



Texas Teen Plotted Terror as ‘Message to America’ – A Plano West (Texas) High School student was arrested on Tuesday, about two weeks out from an ISIS-inspired plot to conduct a mass shooting at the Stonebriar Centre mall in Frisco. The 17-year-old had considered other targets, including his school and a Hindu temple, before deciding on the mall, but the Muslim convert also discussed online with FBI confidential sources and an undercover, waiting until after the start of Ramadan (May 15) to minimize Muslim casualties. Though his plan was generally to “run and gun,” he conducted surveillance of the mall, and specifically plotted to first assassinate a police officer on duty at the location. In one conversation with an FBI source posing as an ISIS sympathizer, he said, “I’d actually like to make a cop surrender and drop his gun...then douse him with gasoline and burn him...(and) record it.”



Assessment: In other conversations the teen talked of igniting fires at the mall for the sake of additional casualties and financial damage, and discussed taking hostages. He drew inspiration from online ISIS propaganda, including “magazine [guides for performing operations](#) and making bombs.” His message to America [cited](#) “fighting Islam and slaughtering the Muslims.” He “thought carefully about how [best to terrorize](#) the American public.” He began online correspondence with an FBI confidential source in December 2017, but prior to that, he had asked certain classmates how to obtain a gun, and at least one had reported his suspicious behavior to school officials. It remains to be seen if this tip led to the FBI infiltration and disruption of his murderous plans.

Unheralded New Jersey Terrorist Sentenced to Life – A self-proclaimed jihadist was [sentenced to life in prison](#) (without parole) for the 2014 ambush killing of a college student stopped in his car at a traffic light in West Orange, New Jersey. The 33-year-old admitted to the murder as well as two others in Seattle after he was arrested weeks later while living in a tent in a wooded area of West Orange; a gun in his possession was later linked to all three killings (plus one other). In court papers filed in Seattle in 2014, the shooter described himself as a strict Muslim who was angered by U.S. military actions in Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan—including the resulting deaths of innocent civilians and children. He confessed that he shot three men leaving a gay nightclub in Seattle (killing two), because he believed they were gay.

Assessment: The senseless murder of 19-year-old Brendan Tevlin “[gripped the region’s attention](#)” at the time, but even after the arrest of his killer, the connection to the other Seattle shooting and admission of “jihad,” the attacks were largely unheralded as terrorism—domestic terrorism by a Homegrown Violent Extremist (HVE). Investigators first followed the notion that the ten shots fired at Tevlin at close range must have been by someone that knew him. Within weeks, the dead-to-rights assailant told prosecutors, “All these lives are taken every single day by America, by this government. So a life for a life.” Thus the anonymous murders took on the mantle of terror, but perhaps due to the nature of the killings and timeline, it barely struck a chord with the media.

Brooklyn Car Wash Tragedy Called ‘Freak Accident’ – An 85-year-old woman was killed and her 90-year-old husband critically injured when a mishap at a Brooklyn car wash escalated into a shocking series of collisions. Apparently the couple’s car was impacted by an SUV exiting the car wash from the line behind their car. As the two went to inspect the damage to the rear, a 61-year-old car wash employee backed the SUV into the wall by the exit, then suddenly accelerated forward, crushing the woman between the cars. Inexplicably, as seen in surveillance [video](#), the “panicked” driver then repeated the action—backing into the station, then accelerating forward—two more times. There were no initial charges filed against the employee.

Assessment: A panicked step on the gas pedal rather than the brake, is not all too rare, but coupled with forward and reverse gear shifting seems difficult to understand. Each year, more and more drivers of varying abilities are added to New York and U.S. roadways, and [more than 100](#) people die in motor vehicle crashes daily. Responders are again reminded to take nothing for granted when operating in any areas with moving vehicles. A new report by Rand Corp., called, “[The Road to Zero](#)” offers “a vision for achieving zero roadway deaths by 2050.” The three-pronged approach emphasizes more advanced safety technology, a culture of safety, and a catch-all of approaches already shown to be effective, which includes improvements to emergency response. The report also notes that pedestrian deaths have “increased dramatically in recent years.”



Police Hurt in Explosion during Connecticut Stand-off – A domestic violence, turned hostage situation, turned standoff came to a violent head when an explosion in a barn behind a North Haven, Conn., house injured at least nine police officers. The crisis began Wednesday afternoon when police were called to the location after a woman notified them that she had been held hostage there by her husband. Sometime after she was able to escape, the man barricaded himself in at the location, and police negotiated with him to come out for about six hours, when the explosion and resulting fire occurred. The fire eventually extended to the home, where firefighters were able to keep it in check. Remains of one person were found in the burned out building.

Assessment: It was [learned](#) that the woman filed for divorce two weeks prior to the incident. Such volatile domestic situations present responders with a figuratively and sometimes literally incendiary atmosphere. Fortunately the police officers suffered only minor injuries.

Basque Separatist-Terror Group ETA Disbands After Decades – After nearly six decades of violent resistance to Spain’s central government, the Basque separatist group ETA has stated in a letter published Wednesday that it has “completely dissolved all its structures and has terminated its political initiative. The group began in 1959 as a left-wing, student-led independence movement, and over the years, was responsible for over 800 deaths, with a height of almost 100 in 1980. The worst single attack was a supermarket bombing in Barcelona in 1987, which killed 21.

Assessment: [Experts](#) on terrorism tend to agree on [three to five](#) ways in which [terrorism ends](#): external repression/military defeat/policing; internal collapse/competition/splintering; public rejection/politics; success. It is more readily apparent how some of these apply to insurgent rather than ideology-driven.

The Population Bomb: Diffused or Still Ticking? – Fifty years ago, Stanford biologist Paul Ehrlich (and his wife, Anne) published the book, [The Population Bomb](#), detailing doomsday scenarios based on the earth’s inability to sustain life in the face of a burgeoning global population. The author(s) predicted that hundreds of millions would starve to death in the 1970s and that the end was nigh. The bestseller “[influenced an entire generation](#),” with popular portrayals of overpopulation depicted in the [1967 book/1976 film Logan’s Run](#), the 1969 Star Trek Episode “[The Mark of Gideon](#),” and the 1973 movie [Soylent Green](#) (a dystopia also ravaged by global warming), among others. Recently, the 85-year-old Ehrlich doubled-down on his controversial work, saying a collapse of civilization is a ‘[near certainty](#)’ in the coming decades. [Critics](#), however, [cite other academics](#) who say that the ingenuity and resourcefulness of the human mind must be factored into the equation. They point out that doubling of global population from 3.5 billion in 1968 to 7.6 billion today has been met with human responsiveness, such as the [Green Revolution](#). [According to Ehrlich](#), that 7.6 billion is 5.6 billion too many.



Kirk on overpopulated Gideon

Assessment: Firefighters continually face daunting challenges, which often may carry dire consequences. Anyone who has been around the fire service, however, knows that ingenuity is a hallmark of the profession. Many of the daunting challenges carried with population growth can be solved with ingenuity. Additionally, those dire consequences may be further off than discussed, as the UN Population Division has improved forecasting techniques, and is now calling for a leveling off of 8.2 billion in 2030, 8.9 billion in 2050, and stabilization of about 9 billion thereafter. One proven method of slowing population growth comes through equality and education for women, whereby [fertility rates](#) are consistently lower in nations where this is prevalent.

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