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Suicide Terrorism: Understanding the Mindset and Motives

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Suicide Terrorism: *Understanding the Mindset and Motives*

By

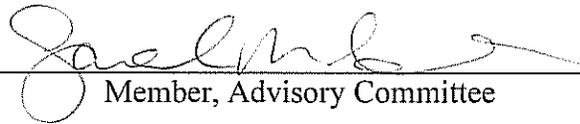Joshua Daniel Goss

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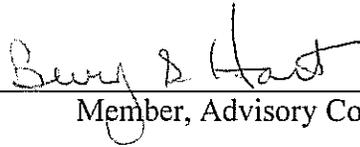
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SUICIDE TERRORISM: UNDERSTANDING THE MINDSET AND MOTIVES

By

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Bachelor of Science
Eastern Kentucky University
Richmond, Kentucky
2012

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the Hero's

of the United States Armed Forces who laid down

their lives for our country.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ABSTRACT

Suicide Terrorism plays major roles in devastating and destructing cities and their people while communities try to fight the Global War on Terrorism. The devastation and destruction can either be focused on individuals or a certain infrastructure. There are two tactics of executing the acts of suicide terrorism; strapping explosives to their bodies and or steering some sort of transportation into a place of gathering. The methodology of this study is an auto-ethnography. The auto-ethnography is designed to find understanding of personal experiences using a qualitative method of study. Understanding the motives and mindset of suicide terrorist can be very complex. In the study, variables of political, educational, family moral and beliefs, and religion are all researched comparing to the personal experiences of what drives an individual to carry out such acts of violence. Conclusive research shows all four variables play particular roles in certain suicide terrorist acts, and some drive these actions more than others.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Iraq War was a conflict that many Americans supported and many disapproved. The invasion began on March 13, 2003 and lasted until May 1, 2003. After May 1st, the war was then given the title of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). During the invasion, troops from Poland, Austria, the United Kingdom and the United States conducted combat operations lasting twenty-one days with the objective of dismantling Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist government. The total number of troops from these four nations totaled approximately 195,200 personnel (Bush, 2003). During the invasion there was also support from Kurdish irregulars from Iraq. Hussein's Ba'athist government called for the Arab nation to unite into one single nation. This motto tried to honor the code of "Unity, Liberty, and Socialism". Essentially, the Arab nation comes into one, leaving freedom from non- Arab parties from zero control and or interception of power from the Ba'athist government.

At the time of the invasion, President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair stated the coalition mission was, "to disarm Iraq of their weapons of mass destruction, to end Saddam Hussein's support of terrorism and to free the Iraqi people" (Bush, 2003). Tony Blair believed and stood by the reasoning that the invasion was due to Iraq's failure to comply and use their final opportunity to disarm themselves of their nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. Leaders across the world believed this was a major and immediate threat to world safety and peace.

The Iraq War started a new wave of insurgent war fighters that would do anything to dismantle a U.S. and Coalition Force push or patrol. During the war insurgents also fought in an Iraq civil war beginning in February of 2006, then decreased later that year. Insurgents came from all over the Middle East to be apart in fighting against U.S. and Coalition Forces. When this new wave of insurgents started, it refueled the method of suicide bombings. Suicide bombings made it easier for the insurgent to dismantle the enemies and to ultimately make a statement.

Justification of what the mindset and motives are of a suicide bomber may never be truly exposed. Understanding the mindset and the motives of insurgents can help one to better understand the behaviors of a suicide bomber during the Iraq War. In today's wars, it is considered to be the easiest and deadliest act of violence to quickly cause the greatest amount of devastation and destruction.

This study is being conducted to examine some potential variables that contribute to thoughts and behaviors of suicide bombers during the Iraq War. This research is in attempt to find understanding of why these acts are committed and what drives insurgents to these extremes.

Definitions

Improvised Explosive Device (IED)

•*Improvised Explosive Device. This is an explosive device that is improvised and upon exploding, it burst with violent energy from within.*

•*"A device placed or fabricated in an improvised manner incorporating destructive, lethal, noxious, pyrotechnic, or incendiary chemicals and designed to destroy, incapacitate, harass, or distract." (Directive, 2007)*

Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED)

•*Vehicle borne IEDs (VBIEDs) are devices that use a vehicle as the package or container of the device. These IEDs come in all shapes, colors, and sizes which vary by the type of vehicles available – small sedans to large cargo trucks. There have even been instances of what appeared to be generators, donkey drawn carts, and ambulances used to attempt attacks on Coalition Forces and the New Iraqi Government (Security, 2011).*

Suicide Terrorist

•*A suicide bomber is a person who wants to bomb a target so badly that they are willing to die in the process and that; in fact, dying along with the victims is part of the point. A number of critics insist that "suicide bombers" actually be labeled "homicide bombers" in*

order to emphasize the fact that these people are killing others. Suicide bombers may be motivated by religious beliefs that they will be rewarded in heaven for sacrificing their lives for their beliefs, while other religions consider it suicide, which is not allowed under its beliefs. (USLEGAL.com, 2001-2013)

Hamas

•Hamas is a fundamentalist Islamic organization that wants to establish an Islamic state on what it considers "historic Palestine," which includes modern-day Israel. (Katz, 2013)
•Hamas' military wing is responsible for the majority of terrorist attacks against Israel since the signing of the Declaration of Principles in 1993. (Katz, 2013)

Crimes against Humanity

•"Crimes against humanity: murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, and other inhumane acts committed against civilian populations, before or during the war; or persecutions on political, racial or religious grounds in execution of or in connection with any crime within the jurisdiction of the Tribunal, whether or not in violation of the domestic law of the country where perpetrated." (Bassiouni, 2011)

Martyrdom

•Martyrdom is the suffering of death in the belief of religion. Islamic Martyrdom is considered by most a suicide mission carried out by extremist. The word martyr is Greek for "witness".

