

---

## Threat Assessment: Do Lone Terrorists Differ from Other Lone Offenders?

Diane M. Zierhoffer  
*Henley-Putnam University, zierhofferdm@hotmail.com*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/jss>  
pp. 48-62

---

### **Recommended Citation**

Zierhoffer, Diane M.. "Threat Assessment: Do Lone Terrorists Differ from Other Lone Offenders?." *Journal of Strategic Security* 7, no. 3 (2014) : 48-62.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.7.3.3>

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/jss/vol7/iss3/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Open Access Journals at Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Strategic Security by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. For more information, please contact [scholarcommons@usf.edu](mailto:scholarcommons@usf.edu).

---

## **Threat Assessment: Do Lone Terrorists Differ from Other Lone Offenders?**

### **Abstract**

This study evaluates the viability of a threat assessment model developed to calculate the risk of targeted violence as a predictor of violence by potential lone terrorists. There is no profile, to date, which would assist in the identification of a lone terrorist prior to an attack. The threat assessment model developed by Borum, Fein, Vossekuil, and Berglund and described in "Threat Assessment: Defining an approach for evaluating risk of targeted violence" (1999) poses ten questions about the patterns of thinking and behaviors that may precipitate an attack of targeted violence.

Three terrorists are studied to assess the model's value as a predictor of terrorism. It is assessed for its use within law enforcement, during an investigation of someone brought to attention as a possible terrorist and for family members or friends who suspect potential terrorist behavior. Would these questions encourage someone to report a friend to prevent a possible attack?

This threat assessment model provides a foundation for future research focused on developing a structured risk assessment for lone terrorists. In its present form, the questions can assist both citizens and law enforcement personnel in identifying the patterns of thought and behavior potentially indicative of a lone terrorist.

## Introduction

Terrorists who operate without the support of a terrorist organization, network, or other individuals can be difficult to detect before an attack.<sup>1</sup> Research into terrorism is predominantly focused on organizations and the concepts of social psychology that explain the influence of groups on the recruit. Research on lone offender terrorism has been minimal, seemingly because terrorism is most often regarded as a collective activity.<sup>2</sup> From the perspective of social psychology, it is relatively easy to understand how a disenfranchised individual can be drawn into a terrorist group. With a rise in individual attacks since 9/11, it may be important to research other forms of terrorism.

Although, to date, there is no profile that would predict a terrorist attack by a lone offender, it may be possible to recognize the behaviors that could lead to an attack by a lone terrorist by applying the threat assessment approach conceived of by Fein and Vossekuil and refined by Borum, Fein, Vossekuil and Berglund in their work “Threat assessment: Defining an approach for evaluating risk of targeted violence.”<sup>3</sup> Their model examines behaviors that may help to identify lone offender terrorists before they attack. The threat assessment approach developed by Borum *et al.* will be evaluated for its effectiveness as a tool to aid in the identification of lone terrorist offenders. This approach has been applied to other types of targeted violence in cases of school homicide, domestic violence, stalking and workplace violence, but has not been considered for the lone terrorist.<sup>4</sup> The behaviors addressed by this tool appear to be as relevant to the prevention of an attack by a lone terrorist as they are for the perpetrator of other targeted violence.

Leon Panetta, former director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), stated in February 2010, “It’s the lone-wolf strategy that I think we have to pay attention to as the main threat to this country.”<sup>5</sup> Anders Breivik killed seventy-seven people in Norway when he detonated a car bomb in Oslo and then attacked a youth camp. In his manifesto he described how “Solo Martyr Cells” are undetectable and that the cell commander works solo, basing all decisions on fixed fundamental principles, eliminating the need to ever consult. Breivik advises his reader against

---

<sup>1</sup> Ramon Spaaij, “The Enigma of Lone Wolf Terrorism: An Assessment,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, (2010): 854, available at: <https://www.opensource.gov/providers/ebsco/GoToSite/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=6&hid=13&sid=db676d04-b927-4b4f-b208-7975acbe1e19%40sessionmgr10>.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, 855.

<sup>3</sup> Randy Borum, Robert Fein, Bryan Vossekuil and John Berglund, “Threat Assessment: Defining an Approach for Evaluating Risk of Targeted Violence,” *Behavioral Sciences and the Law* Volume 17 (1999): 323-337.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice, *Protective Intelligence and Threat Assessment Investigations: A Guide for State and Local Law Enforcement Officials*, by Robert Fein and Bryan Vossekuil (NIJ/OJP/DOJ Publication No. NCJ 179981 (2000): iv.

<sup>5</sup> Pantucci, Raffaello, *A Typology of Lone Wolves: Preliminary Analysis of Lone Islamist Terrorists* (London: International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, 2011): 3, available at: [http://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/1302002992ICSRPaper\\_ATypologyofLoneWolves\\_Pantucci.pdf](http://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/1302002992ICSRPaper_ATypologyofLoneWolves_Pantucci.pdf).

making any connection with extremist networks or other movements to minimize detection, and remain hidden until ready to act.<sup>6</sup>

The key to a counterterrorism response is to know how attacks are formulated, and not necessarily who will conduct an attack. Insight into the pathway to violence might yield a more effective way to defend against the lone offender and prevent a terrorist attack. Counterterrorism services must be vigilant for the signals, no matter how small, that an individual displays before an attack.<sup>7</sup>

This study examines behaviors that may identify lone offender terrorists before they attack by analyzing the threat assessment model developed by Borum *et al.*<sup>8</sup> The model will be assessed against the case studies of three domestic lone terrorists. The model will be analyzed for its value to law enforcement professionals in the assessment of a potential terrorist. The identification of an individual who poses a threat cannot and should not fall solely within the realm of law enforcement. Discussion will also include the value of this model for use by the general public in order to recognize behaviors and thought processes that might identify the possible lone offender before they engage in terrorist attacks. Are the behaviors of a terrorist similar enough to those of other types of lone offenders? Can this model be used to help identify a potential lone terrorist, encouraging the average citizen to contact law enforcement personnel? Does this model serve as a basis for an investigation?

