Fem Fatales: The Evolution and Significance of Female Involvement in Terrorist Networks and Suicide Bombing

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This research explored the evolution and significance of female involvement in terrorist networks. An historical context and evolution of female involvement in terrorist networks was presented and reviewed for emerging trends in the transition in type of female participation. Current examples of female involvement in terrorist networks, specifically homicide bombings, are quantified over a four-year period from 2000 to 2003, and then compared to prior periods. Analysis showed an increasing trend to use females as homicide bombers within terrorist networks. The significance of this trend was considered in relation to the educational levels of female homicide bombers. This research concluded that homicide bombings, in general, are becoming an increasingly common tactic used by terrorist networks, and that using females as homicide bombers has emerged as a coinciding phenomenon. Overall, this investigation directs avenues for future research regarding the significance of female participation in terrorist networks, both domestically and abroad, and how that might relate to female's educational levels

Introduction

Rudy Giuliani, "America's Mayor," says that the suicide threat is the worst threat we face (Morgenstern, 2005). This becomes all the more important comment, when we consider three "flaws" regarding suicide threats (e.g. suicide bombers) as follows: 1) Only crazy or deranged people do this (suicide terror) and they strike at random, 2) These actors do not devote resources to this activity and, 3) It is not a threat to my own community or region (Malka, 2004). Adding to this list, no doubt for most people is the unthinkable of the unthinkable: That women could possibly be involved in such acts. Said another way, while it is difficult for many to understand or even accept the idea of suicide bombers, it is all the more improbable that a woman could be involved in such an activity. And yet they are, and it appears their involvement is increasing.

Investigating the evolution and significance of female involvement in terrorist networks is important because it appears to be a new and growing trend in the tactics utilized by terrorist networks, particularly in regards to the use of females as suicide or homicide bombers. Recently Commemorating Martyrs of the Global Islamic Movement, in the country of Iran announced that close to 450 individuals have volunteered to engage in suicide bombing tactics in Iraq and elsewhere. Of this number, over half were identified as female (Morgenstern, 2005). With the United States' Department of Homeland Security's primary purpose being "to protect the nation against future terrorist attacks [and to] analyze threats… and coordinate the response of our country", it would seem that the need to examine the possibility of this trend is necessary for practitioners to stay abreast of the potential trends in terrorist tactics (DHS, 2003, organization section, para. 3). In fact, regarding the War on Terrorism, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) cites that "the greatest challenge is to penetrate these terrorist networks" in an attempt to better understand and thwart their tactics,

and furthermore, that "these challenges are the focus of our efforts" in combating terrorism (CIA, 2003, FAQ section, para. 5).

Given the relatively limited amount of analysis regarding the occurrence and significance of female involvement in terrorist networks, it is the general intent of this investigation to generate a comprehensive base from which future research might draw and/or emerge; and, more specifically, to explore the significance and some of the possible implications of this emerging trend among terrorist networks to utilize female involvement – particularly regarding suicide or homicide bombings. To better understand why this trend might be emerging, it is necessary to first define the current concept of terrorism in general and identify some of its emerging tactics. Second, to give an illustration of some of the historical female participation in terrorist networks. Third, to detail some of the more recent examples of female involvement in terrorist activities as evidence of the increasing use of females to perpetrate such terrorist acts as suicide or homicide bombings. Fourth, to examine the evolution of the female role in terrorist networks; and finally, to examine the significance behind increasing female involvement within terrorist networks.

Terrorism: Defining its Goals, Tactics and Trends

According to the CIA (2003), "the intelligence community is guided by the definition of terrorism contained in Title 22 of the United States Code, Section 2656f (d)," which states, in part, that:

> The term "terrorism" means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience. The term "international terrorism" means terrorism involving the territory or the citizens of more than one country. The term "terrorist group" [or network] means any group that practices, or has significant subgroups that practice, international terrorism (FAQ section, para 6).

Furthermore, Boaz Ganor, director of the International Policy Institute for Counter Terrorism (ICT), defines suicide terrorism specifically as "the operational method in which the very act of the attack is dependent upon the death of the perpetrator," an act that is aimed at "striking a blow to public moral" (1998, pp. 12 – 17; 2001 pp. 140 – 145). Generally, as White (2003) points out, it is often "more helpful to examine the meaning of terrorism within specific frameworks… [because] the definition of terrorism changes within political and social contexts" (pp. 5 – 7). While there has been difficulty in the world community in identifying a uniform definition of terrorism the International Counter-Terrorism Academic Community agrees on the following:

> "Terrorism is the deliberate use of violence against civilians in order to achieve political goals (ideological, nationalist, social, religious etc.)." In light of this definition, terrorism is always an illegitimate strategy for any group of people, just as targeting civilians is defined as a war crime in conflicts between states.

In addition, there is a rationale behind the additional usage of term "homicide bombing" when addressing suicide bombings in this investigation. In 2002, the Bush administration provided the term "homicide bombing" as a synonym for suicide bombing (Combs, 2006). The motivation of the Bush administration being, to de-emphasize the self-sacrificial connotations of suicide bombing so that the

homicidal aspects are not overlooked. While the use of the term is not as common as that of suicide bombing, both Fox News and the *New York Post* have made attempts to convert to using the term. This conversion is definitely worthwhile, particularly regarding re-shifting the focus of these bombings away from the perpetrators and onto the impact of their violent crimes.

