

# FBI tried to ensnare Orlando shooter in fake terror plot

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Omar Mateen, the 29-year-old security guard who carried out the horrific June 12 massacre of 49 people at The Pulse, an LGBT nightclub in Orlando, Florida, was the target in 2013 of a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) “sting” operation aimed at goading him into participation in a terrorist plot.

In Orlando on Monday, FBI Special Agent Ronald Hopper told the media, “We currently have no evidence that he was directed by a foreign terrorist group, but was radicalized domestically.”

Hooper was speaking at a press conference called to announce the release of a partially redacted transcript of a 50-second telephone conversation between Mateen and a 911 dispatcher that was made in the early morning hours in the course of what became the worst mass shooting in recent US history.

The transcript’s release sparked a political row, with Republican leaders and right-wing news outlets and commentators denouncing the Justice Department for editing out Mateen’s statement of “allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi of the Islamic State.”

“Selectively editing this transcript is preposterous,” said the Republican speaker of the House of Representatives, Paul Ryan. “We know the shooter was a radical Islamist extremist inspired by ISIS.” He argued that release of an un-redacted transcript would allow the public to be “clear-eyed about who did this and why.”

The FBI argued that references to the Islamic State and its leader had been cut in order not to give credit to terrorist groups and their leaders. “We’re not going to propagate their rhetoric, their violent rhetoric,” said Special Agent Hooper. Later in the day, however, the Obama Justice Department bowed to the right-wing pressure and released the transcript without the redactions.

While the argument over the transcripts was directed at feeding the narrative that “political correctness” was responsible for preventing the FBI from foiling a terrorist atrocity, the revelations about the agency’s earlier contact with Mateen raise the more substantive question of whether the agency played a role in fomenting the bloodbath and in furthering his “domestic radicalization.”

St. Lucie County, Florida, Sheriff Ken Mascara told a local

southeastern Florida newspaper last week that he had brought Mateen to the attention of the FBI in 2013 after requesting that he be removed from his job as a security guard at the St. Lucie County Courthouse, where he was employed by the transnational security corporation G4S.

According to Mascara, Mateen had made threatening remarks to a sheriff’s deputy, saying that he could have him and his family killed by Al Qaeda, and made “very disturbing comments about women and followed it up with very disturbing comments about Jews and then went on to say that the Fort Hood shooter was justified in his actions.”

According to Mascara, the FBI launched an investigation during the course of which it planted one of its “confidential informers” inside the courthouse to “lure Omar into some kind of act, and Omar did not bite.”

Afterward, the sheriff said, the FBI concluded Mateen was not a threat. His company, G4S, meanwhile, reportedly credited the security guard’s testimony that he had been taunted by co-workers because he was a Muslim and concluded that he had been subjected to a hostile work environment.

Since September 11, 2001, virtually every significant prosecution of individuals charged with terrorist acts in the US has involved the use of “confidential informants,” often highly paid to troll through mosques and immigrant communities in search of hapless, and frequently mentally disabled, individuals who can be recruited to plots that would never even have existed outside of the FBI providing the inspiration and the material means.

As trial transcripts have revealed, the modus operandi of these informants/provocateurs includes posing as radicals with Al Qaeda or ISIS connections and pressuring the targets of the sting into joining the manufactured plots.

Reports that have surfaced since Mateen was killed in a hail of police gunfire last week indicate that he was likely seen as a good prospect for such an operation, described by co-workers and others close to him as suffering from serious mental problems.

In a feature article published barely a week before the Orlando massacre, the *New York Times* reported, “The FBI has significantly increased its use of stings in terrorism cases, employing agents and informants to pose as jihadists, bomb

makers, gun dealers or online ‘friends’ in hundreds of investigations into Americans suspected of supporting the Islamic State.”

According to the *Times’s* account, undercover sting operations now feature in at least two out of every three prosecutions involving alleged support for ISIS. This is no doubt a significant underestimate.

The report said that court records confirmed that the FBI’s covert “agents have helped people suspected of being extremists acquire weapons, scope out bombing targets and find the best routes to Syria to join the Islamic State.”

The *Times* cites the case of Emanuel Lutchman, a mentally ill panhandler in Rochester, New York, whom a paid informant convinced to join an invented terrorist plot, driving him to Walmart last December “to buy a machete, ski masks, zip ties and other supplies for a would-be terrorist attack on New Year’s Eve...the informant covered the \$40 cost.”

A similar sting operation was mounted against James Gonzalo Medina in Miami, Florida, by the same FBI office that attempted to entrap Mateen. Undercover agents convinced Medina to join them in a plot to bomb a synagogue, supplying him with a fake bomb and driving him to the building before arresting him.

Federal officials told the *Times* that it has about 1,000 open investigations into so-called homegrown violent extremists, with a “significant number” of cases involving undercover sting operations. In other words, several hundred individuals are today being pressured by agents provocateurs to involve themselves in terrorist actions. It is hardly a stretch of the imagination to envision this wholesale exercise in manufactured terror producing new tragedies on the scale of Orlando.

The central activity of the FBI’s counter-terror division is directed not at uncovering real terrorist threats, but rather at manufacturing fake ones in order to supply the pretext for the unrelenting buildup of a police state.

In pursuit of this same objective, the agency, while acknowledging the obvious fact that Mateen was not acting under the direction of ISIS or any other terrorist group, is continuing to promote the thesis that the atrocity in Orlando is to be explained by Mateen being “domestically radicalized” as an Islamist terrorist.

To further this contention, they have sought to downplay extensive evidence that Mateen was suffering from severe mental and emotional problems and, in many ways, fit the profile of those involved in the mass shootings that occur across the US on a more than daily basis.

In particular, the FBI has suppressed reports that Mateen may have been driven by internal conflicts between his sexuality and an extremely oppressive social environment within his family.

His former wife, Sitora Yusufiy, an immigrant from Uzbekistan whose current fiancé is Brazilian, told the Brazilian news program SBT Brasil that she believed Mateen was gay

and that his father had denounced him as homosexual in front of her on several occasions.

Yusufiy, who described Mateen as “mentally unstable and mentally ill,” said he had beaten and abused her before her family rescued her from the relationship.

Most significantly, Yusufiy’s fiancé, Marco Dias, told the Brazilian station that she had spoken to the FBI about Mateen’s “gay tendencies” and had been asked by FBI agents “not to tell this to the American media.”

The account given by Mateen’s ex-wife has been corroborated by patrons of The Pulse, who have told the media that he regularly visited the nightclub, drinking heavily there and attempting to pick up men. Witnesses have also said that he was active on gay dating apps such as Grindr for years, and that they had given their phones with evidence of this to the FBI. At the same time, co-workers recalled Mateen expressing violently homophobic hatred.

For the most part, the corporate media has adhered to the blackout demanded by the FBI. In a long profile of the killer posted by the *New York Times* Saturday, there is no mention of either this aspect of Yusufiy’s statements or those of the Pulse patrons. The article states tersely, “while some reports have suggested that he was gay, federal officials say they have found no evidence in his effects or online presence to back them up.”

The clear aim here is to bolster the official story that the Orlando massacre is the product of Islamist terrorism and that the necessary response--supported by both the Democrats and Republicans and their presumptive presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump--is an escalation of both war abroad and repression at home.

Excluded from every statement and analysis provided by the capitalist politicians and media is any suggestion that the horrendous crime in Orlando, like so many mass shootings before it, has its real roots not in some foreign terrorist ideology, but in the malignant state of American society, a social order that has been dominated for decades by endless war abroad and ever-widening social inequality at home.



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