

Shooting Doesn't Fit Normal Gun Debate

WASHINGTON (AP) — As investigators search for a motive behind the deadly rampage in San Bernardino, politicians are searching for a way to talk about it.

The details of the California massacre at a holiday party — pointing at a possible link to Islamic militants and raising questions about domestic extremism — quickly knocked both Republicans and Democrats off their talking points, upending what has become a grim and predictable ritual in American politics.

Democrats who have vowed to use every mass shooting as a moment to call for new gun laws were tempering their rallying cries. Republicans who point to mental health services as the solution had begun to blame extremist views.

In an interview Friday morning, Florida Sen. Marco Rubio said “we have a violence problem in America” but added it’s not exclusive to guns. A U.S. citizen with a clean background but extremist views is perhaps the most significant threat, he said.

“That is a very significant, difficult threat to confront,” the Florida Republican said on “CBS This Morning.”

Nightclub Firebombed After Dispute

CAIRO (AP) — Two men who were denied entry to a nightclub later returned with others and firebombed it early Friday, setting off a blaze that killed all 16 people who were trapped inside by the smoke and flames, authorities said.

Terrorism was quickly ruled out as the cause of the attack at the El Sayad restaurant and club in Cairo’s Agouza district. Egypt has been battling a growing Islamic insurgency in recent months.

The overnight fire that came on the first day of the week-end in Egypt also injured three other people.

Police were searching for six people suspected in the attack, which occurred after two of them were not allowed to enter the club, said Interior Ministry spokesman Abu Bakr Abdel-Karim.

After the two were refused entry, they “went and drank alcohol somewhere else,” then brought four others with them, arriving on three motorcycles about 6 a.m., Abdel-Karim said.

No one who was inside the club survived, Abdel-Karim said. Eleven of the dead were employees, and the other five were not identified, he added.

White House Reviews Women In Military

WASHINGTON (AP) — The government is deliberating whether to propose Selective Service changes that would make women eligible for the military draft, the White house said Friday, a day after the Pentagon said it would no longer bar women from combat jobs.

The Defense Department has prepared an analysis of how the Pentagon change could affect the U.S. Military Selective Service Act, said White House spokesman Josh Earnest.

“We’re going to work with Congress to look at that analysis, to review it, to get others’ opinions and determine if additional reforms or changes are necessary in light of this decision,” Earnest said.

Earnest said President Barack Obama has not expressed his views to the Pentagon.

The comments came a day after Defense Secretary Ash Carter announced he was ordering the military to open all military jobs to women, including the most dangerous commando posts.

Cities' Policies On Police Videos Erratic

CHICAGO (AP) — There’s often little consistency in U.S. cities’ policies on how quickly to release videos of police officers shooting civilians under disputed circumstances, with many municipalities making decisions as they go or waiting to act until political pressure or court rulings force the issue.

As a result, contested videos can emerge within days, months, years — or never. A long wait often invites accusations that city leaders and police are seeking to hide some wrongdoing or endeavoring to cover something up.

This week, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel announced he’s setting up a task force to examine his city’s video-release policy, among other issues, amid public and political outcry over white Officer Jason Van Dyke’s shooting of black teenager Laquan McDonald 16 times in 2014. For more than a year, the city actively delayed releasing police dash-cam footage of the officer continuing to fire even as McDonald crumpled to the ground.

Cities’ policies are all over the map. Many don’t have any clearly identifiable policy in writing, including Chicago, which has a reputation for dragging its feet. Sometimes, civilian cell-phone video plays a role in prodding a city to release its own police video, as happened in Charleston, South Carolina, earlier this year.

In Seattle, nearly all police video is posted online almost immediately, though special software blurs the images and a video with clear images must be requested.

Ex-Band Frontman Weiland Dead At 48

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. (AP) — Scott Weiland, the magnetic former frontman of the Stone Temple Pilots whose three-decade career in music also included solo albums and a spot in the supergroup Velvet Revolver, has died. He was 48.

The singer’s manager, Tom Vitorino, confirmed the death to *The Associated Press* early Friday morning. Vitorino referred to a statement on Weiland’s Facebook page that said the singer died in his sleep while on a tour stop in suburban Minneapolis.

Police said investigators found small amounts of cocaine on Weiland’s tour bus, though a cause of death hasn’t been released. The singer had been dogged by substance abuse problems throughout his career.

Weiland’s former Stone Temple Pilot bandmates — Eric Kretz and brothers Dean and Robert DeLeo — released a statement Friday thanking Weiland “for sharing your life with us.”

“Together we crafted a legacy of music that has given so many people happiness and great memories. The memories are many, and they run deep for us,” the statement read. “We know amidst the good and the bad you struggled, time and time again. It’s what made you who you were.”

Robert Loggia, TV Tough Guy, Dies At 85

Oscar-nominated actor Robert Loggia, who was known for gravelly voiced gangsters from “Scarface” to “The Sopranos” but who was most endearing as Tom Hanks’ kid-at-heart toy-company boss in “Big,” has died. He was 85.

