

Attacks on German Public Figures, 1968–2004: Warning Behaviors, Potentially Lethal and Non-lethal Acts, Psychiatric Status, and Motivations

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Fourteen non-terrorist attackers of public figures in Germany between 1968 and 2004 were intensively studied, with a particular focus on warning behaviors, attack behaviors, and the relationship between psychiatric diagnosis, symptoms, and motivations for the assault. A large proportion of the attackers were severely mentally ill, and most likely to be in the potentially lethal rather than the non-lethal group. A new typology of seven warning behaviors was applied to the data, and all were present, most frequently fixation and pathway warning behavior, and least frequently a direct threat. Psychiatric diagnosis could be closely linked to motivation when analyzed at the level of symptom and content of thought, often delusional. Most of the attacks were directed at political figures, and the majority occurred after 1995. Copyright © 2011 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

INTRODUCTION

Although scholarly research on attacks and assassinations of public figures began over a century ago (MacDonald, 1911), the yield until recently has largely been limited to case studies (Clarke, 1982; Jones, 1992; Kaiser, 1970; Rosenberg, 1968). Fein and Vossekul were the first to systematically study assassins and attackers of US public figures in their descriptive studies (Fein, Vossekul & Holden, 1995; Fein & Vossekul, 1998, 1999), and Calhoun (1998) introduced data on threats and violence toward the US judiciary during this same time period. The last decade has been marked by increasingly systematic attention to public figure attacks, whether they be royalty (James et al., 2009), European political figures (James et al., 2007), non-political US celebrity figures (Schlesinger & Mesa, 2008), or attempts to integrate these findings and relate them to the broader stalking and problematic approach literature (Meloy, 2011; Meloy et al., 2004; Meloy, Sheridan & Hoffmann, 2008). Incisive case studies also continue (Bugliosi, 2007; Sides, 2010; Unsgaard & Meloy, 2011).

The framework for these analyses has been *targeted violence threat assessment*, with a provenance in the work of Dietz and Martell (1989), defined and operationalized by

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Fein *et al.* (1995), and subsequently elaborated upon by Borum, Fein, Vossekuil, and Berglund (1999) and Calhoun and Weston (2003). This method of assessing and risk-managing threats toward an identified target has not been limited to public figures, but accounts for the planned, dynamic, and low base rate nature of the violence in these cases. The threat assessment method is idiographic and fact-based, and contrasts with the more nomothetic, static, and probabilistic methods of assessing general violence risk (Otto & Douglas, 2009). The purpose of threat assessment is both to assess and to risk-manage an identified subject of concern.

What has heretofore been lacking is a careful study of the proximal elements of targeted violence in a group of public figure attackers or assassins: namely, the warning behaviors that precede such attacks; behaviors and inferred psychological states of the attackers at the time of their violence; and the association, if any, between the psychiatric status of the attacker and his or her specific motivation to attack. Additional distal information, such as demographic characteristics and attachment pathology (Meloy, 1992) of the attackers, may also produce useful hypotheses for explaining a predisposition to targeted violence among such individuals.

The purpose of this research is to focus upon virtually all non-terrorist German attackers of public figures between 1968 and 2004 ($N = 14$), and systematically study these proximal elements in detail. This work should theoretically advance understanding of targeted violence, and empirically test the applicability of some new targeted violence constructs. Lethal intent is also compared with non-lethal intent attacks to discern similarities and differences.

METHODS

Sample

Online newspaper archives, internet search engines, and German criminological literature first identified incidents of attacks on public figures in Germany. The starting point selected for the research was 1949, when the Federal German Republic and the German Democratic Republic were founded.

The primary search criteria for this study were attacks on public figures in Germany committed by a lone offender. The attacks could be with lethal or non-lethal intent. Incidents which occurred during collective political protest action were excluded, for example, when protesters threw eggs at former German chancellor Helmut Kohl in 1991.

Excluded were all cases, whether perpetrated by an individual or a group, that had a clear terrorism motivation as defined by the FBI: “the unlawful use of force or violence committed by a group or individual against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives” (FBI, 1996; 28 C.F.R., Section 0.85). A study of individuals who attacked a public figure in Germany and were motivated by terrorism during the same time period will be the topic of a subsequent article. Terrorism can and should be legitimately considered a type of motivation for an attack on a public figure (Biesterfeld & Meloy, 2008), and the attacker’s association with a group – whether at the time of the attack or previously – is another social variable to consider along with the ones advanced in this study. For example, all of the seven warning behaviors could be driven by a

terrorist motivation, which, in turn, could be influenced by a psychiatric disorder and a group affiliation.

Using the criteria described above, 17 cases were identified. Authors approached the public prosecutors' offices where the court hearings of each case took place in order to ask for access to court and police files of the incidents. Sufficient primary material for analysis was available on 14 cases between 1968 and 2004. All three attacks without primary data being accessible were minor incidents. Not enough material was gathered by law enforcement authorities due to the cases' low profile. This sample covers the entirety of serious violent incidents against German public figures since the end of World War II.

For every incident, primary data were used as the basis of analysis. The primary data consisted of court records, investigative files, and in some cases psychiatric reports. In addition to the primary data, more information from the public domain was gathered whenever this was reasonable, e.g., autobiographies or interviews with the attackers, or interviews with other individuals involved in the case.

Analysis

The research design is observational, archival, and descriptive. Due to the small sample size no inferential statistics were used.

Descriptive Data of the Attackers and the Victims

The public figure status of the victims and their physical injury were recorded. The study measured the attacker's age, gender, intimate and social relationships, and attachment history as a child. The latter variable was defined as loss or absence of a parent during childhood. Past psychiatric and suicidal histories, alcohol and drug problems, contacts with police, criminal convictions, and the work histories of the offenders were recorded. Unstable work history was defined as an individual who had never worked at all, had an unusually long period of unemployment, or had many (but brief) periods of employment. A loner was defined as someone who was perceived as a loner by others, who lived alone, or who preferred to be alone. Approach behavior and communication with the public figure victim were analyzed.

Comparing Potentially Lethal and Non-lethal Attacks

The sample was divided into potentially lethal and non-lethal attacks using the criteria of weapons involved. In potentially lethal attacks, deadly weapons like guns, knives or bombs were used by the attackers. In non-lethal attacks, no such weapon was present. Instead, the public figure was, for example, physically assaulted by a slap in the face, by thrown eggs, or by paint bombs. None of the weapons utilized by these attackers could kill the target.

