

## CRIMINOLOGY

**Vehicle-borne terror**

*Stud. Conflict Terror.* <http://doi.org/cch7> (2017)



Credit: Photoalto/James Hardy/Photoalto Agency  
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Terror attacks by lone actors have increased and become more varied in their mode of attack in recent years. Heterogeneity in ideology, motivation, context and individual characteristics has made a comprehensive profile of lone-wolf terrorists difficult to achieve. As a consequence, scholars have increasingly looked to develop profiles of specific sub-groups to advance our understanding of non-organizational terrorism and to identify group-specific intervention points.

New research by Simon Perry and colleagues at Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel, examines the population of lone-actor terrorists who carried out attacks with vehicles in Israel between January 2000 and March 2016. Data were collected from the Israeli Security Agency, as well as open sources, such as court proceedings, media reports and social media, for 62 vehicle-borne lone-actor events. No single socio-demographic profile emerged. However, previous criminal behaviour and past experience as a driver or heavy equipment operator was common among attackers. They also found that attackers generally did not suffer mental health problems and were largely driven by religious/nationalistic motives, and their actions were triggered by political and security-related events. In this regard, they share many characteristics with terrorists operating in larger networks.

Given the simplicity and low cost of carrying out vehicle-borne attacks, further research is needed to understand the decision-making process and path to action for lone-wolf terrorists.

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Published online: 5 September 2017

DOI: 10.1038/s41562-017-0214-2