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## **Simulated hostage taking and its consequences. Orlando shooting case**

### **Introduction**

The article focuses on, firstly, the tactics of the so-called ‘simulated hostage situation’<sup>1</sup>, which was described in details in one of the ISIS papers; secondly, the Orlando shooting case (June 12<sup>th</sup> 2016), in which the tactics was applied, was analysed here. It is not the only case when the tactics has been applied, however hostage situations from the Nariman House (Mumbai 2008), or Bataclan (Paris 2015) were the elements of a sequence of attacks performed by groups of terrorists and that would require analysis of all elements of the event. ISIS papers focus on the tactics to be applied by one or two attackers and a non-simultaneous attack. Furthermore, those attacks were not the subject of tactical analyses made by terrorist organizations and the Orlando case was described in full details in the AQAP paper.

Salafi terrorist organizations – like ISIS (the Islamic State), AQ (Al-Qaeda) or AQAP (Al Qaeda of the Arabian Peninsula) not only call for attacks<sup>2</sup> in the USA and in the EU but also publish instructions for homebred terrorists who would like to carry out a spectacular attack, but they do not how to do it. The *Inspire* magazine, linked to AQAP, debuted in 2010 on the Internet with its cover *Prepare a bomb in your mother’s kitchen* and for many years has provided its readers with instructions how to carry out different types of attacks on civilians. The recent issue contained a instruction how to do the so-called derailer and suggestions how to bring about a land catastrophe. ISIS acts in the same way; in the *Rumiyah* magazine for two years there have been articles calling for violence against the infidels and specific ideas and instructions how to set fire successfully, how attack with a knife, how to ram pedestrians with a lorry. He less known ISIS works, like e-books *How to survive in the West. A Mujahid Guide* and *Muslim Gangs* give the instructions how to make pipe bombs and other types of IEDs.

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<sup>1</sup> The author uses the term, in English–language publications by ISIS the term *hostage-taking in the lands of disbelief* is used, but it does not give the full sense of the tactics suggested by authors of the publications.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. K. Wojtasik, *Krew niewiernych jest halal. Radykalizacja postaw i nawoływanie do ataków na ludność cywilną w wybranych publikacjach tzw. Państwa Islamskiego (ISIS)*, „ePolitikon” 2017, No. 23, pp. 113–135.

### The so-called simulated hostage situation

In the *Rumiyah* magazine edited by the *Al-Hayat Media Centre* media agency linked to ISIS there is a series called *Just terror tactics*. In the opening article<sup>3</sup> it was stressed that the presented practices are prepared for the lone wolves, however the most appropriate name for the action is *just terror*.<sup>4</sup> Operations called ‘just terror operations’ are carried out in those countries where the infidels are the majority (*dar-al-kufr*) by fighters who pledged allegiance (*bay’ah*) to the Islamic State. The organization calls for killing as many infidels as possible. Apart from direct consequences – as the people’s death, it would have much more serious social consequences: *the basic goal of all actions within the just terror operations is to arouse terror and the feeling of helplessness among the enemies of God and to remind them that their efforts in the war against Islam and Muslims will lead to even higher number of fighters in their neighbourhood ready to attack with no mercy on their soil*.<sup>5</sup>

There is an article in issue 9 of the *Rumiyah* magazine that is devoted to *hostage taking*. The introduction is typical for the ISIS publications and has a turgid and exalted tone, and selected quotations from Quran or the hadith passages, to reassure the possible attacker that killing infidels makes them perform the religious duty. Further in the ‘tactics’ part the author gives instructions on hostage taking situations that increases the efficiency of an attack (by the number of victims) but also enhances the media effect of the action and thus it contributes to the achievement of soft targets of terrorism, i.e. to havoc and to sustain the atmosphere of fear and threat. Terrorism is the effective using violence and fear, i.e. gaining political goals by cunning manipulation (real or possible) of using violence and the impression it makes.<sup>6</sup> Terrorists from ISIS have perfectly got the skills. The organization builds its media strategy effectively, threatens European countries, introduces the atmosphere of fear and suspicions, shows brutality and gives the clear message on its real strength, shows activities that attract young radicals. *Striking fear and effective sustainment of fear, tension can give terrorists an advantage. It comes from the simple fact that fear is an unwanted feeling and each individual and whole societies are ready to sacrifice much to get rid of such feeling*.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Rumiyah* No. 2, p. 12 [online], <http://clarionproject.org/factsheets-files/Rumiyah-ISIS-Magazine-2nd-issue.pdf> [access: 9 XII 2017]

<sup>4</sup> Just terror operations.

