

Two gunmen killed outside anti-Islam provocation in Texas

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Two gunmen were shot and killed outside a staged anti-Islamic provocation in the city of Garland, Texas, Sunday night, an outcome that was patently sought and welcomed by the event's organizers.

The event, which was billed as a "Muhammad Art Exhibit and Cartoon Contest," had been turned into an armed camp by local authorities and its organizers, who paid \$10,000 for extra police.

Cops had sealed off the area surrounding the Curtis Culwell Center, which is run by the local school district, and installed metal detectors at the door. An entire SWAT reaction team, dressed in military camouflage and armed with assault rifles, was deployed behind the center.

As it happened, just one Garland traffic cop is reported to have shot both of the gunmen with a pistol after they had fired on a security guard, wounding him in the ankle.

One of the gunmen was identified as Elton Simpson of Phoenix, Arizona, who was well known to federal authorities, while the other was said to be his roommate, Nadir Hamid Soofi. Both were wearing body armor and carrying assault rifles, according to police reports.

The event was organized by the American Freedom Defense Initiative (AFDI), a right-wing, rabidly anti-Muslim and pro-Zionist organization, with the express purpose of grotesquely cashing in on the right-wing and anti-Muslim campaign whipped up over the terrorist attack on the offices of *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris last January.

Aping *Charlie Hebdo* and its vulgar anti-Muslim caricatures, the group staged a contest offering a \$10,000 prize to the "best" cartoon of the Muslim prophet Muhammad, an action deliberately designed to insult and incite Muslim sensibilities while at the same

time whipping up anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant chauvinism.

The leader of the group and the event's organizer was Pamela Geller, who previously won notoriety as one of the instigators of a racist campaign against the so-called "Ground Zero mosque," an attempt to whip up lynch mob hysteria over a proposed Islamic cultural center near the site of the former World Trade Center buildings.

She has also received media attention through a series of lawsuits aimed at forcing local transit authorities to place openly racist and inflammatory anti-Muslim advertisement posters on buses and in subway stations. Last month, a federal judge ruled in her favor, finding that New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) cannot prevent her from having a poster with the text "Killing Jews is Worship that draws us close to Allah" next to the image of a young man in a *keffiyeh*, a traditional Middle Eastern headdress.

The Southern Poverty Law Center, which tracks white supremacist and fascist organizations, has described Geller's outfit as a "hate group," noting that she "has mingled comfortably with European racists and fascists."

Indeed, brought to the US to make the main speech at the cartoon contest in Texas was the Dutch member of parliament and leader of the extreme right-wing Party for Freedom, Geert Wilders. A self-proclaimed advocate of "free speech" when it comes to vilifying Muslims, Wilders has called for a ban on the publication of the Quran.

On its own web site, Geller's AFDI describes itself as a group that "acts against the treason being committed by national, state, and local government officials, the mainstream media, and others in their

capitulation to the global jihad and Islamic supremacism, the ever-encroaching and unconstitutional power of the federal government, and the rapidly moving attempts to impose socialism and Marxism upon the American people.”

In the immediate aftermath of the shooting, Geller made it clear that she had anticipated a violent outcome, effectively having organized the event as a means of provoking one. “This is war on free speech,” she tweeted, before any identification had been made of the slain gunmen. “What are we going to do? Are we going to surrender to these monsters?”

One of those killed, Elton Simpson, 30, had been closely monitored by federal authorities for years. Beginning in 2006 and continuing until late 2009, the FBI had paid an informant \$132,000 for wearing a wire and attempting to entrap Simpson into making statements implicating himself in the support of terrorism and an alleged plan to travel to Somalia to join the Islamist group Al Shabaab. With tapes covering some 327 days of conversations, federal prosecutors were unable to prove their case, and Simpson was found guilty only of making false statements to the FBI and sentenced to probation.

He was subsequently placed on a no-fly list. According to the *Washington Post*, “The FBI had begun monitoring Simpson again recently.”



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