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Omar Mateen's Motive

By James Bradley
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America doesn't understand Orlando shooter Omar Mateen's motive. The *New York Times* speculated that Omar was probably radicalized over the Internet, that he was anti-gay or perhaps a frustrated self-hating gay, finally concluding that we might never know. Many American media outlets reported that Omar was motivated by ISIS propaganda and that he was infected by the virus of radical Islam.

Omar was born in the U.S. and never traveled to the birthplace of his parents, Afghanistan, which he called "my country." I remember Afghanistan in 1975 as a 20-year-old hitchhiking across Asia with my 19-year-old girlfriend. We roamed that beautiful country, interacting with friendly Afghans. At the time hardly anyone was concerned about "radical Islam."

Soon afterwards the Soviet empire moved into Afghanistan and attempted to conquer it. When the indomitable Afghans refused to submit, the Soviet empire soon collapsed.

In 2001 the American empire moved in and, according to Brown University's Watson Institute, almost 100,000 Afghani civilians have been killed, mostly by U.S. bombs.[1]

Being bombed is very emotional to those on the receiving end. As humans under attack, you're naturally motivated to retaliate. When I ventured across Vietnam and Laos, survivors of U.S. bombing raids told me of their fellow villagers who, back in the 1960's, did not know anything about a country named America or the war beyond their hills. But these illiterate peasants were

instantly radicalized and committed to patriot resistance upon their very first sighting of U.S. warplanes dropping bombs on their homes and families.

Look what happened in the wake of the 9-11 attack upon the World Trade Center: thousands of American men and women were radicalized—moved by murder from the air—after viewing images of their homeland under attack. We Americans honor their reaction as “patriotism.”

Americans will always remember 9-11, but curiously, we don’t expect other people to react in a similar, visceral, patriotic way when their homelands are bombed. President Richard Nixon discovered how to make war more palatable to American voters. When he took office in the midst of the quagmire of the Vietnam War, Nixon did something unprecedented in the history of war: he upped the killing of Indochinese, but accomplished the feat with fewer U.S. casualties. As the president withdrew U.S. ground troops from Vietnam, he dramatically increased the ferocity of the air war. As Nixon slaughtered many more people than his predecessor President Lyndon Johnson, the removal of American boots shifted the Vietnam War from the front to the back of the American mind.

Maybe we Americans have difficulty understanding the immediate and extreme reactions that dropping U.S. bombs creates because our homeland has never been carpet-bombed. And what American newspaper publishes photos of the dead Muslims killed by Obama? If you google “Muslim bombing” with the name of your favorite newspaper or news website, the results will show only Muslims’ reactions in the US. The hundreds of thousands of Muslims the U.S. kills don’t register. So we don’t see the truth. Is it ignorance, or — as Nixon discovered — that the American people don’t mind others, foreigners, being killed, just so American boys are not dying in great numbers on the ground?

Instead of facing Omar’s true motive, we debate semantics. It’s as if we expect that after the left-wing or the right-wing identifies the correct way to depict the menacing mental virus, our national security state will root out the sickness.

Omar announced his motive just hours before he died, but U.S. officials and our compliant media won’t report the truth. At that moment, Omar was holding about 15 people in the blood-streaked bathroom of the Pulse Orlando nightclub. Near him sat a young African-American woman from Philadelphia—Patience Carter—bleeding from the bullet wounds in each of her legs. Ms. Carter remembered, “I could see piles of bodies laying over the toilet seat and slumped over.”

Omar said to Ms. Carter, “You know I don’t have a problem with black people, this is about my country, you guys have suffered enough.”

Then Omar dialed 911 from his cellphone. He spoke loudly and clearly and everyone in that hellish bathroom heard him declare his motive. Ms. Carter wept as she recalled, “He wasn’t going to stop killing people until he was killed, until he felt like his message got out there.”

NBC News was the first to break the story that Omar had phoned 911, spinning the scary narrative that Omar had pledged his allegiance to ISIS.

Lying near dead people, wondering if she was about to die, Ms. Carter understood Omar's real motive. She said, "The motive was very clear to us who are laying in our own blood and other people's blood, who are injured, who were shot. Everybody who was in that bathroom who survived could hear him talking to 911, saying the reason why he's doing this is because he wanted America to stop bombing his country." [2]

About ten years ago I wrote a book called *Flyboys*, about U.S. bombing in World War II. While our German and Japanese enemies considered U.S. ground troops to be normal combatants, Adolf Hitler and Emperor Hirohito reserved special places in hell for the despised American Flyboys who dropped bombs on their homelands.

When I was a kid, the U.S. was not bombing Muslims and Muslims were not attacking us. Now we bomb many Muslim countries, with our secret CIA drone assassination campaign. These presidential-sanctioned bombings remain secret only to the American public. The Muslim victims on the receiving end know immediately what happened and who did it.

Millions of Muslims become aware of fellow Muslims killed by U.S. bombs via the Internet. We Americans are not allowed to see these images, so we believe the explanation of our leaders when they explain that a shooter was "radicalized over the Internet." Our eyes never see the body parts of Muslims we've blown apart. So we experience the *effects*—like the San Bernardino and Orlando reprisals—but we are blind to the *causes*. As blinkered citizens, we buy the U.S. government's obfuscating narrative, while millions of others around the world see the ugly truth.

Officials have deftly shifted our attention to the fact that Omar pledged allegiance to ISIS. In his highly emotional last hours Omar did spout a lot of contradictory nonsense, like identifying with Muslim factions who actually oppose one another. So you can pick and choose your version of this story.

Many of my American friends believe that the U.S. bombing of Muslims has nothing to do with them attacking us. If they're right, this would be history's first example where a bombed populace didn't fight back. It seems to me a foregone conclusion that if the U.S. started to bomb Australia tomorrow, we'd soon have Australian terrorism in the U.S.

Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch flew to Orlando and told grieving families:

I know that the LGBT community in particular has been shaken by this attack. It is indeed a cruel irony that a community defined almost exclusively by whom they love is so often a target of hate . . . Let me say to our LGBT friends and family, . . . our most effective response to terror and hatred is compassion, unity and love. [3]

The idea that loving each other more will solve this problem shows that most of us are unaware of the regular U.S. drone killings of Muslims beyond our borders. Perhaps we need to love more peoples than just ourselves.

Instead of debating euphemisms about viruses which we'll never catch with our security dragnets, why step back, look at our place in the world and face facts: the *effect* of Muslim

retaliation will never go away unless we remove the *cause*. It's within our power to end this cycle of violence.