Regarding the goals of terrorist networks, Robert Pape (2003) suggests that, "terrorism has two purposes – to gain supporters and to coerce opponents" (p. 345). Of particular interest here are the tactical methods that these terrorist networks employ to gain attention to their political cause (support), and how they are able to manipulate popular perceptions to effectuate the political changes they desire (coercion) by committing such criminal acts as suicide or homicide bombings (terror). It is possible that homicide bombings have become the most effective "weapon" that the terrorist networks now have available to accomplish their political goals (Gunaratna, 2000). As Pape (2003) also states, "terrorist organization are increasingly relying on suicide attacks to achieve major political objectives … [because] suicide terrorism follows a strategic [and tactical] logic" (pp. 343 – 344). A logic that is not without merit. Sprinzak (2000) identifies the following as some of the advantages of suicide terror:

- It is a simple and low-cost operation (requiring no escape route or rescue mission).
- It increases the likelihood of mass casualties and extensive damage (since the bomber can choose
- the exact time, location, and circumstances of the attack).
- There is no fear that interrogated terrorists will surrender important information (because their deaths are certain).
- It has an immense impact on the public and the media (because it precipitates an overwhelming sense of helplessness)

In using females as homicide bombers, Beyler (2003a) points out, "terrorist organizations have added a new focus to terrorism by placing the emphasis on the perpetrators… opening the stage for the entry of [even more] female combatants" (Introduction, para. 1). Beyler (2003a) continues, "female participation is being manipulated by terrorist organizations, which intend to use the image of a female suicide bomber to distort worldwide public opinion" (Beyler, 2003a, para. 3). Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the spiritual leader of Hamas, in commenting about their use of a female suicide bomber said, "Women are like the reserve army—when there is a necessity, we use them" (Beyler, 2003a). Often times, "the media [also] becomes a victim of this strategy by describing female bombing actions as the only way for these women to express their frustration; a testimony of utter despair" (Beyler, 2003b para. 4). Therefore, in effort to garner public and political support, these terrorist organizations are using homicide bombings and, more specifically, female homicide bombers, to shock the conscience of democratic ideologies via the influence of the media in order to coerce concessions from their opponents.

Zedalis (2004) notes that terrorist organizations use women as weapons because they provide:

• Tactical advantage: stealthier attack, element of surprise, hesitancy to search women, female stereotype (e.g., nonviolent).

• Increased number of combatants.

• Increased publicity (greater publicity = larger number of recruits).

• Psychological effect.

"It is the ultimate asymmetric weapon," explained Magnus Ranstorp, director of the Center for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence. "You can assimilate among the people and then attack with an element of surprise that has an incredible and devastating shock value" (Van Natta, Jr., 2003, sec. 4, p. 1).

Women, it would seem have been "discovered" as advantageous for terrorist groups and organizations to use.

Given the wave of investigation into terrorist networks in general since September 11, 2001, it is essential to review three emerging suppositions regarding the modern tactics of terrorism before narrowing the focus to female participation specifically. First, to examine the insightful common denominators put forth by Robert Pape (2003) in an article published by the American Political Science Review *called* The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism *that examines why homicide terrorism works and why it will continue to increase. Second, to explore the role of media usage by terrorist networks; and finally, to review the adaptive nature of terrorist networks as reported by the CIA in the* National Strategy for Combating Terrorism (2003).

Pape (2003) contends that the tactical common denominator for utilizing the tactic of homicide terrorism among terrorist networks transcends the most common explanations of why "suicide terrorism is rising around the world (e.g. religious fanaticism or psychological explanations)" (p. 343). His research argues that "over the past two decades, suicide terrorism has been rising largely because terrorists have learned that it pays… [and that] the terrorist's political causes have made more gains after they resorted to suicide operations than they had before" (p. 343). As the title of Pape's work implies, homicide terrorism has a strategic and tactical logic, "one specifically designed to coerce modern liberal democracies to make significant concessions" (p. 343). Furthermore, these "modern liberal democracies," or the terrorist's targets, are also "democratic occupying entities" such as, for example, the United States, Israel and the Russian Federation (Gordon, 2003). A characteristic, we would note, which is also highly conducive to media influence and attention. Again, a characteristic that empowers terrorist networks with the ability to shock the conscience of democratic ideology via the media to achieve their political concessions.

It would seem that the media has become a key tool in the tactics of terrorist networks as well. Terrorist networks use the media to gain public and political support – to make their cause known, to coerce the concessions made by "democratic occupying entities", and to reinforce the successful tactic of utilizing homicide bombers in the first place. In fact, while not the specific focus of this study, an observation that is perhaps worthy of future research is the increase in occurrence and effectiveness of homicide terrorism as found in Pape's (2003) research between the years of 1980 to 2001, and how that corresponds to the dawn of cable television, the Internet and the advent of globalization. However, for the sake of this investigation, it is enough to state that technology and media influence is a "force multiplier" for terrorist networks (White, 2003, p. 16 - 17). "In military terms, a force multiplier increases striking power without increasing the strength of a unit" (White, 2003, p. 16). Regarding the media's influence in relation to the terrorist network's tactics, "[media] coverage can enhance the aura of the event… twenty-four hour news coverage leads to sensationalist filler" (White, 2003, p. 16-17). All of which only serves to reinforce the support and

acknowledgment of a terrorist network's cause, and shift the focus away from the brutal crimes they have committed.

Furthermore, the CIA, in their *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* (2003), also states that, "[t]he international environment defines the boundaries within which terrorists' strategies take shape. As a result of freer, more open borders this environment unwittingly provides access to havens, capabilities, and other support to terrorists" (p. 6). Therefore, the defenders of democracy must also stay abreast of the adaptive environment and "changing nature of terrorism" (CIA, 2003, p. 6). The CIA (2003) report continues, "the terrorist challenge has changed considerably over the past decade and likely will continue to evolve. Ironically, the particular nature of the terrorist threat we face today springs in large part from some of our past successes" (p. 6). Furthermore, speaking to the end of the Cold War, a period that corresponds to Pape's (2003) research and the rise of media influence, the CIA (2003) report concurs that:

> We also saw dramatic improvements in the ease of transnational communication, commerce, and travel. Unfortunately, the terrorists adapted to this new international environment and turned the advances of the 20th century into the destructive enablers of the 21st century (p. 7).

Once again, the adaptive nature of terrorist networks builds on modern technology and the media to further their political cause (Gunaratna, 2000).

Ironically, "terrorists often seek out states [and countries] where they can operate with impunity… More audaciously, foreign terrorists also establish cells in the very open, liberal, and tolerant societies that they plan to attack" (CIA, 2003, p. 8). By utilizing the very freedoms of democratic society, terrorist networks use the very system they seek to thwart as a means to their end. Shrewdly, these terrorists adapt to whatever works best and change tactics to whatever is most effective at accomplishing their goals. For example, when guerilla tactics began to be viewed as too militant and producing less effective results for terrorist networks in the late 1970s, they began to use homicide bombings, which produced more effective and beneficial results (Gordon, 2003). Furthermore:

> Today's terrorist threat is different from that of the past. Modern technology has enabled terrorists to plan and operate worldwide as never before. With advanced telecommunications, they can coordinate their actions among dispersed cells while remaining in the shadows. Today's terrorists increasingly enjoy a force-multiplier effect by establishing links with other like-minded organizations around the globe (CIA, 2003, p. 10).