Psychiatric Disorder and Motivation

A forensic report with a diagnosis was available in six of the cases (43%). The entire case material of every attack was also reviewed independently by a forensic psychologist

(A.G.) and a forensic psychiatrist (A.E.) in order to analyze the psychiatric and psychological status of every attacker according to *International Classification of Diseases-10* (ICD-10) criteria. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, 4th edn-Text Revision* (DSM-IV-TR) criteria were used in order to assess for narcissistic traits or features. No formal interrater reliability was conducted. Instead the researchers thoroughly discussed each case until a consensus was reached on the reasonable probability of a ICD-10/DSM-IV-TR diagnosis. When there was substantial evidence that warranted a different diagnosis, although a forensic report existed, this different diagnosis is reported as well. When the authors came to the same conclusion as the forensic report, the diagnosis was taken from the latter.

Judgments about the personality were made according to verified statements given by attackers (e.g., “The peculiar coincidence of my birthday with the storming of the Bastille on July 14, 1789, 150 years before I was born, is something I still think about. . .”), and actions committed by them, both related and unrelated to the attack.

Statements from laypersons (e.g., neighbors) or conclusions in the media (e.g., newspapers) were treated with great skepticism, and not relied upon, since statements such as, “He was psychotic/antisocial,” don’t necessarily correspond with the true meaning of the disorder as coded in the diagnostic manuals.

Since direct interviews with the offenders were not possible, and given the lack of other sufficient and reliable information to conclude that the general/entry criteria for a personality disorder according to ICD-10 (e.g., pattern since childhood, affects multiple areas such as cognition, interpersonal contact) were fulfilled, only the personality traits or features, if there were any, are reported in cases without a forensic report.

The variable of motivation was derived from direct statements of the offenders. In seven cases (50%), another underlying motive was apparent, which was distinctive and not consciously formulated by the attackers themselves. It often revealed a more self-centered reason that was hidden by altruistic claims of attacking for the good of other people.

Warning Behaviors

Warning behaviors are typically acute, dynamic, proximal, and accelerating, and may result in a threat assessor determining that the subject of concern poses a threat of violence toward the target. They are intended to help structure a threat assessment in a standardized manner (Meloy, 2011; Meloy & O’Toole, in press; Meloy, Hoffmann, Guldimann & James, in submission):

1. *Pathway* warning behavior – any behavior that is part of research, planning, preparation, or implementation of an attack (Calhoun & Weston, 2003).
2. *Energy burst* warning behavior – an increase in the frequency, variety, or intensity of any warning behavior.
3. *Novel aggression* warning behavior – acts of violence unrelated to attack behavior that are committed for the first time.
4. *Fixation* warning behavior – any behavior that indicates an intense preoccupation with a person or a cause (Mullen *et al.*, 2009). We made a distinction between “mild” and “heavy” fixation, the latter indicating a pathological fixation which

increasingly becomes the centre of attention and activities in day-to-day life for the fixated individual, and leads to social and occupational deterioration.

5. *Identification* warning behavior – any behavior that indicates a psychological desire to be a “pseudocommando,” (Dietz, 1986), have a “warrior mentality,” closely associate with weapons or other military or law enforcement paraphernalia (Hempel, Meloy, & Richards, 1999), identify with previous attackers, or identify oneself as an agent to advance a particular cause or belief system.
6. *Leakage* warning behavior – the communication to a third party of an intent to do harm to a target (Meloy & O’Toole, in press).
7. *Directly communicated threat* warning behavior – the direct communication of a threat to the target or law enforcement beforehand.

Attack Behavior

We looked at the date, time, and place of the attack, which weapon was used, and if the offender came closer than 2 meters before he started his attack. An analysis was conducted to see if the perpetrator addressed his victim personally before the assault, a phenomenon first identified among mass murderers and referred to as a “psychological abstract” (Hempel et al., 1999).

RESULTS

All percentages represent the proportion of subjects where the variable was present. When *n* follows the percentage, it refers to the number of subjects where the variable could be coded, scored, or quantified due to sufficient data.

The Attackers and the Victims

Public Figure Victims of Attack

There were only two incidents in which the public figure targets had a non-political background (14%): one was an athletic star and the other a television presenter. In all of the other attacks the public figures were politicians. The majority were national politicians (43%), including a Chancellor, ministers in the federal cabinet, and a nationally known student leader. The second largest victim group were politicians at a German state level (29%) and were local representatives of parliaments. In two cases the victims were at a local level (14%) and included a mayor and a district administrator. In two cases there were secondary victims besides the target: a close protection officer was wounded in one case, and a number of politicians and their secretaries received letter bombs in another case.

In nine of the attacks, the public figure was injured (64%), in three of these cases (30%) in a life-threatening manner. None of the victims died during or directly after the attack, although one public figure perished by drowning due to an epileptic seizure caused by the shotgun wounds 11 years earlier.

Demographic Data of the Attackers

The oldest offender was 83 years old, the youngest 22, and the average age was 40 years (Table 1). Nine offenders were male (64%) and five were female (36%). All of the attackers were of German nationality.

Attachment History

There was a clinically significant frequency of loss of a parent in their childhood histories. In the 12 cases in which data on the attachment history were available, three of the offenders (25%) lost their mother or had almost no contact with her until the age of 16. Three other attackers (25%) lost their father as a child (Table 1).

Psychiatric History and Status

Almost half of the offenders (42%, $n = 12$) had a severe mental disorder and psychiatric history before the attack (Table 1). All cases warranted a psychiatric diagnosis or had identifiable psychiatric features (ICD-10/DSM-IV-TR) except for one. Five cases (36%) were psychotic at the time of the attack. Three of these cases were diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia (21%). The amount of previous suicidal ideation was substantial (75%, $n = 12$), and the frequency of suicidal attempts was clinically significant (45%, $n = 11$).

Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Of the 11 cases where data were available, a small number of attackers had a history of alcohol (18%) or drug problems (18%) in the past. Only one offender (8%, $n = 13$) was intoxicated at the time of the assault.

Work History

The majority of the attackers (75%, $n = 12$) had an unstable work history, and this same number were unemployed at the time of the attack.

Police Records

More than half of the offenders (57%) had come to the attention of police before the attack. Half of the sample (50%) had a conviction for non-violent incidents. A slightly smaller group (39%) had a previously violent history. Data were missing in one case. Almost one-third (29%) had been in prison before their assault.