Ba'athist Government

•Ba'athism is an Arab National Ideology that promotes renaissance and rebirth to Arab cultures. People believe in Ba'athist Government believe socialism is the only way to create an Arab society that can be united as one and free.

CHAPTER 2

SUICIDE TERRORISM DEFINDED

A suicide terrorist has one main objective in mind: to cause great devastation. The devastation can either be focused on individuals or a certain infrastructure. There are two tactics of executing the acts of suicide terrorism; strapping explosives to their bodies and or steering some sort of transportation into a place of gathering.

Strapping explosive devices to one's body gives the terrorists access to places where vehicles cannot be placed or driven. Crowded areas are typically targeted resulting in the greatest damage and largest numbers of casualties. Using a vehicle to run into a building or other infrastructure will also cause devastation not only in a loss of lives, but this type of explosion restricts access to entry points for rescue or ways of egress after the bomb has been detonated. Suicide terrorist that use vehicles in their tactics are called Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (VBIED).

Most suicide terrorists know they will die for their cause in an attack but there are some suicide terrorists that do not know or understand the consequences of their action. There are instances where children have been put into these situations due to family morals or beliefs in which their family members have educated them. Children across the world are all the same. Children in all cultures have someone they look up too. In this case, insurgents and/or family members are known to corrupt children in ways to conduct missions of suicide terrorism acts (J. M., 2009). The children understand they are about to cause great harm to people but psychologically they do not understand the true consequences of the acts that they are about to commit.

Many high ranking officials believe politics are the number one role players in motives of a suicide terrorist but other believe religion is a larger factor. Men and children are not the only people that choose to carry about suicide terroristic events. Women are known to do this as well. For example, in Chechnya there are women who carry out their missions because of a husband that has been killed by rebel forces. The women that choose to do this are known as "the Black Widows." The women are usually

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engaging in this activity due to grief, hatred, or revenge (Maryland, 2010-2013). In regards to religious influences, suicide terrorists who believe and follow radical Islamic ideology are willing to die as an act of dedication and devotion to the holy war, or Jihad (Bukay, 2006).

In the Quran, not much is discussed about the afterlife of the Muslim religion in regards to sacrificing oneself; however, it does describe huris. Huris is the belief of being converted into a virgin maiden. It is said that a man will be rewarded with 72 virgins when arriving to heaven. In the Muslim religion, every believer has a chance to get to heaven but if one is a martyr, they will get their faster (Tsai, 2010). Female suicide terrorists believe when they get to heaven they will reunite in the next world with their husband, but for those who had multiple husbands they would have a choice to choose one for eternity (Tsai, 2010).

Another example of suicide bombers are the Japanese Kamikaze pilots of World War II (WWII). Kamikaze pilots used their planes as flying bombs aimed at Pacific Allied ships toward the end of the war (Tanaka, nod). Their planes were loaded down with extra high explosive components to cause as much damage as possible when they would fly themselves into military targets. The Japanese also used piloted torpedoes called "kaiten" while on their suicide missions (Kaiten-class). The kaiten were small submarines that would act as manned torpedoes to wreck and dismantle enemy vessels. This was an intelligent way of destroying the enemy; these submarines could move swiftly, silently and deadly in order to complete their mission of dismantling and devastating ones Army.

Modern day suicide terrorist have become increasingly creative and more destructive. Today suicide bombings happen at any time or at any place. Some of the most notorious suicide attacks are the Beirut Bombing of the Marine Corps barrack, USS Cole, and 9/11. Suicide terrorist have produced phenomenal numbers of events not only in Iraq but in Afghanistan and Pakistan as well. Western Europe and the United States have both had experiences with suicide terrorism. On September 11, 2001, between the New York City World Trade Center's, the Pentagon in Washington D.C, and Shanksville, Pennsylvania almost 3,000 people were killed from suicide terrorism. On July 7, 2005, 52 people were

killed and 700 injured in suicide bombings across London. On that day four Islamist terrorists from London detonated three bombs throughout the underground transportation system, and one was placed on a double-decker bus (Commons, 2006).

Since 2003 in Iraq, suicide bombings have killed thousands of people, mostly innocent. These bombings are all unexplained due to their frequency. Al-Qaeda and their allies (Ansar al-Sunna and Islamic State of Iraq) take responsibility for the targeted civilians that have been either abducted or executed. Al-Qaeda, over the past decade, has gone public about the bombings that have been committed, giving themselves all the glory. They reported to have set off suicide bombings in markets, bus stations, mosques, and all other areas of large gatherings to send their message to others and Allah. These heinous acts are considered war crimes and many may even be categorized as crimes against humanity.

