

# **Lone-actor terrorists – Warning Behaviors, Risk Assessment, and Copycat Effects**



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- September 10th, 1898, Geneva. The 26 years old Luigi Lucheni was lying in wait for Elizabeth, the Empress of Austria.
  - Elizabeth wanted to board a steamship when Lucheni stabbed her in the chest. She died within hours.
  - Lucheni had heard from a local announcement that Elisabeth was in town.
  - Before attacking the Empress of Austria the assassin had thought about killing the Italian king or a French prince. But he did not have enough money to travel.



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- Lucheni was born as an illegitimate son. His mother gave him away to an orphan asylum. Already as a young child he had to work hard.
  - He grew up in several families. He was very poor and was living in different countries.
  - Making a career in the military he was employed by a prince as a servant.
  - Due to maladaptive comments he lost his position again. In a number of letters to the prince and his wife he desperately tried to get his position back again.

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- Although Lucheni was sympathizing with the Anarchist movement his political activities were sporadic.
  - Asked in court for the motivation to murder Elisabeth he answered, that he wanted to take revenge for his life.
  - He also later said that he wanted to kill a famous person so that his name will be published in the newspapers.
  - He presented himself in court in a vain and arrogant manner.
  - He asked to be executed.





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- In prison he repeatedly attacked staff.
  - He wrote a book about his life and his childhood.
  - In 1910 he finally committed suicide still being in prison.



