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## The Public Figure Assassin As Terrorist

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According to the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation, terrorism is defined as: “The unlawful use of force or violence committed by a group or individual against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives” (FBI, 28 CFR, Section 0.85). Although the history of public figure stalking, attacks, and assassinations is largely a product of the behavior that would not fit this definition, there are a subgroup of individuals who carry out stalking and attacks that would specifically meet this definition of terrorism. We offer this chapter as a counterpoint to the emphasis upon other motivations and the predominance of mentally ill individuals that characterize much of the contemporary research in this area. Our interest is the subject who stalks and attempts to kill a public figure to explicitly further a political, social, or in some cases, religious objective.

### THE ASSASSINS – 12<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY MURDER, INCORPORATED

One of the earliest examples of terrorism in this context would be that of the *Hashisheen*. They were a sect of Shia Islam known as the Ismailis – believers in the restoration of Ismail as the Mahdi of Islam. The founder of the order, Hasan bin Sabah,

held ultra-conservative interpretations of Islamic philosophy and felt that anyone who did not believe as he did became a legitimate target for death. Sabah's philosophy also espoused total obedience to the founder. In point of fact, Sabah had established rules for entry into his order that rather parallels many of the attributes of modern cults:

“The First Rule was that the Missionary must know human psychology in such a way as to be able to select suitable people for admission to the cult...the second rule of procedure was the application of flattery and gaining the confidence of the prospective member. Third came the casting of doubt into the mind, by superior knowledge. Fourthly, the teacher must apply an oath to student never to betray and of the ‘truths’ which were to be revealed to him. Now he was told, as the fifth stage, that Ismailism was a powerful secret organization, supported by some of the most important figures of the time” (Daraul, 1961/1989).

Hasan bin Sabah was born in what is now Iran and spent his formative years as a Shia ‘Twelver’ as his father had been before him.

However, as Hasan grew he ultimately embraced the Ismaili tenets of faith and was mentored by some of the powerful Ismailis of that time. He traveled to the court of the Fatamid Caliph in Cairo and remained there for several years until he returned to his homeland, always spreading the word of the Ismaili faith and garnering many converts to his philosophy. Hasan became a thorn in the side of the ruling Seljuk



Sultans as well as other Sunni and Shia fiefdoms who sought his arrest and execution.

This compelled Hasan to establish a location for his own sanctuary. Ultimately, he and his followers conquered a fortress at Alamut, Iran, where he remained until his death 35 years later.

Alamut became his base of operations and he continued to send missionaries throughout the regions spreading his 'faith'. His enemies continued to harass his followers and he became a target of the Sultan's vizier (prime minister) Nizam al-Mulk. It was at this time that Hasan began the effort for which his group became best known – assassination. His first target, and his first success, was Nizam al-Mulk. The assassin took the command of his leader and went in disguise to approach Nizam al-Mulk, whereupon the assassin killed al-Mulk with a dagger. Although the assassin was killed almost instantly, this act established Hasan as a major player in the region.

For the next decade, Sabah's minions obtained additional fortresses in the region extending to Isfahan in modern day Iran. Additionally, his "emissaries" covertly conducted missionary work, spreading the Ismaili vision of Islam and obtaining additional converts. During the remainder of his life, Sabah commissioned at least 50 assassinations. His son, Hasan, succeeded Sabah upon his death in 1142 CE and continued his father's legacy of assassinations, some of them worthy of note:

ASSASSINATION OF CONRAD, MARQUIS DE  
MONTFERRAT (April 28, 1192)

Conrad, who ruled Tyre during the Third Crusade, was not well liked by Saladin and the Muslim population. Exactly who commissioned the



assassination through the Ismaili sect was not exactly known and has been attributed to both Saladin a military enemy of Conrad, and Richard, King of England, for whom Conrad was a political rival. Chronicled by the contemporary historian Imad ad-Din, the event was described as follows: “Meanwhile he lounged carelessly on his couch eating his food. He ate and made his collation, unaware of the precipice ahead of him; he ate and drank, sated and solaced himself, and went out and rode his horse. Suddenly, two men fell on him like two mangy wolves and with their daggers stopped his movement and struck him down near those shops. Then one of them fled and entered a church, having put out that vile soul. The Marquis, at death’s door, but still with a flicker of life in him, said, ‘Take me into the church’, and they took him in thinking that he was safe there. But when that one of the two murderers saw him, he fell on him to finish him off and struck him again, blow on blow. The Franks seized the two companions, and found that they were two apostates of the Brotherhood of Isma’ilites. They asked them who had commanded them to commit this murder, and the assassins said it was the King of England. They also said that they had been Christians for six months and had begun a life of asceticism and purification, frequenting churches and living lives of rigorous piety. One was in service with Ibn Barzan and one with the Prince of Sidon so they could both be close to the Marquis, ensuring his confidence in them by their constant presence....” (Gabrieli, 1993, p. 238).

The famed Muslim general Saladin himself was not entirely safe from the reach of the Assassins. By 1181-2, a man named Sinan had been promoted to chief of the



assassins in Syria. In letters to the Caliph in Baghdad, Saladin accused the rulers of Mosul of being in league with the Assassins and using them as a mediation tool with the Franks (the common name given for the Crusaders of the time). This raised the ire of Sinan, who proclaimed Saladin as the chief enemy of his sect. But attempts on Saladin's life began 10 years earlier when Assassins were commissioned by the vezir of Aleppo through Sinan to kill Saladin who had

besieged the city. The first attempt occurred in 1174-75, during the siege of Aleppo (Lewis, 1967). According to Saladin's biographers, the regent of Aleppo, Gumushtigin, engaged Sinan to kill the great general. "The appointed emissaries (assassins) penetrated the camp on a cold winter's day, but were recognized by the emir of Abu Qubais, a neighbor of theirs. He questioned them, and was at once killed. In the ensuing fracas many people were killed, but Saladin himself was unscathed." (Lewis, 1967, p. 133).

