

A Difference Between Terror Acts?

U.S. Congressman Sean Duffy refers to the right-wing attack on a Quebec mosque as a “one-off.”

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At 9:02am on April 19, 1995, Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols put right-wing extremism firmly on the American social map with the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City that killed 168 people, including 19 children, and injured a further 500.

Since then, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) has tracked over 100 major terrorist plots and rampages intended to target government property, use chemical and biological weapons, and assassinate presidents.

Some of the most prominent recent attacks include the shooting of nine African-American worshippers by 21-year-old Dylann Roof in a Charleston church in North Carolina, the attack on a Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado Springs by Robert Lewis Dear Jr. that killed three, and the Georgia-based terrorist group FEAR (Forever Enduring, Always Ready) that, among numerous other acts of domestic disturbance, contemplated blowing up a dam and poisoning the apple crop in Washington state.

One study by the Cato Institute found that since 1975, foreign-born terrorists were responsible for 3,024 of the 3,432 deaths on US soil, but the bulk of these—2,983—came on one day: September 11, 2001. A study by the Anti-Defamation League concluded that of the 372 lives lost to domestic extremism between 2007 and 2016, 74% came at the hands of right-wing extremists. Last year, with the Orlando nightclub shooting that killed 49, was the first in three decades where right-wing extremists were not responsible for the most extremism-related deaths in the United States.

And yet it is the threat of Islamic extremism that dominates the social conscience and incites most fear, despite being responsible for less than 1% of murders in America. Is there a difference between acts of terrorism based on who commits them? Apparently so.