Bruce Hoffman's definition of terrorism will be used as a baseline:

"...the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change...is specifically designed to have far-reaching psychological effects beyond the immediate victim(s) or object of the terrorist attack. It is meant to instill fear within, and thereby intimidate, a wider 'target audience' Through the publicity generated by their violence, terrorists seek to obtain the leverage, influence, and power they otherwise lack to effect political change on either a local or an international scale."<sup>9</sup>

## The Lone Terrorist

Spaaij's definition of a lone offender terrorist consists of three elements: the terrorist operates alone, does not belong to an organized terrorist group or network, and the plan is conceived and conducted solely by the individual with no direct outside guidance or command. The ideology behind a terrorist group and an individual engaged in terrorism may be the same, a lone offender may sympathize with the ideology of a terrorist group and may have once belonged to

---

<sup>6</sup> Anders Breivik, "2083: A European Declaration of Independence," *unitednations.ispnw.org*, 2011: 820, available at: <http://unitednations.ispnw.org/archives/breivik-manifesto-2011.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Edwin Baaker and Beatrice de Graf, "Preventing Lone Wolf Terrorism: Some CT Approaches Addressed," *Perspectives on Terrorism* (December 2011), 47, 6, available at: <https://www.opensource.gov/providers/ebsco/GoToSite/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=4&hid=12&sid=3b822882-09a2-41f8-9aco-7ce7d00e7f51%40sessionmgr11>.

<sup>8</sup> Borum *et al.*, "Threat Assessment," 323-337.

<sup>9</sup> Hoffman, Bruce, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 40-41.

and/or been trained by a group, but the attack was neither directed nor supported by any organization.<sup>10</sup>

A typical terrorist has contact with others of similar interests, often goes abroad for training, and likely purchases a weapon for the purpose of the attack. While any of these tasks could raise a flag for security personnel, and signal a potential terrorist plot, the lone terrorist is unlikely to be involved in any of those activities and would likely go unnoticed until an attack.<sup>11</sup> One of the more difficult terrorists to detect is one who seeks information online and passively absorbs the message without interacting on the website.<sup>12</sup> The Internet is rife with extremist material that appears to have fostered the growth of the self-taught extremist. It may be difficult to distinguish between an individual who simply adopts the ideology of a terrorist group and the angry loner who acts out using information obtained from the Internet to pretend to be part of a larger movement.<sup>13</sup> Pantucci suggests there is more mental illness among individual attackers than is found within a terrorist group. Psychological issues could easily prohibit one from joining a group, forcing a mentally ill individual to act out alone.<sup>14</sup>

On the Internet, loners could easily connect with radicals on another continent, drawing inspiration and guidance, without direct contact. Not only is the Internet a medium for ideology, it provides information on how to build devices or otherwise inflict harm in the name of an ideology.<sup>15</sup> The lone offender may share some level of commitment to, and identify with, an extremist movement.<sup>16</sup> Those who can act without leadership or a support network and adhere to the ideology can be very dangerous and would be difficult to locate, track, and monitor.<sup>17</sup> A major challenge for law enforcement is determining how an individual moves from having radical beliefs to actually acting on those beliefs.<sup>18</sup>

Lone attackers are more difficult to monitor because they are not tied to an organization already under surveillance. They have operated with little expense and much success.<sup>19</sup> Some prominent examples include Theodore Kaczynski and Eric Rudolph who were both very effective in evading capture for years and spreading fear among ordinary citizens. They had very strong beliefs and had separated themselves from family and community.

---

<sup>10</sup> Spaaij, "The Enigma of Lone Wolf Terrorism," 856.

<sup>11</sup> Pantucci, "A Typology of Lone Wolves," 6.

<sup>12</sup> Paul Cruikshank and Tim Lister, "The 'Lone Wolf' –the Unknowable Face of Terror" CNN.com, February 8, 2012, available at: [http://articles.cnn.com/2012-02-18/opinion/opinion\\_lone-wolf-terror\\_1\\_lone-wolf-terror-attack-lone-terrorists?\\_s=PM:OPINION](http://articles.cnn.com/2012-02-18/opinion/opinion_lone-wolf-terror_1_lone-wolf-terror-attack-lone-terrorists?_s=PM:OPINION).

<sup>13</sup> Pantucci, "A Typology of Lone Wolves," 6.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 6-7.

<sup>16</sup> Baaker and de Graf, "Preventing Lone Wolf Terrorism," 47.

<sup>17</sup> Marie-Helen Maras, "How to Catch a Terrorist: Is Mass Surveillance the Answer?" *Journal of Applied Security Research* (2010):26-28, available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19361610903411790>

<sup>18</sup> Bjelopera, "American Jihadist Terrorism," 3.

