

**Pyroterrorism**

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## EDITOR'S COMMENT



This is a collection of papers focusing on wildfires as a means of terrorism (pyro-terrorism or tera-terrorism). It aims to mobilize those involved in national security and civil protection to proceed to necessary hardening measures that will fortify homeland. Not all wildfires are due to terrorism; but we have to be open-minded because the unexpected always happens! This is an ancient war technique and its knowledge might assist our differential diagnosis when exploring the causes of simultaneous mega-fires in certain parts of a nation in a given period of time...

“Pyro” comes from the Greek word “pyrà” = “fire”

A collection of papers related to “Pyroterrorism” are also available at [“CBRNE-CT Papers”](#) section of the CBRNE-Terrorism Newsletter

## Profiles in pyroterrorism Convergence of crime, terrorism and wildfire unleash as a weapon on population

By Robert Baird

Source: <http://www.homeland1.com/disaster-preparedness/articles/985110-Profiles-in-pyroterrorism/>

The four cases of Raymond Oyler, Brendan Sokaluk, Jose Padilla, and Daniel San Diego illustrate the complex convergence of crime, terrorism and wildfire. These profiles provide law enforcement and arson investigators examples of potential future pyroterrorists who may seek to unleash wildfire as a weapon on the population of the United States.



Defendant Raymond Oyler looks back during opening statements of his trial Thursday, Jan 22, 2009 in Riverside, Calif. (AP Photo/Nick Ut)

because he later admitted to lighting various fires over a span of years. Second, as the judge succinctly points out, Mr. Oyler steadily improved his proficiency at unleashing these arson wildfires.

In 2007 Raymond Lee Oyler, deliberately set a series of fires in the California countryside over the span of several months. This arson spree culminated with the Esperanza fire, an exceptionally destructive wildfire fed by Santa Ana winds. Three firefighters were killed on the scene and two later died in the hospital. Had those five men been killed by a naturally occurring wildfire, the Esperanza fire would have been considered a tragedy. Instead, it was a case of murder. A California criminal court tried and convicted Oyler of five wreck havoc in this county by setting fires by his own design for his own purposes and as proven by the evidence he became more and more proficient... He knew that young men and women would put their lives on the line to protect other people and property and he continued anyway."2 The weapon of these five murders was wildfire. Oyler's case provides two distinct trends worth noting. First, he was a serial arsonist



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This case is important for law enforcement and arson investigators to seek out trends in arson-induced fires in a given region and potentially project times of vulnerability and indicators of serial pyroterrorists. This concept is akin to the U. S. military's effort to defeat insurgent networks that emplace improvised explosive devices by projecting trends in an attempt to be preventative. Instead of being reactive, fire management officers and homeland security analysts may evaluate trends and take measures to mitigate times and areas of vulnerability. Researchers Jeff Prestemon and David Butry studied wild land arson as an auto regressive crime and demonstrated that temporal clustering of incidents occurs, "which supports the hypothesis of either serial or copycat fire setting."<sup>3</sup> The researchers further infer that projections may be made for law enforcement and fire managers on which specific areas of vulnerability may be at greater risk during certain times. This provides a template for law enforcement to target given areas where perpetrators may act. The limitation of this type of projection is that unless the number of arson fires is tracked and sought to be reduced, it is very difficult to determine how many Fires were prevented. Further research in specific regions is needed, however, the premise of tracking wildfire arson trends, and projecting potential behavior, is relevant and useful.

The second case that profiles a potential pyroterrorist is that of Brendan Sokaluk, a 39-year-old former volunteer firefighter accused of lighting one of several blazes in Australia during the 2009 wildfire season. Overall the season resulted in 189 dead, 1,800 houses destroyed, and 7,000 people homeless.<sup>4</sup> As arson investigators attempted to build a case against Sokaluk, they were confronted with the difficulty of proving a causal relationship between the location of the acts of arson and the locations of the deaths. Australian investigators revealed that they encountered a great deal of difficulty in proving exactly what damage and deaths Sokaluk was directly responsible for, because different fires would join and feed others.<sup>5</sup> Sokaluk's case illustrates that the more complex the fire, and the more it interacts with other naturally occurring wildfires, the harder it will be to develop a causal link of the deaths in a wildfire to the pyroterrorism defendant. As a result, Sokaluk was only charged with starting fires that resulted in the death of 11 people and limited property damage. The Australian wildfires provide a worst case scenario for how several large arson wildfires in the United States could wreak havoc in the American wildland urban interface and the challenges in building cases for prosecution.

José Padilla, the third case study, is a convicted terrorist who has shown the desire to unleash wildfire to cause destruction to terrorize the American people in an urban environment. Padilla was born in the United States and Travelled in 2001 to Pakistan to meet with Kahlid Shaikh Mohammed and other senior al-Qaeda leaders. While with al-Qaeda, Padilla was recruited to conduct terrorist acts in the United States. He was initially suspected of plotting to detonate a "dirty bomb," but was ultimately convicted of a plot of "blowing up apartment buildings (using natural gas)... [in] as many as twenty simultaneous explosions, probably in New York." <sup>6</sup> Padilla, a known gang member in Chicago, is an example of how future jihadists may be recruited from US citizens who have, and can exploit, ties to U.S. criminal networks for illicit funding, illegal weapons, false credentials, and safe havens.

The second concept that Padilla's case introduces is "forest jihad." Jonathan Figchel, senior researcher at The Terrorism Studies Group, has studied the concept of forest jihad for more than a decade and states that it is critical for responders and analysts to understand that militant jihadists have considered setting forest fires as a form of economic warfare, identified targets, and discussed appropriate manpower for more than a decade. Figchel concludes that, "The so-called 'Forest Jihad' is being championed by Islamic scholars and Osama bin Laden's terror strategists who believe setting fire to dry woodlands will produce maximum damage at minimum risk."<sup>7</sup> The forest jihad concept was also openly discussed in the book *Knights Under the Prophet's Banner* by bin Laden's associate, Ayman al-Zawahiri, who encouraged jihadists to "move the battle to the enemy's ground to burn the hands of those who ignite fire in our countries."<sup>8</sup> In December 2007 a message posted online at aljazeeraatalk.net said, "Imagine if, after all the losses caused by such an event, a jihadist organization were to claim responsibility for [starting] the forest fires... You can hardly begin to imagine the level of the fear that would take hold of people in the United States, in Europe, in Russia, and in Australia."

This post was signed by Abu Thar Al-Kuwaiti on behalf of a group called the Al-Ikhlās Islamic Network.<sup>9</sup> The forest jihad concept was also tracked by Adam Dolnik, director of research at the University of Wollongong's Centre for Transnational Crime Prevention. He noted that postings on



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jihadist websites during 2009 called for simplified terrorist attacks to counteract failures of more complex operations.<sup>10</sup>

Educating leadership is critical to understanding the threats. An example of a pilot program is the coordination of the New York City Fire Department with the Combating Terrorism Center at the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, New York, to educate fire and emergency personnel. Fire managers must integrate closely with law enforcement personnel in prevention and threat understanding. Beyond local police, it is also important to integrate with the FBI's regional Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF). A cooperative regional terrorism early warning center increases the capability to prevent pyroterrorist attacks by timely sharing of information. Fire behavior analysts and arson investigators should establish reporting links to these centers in the event arson wildfire cases follow any discernable pattern. Some fire managers, responsible for high-threat regions, may go as far as the FDNY, which installed the electronic technology to receive classified information in the FDNY Operations Center.<sup>11</sup> By more closely integrating with law enforcement at a variety of levels or attending homeland security training, fire managers can be aware of likely terrorism indicators and early warnings. Phoenix, Scottsdale, and Rural/Metro Fire Departments in cooperation with the Phoenix JTTF provides an example of success in integration that led to the apprehension of a pyroterrorist who set fire to luxury homes to reduce urban sprawl.<sup>12</sup>

The final profile in pyroterrorism is the case of Daniel Andreas San Diego. San Diego illustrates the potential for perpetrators to be wanted domestic terrorists who desire to commit pyroterrorism within the United States against an array of wildland and urban targets. San Diego has the unique distinction of being the first domestic terrorist on the FBI's Most Wanted List. His body is tattooed with grizzly renderings of arson destruction to both woodlands and urban areas. San Diego is alleged to have set two bombs in the same vicinity, the second set to detonate an hour after the first, apparently intending to murder first responders.

While his first attempt was discovered by clearing the area before the detonation, San Diego showed intent to kill with his devices and is still at large.<sup>13</sup> While San Diego is known to be a dedicated vegan, he still seeks to harm humans to further his animal rights agenda. Incident commanders must be aware that terrorists regularly target first responders for multiplied benefit.

First responders to a suspected arson fire may not expect to be the targets of a terrorist, but they are susceptible to attack while focusing on fire suppression and incident management. Today, the Internet and mass media provide detailed information on the current and projected fire danger ratings with the intent of reducing negligent fires. However, the result is an abundance of information enabling a terrorist cell to target first responders while law enforcement personnel are busy with evacuation duties.

Additionally, terrorists may block evacuation routes out of fire-threatened areas to create havoc, mayhem, and mass casualties—material ripe for broadcast through the national media and effectively increasing the psychological effect of pyroterrorism in the American population. National Type 1 Interagency Incident Management Teams should be considered national assets when dispatched in response to a significant terrorist attack, because they are at risk of being targeted themselves. In the post 9/11 world, incident management should encourage self-protection and integrate with both US Northern Command, and federal and local law enforcement for threat awareness and security. The US military uses the concept of the force protection officer to address threats to the armed forces in a similar manner. A worthy consideration would be to establish the same function on the incident command and general staff. Those staff officers would liaison with local law enforcement, JTTFs, and officials of the Homeland Security and Defense departments, request regional early warning information from local and federal law enforcement, as well as inform the incident management team. Finally, the force protection officer would also coordinate with the plans section to project potential wildfire threats to critical infrastructure, and alert and coordinate with the Department of Homeland Security and regional critical infrastructure protection agencies.

Finally, it is not reasonable to expect that all the nation's vulnerable areas (urban, forests, and wildland urban interface) could be physically guarded against arsonists bent on massive destruction. All terrorists use violence as a means to coerce governments, alter public opinion, and stir media sensationalism of an event as a sort of violent theater to broadcast their agenda.<sup>14</sup>

In the event terrorism is determined, or revealed through other media outlets or the Internet, it is vital that authorities respond with credible counter-messages that reduce public fear and inspire



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confidence. Incident commanders, local emergency responders, law enforcement, and elected officials must all win the "battle of the narrative" and demonstrate their effectiveness and progress in handling the situation and restoring order while clearly articulating the despicable criminal actions and wanton destruction on the part of the terrorist.

Consequently, law enforcement and homeland security planners at federal, state, and local levels should conduct contingency planning to focus on rapid identification of arson-induced fires. In the event a terrorist group takes claim for a wildfire and its destruction or killing, the incident commander and local, State, and federal agencies must be fully prepared for an orchestrated multimedia terrorist information blitz meant to reduce confidence in the government response, invoke fear, and incite general civil unrest. Responses may include preplanned public affairs messages and themes that inspire confidence and reduce the perception of weak security. Countering the potential terrorist web posts or videos claiming responsibility for an arson wildfire will be absolutely critical to reducing fear while law enforcement and fire investigators gain time to apprehend perpetrators.

Wildfire has the destructive power to cause tremendous damage and kill on a massive scale as evidenced in the recent Australian bush fires. In this post 9/11 era, we may be weary of how many ways we are vulnerable to attack from unseen perpetrators or global jihadists seeking our destruction. Vigilance and readiness to fight arson-induced wildfires already exists. Using this information about new and emerging types of terrorism threats, homeland security planners can anticipate an attack, institute ways to mitigate the severity of the destruction, and protect our population.

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*Mr. Baird is a Lieutenant Colonel and counterinsurgency lead for the Marine Corps Center for Irregular Warfare. He is a former seasonal police officer for Ocean City, Maryland, and has deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. This article does not represent the views of any governmental agency.*



**Pyroterrorism in California: A Sad State of Affairs**

Source: <http://politics.lilithazine.com/California-Pyroterrorism.html>

**New Fires in October 2007**

I am monitoring the new fires in California. Several of the fires look to be the work of an arsonist, possibly a pyroterrorist or group of pyroterrorists.

**2005 Wildfires**

Ten different wildfires killed 18 people in California in 2005. These fires are believed to have been started by either an arsonist or a pyroterrorist.

Over 500,000 people were evacuated from 17,000 acres. 3000 firefighters tried to contain the blazes but new blazes were started, suggesting an arsonist or pyroterrorist at work. The fires ended up destroying 2000 homes and caused \$200 billion dollars (US) in damages. It was one of the largest fires in US history.

At the time George W. Bush went on the record saying he would try to solve the problem of forest fires by simply cutting down the forests or "thinning" them out. But thinner forests don't prevent wildfires, because grass fires spread faster and are harder to control.

And it certainly doesn't stop a pyroterrorist intent on damaging the American economy.

Resident: 'I thought I was in the middle of hell'



A firefighter deliberately setting fire to a small area in an attempt to create a curtain of ash where the fire has already burned, that way it can be put out easier and the fire will not spread beyond that curtain.

**2003 Wildfires**

Take a look at this news excerpt from Saturday October 25th 2003.

RANCHO CUCAMONGA, California (CNN) -- Thousands of suburban residents east of Los Angeles left their homes in the hands of firefighters Saturday, fleeing two wildfires racing through tinder-dry brush and forests.

One blaze that officials suspect started Tuesday as the result of arson had consumed more than 27,000 acres in the San Bernardino National Forest and the communities surrounding Rancho Cucamonga by Saturday evening.

Driven by hot, dry Santa Ana winds gusting up to 50 mph, the fire crowned dozens of rooftops with orange flames and glowed dully against the premature dusk brought on by thick, black smoke.



The ash is so thick, you can barely see the sun. It looks like a surreal version of Hell.



