

STATE, LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL

Algeria (continued)

Islamist and formerly Al-Qaeda affiliate Mohktar Belmohktar as the organizer of the attack. He is not believed to have been present for the actual attack. Belmohktar has previously been convicted in absentia of terrorist acts in Algeria. Additionally, Mauritanian news sites reported that the attack was also led by Abdul Rahman al-Nigeri. Having led the militants into the plant, al-Nigeri is reported not to have survived.

The attack was immediately of international importance, as over a hundred foreigners worked in the plant owned by Britain's BP, Norway's Statoil, and Algeria's Sonatrach. JGC Corp is a Japanese engineering firm that also does work at the plant. Out of the thirty-seven hostages killed, three were US citizens. Among the dead or missing expatriates are Japanese, Filipinos, Norwegians, Britons, Malaysians, Romanians, and one French national.

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The Algerian government has received mixed responses from world leaders for launching the attack. British PM David Cameron had requested that the Algerian government consult with the other countries involved before proceeding. President Barack Obama placed the blame for the deaths completely on the terrorists.

Sandy Hook Conspiracy Theories Surface, Enrage

Monique Kreisman, staff writer

Conspiracy theories have always been a prominent part of American history. Over the past few decades discussion has surrounded events, such as the moon landing, a possible UFO crash, and the assassination of President Kennedy to name a few. Now, in response to the tragic shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary, a group has released a video claiming that the murders were part of a conspiracy to push forward gun control legislation. While there are some elements of truth in the video—if any thoroughly covered media story is picked apart, holes can be found—the conclusion, drawn by the Sandy Hook truthers, is quite disturbing and offensive to the families of the victims. Is there real evidence to support their claims, or have these conspiracy theorists gone too far?

The thirty minute YouTube video begins with the epithet, "Video not intended to offend anyone but criminals, our hearts go out to anyone affected by this tragedy. We do NOT claim this shooting did not take place!!!" Their first assertion is that there was more than one shooter. On December 14th Adam Lanza killed twenty children and six adults before taking his own life. Some witnesses say they saw a man in handcuffs near a wooded area. According to the truthers, the man was chased and apprehended by police, and the media never followed up on his story.

Was Adam Lanza the only shooter? Was the man running in the woods involved? Or was he mistakenly apprehended? These questions are posed by the video, but they remain unanswered.

The truthers also claim that there were discrepancies as the story was unfolding about how many guns were found inside the school. The media first reported that two handguns were found with Lanza and a rifle was found inside his trunk. However, the medical examiner said at a press conference that the rifle, found outside the school and in the trunk of a car was the primary weapon. The media then changed the story to say that the rifle was found next to Lanza and four handguns were found in the school. Was it bad reporting in the beginning, or did the story change intentionally?



Memorial at Sandy Hook Elementary
photo via Mashable

The video also calls attention to Robbie Parker, the father of Emilie Parker, whose daughter was one of the victims. He was filmed at a press conference smiling and joking seconds before appearing incredibly sad to give his statement. The video also points out several holes in an interview with Gene Rosen, a member of the Screen Actors' Guild, and a man who found six children outside his house and brought them inside the day of the shooting. The video shows more footage of parents smiling and laughing and it claims that actors could have been hired to play witnesses and parents.

The conspiracy theorists also call attention to several dates surrounding the incident. The shooting occurred on December 14th, 2012. A Facebook page mourning the loss of one of the victims was created on December 10th. At least six fundraising websites for the victims' families were created days before the shooting, as well. The truthers argue that so many websites with the wrong dates cannot be a coincidence, but the Internet is not known for its reliability.

On the same subject, a website was discovered that announces a Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection training course scheduled for December 14th from

9 AM to 4 PM titled, "Planning for the Needs of Children in Disasters." The course was held in the vicinity of Sandy Hook Elementary the same day and time of the tragedy.

Part two of the YouTube video ends with the text, "It's not fair to label a group as 'truthers' or 'conspiracy theorists.' That implies they are over the top, crazy, and against everyone else. These are millions of everyday people that deserve answers to their questions. And it seems by labeling them like that, it's easier to dismiss them and not have to look at the facts."

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All things considered, the video did contain evidence of anomalies or questionable activity on the part of the government. The claims should not be dismissed or pushed aside, but they should also be investigated with

an attitude of respect for the families of the victims and reverence in light of this incredible tragedy. Each person should decide for herself to what extent holes in stories and coincidences ought to be construed as a conspiracy cover-up.

The original video can be found at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wx9GxXYKx_8, and Part 2 can be found at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_nUOBSN03TU.

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