<sup>5</sup> *Rumiyah* No. 2, p. 13 [online], <http://clarionproject.org/factsheets-files/Rumiyah-ISIS-Magazine-2nd-issue.pdf> [access: 9 XII 2017].

<sup>6</sup> Cf. T. Białek, *Terroryzm: manipulacja strachem*, Warszawa 2005, Wydawnictwo Studio EMKA, pp. 32–34, T. Goban-Klas, *Media i terroryści. Czy zastraszą nas na śmierć?*, Kraków 2009, Wydawnictwo UJ, pp. 33–66, I.T. Dziubek, *Media a współczesny terroryzm*, in: *Bezpieczeństwo państwa a zagrożenie terroryzmem. Terroryzm na przełomie XX i XXI wieku*, Vol. 1, K. Jałoszyński, T. Aleksandrowicz, K. Wiciak (ed.), Szczytno 2016, WSPol Szczytno, pp. 259–315.

<sup>7</sup> T. Białek, *Terroryzm...*, p. 34.

The first sentence of the instruction shows that in case of the ISIS terrorists or its radical affiliates the hostage taking should in principle turn into a massacre. The goal of a hostage taking situation is to prolong the action and attract the media attention: *the goal of a hostage taking situation where infidels live, particularly in case of just terror operation, is not taking many hostages to negotiate demands.*<sup>8</sup> The author suggests hostage taking situation but only to enhance the effect of the whole attack. In this case it seems justified to use the term *simulated hostage situation* to describe the ISIS tactics, the goal of which is to make the act of terror longer, to gather the possible victims at one place, to attract the media, and, first of all, to put the assault off (fear for the hostages' lives) and to maximise the number of victims – delayed medical assistance results in many casualties, particularly when the first stage of an attack an active shooter strategy was adopted. In this situation people who got shot and who will not be given medical assistance on time, would probably not survive several hours of waiting for help.

Simulation of hostage taking is followed by desired 'soft' results – it boosts the sense of danger, lasts in the social memory for long, it focuses the media interest, especially when it lasts for a long time and the live reports are possible. The author of the instruction warns that most probably the action will end in the police assault and the attacker will be killed, however he/she will die in a glory of the martyr. The author suggests also to choose closed (in terms of space), crowded public sites, gather there the people in one place and after the control over the situation is taken, to start killing people so that the most victims die before the police intervenes. The example of such tactics was the Bataclan attack (Paris, 2015). The attackers armed in AKs and grenades entered the music hall and started killing people there, and then: (...) *after killing or wounding many infidels, the rest were taken hostages to put the assault of armed services off (...)*<sup>9</sup> and the Pulse nightclub shooting (Orlando, 2016), stressing that the attacker benefited from the assault delay and could kill more infidels this way."<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, the "usefulness of human shields was stressed when the assault comes.

Summing it up – it should be stressed that the author of the article gives in fact a very general advice to the followers of the organization who have never taken part in fighting, who do not have any military training, nor any experience in urban fights. Nevertheless, for people who are motivated and radical enough this type of message can be just enough to take action. Particularly that in materials for the ISIS followers there are often opinions that in case of attacks on infidels it is not equipment nor skills that are important but full trust in God and the faith in his power are the factors that guarantee the success of missions, according to a motto *rely on God not on the equipment*. To justify the cruelty the author stresses that it is God himself who

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<sup>8</sup> *Rumiyah* No. 9, p. 47 [online], <https://qb5cc3pam3y2ad0tm1zxuhho-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Rumiyah-9.pdf> [access: 9 XII 2017].

<sup>9</sup> *Rumiyah* No. 9, p. 47.

<sup>10</sup> Although there are some discrepancies in sources, after the attacker had barricaded himself with hostages, he killed a few of several dozen of them.

forbade “killing traitors”<sup>11</sup> and “fighting infidels who are the nearest”<sup>12</sup> so every action should be an act of faith and love for God. Furthermore, detailed criteria of victims “selection” have not been given – the fact of being infidels, the fact that they live were mostly infidels live, the fact that they are in a place where attack is possible, all that is enough. The same rhetoric is used in the *Inspire* magazine, linked to the AQAP.

Significant attention was paid to a media effect of the attack; the hostage taking situation will be a breaking news, dominate news services, attracts the attention of the whole world, will be reported live and then commented for a long time. Death of an attacker in a possible assault will be described as laudable and heroic and as an act people should not be afraid of. This kind of message can have particular consequences, i.e. radicalization of beliefs, motivation for those who hesitate and reassuring them that infidels deserve death. This can lead to an increase of attacks on civilians on European cities. Such publications can boost brutality and severity of an attacker, reluctance to talks with negotiators and, most of all, simulation of hostage taking in order to prolong the action/delay the assault. The examples of such tactics are Mumbai attacks (Nariman House, 2008), Paris attacks (the Bataclan concert hall, 2015) and Orlando shooting (the Pulse club, 2016).

