

Meet Syed Farook And Tashfeen Malik, The Husband And Wife San Bernardino Shooters

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"Was there a link to terror?"

That's the question Americans are asking themselves the morning after a husband and wife [opened fire with assault rifles](#) killing 14 and wounding 21 at a San Bernardino County employee holiday party.

The shooters, Syed Rizwan Farook, 28, and Tashfeen Malik, 27, left their young child with Farook's mother in nearby Redlands on Wednesday morning before dressing in "assault clothing," and crashing the party (literally). A subsequent shootout with authorities left both suspects dead. The couple used a DPMS model and a Smith & Wesson M&P 15 along with two handguns, a Ilima and a Smith & Wesson. The rifles, two .223s, are capable of piercing bulletproof vests. The weapons were purchased legally.

Here's what we know about Farook and Malik so far.

Farook, whose family was originally from Pakistan, was born in America and was employed as an environmental health specialist for San Bernardino County. He did what health specialists do: inspect restaurants and other facilities for health violations.



Reuters [was able to obtain](#) some on-the-ground intelligence from a SusAnn Chapman, who's described as "a cashier and waitress at China Doll Fast Food." Apparently, Farook inspected the China Doll earlier this year. "He was real quiet," Chapman said. "He checked the food and said he was here because somebody complained. ... He looked completely normal."

Ok, not helpful.

However, some clues as to what might (and we emphasize "might") be going on here emerge when we take a closer look at Malik. According to Hussam Ayloush, executive director of the Los Angeles chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations who, like SusAnn, spoke to Reuters, **Malik "was believed to be from Pakistan and had lived in Saudi Arabia before coming to the United States."**

"Farook traveled to Saudi Arabia earlier this year and returned with a wife," [AP reports](#), citing co-worker Patrick Baccari, who said Farook "was gone for about a month in the spring, and when he returned word got around [he'd] had been married." His new wife was described as "a pharmacist."

Now clearly there are no smoking guns there, but it's worth noting that when it comes to radicalization, no one does it quite like the Saudis. But as we read further, AP uncovers the smoking gun: "**Several months ago Farook grew out his beard.**" There you go - excessive beard action. The terrorist hallmark.



All sarcasm aside, AP goes on to say that according to coworkers, Farook was "a devout Muslim," and according to a profile posted on the dating site iMilap, Farook enjoyed "reading religious books and target practice with younger sister and friends."



A separate profile on Dubai matrimonial.com (which describes itself as the "first and only legal marriage service provider in the UAE), shows Farook identifying himself as a Sunni:



Although we would urge caution when it comes to drawing conclusions around the sectarian divide, we'd be remiss if we didn't note that ISIS, al-Qaeda, and many of the other groups the public generally identifies with extremism, are Sunni. Saudi Arabia (where Farook allegedly found his wife) promotes puritanical Wahhabism.

In the wake of the tragedy, Muzammil Siddiqi, religious director of The Islamic Society of Orange County, reminded Americans that Islam is not synonymous with terror: "Please do not implicate Islam or Muslims. Our faith is against this kind of behaviour."

Here's Patrick Baccari's (quoted above) account of the shooting, again, via AP:

Baccari, who was sitting at the same table as Farook, said employees at the holiday party were taking a break before snapping group photos when Farook suddenly disappeared, leaving a jacket draped over his chair. Baccari stepped out to the bathroom when he heard explosions.

"I'm getting pelted by shrapnel coming through the walls," he said. "We hit the ground."

The shooting lasted about five minutes, he said, and when he looked in the mirror he realized he was bleeding. He was hit by fragments in the body, face and arms.

"If I hadn't been in the bathroom, I'd probably be laying dead on the floor," he said.

Clearly, quite a bit hinges on whether or not this gets tied to radical Islam. If authorities "prove" (or create) a link to extremists, the backlash against Syrian immigrants and against American Muslims more generally, will only grow.

Additionally, public support for American boots on Syrian ground will rise as any link to terrorist ideology will invariably be trotted out as "proof" that "lone wolf" or not, attacks have now crossed the pond to reach American soil.

Of course at the end of the day, two people opening fire with assault rifles on a holiday party seems pretty "terrifying" to us regardless of what inspired the shooters, but remember,

crises like these are only “useful” in today’s world if they serve someone’s geopolitical ends so don’t be surprised if the mainstream media soon turns up the San Bernardino equivalent of the forged Syrian passport found in Paris three weeks ago.

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