So, while Saddam Hussein may be able to "eradicate a 'problem' by killing tens of thousands of Kurds… democratic society's liberal notions and horror at such tactics preclude equally combative suppression philosophies" (Gordon, 2003).

This adaptive nature of terrorist networks has also been mirrored in two recent presentations regarding the tactics of terrorism. First, by Robert Ruth (2003) in his presentation of Town and Country Terrorism at the annual Southern Criminal Justice Association's meeting on September 24, 2003 in Nashville, TN regarding domestic terrorism and the infiltration of foreign factions; and second, by Major

Andy Dietz, United States Marine Corps, in his address to the Southeastern Command and Leadership Academy at The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga on November 12, 2003. Both gentlemen reported similar observations regarding the adaptive nature of terrorist networks, but in different ways and from different viewpoints.

In his study, Ruth (2003) reported a trend of terrorist networks to migrate towards and infiltrate rural areas to avoid detection (specifically North Carolina), a tactic that generally required recruitment of sympathetic locals. Furthermore, Ruth observed that as one terrorist tactic was discovered or revealed to authorities, the terrorist networks would modify their next attack accordingly (e.g. The Untouchables you send one of ours to the hospital, we'll send one of yours to the morgue philosophy). Conversely, from his military experience in the most recent war in Iraq, Major Dietz (2003) reported high levels of specific tactical adaptations by terrorist networks. Where as attacks use to focus on taking out a single target, such as a one military vehicle, now, through observation by terrorists regarding the spacing between vehicles, several targets (vehicles) are attacked at once. Furthermore, Dietz (2003) observed, the terrorists are becoming stealthier in hiding explosives for attacks by hiding explosives in Coke cans and among debris on the street.

With the definition, goals and purpose of terrorist networks reviewed; and after examining the current tactics and trends of terrorist networks, we now turn to why females have historically been considered an unlikely threat, even in the face of conflicting historical evidence.

How Could She?

There has been perhaps been no concept as readily dismissed by popular contention as that of a willfully violent woman. The operative assumption being that even if a woman is violent, she could not have wanted, deliberately, to cause harm (Pearson, 1997). This inherent disbelief seems to know no boundaries. As a demographic, it would appear that women have successfully convinced the world that they are practically incapable of willfully perpetrating violence – much less commit an act of terrorism. Quite simply, the mortal threat of a female foe is rarely, if ever, taken seriously. These dismissive assumptions are the greatest strength behind making an argument for the increasing likelihood of terrorist networks to utilize female participants to perpetrate terrorist acts – specifically regarding homicide bombings.

Society's primordial block regarding the capacity of females to commit violent acts may be the most glaring example of denial ever recorded. So why does this phenomenon prevail? It is perhaps the deeply engrained ideology of women as life-givers, not life-takers, which does the most to prevent any legitimate notion of the willfully violent female offender (Adler, 1981; Chesney-Lind, 1997; MacDonald, 1991; Mann, 1984; Pollak, 1977). However, it is typically the physiology factors that are the first to be argued against any female involvement in violent or terrorist acts. Our species cannot seem to shake the gender roles of men being the stronger *protector* and women being the weaker *protectee*. Sure, in primordial days, when physical strength was a requirement to defend the tribe in combat it could be argued that men had the physical edge of brute force. However, those days are long gone. Today, merely squeezing a trigger or flipping a switch is all that is *physically* required to be able to commit a violent act of terrorism.

How could she? This emblematic response to violent female offenders in general reflects the belief that women are not psychologically wired for aggression (Adler, 1981; Chesney-Lind, 1997; MacDonald, 1991; Mann, 1984; Pearson, 1997; Pollak, 1977). It automatically assumes that the violent female offender is an anomaly, or, at the very least, an involuntary participant. Even when a violent female offender or terrorist has been identified, it has often been in the light of secondary support to a larger male-dominated campaign (MacDonald, 1991). Not, for example, as the brains behind the brawn, or as a willing and eager participant. Furthermore, most female offenders or terrorists are routinely labeled as crazed, hyper-masculine Lomobrosian atavists, feminist man-hating lesbians, or merely brainwashed little girls that just happened to fall in with the wrong guy (MacDonald, 1991).

Little credence has ever been given to the genuine involvement of women in violent criminal acts or terrorist activities. As Pollak (1977) points out, "women have received more commendations for their seemingly low criminality than practically any other population group… [and] it is a grave mistake not to challenge that assumption" (p. 1). The more likely scenario, as Pollak (1977) continues, "is a statistical deception of the masked character of female crime" (p. 1). Female offenders, particularly violent female offenders, are under-reported, less often detected then there male counterparts, and, if apprehended, shown more leniency in sentencing (Adler, 1981; Chesney-Lind, 1997; Mann, 1984; Pollak 1977).

By not taking seriously this even darker figure of under-reported violent female crime, and perhaps consequently the increased potential for female involvement in terrorist activities, the criminal justice system may be leaving the back door wide-open for surprise exploitation. Freda Adler (1981) puts this notion into perspective:

> The historical perception of women as more dependent and emotional than men, and less aggressive and defiant of authority, has carried over to the criminal justice system… where the functionaries have chivalrously treated women more protectively than men (p. 4).

All of which is quite disadvantageous in today's reality where society demands that practitioners and the government be as prepared as possible against any future acts of terrorism. If the criminal justice system is unwilling to examine, or does not believe in the viability of the female terrorist, then perhaps the inevitable will be as shocking as a commercial airliner being used as a bomb.