In 2004, Iraqi insurgents made significant shifts aiming their focus on their own Iraqi population. Instead of using IED's on U.S. and Coalition Forces they began using suicide bombers and vehicle borne IED's. Al-Qaeda began doing this in order to scare out all possibilities of Iraqi forces and Iraqi populations working with the U.S. They quickly learned, by using suicide techniques, they can or could focus on larger amounts of victims rather than placing IED's. A study conducted by Iraq Body Count shows that at least 12, 284 civilians were killed in 1,003 suicide bombing events in Iraq between the years of 2003 and 2010. Interestingly, this research study revealed that suicide bombings killed sixty times the civilians as it did soldiers.

CHAPTER 3

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Suicide terrorism today is the easiest method of destruction on a group of people or infrastructure. The problem of this thesis is to attempt to further define and analyze the concept of suicide terrorism and to understand the motives and the mindset behind committing these acts of violence and mass destruction.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine some of the potential variables that contribute to the thoughts /behaviors of suicide bombers in Iraq. This auto-ethnographic research study will attempt to examine the cultures and behaviors of suicide terrorist experiences while serving in the United States military in an attempt to understand their motives whether it be religion, education, family morals/beliefs, or political reasoning.

Assumptions

Suicide bombers are typically Muslim and commit these attacks based on their religious teachings, family influences, political motives, or other beliefs that are so strong they are willing to sacrifice their own lives for a purpose.

Limitations

The auto-ethnographic method of this study will be based upon my personal experiences with suicide terrorist attacks and incidents while serving in Habbaniyah, Iraq. The only limitation may be my ability to accurately recall and transcribe all the events that were experienced. However, the images, sounds, and smells are permanently imprinted on my brain in such a way that the recollection of the experiences will be true to my memories

of them. In addition, ethnography and other qualitative methods adhere to the premise that our experiences are only a snapshot of what is happening in that particular place and time.

Collectively, many military personnel have had similar experiences and also struggle with coming to grips with their feelings and thoughts about being a Marine or soldier in Iraq. Each military combat veteran's experience may be different but most will have common themes. It is this author's hope that this project will help other military personnel to understand and come to some acceptance of the role of the US Military and the actions of suicide bombers.

Organization of the Study

The purpose of war (from a U.S. standpoint) was to complete our missions, keep civilians safe, along with our fellow brothers all under the assumption that some middle eastern countries were developing weapons of mass destruction. In this thesis, the author will analyze personal experiences in an attempt to understand Suicide Terrorism. Trying to find the reasoning and understanding behind the mindset of a suicide terrorist is the phenomenon of interest under investigation. Specifically, this author experienced four suicide terrorist situations while deployed with the U.S. Marine Corps in Habbaniyah, Iraq in 2007.

Suicide terrorism evolves through political views, religion, education, and family beliefs and or morals. This thesis will be conducted as an auto-ethnography. My main concern is to study and find understanding in and of the mindset of a suicide terrorist. I will be looking at the cultures and behaviors of suicide terrorist, finding and understanding their motives whether it be religion, education, family morals and/or beliefs, and political reasoning.

This research will connect the four themes of religion, education, family morals and beliefs, and political gains. Blending a significant literature review and using previous research analyses and my personal experiences, this author believes strong understanding and logic will come from this research that will possibly help veterans find reasoning and

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understanding to certain situations they also experienced overseas. Lastly, conducting this research will be therapeutic for me to help better understand the situations I witnessed and fought against and struggle to understand still today.

The literature review will contain background and supporting information addressing suicide terrorism along with other auto-ethnographies that are based upon military experiences. The methodology section will address the motives of suicide terrorism with articles and research explaining reasons and conclusions of suicide terrorism.

CHAPTER 4

AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHY AS A METHOD AND PHILOSOPHY

Auto ethnography is a style of research that shows both writing and self-reflections of their own personal experiences. This technique is to connect the personal experiences and encounters with the meaning and understanding of those experiences (Ellis, 2011).

A well- renowned auto-ethnographer is Dr. Carolyn Ellis of University of Southern Florida. Much of her focus is on writing and revising auto-ethnographic pieces as a way to help better interpret and understand experiences in ones cultures and or environments. One of her main focuses in research today is working with Holocaust survivors and witnesses (Florida, 2013).

Dr. Ellis has been a part of and written many books focusing on the qualitative research technique of auto-ethnography. One of her most famous books is titled: The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel about Auto-ethnography (Ethnographic Alternatives). In her text book, she uses methodological advice, understanding, and her own personal experiences in a narrative. It is about a fictional graduate course she instructs and in the story you get to know her students and their projects to understand the topics and strategies that fall within auto-ethnography. Throughout her text book, she gives useful strategies for conducting a study, including the needs for introspection, struggles of an ethnographic writer, and the difficulties of explaining the results of an ethnographic research to others.