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The official count (as of Saturday the 25th) was 15 homes destroyed, but views from news helicopters showed dozens of houses ablaze. Fire officials say at least 8,400 structures are threatened. The fire is 23 percent contained. The fire also threatened the electrical lines that provide power for up to 1 million customers in the Los Angeles basin, forced the closing of several roads, and spewed flaming ash and heavy smoke across the region.

Meanwhile, 10 miles east of Rancho Cucamonga, a second fire that began Saturday morning raced through neighborhoods in the Waterman Canyon area of the San Bernardino Mountains, consuming more than 10,000 acres by early evening. The Associated Press report authorities as saying.

More than 200 homes had been destroyed and at least 7,000 were threatened.

Capt. Dennis Cross of the Los Angeles County Fire Department said no containment was in sight.

"It just gives you an indication of the kinds of winds we are experiencing ... the dry fuel and the bad brush season," Cross said.

He said steady winds were funneling down the canyon at about 30-40 mph, with gusts up to 50-60 mph.

As many as 12,000 homes in the region were under "some form of evacuation," with residents having already left or preparing to do so, Forest Service information officer Martin Esparza said.

More than 2,200 firefighters battled the Rancho Cucamonga blaze. Officials reported 11 injuries, none serious, mostly to firefighters.

Firefighters not involved in directly fighting the fire concentrated their efforts on safeguarding homes that were dangerously close to the front lines.

Evacuations were lifted east of Day Creek and north of Interstate 15, which had reopened after being closed for part of Friday. I-210 and several smaller roads remained closed.

The latest residents told to leave their homes were from San Antonio Heights, Euclid Heights, Mount Baldy, Snow Drop Road, the Alta Loma Woods neighborhood and the area north of Almond. Thousands of homes and other structures were threatened.

Officials weren't sure how many other structures had been destroyed because flames were still engulfing evacuated areas.

Late Friday, fire crews took advantage of a lull in the Santa Ana winds and sent fixed-wing aircraft to dump flame retardant on the rapidly swelling blaze. But higher winds kept the planes grounded Saturday.

The blaze whipped into a frenzy late Thursday when the Santa Ana winds swept down Day Canyon faster than expected. Steep, rugged terrain hampered firefighters trying to get close.

Esparza said authorities had ruled out natural or regional causes, leading them to suspect arson.

The fact that there is TWO separate fires (with possibly more to come) also means arson. Since California is the wealthiest State in the US, it is a logical target for pyroterrorism because it will do the most economic damage.



Suburbia on fire. Houses and trees in L.A.'s suburbia are on fire.



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### Pyroterrorism

is the willful destruction of a Nation's forests, farms and cities, through the use of FIRE. It is the oldest method of war. To raze another country is a symbolic means of destroying their economy. It turns their country into a wasteland of ash and dust. A desert.

Northern Africa used to be a prosperous land of fertility. Until the Romans had their wars with Hannibal and the Romans burnt the land to the ground (a war time practice known as razing) and sowed the land with salt so nothing would grow.

I have been warning people since 2000 that the United States would be a likely target for Pyroterrorism. I have been trying to warn people that this could happen which includes this quote below. But this is just one website and politicians are hardly worried about preventing pyroterrorism or catching the elusive terrorists.

During the summer of 2002, 140 thousand acres of forest and homes were destroyed by a blaze apparently caused by a small campfire. Another 2 million acres were destroyed in Alaska during August 2002, due to similar causes. Also in August 2002, Oregon had over half a million acres destroyed in 7 different fires.

In the last few years arson/pyroterrorism has happened in Greece, Portugal and in Australia, and now it has come to the United States. Whether its just regular arson or deliberate politically motivated pyroterrorism, we will never know unless the arsonist/pyroterrorist is caught.

I hate to be the prophet of bad news, but I fear it will only get worse. I predict this is just the beginning of the razing of the United States.

The United States is not equipped to deal with massive forest fires. Once started, they are extremely hard to put out and George Bush has actually been cutting funding to fight such fires. He has NOT been taking the threat of pyroterrorism seriously.

And now that pyroterrorism is happening in America what will Americans do about it? As usual they will likely debate the issue rather than try to actually prevent the next time it happens. Whether this is a common arsonist or a pyroterrorist has not yet been proven, and it may never be proven unless America starts taking the threat seriously.

### Suspicious fires destroy forests in northern Lebanon

Source:[http://news.monstersandcritics.com/middleeast/news/article\\_1368288.php/Suspicious\\_fires\\_destroy\\_forests\\_in\\_northern\\_Lebanon](http://news.monstersandcritics.com/middleeast/news/article_1368288.php/Suspicious_fires_destroy_forests_in_northern_Lebanon)

Ehden, Lebanon - Wild fires raged across vast areas of forest in north Lebanon as choppers from nearby Cyprus helped combat the flames threatening population centres.

Civil defence rescuers said no casualties have been reported in the fires that broke out Tuesday evening and developed early Wednesday across the dry land after a long summer.

Lebanese army helicopters and Cypriot choppers worked throughout the day to help combat the blaze spreading to populated areas in the Ehden region.

According to an eyewitness some residents of the Ehden region slept outside their homes because the fires were close to their homes.



Firefighters carrying poor equipment. Bush's cuts have hurt firefighters across the Nation. Helicopters equipped to fight forest fires are extremely rare.







Police blocked traffic along the Zghorta-Ehdén highway, which penetrates the region's forests and olive groves to avoid civilian casualties.

'We are carrying out a double mission, on the one hand we combat the forest fires and, on the other, we try to prevent the blaze from reaching population centres,' a civil defence worker said. He attributed the fires to the dry land after a hot summer.

But Interior Minister Hassan Sabaa pointed an accusing finger at arsonists.

'The big question is: how did these fires start late at night and in areas that are not linked to the road network,' Sabaa told Voice of Lebanon radio.

'The fires we think from initial reports are intentional,' Sabaa added.

'God is the best firefighter,' said Fadi Mouawad a resident of Ehdén.

In the Muslim villages of north Lebanon the elderly clergymen called for special 'rain prayers.'

Wild Fires have Swept across more than 6,000 acres of forest land earlier this month killing one person and injuring scores.

Italian planes were brought in the country to help put out the raging fires.



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## Pyro-Terrorism—The Threat of Arson-Induced Forest Fires as a Future Terrorist Weapon of Mass Destruction

ROBERT ARTHUR BAIRD

United States Marine Corps, School of Advanced Warfighting  
 Marine Corps University  
 Marine Corps Combat Development Command  
 Quantico, Virginia, USA

*The United States is at significant risk of a future pyro-terrorist attack—when terrorists unleash the latent energy in the nation's forests to achieve the effect of a weapon of mass destruction—the threat, must be defined America's vulnerabilities understood, and action taken to mitigate this danger to the United States.*

### Introduction

We are today a Nation at risk to a new and changing threat. The terrorist threat to America takes many forms, has many places to hide, and is often invisible.—President G. W. Bush, 16 July 2002.<sup>1</sup>

While America orients on the readily apparent scenarios of smuggled nuclear weapons and radiological bombs, Al Qaeda is adapting to avoid security and screening systems and is seeking new operational tactics and destructive technologies. Instead of using expensive, complex, and readily detectable nuclear or radiological bombs, future terrorists can easily ignite several massive wildfires to severely damage regional economies, impact military forces, and terrorize the American population. Studies of wildfire conflagrations have shown that they can rival the destructive force of nuclear weapons, giving the terrorist a weapon with the same effect with a great deal less effort and risk.<sup>2</sup>

Pyro-terrorism is the use of incendiary attacks to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, to advance political or social objectives.<sup>3</sup> Pyro-terrorism possesses the four generally accepted elements of terrorism: targeting of noncombatants, political motivation, violence with a psychological impact, and organized perpetrators.<sup>4</sup> In contrast, the criminal act of arson-destroying property with fire for profit

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the individual student author and do not necessarily represent the views of either the Marine Corps Command and Staff College or any other governmental agency. References to this study should include the foregoing statement.

Address correspondence to Lt. Col. Robert Arthur Baird, United States Marine Corps, School of Advanced Warfighting, Marine Corps University, 2076 South Street, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Quantico, Virginia 22134-5068, USA. E-mail: bairdra@i-mef.vsmc.mil

**2007 Greek fires may be treated as terrorism**

Source: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/aug/27/1>



Burned cars sit in a field near Artemida, one of the villages caught in the fires which have spread through the Peloponnese forests. Photograph: Milos Bicanski/Getty

A Greek prosecutor today ordered an investigation into whether arson attacks, which have been blamed for the worst forest fires in decades, could be considered terrorist acts.

The public order ministry said Dimitris Papangelopoulos, who is responsible for prosecuting terrorism and organised crime, ordered the investigation to determine "whether the crimes of arsonists and of arson attacks on forests carried out in the country during the summer of 2007" could come under Greece's anti-terrorism law.

The investigation would also seek to identify those who were responsible, the statement said.

At least 63 people have died in the fires. A blaze broke out today on the fringes of Athens, burning down a slope of Mount Ymittos and threatening a suburb of the capital.

Four planes, a helicopter and 15 trucks with 45 firefighters attended the fire as it burned through shrubs toward the suburb of Papagou. A pall of smoke hung over central Athens, and the smell of burning permeated the air.

Firefighters and planes from across Europe, backed by soldiers, police, officials and hundreds of thousands of volunteers, joined the fight yesterday against forest fires that have caused death and destruction across Greece over 48 hours.

Italy, France, Germany, Norway and Spain despatched aircraft and commandos to a nation that by last night appeared increasingly unable to combat the fires.

With authorities trying to stop two world heritage sites - Olympia and the fifth century BC theatre of Epidavros - being burned on the Peloponnese, officials did not rule out that hundreds of people could also be missing, having become victims of disorganisation and bungled evacuation plans.

Since the first fires broke out on Friday, the hardest hit area has been the southern peninsula - a popular destination for British holidaymakers - where high temperatures and gale force winds have fanned the flames.



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"The damage is terrible, without precedent. We are doing everything we possibly can to help people, to save lives," said the acting interior minister, Spyros Flogaitis.

Over the weekend, television channels depicted harrowing scenes of people burned alive in their cars as they belatedly tried to flee the flames. On Saturday, police said they found the bodies of a mother and her four children who were incinerated when their home near Zacharo in the Peloponnese was engulfed by flames.

Despite the mass evacuation of villages, towns, hotels and resorts - thousands of tourists have been forced to camp on beaches - officials said many of the elderly and infirm were refusing to leave their homes.

"There are death notices everywhere," one local resident said. "Everyone knows someone who has lost a person to the fires."



A senior official in Olympia had expressed concerns over whether the ancient monument, the site of the first Olympic games, would escape the flames. By last night it appeared that attempts to keep the fire at bay had been successful: the fires scorched the yard of the museum, housing a number of famous classical sculptures, such as Hermes by Praxiteles, but planes, helicopters and scores of firefighters halted the advance.

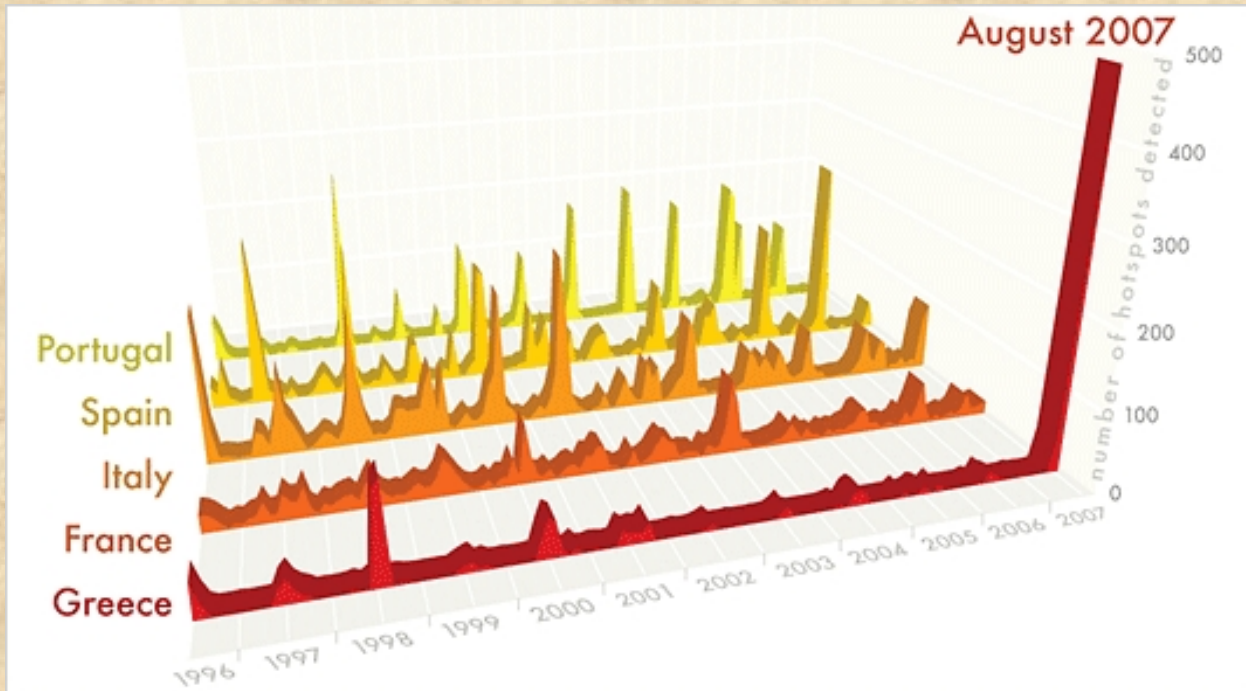
"With self-sacrifice, firefighters fought 'trench battles' to rescue these sensitive and important sites," the public order minister, Byron Polydoros, told reporters.

The foreign intervention came less than a day after the country's prime minister, Costas Karamanlis, declared a state of emergency and appealed to the European Union for help. With an estimated 170 fires on 42 fronts and new ones erupting every hour, he said the situation was simply too much for Greece to cope with alone.