<sup>19</sup> George Michael, *Lone Wolf Terror and the Rise of Leaderless Resistance* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2012), 3, available at: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/99610155/Lone-Wolf-Terror-and-the-Rise-of-Leaderless-Resistance>.

## Counterterrorism and the Lone Offender

Because one cannot predict the nature or the probability of an attack nor the target, U.S. counterterrorism policy has shifted to a precautionary approach. Policies designed to deter terrorism are not likely to be entirely effective because laws that prevent crime, to be effective, require an offender to process the cost of committing a crime versus the benefit and then make a series of rational decisions before making a choice. Many terrorists do not appear affected by the threat of imprisonment or death, as many are willing to die for their cause.<sup>20</sup>

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has the authority to investigate individuals or groups based upon information that identifies terrorist threats or activity before an attack occurs. This gives the FBI the opportunity to make assessments of activity before a crime is committed. An example is the ability to monitor Internet websites and social media, where terrorists are known to recruit, train and communicate.<sup>21</sup> Undercover agents, informants, and agent provocateurs who have infiltrated and reported on terrorist activity have been effective.<sup>22</sup>

Counterterrorism is challenging because the expression of radical ideas in an open forum is legal, but the planning toward a terrorist attack is often done in secret, as the activity is illegal.<sup>23</sup> Effective intelligence is required in order to anticipate and prevent an attack. In the case of an organization where guidance comes from a leader, information may be gleaned from communication intercepts, from the monitoring of border crossings and the movement of money, as well as from relationships with foreign intelligence services. However, this intelligence is unavailable for the individual terrorist who does not communicate with nor gain support from an organization.<sup>24</sup> As a result, intelligence gathered at the national level may not be adequate to intercept an individual operating alone.

Local police can gather information from the community through police networking, conducting investigations or intelligence collection. The sharing of information between law enforcement agencies is critical to counterterrorism, and an active police force in a community may be able to develop relationships with citizens that would encourage reporting.<sup>25</sup> Providing guidance for bystanders who may observe the activity of a potential lone terrorist may enhance the reporting, thus contributing to counterterrorism.

## Threat Assessment

A threat assessment is defined as "...a set of investigative and operational activities designed to identify, assess, and manage persons who may pose a threat

---

<sup>20</sup> Maras, "How to Catch a Terrorist," 22-24.

<sup>21</sup> Bjelopera, "American Jihadist Terrorism," 3.

<sup>22</sup> Maras, "How to Catch a Terrorist," 36.

<sup>23</sup> Bjelopera, "American Jihadist Terrorism," 3-4.

<sup>24</sup> Brian Jenkins, "The Terrorism Early Warning Group's Contribution to the Counterterrorism Intelligence Process," in J. Sullivan and A. Bauer (eds.), *Terrorism Early Warning: 10 Years of Achievement in Fighting Terrorism and Crime* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County, 2008), 215, available at: [http://file.lacounty.gov/lasd/cms1\\_144939.pdf](http://file.lacounty.gov/lasd/cms1_144939.pdf).

<sup>25</sup> Jenkins, "The Terrorism Early Warning Group's Contribution," 215-218.

of violence to identifiable targets.”<sup>26</sup> It involves the analysis of thoughts and behavior patterns that result in an attack on a particular target. An assessment must determine the level of threat posed by the individual at a given point in time as well as an assessment of the progress made toward an attack and the speed at which the individual is moving toward the goal.<sup>27</sup>

Can a threat assessment model for other violent crimes be applied to terrorism? The prediction of violence is never a simple yes or no; the actions of a potential perpetrator are conditional, dependent upon numerous conditions or circumstances.<sup>28</sup> The construct of dangerousness or risk has been viewed as fluid; dangerousness depends upon the situation, it can change, and the level of risk lies on a continuum of probability.<sup>29</sup> Many potential factors must be evaluated in the development of a model to assess risk. Although the same factors may apply to terrorism that apply to other types of violence, their significance may be weighted differently when the model is validated.<sup>30</sup> The ten questions developed by Borum *et al.* as an approach to evaluate the threat for targeted violence will be assessed for their value in evaluating the threat for lone offender terrorism.

This approach to assessing the threat of targeted violence is based upon three principles: 1) targeted violence is the culmination of a process of thinking and behavior that is deliberate and not impulsive; 2) there is interaction among the potential attacker, a past emotional event, a current situation, and a target; and 3) understanding the behaviors of the individual as they progress from the development of the idea to the actual movements toward the target.<sup>31</sup> The threat assessment tool refined by Borum *et al.* poses questions that address these principles. It is applied retrospectively here to the cases of three lone offender terrorists to assess its potential value prior to the terrorist attack.

The results of this analysis indicate this threat assessment tool may be useful in the development of a more effective counterterrorism program. An effective counterterrorism program should identify, monitor, and arrest the lone offender. Included among the keys to an effective counterterrorism program for the lone terrorist is to understand how attacks are formulated rather than to know who will attack. Counterterrorism programs should encourage community cooperation in identifying the lone offender and should study the potential triggers that radicalize the lone offender.<sup>32</sup> This model contributes to this effort.

## Threat Assessment Process

Borum *et al.* posed ten questions to guide an evaluation of a threat of directed violence. Table 1 presents the questions as they were initially presented in the Targeted Violence Questions column.<sup>33</sup> They are presented beside the questions

<sup>26</sup> Borum *et al.*, “Threat Assessment,” 327.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 327-328.

<sup>28</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, *Protective Intelligence and Threat Assessment Investigations* (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice, 1998): 49.