### Orlando shooting

Omar Siddeq Mateen armed with assault rifle and a handgun, started shooting in a gay crowded nightclub in Orlando (Florida). Most of the shooting took place in first 16 minutes of the attack. Then he stopped shooting, took hostages and retreated to the bathroom. He had a telephone communication with the police negotiators. The transition from “active shooter” to “hostage barricade” caused the attack last over 3 hours. The attacker pledged allegiance to the Islamic State. The gunman is killed in a shootout with the police. There were 49 victims of the attack plus the gunman, 53 people were wounded. The attack is regarded as the worst mass shooting in the US history.

Course of events:<sup>13</sup>

**1:58 a. m.:** gunman enters the club and begins shooting;

**2:02 a. m.:** off-duty police officer (working as security guard) shoots back;

**2:08 a. m.:** police respond and 8 officers force the gunman to retreat to the bathroom, where he takes hostages;

<sup>11</sup> Even English-language publications use the Arabic term *murtadd*, it is worth pointing out that in case of ISIS its usage is very broad – it means governmental forces fighting in Syria, Peshmergs, and even Talibs.

<sup>12</sup> *Rumiyah* No. 9, p. 50.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Orange County Sheriff Office Orlando Nightclub Shooting Incident Reports*, <https://publicintelligence.net/orlando-shooting-reports/> [access: 9 XII 2017], <http://interactives.ap.org/2016/orlando-shooting/> [access: 9 XII 2017] and *Investigative Update Regarding Pulse Nightclub Shooting*, [online], <https://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices/tampa/news/press-releases/investigative-update-regarding-pulse-nightclub-shooting> [access: 9 XII 2017].

- 2:18 a. m.: SWAT team responds;
- 2:35 a. m.: the gunman calls 911 and pledges his allegiance to ISIS;
- 2:48–3:27 a. m.: three phone calls with police negotiators;
- 2:48 a. m.: the gunman says attack is in response to US military operations against ISIS (9 minute call);
- 3:03 a. m.: the gunman claims to have a vehicle rigged with explosives parked outside (16 minute call);
- 3:24 a. m.: the gunman uses Facebook to post his allegiance; end of conversation;
- 4:21 a. m.: the police help 8 victims escape through an air conditioning vent;
- 4:29 a. m.: the escapees report plans to strap victims with explosives<sup>14</sup> within 15 minutes<sup>15</sup>;
- 5:02 a. m.: the police use armoured vehicle to break through building wall;
- 5:14 a. m.: the police enter and kill gunman in shootout; medical response.

The attack was classified as home-grown terrorism. The gunman was Omar Siddeq Mateen<sup>16</sup>, 29-year-old American citizen, born in New York, lived in Fort Pierce in Florida. His parents are of Afghan origin, emigrated to the USA in the 1980s. The investigation did not prove his direct contacts with any terrorist organization. Although he pledged allegiance to ISIS one cannot confirm that he was a militant. The FBI investigated in 2003 and 2004 Mateen's ties to Florida-born ISIS militant and the fact that he boasted of Al-Qaeda and Hezbollah ties, however the investigations were closed. Mateen was a Muslim but not devout and disciplined. His religious activity had increased few months before the attack, probably with the increase of his radicalization. The attacker had Police records because of domestic violence and his wife testified that he was emotionally unstable. He noted history of homophobia; after the attack his father claimed that the attack was not of the religious nor terrorist nature but it was rather an act of deep hatred to homosexuals. There were some media rumours that Mateen frequented the Pulse club, used gay web pages and applications, however there some discrepancies in sources. His visits to the club could have been due to adventure seeking but also they could have been a part of his preparations for the attack. The attacker was a security guard trained in using guns, in the attack he used his own weapon.

### **Tactics: active shooter vs. simulated hostage taking<sup>17</sup>**

On 12 June 2016 at about 2 am armed with the SIG Sauer MCX and Glock 17 gunman started shooting at people gathered in the gay nightclub Pulse during the Latino Night.

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<sup>14</sup> The attacker's car was immediately searched but no explosives were found.

<sup>15</sup> According to other sources a brother of one hostage got a sms with this news, which he passed further to the Police.

<sup>16</sup> Also: Omar Mir Seddique Mateen.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Orlando Terror Attack Fireguard 6/12/16*, FDNY Center for Terrorism and Disaster Preparedness, <https://publicintelligence.net/fdny-orlando-attack/> [access: 10 XII 2017].