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Yesterday, the French leader, Nicolas Sarkozy, offered Mr Karamanlis further aid after it emerged that two French tourists were among the casualties. Greece's foreign minister, Dora Bakoyiannis, said she expected



31 aircraft from 12 countries to arrive today.

Despite the overseas assistance, authorities remained pessimistic that the fires, which had intensified as they raged through six pine forests, would be brought under control soon. "The winds have fallen and that is helpful but this is a situation that cannot be confronted easily," said Nikos Diamantis, a spokesman for the firefighting force.



By last night about 500 conscripts had joined locals, often armed only with buckets and hose pipes, in the west, north and south of the country, as the fires spread to the island of Evia, killing at least six people there.

The tardy intervention of the army added to widespread condemnation of the government's handling of the catastrophe. Many criticised Mr Karamanlis, who this month called a snap election for September 16, of failing to do enough to prevent the outbreak of some 3,000 forest fires that have destroyed large parts of Greece this summer.

The ruling New Democrats have also been denounced for undermining the firefighting force, reorganised by the former Socialist government ahead of the 2004 Athens Olympic games,

by handing top jobs to inexperienced political appointees.

"This is nothing short of a national tragedy," said Giorgos Papandreou, Greece's main opposition leader, after visiting the Peloponnese. "The government has a lot to answer for."





Writing in the Sunday Vima, the columnist Rihardos Someritis said: "We had a beautiful country but we are increasingly losing it to fires, rubbish and the illegal buildings [built on land cleared by blazes]."

Yesterday, as fires continued to smoulder in the Hymettus range around Athens, the health ministry appealed to inhabitants to stay indoors and keep their windows shut because of the high density of ash in the air.

Wild fires across Greece are frequently blamed on arsonists working on behalf of developers intent on building on prime forest land. Mr Karamanlis said it was "too much of a coincidence" that so many of the blazes had erupted simultaneously and often in the dead of night. The government yesterday announced bounties of up to 1m (£680,000) for information that could lead to the arrest of arsonists.

**Australian Wildfires Could Fuel 'Forest Jihad' Terrorists, Experts Say**

Source: <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,490306,00.html>



Feb. 9, 2009: Police inspect a farm house destroyed by wildfires in Kinglake, Australia.

Firefighters and homeowners aren't the only ones keenly watching Australia's massive wildfires, responsible for killing at least 173 people in the southern part of the continent.

Terrorism experts suspect Muslim extremists are watching closely, too — and taking note of the devastation.

While Australian authorities have revealed no evidence linking the wildfires to extremists, terrorism experts say the large death toll, the

huge swath of destruction and the massive financial blow to the country are proving to Islamic terrorists that arson can be a highly effective — and simple — tool of holy war.

In November, an extremist Web site called on Muslims to launch a "forest jihad" in Australia, Europe, Russia and the United States. The posting, which quoted imprisoned Al Qaeda terrorist Mustafa Setmariam Nasar, said setting forest fires was legal under "eye-for-an-eye" Islamic law.

"Scholars have justified chopping down and burning the infidels' forests when they do the same to our lands," the posting read.



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The author of the posting indicated that Nasar — also known as Abu Musab Al-Suri — was urging terrorists to use sulfuric acid or gasoline to start the fires.

"Forest fires track well with the latest discussion trends seen in the Al Qaeda forums — easy to do, big impact, low security risk, high media coverage," said Al Qaeda expert Jarret Brachman.

"We've seen these kinds of appeals for action, be it setting fire to forests in Australia, to creating oil slicks on mountain roads in Europe, to poisoning water supplies and driving buses off bridges in the United States.



"The fact is that the Al Qaeda ideology is starting to branch out to more of an 'anyone, anywhere, anytime, anyhow' approach."

Brachman, author of "Global Jihadism: Theory and Practice," said "forest jihad" fits well in the growing interest among terrorists to establish "Al Qaeda armies of one."

"Could [militants] do this? Yes," said Steve Emerson, executive director of The Investigative Project on Terrorism. "It wouldn't be difficult, in the same way that terrorists could poison stored food supplies."

Perhaps more troubling, Emerson said, is that there is very little authorities can do to prevent terrorists from setting deadly wildfires.

"It would be absolutely impossible to protect against," he said. "Airport parameters are hard enough to protect. Imagine trying to protect something 100,000 times as big."

Neil Livingstone, chairman and CEO of Executive Action LLC, an international consulting firm, said terrorists could claim responsibility for the Australian inferno even if they had nothing to do with it.

"That may be something that they try to do," Livingstone told FOXNews.com. "Terrorists may well try to pile on, if you will, and say this is their moving hand and that they have unseen agents that are responsible for this. But you can bet that would produce a hell of a backlash against the Muslim population in Australia."

If extremists did have had a hand in the wildfires, Emerson said, it would be "very disturbing."

"It would indicate a new area of jihadist attacks, that is, attacking natural resources," he said. "And given the devastation of these fires, it certainly could instill new terror ideas in other areas like the food supply chain or in the environmental realm."

Nonetheless, he said, the majority of terrorists are likely seeking ways to create the most destruction with the least amount of effort. A wildfire doesn't yield "as much fruit" as an inner-city bombing, he said.



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But Brachman said the "Al Qaeda armies of one" approach has several benefits for terrorists, including more overall acts of violence and additional opportunities to become involved in new geographical areas. It also means less



operational control for Al Qaeda's senior commanders, he said.

"We're definitely going to see more of calls for these kinds of operations in the future," he said. "The question that American security professionals and first responders will have to wrestle with is whether anyone will be answering these calls."

### **Feds: Pyro-Terrorism a Real Threat in the U.S.**

Source: <http://www.officer.com/news/10882958/feds-pyro-terrorism-a-real-threat-in-the-us>

The federal government is prepared for the use of fire as a weapon, and one official says that pyro-terrorism is something all responders need to be ready to combat.

Robert Baird, Deputy National Fire Director, Fire and Aviation Management, U.S. Forest Service, spoke Wednesday in San Diego at the opening ceremonies of Firehouse World -- a conference affiliated with Officer.com's sister website Firehouse.com.

"Arson in the [Wildland/Urban interface] is a real threat," said Baird in his keynote comments. "Anything we can do to reduce it is a real accomplishment."





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Baird gave a quick review of the use of arson and pyro-terrorism throughout modern history, starting with the fire balloon bombs Japan launched on the mainland United States during World War II. Of the 9,000 launched, 300 hit the mainland.

It was also identified as a military weapon during the Vietnam War. The attacks on the World



Trade Center were also a case of pyro-terrorism in his mind, Baird said, noting that Osama Bin Laden was a civil engineer and knew the effect the fuel on the planes would have.

Robert Baird, Deputy National Fire Director, Fire and Aviation Management, U.S. Forest Service, says all responders need to be prepared to combat pyro-terrorism.

In 2002, federal authorities arrested José Padilla, an NYC native and declared enemy combatant, on suspicion that he

was plotting with terrorist Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the architect of the 911 attacks on the United States, to detonate a dirty bomb in Chicago.

During the investigation, Baird said authorities learned that Khalid figured out it would be too difficult to get a dirty bomb into the country and detonate it. So a plan was hatched to solicit volunteers to burn 20 apartment buildings in New York City simultaneously using gasoline.

In 2004, the FBI came upon intelligence and issued an alert to the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) suggesting that Al Queda had plans to start wildland fires in Montana, Wyoming, Utah and Colorado, Baird said, noting that all the material he was presenting was unclassified information and his interpretations and analysis were his own.

“I am not going to be some suit out of Washington, D.C., coming out here and telling you how to fight wildland fires,” said Baird, who added that his family in California was evacuated during the Camp Pendleton fire.

And as recently as this past winter, a readily available Al Queda magazine, called “Inspire” published an article and photos declaring people have the freedom to light fire bombs against the American enemies, Baird said.

“Terrorists have assessed us and they look for our weaknesses,” Baird said.

The threat, however, is not just from outside of the United States borders, Baird said, noting there are plenty of domestic groups who might use pyro-terrorism as a method to advance their goals.

Baird pointed to the bombings of domestic terrorist Daniel Andreas San Diego, targeting firefighters and responders in 2003, as evidence of domestic pyro-terrorism.

Raymond Lee Oyler, the man charged and convicted for setting the deadly Esperanza Fire in 2006 that claimed the lives of five firefighters, is yet another example of arson as a form of terrorism. Oyler was also suspected of starting as many as 25 other fires.

Even the recent fatal shooting of firefighters in Webster, N.Y., on Christmas Eve, is an example of someone using fire to create terror and kill firefighters, and a stark example of pyro-terrorism, Baird said.



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The best way to combat pyro-terrorism, according to Baird, is to have a “cohesive wildland fire strategy” and to develop partnerships across all agencies to develop good tactical information.

While there may be many challenges to curbing pyro-terrorism, Baird said developing “robust intelligence” on suspects and plots will go a long way toward achieving the goal.

It also helps to prevent fuel build-up that can contribute to the severity of wildland fires, Baird said, noting that fire officials need to know when to extinguish fires and when to let them burn to mitigate that potentially threatening fuel build-up.

Ultimately, the goal is to protect the public and responders from any harm pyroterrorists may be trying to inflict, Baird said, adding that watching out for each other will help.

“When you roll into a fire, make sure everyone is protected and there are no easy targets,” Baird said. “Protect each other and bring everyone home.”

### Pyroterrorism in Seattle

Source: <http://pyroterrorism.blogspot.gr/>

Oregon - In recent years, it seemed as though law-enforcement agencies had finally been able to achieve major breakthroughs against “pyroterrorism” carried out by environmental and animal-rights radicals, much of it in the Pacific Northwest.



But the arson fires involving several new luxury homes near Seattle Monday indicate that small, self-contained cells of saboteurs continue to plot and carry out attacks in the name of environmental activism, officials say.

“Even though the number of spectacular arsons in the name of ELF [Earth Liberation Front] and ALF [Animal Liberation Front] decreased in the past couple of years, the level of criminal activity carried out on behalf of these movements has not slowed down a bit,” says Oren Segal, director of the Anti-Defamation League’s Center on Extremism in New York.

“For every successful conviction in an older ELF or ALF attack, there are dozens of new actions being

planned and carried out, and not just against property. The deliberate targeting of individuals has become even more widespread and violent.”

In this week’s attack, four new unoccupied homes in the Seattle suburb of Woodinville were destroyed or damaged. Explosive devices were found along with a sign in which ELF took responsibility.

The “Street of Dreams” development, including large homes listed at more than \$1 million, featured environmentally friendly design and construction elements. But critics had complained that the project could damage the nearby stream habitat of endangered chinook salmon.

As recently as 2005, the Federal Bureau of Investigation said attacks by environmental and animal rights extremists were one of the most serious forms of domestic pyroterrorism. Many of these attacks have been linked to a shadowy group calling itself “the family.”

Officials count some 1,200 such incidents since “pyroterrorism” became a major concern in the 1990s.

Attacks dating back to 1997 have been directed at US Forest Service ranger stations, wild horse corrals used by the US Bureau of Land Management, a Bonneville Power Administration high-tension power line tower, an SUV dealership, three forest products companies, the University of Washington Horticultural Center, a Colorado ski resort, a horsemeat packing plant, and a police station in Eugene, Ore.



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Other targets include the destruction by arson of a large condominium project under construction in San Diego in 2003, and housing and commercial developments in Michigan, Pennsylvania, and New York. Property damage is estimated to have totaled more than \$200 million.

A law-enforcement breakthrough in the West came in 2006 when an informant with a recording device resulted in a 65-count indictment against 11 individuals associated with "the family." Evidence included 35 compact discs of recorded conversations and 40,000 pages of transcripts, police reports, and photos.

Over following months, the suspects (five women and six men) began cooperating with prosecutors, in some cases providing information on fellow suspects in return for reduced sentences.

But threats and attacks continue. In Santa Cruz, Calif., recently, the husband of a University of California researcher whose biomedical research includes the use of lab animals was attacked in his home by masked assailants. No one has taken responsibility for the attack, but university officials suspect animal rights activists. Other staff and students have been targeted by animal rights activists in recent weeks, according to university officials.

"The incidents include harassing phone calls and graffiti vandalism at the victims' homes," university Chancellor George Blumenthal said in a statement. "No claims of responsibility have been made, and police are investigating. These actions come in the wake of dangerous incidents involving researchers at other campuses, including UCLA."

The University of California at Los Angeles recently obtained a temporary restraining order against animal rights groups and activists accused of harassing university researchers. In one recent incident, an incendiary device was placed on the porch of a UCLA researcher who uses monkeys in her research on nicotine addiction.

Groups named in the restraining order are UCLA Primate Freedom, the Animal Liberation Brigade, and the Animal Liberation Front.

While attackers remain anonymous, their works are chronicled and promoted by the "North American Animal Liberation Press Office," in Woodland Hills, Calif.

The press office claimed in a recent posting to its website, "There were at least 53 claimed actions by the animal liberation underground in North America in 2007, almost twice the number from the year before – and there are undoubtedly many more actions that went unclaimed."

## Al Qaeda terrorists interested in using fire to unleash hell in United States

By Christopher Collins

Source: <http://www.examiner.com/article/al-qaeda-terrorists-interested-using-fire-to-unleash-hell-united-states>



The men who launched al Qaeda's English-language magazine "Inspire" magazine continue to promote jihadi attacks on Western targets, offering detailed advice on how to start huge forest fires in America with timed explosives and how to build remote-controlled bombs.

Although the two Muslim terrorists who launched the Jihadist magazine Inspire were killed in a U.S. airstrike last fall, the magazine continues to promote terrorism against America with its recent release of issue nine of using fire as a weapon.

In the magazine, a writer who goes by the name The AQChef said, "In America, there are more

houses built in the countryside than in the cities. It is difficult to choose a better place than in the valleys of Montana."

Although the mainstream media has reporting has been spotty on this story, it has caught the eye of the Department of Homeland Security who wrote up an unclassified report, that is posted on the



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web, on May 31, 2012, which was not publicly available, until now that outlines the threats posed by Al Qaeda terrorists and cells sympathetic to their cause in Al Qaeda's latest issues of their online magazine that is only available in Jihadist sites.