Social Behavior

Half of the attackers (50%, $n = 12$) were loners. Seventy-eight per cent of the attackers had no sexually intimate relationship at the time of the offence. One third (30%, $n = 10$) had a history of high geographic mobility.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of attackers

Variable	All 14 cases	Potentially lethal (<i>n</i> = 9)	Non-lethal (<i>n</i> = 5)
Gender			
Male	64% (9)	56% (5)	80% (4)
Female	36% (5)	44% (4)	20% (1)
Being in a partnership at the time of attack			
Yes	22% (2)	13% (1)	100% (1)
No	78% (7)	87% (7)	0% (0)
Mean age of offenders (years)	40	39	41
Loss of mother/almost no contact until age 16			
Yes	25% (3)	33% (3)	0% (0)
No	75% (9)	67% (6)	100% (3)
Loss of father/almost no contact until age 16			
Yes	25% (3)	33% (3)	0% (0)
No	75% (9)	67% (6)	100% (3)
Past psychiatric history			
Yes	42% (5)	56% (5)	0% (0)
No	58% (7)	44% (4)	100% (3)
Past suicide attempt			
Yes	45% (5)	63% (5)	0% (0)
No	55% (6)	37% (3)	100% (3)
Past suicidal ideation			
Yes	75% (9)	100% (9)	0% (0)
No	25% (3)	0% (0)	100% (3)
Paranoid schizophrenia			
Yes	21% (3)	33% (3)	0% (0)
No	79% (11)	67% (6)	100% (5)
Alcohol problems in the past			
Yes	18% (2)	25% (2)	0% (0)
No	82% (9)	75% (6)	100% (3)
Drug problems in the past			
Yes	18% (2)	13% (1)	33% (1)
No	82% (9)	87% (7)	67% (2)
Intoxicated at time of attack			
Yes	8% (1)	0% (0)	25% (1)
No	92% (12)	100% (9)	75% (3)
Unstable work history			
Yes	75% (9)	78% (7)	67% (2)
No	25% (3)	22% (2)	33% (1)
Unemployed at time of attack			
Yes	75% (9)	75% (6)	75% (3)
No	25% (3)	25% (2)	25% (1)
Violent/Non-violent incidents that came to the attention of the police			
Yes	57% (8)	56% (5)	60% (3)
No	43% (6)	44% (4)	40% (2)
Official violence convictions or known to police for violence against other people			
Yes	39% (5)	38% (3)	40% (2)
No	61% (8)	62% (5)	60% (3)
Official convictions or known to police for non-violent incidents			
Yes	50% (7)	44% (4)	60% (3)
No	50% (7)	56% (5)	40% (2)
In prison before			
Yes	29% (4)	22% (2)	40% (2)
No	71% (10)	78% (7)	60% (3)
Loner			
Yes	50% (6)	75% (6)	0% (0)
No	50% (6)	25% (2)	100% (4)

(Continues)

Table 1. (Continued)

Variable	All 14 cases	Potentially lethal (<i>n</i> = 9)	Non-lethal (<i>n</i> = 5)
Moves from place to place			
Yes	30% (3)	25% (2)	50% (1)
No	70% (7)	75% (6)	50% (1)
Communication with victim e.g., letters			
Yes	17% (2)	25% (2)	0% (0)
No	83% (10)	75% (6)	100% (4)
Approach or attempt to approach victim before attack			
Yes	46% (6)	50% (4)	40% (2)
No	54% (7)	50% (4)	60% (3)

All percentages represent the proportion of subjects where the variable was present. When *n* follows the percentage, it refers to the number of subjects where the variable could be coded, scored, or quantified due to sufficient data.

Approach and Contact Behavior Toward the Victim

A history of *persistent* contact and approach behavior toward a public figure, which the authors label stalking, was only present in the two celebrity cases, but not in any of the political incidents. Almost half of the sample (46%, *n* = 12) approached or tried to approach the public figure beforehand at least once, but were not persistent. Very few of the attackers (17%, *n* = 2) contacted the victim directly before the attack. In one case a stalker repeatedly approached the victim and spoke to him without uttering any threat. Another woman wrote at least one letter to the later victim but no more specific information was included in the files.

Comparing Potentially Lethal and Non-lethal Attacks

Because of the small sample size and the absence of inferential statistics, only clear-cut descriptive differences were considered to mark a distinction between these two groups. Based upon our definitions, there were nine potentially lethal (64%) and five non-lethal (36%) attacks.

Similarities between Potentially Lethal and Non-lethal Attacks

There were no noticeable differences between the two groups for unstable work history, prior convictions, or coming to the attention of the police before the attacks.

Differences between Potentially Lethal and Non-lethal Attacks

On a number of psychological and psychiatric characteristics the non-lethal attackers proved to be more stable and more inconspicuous than the potentially lethal offenders. No loss or absence of a father or mother figure were reported in their childhood. None of them had a past psychiatric or suicidal history. Although 75% of the potentially lethal attackers were loners, none of the non-lethal attackers proved to be isolated in this way.

Both cases in which the attacker tried to communicate with the victim before the attack were in the potentially lethal group.

The Link between Psychiatric Disorder and Motivation

In all of the cases (93%) where psychiatric features were present, a link between the psychiatric disorder and the motivation for the attack was observable (see Table 2).

Motivations for the different attacks varied widely. Different psychological levels or layers of motivation were sometimes present in the same offender. This was apparent in half of the cases where the motive that was self-admitted by the offender differed from the underlying psychological motive discerned by the authors of this article.

For example, one female attacker who had thrown a Molotov cocktail at a politician driving in a car said she had done this because she was fighting for social justice (Case 6). On a deeper and probably unconscious level, a feeling of exclusion from her peers presumably also contributed to her plan to attack the minister. The other political activist believed she was a police informer, and she may have wanted to do something “big” to prove them wrong.

Owing to the differing and not uncomplicated nature of motivation in this small sample, attempts to type or classify motivation were avoided. Nevertheless, two basic motivational dynamics emerged in the case material. One was to seek attention. The other was to fight against forces that threatened the attacker or other individuals. The first motivational dynamic was connected to narcissistic or histrionic traits; the second was linked with paranoid traits and disorders.

In all five cases where narcissistic and/or histrionic traits were prominent, the attacker clearly revealed a need for attention. This could normally be seen in the general communication style and interactional behavior of the offender.

An unemployed teacher slapped the German Chancellor during a party meeting (Case 13). He argued that he acted symbolically in the name of the whole nation. Seemingly happy about the public interest in him this generated, he re-enacted his assault in front of a TV camera a few days later. He told journalists he was proud of the attack, which he said was a great experience for him. Later at the court hearing he distributed his résumé to the media.

In Case 1 where fragile narcissism was paired with depression, a suicide-by-cop scenario emerged (Mohandie, Meloy & Collins, 2009). The young offender said that he was a “nobody” and wanted to do something “big” before he died. After having wounded a politically left-wing student leader with his revolver, the would-be assassin started a shootout with the police. The officers noticed that the young man deliberately missed them when he fired his weapon, and made no attempt to run for cover. He tried to poison himself, but survived, shortly before he was arrested. He subsequently committed suicide while in prison.