<sup>29</sup> Borum *et al.*, “Threat Assessment,” 324.

<sup>30</sup> John Monahan, “The Individual Risk Assessment of Terrorism,” *Psychology, Public Policy and Law* 18:2 (May 2012): 13-28.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 329-330.

<sup>32</sup> Baaker and de Graf, “Preventing Lone Wolf Terrorism,” 47-48.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 331-334.

posed in this study, under Terrorism Questions, showing the changes that make them more relevant for terrorism. Two questions, numbers three and four, have been adjusted slightly for use in the case of a lone terrorist.

**Table 1: The Threat Assessment Process: Ten Questions Comparison of Questions Developed for Targeted Violence and Terrorism**

#	TARGETED VIOLENCE QUESTIONS	TERRORISM QUESTIONS
<b>1 Motivation</b>	What motivated the subject to make the statements, or take the action, that caused him/her to come to attention?	What motivated the subject to make the statements, or take the action, that caused him/her to come to attention?
<b>2 Communication</b>	What has the subject communicated to anyone concerning his/her intentions?	What has the subject communicated to anyone concerning his/her intentions?
<b>3 Interest in Terrorism</b>	Has the subject shown an interest in targeted violence, perpetrators of targeted violence, weapons, extremist groups, or murder?	Has the subject shown an interest in terrorism, terrorist groups, weapons, extremist groups, or espoused a radical ideology?
<b>4 Attack-related Behaviors</b>	Has the subject engaged in attack-related behavior, including any menacing, harassing, and/or stalking-type behavior?	Has the subject engaged in attack-related behavior, including surveillance, purchasing weapons or the ingredients for explosives/weapons?
<b>5 Mental Illness</b>	Does the subject have a history of mental illness involving command hallucinations, delusional ideas, feelings of persecution, etc. with indications that the subject has acted on those beliefs?	Does the subject have a history of mental illness involving command hallucinations, delusional ideas, feelings of persecution, etc. with indications that the subject has acted on those beliefs?
<b>6 Organization</b>	How organized is the subject? Is he/she capable of developing and carrying out a plan?	How organized is the subject? Is he/she capable of developing and carrying out a plan?
<b>7 Loss</b>	Has the subject experienced a recent loss and or loss of status and has this led to feelings of desperation and despair?	Has the subject experienced a recent loss and or loss of status and has this led to feelings of desperation and despair?
<b>8 Corroboration</b>	Corroboration –What is the subject saying and is it consistent with his/her actions?	Corroboration –What is the subject saying and is it consistent with his/her actions?
<b>9 Concern of Others</b>	Is there concern among those that know the subject that he/she might take action based on inappropriate ideas?	Is there concern among those that know the subject that he/she might take action based on inappropriate ideas?
<b>10 Prevention</b>	What factors in the subject’s life and/or environment might	What factors in the subject’s life and/or environment might



	increase/decrease the likelihood of the subject attempting to attack a target?	increase/decrease the likelihood of the subject attempting to attack a target?
--	--	--

## Case Studies

The threat assessment model refined by Borum *et al.* is applied to the cases of three lone offender terrorists. The examination of these case studies demonstrates the similarities in the behaviors of terrorists to the behaviors of lone offenders who are not deemed to be terrorists. The answers to each of the ten questions are presented in a table followed by a discussion of the relative effectiveness of the model. The cases of Theodore Kaczynski, known as the “Unabomber;” Eric Rudolph; and Abdulhakim Mujahid Muhammad formerly known as Carlos Bledsoe have been selected because they are domestic cases and litigation is complete.

### *Theodore Kaczynski (The Unabomber)*

Theodore Kaczynski, known as the Unabomber, was convicted of mailing sixteen package and letter bombs, killing three and injuring twenty-three over eighteen years, and was sentenced to life in prison without parole.<sup>34</sup> When he was younger, Kaczynski’s parents encouraged his academic pursuits, culminating in his graduation from Harvard University at age twenty.<sup>35</sup> He obtained his PhD in Mathematics from the University of Michigan five years later. After teaching for two years at Stanford University, and publishing articles that impressed his peers, he quit, ultimately living as a recluse in Montana.<sup>36</sup>

Throughout his life, Kaczynski expressed anger toward his parents, blaming them for emotional abuse because they focused on his academic abilities, thus leaving him to feel that he was a social cripple.<sup>37</sup> Kaczynski wrote letters to newspapers, magazines, potential targets, and to one victim.<sup>38</sup> In 1995, his manifesto was published by law enforcement with the hope that someone who might have heard him would be able to identify the Unabomber. In letters to his parents he blamed them for his social woes, while the manifesto and letters to publications and public figures spoke of his disdain for advancing technology. Results of a psychological assessment completed after his arrest diagnosed Kaczynski with paranoid schizophrenia with two significant delusions. They were his beliefs that science and technology would destroy nature by turning humans into automatons controlled by machines and that his inability to socialize, particularly with women, was the result of abuse by his parents.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Alston Chase, “Harvard and the Making of the Unabomber,” *The Atlantic Monthly* 285:6 (2000), available at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/past/docs/issues/2000/06/chase.htm>; Instituut voor Veiligheids- en Crisismanagement (COT), *Lone-wolf terrorism*. (2007, June 7): 82-83, available at: <http://www.transnationalterrorism.eu/tekst/publications/Lone-Wolf%20Terrorism.pdf>.