Types of guns and large amount of ammunition suggest that the attack was planned to kill as many people as possible. He attacked when the party neared completion, the music was still on, guests drank their last drinks. After a few-hours party the guests were tired and relaxed, some under the influence of alcohol (or other staff that lowered the ability to quick reaction). Loud music masked gunshots, some of the victims identified shots as an element of the music or part of any event. The gunman was shooting the people as active shooter – all people were potential victims, he aimed at people to kill, numerous victims had multi-shot traces. The gunman killed his victims one by one. An off-duty police officer (working as a security guard) returned fire as the first, then other policemen and the SWAT team responded. The gunman retreated to the bathroom (where some victims were hiding) and stopped shooting. He switched his tactics to the hostage-taking procedure.

It should be noted that in case of an active shooter and Islamic radical at the same time, who declares allegiance to ISIS, it is hard to talk about typical hostage taking situations: demands, negotiations and possibilities to satisfy certain conditions in exchange for the victims' lives. Hostages are de facto potential victims, because the goal of such attack is to kill as many as possible with no guarantees that any concessions are made by the authorities. Simulation of hostage taking to prolong the action is the way to attract a maximum attention and go give media time to come to the place and give live media coverage for it is the publicity, media presence and the increased result wanted by the ISIS. It was repeated many times in the instruction materials for potential attackers published by ISIS and other terrorist organizations.

The tactics change caused that police teams withdrew outside the building (it was suspected that an IED was inside, probably a battery from exit light was mistaken with IED). The attack was prolonged in time. Medical assistance could not reach all the injured, there was no way of providing assistance to the shot ones inside the building, which lowered their chances to survive. The police assault was prolonged also because the gunman declared that he had an explosive vest and a vehicle packed with explosives parked outside.

The gunman attacked a night club, a soft target, i.e. venue which is an easily accessible target for the attacker. Soft target<sup>18</sup> is a generally accessible place with no strategic nor symbolic meaning, mostly unguarded; it is a place where a great number of civilians, potential victims gather, so it is very difficult to protect. In case of attacks in the EU and the US – these are the most frequently used places by terrorists from Salafi terrorist organizations (ISIS, AQ, AQAP).<sup>19</sup> Statistics of “successes” published

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. J. Hesterman, *Soft targets*, in: M.J. Fagel IJ. Hesterman (ed.), *Soft Targets and Crisis Management: What Emergency Planners and Security Professionals Need to Know*, Boca Raton 2017, CRC Press, pp. 1–9; R.H. Martin, *Soft Targets are Easy Terror Targets: Increased Frequency of Attacks, Practical Preparation, and Prevention*, “Forensic Research Criminology Internal Journal”, No. 3(2) [online], <http://medcraveonline.com/FRCIJ/FRCIJ-03-00087.php> [access: 9 XII 2017].

<sup>19</sup> *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT) 2016*, p. 6 [online], <https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/main-reports/european-union-terrorism-situation-and->

in Arabic language magazine, *Al-Naba* show clearly that militants affiliated by ISIS acting outside Syria and Iraq attacked mostly soft targets.<sup>20</sup>

Soft target is more susceptible to a terrorist act than a protected location. The examples of such locations are railway stations, schools, hospitals, places of religious worship, stadiums/sport clubs, clubs/night clubs, museums, cultural centres, cafes, restaurants, theatres, shopping centres, places, open spaces, i.e. the places that are the opposition to secured hard targets like public administration premises, military facilities, embassies, critical infrastructure facilities.

Furthermore, it should be stressed that a night club, like the Pulse club, is a relatively easy target for a determined attacker because of the high number of potential victims there, who do not expect any attack, the attacker can take advantage of a surprise effect. There is a party relaxed atmosphere in the club, and emotions make quick response and rational decisions impossible, participants are often intoxicated and thus the speed of reaction and the assessment of the level of threat is lowered. The architecture of such venues makes difficulties in their leaving during the attack, egress points are limited, the potential victims are not familiar with the egress points or with back exit points for staff. Numerous recesses, narrow passages, corridors in the clubs allow to hide on the one hand and, on the other, they make quick evacuation very difficult. The same refers to the lighting; darkness, lasers and sharp blinkers hamper location of an attacker and finding escape. In case of an attack in a night club, where few hundreds of people party, the next factor boosting the number of potential victims is a panic of the panicked crowd, the possibility of trampling or wounding people fleeing from the attacker. A part and parcel of parties are loud music that masked gunshots, screams of victims and orders given by security services. The noise hinders phone calls, like police calls, giving detailed information on the situation. The event can also be mistakenly identified – in the YouTube and jokes era<sup>21</sup>, theme parties and arranged kidnappings – the appearance of a masked individual, confusion, screams can be interpreted as a kind of a play, another party element.<sup>22</sup> The outfit of an attacker, a mask, a balaclava, a bulletproof vest can be misled as an outfit of a film fan or a member of a fandom. Clubs and discos are venues of general access – everybody can join, buy a ticket and enter, they can visit the place over and over again – get to know the space, observe the staff, their reactions to not typical situations, put on some tests. Furthermore, in case of numerous clubs and theatres their floor plans are available in the net because of the reservation of places possibilities. It allows to get familiar with the layout of the building, to identify the most crowded places and to plan an attack

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trend-report-te-sat-2016 [access: 9 XII 2017].