In all psychotic cases (36%), the content of the delusions was directly connected to the motivation. All delusions evidenced a paranoid dynamic – an irrational fear of imminent assault – and a majority of these attackers were suffering from paranoid schizophrenia at the time of their assaults. From their delusional point of view, the attacks were eminently rational and necessary to protect themselves or others from serious harm. This contributed to their determination to act with lethal intent, a likely correlate of the perceived lethality of the threat posed toward them. In Case 10 suicidal

Table 2. Diagnosis and motivation

Victim/perpetrator	Psychiatric diagnosis?	Specific motivation?	Related?
1) Rudi Dutschke, student leader/Josef B.	(FR) Personality disorder; traits not specified but mainly narcissistic and to a lesser extent antisocial, depressive development	(SA) He says he is a "nobody"; he wants to do something "big" before he dies. He thinks victim is a "brilliant" head. He also says he hates the "communists" because they apprehended his uncle	Yes
2) Kurt-Georg Kiesinger, politician/Beate K.	No	(SA) Change of leadership, justice for all the Nazi victims	No
3) Oskar Lafontaine, politician/Adelheide S.	(FR) Paranoid schizophrenia; verbal hallucinations: Jesus told her to kill a politician; delusions: underground human factories	(SA) People must be made aware of human factories and be protected but it was also to reduce her intense tension	Yes
4) Wolfgang Schäuble, politician/Dieter K.	Paranoid schizophrenia; delusions: German state terrorizes him and others	(SA) He wants to make his agony public, attack was an act of self-defense	Yes
5) Monica Seles, tennis player/Günther P.	(FR) Personality disorder; traits not specified but likely anxious/avoidant traits, reactive depressive component also likely; perhaps also schizoid traits present	(SA) He wants to punish Monica Seles and prevent her from getting better than Steffi Graf ("teach her a lesson") (UM) Victim poses a threat to his idol's success (Steffi Graf) and since he was narcissistically linked with his idol she posed a threat to him as well	Yes
6) Manfred Püchel, politician/Eva-Maria H.	(FR) Paranoid, histrionic, narcissistic, compulsive personality disorder	(SA) She fights for social justice and she wanted to be taken seriously by the victim/talk to him (UM) She was friendly with political activists. These people later believed she was a police informer. She was excluded and probably wanted to do something "huge" (like throwing a Molotov cocktail) to prove them wrong	Yes
7) Eberhard Diepgen, politician/Dieter K.	Histrionic and narcissistic personality traits likely	(SA) According to him he wanted to protest against the construction work on the Potsdamer Platz in Berlin. His victim had approved of the new buildings. He said he wants to send early "Christmas greetings" to the victim on December 20 via the egg (UM) He wanted to ridicule the mayor and it was a platform for showmanship to him	Yes
8) Joschka Fischer, politician/Samir F.	According to the verdict his "personality deviates from the average person"; histrionic traits likely	(SA) He fought against Germany's participation in the Kosovo war. He wanted to stop the war (UM) He probably was also motivated by getting attention	Likely

(Continues)

Table 2. (Continued)

Victim/perpetrator	Psychiatric diagnosis?	Specific motivation?	Related?
9) Hans-Christian Ströbele, politician/Bendix W.	Anti-social personality traits likely	(SA) He said the “Greens” are responsible for “ecological” grievance in his home town. He was in a self-admitted bad state of mind as he was drunk after a party (UM) He is a known neo-Nazi with a violent past	Likely
10) Mr. C., TV moderator/S. G.	Likely psychotic	(SA) She claims she wanted to get killed by him. She wanted to kidnap him and then force him to kill her. In case he refused she would kill herself in front of him. She thought she needed a witness when she killed herself so that she couldn’t back down from her intention	Yes
11) Various politicians, secretaries/Johann L.	Schizoid traits likely	(SA) He committed suicide, therefore we can only speculate that he wanted to raise awareness about the job situation in Germany. After he was called a “mad man” in the newspapers he sent an article about election fraud/lies and unhappy voters with one of the bombs (UM) He was unemployed. He may have been frustrated about his own situation and wanted to take revenge	Likely
12) Roger Kusch, politician/Yvonne C.	FR – Paranoid schizophrenia; delusions: she was haunted by right-wing politicians and others because she is of noble ancestry. She claimed she could also tell from a child’s movements whether the child had been raped	(SA) She wanted to prevent children getting raped and didn’t want people to vote for the victim’s party because they are pedophiles	Yes
13) Gerhard Schröder, politician/Jens A.	Psychiatrist deemed him as likely “mentally disturbed”, but there was no further evaluation; narcissistic traits likely, may be histrionic as well	(SA) He slapped the Chancellor vicariously for the whole nation because the Chancellor always talked about getting jobs for people (UM) He had been without work for years. He thought of himself as a victim of the system who had done everything he could. He was also seeking attention	Likely
14) Mr. S., politician/Alois K.	(FR) Organic personality disorder/differential diagnosis: dementia; delusions: there was a conspiracy against him. The border stone was at the wrong place, which is why he hit it with his car (not because of his age and driving skills)	(SA) He wanted to threaten his victim with the knife so that he would help him to settle the problem with the border stone. He also thought the victim had laughed at him before because he had to pay the bill for the measurement expertise	Yes

FR, forensic report available; SA, self-admitted motive; UM, underlying motive.

intent was prominent, but an irrational fear of protecting herself and revenge was also present.

In Case 4 a paranoid schizophrenic individual believed the German state was torturing his mind. He thought that the Chancellor and the minister of the interior were specifically responsible. He desperately wrote to other politicians asking for help. Then he noticed that the minister of the interior was coming to speak at an election rally close to where he lived. He went to the rally and shot the politician, wounding him in a life-threatening manner. The conscious, albeit psychotic motivation for this assassination attempt was self-defense.

In two cases where schizoid personality traits were present (Cases 5 and 11), a likely motivation for the attack was revenge. The schizoid attackers planned and prepared the attack secretly, probably due to their emotional detachment and preoccupation with fantasy.

For example, a young, isolated, and unemployed man sent a series of letter bombs to politicians (Case 11). One of the bombs was accompanied by an article concerning election fraud and the unhappiness of voters. Although case file data were limited, it appeared that he wanted to take revenge for his desperate life situation.

The two attackers with antisocial traits had a history of previous criminal record and aggressive behavior (Cases 1 and 9). The use of violence appeared to be a natural outcome of their grievance toward and dislike of politicians. It is notable that none of the 14 attackers were motivated by thwarted sexual, affectional, or affiliative desires for the targets.