Yet Sinan was not done and had a second attempt made on Saladin. Again, Lewis describes the event, "In the following year, Sinan decided to make another attempt, and on 22 May 1176, Assassins, disguised as soldiers in his army, attacked him with knives while he was besieging Azaz. Thanks to his armour, Saladin received only superficial

wounds, and the assailants were dealt with by his emirs, several of whom perished in the struggle” (Lewis, 1967, p. 133).

Saladin did not sit idly by after these attempts. The power of the Assassins in the Holy Land had expanded to the point where Saladin felt that they needed to be dealt with as any other armed enemy. Accordingly, Saladin took his army to the Syrian headquarters of the Assassins and laid siege to the fortress at Masyaf. The story is as follows and is based on an account by the Ismaili chronicler Abu Firas (Lane-Poole, 1898):

“When Saladin laid siege to Masyaf, Sinan was absent, and the king’s summons to surrender reached him at a village near Radamus. He told the messenger that he must have a personal interview with Saladin; and then, since access to Masyaf was blocked by the leaguer, he retired with only two companions to the top of a neighbouring mountain, whence he looked down upon the siege and awaited the event. Saladin, believing that he had the arch-enemy in his power, sent a body of troops to surround him; but hostile soldiers and peaceful messengers were alike held back by a mysterious force which numbed their limbs. Such was the miraculous power of the holy Master, in whom his followers were taught to recognize a veritable incarnation of Divine Reason. The awed reports of his baffled and perplexed envoys worked upon Saladin’s fears. He remembered the two former attempts upon his life, and began to doubt whether anything human could save him from the supernatural agencies of this devil or saint. He had chalk and cinders strewed around his tent, to detect secret footsteps; his guards were supplied with linklights, and the night watches were frequently relieved. But unearthly terrors surrounded him, and his sleep was troubled. One night the watchers on the battlements

of Masyaf perceived a spark like a glow-worm slowly gliding down the hill where the Master sat. It vanished among the tents of the Saracens. Presently Saladin awoke from his uneasy dreams to see a figure gliding out at the tent door. Looking round he noticed that the lamps had been displaced, and beside his bed lay some hot scones of the shape peculiar to the Assassins, with a leaf of paper on the top, pinned by a poisoned dagger.

There were verses on the paper:

“By the Majesty of the Kingdom! What you possess will escape you, in spite of all,  
but victory remains to us;

We acquaint you that we *hold you*, and that we reserve you till your reckoning be paid”

Saladin gave a great and terrible cry, and the guard and the officers rushed in. He showed them the scones, the dagger, the verses. The dread Master had been actually at his pillow: it was nothing short of a miracle.” (Lane-Poole, 1898, p. 119).

It was shortly thereafter that Saladin ended his siege and departed from the Assassin’s territory. While this account was that of one of Sinan’s fans, sorcery aside, such accounts did much for the fearsome reputation established by the Assassins for three centuries.

It also pointed out some interesting methodology that bears awareness in our modern age. The Assassins were a classic cult and as such, displayed certain characteristics. First, the Assassins were ruled by a charismatic leader who demanded total authority (one story has it that while being visited by a vizier [a close political advisor] from the Sultan’s court, Sabah commanded a guard to throw himself from a tower to his death on the rocks below to demonstrate his complete control of his core followers).

Secondly, Sabah and his successors used a variety of controlling techniques over their followers to maintain dominance. One could allow that the Ismailis were operating on two levels: the public and the private, or more correctly, the overt and the covert. The Old Man of the Mountain, as the leader was called, would send out his “emissaries” to preach the Ismaili faith to the general public. From those public efforts, recruits who demonstrated “special” qualities (i.e. fully committed, easily manipulated, and disaffected from their families) were sent to the fortresses for in-depth indoctrination into the Ismaili faith and training in the art of assassination.

Thirdly, these recruits were the victims of total isolation – social and physical – while in training. They were subsequently sent out either as “emissaries” or as killers and deemed necessary by the leadership.

Fourth, due to their training these converts would exhibit fanatical behavior that would be regularly reinforced by additional training and tasking by the leadership.

Finally, cults would deeply enmesh themselves in secrecy and deception. This was especially true of the Assassins who would enter into treaties and relationships with anyone they felt would benefit such an effort. They would routinely abrogate such agreements or treaties as it suited them to do so.

Their training techniques included how to kill in close quarters (Close Quarters Battle or CQB in our modern terminology), reconnaissance and surveillance, disguise, deception, and undercover operations. Training was a continuing aspect that allowed the leadership to continue its control of the recruits who believed they were being called by God to do that work. The story regarding martyrdom and being rewarded in the afterlife with 72 virgins was originated by the Assassins as an additional incentive for their

sacrifice. Sabah went so far as to take a portion of the fortress at Alamut and convert it into “heaven.” Recruits who were preparing for an assassination mission were allowed to celebrate prior to their mission. This included the use of hashish that caused severe intoxication of the recruits to the point of partial or full loss of consciousness. Once unconscious, the recruits were taken from the party room to the “heaven” created by Sabah which included soft grass, wines, hashish, and young women. Aroused into consciousness, they would continue their partying until unconsciousness befell them again, whereupon they were removed to the original celebration room. Once the recruits recovered from their partying, Sabah would ask them how their trip to heaven was--God had given him charge over angels who had transported the recruits to heaven as a demonstration of what the afterlife would be like. Needless to say, the recruits were even more impressed by Sabah’s power and eager to complete their assassinations. Once dispatched, the assailants would, for all practical purposes, stalk their target. Often they would obtain jobs or positions that would allow them access to the target on a recurring basis. They would learn his habits and routines, allowing them to select the most auspicious moment to attack and kill. This methodology would be repeated throughout the centuries by many stalkers and political/terrorist assassins.

