

Case 102: Ohio State University

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On the morning of November 28, 2016, a new Ohio State University student, Abdul Artan, 18 years old and a legal permanent resident from Somalia, rammed his Honda Civic into a group of students and faculty on the Columbus campus, and then leapt from the car and began attacking people with a butcher knife. A campus police officer, who happened to be nearby as part of an investigation into a reported gas leak, shot and killed Artan who continued to lunge at him, an encounter that took less than a minute. No one Artan attacked was seriously injured.

Niko Pittore, an intern at the Cato Institute when he wrote this study, stresses that there is no way any person or intelligence agency could have known that this was coming: “There was no inkling of the possibility Artan was going to commit an act like this.”

Amiable and devout, Artan had come to be deeply outraged at the way Muslims were being treated around the world—particularly the Rohingya in Myanmar, or Burma, whose travails, then little known, were to hit the front pages a year later when there was a concentrated effort by the military to drive them from the country.

Artan reached his conclusions quietly and on his own, impressed by the internet postings of the Islamic State and of Anwar al-Awlaki, the American-born al-Qaeda cleric in Yemen. He saluted them both in a Facebook message he posted minutes before the attack and in a letter left in his bedroom that he had torn up, but not destroyed. In them, he pledged allegiance to “dawla” or “dawla in el Sham.” But it was apparently the plight of the Rohingya that triggered the attack: “Seeing my fellow Muslims being tortured, raped, and killed in Burma led to a boiling point. I can’t take it anymore.”

For his efforts, the Islamic State dubbed him “a soldier of the Islamic State” who “carried out the operation in response to calls to target citizens of international coalition.” There is, as usual, no evidence that Artan had any connection with them.

Artan left all of his possessions to his “beloved but yet moderate mother” in his torn-up letter, and promised to “intercede for you in the day of Judgment.”¹

Shortly after the attack, she and the rest of the family moved from the Columbus area because of a series of death threats.²

¹ Andrew Welsh-Huggins, “Ohio State Attacker Faulted ‘Moderate’ Muslims,” *apnews.com*, June 1, 2017.

² Steve Levine, “OSU knife attacker left handwritten, ripped up note behind in home,” *abc6onyourside.com*, June 1, 2017.

Case 102: Ohio State University

Niko Pittore

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1. Overview

Abdul Razak Ali Artan was a legal permanent resident who came to the United States as a refugee from Somalia via Pakistan in 2014. In 2016, the 18 year old (some reports have a different age) enrolled at Ohio State University majoring in Logistics at the University's Max Fisher College of Business. On November 28, 2016, at 9:52am, angry at the way Muslims were being treated around the world and self-radicalized by the Islamic State and the late notorious American-born al-Qaeda cleric, Anwar al-Awlaki, he drove his Honda Civic into a group of students and faculty on the Ohio State campus. After he crashed into a concrete barrier, he left the car, brandished a butcher knife, and began attacking people.

Officer Alan Horujko of the Ohio State University police force, who happened to be nearby because of a reported gas leak, was on scene immediately. Reports indicate that Artan ignored Horujko's orders to drop the weapon and get down on the ground and charged at the officer who then shot and killed him, an encounter that took no more than a minute.¹

In total, thirteen people were injured, but none had life-threatening injuries.² At Artan's house after the attack, authorities found a torn up letter in which, among other things, he pledged allegiance to "dawla," a state or country in Arabic, most likely referring to the Islamic State.³ After the attack, the Islamic State called him a "soldier of the Islamic State."⁴

No one saw this attack coming: Artan had not been on any intelligence watchlist. Nor did any people around him suspected anything. Indeed, those who knew him spoke very highly of him. Although he was upset at the way Muslims were being treated around the world, there was no indication he would commit an act like this to exact revenge for such treatment.

2. Nature of the adversary

Artan and his family came to the United States in 2014 on refugee visas when he was sixteen (there were conflicting reports on his age) years old. They had been in Pakistan after leaving Somalia, and spent around seven years in Islamabad with other Somali refugees on a street called "Somali Street." "He was a very normal, young boy," said Muhammad Ali, who knew Artan during his time

¹ "Ohio State attack: Police identify suspect as business student," dispatch.com, November 28, 2016.

² Beth Burger, "FBI combing Ohio State attacker's life for motive," dispatch.com, December 1, 2016.

³ Andrew Welsh-Huggins, "Ohio State Attacker Faulted 'Moderate' Muslims," apnews.com, June 1, 2017.