Loggia’s wife Aubrey Loggia said he died Friday at his home in Los Angeles after a five year battle with Alzheimer’s. “His poor body gave up,” she said. “He loved being an actor and he loved his life.”

Hanks expressed his grief on Twitter.

“A great actor in heart and soul,” Hanks wrote. “A sad day.”

A solidly built man with a rugged face and rough voice, Loggia fit neatly into gangster movies, playing a Miami drug lord in “Scarface,” which starred Al Pacino; and a Sicilian mobster in “Prizzi’s Honor,” with Jack Nicholson and Kathleen Turner. He played wise guys in David Lynch’s “Lost Highway,” the spoofs “Innocent Blood” and “Armed and Dangerous,” and again on David Chase’s “The Sopranos,” as the previously jailed veteran mobster Michele “Feech” La Manna.

A 'Breeding Ground' For Soccer Fraud

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — The South American lands that are home to some of soccer’s greatest players now are at the center of the sport’s biggest corruption scandal.

The names don’t resonate like those of Pele, Messi and Maradona, but they’ve been part of several generations of South Americans who have run the popular, profitable and murky business of soccer.

Two waves of arrests and sweeping indictments in the last six months by U.S. and Swiss authorities investigating widespread corruption in FIFA, the sport’s multibillion-dollar world governing body, have snared 13 top soccer officials from the continent, more than any other region.

The current and two former heads of CONMEBOL, the South American governing body, are under arrest: President Juan Angel Napout of Paraguay, and former Presidents Nicolas Leoz of Paraguay and Eugenio Figueredo of Uruguay.

FBI Investigates California Attack As Act Of Terror

BY AMANDA LEE MYERS
Associated Press

SAN BERNARDINO, Calif. — The FBI announced Friday that it is investigating the mass shooting at a Southern California office party as an act of terrorism, but the agency’s director said there is no indication the husband and wife who killed 14 people were part of a larger plot or members of a terror cell.

If the investigation confirms those initial suspicions, the attack would be the deadliest inspired by Islamic extremism on U.S. soil since Sept. 11.

While authorities did not cite specific evidence that led them to the terrorism focus, a U.S. law enforcement official said that the wife, Tashfeen Malik, had under a Facebook alias pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group and its leader. A Facebook official said Malik praised Islamic State in a post at 11 a.m. Wednesday, around the time the couple stormed a San Bernardino social service center and opened fire.

Malik and her husband, Syed Farook, died in a fierce gunbattle with authorities several hours after their commando-style assault on a gathering of Farook’s colleagues from San Bernardino County’s health department.

An Islamic State-affiliated news service called Malik and Farook “supporters” of their Islamism cause but stopped short of claiming responsibility for the attack.

FBI Director James Comey would not discuss whether anyone affiliated with IS communicated back to Malik, but he said there was no indication yet that the plot was directed by any other foreign terror group. He also declined to rule out that future possibility.

“The investigation so far has developed indications of radicalization by the killers and of potential inspiration by foreign terrorist organizations,” Comey said. He cautioned that the investigation has not yet shown evidence the couple was part of a larger group.

Despite mounting signs of the couple’s radicalization, there “is a lot of evidence that doesn’t quite make sense,” Comey said in a nod to the



IRFAN KHAN/LOS ANGELES TIMES/TNS
Attendees listen to speakers at an interfaith group prayer vigil at the Islamic Center of Redlands in Redlands, Calif., on Friday, Dec. 4.

fact that the investigation was just two days old.

Attorneys representing Farook’s family urged the public and media to wait for specific evidence before jumping to conclusions. They said none of his relatives had any indication either Farook or his wife held extremist views.

David Bowdich, head of the FBI’s Los Angeles office, said “a number of pieces of evidence” point to terrorism and that the agency was focused on that idea “for good reason.” He would not elaborate.

The U.S. official who revealed the Facebook post was not authorized to discuss the case publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity. The Facebook official, who also spoke on condition of anonymity because the person was not allowed under corporate policy to be quoted by name, said the company discovered Wednesday’s post on Thursday, removed the profile from public view and reported its contents to law enforcement.

Bowdich said he was not aware of the IS-affiliated Aamaq news service report but was not surprised IS would attempt to link itself to the attack. He said investigators were looking carefully to determine if there is an IS connection.

Farook and Malik rented

a townhome where investigators said they found an arsenal of ammunition and homemade bombs. On Friday morning, the property’s owner allowed reporters inside in an unusual scene broadcast live on cable TV.

Bowdich said the FBI was done with the scene. Analysts were trying to retrieve data from two cellphones found nearby that had been crushed in an apparent attempt to destroy the information inside.

“We hope that will take us to their motivation,” he said.

Until Friday, federal and local law enforcement officials said terrorism was a possibility but that the violence could have stemmed from a workplace grudge.

Attorneys for Farook’s family urged the public not to rush to judgment.

“If the most evidence there is to any affiliation is a Facebook account under another person’s name ... then that’s hardly anything at all,” attorney David Chesley said.

Chesley and another attorney described Malik as a housewife who closely followed religious traditions. They said Farook’s mother, who lived with the couple, never saw any of the weapons or bombs authorities found. The FBI questioned her Wednesday night and, according to the attorneys, said they

would not release her until Farook’s siblings came for questioning.