## CONTEMPORARY ASSASSINS AS TERRORISTS

### ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT WILLIAM MCKINLEY

On September 6, 1901, President William McKinley attended the Pan American Exposition in Buffalo, New York. A receiving line had been set up at the Temple of Music pavilion where President McKinley was meeting members of the public and

shaking hands with well-wishers. As the line progressed, the president was approached by a young man whose right hand appeared to be heavily bandaged. As the young man got close to President McKinley, it became apparent that the bandage concealed a firearm and two shots rang out. McKinley was struck by both bullets, once in the chest and once in the abdomen. Secret Service agents who had been standing nearby, jumped on the



assailant, aided by a civilian who had just shaken the president's hand. McKinley slumped to the ground and was taken to a nearby hospital. Although initial reports from medical personnel indicated that the president's injuries were not severe and that he was expected to recover, McKinley died from his wounds in 8 days, due principally to infection and the inability at the time to detect the damage caused by the bullets.

The assailant, Leon Czolgosz, an avowed Anarchist, was tried, convicted and executed in the electric chair 45 days after the attack. Czolgosz (pronounced Tsōlgōsh) told investigators at the time that he had been inspired to kill McKinley by the writings and speeches of Emma Goldman.

***“I am an anarchist – a disciple of Emma Goldman. Her words set me on fire.”***

– Leon Czolgosz, (testimony to  
the district attorney, Sept. 7, 1901,

reported by the Buffalo Evening  
News, p. 9)

Czolgosz had actually met Goldman on two occasions prior to the assassination, both in



public forums. Based on Czolgosz' statements, Goldman and several other notable Anarchists of the time were arrested and held while the investigation was conducted. However, the investigation indicated that no conspiracy existed, that Czolgosz had acted alone. Not that Czolgosz was idolized by the Anarchists themselves. In point of fact, several Anarchists had written in their

publications that Czolgosz was actually a government spy and not to be trusted (National Archives, article by Abraham Isaak in the anarchist journal Free Society, 1901). Yet, Czolgosz attributed his efforts to the Anarchist philosophy and felt that he had "done his duty" as he was reported to have written after the attack (Buffalo Evening News, Sept. 7, 1901, p. 9).

Between 1894 and 1900 anarchists murdered the President of France, the Premier of Spain, the Empress of Austria and the King of Italy (Warren, et al, 1964). The Secret Service felt that action taken against the anarchist movement in Europe in the wake of these assassinations was compelling them to leave Europe and come to the US. Unfortunately, US presidents continued to move about with minimal protection, and no substantive changes to presidential protection occurred until after McKinley's death.

In his confession Czolgosz stated that he had no personal enmity towards the President, but that he did not believe in rulers of governments of any kind. He stated, "I

don't believe that one man should have so much service and another man should have none". At his execution, Czolgosz referred to the President as an "enemy of the good people – the good working people". He expressed no remorse for his crime (Warren et al., 1964, p. 510).

Although Czolgosz was deemed sane at the time of the assassination, there are some who contend that he suffered from some mental problems, possibly paranoid schizophrenia. In 1898, Czolgosz had suffered a "mental breakdown," but there was no additional information regarding the nature of this incident. Inquiries made about a year after Czolgosz' execution by two "alienists" offered their opinion that he had been delusional (Warren et al., 1964). An article in the American Journal of Insanity reviewed the psychiatric evaluation of Czolgosz prior to his trial:

*If Czolgosz was a victim of mental disease the question would [381][382] naturally arise as to what form of that disorder he was suffering from. If, in answer to this question, we undertake to make a diagnosis by exclusion, we find the following results: There was absolutely no evidence of insane delusion, hallucination or illusion. There was none of the morbid mental exaltation or expansiveness of ideas that would suggest mania in any form, none of the morbid mental gloom and despondency of melancholia, none of the mental weakness of dementia, none of the conjoined mental or motor symptoms that are characteristic of paresis, nor was there anything in his manner, conduct or declarations that would suggest the morbid vanity and egotism, the persecutory ideas or the transformation of personality which usually characterize paranoia*

*or systematized delusional insanity. In fact, at no time during the period from his arrest to the time of his execution, did he exhibit any of the mannerisms, boastful display, etc., or claim to have a "divine inspiration" or "a mission," or make any complaint or suggestion of personal wrongs and persecutions which are so characteristic of paranoiacs; nor did he, during his trial, or subsequently, evince any indication of satisfaction or delight at being the central figure of the occasion and the observed of all the observed which he was; nor was there any attempt on Czolgosz' part to simulate mental diseases. The refusal to talk with his counsel was perfectly consistent with the views which he expressed to the District Attorney soon after his arrest, namely, that he did not believe in law and that he wanted no counsel. He did however, converse with others, namely, the District Attorney from time to time before his trial, also with his guards at the Buffalo jail, with whom he frequently walked in the corridor fronting his cell for an hour or two at a time, conversing with them intelligently the while and making his wants as to bathing, toilet, tobacco, etc., known in a natural manner. He also conversed freely with the people's experts in their earlier examinations of him, and talked, though not so freely, with Dr. Hurd and myself, and when on arraignment for trial and formally asked to plead he promptly arose from his chair and answered in a clear voice, "guilty." He also responded promptly when directed by the clerk of the court to "stand up and look upon the juror" as each of the jurors was sworn, and resumed his seat in each instance*

*[382][383] at the proper time. Beyond this he remained mute while in the court room, and yet to any one who observed him closely it was apparent that he was fully aware of, and attentive to the proceedings. (MacDonald, 1902, p. 369-86).*

Prior to the assassination, Czolgosz was obsessed with Gaetano Bresci, assassin of the King of Italy several years before (Fischer, 2001). It was even said that Czolgosz had a clipping of this event that he kept in his wallet and would re-read from time to time. Perhaps his admiration of Bresci's attack provided the impetus for Czolgosz to commit his act.