Statements in the report said that “for at least a decade, international terrorist groups and associated individuals have expressed interest in using fire as a tactic against the Homeland to cause economic loss, fear, resource depletion, and humanitarian hardship. There is no evidence that international terrorist groups and inspired individuals are responsible for any purposeful destruction of public or private property by setting wildfires in the United States. Using fire as a weapon, however, is inexpensive and requires limited technical expertise, giving it a strong advantage over other methods of attack. Statements advocating this tactic are most often found on violent extremist Web forums and in violent extremist propaganda.”

The report also stated that the ninth issue of Inspire—“AQAP’s English-language magazine published on 2 May 2012 as the winter 2012 edition—advocates setting wildfires in the United States to create economic hardship and cause the loss of life of firefighters, the destruction of property and buildings, and general psychological distress. The first issue of Inspire, which AQAP released in summer 2010, also briefly made reference to setting fires as a tactic. We have no indications AQAP or unaffiliated violent extremists are planning to act upon the suggestions contained in Inspire.”

The report also went on to say that on February 6, 2012, a purported violent extremist posted a message entitled “The Top 100 Targets in the United States” that noted “pyro-terrorism is perhaps the greatest threat America has ever faced,” as perpetrators run a low risk of detection and the posting urges “pyro-terrorists” to start forest and grass fires randomly to cause economic damage.

While wildfires are presently raging in western states, the Denver Field Office of the FBI last month warned the Colorado and Wyoming law enforcement agencies of the potential threat that jihadists could start wildfires as a form of terrorist attack as a result of the article in the winter issue of Inspire, a jihadist webzine produced by al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). As of now, there have been no indications that the fires in the western part of the U.S. have been started by terrorists.

Although the “Inspire” magazine had lain dormant for a while, it was recently resurrected in 2010, according the Anti-Defamation League (ADL).

However, issues eight and nine caught the attention of the seriousness of what Al Qaeda may be up to. In a startling statement, the editorial in the magazine stated, “To the disappointment of our enemies, we are still publishing America's worst nightmare.”

Christopher Collins is a Cold War Veteran (6915th ESS) of the USAF; a member of the Paulding County Georgia GOP, Precinct Captain, and State Delegate. He’s a member of the American Legion, the US Air Force Association, and the American Diabetes Association. He is also a supporter of the NRA, GCO

### ELF as America’s biggest domestic threat

Source: <http://www.drtoconnor.com/3410/3410lect05.htm>

Although debatable, ELF, or the Earth Liberation Front, will be considered here as the most active, most dangerous, and largest domestic terrorist group in America (at least the FBI seems to think so). ELF first surfaced in 1996 when they set fire to a U.S. Forest Service truck in Oregon, which caused little damage, but have since escalated into major damage events in populated areas. ELF is a militant offshoot of the group Earth First! and before that, have roots in such 1970s groups as the Environmental Task Force, which went around the country blowing up crop dusters because they were spreading harmful pesticides. They believe in saving the planet from the damage being done to it by pollution, logging, mining, and real estate development. Their strategy is that by destroying property and inflicting financial damage, they can convince people to stop environmentally harmful practices. Like ALF, ELF operates without leadership and structure, and it may even be inappropriate to call ELF a “group.” Activists “join” ELF by carrying out “direct action,” leaving behind some slogans or initials at the crime scene, and then posting their accomplishment on one of the group's web sites. According to the ELF website, 75 “direct actions” occurred in 2003, of

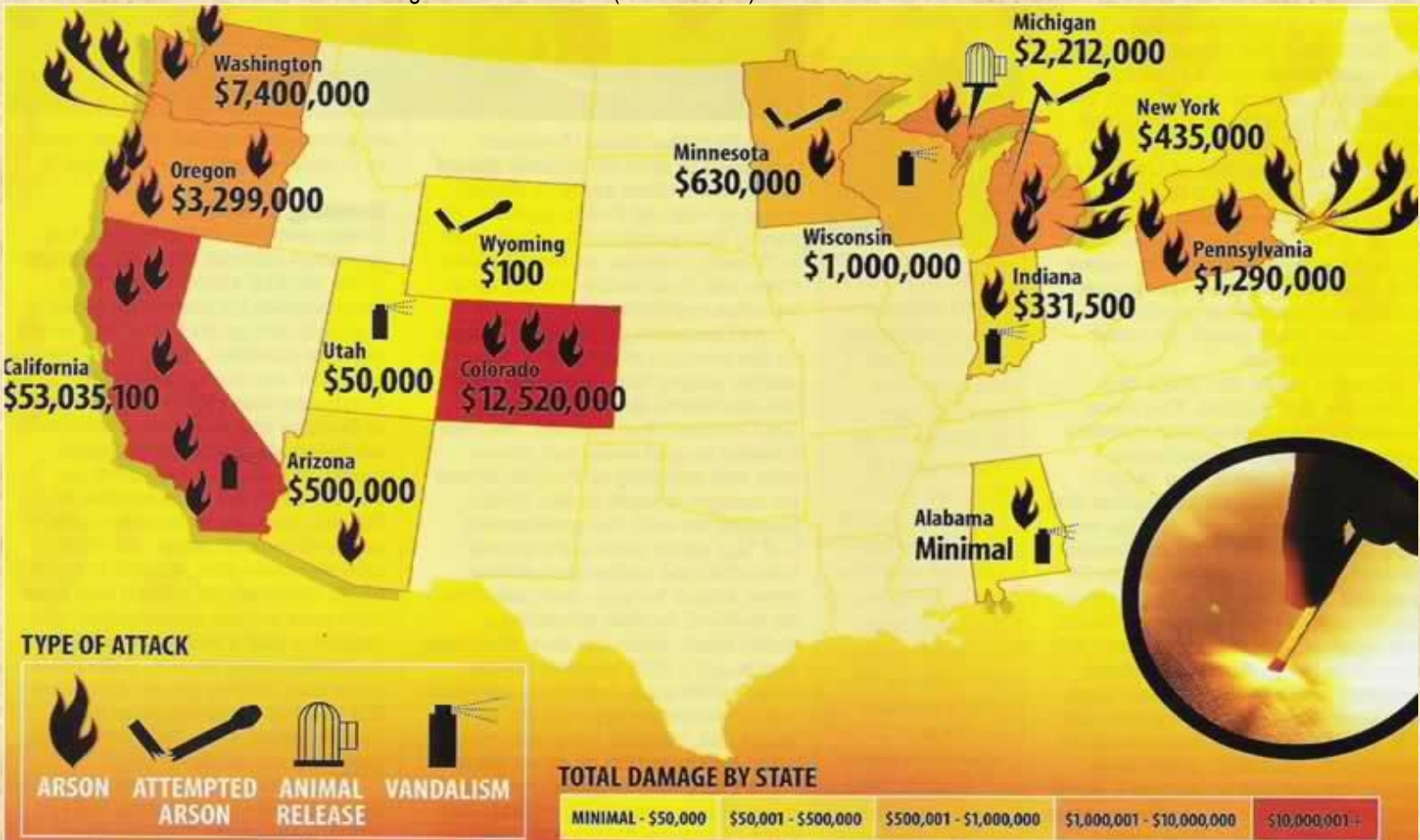


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which half were claimed in the name of ELF (or ALF), and rest were either anonymous or in the name of what were called "revolutionary cells" such as the Animal Liberation Brigade, Direct Action Front, the Frogs, or the Vegan Dumpster Militia.

In 2004, the FBI has been actively tracking and arresting suspected "ringleaders" of ELF, such as the 23-year old responsible for a 2003 firebombing of a Hummer dealership. He was caught after sending emails to a major newspaper claiming responsibility for the crimes. Another shadowy 38-year old "ringleader" was caught in 2004 using fake IDs and attempting to shoplift some boltcutters from a Canadian store. The FBI's strategy has been to make high profile arrests and attempt to demonstrate the group's vulnerability. Meanwhile, the property damage keeps adding up.

- a 2004 firebombing of newly constructed homes in Seattle, costing \$1 million
- a 2003 arson of a condominium complex in San Diego, costing \$50 million
- a 2003 arson of a Hummer dealership and 3 other car dealerships in Los Angeles, costing \$2 million each
- a 1998 arson at a ski resort in Vail, Colorado, costing \$12 million
- since 1996, numerous crimes in 14 states, totaling over \$100 million in damage nationwide; see map, which is from Maxim Magazine's 2004 article (Denson 2004)



Numerous FBI-led Joint Terrorist Task Forces and anti-terrorist analysts have tried to track down, arrest, prosecute, and convict members of ELF, but they are a difficult group for law enforcement to deal with. Superior encryption tools are used whenever members communicate with one another electronically or via their centralized websites, and ELF's autonomous cell structure defies surveillance and infiltration. The FBI claims ELF has simply had dumb luck that nobody has been killed yet, but ELF



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maintains that it carries out well-planned acts of economic sabotage. There is no known way to profile ELF members as different from other environmentalists who might live in co-ops on organic farms. NIJ-funded research is underway, however, to develop pre-incident indicators of when such extremists seem to get desperate enough to go on another arson rampage, like they did in 2003, where theories abound from speculation involving upset over the war in Iraq to the influence of other factors, like when the group thinks enough endangered species are at risk, or the cause of getting Americans to change their lifestyles need to be placed in the public eye again. Unfortunately, there are few criminological theories of ecoterrorism developed yet, and it may very well be some time before all the necessary research is completed.

### Pyroterrorism

Ecoterrorism may very well be the only kind of terrorism which has spawned its own "backlash" terrorism -- pyroterrorism. The only other kind of terrorism that has produced a backlash is cyberterrorism, and that has been in the form of vigilante, counterjihad activity. With ecoterrorism, however, and I should note that there is little evidence to prove it, suspicion has it that the rash of forest fires in recent years may have been caused by ANTI-ENVIRONMENTALISTS who are "fed up" with all the pro-environmental, tree-hugging nonsense (as they see it). The official story that most governments usually give out is that forest fires are caused by lack of rain, lightning, or careless campers, but it may very well be that disgruntled anti-environmentalists (who are sympathetic to the concerns of timber companies) deliberately set the fires. Pyroterrorism is suspected to be the case more in Australia and Latin America than in the United States.

Serial arson is, of course, not terrorism, but in some cases, pyroterrorism may be a better word for it. Take the case of Harry Burkhart, a 24-year old German national who went on a four-day, 53-firebug spree in Los Angeles from late December 2011 to February 2012. He was in the USA on Chechen documentation, and may have had a history of firestarting back in Germany. A devout anti-American, Burkhart was specifically upset with authorities deporting his mother who ran an exotic massage parlor. His modus operandi was to create incendiary devices out of Duraflame logs and ignite them under the parking garages of apartment buildings. Nothing gets the attention of police intelligence services more than something like this.

Pyroterrorists always seem to be "backlashing" against something. Consider the *Wise Use* movement. Relatively non-violent, this coalition of right-wing groups is opposed to government control of public lands, and has been fairly successful at lobbying government to free up more federal land for private use and development. The movement has been around at least since the so-called Sagebrush Rebellion of the 1970s when western state governors started calling for more federal land to be turned over to the states. They are opposed to the "taking" clause of the Constitution which allows governments to force (with compensation) land owners out for public works projects such as building highways. They would rather see national forests become off-road vehicle sites with logging and mining operations to extract the valuable resources that government lands hold. Vohryzek-Bolden et. al. (2001) report that the movement's success can be attributed to a fairly sophisticated public relations strategy, consisting of three different kinds of messages to three different audiences (below), and the model could serve as illustrative of all sorts of extremist groups.

- the *vanguard* message -- used to keep hardcore members in line, expressing the central ideas of the movement, and helping raise money for the organization
- the *conspiracy* message -- used as a recruiting tool to organize local groups or to convince already-involved members
- the *mainstream* message -- used to make academic or pseudo-scientific arguments; often the most prominent communication

Pyroterrorism has even caught the attention of international terrorism groups. In the May (#9) 2012 issue of *Inspire*, al-Qaeda's online newsletter, detailed advice on how to start huge forest fires in America is given. Specifically, it says "In America, there are more houses built in the [countryside] than in the cities, [so] it is difficult to choose a better place [than] in the valleys of Montana." The article goes on to talk about the correct wind patterns to set a forest fire in, the right season, the right time of year, and the correct temperature.



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No. 79, Summer 2008/09, pages 8-22.  
Web site: [www.nationalobserver.net](http://www.nationalobserver.net)

## Australia's nightmare: bushfire jihad and pyroterrorism

Mervyn F. Bendle

Victoria's tragic Black Saturday bushfires persisted through most of February 2009 in the face of courageous, sustained, and selfless efforts by thousands of firefighters and other personnel to bring them under control. A Royal Commission has been established by the Victorian Brumby Government and has been given wide-ranging powers and terms of reference, and it is to be hoped that it will identify the causes of the fires and recommend measures to prevent such a catastrophe from occurring again.

### Pyroterrorism defined

On the other hand, the fires must alert us to the extreme danger posed by pyroterrorism, especially as global terrorist organisations continue to modify their strategies in the face of the increasingly effective counter-terrorism measures that are being employed

against them.<sup>1</sup> Pyroterrorism can do great harm to valuable natural resources and infrastructure; destabilise and degrade regional economies; kill, maim, terrorise, and radically reduce the quality of life of large populations of people; and even destabilise social and political systems.

Pyroterrorism may be defined as the use by non-state organisations of large-scale fires to attack, intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in order to advance political, social or religious objectives. In pursuit of its objectives it exhibits the four central elements of terrorism: the targeting of non-combatants, a political motivation, extreme violence with an intended psychological impact, and organised and totally committed perpetrators.<sup>2</sup>

Pyroterrorism is inherently low-tech in nature and requires only primi-

1. Mervyn F. Bendle, "Global jihad and the evolution of terrorist-training doctrines", *National Observer*, No. 78, Spring 2008.
2. See Robert A. Baird, "Pyro-terrorism — the threat of arson-induced forest fires as a future terrorist weapon of mass destruction", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* Vol. 29, Issue 5, July-August 2006, p. 415.