⁴ Julie Carr Smyth and Andrew Welsh-Huggins, "ISIS hails Ohio State University attacker Abdul Razak Ali Artan as 'a soldier of the Islamic State'," globalnews.ca, November 29, 2016.

in Pakistan. “He was religious and used to pray regularly, but he did not have any extremist tendencies.”⁵ The family soon became legal residents.

Catholic Charities helped the family adjust to life in the United States by finding them a place to live in Dallas and providing assistance with language and job skills. David Woodyard, CEO of the organization, told CNN that Artan and his family came to them in June 2014 after being vetted by the State Department. He said the family consisted of a single mom and seven children, three boys and four girls. Artan was the third eldest. After just over three weeks, and for no given reason, Artan’s family moved to Columbus, Ohio. Woodyard said Catholic Charities provided no assistance in the move. There was nothing in the family’s file to indicate there had been any trouble while they were in Dallas, and Woodyard did not know of anyone at his organization who had a detailed memory of them.⁶

Artan attended Columbus State Community College starting in the autumn semester of 2014, according to Allen Kraus, the school’s vice-president of marketing and communications. Artan graduated cum laude with an Associate of Arts degree in the Spring 2016 and continued taking classes through summer semester. The school had no record of behavioral or disciplinary issues during his time there.⁷ At Columbus State, some classmates recalled him as a diligent student. Myranda Thompson, who took a sociology class with him, said he “had a passion for his religion” and spoke of Islam frequently. Frank Oteng, who helped Artan with his statistics classwork, said he was focused on his studies, spoke hopefully of transferring to Ohio State, and “seemed very normal.”⁸

While in Columbus, Artan worked at a Home Depot. His specific department or responsibilities were never given. An employee described him as “a nice, nonviolent person. He talked to everybody.”⁹ Darla Neises, worked with Artan in Columbus. “He was a sweet kid,” she said “He was very sweet and kind, he used to write me bravos all the time, he’d get a lot of them. He was employee of the month.” She said she was shocked by the news and compared it to getting hit in the face with a frying pan.¹⁰ Jack Ouham, a Moroccan immigrant and owner of a convenience store called Hometown Market on Nationwide Boulevard in downtown Columbus, had this to say, “He used to stop in every day. He didn’t smoke, didn’t drink. He was very respectful, very educated.” Ouham said Artan was the third oldest of the seven children in the family. He was born in Kenya, possibly in a refugee camp after the family fled civil war-torn Somalia.¹¹ Louann Carnahan lived next door to Artan on the west side of Columbus in a community with many Somali families. She said Artan lived in an apartment with about eight

⁵ Mitch Smith and Adam Goldman, “From Somalia to U.S.: Ohio State Attacker’s Path to Violence,” *nytimes.com*, December 1, 2016.

⁶ Aamer Madhani, “Accused Ohio State attacker reportedly posted rant online,” *usatoday.com*, November 29, 2016.

⁷ Darran Simon, “Ohio State attacker said he was ‘scared’ to pray in public,” *cnn.com*, November 28, 2016.

⁸ Smith and Goldman, “From Somalia to U.S.: Ohio State Attacker’s Path to Violence.”

⁹ Simon, “Ohio State attacker said he was ‘scared’ to pray in public.”

¹⁰ Madhani, “Accused Ohio State attacker reportedly posted rant online.”

¹¹ Madhani, “Accused Ohio State attacker reportedly posted rant online.”

other people, describing him as a pleasant young man who had told her he went to the mosque daily.¹²

After transferring to Ohio State in 2016, Artan became a logistics major in the Max Fisher College of Business.¹³ He enrolled in a class focused on “microaggressions” and how they victimize various groups. According to Ohio State’s Multicultural Center website, the class is “carefully structured to explore social group identity, conflict, community, and social justice.” Moreover, the course asks students to ponder the question, “How have you come to learn about race/gender/sexuality/religion? How has this shaped your world view?” At the conclusion of the course, students were expected to “Identify micro-aggressions within their daily lives and within society as a whole,” “Identify ways in which they can challenge or address systems of power and privilege,” and “Demonstrate an appreciation for other points of view and other cultures.” Artan had a “Microaggression Group Project” due the week of the attack worth 15 percent of the overall course grade.¹⁴