<sup>35</sup> Chase, “Harvard and the Making of the Unabomber”; COT, *Lone-wolf terrorism*, 38.

<sup>36</sup> COT, *Lone-wolf terrorism*, 38.

<sup>37</sup> Turchie, Terry and Kathleen Puckett, *Hunting the American Terrorist: The FBI’s War on Homegrown Terror*, (Palisades, NY: History Publishing Company, 2007), Nook Edition, 199-201.

<sup>38</sup> Chase, “Harvard and the Making of the Unabomber.”

<sup>39</sup> Ibid; Sally C. Johnson, “Forensic Evaluation,” United States District Court for the Eastern District of California (1998): 40-41, available at: <http://www.chicagotribune.com/media/acrobat/2008-04/37849352.pdf>.

Kaczynski's sister-in-law recognized the similarity between the manifesto and things she had heard about him. She convinced her husband to talk to authorities. In his report, David Kaczynski stated his brother had become more disturbed over the years.<sup>40</sup> David feared his brother would hurt others and that compelled him to identify him as a suspect.<sup>41</sup>

### *Eric Rudolph*

Eric Rudolph was sentenced to multiple life sentences without parole, convicted of killing two people and of injuring more than 100 people in four separate bombings.<sup>42</sup> He is known primarily for exploding a pipe bomb at the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta. As he was growing up, his mother exposed him to numerous religions including Christian Identity and introduced him to several members of white supremacist groups.<sup>43</sup> She had also endorsed a fear of the United States government.<sup>44</sup>

Rudolph has been described as “disaffected,” a young American who found solace in extremism. Early on, Rudolph demonstrated his inability to fit in, spending weekends in the woods alone, living a very transient life with his family, adopting Christian Identity tenets which includes the belief in the supremacy of the white race, and getting kicked out of the Army after only eighteen months.<sup>45</sup> His mother likely influenced his anti-abortion stance. They shared many of the same ideas and his mother likely introduced him to much of his ideology.<sup>46</sup>

It appears that Rudolph's inability to fit in and his desire to matter contributed to his bombing campaign.<sup>47</sup> Rudolph's inability to conform and his failure to find others who believed as he did appear to have motivated him to attack in anger, to gain attention through violence that he could not find in other ways.<sup>48</sup>

### *Carlos Bledsoe/Abdulkakim Mujahid Muhammad*

---

<sup>40</sup> David Johnston and Janny Scott, “Prisoner of Rage: The Tortured Genius of Theodore Kaczynski,” *The New York Times*, May 26, 1996, 12-14, available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/05/26/us/prisoner-of-rage-the-tortured-genius-of-theodore-kaczynski.html?ref=davidkaczynski>.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>42</sup> Shaila Dewan, “Olympics Bomber Apologizes and Is Sentenced to Life Terms,” *The New York Times*, August 23, 2005, 15-16, available at: [http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/23/national/23bomber.html?ref=ericrobertrudolph&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/23/national/23bomber.html?ref=ericrobertrudolph&_r=0); Federal Bureau of Investigation, “Eric Rudolph Charged in Centennial Olympic Park bombing,” *USDOJ.gov*, October 14, 1998, available at: <http://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/1998/October/477crm.htm>.

<sup>43</sup> Vollers, Maryanne, *Lone Wolf: Eric Rudolph: Murder, Myth, and the Pursuit of an American Outlaw*, (New York: HarperCollins eBooks, 2006): 102-104.

<sup>44</sup> Nathan Springer, “Identifying the Markers and Warning Signs of Domestic Lone Wolf Terrorists in our Midst,” (Master Thesis: Naval Postgraduate School, 2009), 52, available at: <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=29620>.

<sup>45</sup> Michael Ross, “Eric Rudolph's Rage was a Long Time Brewin,” *MSNBC.com*, April 13, 2005, available at: [http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/7398701/ns/us\\_news-crime\\_and\\_courts/t/eric-rudolphs-rage-was-long-time-brewing/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/7398701/ns/us_news-crime_and_courts/t/eric-rudolphs-rage-was-long-time-brewing/).

<sup>46</sup> Springer, *Identifying the Markers*, 61.

<sup>47</sup> Turchie and Puckett, *Hunting the American Terrorist*, 260, 270.

<sup>48</sup> Vollers, *Lone Wolf*, 249.

Abdulahakim Mujahid Muhammad, born Carlos Bledsoe, was arrested on June 1, 2009 after shooting two soldiers outside of the Little Rock Recruiting Station.<sup>49</sup> He was convicted after pleading guilty to capital murder, attempted capital murder, and ten weapons related charges. He was sentenced to life in prison without parole for the murder plus eleven life sentences plus 150 years for the remaining charges.<sup>50</sup>

Bledsoe was raised in Memphis by parents who owned a tour business. Neighbors described him as a nice young man.<sup>51</sup> He graduated high school and attended Tennessee State University for three semesters before dropping out.<sup>52</sup> For many years he had been in sporadic trouble with the law and was using alcohol and marijuana to excess.<sup>53</sup> While in college, he turned to religion to straighten out his life. Bledsoe felt welcomed by Muslims and studied in Nashville before changing his name and soon thereafter travelling to Yemen, supposedly to teach English.<sup>54</sup> Muhammad was arrested and jailed in Yemen possessing false Somali identification papers.<sup>55</sup>

Muhammad had stated many times, after returning from Yemen, that he was angry at what the United States military had done to Muslims in Iraq and Afghanistan, and his parents were aware of his burning anger.<sup>56</sup> After his arrest, he made clear that he was seeking revenge for the American killing of Muslims. He also was angry about what Jewish groups had done in Palestine.<sup>57</sup> His parents were aware that he had been radicalized while in Yemen and that he had returned home with anti-American views and attempted to westernize him by directly involving him in the family tourism business.<sup>58</sup>

## Responses to the 10 Questions

Table 2 presents abbreviated responses to the questions from Table 1 for each of the three cases. Most of the questions presented some information that could be

---

<sup>49</sup> Mike Durham, "Arrest Affidavit/Disposition Report," *Arkansas Crime Information Center* (June 2, 2009): 4, available at: [http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case\\_docs/989.pdf](http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/989.pdf).