Warning Behaviors

Pathway Warning Behavior

Detailed information on this warning behavior was available in 13 cases (see Table 3). In every single attack, whether potentially lethal or non-lethal, multiple steps along the way were readily identifiable. The research and planning phase was probably underreported since it often only takes place in the mind of the offender. Therefore, only research and planning behavior that brought the offender into contact with other individuals could be seen in the files. For example, one of the perpetrators asked a taxi driver for the victim's address on the day of attack (Case 1). Typical preparation behavior was the acquisition of weapons such as firearms or explosives in the potentially lethal group, or a paint bomb in the non-lethal group (Case 8). Prearrangements to be able to get close to the public figure were also reported. One offender even applied for membership of the party of the then German Chancellor in order to gain entrance to an event where he was giving a speech (Case 13). The implementation phase regularly started with breaching. In three of the cases the attackers employed a ruse. One attacker pretended to take journalism notes to fool security (Case 2); another concealed a knife in a bouquet of flowers, pretending to be a fan of a well-known politician (Case 3).

The only offence in which the pathway could not have been seen at all involved a more situational dynamic. A neo-Nazi with a violent past was returning home in the early hours after partying and drinking all night (Case 9) when he spotted a well-known Green party politician distributing flyers during an election campaign. The neo-Nazi

Table 3. Summary of warning behaviors

Case	Potentially lethal?	Pathway ¹	Energy burst	Novel aggression	Fixation (a, mild; b, heavy)	Identification ²	Leakage	Direct threat
1	Yes	✓	24 hours	✓	Cause (a)	✓	✓	×
2	No	✓	72 hours	×	Cause (b)	×	✓	×
3	Yes	✓	3 months	✓	Cause (b)	✓	×	×
4	Yes	✓	×	×	Cause (b)	×	×	×
5	Yes	✓	72 hours	×	Person (b)	×	×	×
6	Yes	✓	1 year	✓	Cause (b)	✓	×	✓
7	No	✓	×	×	Person (a)	✓	×	×
8	No	✓	?	✓	Cause (a)	✓	?	×
9	No	?	×	×	Cause (b)	✓	×	×
10	Yes	✓	3 months	×	Person (b)	×	×	×
11	Yes	✓	×	?	Cause (?)	✓	×	×
12	Yes	✓	3 months	?	Cause (b)	×	×	×
13	No	✓	?	×	Person (a)	✓	?	×
14	Yes	✓	1 week	✓	Person (b)	×	×	×

¹(1) Research/planning; (2) preparation; (3) implementation of attack (Calhoun & Weston, 2003). ²(1) Warrior mentality/weapons fascination; (2) interest and study of previous assassins; (3) ideology: ✓, present; ×, absent; ?, not enough information.

did not like the politician because of his left-wing politics. He observed the member of parliament for 15 minutes with a “hate-filled” look, as a witness later reported. He then approached him from behind and hit him on the head fiercely. This pattern perhaps signified a shortened pathway to violence. The planning could have happened during the period of brief observation. As the attacker used his hand as a weapon, no preparation was needed. He started the implementation phase while walking purposefully in the direction of the politician.

Clearly detectable aspects of the early pathway warning behavior came to the attention of authorities or official security personnel in at least five of all cases (38%, $n = 13$). Two offenders tried to approach, or even attack, days or months before their final assault, but failed when security stopped them (Cases 2 and 6). In another case, the first control point found eggs on a notorious protester who was already known for his fixation on the politician and later victim (Case 7). The protester was then able to hide those clearly non-lethal weapons at the next security check before he approached the politician and started his egg attack. One delusional woman already known to authorities as a result of her mental illness twice tried to apply for a gun license but failed (Case 3). Another attacker suffering from paranoid schizophrenia asked for the addresses of several politicians at a police station (Case 12).

Energy Burst Warning Behavior

An increase in the frequency, variety, or intensity of any warning behavior in the time before the attack was noted in two-thirds (66%) of the 12 cases where information existed. The length of the energy burst behavioral pattern ranged from 24 hours to 1 year. If the time frame was rather short (72 hours or less), a combination of preparation and implementation behavior usually emerged. This could be seen in three attacks (Cases 1, 2 and 5). For example, in the last 3 days before the assault one offender (Case 5) demonstrated a series of behaviors as described in the last stages of the pathway

model (Calhoun & Weston, 2003). Before leaving his home, the stalker hid important belongings in his garden, believing he would go to jail for a long time. He then traveled to Hamburg where he followed a female sports star, desperately hoping for an opportunity to attack. Finally he was able to breach security while she was playing a public tennis match.

When energy burst warning behavior occurred 3 months or more before the attack, the grievance triggering the assault regularly played a role. For instance, one delusional woman, believing that children were in danger of becoming victims of sexual assault (Case 12), made child rape accusations against various people months before her attack. She also sent disturbing e-mails and insulted another person. One female stalker (Case 10) who obviously felt rejected by a public figure started a more offensive pattern of approach behavior. The targeted television presenter was so worried that he asked the police for help.

Novel Aggression Warning Behavior

Novel aggression was seen in five of the 12 cases (42%) where information on this factor was available. In four of these five cases (80%), the attackers were in the potentially lethal group. And even the non-lethal attacker showing novel aggression (Case 8) seriously injured a public figure. He threw a paint bomb with such force that he injured the eardrum of the politician who later had to be treated in hospital.

Two striking dynamics were observed in the novel aggression behavior patterns. First the novel acts of violence committed ahead of the attack were often of remarkable intensity. For instance, one offender (Case 1) tried to shoot other people on two occasions approximately 2 years before the attack. A delusional woman (Case 3) set fire to the house of a relative 4 years before stabbing a politician. Another offender (Case 6) attacked a police officer with a brick a few months before her attack on a public figure.

A second dynamic regularly observed was a notable similarity between the novel aggression behavior and the *modus operandi* of the attack on the public figure. This form of novel aggression often seemed to be a behavioral trial run but was not necessarily part of a conscious preparation for the assault. For example, the attacker (Case 8) who injured the politician with a paint bomb had also thrown cans at a civic center a few months before. The female offender (Case 6) who threw a Molotov cocktail at a car of a politician had previously thrown small bottles filled with gas at a political demonstration. Finally the assassin (Case 1) who shot a left-wing student leader had in the past fired at a French policeman and at a guard on the East German border.

Eighty per cent of those exhibiting novel aggression warning behaviors were known to the authorities before the attack on the public figure.

Fixation Warning Behavior

All of the attackers demonstrated a fixation, at least in its mild form in which the individual has an intense preoccupation with a person or a cause. One example of a mild fixation was an attacker who had the strong political belief that the participation of German soldiers in the Kosovo war was wrong, but this issue did not become the main focus of his thinking or political activity (Case 8). Nine of the attackers (69%, $n = 13$) revealed a heavy and pathological fixation in which their obsessive preoccupations

compromised their social and/or emotional functioning. For instance, one delusional attacker believed that underground flesh factories existed in which humans were being killed and started putting up posters in the street and placing advertisements in the newspaper to warn the public (Case 3).

