Fascist killer appears in Norwegian court

Robert Stevens, Susan Garth
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The right-wing extremist Anders Behring Breivik appeared in court yesterday and confessed to the mass murder of 76 people in Norway, many of them children.

Breivik pleaded not guilty in a closed session of an Oslo court. This was despite his admitting to having planted the bomb which exploded in Oslo city centre on Friday and later carrying out the mass shooting at a Labour Party summer camp on the island of Otøya.

Eight people were killed in the bomb attack, and 68 in the shooting rather than 83 as previously claimed. Given the size of the Norwegian population, which is only some 4 million, and the population of Oslo, which is just over half a million, the death toll is all the more horrific.

Breivik was arrested while still in possession of weapons and ammunition. He is accused of "acts of terrorism."

The defendant's statements were reported to the media later by the judge. Speaking through an interpreter, Judge Heger said that Breivik believed he was saving Norway and Western Europe from "cultural Marxism and Muslim domination." He claimed that his victims were guilty of "treason" for promoting multiculturalism.

Judge Heger remanded the accused in custody for eight weeks, the first four in total solitary confinement. He will not be allowed visits or to send or receive messages, except from his lawyer. The judge insisted that this was necessary to allow the police to carry out their investigations without interference from Breivik.

Heger gave the same reason for holding the hearing in private. The prosecution raised the possibility that the defendant would use a public hearing to send messages to co-conspirators.

Breivik had earlier told his defence lawyer, Geir Lippestad, that he had acted alone. But Heger said "that there is concrete information that a public hearing with the suspect present could quickly lead to an extraordinary and very difficult situation in terms of the investigation and security."

Police Chief Sveinung Sponheim told reporters that it was "not at all certain" if Breivik had acted alone or not. "That is one of the things that the investigation will concentrate on," he said. But he admitted that police had no other suspects.

After the hearing, Judge Heger said that it was now believed that there were two terrorist cells associated with Breivik.

Just what Breivik would seek to communicate on the stand, either in the form of a political statement or a message to any co-conspirators was not indicated. He has already made extensive statements on the Internet, including publishing a 1,500 page document setting out his right-wing views. A further statement of those views in court, under highly controlled conditions and facing cross examination from skilled lawyers, could hardly do any further damage.

The closed court hearing for Breivik suggests that the Norwegian authorities have something to hide.

He first came to the attention of the secret service, by their own admission, in March, when he placed an order with a Polish chemical firm. The head of Norway's secret service, Janne Kristiansen, said that they did not investigate the matter any further. It was also reported that Breivik and an unidentified second person tried to buy fertiliser earlier this year.

Fertiliser and a range of basic household chemicals have been repeatedly used to manufacture explosives. In 2007, five men were convicted in Britain for an attempt to blow up a shopping mall using a fertiliser bomb. The claim that the Norwegian authorities let what they admit was an unusual purchase of chemicals pass without investigation must be accounted for. The one clear fact that emerges is that Breivik was on their radar before the Oslo bombing and the Otøya massacre.

Even the British intelligence services seem to have noticed this man and his connections with right-wing groups in England. He is said to have attended a meeting with UK fascists in April 2002. He is said to have contact with the Stop the Islamification of Europe and the English Defence League.

Breivik posted a video on YouTube—since

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removed—showing himself in scuba gear pointing an automatic weapon at the camera saying, “Before we can start our crusade we must do our duty by decimating cultural Marxism.” It was called Knights Templar 2083. The title of the video supposedly referred to the siege of Vienna in 1683, when a Turkish army was defeated. Breivik’s manifesto was called “2083—A European Declaration of Independence” the date is the 400th anniversary of the siege. Breivik seems to have posted material on an anti-Islamic blog called “The Gates of Vienna.”

There was plenty of warning about Breivik’s intentions. Breivik is said to have written,“Once you decide to strike, it is better to kill too many than not enough, or you risk reducing the desired ideological impact of the strike.”

Breivik appears to have been well financed and well organised. He leased a farm north of Oslo two years ago. According to Reuters, the farm is near a military base housing the 2,000-strong Telemark battalion. He posted an entry on his Internet diary commenting on the proximity.

“It’s quite ironic,” Breivik wrote, “being situated practically on top of the largest military base in the country. It would have saved me a lot of hassle if I could just ‘borrow’ a cup of sugar and 3kg of C4 (explosive) from my dear neighbour.”

Locals noted what an unlikely farmer Breivik was. A woman who worked at the local pub and filling station said that he insisted on getting receipts for all his purchases and paid with a card.

Soldiers from the local camp drink at the pub, which is decorated with pictures from Afghanistan.

Owning a farm allowed Breivik to buy large quantities of fertiliser for an apparently legitimate purpose. Even so, the Polish company he used was sufficiently concerned at the amount he was buying to alert the police. It is thought that it was at this farm, under the noses of the Norwegian army and with the police warned of his purchases, that he built the car bomb that devastated central Oslo.

Breivik seems to have joined a gun club in 2005, and he had a number of registered weapons. But the ease with which he could get hold of automatic weapons and the dumdum bullets with which he is alleged to have shot people on the island of Otøya must also raise questions. Norway is a hunting country, but firearms are strictly controlled and the level of gun crime is relatively low. Breivik claims that he got his armoury from the Czech underworld, but if true this does not explain how he got them into Norway.

The two-phase character of the Norway killings strongly suggests that Breivik did not work alone. It was reported that six people had been arrested in Norway as well as an employee at the Polish agricultural supplier that had sold fertiliser to Breivik. All have since been released without charge.

The ease with which he gained access to the camp must be explained. This was a regular summer event organised by the Labour Party. It regarded as the nursery of future politicians and future leaders of the country. Labour leader and Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg was due to visit on Saturday.

Breivik was able to gain access to the island apparently disguised as a policeman. No one has yet explained where he got hold of a uniform that was sufficiently convincing to persuade the security guards on duty that he was there on official business.

When the police were alerted to the massacre that was taking place on Otøya, it took them over an hour to set foot on the island. Breivik’s shooting spree lasted 90 minutes. By the time they arrived only Breivik was there and he handed himself over to custody without a struggle, despite having guns and a large amount of ammunition.

There has been mounting criticism of the police response to the massacre. The police have claimed that they did not have the right kind of helicopter to reach the area, and that when they attempted to reach it by boat, the craft was so overloaded with police and equipment that it began taking on water and was forced to turn back.

On Monday, over 100,000 people rallied in Oslo in solidarity with the victims of the attack. While initially called as a march, the throngs of demonstrators was too great to move through the city’s streets. Similar rallies were held elsewhere across Norway.

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