<sup>50</sup> Jeannie Nuss, "Abdulahakim Muhammad Trial: Shooter in Arkansas Soldier Killing Sentenced to Life," *The Huffington Post*, July 25, 20011, 1, available at: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/07/25/abdulahakim-muhammad-trial\\_n\\_909106.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/07/25/abdulahakim-muhammad-trial_n_909106.html).

<sup>51</sup> NEFA Foundation, "The Little Rock, Arkansas Recruiting Station Shooting," The NEFA Foundation, Report #18, 2009, available at: [http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/NEFA\\_littlerockrecruitingshooting.pdf](http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/NEFA_littlerockrecruitingshooting.pdf).

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Kristina Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier in Arkansas Says He Wanted to Cause More Death," *Commercial Appeal*, November 13, 2010, available at: <http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2010/nov/13/muslim-who-shot-solider-arkansas-says-he-wanted-ca/>, under section 2.

<sup>54</sup> NEFA Foundation, "The Little Rock, Arkansas"; James Dao, "A Muslim Son, a Murder Trial and Many Questions," *The New York Times*, February 16, 2010, 25, available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/17/us/17convert.html?pagewanted=1>.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Arkansas Crime Information Center, *Arrest affidavit/Disposition report*, 4; NEFA Foundation, "The Little Rock, Arkansas."

<sup>57</sup> The Investigative Project on Terrorism, "The Making of an American Jihadist: Abdulhakim Mujahid Muhammad," *IPT New*, 2011, available at: <http://www.investigativeproject.org/2772/the-making-of-an-american-jihadist-abdulahakim>.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

alerting to law enforcement professionals. Family and peers might also utilize these questions as a foundation for a report to law enforcement officials.

**Table 2: Abbreviated responses for each case to the 10 terrorism questions**

	<b>Theodore Kaczynski</b>	<b>Eric Rudolph</b>	<b>Abdulkhikim Mujahid Muhammad</b>
<b>1 Motivation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anti-technology</li> <li>• Anti-industry</li> <li>• Revenge</li> <li>• Desire to be recognized; to matter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anti-abortion</li> <li>• Inability to fit in</li> <li>• Desire to matter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Angry at U.S. for killing Muslims</li> <li>• Radicalization</li> </ul>
<b>2 Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anonymous letters</li> <li>• Expressed anger to family</li> <li>• Maintained journals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Told acquaintance he wanted to build a bomb</li> <li>• Maintained journals</li> <li>• Limited contact with family</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No communication of intent with family</li> </ul>
<b>3 Interest in Terrorism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hid behind “FC;” Freedom Club</li> <li>• Ideology against technology</li> <li>• Influence: <u>The Secret Agent</u> by Joseph Conrad</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fringes of extremist groups</li> <li>• Hid behind “Army of God”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conversion to Islam</li> <li>• Went to Yemen</li> <li>• Was arrested with paperwork for Somalia</li> <li>• Imprisoned in Yemen</li> </ul>
<b>4 Attack-related Behaviors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Threat to “get even” in 1978</li> <li>• Science experiments in high school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchased materials at Wal-Mart</li> <li>• Gave up connections to family and friends</li> <li>• Had weapons; learned skills in Army</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fights and gang membership in high school</li> <li>• Purchased weapons</li> <li>• Two unsuccessful attempts before shooting</li> </ul>
<b>5 Mental Illness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paranoid Schizophrenia with delusions</li> <li>• Diagnosis post arrest</li> <li>• History of seeking counseling; only single visits or</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No diagnosis</li> <li>• No psychological assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No diagnosis</li> <li>• Psychological assessment post arrest</li> </ul>

	letters		
<b>6 Organization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PhD by age 23</li> <li>• Professor at Berkeley</li> <li>• Built his own cabin</li> <li>• Lived frugally</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completed Basic Training and Air Assault</li> <li>• Learned survival and infantry skills in Army</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attended college successfully for 3 semesters</li> <li>• History of alcohol and drug use</li> <li>• Not a good planner: 2 failed attempts</li> </ul>
<b>7 Loss</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social outcast all his life</li> <li>• Loss of a peaceful world due to technology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Few relationships with women</li> <li>• Never fit in</li> <li>• Gave up social connections prior to bombing campaign</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lost his position among his Muslim world upon deportation to the U.S.</li> </ul>
<b>8 Corroboration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always a loner</li> <li>• Loving letters versus angry letters to home</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People heard his rants for years</li> <li>• Anti-gay, blacks &amp; abortion</li> <li>• Spent much time alone</li> <li>• Conflict between wanting to be part of a group and inability to do so</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Angry, but he was willing to move to Little Rock to run the family business</li> <li>• His attitude seemed to turn positive</li> </ul>
<b>9 Concern of Others</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes: sister-in-law</li> <li>• Family knew of anger</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No, though one woman heard threat at least 5 years before 1<sup>st</sup> bomb</li> <li>• Community shared similar views</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, the family</li> <li>• FBI questioned and released him-no investigation</li> <li>• His father gave him a job in Little Rock to de-radicalize him</li> </ul>
<b>10 Prevention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to sustain personal connections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finding acceptance</li> <li>• Ability to sustain personal connections</li> <li>• Mother who taught socially</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Had FBI opened a full investigation</li> <li>• Had his father not moved him to Little Rock</li> </ul>

