

H A R L A N   R I C H A R D S

August 14, 2012

Domestic Terrorism: What Is It?

The dictionary defines "terrorism" as "the use of violence and threats to intimidate or coerce, esp. for political purposes."

The recent killing of 6 Sikhs in Wisconsin has been called domestic terrorism, I suppose to distinguish it from imported terrorism. However, a madman killing 6 people for no apparent reason or motive does not seem to meet the definition of terrorism found in the dictionary. It was certainly a terrible tragedy and many people were made to suffer for no apparent reason but what is lacking is the objective. In this case, there wasn't one.

I would speculate that most natural born U.S. citizens do not know what the Declaration of Independence says. It was essentially a terrorist manifesto and would have gone down in history as such if we would not have won our independence. But the victors write history, as they say, so we consider it our manifesto in support of liberty and justice for all.

When McVey and Nichols blew up the federal building in Omaha, that was terrorism. It was a politically motivated action against our government intended to influence the way our government operated. It was wrong-headed and misguided, but it was a terrorist act. The Sikh killings and even the Colorado theater massacre were not terrorist acts as they had no discernable purpose.

I deplore violence against innocent targets and think that we as a society should do everything we can to prevent such act. But I think the news media does us all a disservice when it labels random acts of hate-driven violence as terrorism. the phrase becomes trite and overused, leaving us searching for an even more appropriate term when a real terrorist act occurs.

The news media also likes to portray right-wing skinheads as violent radicals, implying that they are all a bunch of terrorists that just haven't acted yet. I think that sort of stereotyping is unjustified as well. Although I don't subscribe to their hate-filled ideology, I am well-aware that not all of them have the propensity to engage in maniacal acts of violence.

Does anyone remember the John Birch Society? They were a radical right-wing white supremest group decades ago which fought desegregation tooth and nail. they did alot more in their hey day but eventually faded into obscurity. However, the sons of the founder are alive and well and using their vast wealth to further their agenda through political means. Although not as sensational as a massacre, it is much more effective. I'll leave it to you readers to trace these people to Governor Scott Walker.