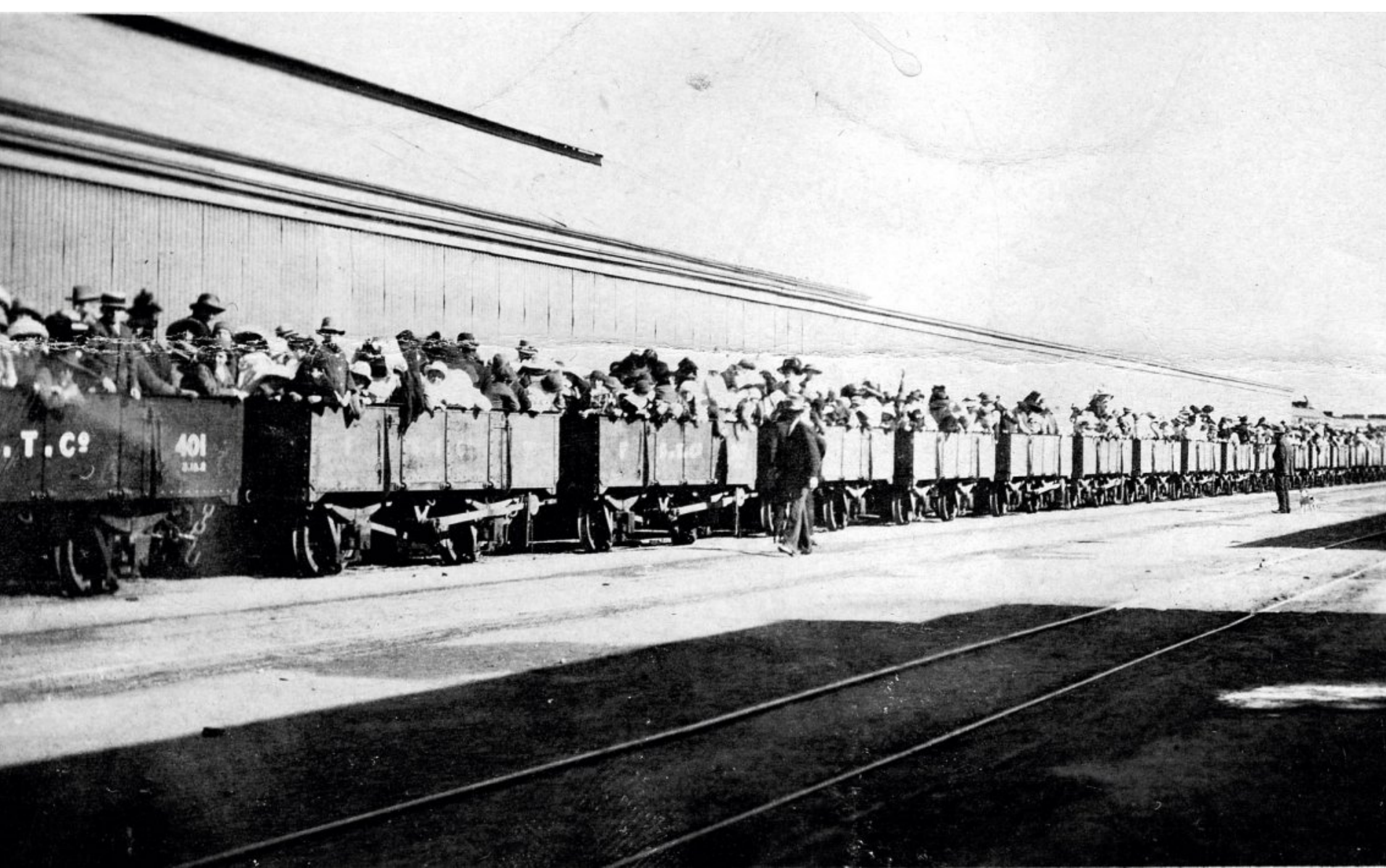
## Broken Hill, Australia, 1915



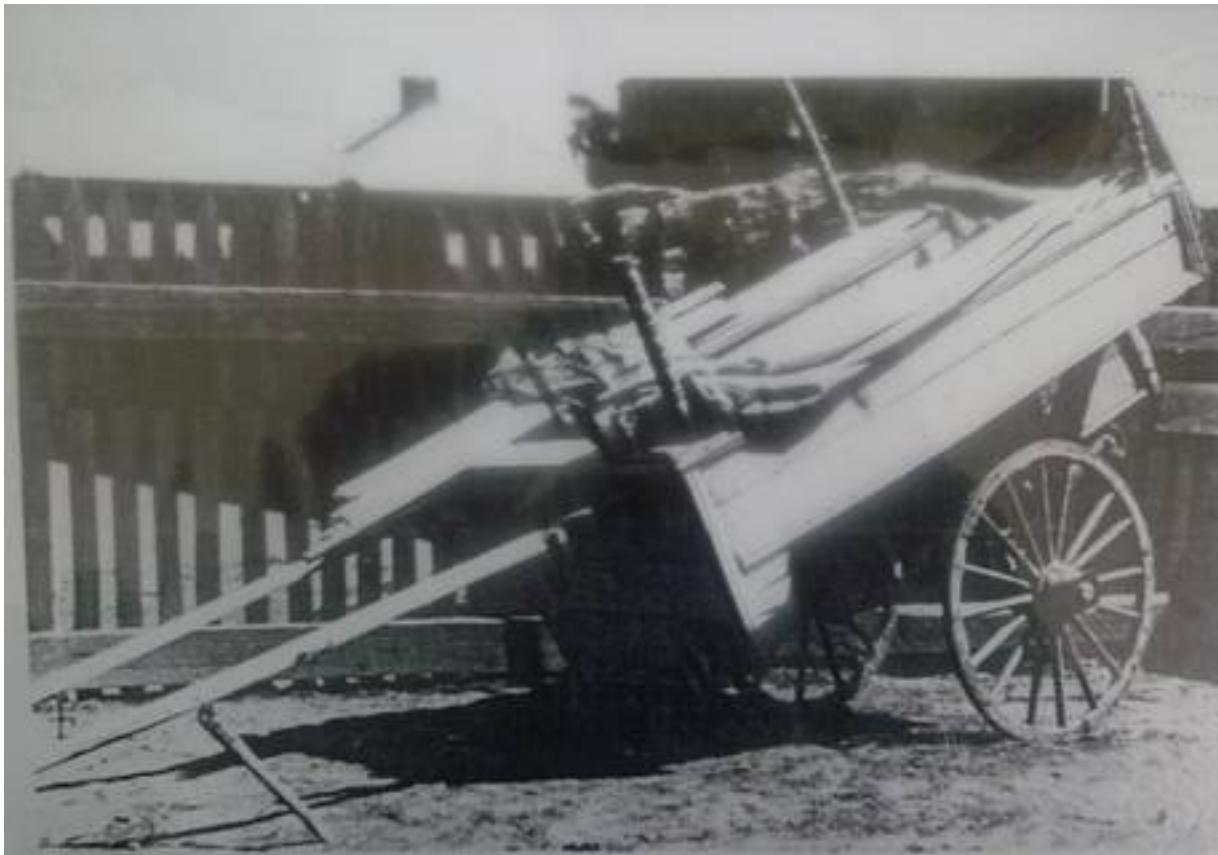
## Broken Hill, Australia

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- At 10am on 1 January, 1915, a long and crowded train pulled away from the Broken Hill platform. It had been a town ritual since 1901: on New Year's Day, the Manchester Unity Order of Oddfellows, a friendly society founded to embrace education and social advancement, held a picnic 14 miles away.
- The train was a steam train. The picnickers were in open trucks.
- There were 1.200 men, women and children on board.



- A white cart was parked close to the tracks. There were words painted on the side – 'Lakovsky's Delicious ITALIAN ICE CREAM. A Food fit for Children and Invalids' . Also a Turkish Flag was set up.







- At that moment, a pair of white turbans bobbed up from the trench and two gunshots were fired.
- Two girls yelled "Happy New Year!". They imagined the shots were being fired in honour of the passing train.
- The 17-year-old Alma Cowie slumped to the floor. The top of her head had been blown away. Two more people were killed on the train and several more injured.



- The two offenders named Molla Abdullah and Mohammed Güll then took shelter on a nearby hill.
- A 90-minute gun battle followed, during which armed members of the public arrived to join the police and military. Both attackers died. An eyewitness later stated that one of the offenders had stood with a white rag tied to his rifle but was cut down by gunfire. He was found with 16 wounds.

# DREADFUL AFFAIR AT BROKEN HILL

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## TWO FOREIGNERS RUN AMOK

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### RIFLE SHOTS FIRED AT A TRAIN

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### FOUR PERSONS KILLED AND SEVEN WOUNDED

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### MURDERERS SHOT DOWN BY AVENGING PARTY

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\* Broken Hill, January 1.