		appropriate values	
--	--	--------------------	--

## Discussion

The threat assessment model developed by Borum *et al.* to evaluate the assessment of risk for targeted violence, and presented in Table 1, appears to focus on relevant patterns of thinking and behaviors when applied to the potential lone terrorist. Utilizing these three cases, most of the terrorism questions provided answers, summarized in Table 2, which might have caused concern from either acquaintances or law enforcement agents had these questions been available in a structured format. Attention to patterns of behaviors and thoughts may have prevented these terrorist attacks or, in the cases of Kaczynski and Rudolph, might have prevented subsequent attacks. However, their utility is seemingly more relevant with today's technology and cultural awareness of terrorism than they may have been in the 1980s and 1990s when Kaczynski and Rudolph were conducting attacks.

Borum *et al.* presented three principles upon which an assessment of threat should be based. The first principle is that targeted violence involves a process of thinking and planning that is deliberate and not impulsive, often consuming the planner's life. Several questions in the assessment deal with the planning an individual must do in order to carry out an attack. The second principle involves the interaction among the potential attacker, a past emotional event, a current situation and a target. The third principle is to understand the behaviors of the individual that are likely to lead up to an attack.<sup>59</sup> Using hindsight, these three principles are known in each of the three cases presented. These assessment principles focus attention on behaviors that are likely to be a part of the attack process. Based on these cases, these principles appear to be as relevant for detecting the lone terrorist as they are for detecting the perpetrator of targeted violence. Being physically or emotionally close to someone would expose one to the behaviors of that person. Publicizing these principles and questions may lead concerned citizens to contact authorities who may open an investigation and prevent an attack.

There is significant information known about Kaczynski to provide positive responses to all ten questions. Rudolph and Muhammad are negative for mental illness and Muhammad is not known to have communicated any information about a plan to anyone who might have cooperated with law enforcement. Question number seven has positive results for all three terrorists. Their histories are expanded here to draw attention to their losses. Kaczynski was a social cripple who never fit in. He hated the technological society in which he felt he could not live and identified himself with a cause that would not reject him: FC, or Freedom Club, his own anarchist group of which he was the only member.<sup>60</sup> Rudolph was unsuccessful in his bid to join the Army's Special Forces but, by becoming the Army of God, could vent his anger against abortion and find acceptance.<sup>61</sup> Muhammad fell in with a bad crowd in high school and then in

<sup>59</sup> Borum *et al.*, "Threat Assessment," 329-330.

<sup>60</sup> Turchie and Puckett, *Hunting the American Terrorist*, 270.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, 264.

college, and sought comfort in religion. Rejecting the Baptist church in which he had grown up, he learned about Islam and found acceptance in a group that seemingly encouraged him to attack Americans to further their cause.<sup>62</sup> Each had experienced loss throughout their lives and expressed anger over their perceived injustices.

The seventh question attempts to identify a recent loss. In all three of these cases the losses were not recent, but were persistent. The end of a romantic relationship or the death of a loved one might spark an individual to retaliate out of hurt or anger. Perhaps with terrorism, loss might be more broadly defined, as these three cases seem to suggest. Each of these men fought internally with their inability to find their place in society. Borum *et al.* appear to correctly identify a sense of loss as a risk factor for terrorism, but loss as a trigger might be different for terrorism than for targeted violence. This factor warrants further research. Perhaps the question should address a festering reaction to a loss rather than a recent loss that might be more of a trigger for violence against a specific target than a trigger for terrorism.

All questions in this approach produced positive responses for one or more of these cases. However, more is known about these cases now than may be available for potential lone terrorists who have not yet attacked. In the same manner that the seventh question might be refined, further research is recommended to consider language that more specifically defines the behaviors and thinking relevant to the lone terrorist.

Law enforcement agencies may benefit from having these questions; they may have been helpful in the assessment of risk posed by Muhammad. The FBI questioned Muhammad before he went to Yemen, while he was imprisoned there, and then upon his return to Memphis. Muhammad's father believes his son attended Jihadi training in Yemen and information about that investigation is not available to the public.<sup>63</sup> It has been hypothesized that had criminal activity been detected the FBI may have broadened the investigation, which might have led agents to observe Muhammad in the early stages of the attack cycle.<sup>64</sup> The FBI may have assessed Muhammad for criminal behavior but may not have identified his behavioral changes over time as indicators of a potential terrorist threat. If provided a model for assessing the risk of lone terrorism, law enforcement may examine behaviors more effectively and counter the terrorist threat.

The ability for people to assist law enforcement in identifying potential threat is dependent upon relationships between the potential terrorist and those who might be able to detect the potential risk. Kaczynski and Rudolph had inadequate relationships for most of their lives and Bledsoe/Muhammad turned away from his family to find acceptance in an unfamiliar culture. In these terrorist cases, the targets were strangers who represented a cause against which each terrorist professed his belief. Research suggests lone terrorists tend to be intelligent individuals who look internally for the authority needed for taking action rather

---

<sup>62</sup> Goetz, "Muslim who shot soldier...", Section 2, 13-20.