The Historical Context

The following are but a few examples of the historical involvement of females in terrorist networks. Many, if not all, terrorist networks are known to covertly recruit women specifically because of the ease with which females are able to circumvent detection by security when carrying out a mission (Beyler, 2003; Copeland, 2002; Gunaratna, 2000; Lloyd, 2003; MacDonald, 1991; MFA, 2003; Schweitzer, 2003). The following groups have historically maintained largely unrecognized and unexamined female memberships. These examples are, by no means, exhaustive. A brief synopsis of each group will be given first, with an analysis of the evolution, transition and significance of female involvement to follow.

The Baader-Meinhof Gang – This group was the forerunner of a Germany terrorist organization which would become known as the Red Army Faction (RAF), and whose heyday of terror was primarily

during the 1970s. Two females, Gundrun Ensslin and Ulricke Meinhof are credited with being the brains and revolutionary heart behind the brawn of Andreas Baader, a male, who was reported as being more interested in the criminal lifestyle and the "adventure" of terrorist activities than the predominately feminist and Marxists ideology which drove the faction (MacDonald, 1991). Numerous women were drawn to join the various incarnations of the RAF and commit terrorist attacks for their anti-capitalist cause. In fact, ten years ago (circa 1991), five of the eight most wanted German terrorists were women from the RAF (MacDonald, 1991). Most of the original leaders of this group were captured, including both female founders who later died while incarcerated. The fall of the Soviet Union is generally credited with the demise of this terrorist network (Schweitzer, 2003).

The ETA – Whose initials that stand for Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (meaning Homeland and Freedom), but more commonly referred to as the Basque Nation and Liberty, emerged from the Basque region of Spain during the 1950s. It is one of the largest nationalistic terrorist groups in Europe (White, 2003). Currently, the ETA is an active terrorist organization whose traceable funds was one many groups frozen by the United States Treasury Department in the wake of the September 11th attacks (*U.S., EU freeze assets*, 2002). This group has always recruited women and had a large female commando division. An associated feminist political movement called Egizan (meaning Act Women), collaborates with the ETA to comment terrorist acts for both groups and is reported as having some of the most ruthless female members among terrorist networks (MacDonald, 1991; White, 2003).

Lebanon/Hezbollah – The first female homicide bombing was committed on April 8, 1985 in a car bombing against the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) in Lebanon, Khyadali Sana killed four soldiers and wounded two others (Beyler, 2003, Chronology, para. 1; Pape, 2003, pg. 357). Six more female homicide bombers would strike the Southern Lebanon Army (SLA) over the next two years (see Appendix A). The SLA was backed primarily by the Israeli Defense Forces and assisted by the United States, France and the United Nations (Pape, 2003).

In fact, the very first homicide bombing happened in 1983 against the U.S. Embassy in Beirut. It was perpetrated in response to the insurgence of Israeli forces into Lebanon, and is perhaps the event that led to the withdrawal of democratic entities in the area (Pape, 2003). While it was perhaps the shock of the first occurrence of homicide terrorism that led to democratic concessions in Beirut, the fact that a female perpetration of a homicide bombings barely two years later in the same campaign cannot be overlooked. The two phenomena appear to be growing in effectiveness along simultaneous timelines and, it would appear, for similar reasons – to coerce moderate gains against "occupying democratic entities" (Pape, 2003).

North Korea & Kim Hyon Hui – Perceiving the selection of Seoul for the 1988 Olympics as a political affront, and seeking to frighten countries away from the international games, the North Korean government activated one of their terrorist operatives to bomb Korean Air Flight 858. That operative was Kim Hyon Hui, a petite woman who was specifically recruited and brainwashed by her government to commit a terrorist act because of the unassuming nature inherent to her being a female – a female who would have killed herself when caught if her cyanide cigarette had worked properly, a female who took eight days to break under intense interrogative techniques, a female who intended to blow up an airline full of people for her country (MacDonald, 1991).

LTTE (Liberation Tigers for Tamil Eelam) – This Tamil separatists group began utilizing homicide terrorism tactics in their fight for independence from Sri Lanka in the late-1980s and female suicide bombers in early 1990s (Gunaratna, 2000; White, 2003). Nearly half of all the LTTE members are female, as well as comprising about half of the elite homicide division called the Black Tigers (Lloyd, 2000; MacDonald, 1991; White, 2002). The most notorious female homicide attack by the LTTE occurred on May 21, 1991 when a woman known as Dhanu assassinated Rajiv Gandhi and killed 16 other people in the process. After garlanding Gandhi and kneeling down to touch his feet, Dhanu detonated the explosives hidden under hear traditional cultural gown. Dhanu had been specifically chosen by the LTTE because of the perceived lack of suspicion regarding women by Gandhi's security (Lloyd, 2000; MacDonald, 1991).

Nearly a third of the 168 homicide bombings committed by the LTTE between 1980 and 2000 have been perpetrated by female guerrillas (Gunaratna, 2000; Schweitzer, 2003). Including an attempt on President Chandrika Kumaratunga on December 18, 1999 that killed 23 people and nearly blinded the president, and another female homicide bomber who detonated her explosives in front of the office of Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike on January 5, 2000 killing 13 people (Lloyd, 2000). However, after two decades of fighting and homicide bombings, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam began a ceasefire in December 2001when the Sri Lankan government agreed to peace negotiations and concessions for the LTTE's political cause.

The Intifada – This group was an uprising of Palestinians, primarily women and children, begun in October of 1987 as a subgroup of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), and set against the Israeli military occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (White, 2003; MacDonald, 1991). The young girls involved were treated as equals by their compatriot boys and the Israeli soldiers in their tactics, deadly aim and stealth. These young girls also made up at least half of the *shebab* – the terrorist army of young people that attacked the soldiers. The function of the older women in the group was to organize the riots and stand in front of the male and children rebels because the Israeli soldiers were less likely, and in fact ordered not to shoot them. In addition, the older female members of the group used traditional female clothing to hide and transport a variety of armor and weapons. Even though the Israelis were aware of this female participation, the reluctance to manhandle these women was further deterred by the soldier's fear of fighting off a mob of outraged Palestinian Muslim men for physically violating their women (MacDonald, 1991).