The couple’s orphaned 6-month-old daughter is in the care of child protective services and the family will try to recover her next week.

Farook had no criminal record, and neither he nor his wife was under scrutiny by local or federal law enforcement before the attack, authorities said.

Malik, 27, was a Pakistani who grew up in Saudi Arabia and came to the U.S. in 2014 on a fiancée visa. Farook, a 28-year-old restaurant health inspector for the county, was born in Chicago to Pakistani parents and raised in Southern California.

Law enforcement officials have long warned that Americans acting in sympathy with Islamic extremists — though not on direct orders — could launch an attack inside the U.S. Using slick propaganda, the Islamic State in particular has urged sympathizers worldwide to commit violence in their countries.

Others have done so. In May, just before he attacked a gathering in Texas of people drawing cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad, a Phoenix man tweeted his hope that Allah would view him as a holy warrior.

Germany OKs Military Mission Against Islamic State Group

BY DAVID RISING
Associated Press

BERLIN — Germany stepped up its contribution to the fight against the Islamic State group on Friday, with lawmakers overwhelmingly voting in favor of sending reconnaissance jets, a tanker plane and a frigate to provide broad noncombat support to the U.S.-led coalition flying airstrikes against the militants.

The move answers a call for help from France following last month’s deadly attacks in Paris. IS militants claimed responsibility for the Nov. 13 attacks that killed 130 people and wounded hundreds.

On Friday, Belgian and French authorities said they were hunting two new suspects in the Paris carnage. The men used fake identity cards and sent money to a relative of the man who orchestrated the attacks the day before the ringleader died in a shootout with French police, the Belgian prosecutor’s office said.

The German Parliament voted 445 in support of the mission against IS and 146 against, with seven abstentions. The plan received wide support from the ranks of Chancellor Angela Merkel’s governing coalition, a week after the German leader assured French President Francois Hollande that Germany would “act quickly” to help its ally.

German opposition lawmakers, however, questioned the effectiveness of military operations against the extremists. “You won’t fight IS that way. You’ll only strengthen it,” Left Party lawmaker Sahra Wagenknecht told Parliament.

Her criticism echoed the concerns voiced by Nicolas Henin, a French journalist who was held hostage by Islamic State militants for 10 months until being freed in April 2014. Henin told The Associated Press that while using military muscle

against the group shouldn’t be ruled out, it should only be a small part of a broader strategy.

“The party that will win is not the party that will have the most powerful, the most modern or the most expensive weaponry or even the bravest fighters,” Henin said. “The side that will win ... is the party that will have the Syrian people on its side. By bombing Syria, we are pushing the Syrians into the hands of IS.”

The 134 million-euro (\$145 million) German mission will see two Tornado reconnaissance planes sent to Turkey’s Incirlik base as early as next week. The frigate is already en route to join French aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle.

“The goal... is to fight and contain IS, and destroy their safe havens and their ability to lead worldwide terror operations,” Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen told reporters Thursday before heading to Ankara for talks with her Turkish counterpart.

She also met with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to talk about stationing German troops there and other aspects of the deployment, the Defense Ministry said Friday.

In all, Germany plans to send up to six Tornado reconnaissance planes and a tanker aircraft, as well as the frigate to help protect the French aircraft carrier, but won’t actively engage in combat.

A maximum contingent of 1,200 soldiers was also approved, serving as support troops in Turkey and elsewhere, including at headquarters operations in Qatar and Kuwait. The German mission is open-ended, but needs annual parliamentary approval.

An association representing active and former members of the German military said it wouldn’t discount the possibility that Germany might eventually send

ground troops to Syria. “A few weeks ago the government had also ruled out an active role of the air force against IS, and we know where things stand now,” the chairman of the German Bundeswehr Association, Andre Wuestner, told public broadcaster Bayerischer Rundfunk.

But Merkel’s government reiterated that the mission was one of noncombat support.

“There’s nothing in this mandate about the deployment of ground troops,” the German leader’s spokesman, Steffen Seibert, said. “It’s not planned, and nobody in the German government is planning it.”

Meanwhile, Hollande visited the Charles de Gaulle, France’s only aircraft carrier, in the eastern Mediterranean where it was dispatched a week before the Paris attacks. The French carrier has been launching raids against Islamic State bases as part of the U.S.-led coalition’s strikes against the group — 110 sorties so far. It carries 2,000 people on board.

British jets flew their first missions as part of the coalition’s anti-IS efforts on Thursday, striking oil fields in eastern Syria that help finance IS.

On Friday, the Belgian federal prosecutor’s office said authorities were searching for two new suspects in the Paris attacks.

The men, carrying bogus IDs in the names of Samir Bouzid and Soufiane Kayal, were traveling in a Mercedes with another Paris attacks fugitive, Salah Abdeslam, when the car was checked Sept. 9 at the Hungarian-Austrian border, the prosecutor’s office said in a statement.

It said the Kayal ID was also used to rent a house in the Belgian town of Auvelais that authorities have searched as a possible site for making the suicide bombs used in the Paris attacks.

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