Today, auto ethnography is becoming very beneficial with the United States Military and Veterans (Capps, 2009). Through past wars there have been many essays written about soldier's experiences during their service but not much research has been done using the qualitative method of auto-ethnography. Today there seems to be vast research on military issues and one important issue across the country that veterans are facing is readjusting back into a civilian lifestyle (Capps, 2009). This style of research has been tremendously helpful to veterans and others to help better understand and learn to heal and deal with situations in which they were placed. Many have gone through similar

situations so many veterans and family members can relate to a common shared experience.

One of the most profound auto-ethnographies is Tears of a Warrior. This is written by husband and wife, E. Anthony Seahorn and Dr. Janet J. Seahorn. This is a family's story of Mr. Anthony Seahorn and his family's journey over the past thirty years. They started writing this auto-ethnography because of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars. They quickly realized there are many others that are living and coping with the same effects and traumas of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The Seahorn family recognized that there are many veterans suffering from more traumatic events but they simply wanted to make a difference in others and to help veterans and their families with daily struggles. The auto-ethnography begins with Anthony's experiences overseas in combat, Dr. Janet's perspective and experiences as a wife of a combat veteran, and lastly researching PTSD together. Research conducted was labeled as the experience of combat, how PTSD affects the veteran, how PTSD affects the family, strategies for living with PTSD, and how to restore hope for today and the future.

As Dr. Carolyn Ellis teaches, there is no better way to teach the auto-ethnographic method than by working through the lives that actually lived those experiences. That is why Tears of a Warrior is very largely known through the Veteran Administration community because a vast majority of veterans can relate to these individual and family struggles of PTSD. The coping methods that are present in this auto-ethnography ultimately have saved the lives of many veterans along with relationships with family members.

Using Ethnography for Understanding Team Decision-Making in a Time-Sensitive Military Setting is a MITRE Technical Report by Dr. J. L. Drury (2005). The Purpose of this report is to examine the military element thought process during a time-sensitive military command and control situations. Basically the objective is to understand how military personnel make decisions in high stress situations and environments. His main focus on this study is to conclude whether the military needs to change existing technology or re design military tactics, techniques and procedures to have a better and affective military decision making process. To conduct his study he uses a series of

events that involved Uninhabited Aerial Vehicle (UAV or Drone) operations. These vehicles are a remote controlled aircraft that provides aerial information and data to ground troops which may be pilots, controllers, and or commanders. In the data collection and methodology section of this research he observed moods of individuals who controlled the Drones. Observations included: work pace, impact of the military culture on their work process, their collaboration and effectiveness. The goal of this was to watch for emotions, physical movements (i.e. rushing), Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's), using secure radio transmission versus face to face conversations, if environment impacted their work process, doubts or uncertainty, and how they cue each other into current situations that are about to take place (i.e. countdowns).

Drury (2005) concluded that the military decision making process cannot be effective without leadership. The military is based upon a hierarchical chain of command structure that is based upon the leadership concept. Lastly, he stresses that in order to have a good decision making process, individuals that hold leadership responsibilities need to be able to work diligently with their subordinates and to also make recommendations to their chain of command as well.

Leadership must exist at all levels in order to survive or complete the mission. Individuals need to step up in certain situations where a critical decision needs to be made in order to save lives and ultimately complete the mission. This qualitative study is very important in today's military and society. It explores a cultural phenomenon about the military itself and shows how one culture (all branches of the service) conducts successful operations in a perspective so that society can understand.

In Dr. Jonathan Shay's book, Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character (1995), he uses Homer's accounts and prospective of combat during the Trojan War to examine the Vietnam War. He focuses most of the writings on how poor and unsatisfactory leadership increased trauma of many U.S. military personnel during the Vietnam War. Dr. Shays work has raised awareness for realization of how war can damage the mind, body, and soul of those veterans who have fought, and most importantly has raised the silent voices of the American Vietnam Veterans. Dr. Shay is a psychiatrist for a group of American Vietnam Combat Veterans, all of which have severe,

chronic post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). He uses stories from Vietnam Veterans to compare and contrast Homer's views and explanations of the Trojan War. The overall objective of his study is to use his experiences with veterans for the public to understand how catastrophic war experiences cause lifelong disabling psychiatric symptoms and can also ruin ones good character.

Dr. Shay's study was very interesting in a way of being able to compare soldier's mindsets during and after the Vietnam and Trojan Wars. He concludes his work with explaining wars have not changed. Mindsets and personalities of wars still exist today as they did in Greek Mythology.

In a scholarly journal, What Motivates the Suicide Bombers, by Professor Riaz Hassan (2008), it is stated that individual suicide bombers really do not show personality disorders when they are on their mission. The bombers usually understand and know how exactly they will carry out and conduct their mission. Bombers are focused and will not let anything stand in their way of success. Most of the time the attacks are politically motivated in order to achieve certain strategic goals, such as motivating others to support their ideology and or cause great devastation. Hassan indicates between the years of 1981 and 2006 suicide bombings made up four percent of all terrorism attacks (Hassan, 2008). The suicide events killed 14, 599 people or 32 percent of all deaths related to terrorism (Hassan, 2008).