The most notorious Intifada woman was Leila Khaled, the leader of the Black September faction. "Khaled led a daring hijacking of four airliners on September 6, 1970, which resulted in the destruction of three of the aircraft, the near overthrow of the Jordanian government, and her own capture" (Westerman, 2003). Khaled continues to be an outspoken activist against the "continued Israeli occupation" from her jail cell, and a proponent of the potential of Al-Qaida utilizing female homicide bombers (*Al-Qaida to unleash*, 2003). It would seem that the young girls who threw rocks in the first Intifada have now evolved into the homicide bombers of the second Intifada.

The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) / Hamas / Hezbollah – In addition to the Intifada, several officially sanctioned women's committees were founded with the guidance of Yasser Arafat and the PLO under the guise of educational and vocational training, charity work, and health services. In reality, these committees were to train the Intifada, run guns and launder money for al-Fatah (the military branch of the PLO), and indoctrinate fedayeen or holy warriors (MacDonald, 1991; White, 2003). The Palestinian

female members used this heavy reliance on their services to pressure the men of the movement into passing an Equal Rights for Women bill, "the men… relying as heavily as they do on the women's crucial roles, agreed…albeit reluctantly" (MacDonald, 1991, p. 67).

Ironically, this increased "liberation" of Palestinian women may have very well paved the way for the greater proportional increase in female perpetration of homicide bombings against Israeli targets for the terrorist network seen today (Beyler, 2003; Copeland, 2002; Macdonald, 1991; Schweitzer, 2003). A contrasting rationale to Beyler's (2003), notion that these women have been left with no other way to express their frustrations of utter despair, for why else would *women* resort to such terrorist tactics – the *how could she* mentality. While an analysis will follow, other than among the Chechnya rebels, the Israeli/Palestinian conflict has seen the greatest insurgence of female homicide bombers over the last three years (see Appendix A & B).

The catalyst for increased female homicide bombings in Palestine occurred on January 27, 2002 when Wafa Idris became the first Palestinian female homicide bomber. Since that time over a dozen Palestinian women have perpetrated or facilitated suicide bombings against Israeli targets, as opposed to only three known facilitators in the two years prior to Wafa's attack (see Appendix A). Furthermore, these "female bombers have been absorbed into a growing Palestinian cult of martyrdom," their images appear on posters, they are glorified in poems and songs, and they have come to be viewed as "folks heroes" and "martyrs" (Copeland, 2002, para. 4).

The Chechnya Rebels – After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Chechnya (again) sought its independence from what would become known as the Russian Federation. On December 11, 1994, President Boris Yeltsin ordered Russian troops to invade Chechnya to disarm illegal armed formations (e.g. terrorist networks). However, by spring of 1996, Chechen fighters had forced Russian troops to sign a peace agreement, which, in effect, recognized Chechnya's independence. However, feuding for power between Chechen warlords led to a series of bombings in Moscow and Volgodonsk that killed upwards of 217 people (Waal, 2002). Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin seized on the anti-Chechen publicity to order an extensive and heavy aerial bombardment of Chechnya. In February 2000, the rebel separatists who had fled to the mountains re-inflamed the terrorist network operations of the Chechnyan rebels (Waal, 2002).

Scarcely a year later, on November 21, 2001, the first female Chechnya homicide bomber struck in an attack on the Russian Federation's (RF) Grozny military commander Gaidar Gajiyev (Schweitzer, 2003). Less then a year after that, in October 2002, approximately half of the 41 terrorists (all with explosives strapped to their bodies) who seized some 700 hostages in a Moscow theater were women; approximately 170 hostages were killed in this attack. Over a dozen Chechnya female homicide bombers have struck RF targets since that time (see Appendix A). It should also be noted that there were several women involved in the terrorist take-over of the school in Beslan.

Much like their Palestinian counterparts, Chechen women are being recruited because they are female and less suspicious than men when targeting marks, not to mention the shocking nature of female combatants to the Russian populous and subsequent media attention – albeit somewhat less so than the Palestinian women. While the increase of Chechen women in terrorist networks might be due to the sheer depletion of Chechen male rebels from "cleanings sweeps" conducted by the RF, the increasing occurrence of female Chechen rebels cannot be denied (Waal, 2002).

The Taliban & Al Qaida – By way of the Arabic newspaper *A-Sharq Al-Awsat*, a woman named Umm Osama, which means mother of Osama (as in Bin Laden), announced her leadership of a women's homicide division now working within the terrorist network. Umm reports that the Taliban and Al Qaida have trained her "women warriors" in weaponry to battle U.S. forces in Afghanistan, and will be utilizing these women to carry messages from Afghani leaders to the frontlines. Umm explains that:

> Islamic law permits the woman to stand by the man and to support him in the holy war [and] warns the U.S. that members of her women warriors unit will be arriving very shortly to deliver its first blow, which has been 'declared by their leader' to be a strike that will knock the September 11th attacks into oblivion (Al-Qaida to unleash, 2003; Code pink, 2003).

While there have been no overt acts perpetrated thus far by these "woman warriors", the fact that this terrorist network utilized the threat of this type of tactic is significant to the evolution of the female participation in terrorist networks, particularly regarding homicide bombers. First, the terrorist networks are purposely using the threat of female homicide bombers or "women warriors"; second, the "occupying democratic entities" or targets of these potential actions are receiving these threats as credible; and third, the media is seizing on the sensationalism of potential female homicide terrorists, thus providing increased attention to the terrorist's political cause.

In fact, approximately a month after Umm's announcement, the Federal Bureau of Investigation issued its first "be on the lookout" for a female in the War on Terrorism (FBI Warns, 2003). Two days later, Aafia Siddiqui was detained by Pakistani authorities under the suspicion of being a "fixer" for Al-Qaida, meaning she allegedly funneled money for the terrorist network (Woman Sought, 2003). Subsequently, on June 21, 2003, three other women were also arrested in Saudi Arabia for participation in an alleged plot by Al Qaida to attack Mecca (Reports: Three Women Arrested, 2003).

The Evolution and Transition

To sensationalize a cause, particularly when the focus remains on the perpetrator because she is a female, seems to have become a coercive technique utilized by terrorist networks that "occupying democratic entities" are even less able to tolerate than homicide terrorism in general. After all, what better way to attract media attention to a political cause and to shift the focus off the violent criminal acts of terrorism, then to place the focus on the perpetrator because she is a woman (Beyler, 2003). The horrific nature and loss of life associated with homicide bombings shock the conscience of modern democracies. Excessive media attention inflames the public's outraged, and sometimes sympathy, towards these terrorist networks. All of which pressures governments into making concessions they hope will stop the killing – but not because they have had a particular change of politics.

