

France: How al-Qaeda inspired the Nice terror attack

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The terror group recommended that jihadis use “a pickup truck as a mowing machine” in crowded locations.

Using a vehicle to run down individuals – the Nice attacker, a French-Tunisian named locally as Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel drove a refrigerated truck into crowds celebrating Bastille Day – has been a common tactic for years in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But it was al-Qaeda that first promoted it as a method of attack to supporters of the global jihad movement through its online magazine Inspire, in 2010.

The magazine recommended using “a pickup truck as a mowing machine, not to mow grass, but mow down the enemies of Allah.” It also recommends choosing “the most crowded locations. Narrower spots are also better because it gives less chance for people to run away.”

A similar message was echoed by Islamic State’s spokesman Abu Mohammed al-Adnani just a few weeks ago, when he called on those “behind enemy lines” to carry out attacks at home. That is particularly significant because it represents a shift in emphasis for IS, which has previously called on all Muslims to migrate to their territory in Syria and Iraq. In that respect, telling supporters in the West not to travel could be a sign of increasing desperation within the group after it has suffered territorial losses in recent months.

It is too soon to know whether this attack was carried out on behalf of any particular group, but chat forums associated with both al-Qaeda and IS have been celebrating it. For them, it is another blow to France which has suffered 10 major terrorist incidents since January 2015 – about one every two months – while continuing to warn of more.

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P.S.

* <http://www.newstatesman.com/world/europe/2016/07/how-al-qaeda-inspired-nice-terror-attack>

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