*"During the last five years I have had as friends anarchists in Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit and other Western cities, and I suppose I became more or less bitter. Yes, I know I was bitter. I never had much luck at anything, and this preyed upon me. It made me morose and envious, but what started the craze to kill [439] [440] was a lecture I heard some little time ago by Emma Goldman. She was in Cleveland, and I and other anarchists went to hear her. She set me on fire. Her doctrine that all rulers should be exterminated was what set me to thinking, so that my head nearly split with the pain. ...and when I left the lecture, I had made up my mind that I would do something heroic for the cause I loved." - Leon Czolgosz (testimony to district attorney, reported in the Buffalo Evening News, Sept. 7, 1901, p. 9).*

As with any act of terrorism, this public figure attack involved some degree of planning and methodology. From his testimony, Czolgosz was in Chicago on or about August 29<sup>th</sup>, 1901 and read a newspaper that stated that President McKinley would be at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York. Czolgosz traveled to Buffalo that day by train. His statement indicated that he intended to shoot the President, but had not yet formed a plan (MacDonald, 1902).

Once in Buffalo, Czolgosz rented a room at a local bar and hotel owned by a Polish-American. He stated that he went to the Exposition a couple of times a day. Czolgosz stated that it was not until September 3<sup>rd</sup> that he firmly decided to make the attempt on the President. It was on this day that Czolgosz purchased a .32 caliber revolver and ammunition. That evening Czolgosz went to the Exposition grounds near the railroad gate, where McKinley was arriving that day. McKinley exited his train and entered the grounds, but Czolgosz stated that, although he was close to the President, he was afraid to attempt the assassination because of the number of bodyguards that were present, and he feared that he would be discovered and fail in his attempt. Czolgosz stated that he returned to the Exposition on September 4<sup>th</sup> and was able to stand very near McKinley during a presidential speech. He decided not to make the attempt because the crowd was large and he was being jostled frequently which could have thrown off his aim. Czolgosz waited until Thursday, the 5<sup>th</sup> of September, but could not get close enough for a clear shot. So he returned on the morning of the 6<sup>th</sup> to the Exposition grounds. *“Emma Goldman’s speech was still burning me up. I waited near the central entrance for the President, who was to board his special train from that gate...I stayed on the grounds all day waiting”*(Buffalo Evening News, Sept. 7, 1901, p. 9). Czolgosz then

got the idea of wrapping his handkerchief around his revolver in his hand so that he could bring the weapon to bear quickly. He went to the Temple of Music where a final reception for McKinley was to be held before his departure. Czolgosz got into line and waited his turn. *“I got in line and trembled and trembled, until I got right up to him, and then I shot him twice through my white handkerchief. I would have fired more, but I was stunned by a blow in the face, a frightful blow that knocked me down...”* (Buffalo Evening News, Sept. 7, 1901, p. 9).

Czolgosz stated that he had committed himself to his act, conducted research on the whereabouts of his target, selected the location of the attack and conducted reconnaissance of the location preparatory to the attack itself. Although his entire operation took only about 8 days to design and implement, his methodology has been used by assassins throughout history.

Clarke (1982) identified four types of U.S. Presidential assassins:

- Type I assassins view their act as a probable sacrifice of self for a political ideal.
- Type II assassins are persons with overwhelming and aggressive egocentric needs for acceptance, recognition and status.
- Type III assassins are psychopaths who believe that the condition of their lives is so intolerably meaningless and without purpose that destruction of society and themselves is desirable for its own sake.
- Type IV assassins are characterized by severe emotional and cognitive distortions that are expressed in hallucinations and

delusions of persecutions and/or grandeur. As a rule, their acts are mystically “divinely” inspired – in a word, irrational or insane.

Clarke’s work, and the typologies and motivations of other research groups which followed (see chapter 1 for a review, this volume), have consistently identified a small portion of stalkers, attackers, and assassins of public figures who are motivated to advance a political, social, or religious agenda. Although a minority in relation to all others who pursue public figures, their acts of violence are often very rational and effective in the context of their belief system, although the wished for outcome is often a grandiose elaboration of what actually occurs.

In the first part of this chapter a 12<sup>th</sup> century organization was examined that had a hierarchy, a membership of committed individuals, a radical ideology that promoted the assassination of opponents, and a methodology that resulted in a high percentage of success. Our second example 700 years later, Leon Czolgosz, was not under the influence of a command and control hierarchy, nor was he a member of an autonomous cell; and in fact, he was mistrusted by other Anarchists and remained an associate of this extremist political philosophy not on the basis of peer influence or pressure, but his own internal commitment. He was a solo operator, radicalized over a period of a few years, and developed a methodology while “on the fly.” Nevertheless, he targeted a public figure and successfully carried out his attack, despite some retrospective opinion that he might have also been mentally ill.

Our next case is also contemporary, yet combines the command and control of the Assassins with a desire to advance the establishment of the Caliphate—a pure Islamist state ruled by the law of Sharia as opposed to the politico-religious caliphate from the 8<sup>th</sup>

to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries--through the killing of a political leader, a terrorist act that deviates from the popular notion that terrorism requires the targeting of a civilian population.