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## Ivory Tower Arson Arrest: Berlin Struggles to Define 'Terror'

Source: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/ivory-tower-arson-arrest-berlin-struggles-to-define-terror-a-502178.html>

**Who can be defined as a terrorist? It is a question Germany is wrestling with after a Berlin sociology professor was imprisoned for terrorism after allegedly helping leftists torch cars.**

Forty-year-old Berlin lawyer Christina Clemm was just 10 during the so-called German Autumn of 1977: Her recollections of the historic showdown between the German state and its enemies, the left-wing underground organization known as the Red Army Faction or "Baader-Meinhof Gang," are vague. But when Clemm visited her client, 36-year-old Andrej H., in Berlin's Moabit prison early last week, the atmosphere there was reminiscent of those dark years of leftist terrorism.



The lawyer was only allowed to shake her client's hand in the presence of a prison guard. A plate of bullet-proof glass an inch thick separated them during their conversation. In addition, Clemm's mail was intercepted. Andrej H. told her he was being held in solitary confinement 23 hours a day. He was only allowed out for exercise for one hour a day with two other prisoners. He is being held under paragraph 129a of German criminal law -- the paragraph that deals with terrorism.

And yet the academic -- who holds a Ph.D. in sociology, lectures at Humboldt University in Berlin and has three children -- is not even a prime suspect in the arson investigation that led to his arrest, according to the warrant. The federal prosecutor's office believes H. and an academic from Leipzig are the intellectual leaders of the left-wing "militante gruppe" (mg), a left-wing faction which has allegedly been responsible for about 25 arson attacks since 2001. Three other men from Berlin have also been detained. They were seen trying to place incendiary devices underneath trucks belonging to the German military.

### How Far Can the State Go?

The move by the investigators to use all severity in dealing with such a case is very likely a precedent -- and seems destined to trigger a debate as to the appropriateness of the approach. The central questions are clear: In the age of bloody suicide attacks, what constitutes terrorism? And: How far can the state go?

More than 3,000 supporters, including academics from Germany and the United States, have signed a letter of protest "Against the Criminalization of Critical Science." Last week, renowned US sociologists Saskia Sassen and Richard Sennett published an article called "Guantánamo in Germany" in the British *Guardian*, in which they write: "We are struck by the gray zones of fragile civil liberties and confused state power that this case reveals."

The German Green Party has already said that Minister of Justice Brigitte Zypries has some explaining to do and has promised to pursue the issue in Germany's parliament, the Bundestag. Green Party Floor Leader Renate Künast has criticized the investigation as "lacking a legal basis." Former Bundestag Vice President Burkhard Hirsch, of the liberal Free Democrats, spoke of an inappropriate attempt to turn small militant groups into terrorists. "Torching a car is no small offense," was the brusque retort of Dieter Wiefelspütz, the domestic policy spokesman for the Social Democrats. One could very well speak of terrorism in such a case, Wiefelspütz added.

The bitter debate comes four years after a 2003 legal reform pushed through by the government of then Chancellor Gerhard Schröder which introduced new guidelines for the prosecution of terrorist acts. Coming not long after the al-Qaida attacks in the US, the reform took aim at international terrorist organizations -- and made the prosecution of those groups much easier. At the same time, Schröder's SPD and his coalition partners the Greens wanted to limit the application of terror laws -- originally passed to deal with Red Army Faction attacks in the 1970s -- domestically. There were also European Union guidelines to take into consideration.

### Arson as Terror

Ever since, arson has only been punishable as terrorism when carried out with the intention of "significantly intimidating the population" or "eliminating or seriously damaging the foundations of a





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state or an international organization." Moreover, attacks need to be capable of causing "considerable" damage to the state. Jerzy Montag, one of the Green Party's legal experts, praised the new law at the time by pointing out that it makes it impossible to prosecute "every little thing" as a case of terrorism.

But how do you know when a state is severely damaged? Is every politically motivated crime equal to terrorism, or should the case of Andrej H. be approached solely as attempted arson?

A lack of case law means that an authoritative answer to these questions does not yet exist. The only relevant court decision was handed down by the Federal Court of Justice in its decision that the "pinprick tactic" of right-wing arsonists can be defined as terrorism -- because right-wing arsons are carried out with the intention of driving "all foreigners" out of the region. Cologne-based professor Claus Kress believes that terrorism charges could be leveled against Andrej H. and the other suspects as long as "more than only marginal elements of the German military were destroyed." But, he adds, setting fire to single vehicles is not enough.

Criminal law professor Thomas Weigend likewise finds fault with a broad application of terror laws. In a letter to former head federal prosecutor Kay Nehm, he found fault with the "excessive reach" of the 2003 law and called for a restrictive interpretation. An attack, he wrote, should be classified as terrorist only when "the state in its entirety suffers damage," as in the case of "large-scale attacks on the energy supply," for example. Exceptions should be made only for extreme violence against humans.

### Unusually Sloppy

Even justices at the Federal Court of Justice in Karlsruhe, Germany's highest appellate court, take this view. "Only limited effects with no broader impact are not sufficient, according to the letter of the law," two magistrates at the Federal Court of Justice note. According to that interpretation, the militante gruppe Andrej H. is accused of leading wouldn't be a terrorist organization at all. Even if the left-wing radicals have declared war on the state and have set fire to police cars, job centers and a supermarket, they have taken care not to hurt anybody. Contrary to the Red Army Faction, explosives or firearms are not part of their weapons arsenal.

But what seems like an academic quibble is vital for the future of the investigation into Andrej H's case. Only if the case is classified as terrorism does it become part of Federal Prosecutor Monika Harms' portfolio -- and only then can investigators make use of the full range of surveillance measures. Most importantly, it is only then that alleged behind-the-scenes conspirators can be prosecuted even when they have not contributed to specific crimes in a tangible way -- as with Andrej H. Investigators tapped his phone, traced his movements by following his mobile phone signal, read his e-mails and maintained video surveillance on both entrances to his house for almost a year.

If the arrest warrant issued by the Federal Court of Justice is to be believed, these measures yielded little: Policemen saw the avowed G-8 critic meet with one of the alleged arsonists in a café in February and April of this year. The meetings are said to have been arranged in secret through the e-mail account "opelprolls@yahoo.de." The investigators believe H. is the intellectual mastermind behind the group because his dissertation on urban renewal features the word "gentrification," which also appears in the communiqués of the "militante gruppe."

Last week, Ulrich Hebenstreit, the judge overseeing Andrej H's detention, carefully distanced himself from the initial accusations and temporarily rescinded the unusually sloppy arrest warrant against Andrej H. Hebenstreit argued that H. continues to be "strongly suspected of having committed an offense," but that sufficient evidence "regarding direct participation in one or more attacks by the 'militante gruppe' is not yet extant."

### Arsonists And 'Regional Terrorism' Blamed For Spanish Wildfires

Source: <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/articles/378089/20120828/spain-wildfires-arson-group-marbella-madrid.htm>

Wildfires which have caused the evacuation of more than 2,000 people from their homes in Spain have been blamed on arsonists.

The Spanish countryside has suffered its worst fires for a decade, with the country losing some 577 square miles of forest and countryside to a series of blazes across the country.

Authorities have claimed that a fire which caused the evacuation of substantial areas to the west of Madrid was most probably started by several people.



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Regional justice department chief Regina Planol told Cadena SER radio that the fire, which has affected three towns, began in six different points almost simultaneously - suggesting it was started deliberately.



She compared the setting of the fire to "environmental terrorism", as fires can lead to an affected area being rezoned, facilitating its future sale for social housing.

Spain has suffered almost 12,000 wildfires within a single year - with one blaze near Bedar, north of Almeria, forcing the evacuation of residents to a sports centre.

Tourists have been warned about several areas across the country, such as the Mediterranean beach resort of Estepona, 20 miles west of Marbella, being threatened by fires.

The wildfires have killed seven people, three firefighters and four civilians, during the year, and have destroyed some of the country's most precious protected forests.

The Garajonay National Park, a UNESCO world Heritage site in the Canary Islands, was badly damaged, with 3.1 square miles destroyed.

Despite the continued increase in fires, the country's struggle to pull itself out of recession has led to cash-strapped regional governments cutting their spending, including the resources available for the fighting of forest blazes.

### Arson by Cyber Attack

By Kevin Coleman

Source: <http://www.fireengineering.com/articles/2012/12/arson-by-cyber-attack.html>

As if fire investigations were not complex enough and the pursuit of arson charges against a suspect were not already extremely challenging, indications are that things are getting worse. A new method of committing the crime of arson has been brought to light. This method leverages computers and computer-related equipment and peripherals. There are so many products and services that use computers and automated controls that it is difficult to find some that don't. Most



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of those devices are connected to the Internet for a number of reasons. This Internet connection can be exploited to turn these common pieces of equipment into tools for arsonists. These possibilities represent very real risks and have caught the attention of top officials.

President Obama recently discussed the threat the United States faces from cyber attacks in an 800-word column in the Wall Street Journal entitled "Taking the Cyber Attack Threat Seriously." He is not the only high-ranking U.S. official concerned about this 21st century threat. Just recently, General Keith Alexander, the leader of U.S. Cyber Command, said, "What I'm concerned about is the transition from disruptive to **destructive attacks**." These and other ominous-sounding comments should be considered a warning about what lies around the corner for fire investigators.

Two techniques have recently emerged and have become public about the use of cyber attacks as a destructive mechanism. The first one was discovered by researchers at Columbia University, who discovered a new group of computer security flaws in laser printers that, if exploited, could cause a fire. Based on generally available laser printer market statistics, more than 125 million units are sold each year—a target-rich environment for cyber arsonists. The researchers found that laser printers can be hacked and remotely controlled and manipulated over the Internet. The software /firmware flaws allow hackers access to these devices and give them the ability to cause physical damage. Cyber attackers could remotely access the connected device and continuously turn on the fuser unit (which melts toner onto the page), causing the unit to overheat to the point of catching fire.



During their analysis of this threat, researchers conducted a quick scan; within minutes, they were able to identify 40,000 devices connected to the Internet that were vulnerable to this type of attack. This was a far from exhaustive search. Even worse, researchers determined that this security vulnerability is so fundamental that it may impact tens of millions of printers, multifunction copiers, and other hardware that use hard-to-update software/firmware where the vulnerability resides. Since this vulnerability was reported, a few printer manufacturers have taken action and mitigated this risk. Although the actual number of vulnerable printers is not available, it is pretty much a sure bet that many of these devices remain open to this type of exploitation.

The second area of concern focuses on factory automation and industrial control systems, often referred to as supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) systems. These controllers are used in everything from the power grid to water treatment facilities to commercial heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning (HVAC) systems as well as the complex processes in the chemical and materials production industries. The global annual market for these systems has been estimated at nearing \$50 billion, which indicates the expansiveness of this threat environment. Researchers have warned and actually published multiple SCADA system vulnerabilities that allow remote access and control. These warnings became public prior to the SCADA system vendors were informed about this issue. Thus, there was an immediate risk that these vulnerabilities could be exploited since vendors did not have any time to develop patches. If taken advantage of, cyber attackers could exploit these published vulnerabilities, modify settings, and cause the equipment or process to operate outside specified parameters, which could result in an explosion and a fire.

The concerns raised by this research were so great that federal agencies were privately briefed on the matter. In April 2012, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) conducted the two-day workshop "The Cyber Security for Cyber-Physical Systems." This informative workshop addressed the informational needs of engineers and information technology security specialists



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who design and maintain these control systems, but what about fire investigators? Research was unable to identify where cyber attacks and hacking were a part of the curriculum for fire investigators, but, put simply, would you as an investigator ever consider the possibility of a cyber attack being the underlying cause of an incident?

The arsonist could be half way around the world and start a fire by continuously cycling the fuser unit of a printer, causing it to overheat or improperly adjust setting on SCADA controllers, causing a volatile reaction, explosion, and fire. As if it was not difficult enough to investigate and prove arson given that most of the evidence is destroyed in the fire, now investigators must add the complexities and challenges of cyber attacks, intrusions, and attack attribution to their activities. The clock is ticking until we encounter arson by cyber attack. Experts have expressed their concerns over the growing likelihood that cyber attacks would result in physical implications and damage. That time looks to be just around the corner. Or is it? Could a cyber attack have already resulted in a fire? It is possible that an origin and cause investigation could have missed this and pointed to a control system or printer malfunction. Clearly, this is an area that must be kept in that back of fire investigators' minds when looking into the cause of a fire.

*Kevin G. Coleman is a seasoned security professional and instructor with a comprehensive background in emergency response. He was chief of an ISO class 4 volunteer fire department and is a former International Society of Fire Service Instructors George D. Post - Fire Instructor of the Year. He has 18 years of success in the development and implementation of cutting-edge security and training strategies and continues to work with innovative leaders in business, government, and the military on strategic issues of critical importance such as cyber attacks.*

### **Organized Arson as a Political Crime. The Construction of a «Terrorist» Menace in the Early Modern Period<sup>1</sup>**

By Johannes Dillinger

Source: <http://chs.revues.org/index221.html#text>

Organized arson was regarded as the most dangerous political crime of the early modern period. There is an abundance of records concerning organisations of incendiaryists from French, English or German speaking Europe. The activities of these organizations of arsonists were not designed to do harm to individuals. Arsonists' gangs were allegedly responsible for the conflagration of whole towns. They were even supposed to plan the destruction of entire territorial states e.g. the Southwest German duchy of Württemberg<sup>2</sup>. The incendiaryist gangs allegedly worked for foreign powers, for the political and / or denominational adversaries of their respective victims. The arsonists were supposed to be vagrants, most of them street beggars. In German, organized itinerant arsonists were called 'Mordbrenner' which originally meant 'clandestine arsonists' but became to be understood as 'murder arsonists'.