Kevin Stankiewicz and Jay Panandiker, students at Ohio State, interviewed Artan for Ohio State’s student newspaper, the *Lantern* on August 26, 2016, the first day of classes. They described him as thoughtful and engaged, wanting to spread understanding and awareness, while expressing muted fears that U.S. society was becoming insular and fostering unfair stereotypes of his people. Moreover, he was measured and intellectual, not angry or violent. He opened up quickly and was soft-spoken, in a slightly accented voice, and was friendly.¹⁵

About life at Ohio State he said:

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. There’s Fajr, which is early in the morning, at dawn. Then Zuhr during the daytime, then Asr in the evening, like right about now. And then Maghrib, which is like right at sunset and then Isha at night. I wanted to pray Asr. 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. But, I don’t blame them. It’s the media that put that picture in their heads so they’re just going to have it and it’s going to make them feel uncomfortable. I was kind of scared right

¹² Kathy Lynn Gray, Susan Svrluga, Mark Berman and Matt Zapposky, “Ohio State student identified as campus attacker, nearly a dozen hospitalized,” washingtonpost.com, November 28, 2016.

¹³ “Ohio State attack: Police identify suspect as business student.”

¹⁴ Bradford Richardson, “Ohio State University attacker was enrolled in class studying ‘microaggressions,’” washingtonpost.com, December 1, 2016.

¹⁵ Kevin Stankiewicz, “I interviewed the Ohio State attacker on the first day of school. It felt important. Now it’s chilling,” washingtonpost.com, November 30, 2016.

now. But I just did it. I relied on God. I went over to the corner and just prayed.”¹⁶

He also spoke of his past. He thoroughly enjoyed living in Pakistan, and bemoaned what he felt were western misconceptions about Pakistan, saying: “It’s not like people believe.” Moreover, he spoke of his fears of then-candidate Donald Trump’s rhetoric toward Muslims, what it might mean for immigrants and refugees, what it might mean for those, like him, who practice Islam openly. How ignorance about Islam propels bigotry and hatred.¹⁷

Friends of Artan could not believe he committed an act like this. Ameer Kadar, who last saw Artan two weeks before the attack, said, “He actually loved America. He loved the fact of the opportunity he had here to go to school... He loved the fact that he was able to get a college degree.”¹⁸ A community member who spoke to Artan’s family described them as shocked by his actions. Artan’s mother said he had lately complained about his grades, according to the community member.¹⁹

3. Motivation

A post found on Artan’s computer reveals a political possibility for a motivation: a diatribe in which Artan complained about the treatment of Muslims around the world, including the Rohingya in Burma (Myanmar).²⁰ The Rohingya are often talked about as the world’s most persecuted minority. Nearly all live in the western coastal state of Rakhine and are not allowed to leave without government permission. It is one the poorest states in the country with ghetto-like camps and a lack of basic services and opportunities. They are not considered one of the country’s 135 official ethnic groups, and they have been denied citizenship in Myanmar since 1982, which has effectively rendered them stateless. Due to ongoing violence and persecution, hundreds of thousands of Rohingya have fled to neighboring countries either by land or boat over the course of many decades.²¹ This process was greatly extended in 2017 when Myanmar armed forces sought to expel the group.

Artan thus seemed to be self-radicalized. He felt particularly angry about the way Muslims were being treated around the world: “I am sick and tired of seeing my fellow Muslim brothers and sisters being killed and tortured everywhere ... Muslims being tortured, raped and killed in Burma led to a boiling point. I can’t take it anymore.”²²

¹⁶ Kevin Stankiewicz and Jay Panandiker, “Humans of Ohio State,” *thelantern.com*, August 25, 2016

¹⁷ Stankiewicz, “I interviewed the Ohio State attacker on the first day of school.”

¹⁸ Tracy Connor, Pete Williams, and Stephanie Gosk, “Ohio State Attack: Friend says Abdul Razak Ali Artan ‘Loved America’,” *nbcnews.com*, November 29, 2016.

¹⁹ Darran Simon, “Ohio State attacker said he was ‘scared’ to pray in public.”

²⁰ Connor et al., “Ohio State Attack.”

²¹ “Myanmar: Who are the Rohingya?” *aljazeera.com*, September 28, 2017.

²² “Ohio State Attacker May Have Been Inspired by Radical Messages,” *cbsnews.com*, November 29, 2016.