<sup>63</sup> Dao, "A Muslim Son, a Murder Trial and Many Questions," 6.

<sup>64</sup> Scott Stewart and Fred Burton, "Lone wolf lessons," *Stratfor.com*, June 3, 2009, available at [http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20090603\\_lone\\_wolf\\_lessons](http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20090603_lone_wolf_lessons).

than relying on others, and most were unsuccessful in their social lives.<sup>65</sup> In spite of the lack of deep connection, there were people in the lives of each of these terrorists who could report on changes in behavior and bring their concerns to authority, as happened in the case of Kaczynski.

Empirical research identifies numerous individual risk factors for other crime including age, gender, marital status, social class, major mental illness, prior crime, and personality.<sup>66</sup> The FBI was unsuccessful in identifying the Unabomber when it created a database utilizing these factors. The database included all individuals known to have lived in areas within which Kaczynski operated. Kaczynski was eliminated as a suspect because he was much older than the age bracket the FBI expected would also apply to terrorism.<sup>67</sup> Individual risk factors are unlikely to contribute to the assessment of threat in the way these questions about behaviors may.

One difficulty with this assessment model appears to be the lack of significant relationships between a potential lone terrorist and others who could potentially identify behaviors. Rudolph and Kaczynski were isolated, enabling them to develop and carry out plans without detection. The person most likely to engage in lone terrorism is an isolated individual and because of that, planning of the attack may go undetected. After an attack when information is available to the public, acquaintances and estranged family may recognize patterns of behavior consistent with lone terrorists. In cases where the threat assessment model may not identify behaviors prior to an initial attack, the model may be effective in preventing subsequent attacks, at a much earlier stage than when Kaczynski's sister-in-law became suspicious.

Since 9/11, Americans may have a greater awareness of terrorism. Bystanders have been encouraged by the Department of Homeland Security to report suspicious packages. An educational campaign aimed at preventing an acquaintance from engaging in terrorism may be effective. David Kaczynski's wife saw a resemblance between the ideas of her brother-in-law and a terrorist she read about while in France, causing her to persuade her husband to contact the authorities after the Unabomber's manifesto was published. Although difficult, Kaczynski's brother hoped to prevent more death and destruction.<sup>68</sup>

## Conclusion

The questions posed by Borum *et al.* in their threat assessment model, when modified slightly to reflect behaviors consistent with terrorism, expand efforts to identify a lone terrorist by focusing on thoughts and behaviors that may be indicative of terrorist activity. The model moves away from simply looking at demographics or characteristics of the potential terrorist and focuses on behaviors that could indicate the movement of the person toward achieving a goal. This analysis of the threat assessment model developed by Borum *et al.*

---

<sup>65</sup> Turchie and Puckett, *Hunting the American Terrorist*, 251-258.

<sup>66</sup> Monahan, "The Individual Risk Assessment," 9-13.

<sup>67</sup> David Johnston, "17-year search, an emotional discovery and terror ends," *The New York Times*, May 5, 1998, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/05/05/us/17-year-search-an-emotional-discovery-and-terror-ends.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>, 3.

<sup>68</sup> Johnston and Scott, "Prisoner of Rage," 1.



provides a foundation for further research for a model that would prevent lone offender terrorism.

Law enforcement is limited in its ability to conduct investigations and identify every criminal or terrorist in the community. Citizens, law enforcement agents, and investigators need a tool that might identify the lone terrorist, prospectively rather than reactively. Identifying a lone terrorist before an attack permits law enforcement to focus resources on a viable threat.

Further research is recommended to determine the significance of questions on the list. Not every individual wanting to matter and wanting to fit in turns to terrorism. By the same token, lone terrorists may not desire to matter or to fit in. The model provides questions that identify thoughts and patterns of behavior that could identify a potential terrorist. Are some questions more important than others in determining the point when one turns from ideas to actions? Are there a minimum number of questions that might suggest that move? Monahan, a psychologist who wrote of the challenges to assessing the risk of terrorism, discussed the concept of structuring a risk assessment. He addressed not only the need to identify the risk factors related to terrorism, but he questioned the possibility of measuring or “scoring” those factors to determine their ultimate value in the assessment process.<sup>69</sup> It is recommended the model presented in this study be further studied, applying questions posed by Monahan’s research. It is recommended further research apply this model focusing on more current cases, perhaps having been influenced differently from older trends in terrorism.

This tool appears to provide a solid foundation for a risk assessment model that may help to identify lone terrorists before and after an attack. The behaviors described in the questions of this tool appear to be as relevant in the identification of a potential lone terrorist as they are for the perpetrator of targeted violence. The strength of this model lies in its focus on behaviors rather than demographic data. The weakness of the model is that the observations of behavior require proximity to the perpetrator. Although we may not yet have an effective tool with which to predict the threat of risk for the potential lone terrorist, the threat assessment model developed by Borum et al. to evaluate the risk of targeted violence, with the benefit of further research, can be refined to more specifically address the threat of the lone terrorist.<sup>70</sup>

---

<sup>69</sup> Monahan, “The Individual Risk Assessment,” 7-8.

<sup>70</sup> Bakker and de Graf, “Preventing Lone Wolf Terrorism,” 7.