To reiterate, terrorist networks now seem to be purposely using the threat of female homicide bombers or "women warriors" to coerce concessions. Additionally, the "occupying democratic entities" or targets of these potential actions are receiving these threats as credible, and the media is sensationalizing the potential for, and occurrence of female terrorists as a thrilling news angle, which only provides increased

attention to the terrorist's political cause. Modern terrorist networks seem to be rolling all the emerging trends in terrorist tactics into one with female participation and perpetration of homicide bombings.

When viewed in the historical context, the evolution of female participation in terrorist networks seems to correspond to the research of Robert Pape regarding the increased usage of homicide terrorism in general (2003). A tactical change that was perhaps encouraged by the concessions made by the Reagan administration in Beirut after the homicide bombing of the United States embassy in 1983 (Pape, 2003). Since that time, "there have been at least 188 separate suicide terrorist attacks world wide… increasing from 31 in the 1980s, to 104 in the 1990s, to 53 in 2000-2001 alone" (Pape, 2003, p. 343). Homicide bombings have increased and will continue to increase because they work.

Correspondingly, an examination of the frequency of female homicide bombers over the prior two decades (1980 – 2000) in comparison to the last four years (2000 – 2003) reveals that similar conclusions may be made regarding the increased usage of female homicide bombers by terrorist networks. A trend that has increased dramatically over the last four years when compared to prior periods, and one that will perhaps continue to increase because of media influence and for similar reasons indicated by Pape's research on the increase of homicide terrorism in general – it works (2003).

Methodology

There are four main terrorist networks that have used or are currently using female homicide bombers: Hezbollah and the Palestinian resistance in Lebanon during the 1980s against Israel, the United States and the South Lebanon Army; the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) between 1980 and 2000 against Sri Lanka; Hezbollah, Hamas and the PLO since 2001 against Israel; and the Chechen rebels since 2000 against the Russian Federation.

There were seven individual females involved in seven separate bombings during Hezbollah's Lebanon campaign between 1985 and 1987. While exact occurrences and specific cases of female bombings by the LTTE were unavailable other than the sensationalized attacks, it is generally reported and accepted by experts in the field that approximately 50 of the 168 homicide bombings committed by the LTTE between 1980 and 2000 were perpetrated by females (Cronin, 2003; Gunaratna, 2000; Lloyd, 2000; Macdonald, 1991). There have been 18 individual females involved in 18 separate homicide bombings, or facilitation of homicide bombings, by Hezbollah/Hamas/PLO against Israel between 2001 and 2003. There have been 32 individual females involved in 10 separate homicide bombings against the Russian Federation by Chechen Rebels between 2000 and 2003 (See Appendix A & B).

Table 1

Campaign	Time Period	Females	Yearly Average
Hezbollah/Lebanon	1985 – 1987	7	2.34
LTTE/Sri Lanka	1980 – 2000	50	2.5
Hezbollah/Hamas/PLO/Jihad	2001 – 2003	18	6
Chechen Rebels	2000 – 2003	32	8

A simple generation of the yearly average of female participation in homicide bombings in the four terrorist networks is given in Table One. As can be seen, the four campaigns that have used female bombers can be divided into two separate time periods: one that is prior to year 2000 and in which the campaigns have ended (Hezbollah/Lebanon and the LTTE); and the other, post 2000 and in which the campaigns are on-going (Hezbollah/Hamas/PLO and the Chechen Rebels). Furthermore, when comparing the two time periods, the instance of female participation nearly triples for the current Hezbollah/Hamas/PLO campaign and nearly quadruples for the Chechen Rebel campaign, going from a combined pre-2000 average of 2.42 per year to 6 per year and 8 per year respectfully.

It was perhaps the flurry of media attention surrounding Wafa Idris as the first "martyred" Palestinian female homicide bomber in 2002 that would seem to be the turning point for terrorist networks to increase the tactical usage of female homicide bombers. Since Wafa's bombing in 2002, there have been 14 Palestinian and 30 Chechen females involved in either the perpetration or facilitation of homicide bombings, or arrested for intending to carry out such bombings (see Appendix A & B). Furthermore, during the three-year period between 2000 and 2003, there have 50 females involved in 28 incidents of homicide terrorism on behalf of terrorist networks (killing at least 422), more than half the total number of female homicide bombings committed by the LTTE alone over a twenty-year period (see Appendix B).

This analysis and comparison seems to show an increasing trend to use females as homicide bombers within terrorist networks, particularly over the last four years (2000 – 2003). This increasing trend to tactically use female homicide bombers by terrorist networks would seem to corresponds directly to the findings of Pape's research on the increasing instance of suicide terrorism in general (2003). Thus, this research also concludes that homicide bombings, in general, are becoming an increasingly common trend and tactic used by terrorist networks to garner concessions from their targets, and that the tactical use of females as homicide bombers is emerging as a coinciding phenomenon that might inevitably spill over into the domestic arena if not, at the very least, continue to rise abroad.

The Significance

So, why might this trend to utilize female participation be significant to practitioners regarding the future of terrorist activities and attacks – particularly in the domestic arena? In an examination of the Palestinian women perpetrating or facilitating homicide bombings, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) states that, "the terrorist organizations behind the attacks want to exploit the advantages of dispatching females to perpetrate them" (MFA, 2003, para. 1). Furthermore, that these terrorist networks utilized females "under the assumption that a female is thought of as soft, gentle, and innocent and therefore will arouse less suspicion… [meaning] terrorists were aware of their need for camouflage" (MFA, 2003, para. 1).

Also, in citing the common characteristics of Palestinian females involved in these homicide bombings, the MFA states that these females "were from two poles of Palestinian society… well educated professionals and common young women lacking education and a profession," with the preponderance coming from the top, or well-educated pole among Palestinian females (MFA, 2003, para. 2). Furthermore, when compared to the Chechen Rebels, the only other currently active terrorist network to use female

homicide bombers, the female faction found among the Chechnya Rebels corresponds well to the lower or uneducated pole of females cited be the MFA.