The following text focuses first on the various ways in which arsonist groups were imagined. Special attention will be paid to the circumstances under which such images were created. The fight against alleged arsonist conspiracies in criminal law and police practice and its interrelation with state building processes will be discussed. Finally, suggestions concerning new avenues of historical research will be made. The focus of the whole article will be on materials from the German Southwest, especially sources relating to a supposed series of arsonist attacks connected with a peasant insurrection in 1517.

#### **Covert Warfare?**

The list of those who allegedly engaged in secret warfare against their enemies by hiring vagabonds as arsonists is long and impressive. A few examples shall suffice. One of the earliest cases of politically motivated organized arson is the Bundschuh of 1517. Prior to the Great Peasants' War (1524-1526) the German Southwest experienced a number of peasant rebellions, the so-called Bundschuh upheavals<sup>3</sup>. The term Bundschuh was originally used for cheap footwear worn by peasants. As rebellious peasants chose the Bundschuh as their symbol the word 'Bundschuh' took the meaning of 'organized peasant upheaval'. There were Bundschuh activities in 1493 in Schlettstadt (Alsace), 1502 in



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Untergrombach (Baden), 1513 in Lehen near Freiburg im Breisgau and supposedly in 1517 in the entire upper Rhine region on both sides of the river. None of these rebellions succeeded. The sixteenth century Bundschuh risings were all supposed to have been initiated and organized by the same man: Joss Fritz, a peasant and surveyor of the fences from the village of Untergrombach. After the failure of his two earlier insurgencies Fritz supposedly chose a new tactic in 1517. He allegedly recruited a large number of vagabonds. In turn, these vagabonds were to recruit new adherents to the Bundschuh among the rural population. In addition to that, the vagabonds were paid to raise fires at the beginning and throughout the uprising. One of these vagabonds was arrested and betrayed all the plans of Fritz. Thus, the 1517 Bundschuh revolt was over before it even started. In 1524 three hundred houses burned down in Troyes<sup>4</sup>. The damage was blamed on vagabonds who were said to work for the Habsburgs. These arsonists were allegedly about to target other towns in France. At the imperial diet at Regensburg in 1540, the Protestant estates demanded that emperor Charles V should take action against a Catholic conspiracy. This conspiracy supposedly planned to eradicate the new creed by destroying whole regions: a series of arsonist attacks by vagrant beggars were to raze Protestant towns and villages to the ground. As one might expect, Heinrich von Braunschweig was supposed to pull the strings of this conspiracy in the Reich while the pope himself financed this gigantic autodafé<sup>5</sup>. In German Habsburg countries there were rumours about arsonist attacks organized by the Hussites in the 1420s, by the Venetians in early sixteenth century and finally by the Turks from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries<sup>6</sup>. In the sixteenth century, princes who had been forced out of their territories were suspected to have made pacts with itinerant arsonists to prepare the military retaking of their respective lands. Duke Ulrich of Württemberg and Albrecht Alcibiades von Brandenburg-Kulmbach are well-known examples<sup>7</sup>. On a smaller scale, members of Southwestern Germany's lower nobility were accused of having enlisted the help of Mordbrenner against the domineering power of the dukes of Württemberg<sup>8</sup>. After the devastating fire of London, British cities took measures against vagrants who were said to be the henchmen of the Quakers, or of the Catholics. These religious minorities were supposed to be eager to spread terror and insecurity in the Anglican kingdom<sup>9</sup>. There were rumours about organized crime in Poland in the seventeenth century<sup>10</sup>. A Polish secret organization was said to offer the 'services' of tramps as arsonists. Probably the best-known example of politically motivated organized arson is that of the arsonist scare in revolutionary France. During the Grande Peur especially the rural population feared a pact between the aristocracy and the itinerant poor<sup>11</sup>. The vagrants were to raise fires to destroy the crops and to spread fear and tumult in order to stop the revolutionary movement. During the English 'Captain Swing' protests of the 1830s it was rumoured that Irish itinerant working men were paid by wealthy Jews to commit arson. The adherents of 'Captain Swing' were at pains to emphasize that they did not cooperate with the fireraisers<sup>12</sup>.

- 3 Rosenkranz (1927); Blicke (2004).
- 4 Roberts (1997).
- 5 Scribner (1988, pp. 31-33).
- 6 Scribner (1988, pp. 32-33); Helleiner (1930, pp. 327-335).
- 7 Scribner (1988, p. 33); Spicker-Beck (1995, pp. 122-124).
- 8 Spicker-Beck (1995, pp. 137-144).
- 9 Roberts (1997, pp. 20-22).
- 10 Helleiner (1930, pp. 345-347).
- 11 Lefebvre (1988).
- 12 Hobsbawm (1975, pp. 239-241).
- 13 Dolan (2001, pp. 396-401); Lefebvre (1988, pp. 81-155).
- 14 Spicker-Beck (1995, pp. 319-331). Essentially the same arguments in Spicker-Beck (1999).
- 15 Scribner (1988, especially pp. 33-34, 38-39, 50-52).

The conspiracy theories concerning the Great Fire of London were finally rejected in the early nineteenth century. Lefebvre proved that the Grande Peur was based on nothing but rumours: the most unlikely pact between vagabonds and aristocrats had indeed never existed<sup>13</sup>. However, historians have seriously discussed the other cases of organized arson as specific forms of early modern crime or covert warfare. Concerning the German Mordbrenner historiography pointed to inconsistencies in individual trial records. Spicker-Beck admitted that the confessions of some Mordbrenner seem hard to believe



and conceded that the use of torture makes it extremely difficult to decide which parts of the confessions of supposed arsonists were based on their actual behaviour. However, she accepted the Mordbrenner files as «a representation of a kind of crime typical for that time [the sixteenth century] (das Abbild einer typischen Erscheinungsform der Kriminalität dieser Zeit). Finally, Spicker-Beck concluded that because of the criminal gangs of vagabonds she personally would not have liked to travel one of the dangerous country roads of sixteenth century Germany («Ich hätte nicht unterwegs sein wollen...»)<sup>14</sup>. Scribner suggested that the Mordbrenner fear might have been crossly exaggerated. He stated that there were probably serious misconceptions concerning the scope of organized arson. He spoke about a «paranoia» of early modern governments which were quick to suspect and to punish people for organized political crime without any conclusive evidence. Nevertheless, he considered the existence of bands of fireraisers as too «well-attested» to be dismissed as a delusion. Scribner admitted that tramps were victims of a scapegoating process initiated by state authorities. However, he assumed that they fought back and resorted to extremely violent crime including organized arson<sup>15</sup>.

- 16 Scribner (1988, pp. 31-32, 42).

The very fact that organized arson was supposed to have been used in a variety of religious and political conflicts throughout the early modern period is apt to raise doubts concerning the reality of arsonist conspiracies. Fires that damaged or destroyed towns might be explained as simple accidents. As they were largely built from timber and straw early modern settlements were indeed extremely vulnerable to conflagration. It did not take carefully planned arsonist attacks to burn whole towns to the ground. In 1540, Germany witnessed numerous fires most of which were blamed on arsonist vagabonds. 1540, however, was an extremely hot and dry year<sup>16</sup>. The simple evidence of a fire or a number of fires is not sufficient to substantiate the assumption that there was organized arson.

As the vagabond fireraisers were supposed to work for princes we might expect some kind of documentation about their recruitment in the records of state agencies. To my knowledge, until now no government records whatsoever about this kind of covert warfare have been unearthed. The arsonists claimed to have been paid by agents of various lords but there is no evidence for these financial transactions. This lack of source materials could be explained by the secrecy of the arsonist organization. Officeholders or aristocrats who paid arsonists would of course try to obscure their connection to them. Thus, it is certainly possible that no records were kept or that all the records were quickly destroyed in order to make it impossible to trace arsonist attacks back to those high ranking persons who initiated and financed them.

To find out if there really was politically motivated organized incendiarism the trial records themselves have to be analysed. There are virtually no statements of the suspects that were not made under torture or the threat of torture. There are few witness accounts and hardly any witnesses who spoke in favour of the defendants. Arson was supposed to be organized crime: Anybody in close contact with the suspects could be regarded as an accomplice. As most of the suspects were itinerants few people of any standing in the respective community would claim to know them let alone would be willing to defend them. The records of many trials consist of little more than a confession. An analysis of these confessions is considerably facilitated by the fact that they usually describe a largely unchanging set of actions. There was a pattern of Mordbrenner confessions. If the structural elements this pattern consists of interrelate which each other consistently and if they are plausible in their respective contexts, then we must consider the confessions themselves credible.

- 17 Schulte (1984, pp. 139-141).
- 18 Spicker-Beck (1995, pp. 171-177).

First of all, it is supremely important to note that all the persons engaged in arsonist plots were supposed to be male. Of course, there were female arsonists. But they were blamed exclusively for arson as an individual act of revenge against certain persons. Female arsonists were never said to 'work' in gangs<sup>17</sup>. Organized arson was regarded as the exclusive domain of vagrant men. Even if vagrant women were arrested during investigations against vagabond fireraisers no further legal action was taken against them for arson. Female itinerants were only considered guilty when additional charges of murder or theft were brought<sup>18</sup>.

- 19 Bechstein (1973, pp. 318-320); Roberts (1997); Spicker-Beck (1995, pp. 95-115); the arson records H(...)



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All arsonists were allegedly recruited in roughly the same way<sup>19</sup>. A vagrant accidentally met a person who presented himself as the agent of some foreign potentate. As a rule this person was a total stranger or even a foreigner the tramp had never met before. In other instances it was a person he knew superficially, sometimes another vagrant. In the latter case, this vagrant had been hired earlier by foreigners with the expressed purpose to form a gang of arsonists. The agent offered the vagabond a certain sum of money for raising fire in a certain region. The would-be arsonist was paid immediately by the stranger. Sometimes it was said that the recruiting person even provided the vagabond with slow-matches or gunpowder.

- 20 Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart, A 43 Bü 15. Spicker-Beck believed that Geroldseck had really spoken in(...). After that the arsonist was basically left to his own devices. The confessions turned into a cumulative enumeration of various acts of arson with little structure. Very like the first contact between the fireraiser and his 'principal' all following meetings, if they took place at all, did so purely by chance. Mostly, such additional meetings did not take place because of organizational difficulties. In many cases, they had not even been planned. The 'principal' told the arsonist almost nothing about actual tactics. Nothing was said about the concrete time or place of the arsonist attack. Mordbrenner claimed to have been paid for raising fires somewhere in Württemberg or even somewhere in the Reich. They seemed to be equally happy to attack a village or a town, a monastery, a manor, a cottage or a barn. This striking vagueness could mean that the arsonists' gangs employed 'terrorist' tactics: It is characteristic of terrorism that the immediate target often has hardly any connection to the strategic aim of the attack. The victim of the aggressive act and the adversary it is meant to be directed against are not identical. Spreading insecurity and chaos is at least as important as causing material damage. The strategic objectives of the respective 'principals' remained as a rule shadowy. The arsonist's 'employer' did hardly give any particulars concerning the political aims of the crimes. In a rare exception, in 1538 the South German petty aristocrat Gangolf von Geroldseck allegedly delivered a short hate speech in front of a somewhat perplexed arsonist: Geroldseck explained that his family had been wronged by the dukes of Württemberg and cheated out of the possession of the town of Sulz. Therefore, he wanted Sulz burned to the ground<sup>20</sup>.

- 21 Helleiner (1930, p. 330); Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart, B 17, Bd. 21, fol. 580v-581v.
- 22 Examples in Bechstein (1973, Table V); Spicker-Beck (1995, pp. 102, 106-110).
- 23 The undated original is Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe, 79/3384. Reproductions in Rosenkranz (1927, (...))
- 24 Spicker-Beck (1995, pp. 130-133).

It is difficult to picture any organizational patterns of the arsonists' groups. Some of the source materials mention 'officers' of the incendiarists. However, the questions who invested these officers with what powers remain open. What the source materials do reveal is an amazing flexibility of the arsonists' gangs. Groups formed and dispersed again at will. There were no fixed meeting places. If there were plans to reunite a scattered team of arsonists these plans usually failed. If Mordbrenner belonged to a greater group in the pay of the same 'employer' they were said to use secret signs to recognize each other. There was allegedly a variety of such signs, e.g. girdles made from straw or white staffs<sup>21</sup>. These signs were mentioned in confessions and warrants of apprehension. However, they do not seem ever to have helped to catch a fireraiser. The same holds true for Mordbrenner marks<sup>22</sup>. Vagrant arsonists were said to use marks as a kind of signature. Historiography attributed a list of such marks to the arsonists who were said to work for the Bundschuh of 1517 (figure 1)<sup>23</sup>. However, these marks are in all likelihood several years younger<sup>24</sup>. The marks themselves are rather complicated. It seems highly questionable whether incendiarists ever really used them as a means to identify themselves.

