

Trump uses New York terror attack to call for restrictions on immigration and democratic rights

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President Trump has used Tuesday's terror attack in New York City, in which the driver of a rental truck killed eight people and seriously injured a dozen more, to call for further attacks on immigration and democratic rights. At a press conference on Wednesday, he told the media that he had set in motion plans to eliminate the Diversity Lottery Program, under the auspices of which the driver, Sayfullo Saipov, entered the United States in 2010 from Uzbekistan. The program allows 50,000 immigrants from countries that have historically low rates of immigration to the US.

Trump also tweeted that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) should "step up our already Extreme Vetting Program," apparently a reference either to the travel restrictions he has imposed on those seeking to enter the United States from six Muslim-majority countries or to vetting programs already conducted by the DHS.

Saipov was shot in the stomach by a New York City Police Department (NYPD) officer but survived and is currently in the Bellevue Hospital Center. Asked during the press conference if he would send Saipov to Guantanamo Bay military prison, where "enemy combatants"—those who were detained or kidnapped by US forces and have never been charged with a crime in the period since the Bush administration's invasion of Afghanistan in 2001—have been sent, Trump replied, "Send him to Gitmo, I would certainly consider that, yes."

White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders told the media that the Trump administration considers Saipov to be an enemy combatant: "The actions that he took certainly justify that," she said. Right-wing Republicans also called for Trump to

dispense with legal protections for Saipov, who is a legal US resident entitled to full constitutional rights. Nevertheless, Saipov was charged by federal authorities with terrorism on Wednesday, indicating that it is unlikely that he will be declared an enemy combatant.

The terrorist incident occurred shortly after 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday, when Saipov, a resident of Paterson, New Jersey, allegedly drove a rented Home Depot truck along a bicycle and pedestrian path near the West Side Highway in Manhattan, which runs along the Hudson River. The scenic path is frequented by both tourists and New Yorkers. According to witnesses, he rammed his truck into bicyclists and pedestrians, killing eight people, including five visitors from Argentina who were in town for a high school reunion, a young mother from Belgium, a New Yorker and a man from New Jersey who worked in Manhattan.

Saipov then crashed his truck into a school bus on Chambers Street near Stuyvesant High School. Saipov got out of the truck, allegedly shouting "Allahu akbar" in Arabic ("God is great") and brandishing a paintball gun and a pellet gun, according to reports. He was shot by an NYPD officer who was on duty in the area. Police officials claim they found several knives in the truck and a note in which Saipov identified himself as a supporter of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

According to the criminal complaint filed against Saipov, when the FBI questioned him in Bellevue, Saipov had asked for an ISIS flag to be placed above his bed. The report alleges that Saipov had "ISIS training videos" on his cellular phone, whose gruesome details of shootings and beheadings were released by the authorities and widely reported in the media.

Little has been reported about Saipov. It is known

that after he arrived in the US in 2010, he settled in Ohio where he registered two trucking businesses, then supported himself in New Jersey as an Uber driver; in 2013, he moved with his wife to an Uzbek community in Tampa, Florida. He had apparently grown increasingly hostile to US foreign policy in the last few years while he lived in Tampa.

On Tuesday night, New York City was turned into an armed camp, or, more correctly, the usually heavily armed presence of police, especially in Manhattan, was ramped up even more. Floodlights, metal barricades and police officers armed with machine guns were present at Greenwich Village's annual Halloween parade. City officials claimed that they had added additional security during the event, but for most spectators, it was impossible to tell if there was anything unusual in the large numbers of police.

The Democratic mayor of New York City, Bill de Blasio, praised the police and boasted that "We are, in this city, very comfortable putting out large numbers of police officers with heavy gear, with heavy weapons to send the message: don't try anything here."

On Wednesday, the FBI also sought and found another person of interest, Mukhammadzoi Kadirov of New Jersey, but did not consider him a suspect in the crime.

Authorities have denied that Saipov himself was under surveillance, but the Deputy New York Police Commissioner for Intelligence and Counterterrorism, John Miller, said at a media briefing on Wednesday, "It appears that Mr. Saipov has been planning this for a number of weeks," although he did not elaborate on how he had come to this conclusion. The DHS indicated, according to Miller, that Saipov may, "have some connectivity to individuals who were the subject of the investigation, though he himself was not."

In other words, Saipov was known to the authorities to some degree or another. This follows the familiar pattern seen in cases of the perpetrators of any number of terrorist attacks in Britain, France, Belgium, Turkey and the US involving Islamists over the last decade: The terrorists were on the radar of the Western intelligence agencies, and in many cases, were working directly with them. These included figures such as Tamerlan Tsarnaev, the main perpetrator of the Boston Marathon bombing in 2013, whose uncle, Ruslan, was a CIA asset among Chechen immigrants; and the

Manchester Arena bomber in Britain in May, Salman Abedi, whose parents were associated with Islamist militias that fought Col. Muammar Gaddafi in Libya.

A quarter century of relentless American war in the Middle East and Central Asia has created the conditions in which not only are Islamists armed by the US and its allies and fight as its proxies, as in Syria and Libya, but masses of people have come to understand that the United States is responsible for the conditions of war and political repression in their countries.

The explosion of American imperialism since the collapse of the USSR in 1991, and particularly since the declaration of the War on Terror 16 years ago, now includes the deaths of well over a million people in the Middle East, the razing of cities to the ground and turning tens of millions into refugees. This has stoked deep anger and resentment, which is in turn unleashed as terrorist violence by emotionally disturbed and fragile individuals, often known and often manipulated by the intelligence agencies.

While the United States has not yet fought a war in Uzbekistan, which shares a border with Afghanistan, and a substantial minority population there, it occupied an airbase there for nearly a decade. Washington was allied with the brutal Karimov regime, which shot down 400 anti-government demonstrators in 2005.



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