Almost all lethal attackers (88%, $n = 8$) had a “heavy” pathological fixation. In comparison the rate of pathological fixation for non-lethal attackers was not as high (40%, $n = 5$). The most common were fixations on a cause (64%) like political issues or delusionally based feelings of a threat against the attacker or against other individuals. In the group of five cases (36%) with a fixation on a person, two of the offenders were stalkers; three, including one of the stalkers, also had several personal contacts with the victim before the day of the attack. In the potentially lethal group, two-thirds of the attackers (67%) were fixated on a cause; a nearly identical rate was seen in the non-lethal group (60%).

Identification Warning Behavior

Identification warning behavior was shown by eight of the attackers (57%). As we subdivided the concept into three facets, sometimes more than one form of identification behavior was present in a single case.

The “warrior mentality” in which a person adopts the identity of an armed fighter was seen in only two cases (Cases 1 and 9) of the whole sample (14%). Both attackers were male, connected to a right-wing extremist movement, and people around them were aware of their fascination with weapons. Both men also had a past affiliation with foreign military forces, one as a mercenary in the post-Yugoslavian civil wars (Case 9) and the other spent a short period in the French Foreign Legion (Case 1). Due to their noticeable activities, their “warrior mentality” warning behaviors were also known to law enforcement.

Another facet of identification found that five of the attackers (36%) “were interested or studied previous assassins”. Two of them identified with terrorists from the German left-wing extremist group, Red Army Faction (Cases 3 and 6); while two others (Cases 11 and 13) identified with the member of the German resistance leader, Graf von Stauffenberg, who tried to assassinate Hitler. One offender (Case 1) showed an interest in the murder of Martin Luther King a week before his attack. One perpetrator (Case 13) identified with another individual (Case 2) from our sample of German attackers of public figures without terrorist motivation.

The identification with another terrorist assassin by two of our female perpetrators was known to authorities. One (Case 6) sprayed quotes by a left-winged female terrorist on a ministry building, while the other (Case 3) sent flowers and a note to an imprisoned leader of the Red Army Faction.

Looking at the facet of identification as an agent to advance a particular belief system, five attackers (36%) were intensely related to a left- or right-wing radical political ideology. For all but one offender (Case 1) the identification with a radical ideology was known to German authorities before their attack. In general there was a good correlation between the nature of identification and the type of public figure being targeted. For instance, perpetrators who identified with right-wing extremism assaulted left-wing politicians, whom they saw as a political enemy. Another example was a former teacher (Case 13) who slapped the German Chancellor. He identified with a woman (Case 2) who slapped the Chancellor 35 years earlier.

Leakage Warning Behavior

Leakage behavior was documented in two of the 12 attacks where enough information was available (17%). One of the offenders (Case 1) told his acquaintances the day before the attack that they would hear from him on TV, on the radio and in the press. A female attacker (Case 2) communicated her intent to do harm to the target in a much less cryptic and cautious way. In a speech in front of 3,000 students in Berlin she announced that she would slap the German Chancellor, which she eventually did half a year later. In two other cases (Cases 8 and 13) it remained unclear due to the lack of detailed information whether or not the attacker had revealed his plans before to peers or family members.

Directly Communicated Threat Warning Behavior

A direct threat to the target was present in only one case (7%). The female attacker (Case 6) wrote threatening letters to various politicians – one of whom was the victim. Unfortunately the court files that we were able to review only mentioned that she threatened the later target of the attack in one letter. The exact wording of the written communication was not revealed.

Attack Behavior

Date of Attack

Although a time period of more than 60 years was covered in this study, the majority of cases (64%) took place in the most recent decade (1995–2004; Table 4). Before 1990 only two attacks on public figures (14%) were reported, both of them occurring in 1968.

Place of Attack

Most of the attacks (79%) were carried out in public places (Table 4). In nine of the cases (64%), the assault happened during an official event, e.g., an election campaign, a court hearing, or a sports event. In at least seven of these nine cases (78%), offenders deliberately planned and chose this place for the attack, learning from public sources where they would be able to find the target. Among the three assaults (21%) that were located in the office or close to the private home of the public figure, one was a serial bombing without the need for physical proximity, and the other two cases were knife attacks. In both of these latter cases there were several personal encounters before the potentially lethal attack took place. Repeated contact behavior may have increased the risk of an attack in a private or office environment.

Kind of Attack

The weapons most frequently used during the nine potentially lethal attacks were knives (56%), followed by equal use of firearms (22%) and explosives (22%). In the five non-

Table 4. Attack behavior

Case	Date/time of attack	Place of attack	Kind of attack	Security present	Reaching proximity (2 meters)	Addressing the victim personally during the attack	What happened to attacker
1	April 11, 1968/afternoon	Streets of Berlin in front of the students' headquarters	Shooting	No	Yes	"Are you Rudi D.?" Attacker claimed he also called him a "communist pig", but the victim denied that "Nazi, Nazi"	Fled after people approached the scene, took sleeping pills, shootout with police, committed suicide in prison in 1970
2	November 7, 1968/morning	Political congress	Slapping	Yes	Yes		Overpowered by security. Trial on the same day, sentenced to 1 year in prison, appealed, released the same day. Full responsibility, sentenced to 4 months probation in 1969
3	April 25, 1990/evening	Political rally	Stabbing	Yes	Yes	Told him she wanted to give him the flowers because she admired him and asked him for an autograph	Security overpowered her. Judged irresponsible for crime, still in psychiatric hospital as of 2009
4	October 12, 1990/evening	Political rally	Shooting	Yes	?	No	Security overpowered him. Judged irresponsible for crime, admitted to psychiatric hospital, switched to monitored dormitory in 2004. Apologized to victim 5 years after the attack
5	April 30, 1993/evening	Tennis court	Stabbing	Yes	Yes	No	Security overpowered him. Diminished responsibility, suspended sentence (2 years), lives low-key in his home town today

(Continues)

Table 4. (Continued)