He also specifically mentioned the late notorious American-born al-Qaeda cleric Anwar al-Awlaki as an inspiration, particularly his online sermons.²³

Artan left behind a letter in his bedroom, found ripped up, that asked his family to stop being moderate Muslims and said he refused to sit in luxury while his brothers and sisters are being oppressed. In this letter Artan left behind all of his possessions to his “beloved but yet moderate mother.”²⁴ Moreover, he pledged allegiance to the Islamic State in the letter, saying, “In the end, I would like to say that I pledge my allegiance to ‘dawla,’” putting the word in quotation marks.²⁵ Dawla in Arabic means a state or country, so one can surmise he was pledging allegiance to the Islamic State. For whatever it is worth, the Islamic State news agency called Artan “a soldier of the Islamic State” who “carried out the operation in response to calls to target citizens of international coalition countries.”²⁶

Then, shortly before the attack, he wrote on Facebook, “If you want us Muslims to stop carrying out lone wolf attacks, then make peace with ‘Dawla in al sham.’ ... By Allah, we will not sleep until you give peace to Muslims.”²⁷

4. Goals

It is not clear what Artan’s exact goals were. He made it very clear he was extremely unsatisfied with the way Muslims were being treated around the world, specifically the Rohingya in Myanmar. And, as noted, he also made it clear in a post just before his attack that the only way to stop lone wolf attacks is to improve the worldwide treatment of Muslims. We can surmise that his overall goal was to improve the quality of life for Muslims around the world.

Unfortunately for him, using a car and a knife to injure eleven people and causing no fatalities is not exactly the kind of “heroic” and ground-shaking development you’d want to give Muslims allegedly being tortured around the world. It is very clear he had an amateur-like plan relative to the heroics he was planning.

5. Plans for violence

Artan made a visit to Washington, D.C., a few days before the attack where he purchased a knife at a Walmart and a second one at a Home Depot. Most of us would consider it odd to drive some four hundred miles just to purchase a knife. Apparently so did his family. According to Bob Fittrakis, the family attorney, his family didn’t realize he’d traveled there, has no idea why he went, and urged anyone with information about that trip to contact authorities.

²³ “Ohio State Attacker May Have Been Inspired by Radical Messages. “

²⁴ Steve Levine, “OSU knife attacker left handwritten, ripped up note behind in home,” abc6onyourside.com, June 1, 2017. See the Appendix in this study for a picture of part of the torn-up letter.

²⁵ Welsh-Huggins, “Ohio State Attacker Faulted ‘Moderate’ Muslims.”

²⁶ Smyth and Welsh-Huggins, “ISIS hails Ohio State University attacker.”

²⁷ Steve Levine, “OSU knife attacker left handwritten, ripped up note behind in home.” The full Facebook post can be found at Virginia Kruta, “Police Release Facebook Rant Posted by Abdul Artan Before OSU Attack — And It May Reveal His Motive,” ijr.com, November 29, 2016, and it is also shown in the Appendix below

The day before the attack, Artan left work saying he was tired. A co-worker commented how unusual that was considering he never left work early. Artan had told the co-worker several times that fall he was disgruntled with school and wanted to drop out.²⁸

On November 28, 2016, Artan bought a set of knives, a tomato, and a cucumber at 7:20am at a Walmart in West Columbus with his movements captured by video and photos. Why he had traveled all those miles to Washington, D.C. to buy a simple knife and then bought another in Columbus is nothing less than head-scratching. And there is as well no explanation about the relevance of the tomato and cucumber. But, the “suspect was pleasant and very polite during the checkout process,” the Walmart cashier told investigators. At 7:50am, Artan dropped his sister off at a high school near their home on the city’s west side. He paid a brother the \$40 he owed him around 9:30.²⁹

He then wrote his Facebook declaration and, at 9:52, drove his Honda Civic into the courtyard near Watts Hall on 19th Avenue and College Road.³⁰ He struck several pedestrians, including Professor Emeritus William Clark who suffered injuries to his leg and ankle. At a later news conference, Dr. Clark said, “Until we really know all the facts. I’d prefer to hold judgment. Having been a faculty member for 35 years, I’m only too aware of the things that drive students sometimes to do things they wouldn’t ordinarily do, and so before I pass judgment on this young man, I would like to see exactly what the circumstances are and exactly why he took the course of action that he chose to...I’m sore, but I’m going home this afternoon, and he’s dead. So I think my sense is out of respect just for the living and the dead we should wait until we know what’s the truth.”³¹