## ANWAR SADAT AND THE EGYPTIAN ISLAMIC JIHAD

Anwar Sadat was President of Egypt during a very volatile period of modern history. Once considered a radical terrorist himself, Sadat eventually worked his way through the nationalistic regime of Gamal Abdul Nasser until he became Interim President upon Nasser's sudden death on September 28<sup>th</sup>, 1970. Sadat was elected as President on October 5<sup>th</sup>, 1970 as Nasser's government cronies felt that Sadat could be easily manipulated. Sadat surprised them all, however, when – six months into his presidency – he effectively fired all of Nasser's former associates and became his own man. His presidency was a roller coaster of public support and animosity. He became a hero of the Arab (Muslim) world when he orchestrated the 1973 surprise attack against Israel in association with Assad of Syria. This popularity was somewhat short-lived as Sadat did two things that effectively caused his assassination: he fully participated in the 1978 Camp David Accords at the behest of President Jimmy Carter which effectively made peace between Egypt and Israel; and he began a crackdown on dissent of all kinds in 1981, in particular the radical Islamists (Weaver, 1999)—typically members of the Muslim Brotherhood.



These events caused outrage across the Arab (Muslim) world. A feeling of betrayal permeated Egypt's more fervent Muslims, and action was forthcoming. Egyptian Islamic Jihad, a splinter group from the Muslim

Brotherhood, began to plan Sadat's assassination in 1981. Allegedly, a radical cleric, Omar Abdel-Rahman, known as the "Blind Sheik," issued a fatwa (religious edict) approving the assassination of Sadat for his "crimes" against Islam. Members of EIJ had infiltrated the Egyptian military and it was these assets that were called upon to commit the killing. Information regarding the specific planning of the operation is a bit sparse; however, it is known that Lt. Khalid Islambouli appeared to be the commander of the assault team that carried out the assassination. A total of six attackers appeared to have been involved in the assault.



On October 6, 1981, Sadat was in the reviewing stand at the annual Victory Day parade. Being an annual event, the attackers were well aware of where their target was going to be. Additionally, Sadat's security apparatus was also well-known. According to various press accounts, and as the news video shows, while the parade moved along a troop truck containing the attackers stopped directly in front of the reviewing stand. Lt. Islambouli dismounted the vehicle and approached it. President Sadat stood to receive what he thought would be the officer's salute. Other soldiers rose up from the back of the vehicle and began to throw hand grenades and open fire with assault rifles. Islambouli then ran to the reviewing stand and shot Sadat point-blank in the head, shouting, "I have killed pharaoh!"

The entire assassination took about 2 minutes, resulting in 8 dead and



27 wounded. Video of the assassination shows a confused and ineffective security detail which allowed the assassins to complete their effort. In what appeared to be a coordinated effort immediately following the assassination, rebel elements took control of the town of Asyut in Upper Egypt, and held the town until Egyptian paratroopers arrived several days later and recaptured it.

Two of the attackers were killed during the assassination and the rest were subsequently arrested.

Islambouli and two others were executed for the role in the assassination while the rest were imprisoned for different periods of time (Farrell, 1981). The four key



defendants reflected an alliance of Egypt's military,

civilian, and religious life. They referred to themselves as “the Commanders of the Caliph.” They testified at trial that Sadat’s assassination was justified under Shariah law because he had deviated from Islam (Weaver, 1999). This assassination again involved an organized group with committed members, but not an autonomous cell, dedicated to a radicalized philosophy (a politico-religious belief system) that had developed intelligence on their target and implemented a simple, but effective attack plan.

ROBERT F. KENNEDY AND SIRHAN SIRHAN

There is probably no other assassination in history that has more information available than the assassination of Robert Kennedy – with the possible exception of the assassination of his brother, President John F. Kennedy (Bugliosi, 2007). Both attacks were broadcast live on television (although Robert’s murder was only captured on audio), but in the case of Robert Kennedy, the attack took place in very close proximity to witnesses and the



assassin was captured immediately and survives to the current day. However, consistent with our modern society, conspiracy theories surrounding the assassination abound.

The facts are these: on evening of June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1968, Presidential Candidate Robert Kennedy gave a victory speech to supporters at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, California after winning the California Democratic Primary. At approximately 12:15 a.m. on June 5<sup>th</sup>, Kennedy had completed his speech and had left the podium to depart the



venue. He walked from the stage area through a kitchen pantry accompanied by 77 supporters, aids and celebrities.

At this time, Sirhan Sirhan fired 7 – 8 rounds from a .22 caliber Iver Johnson “Cadet” revolver. According to the

Los Angeles Medical Examiner, Kennedy was hit three times, twice in the back and once behind the right ear. Kennedy died of his wounds 25 hours later, the fatal round penetrating his cerebellum. Sirhan Sirhan was arrested at the scene of the shooting, tried in Los Angeles and sentenced to death. This sentence was commuted to life in prison when California’s death penalty was overturned in 1976. He has been in jail for the past

35 years. Subsequent to this assassination, the U.S. Secret Service began providing protection to Presidential candidates, rather than just Presidential nominees. It is notable that a Democratic Presidential candidate named Barack Obama—began receiving Secret Service protection *one and a half years* before the Presidential election of 2008.

Sirhan Bishara Sirhan was born March 19, 1944 in Jerusalem, Palestine to Christian (Eastern Orthodox) parents. Sirhan was 12 years old when his family immigrated to the United States. There was some speculation that Sirhan may have suffered some physical abuse by his father during those years (Moldea, 1995); there is no doubt that he was exposed to cumulative trauma before the age of five in his surrounding neighborhood, and witnessed the killing of his older brother. Sirhan's father abandoned them and returned to the Middle East after only a year in the United States when his boy was 13. Sirhan was described as a quiet and polite young man while attending John Muir High School where he studied German and Russian and was a member of the California Cadets where he received firearms training. Although he attended college in 1963, he was not a dedicated student and dropped out of school two years later. Sirhan worked often, but typically at low-wage jobs. He did develop an abiding love for horse racing, even working at a ranch in Corona, California. He frequently attended race tracks and gambled on the races. He apparently harbored a desire to become a jockey and given his small stature, he might have been ideal. However, he had a number of accidents while learning to ride and eventually abandoned the idea. He was generally impoverished, or close to it, and owned a 1956 DeSoto as his sole means of transportation.