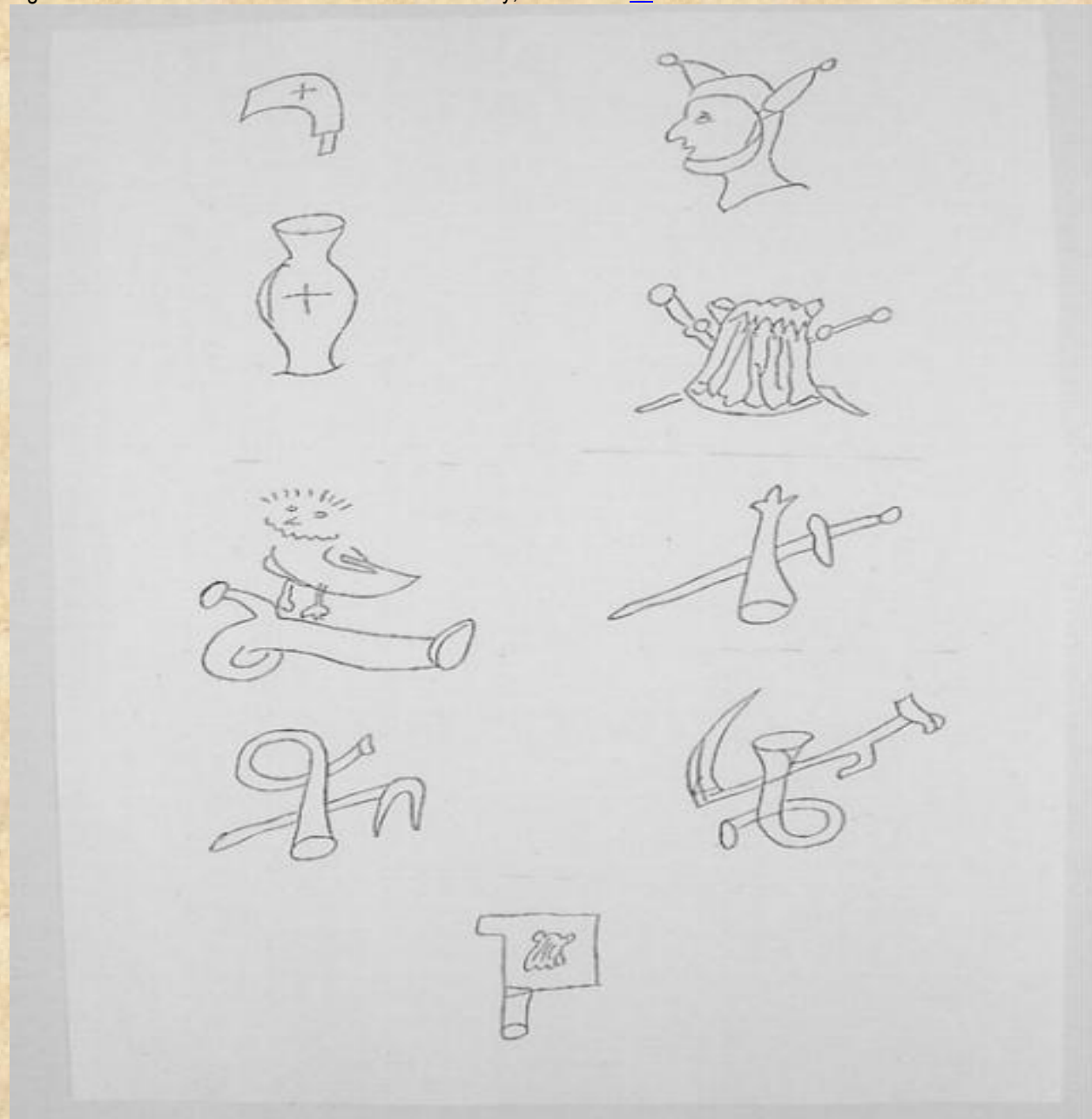
This nearly complete lack of organizational structures in the incendiary conspiracies strongly suggests that arsonists' confessions had no basis in reality outside of the courtroom. It is implausible that the respective 'principals' – many of them influential lords with considerable means – should have been unable or even unwilling to create an organizational apparatus to control their vagrant henchmen. The suggestion that foreign powers paid vagabonds in advance for dangerous and criminal acts without any effective means of control appears to be highly questionable. It is even more implausible that the vagabonds after receiving their payment really committed arson just to fulfil their respective contracts. They had nothing to gain anymore from doing so but risked being caught and punished. Even if their 'employer' had promised



additional payments after they had committed the crime the extraordinarily weak structure of the conspiracy made it unlikely that they would meet their 'principal' again to collect their money.

- 25 Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe, 79/3384.

Figure 1: Mordbrenner marks. Southwestern Germany, about 1530<sup>25</sup>



- 26 Rosenkranz (1927, vol. 1, p. 465); Spicker-Beck (1995, pp. 77-82); Scribner (1988, pp. 44-47).
- 27 Baumann (1994, pp. 48-62, 72-86); Fiedler (1985, pp. 56-83).

Some historians emphasized the fact that the vagrant population consisted partly of mercenaries looking for a new employer<sup>26</sup>. Therefore, they considered the arsonists' confessions credible: The incendiary conspiracy was supposed to have been a parallel to the mercenary system, as it were a secret army for covert warfare. However, the mercenary system of early modern armies was





absolutely different from the arsonist system as it appears in the court records. First of all, mercenaries as a rule knew the recruitment officer who contacted them or at least the military leader they agreed to work for. Before they joined the ranks of the respective army they did not receive any pay at all aside from a small sum that enabled them to come to the mustering place. Anybody who received regular pay was subject to military discipline and forbidden to leave the troop. Of course, there were irregular re-groupings of military units and numerous desertions that made mercenary armies at times resemble the 'anti-system' of the arsonists' gangs. However, if military discipline broke down this was due to the lack of regular pay<sup>27</sup>. In contrast to that, the arsonists' groups were disorganized to begin with. We have to return to the question: Are we to suppose that princes spend money on people they could not control? Or that these princes did not even try to exercise control over them? When compared to the mercenary system, the arsonist conspiracy makes even less sense.

- 28 Jütte (2000, pp. 237-241).
- 29 Graus (2002); Jütte (2000, pp. 219-221, 239-241); Hartung (1982, p. 87); Irsigler, Lassotta (1984, (...))
- 30 Jütte (2000, pp. 209-215); Roeck (1993, pp. 67-71, 138-141). Cf. also Ammerer (2003).

Did the vagrant population itself have an organizational structure that was capable of making up for the disorganization of the arsonist conspiracies? The idea of vagrants belonging to arsonist organizations was supported by another popular imagination of vagrancy: Beggars and vagabonds were supposed to form secret societies. Since the Middle Ages, the source materials allude to organizations of itinerants and beggars with their own structure of offices. There were allegedly fraternities of vagabonds, societies of beggars and even kingdoms of vagrants with estates and diets of their own<sup>28</sup>. The best-known element of this counter-state of itinerants is probably the tramps' court on the Kohlenberg near Basel. The 'brigand' (or 'rogue') literature helped to spread the idea of a secret 'monarchie d'argot'. Some of these supposed beggar organizations were indeed mere fictions, literary fantasies that mingled with sensational reports of the early modern news sheet 'press'. Others were real enough. On closer inspection however, the fraternities of beggars and the vagabond officials turn out to have been institutions or officeholders of state or church that were designed to control the homeless poor. The so-called beggar kings were officials who policed vagrants. Even the court on the Kohlenberg was by no means autonomous but under the close supervision of the Basel magistrate<sup>29</sup>. The fact that these policing agencies were reinterpreted as autonomous, potentially dangerous organizations of the itinerants themselves eloquently demonstrates that peasants and townspeople considered the homeless dangerous without knowing too much about them<sup>30</sup>.

- 31 Abbiateci (1971); Abbiateci (1978, pp. 166-169); Schulte (1984, pp. 120-123).
- 32 Delumeau (1989, pp. 412-455); Po-chia Hsia (1988). Concerning witch trials and the imagery of witch (...)
- 33 Ginzburg (1992, pp. 47-75); Monter (1976, p. 47); Roberts (1997, p. 24); Fritz (2003, pp. 28-29); N(...)

It seems safe to assume that the fear of politically motivated organized arson was a delusion. Of course, there were individual tramps who burned down the houses of peasants who had treated them badly. To be sure, there were unemployed mercenaries who used fire to punish persons they considered their adversaries. Threats of arson were evidently used for blackmail<sup>31</sup>. There might even have been individual criminals who accepted payment for setting fire to the house of some specific person. Nevertheless, it is highly implausible that there were arsonists' conspiracies, politically motivated arson perpetrated by vagrants in the pay of princes. The Mordbrenner were an imaginary, not a real menace. In this respect they may well be compared to the witches or to the Jewish conspirators who allegedly plotted ritual murder and mass poisonings<sup>32</sup>. In contrast to Jews and witches the vagabond arsonists seemed to have no single purpose. They were said to work for a number of different 'principals'. Thus, they served a number of different ends. There were even rumours about competing gangs of arsonists. The dukes of Württemberg as well as their political opponents were suspected to pay for arsonist attacks on each other. This apparent variety of the arsonists' purposes made it difficult to realize that the whole organizational concept of secret societies of itinerant fireraisers was implausible. In this respect the arsonist vagabonds resembled other supposedly criminal organizations of itinerants more closely: The poisoners. In fourteenth century France there were numerous rumours about vagrants who used poison to spread leprosy or the plague. Supposedly, the Jews or the Muslims paid for these 'bioterrorist' attacks because they hoped that they could destroy Christianity that way. Even though the trials against mass poisoners and plaguespreaders seem to have been considerably less numerous than those against arsonists they continued throughout the early



modern period. Alleged Plaguespreaders were persecuted in Geneva in the 1530s and 1540s. The outbreaks of the plague in Lyon in the 1560s were blamed on the Huguenots, the London plague of 1665-1666 on foreigners from France. In the seventeenth century in Southern Germany, there were rumours about itinerant fruit vendors from Italy. They were supposed to smear venom on church doors or door handles and thus poison numerous people<sup>33</sup>.

### The Construction of the Arsonist Scare: History and Historiography

The results of this study so far beg the question how the Mordbrenner delusion originated. Why were arsonist conspiracies considered real? To answer this question, I suggest a distinction between two contexts. The first one is the concrete regional or local context at any given time. Within this context it has to be discussed why at least the respective authorities assumed that there was a direct threat of organized arson. Second, there is a wider cultural context. Within this context it has to be asked why the imagination of organized arson by the homeless poor as such was basically considered credible.

- 34 For all the 'facts' about the Bundschuh of 1517 in the following text cf. Rosenkranz (1927, vol. 2, (...)
- 35 The statements of two other Bundschuh rebels referred in all likelihood to the 1513 rebellion. In a (...)

I will discuss the first context using an early example of the Mordbrenner fear that attracted considerable attention: The Bundschuh peasant rising of 1517<sup>34</sup>. The source materials about the Bundschuh revolt of 1517 are in many ways typical for sources about organized arson: There are no statements whatsoever by the alleged arsonists that were not elicited by torture or under the threat of torture. There are no witness accounts. There are, however, numerous statements by alarmed office holders who warn each other against a peasant upheaval. The council of the Habsburg city of Freiburg and the Vogt (bailiff) of the Baden district of Rötteln took the lead in the investigations against the peasant rebels and their arsonist accomplices. Even questionable rumours about a new Bundschuh were sufficient to alert the Freiburg authorities. From May 1517 onwards, they spread warnings about an impending revolt without having any tangible evidence. Early in September 1517 the Vogt of Rötteln arrested one Michel of Dinkelsbühl, a vagrant juggler. Michel confessed that he belonged to a huge Bundschuh conspiracy that involved more than 2000 people living on both sides of the Rhine, 300 of which he claimed to know by name. This gigantic new Bundschuh allegedly consisted of peasants and townspeople who had hired arsonist vagabonds as their Fifth Column. Michael said hardly anything about the concrete tactics and the aims of the Bundschuh. However, his denunciations were enough to galvanize Rötteln and Freiburg into action. All investigations against the 1517 Bundschuh were founded on Michael's evidence alone. The Vogt informed numerous Southwest German principalities about Michel's confession with amazing speed. Within days, he and Freiburg established a communication network with themselves at the centre. Even though investigations carried out by the authorities of several territories did not have any positive results, Freiburg urged other principalities to keep searching for suspects. The people Michel had named as his accomplices could not be found. During a second interrogation by an emissary of the sceptical town council of Strasbourg Michel began to contradict himself and de facto retracted his denunciations. Freiburg ignored this new evidence. The town council even took the trouble to emphasize openly that it continued to believe in the Bundschuh menace and demanded further investigations by the neighbouring authorities. However, the man-hunt against members of the alleged Bundschuh conspiracy petered out by the middle of October 1517. One Klaus Fleckenstein was arrested and confessed under torture to be a member of the Bundschuh. There was no correspondence whatsoever between Fleckenstein's statement and Micheal's confession. Needless to say, both supposed insurrectionists did not know each other<sup>35</sup>. Freiburg never admitted that the investigations against the Bundschuh had been a failure and that the evidence strongly suggested that there was no new Bundschuh i.e. that Michel's confession had been false. As late as December 1518, the Freiburg town council advocated the arrest and torture of persons who according to other authorities had already proven their innocence.

- 36 Dillinger (2004, 2005).

The fear of a peasant uprising and arson in Freiburg and in Rötteln was undoubtedly real. Both territories had been immediately threatened by a Bundschuh only four years ago. In Freiburg, there had been a fire in 1513 that was quickly blamed on the rebels. As Freiburg and Rötteln had taken the lead in the fight against this earlier revolt too, they now expected the revenge of Joss Fritz' followers. However, they were both so keen to demonstrate the alertness and strength of their policing agencies in 1517 that



mere caution or nervousness on their part is no sufficient explanation for their behaviour. The authorities of both territories faced acute political problems. Rötteln was situated at the periphery of the Margraviate of Baden near the Swiss border. Since the fifteenth century a so-called Landschaft existed in Rötteln i.e. a self-governing organization of the peasant communities. The Vogt of Rötteln was constantly confronted with this largely autonomous representation of the 'subjects'. In 1517 the situation of the Vogt was especially vulnerable as the margrave had ordered him to negotiate a new code of law with the Landschaft. Freiburg faced similar difficulties. The town council was working on a new town law that was to be submitted to the Habsburg lordship in December 1517. The council expected long and difficult negotiations about questions of communal autonomy. It would in fact take three more years till Freiburg's new town law was finally enacted. The Freiburg town council as well as Rötteln's Vogt probably hoped that they would strengthen their respective positions if they demonstrated that they were able to take action against rebels and criminals quickly and decisively. Subsequently, neither of them could possibly admit that they had not been sceptical enough concerning Michel's story about a huge arsonist Bundschuh rising. This would have invited severe criticism or even ridicule. Additionally, the Vogt of Rötteln was obviously very interested in attracting attention to his personal abilities. He ignored his direct superior and contacted the margrave immediately. He even went to see the lords of neighbouring territories personally to bring them the news about the conspiracy he had supposedly uncovered<sup>36</sup>.

- 37 Dillinger (2005); Scott (1986, pp. 332-353).

