations for his surrender, asserting that she “*does not have any influence over him*”. This rupture with the familial sphere is characteristic of the operation of jihadists (and of sects): an individual isolated by his family is, by definition, easier to manipulate; the group to which he attaches becomes his only reference.

In Merah’s case, this isolation is now possibly total. Two of his brothers were arrested. One of their computer’s was used to set a trap for the first victim on March 11th. It remains to be seen whether this was done without his complicity or knowledge.

Merah has **traveled to Pakistan at least twice, in 2010 and in 2011**. He was questioned and briefly detained in the Kandahar region by Afghan security forces during one

of his trips. It was at this moment that his name was transmitted to the French security services (more precisely to the DCRI *Central Interior Intelligence Directorate*, in charge of espionage and counter-terrorism within the borders).

2) The modus operandi

The modus operandi (MO) of the killer is significant.

The investigation will tell us whether he acted alone or with accomplices (his brothers or others), but witnesses say that they only saw one killer at each attack, **which seems to indicate that the accomplices were eventually relegated to a purely logistical role.**

The use of a hand gun, the efficiency and the extreme coldness the killer has shown (pursuing his victims to the end, whether in Montauban or the Jewish school in Toulouse) **could indicates that he had been trained and “formed”**, and if this is the case, it was probably during a visit to Pakistan or Afghanistan.

His escape route after his assassination of the paratroopers of the 17th RGP, in Montauban, **indicates that the attack was carefully planned**: Merah fled onto side roads with his scooter Yamaha T-Max 530 without a problem, but larger vehicles had difficulty following him.

3) A « first » for France ?

The attack on the Jewish school in Toulouse is the **first anti-Semitic attack in France since the massacre on Rue du Rosiers, in Paris, in 1982.**

The three attacks attributed to Merah constitute the **first successful jihadist operation in France since the campaign of attacks in 1994-1996** perpetrated by the GIA (Groupe Islamiste Armé algérien) or local sympathetic elements (including the Lyonnais Khaled Kelkal¹)

This is not to say that the al-Qaeda network has not attempted to attack France since the end of the 1990s. From the conspiracy against the World Cup in 1998, until now, there have been a number of logistical or operational networks dismantled in France or abroad that have specifically targeted the hexagon.

4) A « new » threat

But what seems new (for France) in the case of Toulouse, is that **this was not an attack by a terrorist cell, but by an isolated, or nearly isolated individual.**

Mohammed Merah, from what we know today, corresponds to the profile of a **“lone wolf”**: a terrorist who could have benefited from training and been “oriented” toward certain targets, but acted alone, was master of his schedule, the choice of his objectives and that of his MO.

¹ Kelkal was involved in the assassination of the moderate imam Sahraoui on July 11th, 1995, in a shootout against police officers in Bron on July 15th, in the attack on RER Saint Michel (8 dead and 117 wounded) on July 25th, in attack in Place de l'Etoile on August 17th, (17 wounded) and in a failed attack against the TGV from Paris to Lyon on August 26th, in a second failed attack in Paris on September 3rd (4 wounded) and in an attack against a Jewish school in Lyon on September 7th, 1995 (14 wounded). He was shot on September 29th following at Vaugneray (Rhône) by officers of the parachutist squadron of the National Gendarmerie Intervention (EPIGN).

Though new in France, this profile is not new in the United States where several recent cases have involved “lone wolves”. Among others, notable cases involved **Major Nidal Malik Hassan**, who killed 13 soldiers and wounded 29 others in Fort Hood (Texas) on November 5th 2009, and the failed attack on Times Square (New York), perpetrated by **Faisal Shahzad** on May 1st 2010.

This threat, which is very difficult to counter, is a true nightmare for the security services, the police, and the intelligence services.

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