Hassan is a firm believer that politics are the leading role player in what motivates suicide bombers over religion. In a data base in Flinders University in Australia (The Suicide Terrorism Database) (Hassan, 2008), it discredits the motives of suicide bombers and their religion as the principal cause of their mission. From Hassan's study, a majority of suicide bombers are typically younger males. They are educated and experienced with social networking, and all are attached and prideful to their local communities. "Suicide bombings have high symbolic value because of the willingness of perpetrators to die, signals, high resolve, and dedication to their cause" (pg. 277).

A journal article of The Middle East Quarterly written by David Bukay, titled, The Religious Foundations of Suicide Bombings: Islamic Ideology (2006) argues against most researchers showing politics is a major motive, saying that religion is a prime factor

in the justification of suicide bombings. He believes and explains that religion plays a major role within suicide terrorism, specifically in the notion of Jihad.

Islamic theory of law has labeled four different ways one may fill jihad missions: 1) Faith is in his heart, 2) preaching by mouth, 3) doing good deeds with his or her hands, 4) Confronting enemies (Bukay, 2006). Islamic Jihad laws 1-3 are a part of Da'wa, which is missionary activity and four is direct action to support Jihad. Jihad is an Islamic term that is translated into a meaning of a religious duty to a Muslim (struggle). The Shiahs culture believes in it as a struggle against anyone who does not believe in the Islamic Allah (God). Bukay closes with information laying out that Western Cultural analyst always tend to disregard religion as a primary factor in suicide terrorism. This does not explain why the religion of Islam and its call for Jihad, is the primary motive for suicide terrorism.

Ayad al-Qazzaz is an associate professor of sociology at CSU (California State University). He has studied and written books on women in the Middle East. Ayad wrote a journal article entitled Education of Women in the Arab World. In many cultures education, along with women's rights, does not exist. Many believe women should not be educated. Women's education in the Middle East is considered a luxury and or is just simply unavailable. When it is narrowed down, women are prevented from education due to cultural customs, oppression, and or lack of resources (al-Qazzat). There are some instances where terrorism against education is used in order to send a destructive message that women should not receive education. Ayad came to the conclusion that the most powerful weapon to fight against the oppression of women is to improve their educational status.

Family morals and beliefs dealing with suicide terrorism is a touchy subject that people from different cultures will always disagree. Children have been known for being brainwashed in order to carry out a suicide attack. Murtaza Hussain has written an article titled Pakistani Taliban's Indoctrinated Child Bombers. His writings are very educational on how children become victims of this terror. Most of the children come from poor families and very religious schools (Hussain, 2012). The religious schools give them the only hope for living a successful life. Once terrorists contact a child or a group of

children they immediately begin to brain wash them (Hussain, 2012). They promise them they will be in God's hands and will live a healthy and peaceful life if they carry out God's plan (al-Qazzat). Pakistani Taliban commander Qari Hussain is quoted as saying, "Children are tools to achieve God's will, whatever comes your way you sacrifice it" (al-Qazzat).

"Righteous is he who believes in Allah and the Last Day and the Angels and the Scriptures and the Prophets." Quran 2:177. In the Muslim religion, the most important belief is that there is only one God (Allah), and Muhammad is his prophet. According to the Quran, Allah created all men from a clot of blood at the same time he created fire. Humans are known in the Quran as being the greatest all of creatures and have been created with free will for the main purpose to obey and serve Allah. With beliefs of the afterlife, the Muslim religion teaches the same values as Christianity, that there will be a judgment day where it is divided into Paradise (heaven) or Hell. Muslims ultimately believe there is no other true religion. They invite all people of different race, religions, and nationalities to join their religion.

With the information documented in the literature review my objective is to examine some of the potential variables that contribute to the thoughts /behaviors of suicide bombers in Iraq. My research will attempt to examine the cultures and behaviors of suicide terrorist experiences while serving in the United States military in an attempt to understand their motives whether it be religion, education, family morals/beliefs, or political reasoning.

Methodology

Using auto-ethnographic methodology, this author will be discussing his own personal encounters with suicide terrorism in an attempt to determine what factors influence a suicide bomber's decision making process. This qualitative research will then compare the possible motives from the literature to the contributing factors that emerge through the analysis of the auto-ethnographic experiences.

Auto-ethnography is a style of writing and research methodology that describes and analyzes one's personal experiences in order to understand an experience in a particular culture (Ellis, 2011). Auto ethnography as a method uses both ethnography and autobiography characteristics when conducting a study. Most of the time, an autobiographer writes about past experiences that have impacted them in an attempt to find meaning in the experiences. Ethnography is typically used to study a culture and the values, beliefs, and common practices within the culture in order to help others find understanding and meaning within the cultural group

Auto ethnographic methodology is known for being therapeutic for one's personal encounters in a culture and also can be therapeutic for the ones who are reading it and or who have experienced similar encounters. The study can be helpful in ways of comparison, understanding, and being at peace with a certain situation one may have encountered.

