

Church Security: Taliban Murder of 10 Aid Workers Should Be A Wake Up Call

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The 10 medical aid workers killed by the Taliban were on a trek through Northern Afghanistan to provide eye care to poor, remote villagers. The group was sponsored by the International Assistance Mission, a Christian non profit organization that does not proselytize. IAM operated in the country for over 40 years without incident. This particular group turned down Afghani security escorts because they'd moved around the country without problems, and a false sense of security and resulting complacency had set it. Sadly, these wonderfully talented and idealistic people were lined up and executed by the Taliban, which used AK 47s to carry out their "sentence" - carrying a bible apparently equates to being a spy. Their final moments must have been terrifying, although as people of great faith, I hope they found solace and realized their lives had so much purpose and good.

Americans were outraged by the news, and rightly so. The barbarity of this crime is upsetting and is truly indicative of the ruthlessness of our enemy. However, the shock that defenseless, unarmed medical personnel were targeted is worrisome. It tells me our country isn't mentally prepared for asymmetric warfare. That our citizens believe everyone adheres to the Geneva Convention. That we would never purposely target certain buildings or people, so why would they?

Bottom line - For the radical Islamist jihadists who have put our country in their crosshairs everything is on the table as a target. For instance:

- Your church on Sunday morning when it is packed with thousands of people.
- The Kennedy Center, any Broadway theater in New York City, a sold out concert or sporting event you are attending.
- Your hospital --especially after the first enemy attack, when it is full of patients and first responders.
- Your child's school.
- Your child's daycare center.

Unwilling participants that could be used in a suicide bombing include:

- The elderly
- The disabled
- A young child

Looking at terrorist events around our world in the last few years - we've

already seen terrorist attacks at all of the above venues and the use of elderly, disabled and children as both suicide bombers and human shields.

We absolutely must secure, harden and protect transportation nodes, utilities and key installations and buildings. But we have to do a better job thinking like the enemy and protecting ourselves. Our flank is exposed - do you agree?

Terrorism is a grand marketing campaign and a major product is fear. What strikes more strongly at the hearts of Americans? A train explosion? Times Square bombing? Or a terrorist attack a school where the bad guys take 1,100 hostages, including over 700 children. An hold them for days, forcing a bloody confrontation and show down with law enforcement that results in the deaths of the children they were trying to save. I strongly recommend everyone read the book *Terror at Beslan: A Russian Tragedy with Lessons for America's Schools* for an inside look at a terrorist operation that could easily take place in any of our schools.

Our country is not somehow immune to asymmetric attacks. It doesn't just happen "somewhere on the other side of the world." It is coming to your community, and now is the time to prepare.

Colonel Jennifer Hesterman (U.S. Air Force, retired)

Colonel Hesterman retired in 2007 after 21 years of military service where she completed tours at the Pentagon, multiple command assignments, as well as think tank and Capitol Hill experience. She is currently a Professor teaching counter terrorism courses for American Military University, Contributing Editor at The Counter Terrorist Magazine, and Senior Analyst at The MASY Group. You can read more at her blog, Counter Terror Forum (<http://jennihesterman.blogspot.com/>).

Comments about this article? We welcome your feedback: [contact us](#)

Comments from last week's article (edited due to the amount we received):

"...it just amazes me how many Christians still are completely unaware of the safety and security issues and threats facing the Body of Christ and its leaders." PY

"I appreciate your efforts and even though I don't respond often, I have

benefited from your wisdom. I have subscribed because as a pastor I do want to protect my flock. Your materials have helped us assess and begin to implement a security plan for our church." GG

"While I might have chosen to structure your first response a little differently I believe it has given you a greater platform to address what I see is an even bigger elephant in the room ... apathy. It is indeed a sad statement on the current status of our church culture that we wait till tragedy happens before being convinced we need to react." PL

"I would have very little respect for a "shepard" who runs away at the first howl of the wolf, leaving his flock defenseless..." KK

"Your message is right on unfortunately in America tragedy is the only incentive for people to move forward." NL

"People don't want to face the reality of what things are REALLY like out there." BF

"A responsible pastor will make the safety of his congregation a top priority. I am glad our pastor is such a man." TA

"As we get closer to the last days, the world around us gets to be tougher and more violent, and the need to protect ourselves and our loved ones (including church bretheran) becomes more important - to at least to some of us. Some others, I just don't understand either." SR

"You did the right thing.You need to say the truth to try to get peoples attention." DT

"I had several very positive feedbacks from your initial article on the Maryville incident and also on last week's view. Your response to the Pastor's comments were right on target, needed to be said, and sadly need to be seen by many more Pastors and church officials throughout the country."
LB

"You are being heard out here. Keep it up! I have a feeling most of us, like me, are working hard in the background trying to bring this issue up to the forefront within our local body." BM