



RISK-MODEL CASE STUDIES: COMBATING DOMESTIC TERRORISM

Empowering Witnesses to Fight White Supremacist Extremism While Protecting Civil Liberties

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CASE STUDY 1:

Witness 1's Observation: The Mother

You are worried about your 21-year-old son owning an "AK"-style weapon; specifically, you are concerned about his weapon ownership given his age, maturity level, and lack of experience handling such a firearm. You decide to call the police to get more information about whether it is legal for him to own this weapon. You are transferred to a public safety officer, who tells you that your son is legally allowed to purchase the weapon. The public safety officer asks you twice whether your son is suicidal or has threatened any other persons, and you indicate this is not the case. You do not provide your name or your son's name, and the public safety officer does not seek any additional information from you before the call concludes.

Witness 2's Observation: The Neighbor

You notice that your neighbor, a young man, is acting a bit strange. You once saw him playing outside with an ax. He often gives terse "yes" and "no" answers when you speak with him. He is often late for school. You notice that the family rarely takes vacations because the young man struggles with being in a car for long periods of time. While these behaviors seem odd, they don't concern you.

Witness 3's Observation: The Classmate

One of your classmates is particularly interested in extreme right-wing politics and often gets in political arguments with you. During lunchtime, the classmate would often shift the conversation to ask you about your views on the Second Amendment, white supremacy, and police brutality. He tells you how he can't wait to buy a gun. Conversations about guns didn't seem unusual to you since such conversations are relatively common where you live in Texas. Your classmate's questions didn't seem hateful or racist to you at the time, but they did seem odd.

Witness 4's Observation: The Twin Sister

Your twin brother isn't somebody you would describe as volatile or angry, but he hasn't been getting along with your parents lately. He recently moved out of your mother's home to live with your grandparents. As a result, you haven't seen him outside of school as much. You find out that your twin recently moved out of your grandparents' home as well. You are a little curious as to what happened, but you chalk it up to typical family conflict.

What Really Happened? Look to the Next Page to Find Out

CASE STUDY 1: What Really Happened

A few weeks after the mother called the police, her son, Patrick Crusius, opened fire at an El Paso Walmart, killing 22 people and injuring more than two dozen others. A manifesto believed to be written by Crusius proclaiming white nationalist and racist views was posted on 8chan less than 20 minutes before the first 911 calls came in. The four-page document railed against Hispanics and immigrants, blaming them for taking jobs away.

Neighbors and classmates described Crusius as “strange” and “off”. He was once seen by a neighbor playing outside with an ax. One of his fellow students said that he would often ask her views about the Second Amendment, white supremacy, and police brutality. He moved out of his parents’ house to live with his grandparents. After going to the local college for two years, he moved out of his grandparents’ home and was trying to decide what he was going to do next when he committed the attack.

Family members insisted that he wasn’t a volatile, erratic, or isolated person, and they claim that he was raised in a family that “taught love, kindness, respect, and tolerance.” The family of one of the victims sued the family of the killer and 8chan for fostering an environment of hate. The FBI is investigating the shooting as an act of domestic terrorism.

CASE STUDY 2:

The Witness's Observation: The Teacher

A high school English teacher in Texas noticed a student in possession of a suspicious-looking device that resembled something akin to a briefcase bomb with a clock on it. When the clock alarm started beeping, the English teacher confiscated the device and reported the student to the school principal's office. The police were called and the student was immediately interrogated by law enforcement. After an hour and a half of interrogation, the student was handcuffed and taken into police custody.

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CASE STUDY 2: What Really Happened

In 2015, a 14-year-old boy from MacArthur, Texas, named Ahmed Mohamed built a homemade clock and brought it to school in order to impress his teachers. Ahmed, an aspiring engineer and robotics enthusiast, was known for making a number of inventions, including radios and go-karts. When the English teacher told him she thought it looked like a bomb, he assured her that it wasn't.

The police chief acknowledged that "they had no evidence to support that there was an intention to create alarm or cause people to be concerned." Ahmed's father, a Muslim immigrant from Sudan, said "[My son] just wants to invent good things for mankind. But because his name is Mohamed and because of September 11, I think my son got mistreated."

The case received national attention and spawned concerns about racial profiling and the severity of disciplinary systems in Texas schools. The ACLU stated: "We should not deprive our children of liberty when they haven't broken the law, and we should not suspend them from school when they haven't broken the rules."

Ahmed received a groundswell of celebrity support, including from Barack Obama, who tweeted: "Cool clock, Ahmed. Want to bring it to the White House? We should inspire more kids like you to like science. It's what makes America great."