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *Al-Naba*, No. 106, p. 2 [online], <https://baytalmasadircom.files.wordpress.com/2017/11/is-text-al-naba-106.pdf> [access: 9 XII 2017].

<sup>21</sup> One of the ISIS manuals for fighters suggests directly that in case of an unsuccessful attack explain the situation and unnatural behaviour they should explain they wanted to play jokes and play it in the youtube.com.

<sup>22</sup> Example: Bataclan concert theatre participants (13.11.2015) thought at first that the gunshots were the element of a pyrotechnical show as a part of the concert.

in details.<sup>23</sup> The examples of attacks carried out in such places are the 2015 Bataclan concert hall attack (89 killed) in Paris, shooting in the Aurora movie theatre (Colorado) in 2012 (12 killed)<sup>24</sup> and the terrorist attack in Dubrovka Theatre (Moscow) in 2002 (170 killed).<sup>25</sup>

In case of an attack in a public place the victims selection is practically impossible because of time. The attacker is aware that the police forces or security forces come soon. In Orlando the attacker also did not choose the victims, he was shooting the people next to him. However, he chose the gay club, which made him sure that there are gays and lesbians inside or the sympathizers of the gay environments. This choice seems not random. Radical believers of Islam condemn homosexuality, in some countries where Sharia law is applicable it is even punishable. In some ISIS publications homosexuality is named many times as one of the moral rottenness of the West. In the territories under ISIS rule, homosexuality is punished with death and executions of gay people (mostly precipitated from high buildings) are filmed and placed in the Internet, then commented in official media, also English-speaking media. The attacker had claimed himself a militant and soldier of this organization.

**Table 1.** Hostage taking vs. simulated hostage taking in Islamist organizations' activities.

HOSTAGE TAKING	SIMULATED HOSTAGE TAKING
Example: Russia, Moscow, Dubrovka Theatre, 2002	Example: USA, Orlando, Pulse club, 2016
South Ossetia, Bieslan, school 2004	France, Paris, Bataclan concert hall, 2015
Hostages held by force in a closed location	Hostages held by force in a closed location
Demands were forwarded	No sensible demands
Hostages taken in order to get specific benefits for the group/"cause"	Hostages taken to be victims of the massacre
Media used for touting „the case”, not much of information went public, the message was delayed	Media used for spreading fear, sustaining the fear atmosphere, because of live coverage of the event, witnesses' reports (amateur footages, social media)
Strategy more and more rarely used by Salafi groups	Strategy used more and more often by Salafi groups
Actions directed at the so-called first responders; attack and facilities secondary	Actions directed at the so-called first responders; attack and facilities secondary

Source: self-study.

<sup>23</sup> The FDNY Center for Terrorism and Disaster Preparedness informed that the Orlando attacker knew the club because he frequently attended it.

<sup>24</sup> The shooting was not of a terrorist nature.

<sup>25</sup> The number of victims was not a direct result of the attackers' action but of the tactics applied by the services which broke the building.

## **Response of services – siege, negotiations, storming<sup>26,27</sup>**

The Orlando shooting has been categorized as the mass casualty incident, MCI, i.e. an event with such big number of casualties that full medical assistance by medical services is impossible. Then the triage was applicable. The Police team came to the spot as first. The analysis of terrorist attacks carried out by the followers of Salafi terrorist organizations indicate that in most cases the police patrols appear as first on the spot, which proves the necessity of their preparing (tactical training) on the off chance that terrorist attacks are carried out. The functionalities taking part in the action did not know each other, did not work together (in the accident reports there were statements like “an unknown officer in the rank of...”), did not have coordination training, however, they were capable of efficient reaction to that dynamic event. In case of terrorist attack that took place six months earlier in San Bernardino (California), in which two active shooters killed 14 people, fled from the spot and were neutralized few hours later during the manhunt, in police reports<sup>28</sup> it was stressed that it was due to numerous coordination trainings in case of active shooter situation, they managed to check the building very quickly, help the wounded and save the lives of many others.