One of the longest and most crowded picnic trains that has left Broken Hill carried those who set out with light hearts this morning to attend the annual picnic of the Manchester Unity Oddfellows at Silverton. The train left the Selphide-street station at 10 o'clock and the goods station a few minutes later. The train consisted of two brake vans and 40 ore trucks of the usual sort used for Barrier picnics, with about 1,200 picnickers on board. When the train was about two miles on the way to Silverton, near the cattle yards, an ice cream cart, with a flag flying on it, was noticed on the northern side of the line, close to the railway fence.

taining a force of armed police, who followed on the track taken by the Turks leading along the western outskirts of the town. When the police cars reached a point near the Cable Hotel Sergeant Gibson saw two men amongst the white quartz rocks on a hill. Not suspecting that they were the enemy, Sergeant Gibson was about to make enquiries of them when suddenly they opened fire on the car. Mounted-Constable Mills was struck by two bullets at the outset and then firing began on both sides. Just before the final rush took place Inspector Miller and Lieutenant Resch, in a motor car, the latter driving, swept round the hill between the Cable Hotel and the enemy's





## 1914 – World war I started

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- In November 1914, the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed, who doubled as Caliph of all Muslims, issued a holy commandment directed at Muslims worldwide: they were immediately to rise up in arms against Britain, France, Russia and their allies, who were at war with Germany.
- This call to jihad was mostly neglected.



## The attackers

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- The two soldiers of Allah were not Turks, but British passport-holders from India's north-west frontier.
- The youngest was the ice-cream seller, Badsha Mehmed Gül, a thoughtful 39-year-old man. Gül had come to Australia as a cameleer. When the camel business declined, he had worked in a silver mine until the outbreak of war, and was laid off after all contracts with the German smelters were cancelled.

