

What makes solo terrorists tick?

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The double terrorist attack in Norway last July, which claimed 77 lives, has moved violent acts committed by single individuals up the political, media and now research agendas. Known as "lone wolf terrorism," these acts are carried out independently of established terrorist organizations. In his new report 'Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism,' Dr. Ramón Spaaij, from La Trobe University in Australia and the University of Amsterdam, examines this so-far largely unexplored phenomenon.

According to Ramón Spaaij, "While lone wolf terrorism incidents still account for only a very small percentage of the total number of terrorist attacks, the number of lone wolf incidents has been on the rise in recent decades." Indeed, the [report](#) shows that international security agencies now consider acts of terrorism carried out by individuals as one of the most likely forms of [terrorist attack](#).

Spaaij's report examines and maps the extent and nature of lone wolf terrorism, by drawing on a combination of international data from terrorism databases and high-profile case studies, including Anders Behring Breivik's acts in [Norway](#) last summer. Such acts tend to be carefully planned and prepared.

For the first time, an in-depth analysis is provided of the key features of lone wolf terrorism worldwide over the last four decades. The report provides insights for those working to prevent or minimize the effects of terrorism and political violence, by exploring what drives the lone wolf terrorist to commit mass violence and discussing how this phenomenon can be countered effectively.

Dr. Spaaij said, "Overall, a significant discrepancy exists between the recent political and media attention for lone wolf terrorism on the one hand, and scientific investigation of this phenomenon on the other. Systematic research projects into lone wolf terrorism have been few and far between."

His report focuses on six key dimensions of lone wolf [terrorism](#): its definition; where, how, and how frequently it occurs; what motivates lone wolf terrorists; radicalization and potential links with other [terrorist](#) networks or ideologies; how the acts are planned and carried out; and what lessons can be learned from government responses to these acts over the last 40 years.

More information: 'Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism: Global Patterns, Motivations and Prevention' 2012. 100 pp. (SpringerBriefs in Criminology)
eBook www.springerlink.com/content/978-94-007-2980-3

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