Case	Date/time of attack	Place of attack	Kind of attack	Security present	Reaching proximity (2 meters)	Addressing the victim personally during the attack	What happened to attacker
6	November 22, 1995/evening	Car on the street	Molotov cocktail	Yes	No	No	Attacker fled from scene, drove to victim's workplace, then drove to her home, saw police cars, fled, they followed her. Admitted to psychiatry, diminished responsibility by court, 1 year and 9 months suspended sentence, outpatient therapy. She wrote an apology letter to victim before Christmas 1995
7	December 20, 1995/afternoon	Courtroom	Bursting an egg	Yes	Yes	“Happy Easter, you Santa Claus”	Security overpowered him. Full responsibility, sentenced to 6 months in prison. He disappeared and staged his own suicide in 1998, appeared again in 1999, served prison time
8	May 13, 1999/morning	Party convention	Threw paint bomb	Yes	No	No	Security man overpowered him. Confusion at the scene, people (accomplices?) helped attacker, he escaped, gave interview to journalist, later turned himself in at police station. Full responsibility, 1,840 euro money fine, wore women's clothes at trial
9	September 20, 2002/morning	Street campaign stall	Hitting	No	Yes	“Whore pig”	Fled, victim followed him and called the police; caught by police at a house entrance. Full responsibility, 15 months in prison

10	December 2, 2003/night	Backyard of victim's home	Attempted stabbing	No	Yes	<p>"You don't need to call the police, I'll come back to kill you anyway. I don't want to kill you. I want you to kill me."</p>	<p>Attacker caught in the backyard of a house, had made self-inflicted stabbing wounds to her belly with the knife. Judged irresponsible by court for crime, admitted to psychiatry</p>
11	April–November 2004/morning	Office of politicians	Nine bombs	No	No	No	<p>Attacker committed suicide (burnt himself) after getting an invitation to take a DNA test</p>
12	February 12, 2004/morning	Political rally/information desk	Stabbing	No	Yes	<p>"Fag pig/pedophile pig. You murdered my son"</p>	<p>Overpowered by victim's colleagues. Deemed irresponsible by court, admitted to psychiatric hospital</p>
13	May 18, 2004/evening	Political reception	Slapping	Yes	Yes	<p>To security: "That's all, I'm done."</p>	<p>Security overpowered him. He refused to answer police questions but gave a series of interviews to the media about the attack in the following days. He wore a shirt with his bank account number in front of the judge. No sign of diminished responsibility, 4 months on probation/100 hours community service. Attacker, who had put himself up as a candidate, got the best election result in his election district after the slap.</p>
14	February 23, 2004/morning	Mayor's office	Stabbing	No	Yes	<p>"I get you, I get you"</p>	<p>Chancellor's party excluded attacker as a party member Victim and co-worker overpowered him. Deemed not responsible for crime, admitted to psychiatric hospital, then to a retirement home</p>

lethal assaults, two attackers slapped the victim (40%). The other three attackers knocked the target down, threw an egg, or threw a paint bomb.

Security

In eight of the incidents (57%) security personnel were present. In four of the eight cases (50%) where protection was provided, a potentially lethal attack occurred. In contrast, a dangerous assault occurred in five of the six cases (83%) without protection. There was a greater likelihood of a potentially lethal attack when there was no protection.

Reaching Proximity

In all but one case, information was available for this factor. In three-quarters of the offences (77%, $n = 13$), the attackers came closer than 2 meters to the public figure before launching their assault. No connection could be identified between the proximity factor and whether the offender wanted to act lethally or not.

Addressing the Victim During the Attack

In more than half of the cases (64%), the attacker made a statement during or directly before the assault. This kind of behavior was termed a “psychological abstract” (Hempel *et al.*, 1999). It may provide insight into the perpetrator’s conscious motivation for the attack. This was true in all of the German public figure attacks where a psychological abstract was uttered. In two of the nine abstracts (22%), an instrumental aspect was predominant. For example, a female attacker (Case 3) asked a politician if she might personally give him flowers in order to bypass security and come within close range, which she did. In five of the nine psychological abstracts (56%), anger and hostility were expressed. Sometimes this had a more political undertone, such as politicians being insulted with the words “Nazi” or “whore pig”. Psychotic dynamics were also apparent during these utterances. In one case (Case 12), a delusional woman believed that children were being sexually abused by politicians. Before her stabbing, she called him a “pedophile.” In four of the five cases (80%) where no psychological abstract was present, however, the attacker came from the potentially lethal group. Since most of the non-lethal attackers were trying to get attention with their act, the psychological abstracts appeared to enhance the dramatic orchestration of the assault. As also noted in Table 4, legal outcomes of the cases varied.

DISCUSSION

This is one of the first studies to analyze in detail warning behaviors, attack behaviors, and the relationship between psychiatric diagnosis and motivation for an attack in a non-terrorist universe of public figure cases. It is also the first study to compare potentially lethal and non-lethal attackers since the work of Fein & Vossekuil (1998, 1999).

Although all cases in Germany during this period that were motivated by terrorism were excluded, such cases are a legitimate area of inquiry and will be a comparative topic in a subsequent study. Recent authors of texts on terrorists' motivations have advanced the belief that: (i) they have normal personalities (Post, 2007); and (ii) their social networks are more important than their individual psychology (Sageman, 2004). Ironically, both of these writers are psychiatrists. We would argue, however, that the personality and psychopathology of the individual attacker should never be removed from the motivational equation, and can further our understanding of terrorist behavior. Fundamentally, all acts of terrorism are personal in the sense that individuals involved in the attack bring a resolve to their behavior and a "commitment to act" (Borum & Reddy, 2001) that is shaped by their character and/or psychopathology, regardless of the influence of the group (Meloy, 2004, in press; Pynchon & Borum, 1999). In some cases, *rejection* by the extremist group is a primary drive mechanism for the individual's terrorist act (Puckitt, 2001).

Within our non-terrorist universe, both the potentially lethal and non-lethal groups were following a pathway to targeted violence with clear behavioral indications of planning, preparation, and implementation of their attack. A predatory or instrumental mode of violence, reflected in such a purposeful approach to the public figure, is typical of most public figure attacks (Meloy, 2006; Meloy, Sheridan & Hoffmann, 2008). Both groups also had unstable work histories, difficulty in relationships, and conflicts with authority, usually the police and courts.

However, their psychological and psychiatric histories differed. The non-lethal attackers were more stable and without any psychiatric or suicidal history; the potentially lethal attackers were more often psychotic loners, suicidal, and had a history of severe mental illness: characteristics which do not distinguish them as a group when compared with many problematic approachers to public figures (Dietz & Martell, 1989; James et al., 2009, 2010; Meloy et al., 2008).

The potentially lethal attackers also had more unstable attachment histories. About 56% had lost a mother, a father, or both parents during childhood, and all cases where data were known were in the potentially lethal group. The role of attachment pathology has been extensively studied in samples of stalkers (Kienlen, 1998; MacKenzie, Mullen, Ogloff, McEwan & James, 2008), and theorized in case reports regarding attackers of public figures (Hoffmann & Meloy, 2008; Meloy, 1992; Sides, 2010). These are the first empirical data to suggest that insecure attachment may play a distal but significant role in the psychopathology of attackers of public figures.

