

Questions mount over FBI handling of Orlando gunman

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There are mounting questions about the conduct of the FBI in relation to Omar Mateen, the gunman who killed 49 people Sunday morning at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida. FBI officials have confirmed investigating Mateen in 2013 and 2014, but claim they concluded he was not a threat.

The investigation in 2013 was triggered by Mateen's boasting to coworkers at the G4S security firm, the world's largest employer of armed guards, that he knew the two brothers, Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, who carried out the terrorist bombing at the Boston Marathon. He also claimed to be a member of Hezbollah, the Lebanese militia and political party classified by the US government as terrorist.

FBI Director James Comey said the bureau conducted a ten-month investigation that included two interviews with Mateen and the monitoring of his activities through surveillance and the use of undercover operatives. The probe, according to Comey, ultimately concluded that Mateen had made up his claims of connections to terrorism.

A year later, the FBI opened a new investigation after a former member of the mosque Mateen attended in Ft. Pierce, Florida, Moner Mohammad Abusalha, became the first American to carry out a suicide attack in Syria. This investigation found that the two men were acquaintances but nothing more, according to Ronald Hopper, an assistant agent in charge of the Tampa division of the FBI. "We determined that contact was minimal and did not constitute a substantive relationship or a threat at that time," Hopper told a press conference.

There are several reasons for questioning the truthfulness of the FBI account. His former wife Sitara Yusufiy, who fled domestic abuse after only four months of marriage in 2009, has said she was never

contacted by the FBI in either 2013 or 2014. This would surely be an elementary step in any serious investigation into Mateen's possible connections with Islamic radical groups.

Mateen apparently felt so unthreatened by the FBI investigation in 2013 that he voluntarily informed his employer, the security firm G4S, where he had worked as an armed security guard since 2007. The firm took no action against him, having been assured by the FBI that the investigation had been closed.

Two years later, a coworker at G4S, Daniel Gilroy, a former policeman, made repeated complaints against Mateen because of his constant talk of violence and of his hatred of gays, blacks, women and Jews. The armed guard repeatedly voiced the desire to kill blacks, gays and lesbians, referring to them with racial and antigay slurs.

According to a report by the *Miami Herald*, Gilroy "said he repeatedly complained about Mateen's behavior to supervisors, but they declined to discipline him because of his Muslim faith. Mateen frequently prayed on a mat while at work, he said." Gilroy finally quit the company only to receive dozens of abusive text messages from Mateen after his departure.

The FBI ostensibly took no notice of the political views of Mateen's father, Seddique Mateen, an Afghan immigrant who hosts an online political affairs program hostile to the US-backed government in Kabul. The elder Mateen has expressed sympathy for the Afghan Taliban on his program, calling them "our warrior brothers" who "are rising up" against the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

When all these circumstances are considered, the FBI's defense of its actions in relation to Mateen simply does not hold water. Even in the corporate-controlled press, there has been a certain skepticism

about the FBI account. The *Washington Post* noted Monday, “Much like Tamerlan Tsarnaev, the older of the two brothers who carried out the Boston Marathon bombing, Mateen had been on the FBI’s radar.”

A *Wall Street Journal* profile of Mateen was even more suggestive. Its opening paragraph reads, “The man who committed the worst mass shooting in US history had an online bride from Uzbekistan who said he beat her, coworkers who feared he had terrorist leanings and a father who hosted a cable show in which he claimed to be president of Afghanistan.”

Even more questions are raised by a circumstance reported much more aggressively in the British press than in the American: Mateen’s connection to Marcus Dwayne Robertson, a self-proclaimed Muslim cleric who has served prison time for tax evasion and weapons violations in connection with recruiting American Muslims to join a jihadist group in the West African country of Mauritania.

The press account of Robertson’s career surpasses fiction: six years in the US Marines; followed by joining a gang of bank robbers in New York City; then serving as a bodyguard for the “blind sheik” Omar Abdel Rahman, the Egyptian-born imam now in prison for the 1993 World Trade Center bombing attack; then, after a short prison term, becoming an FBI informer and working in counterterrorism operations in Africa, Egypt and the US from 2004 to 2007 before he was fired allegedly for assaulting his CIA controller.

After going to prison for the second time in 2011 and serving four years for the Mauritania case, Robertson was released from jail and promptly established the “Fundamental Islamic Knowledge Seminary” in Orlando, later renamed the “Timbuktu Seminary,” preaching radical Islamist doctrines, including hatred of gays. One of his students in the new venture: Omar Mateen.

The whistleblowing web site *Intercept* has noted that the same FBI station that cleared Omar Mateen has been involved in some of the most dubious and flimsy “terrorism” investigations, in which homeless and mentally ill individuals have been manipulated by FBI provocateurs who supplied them with money, weapons and alleged “bomb-making” materials, leading to arrests, prosecutions and long jail sentences.

While sheer incompetence may well play a role, the FBI operations in relation to Omar Mateen suggest a

darker conclusion: the US intelligence services maintain a large pool of people like Mateen, potential recruits for overseas operations such as the ongoing war against the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad. It should be pointed out that when Mateen’s acquaintance Abusalha went to Syria to join the al-Nusra Front, the Al Qaeda affiliate was in tacit alliance with the US government in the civil war against the Assad government.

Many such veterans of the Syrian civil war recruited from European countries have returned home to play a central role in the recent ISIS-inspired terrorist attacks in Brussels and Paris.

In the case of Omar Mateen, it may well be that his only link to ISIS is the 911 call he made to Orlando police proclaiming his loyalty to the group, minutes after he had begun his orgy of killing inside the Pulse night club. The accounts of family members and former coworkers suggest that homophobia rather than Islamic radicalism may have been his main motive.

But the actions of the FBI in this case demonstrate that the main concern of the US military-intelligence apparatus as a whole is not to prevent acts of terrorism, but to use the threat of terrorism as the pretext for the building up of police-state measures directed against the American people.



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