



Texas Church Shooter Slaughters Defenseless Congregation – A 26-year-old man with a history of violence and mental problems [stormed](#) into the First Baptist Church in Sutherland Spring, Texas last Sunday and opened fire with an assault rifle, killing 26 people ranging in age from young children to seniors. The shooter entered the church wearing black tactical clothing and a ballistic vest. It was [reported](#) that there was a “domestic situation” between the gunman and his mother-in-law before the carnage. The man was dishonorably discharged from the USAF for assaulting his wife and son, which should have prevented him from buying firearms, but apparently his discharge was not reported to civilian authorities.

Assessment: Many people are asking if mass shootings are getting worse, and it would appear they are. Last week’s church shooting ranks fifth in fatalities, and the worst in U.S. history occurred in Las Vegas only five weeks ago (the top five occurred in the last 10-11 years). And church shootings, in particular, seem to be on the rise with [three](#) notable incidents in three years, including Sunday’s massacre, as well as the attacks in Charleston, S.C. and Antioch, Tenn. Places of worship have unique vulnerabilities as most in attendance will have their backs to the front door. Also, pew-style seating and unfamiliarity with all exits will slow victims’ escape plans.



ISIS Warns More for Manhattan; Bin Laden’s Son Threatens U.S. – A pro-ISIS media group has been busy diagraming threats in the wake of the Tribeca ramming attack on October 31st, issuing PR posters titled “The Specter of Terrorism” and “Manhattan,” the former singling out “the young” and the latter promising “more bitter and greater” attacks. The ISIS-linked [Wafa Media Foundation](#) has also been busy online, promoting threats to the upcoming World Cup, and has previously justified and encouraged attacks on teens/children, such as the Manchester Arena attack. Al Qaeda is also rallying followers as it released an audio message on Wednesday from Hamza bin Laden, urging revenge on the U.S. and the West for the 2011 killing of his father. Additionally, he promotes Jihad and martyrdom in the message and [tells young Muslim men](#) to “prepare for a new wave of armed uprisings across the Arab world.”

Assessment: While it is apparent that homegrown jihadist have followed directives by AQ and ISIS messaging, the Halloween attack in Manhattan clearly demonstrated the degree to which motivated individuals will go to in order to carry out attacks—to the letter. Where NYC has been a perennial favorite target, yet absent major attacks, the event showed to others that there is a path to success; ISIS propagandists seek to capitalize on this. Likewise, serious attention must be given to Hamza bin Laden, as he may be al Qaeda’s best path to a reinvigorated global threat.

Two Police Ambush Plots Uncovered – Two plots to harm police officers in ambush attacks, one in California and one in Washington, D.C., were uncovered this week after tipoffs to law enforcement. In Desert Hot Springs, Calif., a man was arrested for planning to kill police officers and civilians after they received a tip from an acquaintance of the suspect, who is being charged with attempted murder, kidnapping, and possession of ammunition (for probation violations). In the other incident, a man from Dallas traveled to the D.C. with the intent of killing “all white police” at the White House, but the U.S. Secret Service was notified by Montgomery County P.D. in Maryland, after being alerted by the suspect’s wife in Texas (the link to Md. is unclear).

Assessment: Political violence that targets a random person from a particular group, along with a yearning for notoriety, forms the basis of terrorism. The target does not necessarily have to be civilians. Highly-focused attacks on individuals or groups continue, such as the assault on Representative Stephen Scalise, who was shot (among others) at a congressional baseball practice in June by a lone gunman. And since Ukraine’s gray conflict with Russia over Crimea, its capital, Kiev, has witnessed a series of assassinations of anti-Russian leaders. It is notable that the [first wave](#) of modern terrorism in the late 19th Century began in Russia with murders of prominent officials and was quickly emulated by anarchist groups in the Balkans and beyond.



Madagascar Plague Reaches ‘Crisis’ Point – “One of the oldest—and [most feared](#)—of all diseases,” is spreading through the African island nation Madagascar at a rate not seen in 50 years. To date 1,947 people have been infected there and 143 have died from plague, which also became known as “Black Death” when it wiped out 50 million people across Europe in the 14th century. While certain areas of the globe are still prone to annual outbreaks of plague, including Madagascar and the [southwestern U.S.](#), experts fear that the current outbreak is a more lethal strain. Two thirds of the cases have been caused by the airborne pneumonic plague, which is far worse than the usual bubonic form seen.

Assessment: Typically one out of ten cases of bubonic plague, which is transmitted to humans by fleas, such as those carried by rats, lead to the pneumonic form, which can be passed on through coughing and sneezing, and can kill within 24 hours. About a [dozen cases](#) of bubonic plague are recorded in the U.S. every year, particularly from November to April. Of U.S. cases, 11 people have died since 2004 as it [is easily treatable with antibiotics](#). There is great concern, however, that the current strain will travel outside of Madagascar.

Children in Tanzania Killed by Found Grenade – Six children were killed and 15 injured after a hand [grenade](#) that they found while walking to school exploded in western Tanzania. “As they were heading to school this morning, one of the pupils picked up the bomb mistaking it for scrap metal. The pupil was planning to sell it to get money to buy exercise books,” [said](#) a regional police commander. Despite this recent incident, Tanzania is not a war torn country, but has attracted refugees from other countries for decades, such as from Burundi, Rwanda, DRC, and, more recently, Syria and Yemen.

Assessment: As stated in the jihadi threats story above, ISIS has threatened to attack children and young adults. The number of sports venues where children routinely compete or spectate is virtually endless, creating an impossible security dilemma. Attackers will likely target locations that offer the most opportunity, such those with the most attendees. Other venues that attract young visitors (either indoor or outdoor), include natural history museums (think dinosaurs), aquariums, so-called “children’s” museums, and amusement parks. An [article](#) explains how children are not “little adults” when it comes to pediatric trauma care.

Getting an ‘A’ for Effort, Soprano Hits Historic High Note – During a performance this week of a new opera at the Metropolitan Opera in NYC, soprano Audrey Luna became the [first singer](#) in the Met’s 137-year history to hit the [A above high C](#), breaking the previous ceiling—the high G (or even higher A-flat half note). The vaulted high C, long considered the high-note standard, is attainable to many highly-trained professional opera singers, [including](#) some male tenors such as Luciano Pavarotti. “The [G] note...the range, the [tessitura](#),” said Thomas Ades, creator of the new opera (“The Exterminating Angel”), “is a metaphor for the ability to transcend these psychological and invisible boundaries that have grown up around them.”

Assessment: Similar to Ms. Luna’s high G, Chuck Yeager’s flight that broke the sound barrier (760 mph at sea level) in 1947, and Sir Roger Bannister’s sub-four-minute-mile run (3:59.4) in 1954, had to overcome incredible mental and physical barriers to shatter those records. Though their personal struggles are rarely compared to new world records, responders at times must push themselves past mental and physical limits in the performance of duty. Extended operations, such as mass-casualty incidents (especially trauma), collapses and long duration multiple-alarm fires will test the limits of resolve, fatigue, and acuity. Training, a high level of fitness, and a professional attitude can keep responders hitting their personal high A notes over the course of a career.



Ms. Luna’s ‘high A’ note a first in 137 years of Met operas