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The Orlando Horror

By Justin Raimondo
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As I write this (it's Sunday morning, 5:00 a.m. PST) the news is breaking that an Orlando gay nightclub has been attacked by a gun-wielding 29-year-old son of Afghan immigrants, Omar Mateen, who appeared to “have leanings towards’ radical Islamist ideology,” according to the FBI.” At least twenty people are dead, and forty-two are wounded. Mateen died in a gun battle with police.

One can easily imagine what will be – and already is – happening in the wake of this horrific tragedy: the War Party will be quick to jump on this as proof that we must go abroad in search of monsters to destroy, and carry on the endless “war on terrorism” to the very ends of the earth. Donald Trump’s followers will be quick to pounce on this as evidence that their surrealist program of not allowing Muslims into the country must be implemented immediately: it doesn’t occur to them that *they are already here* – and they aren’t going anywhere.

Although Mateen’s parents came from Afghanistan, he was born here in 1986 and was an American citizen. Unless Trump and his followers are saying we have to deport all Muslims – a proposal that not even The Donald has floated – Trumpism appears to offer no solutions. The San Bernardino shooter was also an American citizen, born and raised here. And as I have pointed out before, there is no way to establish a religious test for entry into the US for the simple reason that there is no way to tell who is a Muslim: does it really need to be said that a potential terrorist isn’t going to answer truthfully?

We don't yet know what Mateen's motives were: his father, interviewed by NBC News, says he was angered by seeing two men kissing in Miami recently. That may or may not have anything to do with his religious beliefs; and yet even if the sight of two men kissing did violate the gunman's religious sensibility to the point that it sparked the worst mass shooting in American history, in the end it matters not at all. The US has a little over 3 million Muslims within its borders, most of them citizens. This isn't going to change. And the idea that "fifty percent" of them "want to replace the Constitution with sharia law," as one Fox News "expert" asserted on television hours after the shooting, is just making stuff up.

Mateen's father, Seddique Mateen, is a political figure of some note in Afghanistan, or at least in the Afghan diaspora. Although a US resident, and apparently a citizen, he is a declared candidate for the Afghan presidency. His party, known as "Durand Jirga," recently merged with the "Greater Afghanistan" movement, and demonstrated in front of NATO headquarters calling for "heavy armaments" for the Afghan military and sanctions on Pakistan. Candidate Mateen regularly denounces Pakistan, and claims that the Northwest Frontier Province – source of much of the radical Islamist activity in the region – really belongs to Afghanistan and must be returned. This piece in the *Washington Post* asserts that Seddique Mateen is pro-Taliban, but that is very likely a misconception: his politics are pretty clear if we look at this photo taken at a demonstration in Washington, D.C., in which he stands in front of a poster proclaiming "Long live the USA! Long live Afghanistan!"

If Mateen was in any way influenced by his father's political views, it's doubtful he was sympathetic to ISIS, the Taliban, or any other Islamist group. His ex-wife says he wasn't particularly religious.

We are now hearing that Mateen was "on the radar" of law enforcement "for some time," although what this means exactly is not at all clear. Apparently Mateen was "well-organized and well-prepared," which raises the as yet unproven possibility that he may have had international connections. There are reports that Omar Mateen pledged allegiance to ISIS, possibly during the shooting, as well as in a 911 call made the night of the shooting. NBC is reporting that he referenced the Tsarnaev brothers during the shooting.

If Mateen was "on the radar," then this suggests a situation similar to the pre-9/11 warnings of impending disaster – which were ignored or downplayed by the authorities for reasons best known to themselves. George W. Bush ignored repeated warnings in the months prior to the 9/11 attacks that indicated al-Qaeda was actively pursuing plans to strike at the US. FBI agents received pertinent information that never made it up the pipeline.

There is no doubt that the War Party is going to make the case that this incident means we have to launch new attacks in the Middle East in order to wipe out the terrorist base established by ISIS. And yet given what we know about Mateen, this makes absolutely no sense – for even if we nuked ISIS tomorrow, and even if Mateen was motivated by their ideology, you can't kill an ideology with bombs. As *Chicago Tribune* columnist Steve Chapman put it: "Fighting the terrorists there so we don't have to fight them here doesn't seem to be working too well."

Americans like instant solutions, and they inevitably turn to government for easy answers. Yet there are none: indeed, there may not even be *difficult* answers. The United States is a multinational, multicultural empire: this is simply a fact of reality that has been true since the end of World War II. And there is no way to go back in time and repeal that reality.

What this means is that we are going to have to live with this – the probability of future horrific attacks equal to if not worse than the Orlando incident – for the indefinite future. This is the new normal, and it will persist regardless of how many Muslim countries we level to the ground and no matter how high we build our walls. And it is sheer fantasy to imagine otherwise.

This is grim news indeed, but I'm pledged to telling my readers the unmitigated truth, no matter how hard it is. My hope is that the country will not succumb to mindless demagoguery and simplistic non-solutions that will only make the problem worse.

After all these years, we are still feeling the aftershocks of 9/11, and they will continue for quite some time. The task of libertarians and other advocates of civil liberties and a noninterventionist foreign policy is to resist the forces of unreason to the best of our ability, without hesitation or compromise – no matter which way the winds of public opinion are blowing — while still defending the security of the country and its citizens.

UPDATE: ISIS is now taking responsibility for the Orlando attack through its news agency Amaq. Whether this is just an opportunistic attempt to claim credit, or not, remains to be seen, but in any case the above still applies. Fighting them over there so we don't have to fight them over here doesn't look like a particularly effective plan.