US gunman alleged to have killed six at Sikh temple was a neo-Nazi

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7 August 2012

Much remains murky in relation to the mass shooting Sunday at a Wisconsin Sikh temple that resulted in the death of seven people, including the gunman, and critical wounding of three others. One thing is clear, however: the alleged shooter had a long and deep involvement in white supremacist, neo-Nazi circles.

The ample information about Wade Michael Page's fascist sympathies has been downplayed by the mass media and US officials, and the general theme of media commentary is "the search for a motive." The evidence, however, strongly indicates that Page's homicidal rampage against ethnic Indians was driven by a racist and fascist political agenda, defining his crime as an act of right-wing domestic terrorism.

The 40-year-old Army veteran used a 9 millimeter automatic handgun to fatally shoot six worshippers at the Wisconsin Sikh Temple in Oak Creek, a suburb of Milwaukee, and send two others, as well as a police officer, to the hospital with life-threatening wounds. Page was then killed in a shootout with police.

The deceased Sikhs, ranging in age from 39 to 84, included five men and one woman, identified as Sita Singh (41), Ranjit Singh (49), Satwant Singh Kaleka (65), Prakash Singh (39), Paramjit Kaur (41), and Suveg Singh (84).

The police and FBI claim that only one gunman was involved. However, there are reasons to treat this version of events with some skepticism. Initial news reports Sunday morning, based on statements from witnesses at the scene, spoke of multiple shooters. One witness reported that four white males opened fire. Others said there was more than one gunman.

Temple officials reported seeing suspicious persons and receiving suspicious phone calls in the days prior to the incident. The chairman of the temple said several suspicious men were seen on the premises on Saturday, the day before the shooting.

At a press conference in Oak Creek held Monday morning, authorities said they were attempting to identify another person, a white male, whom they described as "a person of interest." Reporters for the Milwaukee *Journal Sentinel* said a man matching the photo officials had shown was seen at the scene of the temple on Sunday.

Yet the evening news programs on the three major broadcast networks and the Public Broadcasting System dropped any reference to the "person of interest."

President Obama on Sunday and again on Monday issued short and perfunctory statements of condolence for the victims and their families, exhibiting no desire to examine the social roots of this latest mass killing, coming barely two weeks after the rampage at a movie theater in Colorado that killed 12 and wounded 59. His opponent, Republican Mitt Romney, repeated the well-worn mantra of another "senseless act of violence."

Page, born in 1971 in Colorado, joined the Army in 1992 and was given a "general discharge" in 1998. He was denied an "honorable" discharge and, in fact, was kicked out for repeated instances of being drunk on duty.

According to officials, Page received his basic training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma before being moved to Fort Bliss in Texas and ending up at Fort Bragg in North Carolina. He joined the psychological operations unit, a branch of the Special Forces. He was a parachutist and received a commendation medal, five achievement medals, two good conduct medals, the National Defense Service Medal and a Humanitarian Service Medal.

After being forced out of the military, Page lived for a time in Lafayette, North Carolina. He is believed to

have worked as a truck driver at Barr-Nunn Transportation from 2006 to 2010 and left "involuntarily," according to an employee at the firm. He lived for a time in South Milwaukee, Wisconsin and moved last month to Cudahy, near Oak Creek, where he worked nights at a welding supply company making parts.

He acquired an arrest record in four states, including for driving while under the influence and passing a bad check, and spent 60-day stints in jail in Texas and Colorado.

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), a clearinghouse for information on far-right, racist and fascist groups, reported Monday that it had been tracking Page since 2000. In that year he sought to purchase goods from the National Alliance, a neo-Nazi group led by William Pierce, the author of *The Turner Diaries*.

The book depicts a fascist overthrow of the US government followed by a race war, and became something of a Bible of white supremacist elements. Parts of the book were found in the getaway car of Timothy McVeigh, the Gulf War veteran and right-wing militia member who blew up the federal building in Oklahoma City in 1995, killing 168 people.

Also in 2000, according to a 2010 interview Page gave to Label 56, a far-right record company, he went to the Hammerfest 2000 in Georgia and joined the white-power rock band Youngland. In 2005 he founded his own band, End Apathy.

On Monday, a human rights group called Responsible for Equality and Liberty (REAL) said someone based in Milwaukee using the name "End Apathy" began posting on the white supremacist web site Stormfront in early 2008. The site promoted appearances by Page's band, including at a white supremacist gathering held in Richmond, Virginia last March.

The government and media have no desire to probe Page's fascist links because they raise broader questions about the social and political decay of America. This involves the official promotion of militarism and the cultivation, as part of the so-called "war on terror," of anti-Muslim and xenophobic sentiment, especially among backward social layers.

Since 9/11, there have been over 700 reported attacks on the 350,000-strong Sikh population living in the US. Sikhs, whose men generally allow their hair and beards to grow long and wear turbans, are commonly mistaken as Muslims, accounting in part for the growth of attacks on them by right-wing elements.

Threats against Sikhs rose to the point that last April, Representative Joseph Crowley of New York, co-chairman of the Congressional Caucus on Indians and Indian-Americans, sent a letter to Attorney General Eric Holder in which he called on the FBI to collect data on hate crimes against Sikh-Americans. The letter noted that in the last year alone, two Sikh men in Sacramento were slain, a Sikh temple in Michigan was vandalized, and a Sikh man was beaten in New York.

Page's years in the Army's psychological operations unit, moreover, throw the spotlight on the military's recruitment and cultivation of a psychopathic element ready to carry out mass murder against any population targeted by US imperialism for occupation.

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