The importance of psychotic disorders in public figure problematic approachers and attackers is quite apparent and continues to receive research attention (Dietz & Martell, 1989; Fein & Vossekuil, 1998, 1999; James et al., 2007, 2009, 2010; Meloy, 2011; Mullen et al., 2008). In the German sample, psychosis was also substantially present and the content of delusions was directly linked with the motivation for the attack. The risk assessment literature on the mentally ill has noted the principle of rationality within irrationality (Link & Stueve, 1994), and psychosis has a positive and significant relationship to violence risk, although the effect size is small, particularly when compared with personality disorder and/or drug abuse (Douglas, Guy & Hart, 2009). The present findings of a direct link between symptom content of psychosis and motivation for the attack is in agreement with Douglas et al.'s (2009) recommendation that this level of analysis will yield more salient data in understanding violence risk than just the diagnosis.

Personality disorder and attack motivation were also linked when studied at the level of discrete behaviors. Histrionic and narcissistic personality features were present in attackers who were looking for attention through the assault. This was mostly the case in the non-lethal attackers, but when combined with depression, it was occasionally present in the potentially lethal attacker group. The complexity of diagnoses in these cases is to be emphasized, as is the tendency to oversimplify the disorder among both mental health professionals and the public. Typically these cases will have both axis I conditions and apparent axis II traits, features, or disorders.

A warning behavior typology (Meloy, 2011; Meloy, Hoffmann, Guldemann & James, in submission; Meloy & O'Toole, in press) was tested empirically for the first time. This typology organizes, defines, and clarifies various attack signals, pre-attack behaviors, and warning signs concerning attacks on public figures which have been theorized and anecdotally illustrated in the threat assessment literature (Fein & Vossekuil, 1998, 1999; Calhoun, 1998; Calhoun & Weston, 2003; James et al., 2007, 2008; Meloy et al., 2008). Several new concepts, such as novel aggression and energy burst, are also introduced.

Pathway warning behavior, defined by the pathway model (Calhoun & Weston, 2003) proved to be very powerful. Almost every attack on a public figure included the sequential stages of planning, preparation and implementation. The mode of violence was predatory (instrumental), rather than affective (impulsive), in every case (Meloy, 2006).

The rise of suspicious activities in frequency and/or intensity which the present authors termed *energy burst* warning behavior may also be a valid pre-attack signal, which, if present, may mark a heightened risk for an imminent attack. This warning behavior, however, is difficult to code for several reasons: timelines vary considerably across cases, and establishing a baseline of energy for the subject from which to judge an "energy burst" is problematic. More work on this warning behavior needs to be done.

Novel aggression warning behavior that could be seen in the sample suggests that new forms of violent acts in the past and aggressive behavioral trial runs are reasonable factors for a public figure threat assessment. Novel aggression also empirically tests for the first time the last letter of the acronym JACA developed by de Becker (1997), that is, the ability to carry out the act. Novel aggression is the subject testing, although not necessarily consciously so, to see if he or she can be as violent as necessary to carry out the attack on the public figure.

Fixation warning behavior was also very powerful and present in every case, and underscores earlier thinking that pathological fixation focusing on a highly personalized cause is a marker for risk of an attack, particularly against a political figure (James et al., 2009, 2010; Meloy et al., 2008; Mullen et al., 2009). It also appears that the distinction between "mild" and "heavy" is useful.

Identification warning behavior with other public figure attackers, a warrior mentality, or identifying oneself as an agent of a radical ideology was present in more than half of the cases, offering useful data for risk assessment. Identification was originally used by psychoanalysts to describe an internalization process to adapt the characteristics of another (Meissner, 1970), and here specific behaviors were attached to infer such an internal process in subjects who may threaten a public figure.

The low rate of *leakage* warning behavior was surprising (O'Toole, 2000; Meloy & O'Toole, in press). This result was in sharp contrast to other forms of targeted violence such as mass murders and school shootings in which leakage is a very common

phenomenon (Meloy & O'Toole, in press). There may be different characteristic warning behavior profiles for different forms of targeted violence.

As noted in previous public figure attack studies (Fein et al., 1995; James et al., 2007, 2008; Meloy et al., 2004), *directly communicated threat* warning behavior toward the public figure before the attack was extremely rare. This is a logical extension of the stealth of most public figure attacks: a direct threat would convey a warning to the potential victim, and could interfere with a successful assault. The infrequent use of any alcohol or drugs during the attack is also consistent with maintaining a clear state of mind to advance an attack. This is in striking contrast to the use of alcohol in many cases of affective, reactive, or impulsive violence (Meloy, 2006).

It was remarkable how often warning behaviors were known to law enforcement or other authorities. Systematic information management and threat assessment to identify, assess and manage (Borum et al., 1999) potentially dangerous individuals through their warning behaviors toward public figures is clearly necessary. It would be fruitful for public figure protection in Germany and elsewhere to introduce systematic threat assessment procedures gleaned from programs already in use (Hoffmann & Sheridan, 2005; James et al., 2010; Scalora, Zimmerman & Wells, 2008).

Before this, warning behaviors have not been formulated into a systematic theory and then tested empirically. This study provides a theoretical model for empirically categorizing warning behaviors that may have predictive value. Further research is necessary to see if behaviors can be fully captured and reliably categorized by this warning behavior model, and then tested to see if they have concurrent and predictive validity. This will advance the science of threat assessment and provide an empirical foundation for arriving at the decision that a subject of concern poses a threat (Fein et al., 1995).

The results of the attack behavior made clear that known public appearances were often actively selected by the offenders for their assault. On the other hand, the presence of security lowered the risk for acts of severe violence. It was apparent in the German sample that most attacks happened at close range (< 2 meters) to the public figure (de Becker, Taylor & Marquart, 2008).

Similar to cases of mass murder (Hempel et al., 1999), the public figure attackers often made statements during the attack that offered a conscious insight into his or her motivation for the offence. Such “psychological abstracts” do not happen all the time before an attack, but appear to be frequent and significant enough to be studied retrospectively to understand why subjects believed they were mounting the attack. Conscious motivation, however, may differ from more unconscious reasons for the attack (attention-seeking, paranoia, retribution, etc.), which may be, in turn, more closely related to psychiatric diagnosis and specific symptoms which support the attack behavior.

This study is limited by its small sample size, some missing data, the lack of inferential statistics to test for differences, and its focus on public figure attacks in one country that may not generalize to others. However, it provides a template for further work in this area by empirically testing a typology of warning behaviors, describing in detail the comparative attack behaviors of the subjects, and demonstrating the close link between psychiatric diagnosis and motivation for the attack when the disorder is studied at the symptomatic and content level. This is an attempt to advance the science of threat assessment, an idiographic method of risk managing low base rate but highly consequential acts of intended and targeted violence.

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