



Damage in Puerto Rico Called ‘Apocalyptic’ – After receiving the full brunt of Hurricane Maria’s winds, rain and storm surge last week, the entire island of Puerto Rico remains decimated with the vast majority of the population lacking electricity and many essential services. By some estimates, 80 percent of long-distance electrical transmission lines are damaged while nearly 100 percent of local distribution lines [are broken](#). Compounding the problem, gasoline and diesel fuel, used mainly to run portable generators, has only a [limited supply](#). And even more important than fuel, 40-45 percent of residents do not have [potable water](#), which is tied to the electrical grid disruption.



Assessment: During an emergency meeting of the 50 mayors of Puerto Rico, the disaster was described as “[apocalyptic](#).” The island’s largest hospital, Centro Medico, has pitched outdoor tents to accommodate the flow of patients, and even their A/C and power was described as “[spotty](#).” Though restoring power to medical centers is one of the highest priorities, a weakened supply chain, as well as compromised infrastructure (flooded or washed out roads, etc.), make hospital operations and access a challenge. [NYC responders](#) were sent as part of the relief effort immediately (and many were sent straight from Texas and Florida). USAR teams, IMTs, and other task forces have deployed in support of Puerto Rico’s long recovery.

Masked Gunman Shoots Seven During Sunday Church Services – A man wearing a ski mask shot and killed a woman in the parking lot of a church in Nashville, Tenn., and then entered and shot six others before being subdued, shortly after 11 a.m. on Sunday. The 25-year-old suspect was identified as a former worshipper at the quaint Burnette Chapel Church of Christ, and a Sudanese immigrant who had quit his job as a security job the day before. Police have not yet identified a motive, and cryptic posts on his Facebook page were not much help, but they say he admitted to the shooting. An usher at the church is credited with disrupting the attack by first wrestling with the gunman, resulting in a self-inflicted wound, and then retrieving a weapon from his car to hold him at bay.

Assessment: Parishioners say the shooter is known to them, but have not seen him in a couple of years. Some circumstances point to the attack as a final act, rather than having terroristic motivation; he also had a suicidal episode in July of this year. Houses of worship in the U.S. are generally soft targets. Two prior mass shootings were motivated by hate and fit with domestic terrorism: In 2015 a white supremacist killed nine black worshippers in South Carolina and in 2012, a white supremacist killed six members of the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin.

Islamic State releases Audio Message from Leader Baghdadi – A 46-minute recording purported to be from Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al Baghdadi was “[blasted out](#)” to supporters on a messaging app on Thursday. If authentic, which an unnamed U.S. intelligence source working to verify says there is “[no reason to doubt](#),” it would be the first such speech since November 2016. In July, it was reported by media and confirmed by British-based [Syrian Observatory for Human Rights](#) that Baghdadi was killed by a Russian military strike in Deir al Zour Province, but U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis retorted that he believed the elusive leader to still be alive. In the current recording, Baghdadi claims, “America, Europe and Russia are living in a state of terror,” pointing to recent attacks in London and Barcelona.

Assessment: Strategically, Baghdadi’s survival is of little consequence to ISIS operations, as he is not in any direct control, but it may be a morale boost for foot soldiers after a steady loss of territory, including Mosul and part of Raqqa. His focus on the West is concerning, as Islamic State was primarily concerned with activities related to gaining and holding territory from its ascension in 2014 until this year. Now, the religious-based insurgency will turn more toward outward-looking terror attacks.



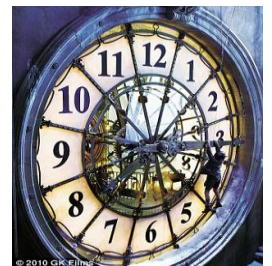
Taliban, ISIS Claim SecDef Target of Afghan Airport Attack – Hours after Defense Secretary James Mattis’s plane landed in Kabul on Wednesday for a visit to demonstrate U.S. support for the Afghan government, the airport was attacked with mortar fire (mostly RPGs) and suicide bombers. Though the attack occurred after Mattis had left the airport, and the mortar rounds landed in an open area—adding up to a failed attack—the Taliban tweeted a claim of responsibility, as did Islamic State. Afghan special forces searched houses nearby, suspecting the rockets were fired from one of them, and then battled gunmen in one house for much of the day.

Assessment: Secretary Mattis’s visit was not publicized, which may explain the long delay in the attack after he landed. Nevertheless, the terror groups clearly view the bombings as having value, despite their ineffectiveness. One take on the value of the attack is that it was successful in [overshadowing](#) the SecDef’s visit. Gaining media attention is a victory for terrorist movements. Unfortunately, a U.S. airstrike in support of an Afghan special police force fighting the attackers resulted in a “missile malfunction,” which caused civilian casualties, which will likely be used by militant Islamists in recruiting and fundraising for future attacks.

UAVs: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly – A civilian drone [crashed](#) into an U.S. Army helicopter flying low along the eastern shore of Staten Island, N.Y. this week. The copper was one of two Blackhawks from the 82nd Airborne out of Fort Bragg, N.C., which were sent to support security operations for the U.N. General Assembly. Alarmingly, parts of drone were later found near the main rotor assembly. Also this week, the FBI director warned congress that terrorists could carry out drone attacks against the U.S., and that the threat was “[imminent](#).” Director Christopher Wray described drones (as weapons) as easy to acquire and operate, while being difficult to monitor and disrupt. NCTC Director Nicholas Rasmussen added that drones could be equipped with chemicals or explosives. Last year, ISIS created a UAV unit to add “a new source of horror for the apostates.”

Assessment: As far as the benefits of drones, many response agencies now use UAVs for situational awareness, including FDNY, which [debuted](#) its UAV at a Bronx 4th alarm in March. And instead of assisting in extinguishing fires, some drones are actually used to start fires. Last year, it was reported that researchers at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln were testing UAVs equipped with “[dragon eggs](#)” to start preventative controlled fires (“prescribed burns”) on the plains to reduce fuel load and eradicate evasive species. And in some parts of China, drones are used to [burn trash](#) off power lines. The weaponization of remote objects is as old as warfare, and responders should monitor the latest attacks trends that could affect them and the communities they serve.

Scorsese Wants to Be Your Film Professor – Through the online education platform Masterclass, legendary Hollywood director Martin Scorsese is [offering](#) a filmmaking class next year, following other courses from respective experts in sports, architecture, and music. Fans will certainly flock to his virtual classroom, which will likely give a director’s perspective on his most popular films, such as “Goodfellas,” “Raging Bull,” “Taxi Driver,” “Hugo,” “Gangs of New York,” and “The Departed.” Registered students (after paying a fee), will have access to 20 video lessons, and they will be able to load their own videos for review by fellow students (Scorsese will “answer select questions”).



Assessment: Web-based learning, a growing trend in almost every field, has become more robust and effective, covering everything from fixing an appliance to earning a degree. In general, the most popular online platforms are EdX, ALISON, iTunesU, and Coursera. For responders, there are a variety of offerings from the National Fire Academy and FEMA. Online learning provides a multi-tier approach through video, graphics, text and pictures, which improve comprehension and retention, especially with hands-on skills that are sometimes better understood through visualization as opposed to verbalization.

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