Angshuman Kapil, a 25-year-old student, was waiting outside Ohio State’s Watts Hall with fifty or sixty other people who had left the building because of a fire alarm. He said the car hit a concrete barrier after barreling down the road.³² So focused was Artan on hitting people, that he apparently failed to follow the most basic rule of driving: Watch the road. Had he been paying attention, it is possible he could have done more damage with his car. The barrier incident showed Artan’s ineptness in attempting to carry out a grandiose act like the one he planned—if he really had a plan at all

He then got out of his car, a butcher knife in his hand, and proceeded to stab people. Kerri Strausbaugh said Artan approached her and warned: “I’m going to fucking kill you.”³³ Moreover, according to Strausbaugh, he let out a war cry

²⁸ Welsh-Huggins, “Ohio State Attacker Faulted ‘Moderate’ Muslims.”

²⁹ Welsh-Huggins, “Ohio State Attacker Faulted ‘Moderate’ Muslims.”

³⁰ Emily Shapiro, Aaron Katersky, Josh Margolin, and Mike Levine, “Ohio State University Student Dead After Driving Into Crowd, Stabbing People at OSU Campus,” abcnews.go.com, November 28, 2016.

³¹ Emily Shapiro, “Injured Professor Says Won’t Judge OSU Attacker: ‘I’m Going Home ... He’s Dead,’” abcnews.go.com, November 29, 2016.

³² Gray et al., “Ohio State student identified as campus attacker, nearly a dozen hospitalized.”

³³ The expletive is extrapolated from Huggins, “Ohio State Attacked Faulted ‘Moderate’ Muslims.”

before chasing people in order to stab them.³⁴ Former Army veteran and Ohio State student Anderson Payne tried to help, and, when Artan got close to him, grabbed the knife and ducked under his arm in order to escape. Although he was unable to disarm and subdue Artan, Payne didn't realize at first that the inside of his hand had been cut by the knife.³⁵

At 9:54, Ohio State sent out an emergency notification telling students to shelter in place due to an active shooter.³⁶ The shots they heard, however, were likely those fired by Ohio State University police officer Alan Horujko who shot and killed Artan after he reportedly failed to obey orders to stop and then charged at the officer.³⁷ Obviously, Horujko had the advantage in the situation, but Artan at that point seemed desperate and perhaps knew he was not going to achieve anything with attacking students. Thus his last ditch effort seemed to be to charge at Officer Horujko and die in a "blaze of glory." Horujko happened to be near by because of the reported gas leak, encountering and then killing Artan at 9:53.³⁸ If he had not been there, Artan would have had significantly more time to chase people and possibly to cause some fatalities.

Eleven people were either hit by Artan's car or stabbed by him. A twelfth person was hit by a stray bullet from Officer Horujko's gun, and a thirteenth was treated for unspecified injuries.³⁹ None of the injuries was life threatening. Eleven of the thirteen victims were treated at Columbus area hospitals. Max Wieneke had a minor injury and refused medical treatment.⁴⁰ Heavily armed SWAT units arrived on the scene after it was over, and they could be seen forming a line up the stairs of a nearby parking garage.⁴¹ Soon after the attack, Ohio State cancelled classes for the rest of the day. Per university policy, Officer Horujko was put on paid administrative leave, and he was soon after cleared of any wrongdoing.⁴²

6. Role of informants

There were no informants for this case.

³⁴ Tracy Connor, "Ohio State Victim Says Attacker Vowed to Kill Her," nbcnews.com, December 1, 2016.

³⁵ Michelle Newell, "Army vet fought Ohio State attacker as he tried to help others after car crash," abc6onyourside.com, November 29, 2016.

³⁶ "Attack at Ohio State campus: 11 injured, suspect killed by police," 10tv.com, December 11, 2016.

³⁷ Emanuella Grinberg, Shimon Prokupecz, and Holly Yan, "Ohio State University: Attacker killed, 11 hospitalized after campus attack," cnn.com, November 28, 2016. For the note about Artan charging at Officer Horujko, see "Emily Shapiro and Michael Hayden, Witnesses to Ohio State University Stabbings Recount Chaos," abcnews.go.com, November 28, 2016.

³⁸ Andrew Welsh-Huggins, "Officials praise fast-acting officer who killed Ohio State attacker", thestar.com, November 28, 2016.

³⁹ Burger, "FBI combing Ohio State attacker's life for motive."

⁴⁰ WCPO staff, "Names of 13 Ohio State attack victims released," wcpo.com, November 30, 2016.

