

Killings in Norway Spotlight Anti-Muslim Thought in U.S.

By Scott Shane

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The man accused of the killing spree in Norway was deeply influenced by a small group of American bloggers and writers who have warned for years about the threat from Islam, lacing his 1,500-page manifesto with quotations from them, as well as copying multiple passages from the tract of the Unabomber.

In the document he posted online, Anders Behring Breivik, who is accused of bombing government buildings and killing scores of young people at a Labor Party camp, showed that he had closely followed the acrimonious American debate over Islam.

His manifesto, which denounced Norwegian politicians as failing to defend the country from Islamic influence, quoted Robert Spencer, who operates the Jihad Watch Web site, 64 times, and cited other Western writers who shared his view that Muslim immigrants pose a grave danger to Western culture.

More broadly, the mass killings in Norway, with their echo of the 1995 bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City by an antigovernment militant, have focused new attention around the world on the subculture of anti-Muslim bloggers and right-wing activists and renewed a debate over the focus of counterterrorism efforts.

In the United States, critics have asserted that the intense spotlight on the threat from Islamic militants has unfairly vilified Muslim Americans while dangerously playing down the threat of attacks from other domestic radicals. The author of a 2009 Department of Homeland Security report on right-wing extremism

withdrawn by the department after criticism from conservatives repeated on Sunday his claim that the department had tilted too heavily toward the threat from Islamic militants.

The revelations about Mr. Breivik's American influences exploded on the blogs over the weekend, putting Mr. Spencer and other self-described "counterjihad" activists on the defensive, as their critics suggested that their portrayal of Islam as a threat to the West indirectly fostered the crimes in Norway.

Mr. Spencer wrote on his Web site, jihadwatch.org, that "the blame game" had begun, "as if killing a lot of children aids the defense against the global jihad and Islamic supremacism, or has anything remotely to do with anything we have ever advocated." He did not mention Mr. Breivik's voluminous quotations from his writings.



Robert Spencer said his Web site was being unfairly blamed for influencing the Norwegian shooting suspect. Ida Mae Astute/ABC

The Gates of Vienna, a blog that ordinarily keeps up a drumbeat of anti-Islamist news and commentary, closed its pages to comments Sunday “due to the unusual situation in which it has recently found itself.”

Its operator, who describes himself as a Virginia consultant and uses the pseudonym “Baron Bodissey,” wrote on the site Sunday that “at no time has any part of the Counterjihad advocated violence.”

The name of that Web site — a reference to the siege of Vienna in 1683 by Muslim fighters who, the blog says in its headnote, “seemed poised to overrun Christian Europe” — was echoed in the title Mr. Breivik chose for his manifesto: “2083: A

European Declaration of Independence.” He chose that year, the 400th anniversary of the siege, as the target for the triumph of Christian forces in the European civil war he called for to drive out Islamic influence.

Marc Sageman, a former C.I.A. officer and a consultant on terrorism, said it would be unfair to attribute Mr. Breivik’s violence to the writers who helped shape his world view. But at the same time, he said the counterjihad writers do argue that the fundamentalist Salafi branch of Islam “is the infrastructure from which Al Qaeda emerged. Well, they and their writings are the infrastructure from which Breivik emerged.”

“This rhetoric,” he added, “is not cost-free.”

Dr. Sageman, who is also a forensic psychiatrist, said he saw no overt signs of mental illness in Mr. Breivik’s writings. He said Mr. Breivik bears some resemblance to Ted Kaczynski, the Unabomber, who also spent years on a manifesto and carried out his mail bombings in part to gain attention for his theories. One obvious difference, Dr. Sageman said, is that Mr. Kaczynski was a loner who spent years in a rustic Montana cabin, while Mr. Breivik appears to have been quite social.

Mr. Breivik’s declaration did not name Mr. Kaczynski or acknowledge the numerous passages copied from the Unabomber’s 1995 manifesto, in which the Norwegian substituted “multiculturalists” or “cultural Marxists” for Mr. Kaczynski’s “leftists” and made other small wording changes.

By contrast, he quoted the American and European counterjihad writers by name, notably Mr. Spencer, author of 10 books, including “Islam Unveiled” and “The Truth About Muhammad.”

Mr. Breivik frequently cited another blog, Atlas Shrugs, and recommended the Gates of Vienna among Web sites. Pamela Geller, an outspoken critic of Islam who runs Atlas Shrugs, wrote on her blog Sunday that any assertion that she or other antijihad writers bore any responsibility for Mr. Breivik’s actions was “ridiculous.”

Representative Peter T. King, Republican of New York, said the killings would not affect hearings on Islamic radicalization. Mark Wilson/Getty Images

“If anyone incited him to violence, it was Islamic supremacists,” she wrote.

Mr. Breivik also quoted European blogs and writers with similar themes, notably a Norwegian blogger who writes under the name “Fjordman.” Immigration from Muslim countries to Scandinavia and the rest of Europe has set off a deep political debate across the continent and strengthened a number of right-wing anti-immigrant parties.

In the United States, the shootings resonated with years of debate at home over the proper focus of counterterrorism.

Despite the Norway killings, Representative Peter T. King, the New York Republican who is chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, said he had no plans to broaden contentious hearings about the radicalization of Muslim Americans and would hold the third one as planned on Wednesday. He said his committee focused on terrorist threats with foreign ties and suggested that the Judiciary Committee might be more appropriate for looking at non-Muslim threats.

In 2009, when the Department of Homeland Security produced a report, “Rightwing Extremism,” suggesting that the recession and the election of an African-American president might increase the threat from white supremacists, conservatives in Congress strongly objected. Janet Napolitano, the homeland security secretary, quickly withdrew the report and apologized for what she said were its flaws.

Daryl Johnson, the Department of Homeland Security analyst who was the primary author of the report, said in an interview that after he left the department in 2010, the number of analysts assigned to non-Islamic militancy of all kinds was reduced to two from six. Mr. Johnson, who now runs a private research firm on the domestic terrorist threat, DTAnalytics, said about 30 analysts worked on Islamic radicalism when he was there.

The killings in Norway “could easily happen here,” he said. The Hutaree, an extremist Christian militia in Michigan accused last year of plotting to kill police officers and planting bombs at their funerals, had an arsenal of weapons larger than all the Muslim plotters charged in the United States since the Sept. 11 attacks combined, he said.

Homeland Security officials disputed Mr. Johnson’s claim about staffing, saying they pay close attention to all threats, regardless of ideology. And the F.B.I. infiltrated the Hutaree, making arrests before any attack could take place.

John D. Cohen, principal deputy counterterrorism coordinator at the Department of Homeland Security, said Ms. Napolitano, who visited Oklahoma City last year for the 15th anniversary of the bombing there, had often spoken of the need to assess the risk of violence without regard to politics or religion.

“What happened in Norway,” Mr. Cohen said, “is a dramatic reminder that in trying to prevent attacks, we cannot focus on a single ideology.”

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