## The attackers

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- His comrade Molla Abdullah was a disgruntled old cameleer with a limp. Aged 60, he had lived in Broken Hill for 15 years. Different skin colour, strange clothes, not Anglo-Saxon – boys laughed when he hobbled by and chased him down the street, throwing stones. He never retaliated, but several times complained to the police, who failed to act.
- Ridiculed, Molla Abdullah immersed himself in his daily prayers. In the absence of a religious leader, he had begun to take on that role. He was also working as a butcher.
- He was not a member of the Butchers' Union. This brought him into confrontation with the local sanitary inspector Brosnan.



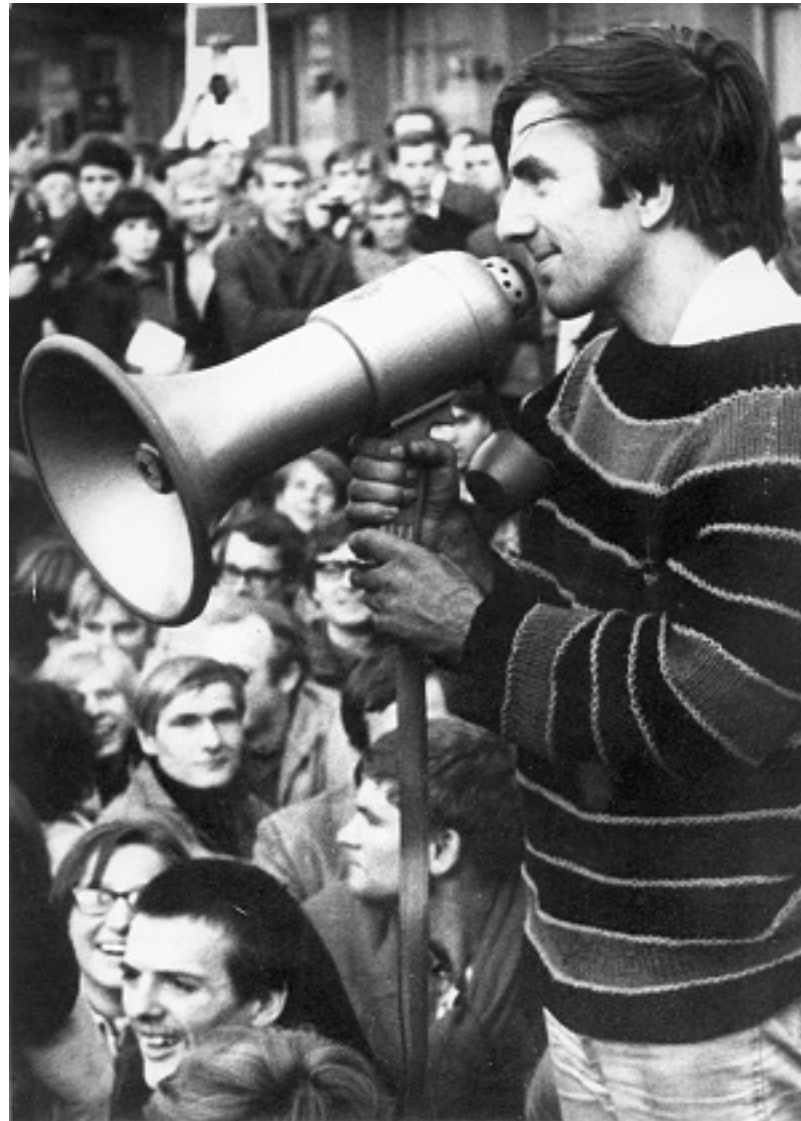
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- Brosnan prosecuted Molla Abdullah for the first time in April 1914, for slaughtering sheep at the North Broken Hill camel camp instead of at the abattoirs.
  - Molla Abdullah was fined £3 and ordered to pay the costs of court. The police magistrate gave Molla Abdullah until the end of December to pay, or face imprisonment for one month.
  - Molla Abdullah wrote: "One day the inspector accused me. On another I begged and prayed, but he would not listen to me. I was sitting brooding in anger. Just then the man Gül Mehmed came to me and we made our grievances known to each other. I rejoiced and gladly fell in with his plans and asked God that I might die an easy death for my faith."