The increased occurrence of female involvement in homicide bombings among these two terrorist networks found in Palestine and Chechnya over the last four years provides an educational-level dichotomy for examination. Particularly regarding the future of possible terrorist activities or attacks in the United States for primarily two reasons: one, as it may relate to the level of education among women in the U.S. and their participation in gangs or radical extremist organizations that may or may not be currently involved in the perpetration of terrorist type activities; and two, the recruitment and infiltration by foreign terrorist networks into domestic groups predisposed to such subversive activities such as gangs and radical extremist organizations.

While there is little hard data regarding the exact number of female members in radical or extremist organizations in the U.S. such as the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) and the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), both are generally considered to maintain high levels of female participation. Moreover, while radical factions of these organizations may not represent the official dogma of the groups from which they emerge, in some instances, particularly in regards to ELF, some of these groups have perpetrated terrorist type activities. For example, "ELF takes credit for arsons at a ski resort in Vail, CO., inspiring four teens to torch housing developments in Long Island, and recently, fire-bombing sport-utility vehicles at an auto dealership outside Erie, PA" (Malkin, 2003, para. 4). However, what is of particular interest here is the generally excepted notion that women who become members of these groups are well educated and typically become members while attending college, not so unlike their educated Palestinian counterparts.

Also, female membership in gangs across the U.S. is perhaps as epidemic as the gang problem itself and could quite possibly be seen as correlating to the low or uneducated pole of female involvement found among the Chechen Rebels. "Although the percentage of gang members who [are] female is difficult to ascertain, all sources agree the numbers [are] significant" (Number of Female Gang Members, 2001, para. 1). Couple that with the fact that Jeff Fort sought to offer the services of the Black P. Stone Nation to Moammar Gadhafi in 1986, and more recently Jose Padilla of the Latin Kings was linked as an operative for Al-Quida, and is it really so far fetched to predict that eventually terrorist networks might utilize U.S. gangs to perpetrate operations – and that those operations might inevitably include the participation of female gang members.

Furthermore, gangs are also increasingly embracing the Islamic principles that underlie the motivational philosophy of most terrorist networks (Gangs and Terrorism, 2003, para. 2). Louis Farrakhan has been working with Bloods in Los Angles and the Vice Lords in Chicago regarding the adoption of Islamic principles and ideology. What's more, many gang legends that have been incarcerated, such as Sanyika Shakur (aka "Monster" Kody Scott), have converted to this militant brand of Islam and continue to influence their respective gang members towards uniting with this militant faction of Islamic rationale (Gangs and Terrorism, 2003, para. 5). Not to mention that gangs, like all organizations, but perhaps most particularly those of the socially excluded, are supported by the underground economy. Untraceable and prolific funds from the sale of drugs and other illegal activities provide a wealth of untapped power for these gangs (Gangs and Terrorism, 2003, para. 10). A potential outlet that has not yet been explored or exploited by terrorist networks, but one that may very well be on the horizon.

Additionally, well-known gangster tactics have long since used females as stealthy perpetrators of illegal endeavors, for example, using women as mules to smuggle drugs or even "using sex as ploy to distract victims" (Valdez, 2000, p.403). Even beyond that, the number of female gang members and outright female gangs has consistently been on the rise. What is to preclude these female gangsters from cutting out the middleman, both figuratively and literally, and start doing it for themselves? In examining current trends among female gang members, Valdez (2000) states "female gang members will also be involved in crimes for profit as they expand their criminal behavior" (p. 403). Furthermore, "you can anticipate an increasing number of female gang members to carry guns and commit more violent crimes" (Valdez, 2000, p. 403).

Discussion

It is perhaps no coincidence that the social revolution and feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s gave birth to the first insurgence of female participation in terrorist networks (e.g. the Baader-Meinhof Gang, Intifada, ETA, LTTE and PLO). Criminologists have long predicted that the progression of social equalization between the sexes, particularly the entrance of women into economic pursuits, would lead to an increase in the volume of female crime (Adler, 1981; Chesney-Lind, 1997; Mann, 1984; Pollak, 1977). While this emancipation theory is intriguing, it can only account for some middle to upper class involvement of females in criminal or terroristic activities such as those female members of ELF, ALF and some of the Palestinian suicide bombers. It certainly does not consider the socio-demographic associated with the woman who, incidentally, did not benefit from the primarily middle-class U. S. led social revolution in the first place (Adler, 1981; Chesney-Lind, 1997; Mann, 1984; Pollak, 1977).

The opposite pole of women prone to terrorist involvement would seem to be the marginalized, poverty laden, oppressed, sub-lower class of uneducated woman who have nothing to lose, but everything to gain such as those female members found among the Chechen Rebels and potentially among U.S. gangs. These women tend to become doubly committed to a cause because they have to be twice as tough as the men whose ranks they infiltrate (MacDonald, 1991). "The real question," as Chesney-Lind (1997) points out, "is why so *few* women resort to violence in the face of such horrendous victimization" in the first place (emphasis added, p. 98). Given the constant outcry from feminist organizations regarding the continual oppression, victimization and violence against women, why should the increasing emergence of female terrorists be shocking at all? After all, women have the denial of society to believe, the covert means to accomplish, an ample motive to commit, and the stealthy opportunity to become some of the most deadly of terrorists. Instead of disbelieving it could happen, practitioners should perhaps be preparing for when it does.

In fact, during the final month of this analysis (December 2003), three of the most deadly homicide bombings committed by females to date were perpetrated, one by a Palestinian female and the other two by Chechen females. Furthermore, these homicide bombings were significant for yet another reason as well. In the Palestinian bombing:

The Jihadi bomber engaged the first defense perimeter, i.e. the security guard, eliminated him, then burst into the restaurant and triggered her mini-doomsday device… a new weapon has been used: Human Precision Bombs… They will fight their way into their

targeted locations. The so-called "weapon of the weak" has been upgraded further. It has become a smart weapon of precision (Phares, 2003, para. 5, 8, & 10).