Sirhan was not a very religious man and changed his doctrines often, ranging from his own Eastern Orthodox upbringing to the Baptists, Seventh Day Adventists, and

he even demonstrated an interest in the occult after the death of his sister from leukemia when he was 20, which appeared to be a critical turning point in his life.

He kept journals that figured prominently in his trial, in which it appeared that he felt disenfranchised from what he perceived as the “American Dream.”



His identity, however, was fostered as an Arab through his hatred of the Zionists, whom he equated with Nazis.

Following the Six Day War in 1967, he often stated that he believed the wealthy American Jews controlled the politicians and media. He wanted to kill Kennedy on the anniversary of the Arab humiliation as a result of the Six Day War. He did.

Meloy (1992) completed a Rorschach study to suggestively determine Sirhan’s mental state throughout the planning, preparation and execution of the assassination. Although defense psychiatrists at the trial opined that Sirhan was paranoid schizophrenic and had killed Kennedy in a dissociative state brought on by the lights and mirrors in the Ambassador Hotel lobby, the prosecution doctors opined that he was a developing paranoid personality (see Hoffmann and Meloy chapter, this volume). Meloy (1992) found that the testing indicated Sirhan was a depressed and suicidal individual whose personality was organized at a borderline level. His Rorschach presented a mixed characterological picture with hysterical, paranoid, and dependent features. One of the defense psychiatrists later found his own testimony to be an “absurd and preposterous story, unlikely and incredible” (Meloy, 2006, p. 39).

In reviewing Sirhan’s activities leading up to the assassination, some of the motivations among assassins and attackers investigated by both Fein and Vossekuil

(1999; “to avenge a perceived wrong”) and Phillips (2006; “resentful”) can be identified as applicable to Sirhan. Based on Sirhan’s diary, it is likely that he made the decision to kill Kennedy in early 1968 when he wrote, on January 31<sup>st</sup>, “RFK must die” (Kaiser, 1970). This exclamation was in response to Kennedy’s support for a proposed sale of 50 US made Phantom jet fighters to Israel. “When Kennedy announced his candidacy...Sirhan began practice shooting”(Moldea, 1995, p. 322). Psychological evidence suggests that Sirhan had idealized Kennedy as a father transference figure prior to this time (Meloy, 1992).

Sirhan denied that he had ever stalked Kennedy before the assassination and continues to assert that he has no recollection of the assault. There were indications that there were four probable stalking efforts against Kennedy prior to the June 5<sup>th</sup> killing:

- May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1968 in Robbie’s Restaurant in Pomona, California, Sirhan was seen with an unidentified woman while Kennedy was dining in the restaurant.
- May 24<sup>th</sup>, Sirhan was observed at a Kennedy rally at the Los Angeles Sports Arena.
- June 2<sup>nd</sup>, Sirhan practiced shooting (after purchasing 2 boxes of .22 caliber ammunition on June 1<sup>st</sup>) and later was observed at a Kennedy campaign rally at the Ambassador Hotel.
- June 3<sup>rd</sup>, Sirhan apparently traveled to San Diego, California to attend a Kennedy appearance at the El Cortez Hotel. (Meloy, 1992)

One must realize that in any political assassination, it is the tactical application that provides any level of success to the assassins. Whatever their motivation – political, religious, or purely narcissistic – it is the tactics that are employed that will allow



assassins to observe the target, assess the situation, plan the attack, and close on the target with any hope of success. On the day of the assassination, Sirhan went to a range and practiced with his revolver. After finishing his practice on the pistol range at about 5:00 p.m., he had a meal at Bob's Big Boy, went to the Ambassador Hotel,<sup>1</sup> and had four alcoholic drinks over several hours. He then asked two people if the Kennedy bodyguards were with him all the time and if he would be coming through the kitchen pantry. Just before he shot Kennedy, he was heard to say, "Kennedy, you son of a bitch" (Clarke, 1982; Kaiser, 1970).<sup>2</sup>

## DISCUSSION

It has often been asserted that assassins are loners who operate on their own without direct affiliation to any particular group. Historically, this has been the case in many assassinations, with the earliest notable exception being the Hashisheen of the Middle East, the origin of the English word, "assassin." In many cases, some type of mental health issue may also be involved to varying degrees. Like the Hashisheen of old and many present-day extremist groups, certain types of persons—ranging from habitual criminals to clinically depressed social outcasts—are sought for recruitment for the express purpose of violence. *There is no profile of the terrorist as assassin*, just as there is no profile of an individual who will stalk, threaten, or attack a public figure (Fein & Vossekuil, 1999), yet general themes do emerge.

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<sup>1</sup> The Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles has since been destroyed, but did serve as the location for the filming of "Bobby," an ode to Robert Kennedy by Emilio Estevez, just before it was leveled.

<sup>2</sup> The Sirhan assassination is closely paralleled by the assassination of Itzhak Rabin, the Prime Minister of Israel, on Nov. 4, 1995. Rabin was killed by 25 year old Jewish law student Yigal Amir who fired two shots from close range as Rabin entered his car following a public gathering. Amir felt betrayed because Rabin was giving land to the Palestinians. Although he stated that he acted alone, others were arrested and implicated in the assassination, including the leader of the extreme right wing Eyal (Jewish Militant Organization).