In the area of the Pulse club there was a mess, bloodstained victims run out of the club, the wounded were lying next to the building, gunshots were to be heard which made the medical response more difficult. Police team took their positions around the building, next group formed two groups to enter the building, one group through the patio and the second group (led by a SWAT colonel) went through the front window. The attacker was forced to retreat to the bathroom, where also victims were hiding. Quite significant police forces were used to secure the spot and to take the wounded out of there. The triage zone was established. The most heavily wounded were transported to the nearest hospital by either police or private vehicles. The storming was delayed because of fear for the hostages' lives and because of reported IEDs inside. This delay caused a lot of criticism, however, the police acted in accordance with the procedures in hostage taking cases. The hostage taking situation delayed the response of the police forces for 3 hours. After entering the club and neutralizing the gunman the policemen found inside 66 people, 40 dead (many with numerous gunshot wounds), 26 alive, transported to hospitals, 9 died at the hospital.

Medical response was delayed because the police units were withdrawn from the building under suspicion that the gunman had explosives. The negotiations started,

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<sup>26</sup> *Orlando Terror Attack Fireguard 6/12/16*, FDNY Center for Terrorism and Disaster Preparedness [online] <https://publicintelligence.net/fdny-orlando-attack/> [access: 9 XII 2017].

<sup>27</sup> *Orange County Sheriff Office Orlando Nightclub Shooting Incident Reports* [online], <https://publicintelligence.net/orlando-shooting-reports/> [access: 9 XII 2017].

<sup>28</sup> R. Brazier, F. Straub, G. Watson, R. Hoops, *Bringing Calm to Chaos: A Critical Incident Review of the San Bernardino Public Safety Response to the December 2, 2015, Terrorist Shooting Incident at the Inland Regional Center. Critical Response Initiative*. Washington DC 2016, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, p. 35 [online], <https://www.justice.gov/usao-cdca/file/891996/download> [access: 9 XII 2017]

the storming was delayed, medical response units were denied entry to the building and remained at the staging area out of blast range. Those who managed to escape from the spot in the first phase of the attacks helped the wounded to get to medical units. Critically wounded victims (who did not manage to escape in the first phase of the attack) received no medical treatment for 3 hours until the building was taken and the gunman was killed. There was also a fear that, like in San Bernardino case (2 December 2015), the gunman's goal was to hit the first responders.

Neither the police forces nor other services had casualties (one of the policemen entering the building was hit in his head but a Kevlar helmet saved his life). There were a few phone calls with the gunman during the hostage taking, negotiations were also conducted.<sup>29</sup> At 2:35 am the gunman called 911, informed about the Orlando shooting, pledged his allegiance to ISIS and hung up.<sup>30</sup> The police negotiator (named Andy) connected to the gunman at 2:48 am. They exchanged few sentences, the gunman said that the attack was a response to US airstrikes in Syria and Afghanistan, which should stop, like the cooperation with the Russian government should stop. The gunman pledged also his allegiance to ISIS, called himself a mujahidin, soldier of God, and said that he parked a vehicle rigged with explosives outside the building and suggested that he had a vest filled with explosives on him. He also mentioned an attack carried out by Tamerlan Tsarnaev. Despite attempts by the police negotiators, they could not obtain any information on the number of hostages inside, how the hostages (and the gunman) were, on possible wounded people. At 2:56 am the police negotiator tried to talk to the gunman again, the gunman did probably hear his talk but did not respond. The connection broke. The negotiator kept trying. The gunman responded, played jokes on the negotiator, the connection broke. The gunman responded during next trial declaring that the reason of his attack was an airstrike in Syria, in which Abu Wahid died.<sup>31</sup> He repeated his claims to stop airstrikes in Syria and cooperation with Russia, repeated that he was acting in the name of ISIS and announced that there would be similar attacks in the USA soon. The negotiator suggested him unsuccessfully to leave the building and to talk to the police. The gunman started asking the negotiator about his personal things, then he stopped talking, the negotiator kept talking and the connection broke soon. During their next short talk the gunman said that the talks irritate him and broke the connection. There came to another negotiation talk, however quite short, in which the gunman said that the talks irritated him and airstrikes in Syria should stop. That talk finished at 3:27 am. This way the gunman gained some time.

The above-described talks indicate that this radical ISIS supporter did not plan to release the hostages in exchange for any concessions, he did not want to save his life,

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<sup>29</sup> <http://www.cityoforlando.net/cityclerk/pulse-tragedy-public-records/> [access: 9 XII 2017].

<sup>30</sup> *Joint Statement From Justice Department and FBI Regarding Transcript Related to the Orlando Terror Attack* [online], <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/joint-statement-justice-department-and-fbi-regarding-transcript-related-orlando-terror-attack> [access: 9 XII 2017].