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- Gül had no need to remind Molla Abdullah that Turkey was at war with Australia, and that the Sultan, only three weeks earlier, had appealed for a jihad against the Entente Powers, obliging all Muslims young and old, on foot or mounted, to support it.
  - Rather than go on living this persecuted and insulting existence in Broken Hill, wouldn't it be better to die gloriously with the guarantee of happiness in the next life – by killing as many Australians as they could?

- The plan was that the engine, unmanned, would drag the 40 packed mining wagons to destruction. In the event, the jihadists missed not only the driver and fireman, but Molla Abdullah's bugbear, Cornelius Brosnan – "owing to my grudge against the inspector it was my intention to kill him first".

**Source: Nicholas Shakespeare. The bloody ballad of Broken Hill. The Independent, February, 2015.**

## Attack on the student leader Rudi Dutschke



- At 10 of April 1968 the 23 years old Josef Bachmann left his work in Munich. He told his colleagues that they will hear from him in the news.
- Then he took the night train to Berlin carrying a gun and sleeping pills with him.
- Arriving in Berlin he asked taxi drivers at the train station where he could find Rudi Dutschke, a well known left winged political leader.
- He found his office and shoot Rudi Dutschke without warning. Dutschke survived but later died of the late effects of his injury.



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- After having wounded a politically left-wing student leader with his revolver, the would-be assassin started a shootout with the police. The officers noticed that the young man deliberately missed them when he fired his weapon, and made no attempt to run for cover. He tried to poison himself, but survived, shortly before he was arrested. He subsequently committed suicide while in prison.



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- Being later interviewed by police Bachmann said he had heard of the attack on Martin Luther King and thought that he wanted to do something like that as well.
  - He said he was never happy in his life and wanted to do something significant before he dies.
  - He also said that he thought about suicide for several years.
  - He had an unstable life history committing a number of criminal acts.
  - He also showed also parasuicidal behavior.

## What have the three cases in common?

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- An unstable life history
- Suicidality
- A belief or a religious system or an ideology that justifies violence