⁴¹ Mitch Smith, Richard Perez-Pena, and Adam Goldman, "Suspect Is Killed in Attack at Ohio State University That Injured 11," nytimes.com, November 28, 2016.

⁴² Tiffany Tarpley, "Timeline of Ohio State University Attack," wwltv.com, November 30, 2016.

7. Connections

The only connections were indirect. Artan was influenced by the online sermons of Anwar al-Awlaki, and was concerned about the mistreatment worldwide of Muslims. He seems to have pledged allegiance to the Islamic State in the letter he tore up and in his Facebook posting. However, two U.S. intelligence officials reported that there are no known contacts between Artan and ISIS or any other foreign terrorist organization. This directly disputes the statement from ISIS' media arm, as has become routine with attacks, claiming that he was working in service of the Islamic State.

8. Relation to the Muslim community

Artan was very religious and prayed regularly. He also attended mosque frequently. However, he showed no extremist tendencies leading up to the event. These had clearly laid dormant for quite some time, not allowing authorities to get a bead on him before he committed this act. No one around him in the Muslim community saw this coming.

In a news conference, leaders in the local Muslim community condemned Artan's attack. Roula Allouch, national board chairman of the Council on American-Islamic Relation said:

“As Ohioans, as Americans and as Muslims, we're shocked by today's senseless attack. We stand together with Ohioans of all faiths and backgrounds in praying for the speedy recovery of all those who were injured in today's attack.” Jennifer Nimer, legal director for CAIR's Ohio chapter, urged the public not to jump to conclusions about Artan's motive and to let investigators do their job: “Responding to such a senseless act of violence with hate is never the solution...And we hope that Columbus will continue to be a place where people of all religions and ethnicities can be treated with respect and dignity.”⁴³

Omar Hassan, president of the Columbus-based Somali Community Association of Ohio, said that a member of Artan's family told him the suspect's mother and siblings had been interviewed by law enforcement authorities after the incident. Hassan noted Columbus has the second-biggest Somali population in the U.S. with about 50,000 immigrants from the east African nation and said the incident would reverberate in the Somali diaspora in the U.S., where concerns about anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant are already heightened: “The timing is not good. We are black. We are Muslim. We are Somali. We are all the negative stigmas.”⁴⁴

The American Human Rights Council Executive Director Imad Hamad said in a statement: “We are shocked by this heinous crime on Ohio State's campus. Universities are havens of learning and individual growth. We must not only stay vigilant against radicalization but against hate mongering and scapegoating as well.”⁴⁵

⁴³ Simon, “Ohio State attacker said he was ‘scared’ to pray in public.”

⁴⁴ Madhani, “Accused Ohio State attacker reportedly posted rant online.”

⁴⁵ Ray Hanania, “AHRC condemns heinous Ohio State University attack,” *arabdailynews.com*, November 30, 2016.

9. Depiction by authorities

Officials were hesitant at first to firmly establish this as an act of terrorism. They had previously not been aware of any investigations or inquiries into Artan's activities. However, the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force came in to investigate it as a possible case of domestic terrorism.⁴⁶ Moreover, Columbus police Chief Kim Jacobs, asked whether authorities were considering the possibility it was a terrorist act, said: "I think we have to consider that it is."⁴⁷ They soon came to the conclusion he was inspired by the Islamic State as well as Anwar al-Awlaki, at which point they began to treat the attack as a terrorist attack.⁴⁸ They further confirmed Artan was not in any sort of contact with the Islamic State or with any foreign terrorist organization and acted entirely alone.

Several politicians also made their voices heard. Governor John Kasich praised the quick response of the police, saying how much "training, expertise, and coordination there was between law enforcement agencies." He added "We are a strong, tough, resilient community." Mayor of Columbus Andrew Ginther said, "it one of those days you're grateful for good training and great people across the board," and urged unity in the days ahead.⁴⁹

True to politician form, the Donald Trump, then president-elect, was quick to pounce on the attack for his political gain, tweeting, "ISIS is taking credit for the terrible stabbing attack at Ohio State University by a Somali refugee who should not have been in our country."⁵⁰ Texas Governor Greg Abbott was also quick to point to this attack as motivation to not accept any refugees; as he tweeted, "This is why I removed Texas from the Refugee Relocation Process. I will not be an accomplice to importing terrorists. Refugee reform needed."⁵¹ At least Vice President-elect Mike Pence managed to keep politics out of it when he called the episode "a tragic attack" and said "our prayers are with them all." US House of Representative Member Adam Schiff (D-CA), the ranking member of the House Intelligence Committee said he operated under the assumption it was a terrorist attack, saying: "The bloodshed "bears all of the hallmarks of a terror attack carried out by someone who may have been self-radicalized."⁵²