There are four primary reasons of using auto-ethnography to study a certain particular culture (Streubert, 2011). The first primary reason is to document certain phenomena in an effort to have a clearer understanding of a cultural group or experience. Each cultural group has their own unique customs, values, and beliefs. This is why it is important to study and reveal alternative realities to describe or explain them in terms of the culture that is studied. The second is to find new theories grounded solidly in the aspects or characteristics that are true to that particular cultural group. When studying a culture, a researcher can find new theories that are occurring in that culture. Third, ethnographic research is done to better understand a complex society. Societies, especially in a third world country where a war is taking place, can be very complex and confusing. Underlying the complexity is the fact that people there are ultimately just trying to survive. Fourth and final, the goal of ethnographic research is to understand human behavior. Human behavior is critical when trying to understand one's culture. People act different in certain situations, especially in a time of war.

CHAPTER 5

AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHIC EXPERIENCES

During the winter of 2006 and spring/early summer of 2007 I was deployed with the Marines to Habbaniyah, Iraq attached to an Explosive Ordinance Disposal (EOD) team. On this deployment our team experienced many battles against the enemy. We conducted military operations consisting of firefights, searching houses for explosive ordinance, detonating Improvised Explosive Devices (IED's), and were victims of enemy IED explosions.

   The first experience occurred while on patrol searching a local Habbaniyah community street for possible IED's. Our unit came across a massive weapons cache consisting of hundreds of IED components, assault weapons, homemade rockets, and mortars. At that exact time our team found these components, the streets were instantly dispersed of local civilians. It felt as if time had stood still and I had a gut feeling something terrible was about to happen. Before I could turn around, all I could hear were radio transmissions and saw two children standing in the street all by themselves with not a soul around them. The two kids seemed skittish and nervous. As my team leader and I began to approach the children, we then knew they were suicide bombers. They were between the ages of 8-13. We immediately began to assess the situation. We first had them lay on the ground, so their hands were exposed so they could not trigger the vests. We then cleared the area for civilians and removed the suicide vest. After the disarming of the vest the children were detained and taken to a holding cell.

    It seemed as if the event was planned and that this situation was a set up as an ambush, the insurgents knowing we would find the IED components to throw us off guard when the suicide bombers arrived. The two kids' vests did not detonate because they were not assembled correctly. I remember the kids not really understanding what was going on, and our interpreter told us at one point the children asked if they could go back to playing with their friends.

The second experience took place in the middle of the day around 3:00pm. We had received a call of a detonation of a Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED). When we arrived on scene everything was calm and I could see a vehicle on fire. As we came closer, we could see the driver of the white sedan lying outside on the ground. His dead body was mangled and chard from the blast of the vehicle. As we began our post- blast evaluation, we noticed the vehicle was designed and set up for detonation. Instead of having large explosives, the trunk was loaded down with smaller 80 mm mortar rounds, making it harder to detonate them all at once. The next step was to try to collect data and intelligence from witnesses. Most of the witnesses would approach us reporting what they saw and others; we would approach them, due to their noticeable actions of trying to ignore us when we would come near them. Some would not look at us and others would simply try to run away. After talking to witnesses and locals of the community, we came across information and evidence that the bomber was trying to blow up a group of female children walking down the street on a dirt path along the road, after they had been released from school. Along the sides of the concrete surfaced road, dirt paths run along both sides acting as a sidewalk for pedestrians. The vehicle did not explode as planned due to poor engineering and a delayed timing trigger.

The third experience took place at a United States Marine Corps outpost in the city of Habbaniyah. While Marines were standing post, a VBIED dump truck was making its way towards them. While in a combat zone, military personnel are given Rules of Engagement (ROE) in order to make sure the enemy is combative or hostile. When executing Rules of Engagement, Marines are able to engage the target if and when there is an immediate threat of imminent danger. Due to the insurgent driving the dump truck through the Marine barricade erratically, two Marines were able to engage using their ROE's to target the insurgent by shooting the engine block out of the truck as well as shooting the insurgent in the chest and the head to disable the vehicle. After the situation had resolved, we approached the vehicle using our robot to avoid putting anyone in danger. The robot is designed to maneuver over rough terrain with tracks for wheels, and mechanical arms used to remove and place explosives in the proper position to detonate or disarm the IED. We had a feeling that it was going to be a dangerous situation. We

used the robot to defuse the ignition of the explosives. The wiring was conducted all throughout the bed of the dump truck all the way to the steering column, and what would have been the ignition of the explosive was connected to the turn signal. After the investigation was complete, we only had one option, to detonate the vehicle in place. There were so many explosive components in the vehicle that it would have taken out the entire Marine outpost/house/living quarters. The area where we detonate the vehicle ended up leaving around a four thousand square foot hole in the ground. We used a controlled detonation to control the blast. Parts of the vehicle were found over five hundred yards away. After our investigation was complete we received word from local villagers, the insurgent who was driving the dump truck was mad at the world because the Marines were in his backyard and felt as if the United States was invading his privacy and life.

During this final event our team was tasked with conducting a route clearance (sweeping for IED's), when during our operation a massive explosion happened to our west about 400 yards away. We immediately packed up and headed that direction to assess and mitigate the situation. When we arrived on scene of the explosion, there was mass chaos and a smell that I will never forget. It was a smell that combined both fresh dirt and burned bodies. The explosion was so big that 40 civilians were killed and over 100 were injured. It was very hard to conduct our evaluation at the time because family members of victims wanted to know reasons and answers. The blast had been so powerful that evidence was embedded too far into the ground and most of the vehicles frame had dispersed into nothing.

