

Ohio State University attack leaves 11 injured, suspect dead

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29 November 2016

At just before 10am Monday morning, 18-year-old Abdul Razak Ali Artan drove into a crowd of people on the Ohio State University campus, exited his car and stabbed multiple bystanders with a knife, according to officials investigating the attack. Less than a minute later, Artan was killed by a campus police officer.

Eleven people were hurt in the attack, one critically. Most were injured by the car, while at least two were stabbed and one had a fractured skull. The campus remained on lockdown for 90 minutes after the university first reported an “active shooter” on campus.

With little information available, the attack was almost immediately portrayed as terrorist-related by the media, local officials and at least one top level political official, US Congressman Adam Schiff (D-California). The FBI has been called in to join the investigation.

Asked at a press conference whether the attack is being considered as a potentially terrorist act, Columbus police chief, Kim Jacobs, said: “I think we have to consider that it is.”

Schiff, the top Democrat on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, released a statement claiming that the attack “bears all the hallmarks of a terror attack carried out by someone who may have been self-radicalized.”

“Here in the United States, our most immediate threat still comes from lone attackers that are not only capable of unleashing great harm, but are also extremely difficult, and in some cases, virtually impossible to identify or interdict,” Schiff said.

Artan, a third-year transfer student at Ohio State, wrote a post on his Facebook page before carrying out the attack, according to NBC News. Expressing his anger with American foreign policy, Artan wrote, “America! Stop interfering with other countries, especially Muslim Ummah (community). We are not

weak. We are not weak, remember that.”

Artan attended Columbus State Community College for two years, graduating cum laude with an associate’s degree, then transferred to Ohio State to continue his studies. Last August, at the start of the fall semester, the campus newspaper the *Lantern* interviewed Artan as part of their “Humans of Ohio State” series. In the interview, Artan expressed concern about his ability to pray on campus, as well as apprehension toward praying in public, due to the negative image of Muslims presented by the media.

Artan told the *Lantern*, “I just transferred from Columbus State. We had prayer rooms, like actual rooms where we could go pray because we Muslims have to pray five times a day... I mean, I’m new here. This is my first day. This place is huge, and I don’t even know where to pray.

“I wanted to pray in the open, but I was scared with everything going on in the media. I’m a Muslim, it’s not what the media portrays me to be. If people look at me, a Muslim praying, I don’t know what they’re going to think, what’s going to happen.”

NBC News reported that law enforcement officials informed them that “Artan was a Somali refugee who left his homeland with his family in 2007, lived in Pakistan and then came to the United States in 2014 as a legal permanent resident of the United States.”

One of Artan’s neighbors, Louann Carnahan, told the *Washington Post*, “He was a nice guy, always speaking when spoken to.”

Jack Ouham, a small business owner near Artan’s home, told the *Washington Post* that Artan had lived with several family members in a three-bedroom apartment for the past year. He described Artan as “a really nice guy, really quiet, very friendly. No craziness. A very normal, respectful guy.”

While the motives behind the attack are not yet clear, the political climate in the US undoubtedly had an unsettling impact upon Artan.

The presidential campaign, which culminated in the election of the fascistic Donald Trump, stirred up anti-immigrant prejudice and encouraged extreme right-wing forces. While Trump issued xenophobic calls for the banning of Muslim immigrants and an expansion of military violence in the Middle East, Clinton called for the imposition of a “no-fly zone” over Syria and supported an escalation of US aggression in the Middle East.

The attack at Ohio State follows a series of threatening letters sent to mosques in California attacking Muslims and warning of a “cleansing” of America under the Trump administration. The letters denounced Muslims as “vile and filthy people” and predicted that Trump is “going to do to you Muslims what Hitler did to the Jews.”



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