<sup>31</sup> Shaker Wahib al-Fahdawi al-Dulaimi better known as Abu Waheeb is an ISIS commander of the Iraqi province of Anbar, born in 1986.

his demands were very general and impossible to comply, particularly in a short period of time. And because of that it is justified to call this situation a simulated hostage taking.

### **Analysis of the attacker's tactics by terrorist organization**

In one of the AQAP Al-Malahem Media affiliates, *the Inspire Guide. Orlando Operation*<sup>32</sup> there was a description of the action and some guidelines for future attackers. The article was published online on 17 June 2017. The author (authors) points out that attacks carried out by lone wolves<sup>33</sup> are an important element of global jihad, which in turn is a way of putting pressure and defending the *ummah*<sup>34</sup> before American imperialism. The path was shown and next hardened by Osama ben Laden and the 9/11 attacks, the work of whom should be continued by individual jihad. The operations in the West have political and social effects in the war waged against the USA. The goal of the *Inspire* magazine has always been support and giving guidelines for radicals ready for attacks in the West. *The Inspire Guide. Orlando Operation*<sup>35</sup> was created by a detailed analysis of the Orlando shooting to provide knowledge and guidelines for its followers. The authors call for such attacks, support all Muslims who intend to attacks on the enemy's ground (i.e. in those countries where infidels live), no matter to whom they would pledge allegiance or which organization they represent. The authors call also non-Muslims, all those persecuted by America to revenge and actions (with any means available) against this oppressive country. The gunman from Orlando, Umar Siddeq Mateen, is described as a hero, his death is described as martyrdom and the whole attack is described as "the blessed operation" and a historical battle, that America will never forget because it was the worst mass shooting in the US history.

The IG pointed out that Umar Siddeq Mateen selected the Pulse nightclub for homosexuals in Orlando, Florida as a target of his attack. The attack took place during the late hours of the night when he opened fire towards the unconscious drunk crowd who were under the loud music. The nightclub was packed with 350 people, 50 were killed and 53 were wounded.<sup>36</sup> Some were taken hostage by the attacker and were later on freed by the police. The attacker was killed in the course of shooting with the police. The attack was classified as an operation *Targeting general gatherings*. These kind of operation are claimed to be important mainly because of the goals that can be achieved by an organization in the war with America.

Such an attack is in fact a direct message to the American society that elects, supports and pays taxes to their governments and thus legitimizes their actions. The attacks are

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<sup>32</sup> *Inspire Guide. Orlando Operation* [online], [https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2016/06/al-qacc84\\_idah-in-the-arabian-peninsula-22inspire-guide-orlando-operation22.pdf](https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2016/06/al-qacc84_idah-in-the-arabian-peninsula-22inspire-guide-orlando-operation22.pdf) [access: 9 XII 2017].

<sup>33</sup> The terms *lone jihad* or *lone mujahid* are used in English-language publications.

<sup>34</sup> Ummah is an Arabic word meaning "community".

<sup>35</sup> Further called the IG.

<sup>36</sup> An official death toll is 49, some media include also the attacker, this is where the number of victims given by the IG.

a form of pressure on the American people not to support those politicians who apply oppressive policy towards Muslims around the world. The attacks are to convince the American people that if they support the government even indirectly in the war with terror, the number of attacks will grow. The authors cite Osama ben Laden's stating that "if you kill us you will be killed too" and hope for such big social pressure that the American government stops any actions against the ummah. The authors prove also that of the American society supported politicians who are at war with Muslims, so it is at war with Islam, it is involved in military actions, and American citizens cannot be viewed as civilians.

The Orlando shooting is considered by the Inspire Guard as one of the most successful lone jihad operations (because of the high number of victims), meaning that it will inspire others to wage similar operations and makes the radicals want to attain a similar or more fatalities. And this encourages those hesitant to launch their own operations, especially when they see how easy it is to execute an operation. The number of those killed in the attack was high compared to other lone jihad attacks. The reason for that was the location of the attack – closed area and thus making it very easy to chase and hunt the targets; the timing – it was late in the night and those present in the club were drunk; the abilities of the gunman in handling firearms because of his job in a security firm.

In the first stage of his operation the gunman took hostages which lengthened the attack for 3 hours and gained the publicity. Taking hostages made the attacker controlled the situation and was difficult to identify. The police used maximum force and the actions caused additional injuries to some of the hostages. The public saw that it was more important for the government to complete the operation (to catch/to kill the attacker) than to save the lives of hostages, which – according to the authors – is even much more embarrassing for the government. The attacker used the most available means – his machine gun; he did not prepare other means, he rather used things that were available to him. This confirmed the rule that in case of attack preparations the main problem is not in obtaining the weapon but is the conviction, determination and the power of will.