Dr. Michael V. Drake, President of Ohio State, cautioned against jumping to conclusions about the motivations of Artan, citing a lack of evidence. Further, he said, "Our campus community is extremely tolerant. The concept of branding a

⁴⁶ "ISIS claims credit for inspiring attack at Ohio State that injured 11," [dispatch.com](#), November 30, 2016.

⁴⁷ Andrew Welsh-Huggins and Julie Carr-Smyth, "Terrorism Suspected in Car-and-Knife Attack at Ohio State," [apnews.com](#), November 29, 2016.

⁴⁸ Max Blau, Emanuella Grinberg and Shimon Prokuecz, "Investigators believe Ohio State attacker was inspired by ISIS," [cnn.com](#), November 29, 2016.

⁴⁹ Smith et al., "Suspect Is Killed in Attack at Ohio State University That Injured 11."

⁵⁰ Reena Flores, "Donald Trump Tweets about Ohio State University Stabbing Attacks," [cbsnews.com](#), November 30, 2016."

⁵¹ Laura Rice, "Greg Abbott Points to OSU Stabbing as Caution against Refugee Resettlement," [kut.org](#), November 29, 2016.

⁵² Welsh-Huggins and Smyth, "Terrorism Suspected in Car-and-Knife Attack at Ohio State."

whole community for the act of a few leads to an intolerance that can make the world a more difficult place for all of us.”⁵³

At around 10:00pm on the day of the attack, OSU students and employees gathered in front of a church located near the scene, to pray for the injured.⁵⁴ Three days later, Stephanie Clemons Thompson, Assistant Director of Student Life at Ohio State, made a Facebook post in which she seemed to sympathize with Artan. She called for compassion and used the hashtags #BuckeyeStrong, #BlackLivesMatter, and #SayHisName. The post received condemnation for defending a person who attempted to kill others, for implying that Artan’s death was wrong, and for comparing a terrorist who targeted his fellow students with victims of police brutality. A change.org petition calling for Thompson’s termination from OSU received over 1,200 signatures, and an OSU spokesman said that the post “clearly is not an official statement of the university and represents her own personal viewpoint.” Some people have defended Thompson for writing the post.⁵⁵

In addition, Ohio State’s Coalition for Black Liberation protested the killing of Artan, added his name to a list of “people of color” who had been killed by law enforcement, and then read it out loud days after the attack. Maryam Abidi, a fourth-year Women’s Gender and Sexuality major said, “We broadened the scope of what today was supposed to be, to talk about the aftermath of what happened on the 28th—to talk about what it meant for that attack to happen and also for Ohio State to be a focal point for a lot of right-wing pundits, Islamophobia and xenophobia. In some cases, the deceased may have committed acts of violence against others before they were killed. Perhaps they were domestic abusers, perhaps they threatened or killed others. This possibility is not something to shy away from. The protest against police brutality extends to the innocent and the guilty alike, because we know that no matter the crime, justice and due process don’t come from a cop’s bullet.”⁵⁶

10. Coverage by the media

The media was cautious in how they approached the situation. Most outlets referred to Artan as an “attacker,” which seems to be a very proper description, especially in the early stages of the investigation. They mentioned that terrorism was being looked at as a way to describe it for the purposes of the investigation, but their personal narrative was very cautious, not jumping to any conclusions or the like, just laying out the facts of the situation, pretty much the way it should be.

⁵³ Smith et al., “Suspect Is Killed in Attack at Ohio State University That Injured 11.”

⁵⁴ Tarpley, “Timeline of Ohio State University Attack.”

⁵⁵ Karen Farkas, “Ohio State University administrator faces calls for dismissal after seeking compassion for student who attacked,” cleveland.com, December 3, 2016.

⁵⁶ Chris Enloe, “Ohio State student protesters claim police went ‘too far’ by shooting, killing Islamic terrorist,” theblaze.com, December 10, 2016.

11. Policing costs

There was not much in terms of policing costs. Artan was shot and killed by Officer Horujko within a minute of their encounter, and there was also no need for court as justice.