 The Chechen bombings also used this two-point attack. These attacks may mark yet another adaptive tactic beginning to be utilized by terrorist networks. In an insightful commentary, Dr. Walid Phares (2003), further observes that suicide bombings have traditionally been one-dimensional, in that the moment a bomber encountered the first perimeter of a target, usually security, they blew themselves up. Now, they are becoming two-dimensional attacks, "two missions, two stages and two results" (para. 6).

Indeed, it would seem that homicide terrorism, the so-called "weapon of the weak" continues to adapt, and it is perhaps not surprising that women, the supposed weaker sex, are increasingly being used to utilize these new techniques. In fact:

> We do not know whether women have been successfully committing [these crimes] because few female criminals were considered important enough to study… [perhaps] the female criminal has just never been caught and is laughing all the way to the bank – if she isn't robbing it" (Mann, 1984, p. 97).

Society cannot continue to deny that *she* is capable of violent terrorist acts; there is no empirical evidence available to suggest that *she* is any less likely than *he* to perpetrate these acts. In fact, as this research has shown, *she* is increasingly being used to perpetrate terrorist activities, particularly homicide bombings. "Female offenders are no longer an insignificant subset of the criminal population, nor are they merely an appendage to a system devised for processing and confining men" (Adler, 1981, p. 5). Maybe a common (although officially un-admitted) instruction given to the counter-terrorist squads in Europe is the most prudent of advice, "shoot the women first" (MacDonald, 1991, p. xiv).

Conclusions

There is no question that homicide terrorism, in general, is an increasingly common tactic used by terrorist networks to achieve moderate concessions from their targets, and that utilizing females as homicide bombers is emerging as a coinciding phenomenon that might inevitably spillover into any future occurrences of domestic terrorism by way of gangs or extremist groups, as well as, at the very least, continue to rise abroad. Counter terrorist strategies must accept the idea that females can and are being used as homicide bombers. It should also be understood that homicide bombings do not occur at an individual level (Zedalis, 2004), i.e. individuals do not suddenly decide to strap a bomb to them and go kill thousands of people. In point of fact, homicide bombers are recruited by terrorist organizations to engage in such an attack. Therefore unrelenting pressure must be placed on the organizations that support and encourage and manage terrorism.

Additionally, tactics and techniques must be developed and used "against" the communities that support the use of homicide bombings for without the support of the communities, the homicide bombings are less likely to be sustained. Agencies (public and private) should increase the hiring of females so that suspicious looking females will be more likely to be detained and searched without the usual accusations of misconduct

(which are far less likely to occur when females are involved).   Training for all personnel should be increased so that everyone is aware of the warning signs and what action to take or not take.

Future research might explore the two educational poles of female involvement, and examine the female membership of domestic extremist groups and gangs as they may or may not relate to future occurrences of terrorist type activities or infiltration by foreign terrorist networks.   Finally, the NIMBY mindset must be eliminated.   The fact is that homicide bombings can and do occur, and females are an increasingly large part of that.   We must also realize that anything can be a target, and that the terrorists seem to be changing their focus to soft targets (e.g., malls, schools, hospitals).   Nothing should be overlooked, and the idea that it can happen here and might happen anywhere needs to become far more prevalent.   We must assume a 9/12 mindset rather than the 9/10 mindset so many people seem to have. Without the proper mindset, we run the risk of being unprepared for the lovely young woman hanging out in the food court at the local mall and we realize too late that yes she was, in fact a homicide bomber.

Appendix A: Incidences of Female Participation, 1980 – 2003

Israel: Hezbollah/Hamas/PLO/Islamic Jihad vs. Israel			
Date	Weapon	Target	Killed
1. August 3, 2001	attempted to place a bomb	Tel Aviv Bus Station	0
2. August 9, 2001	led bomber to site	Sbarro Pizzeria	15
3. August 31, 2001	transporting bomb	Hadera Restaurant	1 (self)
4. January 27, 2002	belt bomb (Wafa)	Jaffa Market Jerusalem	2
5. February 27, 2002	belt bomb	Maccabim checkpoint	1 (self)
6. March 21, 2002	led bombers to site	King George St./Jerusalem	3
7. March 29, 2002	belt bomb	Kiryat Hayovel/Jerusalem	2
8. April 11, 2002	arrested – was to participate in attack that occurred the next day		
9. April 12, 2002	belt bomb	Mahane Yehuda Market	6
10. April 25, 2002	arrest crawling toward Israeli settlement in Gaza to blow self up		
11. May 19, 2002	led bomber to site	Netanya Marketplace	3
12. May 22, 2002	backed out/attested	Rishon Lezion Mall	2
13. June 14, 2002	would be bomber arrested	target unknown	0
14. July 1, 2002	would be bomber arrested	target unknown	0
15. July 17, 2002	arrested on way to commit bombing Jerusalem		0
16. July 27, 2002	arrested on way to commit bombing Jerusalem		0
17. May 18, 2003	bomb in bag	Afula's Amakim Mall	6
18. October 3, 2003	belt bomb	Hafia Maxim Restaurant	21

The names of these women in corresponding order are: Iman Asha, Ahlam Tamini, Abir Hamdan, Wafa Idris, Dareen Abu Aisheh, Kahira As'sdi and Sana'a Shahada, Ayat al-Akras, Shfaa al-Koudsi, Andaleeb Taquataqah, Iman Abu Housa, Da'a Jiusi, Arin Ahmed, Tahani Titi, Leila Bahari, Thawiya Hamour Umaya, Mohammed Danaj and the last two have not yet been identified (Beyler, 2003, Chronology; MFA, 2003).

Appendix B: Number of Females Involved in Incidences, 2000 – 2003

Israel: Hezbollah/Hamas/PLO/Islamic Jihad vs. Israel			
Year	Number of Females	Number of Incidences	#Killed
2001	3	3	16
2002	13	13	19
2003	2	2	27
Total	18	18	62

Chechnya: Chechen Rebels vs. The Russian Federation			
Year	Number of Females	Number of Incidences	#Killed
2000	1	1	27
2001	1	1	3
2002	20	1	170
2003	10	7	160
Total	32	10	360

Combined Total

2000 – 2003	50	28	422

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