The Hashisheen, as al Qaeda and other extremist Islamic groups do today, tried to find, recruit and train for martyrdom relatively young, disaffected, disenfranchised and easily manipulated people for the purposes of violence.<sup>3</sup> Mid-level cell leaders, however, are usually drawn from more educated and affluent backgrounds (Meloy, 2004). Eric Rudolph and Paul Hill, both “lone terrorists” who targeted public venues and a public figure respectively (Puckett, 2001), had conversions that were preceded by social-developmental periods in which they became increasingly adrift from their historical family and community roots, often behaviorally evident in increased social isolation and intolerance of beliefs different from their own. Both Rudolph and Hill’s philosophical trajectories were increasingly vigilant and paranoid, but their belief content differed.

Eric Rudolph spent six months with his mother and brother<sup>4</sup> in Schell City, Missouri, being schooled in the teachings of the Church of Israel: an anti-Semitic and white supremacist organization. He had always wanted to become a paratrooper, but in the US Army he tested positive for marijuana, and was court-martialed, punished, and discharged from the service. In his late twenties, he withdrew into the woods in rural North Carolina, and in July, 1996 he detonated his first of four bombs at the summer Olympics in Atlanta, Georgia.<sup>5</sup> His letters sent to authorities attributed the acts to “The

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<sup>3</sup> The “muscle” recruited for the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington were typically young, unemployed males from southwestern Saudi Arabia who could obtain valid passports and had no official criminal records. These men were a striking contrast to the professional, well educated, middle-class backgrounds of the pilots, particularly Atta, al-Shehi, and Jarrah. Atta had a masters degree from Hamburg, al-Shehi had been a soldier in the UAE military, and Jarrah had been a Lebanese playboy.

<sup>4</sup> The familial devotion among the Rudolph family was extraordinarily evident when his brother, who was never implicated in Eric’s crimes, videotaped the severing of his hand with an electric table saw and sent the tape to the FBI to underscore his commitment to Eric and his beliefs.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Jewell, a private security guard who was investigated as a potential suspect by the FBI, was actually a hero who moved crowds away from the suspicious backpack just before it exploded. He died in August, 2007, at the age of 44.

Army of God.” He was on the lam for nearly seven years before his capture on May 31, 2003 and eventual federal prosecution for the bombings and deaths of three individuals.

Paul Hill converted to Christianity at age 18, fathered three children, and pastored two Presbyterian congregations in South Carolina until his extreme fundamentalism and intolerance of others’ perspectives alienated his parishioners. He was excommunicated in 1991, began an auto-detailing business in Pensacola, Florida, and allied himself with another anti-abortionist, Rev. Michael Bray, who had served time for fire-bombing an abortion clinic. He began to isolate in his attic, writing sermons and speeches to further his religious extremism. In March, 1993, he appeared on the “Phil Donahue Show” after another man named Michael Griffin killed an abortion doctor, David Gunn, in Pensacola, and vehemently justified his actions. Other national media appearances followed--of course--and in May, 1994, he decided to kill a doctor himself: “My eyes were opened to the enormous impact another such shooting in Pensacola would have...Having spoken the truth I needed to exemplify it...God had opened a window of opportunity before me, it appeared I had been appointed to step through it” (Puckitt, 2001, p. 37). Eight days later he shotgunned to death Dr. John Britton and his escort, and wounded his wife. He concealed the shotgun in a tube normally used for anti-abortion posters and hid it in the grass. Right after his arrest, he yelled, “Now is the time to defend the unborn!” (Puckitt, 2001, p. 37). Hill was tried, sentenced to death, and executed in Florida in 2003. His last words were, “May God help you protect the unborn as you would want to be protected” ([www.armyofgod.com/philllinks.html](http://www.armyofgod.com/philllinks.html)).

Assassins who target a public figure to advance a political or religious agenda are terrorists, whether attached to an organized group with a command and control hierarchy,

an autonomous cell, or acting alone. If there is active recruitment, the tactical element commands all of the subsequent activities leading up to the assassination. This is one area that is often overlooked until after the assassination has taken place. It has been a confusing area for law enforcement and a source of distress for intelligence agencies since the former are, by design, reactive in nature. The overt act often *initiates* law enforcement activity, although in retrospect, agencies often minimize their knowledge of the threat, or exaggerate their response to the threat, both attempts to revise history in the face of an utter failure: there is no more potent example than the positioning of various principals to justify their inaction, or inflate their action, through numerous books and interviews following the 9/11 attacks. Notably, agencies like the United States Secret Service and the U.S. Capitol Police have a much more proactive approach to the potential of direct attack against public figures. Unfortunately, traditional law enforcement has been slower to develop more pronounced proactive aspects.

One city-based exception is the extraordinary work of the New York Police Department in counterterrorism, most recently underscored by their publication of an analysis of the functional pathway of autonomous cells committed to a Jihadi-Salafi ideology of violence toward the unbelievers to advance the establishment of a Caliphate. The NYPD has identified four stages that appear to shed light on the development of such autonomous cells and, in some cases, their eventual terrorist acts. The four stages include 1) pre-radicalization; 2) self-identification; 3) indoctrination; and 4) jihadization (NYPD, 2007). Their work complements other functional-behavioral pathway analyses such as those developed by Calhoun & Weston (2003) and Borum et al. (1999). In their detailed report they empirically support their theory with a close look at both domestic and

foreign acts of terrorism that have been interdicted (e.g., Lackawana, New York; New York City-Herald Square Subway) or completed (2004 attack in Madrid; 2005 attack in London).