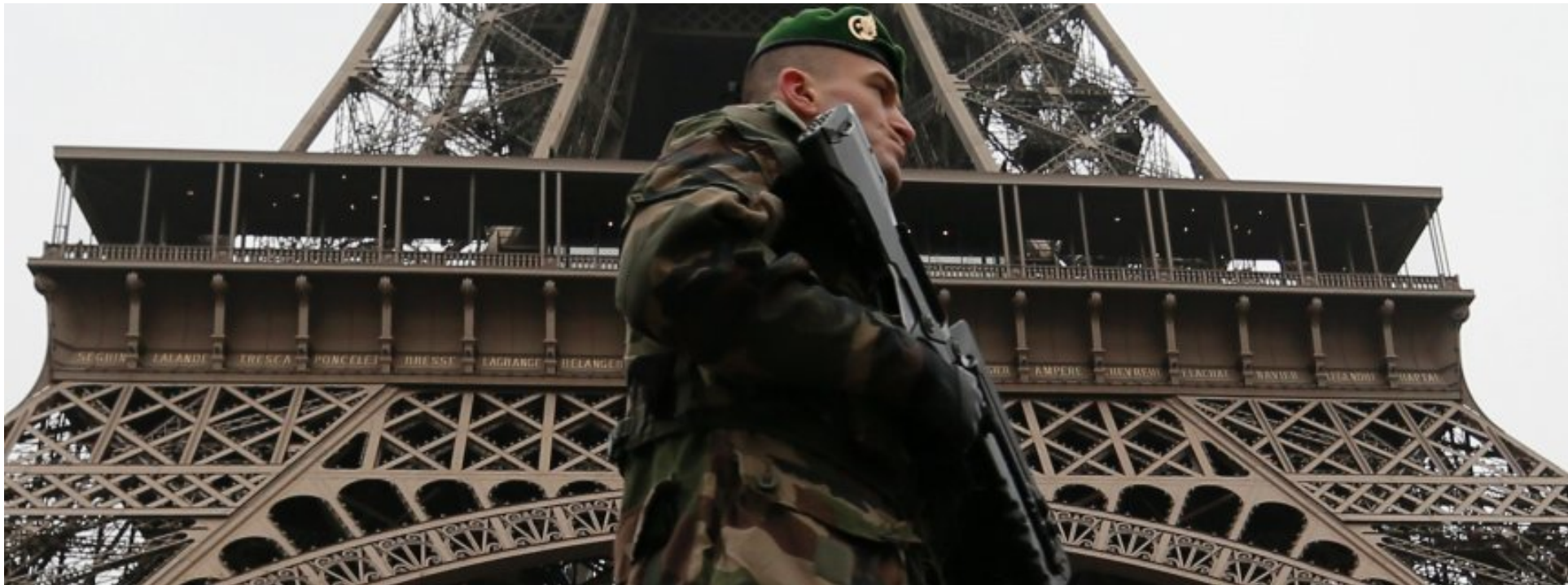
## Paris, January 2015

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## Paris, January 2015





## Paris, January 2015



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# What is the message of these pictures?

## Paris, January 2015



## Paris, January 2015

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## Paris, January 2015



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# What is the message of these pictures?



## Kopenhagen, February 2015

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# Columbine, USA 1999



# Columbine, USA 1999



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**There was a clear international copycat effect after the Columbine school shooting in 1999**



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**The concept of cultural scripts was also promoted by Paul Mullen analyzing mass murder cases committed by adult offenders**

**Already in 1911, MacDonald wrote in his study of attacks on public figures: “One means of protection is for newspapers, magazines and authors of books to cease publishing the names of the criminals...this would lessen the hope for glory, renown, or notoriety, which is a great incentive to such crimes”**



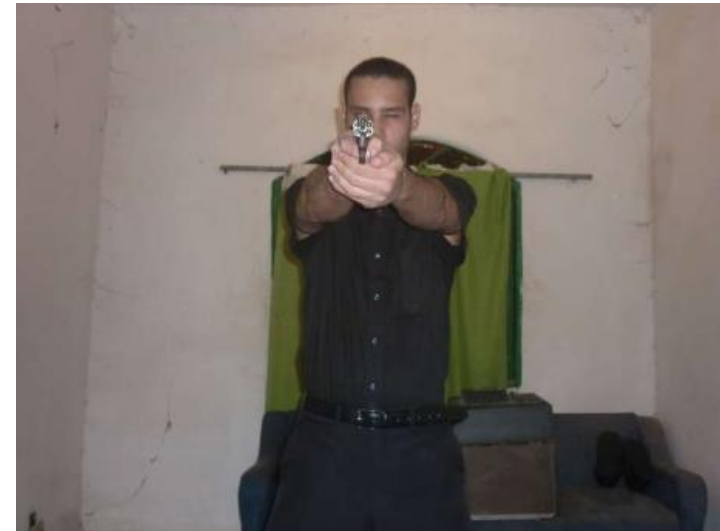
## Current Research

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- Towers et al.: Contagion in Mass Killings and School Shootings. Plos One. July 2015.
- „We find significant evidence that mass killings involving firearms are incited by similar events in the immediate past. On average, this temporary increase in probability lasts 13 days, and each incident incites at least 0.30 new incidents ( $p = 0.0015$ ).“

# **Copycat effects can influence the Modus Operandi and the motive or justification**

## Rio 2011



## Sweden October 2015

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**We can learn from suicide prevention programmes how to reduce the copycat effect**

## Organisations that need to assess risk in that field we came across in the last months

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- Universities
- Schools
- Corporate security
- Police
- Probation officers