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## Trump Exploits New York Attacks to Promote Guantánamo and Perpetual War

By Adam Hudson,  
11/2/2017

Adding to the litany of mass acts of violence that have become increasingly normal, on Tuesday, October 31, an Uber driver used a Home Depot truck to mow down a group of innocent cyclists and pedestrians in New York City's Lower Manhattan. He killed eight people and injured 11. He then jumped out of the truck with a pellet gun and a paintball gun, at which point police shot and injured him. He survived.

The suspect is Sayfullo Saipov, a 29-year-old immigrant from Uzbekistan who came to the United States in 2010. He worked as a truck driver in Ohio and Florida before moving to New Jersey and becoming a driver for Uber. A handwritten note was found in the truck Saipov was driving, in which he declared his allegiance to ISIS (also known as Daesh). President Donald Trump then immediately manipulated the event for militaristic purposes: He said he'd consider sending Saipov to Guantánamo. As is typical of governments, Trump is exploiting the impact of this horrific tragedy to further his administration's agenda of perpetual war and keeping Guantánamo open.

First off, sending Saipov to Guantánamo would likely be illegal, since he is a legal resident arrested on US soil. University of Texas law professor Stephen I. Vladeck points out, "Saipov was lawfully present in the United States at the time of his arrest and is therefore entitled to a full

suite of constitutional protections -- especially those provided by the Fifth Amendment's due process clause." It'd be difficult for Trump to make the case, in court, for detaining a legal resident arrested on US soil at a military detention facility in Cuba.

The call to send Saipov to Guantánamo is especially curious when compared with Trump's reaction to another recent vehicular act of violence in the US: the racist attack in Charlottesville by a white supremacist who ran over a group of antifascist protesters and killed a woman named Heather Heyer. Both attacks were ideologically motivated. But there were no calls for detaining the white supremacist killer at Guantánamo. Instead, Trump blamed antifascists (even though they killed no one) and said there were some "fine people" on the neo-Nazi side. Of course, by Trump logic, this reaction makes perfect sense: White supremacists are Trump's base. Since Saipov is an Uzbek Muslim, this attack can be easily manipulated to push for "war on terror" policies like keeping Guantánamo open and perpetual war in the Muslim World.

As we dig deeper into the connections between Saipov's attack and policies like sending people to Guantánamo, we have to acknowledge an often-ignored reality: The Iraq war created ISIS. The radicalization of prisoners at the US military prison Camp Bucca, torture at Abu Ghraib, and the dissolution of Iraq's military during the war provided the fertile ground from which ISIS would emerge. When the United States bombs Muslims countries and tortures people from those areas, it generates hostility toward the US and more recruits for militant groups like ISIS. Sending Saipov to Guantánamo would make him look like a warrior, further strengthening ISIS. Even from a strategic standpoint, it'd be foolish.

In fact, Uzbekistan was part of the CIA's extraordinary rendition program. Under this program, the CIA kidnapped individuals suspected of terrorism ties and sent them to harsh foreign governments where the United States knew they would be tortured. According to Open Society Foundations, 54 countries participated in the program, including Uzbekistan. The CIA reportedly sent terrorism suspects to Uzbekistan for detention and interrogation. In addition, Uzbekistan allowed the CIA to use its airspace and airports for extraordinary rendition operations.

Extraordinary rendition was just one part of the Bush administration's post-9/11 torture program. The CIA tortured nearly 120 people suspected of terrorism ties in its network of secret prisons around the world. Meanwhile, the US military tortured war-on-terror detainees at Guantánamo, the vast majority of whom were wrongfully detained. The US military and the CIA used a myriad of torture techniques, such as beatings, stress positions, water-boarding and extreme temperatures. Moreover, what also made Guantánamo despicable was the policy of indefinite detention, which continues to this day. Currently, 41 detainees remain at Guantánamo. Torture violates the UN Convention Against Torture, while indefinite detention violates international human rights law.

A day before Saipov's attack, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson told a Senate hearing that there should be no geographic or time limits on the war on terror. Meanwhile, US drone strikes continue. This year, so far, the US launched 115 air and drone strikes in Yemen, which is nearly quadruple from 2016.

President Donald Trump promised to keep Guantánamo open, and Republicans are on his side. Sen. Mitch McConnell agreed in 2016 that it should stay open. Sen. John McCain supports Trump's call to put Saipov in Guantánamo. We cannot count on so-called "reasonable" Republicans to rein Trump in.

Governments manipulate tragedies like the one in New York City to push for draconian policies and more war. Trump is no different. This means the public must be vigilant and challenge these policies at every turn.