Most germane to our chapter is the finding that a few autonomous cells have specifically targeted a public figure for assassination, and we believe this pattern is likely to continue.<sup>6</sup> The Toronto 18 case which was thwarted in Canada in June, 2006, was intending to behead the Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, an aspect of their plot suggested by a young Canadian male named Steven Chand who was raised a Hindu, had served in the Canadian military, and converted to Islam (NYPD, 2007).

Another case involving a homegrown, autonomous cell which targeted a public figure was the Hofstad Group in Amsterdam. Composed of young Dutch Muslims from North Africa, the group considered targeting members of the Parliament as well as the national airport and a nuclear reactor. For unknown reasons, a group member named Mohammed Bouyeri, the son of Moroccan immigrants who was born and raised in West Amsterdam, decided to kill Theo Van Gogh by himself, a provocative Dutch filmmaker who was railing against fundamentalist Islamists, and did so on November 2, 2004. Bouyeri seemed to have been radicalized during seven months in prison for assault, and subsequently became more conservative and strident in his religious and political views.<sup>7</sup>

Bouyeri acquired his own gun and began practice shooting in October, and as the rest of his group planned their more elaborate operations, he rood up to Van Gogh on his bicycle, shot him with his pistol, nearly decapitated him, and plunged a note into his chest

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<sup>6</sup> We are particularly concerned about well known CEOs in the West who personify much of what the Islamists hate and are potent symbols of secularism, technology, and free market capitalism (see Hoffmann and Sheridan chapter, this volume).

<sup>7</sup> The “spiritual sanctioner” of the Hofstad Group was Ridwan Al-Issar who likely fled to Syria the day Van Gogh was killed (NYPD, 2007).

with the knife. He intended to die in a confrontation with police, but much to his dismay, was captured instead (Buruma, 2006). Other members of the Hofstad Group were arrested, and no subsequent terrorist acts were carried out.

Studies by the US Department of Justice have revealed that terrorist organizations will surveil a potential target as many as 14 times in a 22-month period.(California Department of Justice, Protection of Critical Infrastructure Report, 2005). We have given two examples—Czolgosz and Sirhan—of lone assassins who stalked or surveilled their target prior to their killings, if even for a few days or weeks, the *target's behavior* shaping the eventual plan of attack. In some cases, rehearsals may be conducted. In the build up of US Forces in Saudi Arabia prior to Operation Desert Storm, surveillance by unidentified individuals against a high-ranking US military officer was detected by the protection detail. Intelligence assets were brought in to investigate and conduct a surveillance detection operation. The operatives were in position and observed an actual rehearsal – vehicles casually and discreetly blocked the target's car in front and rear, and down the street other “bandits” were positioned to block an intersection to aid the getaway. “Bandit” observers with communications equipment were also spotted on nearby roof-tops. This rehearsal was quick and discrete, but because of the presence of intelligence agents, people and vehicles were identified and the information passed along to host nation police agencies that effected arrests of the soon-to-be-attackers, thereby disrupting the attack and avoiding any injuries.



Other lone attackers have demonstrated tactical planning in their efforts. Charles Guiteau who assassinated President James A.Garfield in 1881, and Arthur Bremer who attempted



to assassinate George Wallace in 1972—but had preferred Richard Nixon as a target—are two additional examples. Guiteau wrote the following letter in the morning hours before his assassination: “I have just shot the President. I shot him several times, as I wished him to go as easily as possible. His death was a political necessity. I am a lawyer, theologian, and politician. I am a Stalwart of the Stalwarts. I was with General Grant and the rest of our men, in New York during the canvass. I am going to the jail. Please order out your troops, and take possession of the jail at once” (Rosenberg, 1968, p. 5).

In summary, we emphasize the following findings and opinions from our review of the data on public figure assassins as terrorists, and our illustration of these events with two examples of “command and control” organizations that led to public figure assassination, two examples of “lone terrorists” who also assassinated, and several contemporary case vignettes of “homegrown” autonomous cells who targeted public figures as part of their terrorist plans.

First, among the many motivations for public figure stalking and attacking, one is to intentionally kill a public figure to advance a particular political, religious, or social belief.

Second, such events are often quite rational and tactically effective within the context of the belief system, but fall short of the grandiose fantasy of the attacker(s) to strategically alter history, impose an absolutist belief system, or change the course of world events.

Third, the public attacker as terrorist is either actively embedded in an organization which helps carry out the killing—a hierarchical organization exercising some command and control or an autonomous cell—or is an isolate or loner who has

adopted a conscious belief system which justifies his actions. Paradoxically, he may be viewed with suspicion or ostracized by his adopted ideological peers due to his behavioral oddities or extremism.

Fourth, public figure attacks as terrorist acts are invariably predatory—planned, purposeful, and emotionless—rather than affective—emotional, reactive, and impulsive (Meloy, 2006). They typically involve days, weeks, or months of research, planning, and preparation.

Fifth, the presence of diagnosable psychiatric disorder(s) in the attacker or assassin does not necessarily mitigate the influence of his political or religious belief system as conscious motivation for the crime. In fact, delusion may bring a resolve to the ideology that would not exist otherwise<sup>8</sup>.

And sixth, regardless of group association and specific motivation, the focus of intelligence and law enforcement efforts must be to gain knowledge of the research, preparation, and planning on the “pathway to violence” (Calhoun & Weston, 2003) *before* there is a breach and attack. This necessitates a vast formal and informal intelligence network and raises important balancing issues concerning the assumed privacy of citizens who live in a free and open democratic society—fundamental social structures that the terrorist often hopes to alter and law enforcement is committed to protect.

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<sup>8</sup> Theodore Kaczynski was diagnosed as paranoid schizophrenic by a Federal Bureau of Prisons psychiatrist, but appeared to be motivated as a serial bomber because of his hatred of technological society and philosophy similar to the Luddites, a social movement in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century of British textile workers who protested the **Industrial** Revolution.

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