Witnessing these events can be hard on many people but at the same time, our team knew we had to do the best job possible when executing our actions because we knew they would ultimately save other lives. Our experiences can help others mitigate future situations of suicide terrorism. I will never forget the smells, sounds, and scenery from each of these events. Each memory is a constant reminder of the kinds of evil there is in the world.

CHAPTER 6

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

A componential analysis helps the researcher search for attributes that are associated with a cultural category (Streubert, 2011). There are two main objects that a componential analysis ultimately lays out; it specifies the conditions under which participants name something, and to better understand under what conditions the participants give something a specific name. This is usually when the researcher looks for units of meaning (measurement). When researching cultural themes in an analysis for ethnography, there are themes that will help assist one in understanding and or coming to means with ones work (Streubert, 2011). In Streubert 2011this includes:

1. Social conflict

2. Social contradiction (what types of conflicts have or are occurring in certain social situation with the people.)

3. Informal techniques of social control (is there information obtained the culture of study that appears to contradict its self.)

4. Interpersonal relationships (are there patterns of behavior that result in a certain social control.)

5. Problem solving

Analysis of the first experience of suicide terrorism has many components that help illuminate the themes and increase the understanding of the experiences. Some key factors in the thoughts or behavior of these suicide terrorists helped our unit determine these were definitely suicide bombings. In the first incident, the streets instantly cleared of local civilians, the two children seemed skittish and nervous, and more importantly the translation from the interpreter that explained that all the kids wanted to do was to go back and play with their friends. The two children did not really know what they were doing or the extent of the potential consequences of their actions. They knew they had a bomb strapped to their bodies but ultimately they did not understand the life- ending impact of those bombs. Also the key to this experience was the observation that the

children had been bathed and dressed for the ultimate sacrifice, death and meeting Allah. It is unconscionable in our society to fathom the sacrifice of an innocent child for the sole purpose of religious or cultural beliefs.

   After reading Murtaza Hussain's work of Pakistani's Taliban Indoctrinate Child Bombers (2012), most children that are placed in these situations have no clue what is going on. They are usually promised something in return by someone they look up to. These children become religious and political pawns in the war. The adults were ultimately trying to send a political message to U.S. Forces that no one can be trusted and that even children are a threat to their very existence.

   My perception of what happened in the second experience is based upon history itself in third world cultures. From my experiences, women in Iraq always seemed as if they did most of the hard labor (i.e. working in the fields, transporting crops), while men retire at an early age in their mid-thirties. Women are sheltered or constricted in a way that they were not as free as young males could be (i.e. playing throughout the streets, interacting with other children). There was always an odd feeling around that school whenever we would conduct patrols. Children were not walking in large groups and the streets were not as crowded as they were before. As time passed in that community, the school never re-opened for the young girls. It was abandoned since the bombing until the day we left.

   Ayad al-Qazzaz's article of Education of Women in the Arab World lends understanding to the role and oppression of women in a Muslim society. This was simply, in our eyes, an act of terrorism from an individual that simply did not believe women should have the same educational rights as men and that women should not be allowed to attend school. It baffled our team because at the time education did not seem to be an issue in the city of Habbaniyah. Education is power and with increased knowledge comes increased self-sufficiency and self-reliance. Culturally, Muslim men are in charge and women are subservient to their wants, needs and desires.

   While on patrol overseas, I could see the loneliness and rage in the women's eyes as I walked past them. Equality between male and female merely exist. Females in Iraq do not have nearly as many rights as males. This can be connected to the motive of power of

what drives a suicide bomber. Certain insurgents cannot stand the fact that equality exist between men and women in America and coalition countries.

The third experience is one that will be forever embedded in my mind. It is a situation where one had to be there to understand how big this VBIED was and the damage it could have done to the village and to the Marines who were stationed there. Overseas, I heard the stories of, "if you see any erratic drivers coming your way, nine times out of ten it will be a suicide bomber." This was one of those times for the Marines who were on post that day. Intelligence had told us that the insurgent was upset that the Marines were in his territory. I believe there is a little more to it than that. Habbaniyah is located right between Fallujah and Ramadi, Iraq. Habbaniyah is described as a rural area with plenty of vegetation along the Euphrates River. This was a prime location for insurgents to drop/pick-up IED components all across the rural land of Habbaniyah. Iraqi insurgents wanted to eliminate US Military personnel in this area, to protect their IED components and bombs.

Professor Riaz Hassan's journal has given me understanding in this research. His work made me understand that most of the time the attacks are politically motivated in order to achieve certain strategic goals, such as motivating others to support their ideology and or cause great devastation, death, and intimidation (i.e. protect and supply IED components to eliminate enemies). The motivation here was political and strategic in nature.