The IG contained negative thoughts as well. The authors do not praise the attack on a gay club although they admit that homosexuality should be fight. In their opinion terrorist attack in such place should not deviate the essence of the attack, i.e. armed jihad and it may rise suspicions of an "ordinary" act of homophobia. As the authors prove that was exactly what the media focused on. Moreover, most victims were Latinos. The authors suggest that it is better to target the white Anglo-Saxon victims because this class of American community is the majority and it is the one that is in the American leadership. An attack on the ethnic or national minority would not cause a social stir and accusations of the government incompetence. An attack on white Americans will result in low security feeling and lack of support for the authorities, which will result in distrust for institutions, chaos, trust crisis and political changes – according to the authors. There were 350 people in the club, 50 were killed, 53 were

wounded, i.e. a third suffered from the attack. The attack would be more effective if a simple IED was built and detonated in a right moment. It would kill those who had not been killed from the gunshots. The authors remained that the instructions for such explosive devices were published in the Issue 1 and Issue 12 of the *Inspire* and recommended merging different tactics to boost the number of victims.

The IG authors call unequivocally upon the Muslims in America to carry out attacks in defence of their religion and the Islamic ummah and remind its readers that Al-Qaeda and other organizations do not monopolize the lone jihad, however they should spread the idea. They call upon every Muslim living in the West (or who are able to travel to the West) to follow upon the footsteps of the Orlando attacker. What is interesting, the *Dabiq* magazine, the then most popular English-language magazine published by the Al-Hayat Media Centre linked to ISIS barely mentioned the Orlando attack. The information appeared in the section of military successes of ISIS: *America – on the seventh day of Ramadan, our brother Umar Mateen, soldier of the Caliphate, carried out an attack on the nightclub for sodomites in Orlando, Florida. Before he was killed he managed to massacre with success the ugly Crusaders, killing and wounding 100 people. The operation was called the most bloody since the 9/11.*<sup>37</sup>

## Summary

The attack on the Pulse club is the kind of events that are very difficult to predict and prevent. The gunman had no ties with any terrorist group, attacked on his own, had no contacts to any organizations, did not seek any assistance nor additional finances, did not meet with any accomplices and his Internet activity did not arise any suspicions. That is the reason why the possibilities to stop the attack by the services operational work were limited and despite the police vigilance the attack was planned and carried out by the gunman. In the attack, off the current military conflict zones, in which civilians were killed, the area for terrorist activities was the urban area, the soft targets were attacked – unsecured and accessible. First, the gunman started shooting at the party participants, then he simulated a hostage taking to take negotiations and prolong the attack. The attack resulted in fatalities and chaos, fear, the feeling of danger, so the so-called soft targets of terrorist organization were reached.

## Abstract

The article consists of two parts. In the first part a simulated hostage taking was described, i.e. one of the tactics of a terrorist attack, which was described in ISIS magazines giving the followers of the organization from the USA and the European

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<sup>37</sup> *Dabiq* No. 15, p. 43 [online] <https://clarionproject.org/factsheets-files/islamic-state-magazine-dabiq-fifteen-breaking-the-cross.pdf> [access: 9 XII 2017].

Union guidelines and information. Salafi organizations have call for many years to attacks territories where infidels live, their calls are directed towards radical followers often without military experience but full of enthusiasm and determination. Apart from ideological and motivational materials there are English-language instructions with guidelines how to organize a terrorist attack prepared for them, the target of which are civilians, most often gathered in easily accessible, unsecured place (soft target). The authors suggest the active shooter tactics and then simulating hostage taking. The simulated hostage taking is to prolong the attack, negotiations are not to work out any concessions or to get any particular benefits by the attacker but to gain additional time to attract the media, to postpone medical assistance to the wounded and preparing the attacker for a next stage – usually storming by the police and confrontation with counter terrorist units. An empiric datum was the Orlando shooting of 12 June 2016. The armed attacker who pledged allegiance to the ISIS, entered the club early in the morning, when the party was coming to the end and started shooting to participants there. The goal of his actions was to kill as many people as he could, completed his plan up to the moment the services entered. When the shooting started, he simulated a hostage taking, started phone calls with negotiators, however his actions had nothing to do with conciliation with services but getting additional time. In the article the tactics of the attacker was analysed as well as the way services acted. After the operation AQAP published the tactics of the attacker and guidelines for potential followers which were also described in the article.

**Keywords:** tactics, ISIS, soft target, hostage taking situation, Orlando attack/operation.