12. Relevance of the internet

As with pretty much all cases of terrorism in this time period, the internet was a crucial factor. Artan was self-radicalized, finding inspiration in online websites maintained by foreign terrorist organizations or affiliated individuals. Important in this case were online sermons by Anwar al-Awlaki and terrorist propaganda from the Islamic State.

13. Are we safer?

This always the hardest question to answer in a case like this. Officer Horujko happened already to be near, responding to a possible gas leak at Watts Hall. If it had taken longer for the police to respond, who knows what could have happened. But regardless, the heroics of Officer Horujko will not be forgotten.

14. Conclusions

What can we learn from this attack? For starters, we can assert this was a definitive case for terrorism. By viewing his Facebook page as well as the note he left, we can conclude Artan had a political motivation for committing this attack. The alleged mistreatment of Muslims around the world eventually became too much for him and he snapped. He believed that by committing this attack, he was exacting revenge for Muslims worldwide, and he pledged that lone wolves would not cease to commit acts of violence until Muslims found peace. Unfortunately for him but fortunately for the rest of us, his plan was amateurish and failed miserably, despite his grandiose plans and inspirations.

Second, it never helps national unity when politicians put forward divisive rhetoric. In this case, then-President elect Donald Trump and Texas Governor Greg Abbott both wasted no time at all taking advantage of this situation to gain political points with their respective bases. They both made this clear this situation makes clear why the United States should not allow in refugees, especially from “high-risk” countries. One can hope politicians might not succumb to the opportunity to jump on a crisis for political gain. However, as then-Chief of Staff to President Barack Obama and now Mayor of Chicago, Rahm Emmanuel, once pointed out, “You never want a serious crisis to go to waste.”

Third, it is very concerning that Artan that was able to self-radicalize on the internet easily and without any contestation. There was no way any one person or intelligence agency could have known Artan was quietly self-radicalizing. This is the most worrisome part of the case. Radicalized quietly and uncontested, he surprised everyone when he barreled his Honda Civic into a crowd of people. That there was a terrorist attack brewing in our midst and that the most sophisticated intelligence agencies in the world were completely blind is definitely cause for concern—although attacks like this are, of course, extremely rare and, in the end, he was able to inflict little damage. But the fact he was able to

pull this off without an obstacles is something to be concerned about. There's absolutely no policy recommendation to make that could have prevented an act like this.

Lastly, there is no excuse for the comments made by the staff member and students who sympathized with Artan. Regardless of what he was as a person or what his skin color is, Artan committed a terrorist attack, albeit a completely failed and pathetic one. Officer Horujko acted correctly: when charged by Artan, he shot him and took him down. There are definitely cases of police brutality against people of color in this country, but this is not one. Statements like these only increase Islamophobia and xenophobia. Sympathizing with Islamic terrorists, as stupid and amateurish as they may be, will not advance the cause. Freedom of speech does not mean freedom from consequence. Maybe they should recognize that.

Appendix

Artan's Facebook page with his warning posted shortly before his attack.

In the name of Allah, the most merciful and the most gracious.

My brothers and sisters, I am sick and tired of seeing my fellow Muslim Brothers and Sisters being killed and tortured EVERYWHERE. Seeing my fellow Muslims being tortured, raped and killed in Burma led to a boiling point. I can't take it anymore.

America stop interfering with other countries, especially the Muslim Ummah. We are not weak. We are weak, remember that.

If you want us Muslims to stop carrying lone wolf attacks, then make peace with "Dawla in al sham." Make a pact or a treaty with them where you promise to leave them alone, you and your fellow apostate allies.

By Allah, we will not let you sleep unless you give peace to the Muslims. You will not celebrate or enjoy any holiday.

Stop the killing of Muslims in Burma.

Btw, every single Muslim who disapproves of my actions is a sleeper cell, waiting for a signal. I am warning you OH America!

And, a message to the Muslims, don't listen to celebrity scholars who sold their deen. I am talking about the likes of Yasir Oaphi, Omar Sulieman, Nourman Mufti and the list goes on. Beware of Al Maghreb institute listen instead to our hero Imam Anwar Al-Awlaki.

Let me as you this question if the Muhammad peace and blessings upon him and his Sanaba were here today wouldn't the western media call them terrorists?

To conclude by Allah, I am willing to use a billion infidels in retribution

Part of the torn-up letter. The text is extraordinarily difficult to read. The major contents can be found in the text above in Section 5.