The final experience that I witnessed happened in a village where most people gathered throughout the day. On each side of Habbaniyah you could feel a difference in cultures, through a difference in infrastructure and lifestyles. While conducting missions, you could tell a difference in culture by the means of how rich one community was compared to the other. Some villages had palace type homes and while others lived in poorly structured concrete homes. The houses were so poorly put together that bullets would zip right through the walls giving Marines and Soldiers no cover.

Looking back on it now, it seemed as if on the richer side of town there was more prayer throughout the day. It may have been due to the lack of money and infrastructure (i.e. mosque, schools, and housing complexes) in that village. You always had an eerie feeling when you drove through town as if someone was watching every move you made.

The less fortunate side of the town was obviously poorer in infrastructure. Houses were built anywhere there was space. The infrastructure isn't as nearly as advanced compared to America culture. The buildings were weak in stability, dirty, and bullet holes covering the walls. The buildings were poorly designed not for longevity. A way of life seemed much simpler there too. This was the side of town that was struck by the suicide bomber. I believe this side of the town was struck because they were vulnerable to an attack. They did not have as much power and little or no resources compared to the richer villages that chose to attack them. Religion in the Muslim faith is about power and dominance.

Understanding religion as a motive can be difficult when trying to justify the reasoning. David Bukay's journal article, The Religious Foundations of Suicide Bombings: Islamic Ideology explains how religion is wrapped into terrorism. This article defines and explains the complexity of Jihad. Jihad is an Islamic word that stands for struggle (Bukay, 2006). Islamic ideology wants those who do not believe in Allah to struggle (Bukay, 2006). This thinking begins to explain why Muslim believers justify an attack based on religious doctrine. Both religious and political issues involved in my war experiences appear to be sending a message to ones culture in an effort to demonstrate dominance and/ or authority over other cultures and people.

Figure 1 illustrates what possibly drives suicide terrorism. In this case suicide terrorism is the epicenter and everything surrounding the epicenter are the motivating factors of what possibly drives suicide terrorist. Every motive plays an important role within suicide terrorism in some way shape or form. They may also play a specific role in suicide terrorism all at once. There is no true underling explanation of justifying the motive of understanding.

Figure 1.

Model-based role of motives

This model shows that all the motives play a particular role and they all affect the actions of suicide terrorism.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Between the analysis of my own personal experiences and an extensive literature review, four main variables help create the motives of a suicide terrorist. These four variables include religion, education, family beliefs and morals, and political motives. One would be quick to assume, when hearing the people shouting "Allahu Akbar" (God is greater or God is the greatest) right before a suicide attack, that in particular would be influenced by religion.

Religious motives and factors come from the Islamic ideology of wanting those to struggle who do not believe in Allah. Looking at my experience with religious motives, the less fortunate side of the town was attacked because it was vulnerable. This village was poor in wealth, transitioning to the Muslim faith; it is about power and dominance. This village was obviously in a struggle and the stronger of the Muslim faith wanted to show power and dominance within the city of Habbaniyah, Iraq.

From the research that was conducted, other motives also contribute the suicide bombing act and play just as large a role as religious aspects.

Historically, during wars, political motives are typically the most logical of the motives. Strong feelings are attached to political differences and this conflict produced anger and frustration. Also intertwined with political beliefs are family and moral beliefs/motives, which form as part of a family's history. These can both be combined and confused with religious and political meaning. One man's ideology is another man's motive. Politically the motives and mindsets are based upon achieving certain strategic goals, such as motivating others to support their ideology and or to cause great devastation, intimidation, and or death to complete their mission or objective. Comparing this to my experience, the political reasoning comes from the intelligence collected during the mission of the attempted suicide bomber. He felt threatened by lack of privacy from U.S. Forces.

Education in the Muslim faith shows that men are in charge and women are subservient to their wants, needs and desires. Women's rights merely exist in the Muslim religion. Comparing this to my personal experience, insurgents cannot stand the fact that rights and equality exists between men and women in the United States along with coalition countries. For example, women in parts of Iraq and Afghanistan were looked down upon for receiving education. Just recently, a women's education movement has been carried out in Afghanistan. Women's rights for independence are very limited, freedoms in a female culture mean very little in the eyes of the public.

Family morals and beliefs in Muslim cultures are very important. Important enough whereas a child looks up to their elders and models their beliefs and motives in life. The two children that were placed in this event ultimately did not have any clue of what was going on. They were placed in a situation where something was promised in return. At that age children do not understand the meaning of death or taking someone else's life. In my view, this was a situation of family morals and beliefs, and also for the adults they were sending a political message to U.S. Forces that no one can be trusted and that even children are a threat to their existence. Sacrificing one of their children would bring more moral and prideful support to their family.

Anyone who is not Muslim may never fully understand this phenomenon of suicide terrorism. As of now, mitigation and prevention are key tools that must be utilized at all times in order to help prevent these events from occurring. Unfortunately, when people are ready to sacrifice their own lives for a greater calling or in the name of religion, then it is almost impossible to prevent all future suicide bombing events. The experience of completing this thesis has led me to a deeper understanding regarding what motivates these individuals to get to this point of violent action. This study has been a learning experience for me in a therapeutic way. It has personally helped me to analyze and think about my bombing experiences and to give these experiences meaning through intellectual and educational understanding other than viewing them as my own personal judgments.

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