The fear of a new Bundschuh rising in 1517 was not completely unfounded. Southwestern Germany experienced a severe economical crisis between 1515 and 1518. Freiburg faced starvation and an epidemic. The town council asked the monasteries to hold masses and processions to ward off further misery. In addition to that, Freiburg's relation to its rural hinterland was exceedingly problematic. The stagnating town faced economic competition from prospering villages, while at the same time the Freiburg council tried to tighten its political control over the neighbouring hamlets and small towns<sup>37</sup>. The peasants of the Black Forest region were indeed restless and hostile to the authorities of the Habsburg city and the aristocratic states. Only eight years later the region became one of the centres of the Great Peasants' War.

At least three factors contributed to the genesis of the Bundschuh anxiety in 1517. A first look at several other cases of arsonist fear in France and Germany documented by Bechstein, Helleiner, Delumeau, Scribner, Roberts, Lefebvre, and Ramsay suggests that these three factors might indeed constitute the basic conditions for the emergence of an acute fear of organized arson. A short outline of these factors might be useful as a point of reference for further research.

- 38 Cf. also Bechstein (1973, pp. 309-310); Helleiner (1930, pp. 332-335, 337-338); Delumeau (1989, pp. (...))

First, there had to be a working infrastructure of communication within the given region and at least one government that was able to use this infrastructure to direct the attention of its neighbours to the supposed arsonist plot. In 1517, Rötteln and Freiburg, at least for a few weeks, had been able to dominate the discussion about the Bundschuh menace<sup>38</sup>.

- 39 Cf. also Helleiner (1930, pp. 343-344); Delumeau (1989, pp. 272-273); Roberts (1997, pp. 10-12); Sc(...)

Second, there had to be a political and / or economical crisis that appeared to threaten this government. This crisis might have resulted from structural problems within the government organization itself. It might also have appeared to threaten one part of the respective political apparatus more than other parts. In our example, the Vogt of Rötteln had more to lose (and more to gain) in the fight against the supposed conspiracy than his immediate superior or the margrave himself<sup>39</sup>.

- 40 Cf. also Bechstein (1973, p. 309); Delumeau (1989, pp. 273-274); Roberts (1997, pp. 11-12); Hellein(...)

Third, there had to be a real if diffuse or latent threat by a hostile force. In the Bundschuh example, the peasantry of the region was indeed hostile to the authorities<sup>40</sup>.

Combinations of all three factors often occurred. That is the reason why after big fires the authorities of a variety of political systems did not hesitate to investigate against organized arson throughout the early modern period.

- 41 Delumeau (1989); Metzger (2001).
- 42 Schubert (1995, pp. 111-121).



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- 43 Dillinger (2004, pp. 179-181).
- 44 Jütte (1988); Schwerhoff (1999, pp. 133-135).

The question about the second context is still unanswered. Why was the imagination of organized arson by vagrants considered credible at all? Vagrants, very like Jews, Muslims, Indians and the imaginary group of the witches belonged to the archetypical 'evil people' of the early modern period<sup>41</sup>. As they lived outside of parish structures of authority and were therefore not subject to the *cura animarum* and the church discipline they were usually excluded from the sacraments<sup>42</sup>. Since the fourteenth century there had been rumours about criminal conspiracies of poor itinerant people<sup>43</sup>. The homeless did not belong to any estate. Their marginalization seemed to give them a reason to avenge themselves upon society. This very marginalization of the itinerants made it difficult to control them, indeed to know anything specific about them. When the *liber vagatorum* that denounced all vagrant beggars as frauds was first published in 1510 it was an immediate success<sup>44</sup>. As has been mentioned above, the homeless poor were supposed to have their own shadowy secret organizations. Thus, in the public imagination vagrants formed a criminal counter-society that was hidden from the state authorities as well as from the everyday society of townspeople and peasants. They did not belong to any estate but they were still supposed to be organized. This quality together with their alleged viciousness made it plausible to suspect them as the perpetrators of organized arson.

- 45 Guazzo (1988, pp. 95-96); Dillinger (1999, pp. 187, 432); Fritz (1998, pp. 208-212). Arson per se d(...)

Gender stereotypes played an important role in the construction of the arsonist conspiracies. Even though there were of course itinerants of both sexes, the members of the imaginary arsonist gangs were all supposed to be male. Criminal violence was indeed largely a male domain and it might therefore have been easy to imagine arsonists as male. However, this explanation is insufficient. Rather, a competing imagination of gender-specific crime eliminated women from the alleged arsonists' conspiracy. There was already a powerful alternative image of the evil, mindlessly aggressive woman: that of the witch. Numerous homeless women fell victim to witch trials. In the context of witch trials charges of organized arson together with those of magic could be brought against women<sup>45</sup>.

- 46 E.g. Geremek (1991), pp. 357-362; Geremek (1976), pp. 340-348. Delumeau (1989, pp. 92-193); Hellein(...)
- 47 Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart, A 43 Bü 3. Cf. Abbiateci (1978, p. 157).

It has been said above that vagabond arsonists seemed not to have had a common goal insofar as they were supposed to work for different employers with different aims. However, all vagrant arsonists were thought to have a common purpose: They caused destruction for its own sake. The ridiculously small sums of money shadowy agents of some foreign potentate allegedly offered the vagrants for raising fire did not constitute a sufficient motive for their crimes. Time and again we find in the sources the conviction that itinerant beggars were mindlessly destructive<sup>46</sup>. Tramps who were arrested as fireraisers were even forced to repeat the condemnation of vagrants as evil persons themselves: When the itinerant beggar Hans Spydelin confessed before the criminal court of Urach in Württemberg in 1526 that he had belonged to a gang of fireraisers he said by way of explanation: «There is no more accursed and no more evil man or beast than beggars» («Es sy kain verfliechtiger beser mensch noch thier dann bettler»)<sup>47</sup>. The indiscriminate and irrational destruction caused by huge fires was thought to be the expression of the viciousness of vagrants. The vagabonds' will to destroy was not the result but the precondition of all the machinations of foreign potentates. Whereas in the popular mind the external enemies that were supposed to hire the tramps were interchangeable and never came to the fore, the organization of itinerants was the centre of attention.

- 48 For an outline of the historiography of crime, its source materials, methods and theories, Schwerhof(...)
- 49 Avé-Lallement (1858, vol. 3, pp. VIII-XVIII). Cf. also Schwerhoff (1999, pp. 130-133).
- 50 In addition to that, Helleiner considered the brutality of the First World War corroborative evidence(...)
- 51 Rosenkranz (1927, vol. 1, pp. 452-462).
- 52 Franz (1984, pp. 76-79). Concerning Franz' affiliation with Nazism cf. Behringer (1999).

Why did historians largely accept the arsonists' conspiracies as facts? Prior to the anthropological turn in historiography and the quantum leap in witchcraft research connected with it, historians had been too ready to read court records as descriptions of reality<sup>48</sup>. In addition to that, the idea of organized arson by vagrants was acceptable to early authors because they shared the prejudice against the homeless. The research literature and editions of source materials published by the criminologist



and mystery author Avé-Lallemant, the theologian Rosenkranz, the historians Franz and Helleiner still influence the relevant historiography today. Avé-Lallemant considered the description of an organized and largely secret criminal subculture that included vagrants one of his great personal achievements<sup>49</sup>. Helleiner explicitly stated that tramps, those «obscure gangs ... of riff-raff (lichtscheue Banden ... Lumpengesindels)», were likely to engage in criminal activities<sup>50</sup>. Rosenkranz depicted tramps as Mephistophelian geniuses who were capable of manipulating peasants at will. He claimed that vagabonds had an inherent tendency to become criminals<sup>51</sup>. Roughly at the same time Franz published on the Bundschuh and the Great Peasants' War, he joined the NSDAP and the SS. It comes as no surprise that he sympathised with the Bundschuh rebels but expressed contempt for their vagrant henchmen<sup>52</sup>. Of course, Scribner and Spicker-Beck did not share the prejudice against vagabonds. However, not even they could distance themselves sufficiently from the earlier authors' decision to accept the sources concerning organized arson as at least partly reliable.

### Organized Arson and the Emerging State

It is highly unlikely that organized gangs of itinerants paid by political leaders to commit arson in order to further political aims ever existed. The Mordbrenner fear was a delusion comparable to the fear of witches, Jewish conspirators or plaguespreaders. However, the emerging states of the early modern period went to great lengths to eradicate the arsonist conspiracies just as they persecuted witches.

- 53 The most comprehensive study about laws against arson in the medieval and the early modern period is (...)
- 54 Concerning arson as the typical weapon of feuds in the context of state building cf. Blickle (2000, (...))
- 55 Timcke (1965, pp. 16-17, 23-26, 31-34). The legal concept of the Mordbrenner is perfectly summarized (...)
- 56 Timcke (1965, pp. 37-41, 43-48, 50-57).
- 57 Timcke (1965, pp. 32-34, 48-49, 60-61, 66); Abbiatucci (1971, pp. 24-25).

An exhaustive study of the legal history of arson in the early modern period would be well beyond the scope of this text<sup>53</sup>. A few outlines shall be sufficient. The end of the Middle Ages witnessed the criminalization of the feud. The aristocracy's 'private' warfare in which fire had been the weapon of choice was banned and vanished slowly from the political culture<sup>54</sup>. At the same time, jurists began to differentiate the individual motives of arsonists. A common arsonist (incendiarius simplex or temerarius) started a fire to harm an individual person. But there was also the Mordbrenner, the incendiarius famosus or incendiarius seditiosus, an entirely different type of criminal. A Mordbrenner aimed at harming the whole community. His victim was not an individual, his victim was society<sup>55</sup>. From the beginning of the sixteenth century, juridical authors were less and less concerned with the circumstances of incendiary acts or with the actual harm caused by them. From the seventeenth century onwards the will to cause damage for its own sake, to do harm to the community was the central feature of arson<sup>56</sup>. Arson had to be punished most severely because it was a threat to the entire society. From the sixteenth century onwards it was common opinion among jurists that secret criminal organizations were responsible for arsonist crime. The incendiarists were supposed to do the bidding of a third party. In the eighteenth century, a contract between arsonists and agents of an enemy prince was considered an integral, indeed a 'normal' part of incendiarism. Arsonist crime was organized crime. In contrast to the incendiarius simplex the Mordbrenner was said to 'work' in secret groups. From the early sixteenth century onwards, jurists took it for granted that arsonists were organized in itinerant gangs<sup>57</sup>. Thus, jurists not only accepted conspiracies of fire raisers as facts. By describing them, they help to spread the fear of organized arson as a political crime.

- 58 Scotti (1832, vol. 1, 299-300).
- 59 Helleiner (1930, pp. 337-338).
- 60 Reyscher (1828, vol. 12, p. 293).
- 61 Staatsarchiv Bremen, 2 D 19f1.

Between the early sixteenth and the middle of the eighteenth centuries, police laws and mandates against incendiarism declared time and again that organized groups of vagrants were responsible for arson (Table 1). The fight against arsonist crime became part and parcel of the innumerable measures against the itinerant poor. The Poor Law of Kurtrier claimed that tramps spread poverty



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as they ruined people by burning down their houses<sup>58</sup>. King Ferdinand issued a mandate that ordered authorities to arrest and question all suspicious vagrants as the country was plagued with arson<sup>59</sup>. In 1555, a mandate from Württemberg stated that a close watch had to be held on all vagrants as they had threatened whole towns with arson time and again<sup>60</sup>. After a devastating fire, the city of Bremen enforced new regulations concerning fire-fighting in 1723. It was part of these regulations to exclude foreign beggars from the Bremen territory<sup>61</sup>.

- 62 The table is far from complete. It is almost exclusively based on the materials that have been made(...)

Table 1: German Police Mandates Mentioning Organized Arson Committed by Vagrants<sup>62</sup>

Year	Territory	Reference
1520	Kurpfalz	Härter/Stolleis, vol. 3.2, 83
1533	Lindau	Spicker-Beck, 366
1536	Pfalz-Neuburg	Härter/Stolleis, vol. 3.2, 29
1538	Kleve-Mark	Härter/Stolleis, vol. 2.1, 73
1540	Lower Austria	Helleiner, 338
1546	Kurpfalz	Härter/Stolleis, vol. 3.2, 169
1548	Austria under Enns	Helleiner, 337
1551	Lower Austria	Helleiner, 338
1555	Kurpfalz	Härter/Stolleis, vol. 3.2, 212
1556	Württemberg	Härter/Stolleis, vol. 4, 157
1560	Lower Austria	Helleiner, 339
1563	Kurpfalz	Härter/Stolleis, vol. 3.2, 265
1565	Kurbayern	Härter/Stolleis, vol. 3.2, 356, 357
1569	Kurpfalz	Härter/Stolleis, vol. 3.2, 290
1577	Salzburg	Helleiner, 340
1583	Tyrol and Habsburg Vorlande	Tiroler Landesarchiv Innsbruck, CD12, fol. 598r
1587	Württemberg	Härter/Stolleis, vol. 4, 241
1590	Kurpfalz	Härter/Stolleis, vol. 3.2, 429
1594	Kurpfalz	Härter/Stolleis, vol. 3.2, 458
1604	Habsburg Lands	Helleiner, 343
1616	Habsburg Lands	Helleiner, 344
1664	Kurpfalz	Härter/Stolleis, vol. 3.2, 823
1675	Austria under Enns	Helleiner, 345
1694	Württemberg	Härter/Stolleis, vol. 4, 1375
1699	Baden-Durlach	Härter/Stolleis, vol. 4, 345
1707	Württemberg	Härter/Stolleis, vol. 4, 1622
1723	Brandenburg	Härter/Stolleis, vol. 2.1, 1767
1723	Bremen	Staatsarchiv Bremen, 2D19f1
1732	Kurköln	Härter/Stolleis, vol. 1, 845
1750	Jülich-Berg	Härter/Stolleis, vol. 3.1, 1271

- 63 Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart, A 43 Bü 2.
- 64 Helleiner (1930, pp. 347-348).
- 65 Staatsarchiv Bremen, 2 D 17e7, Bd. 1.
- 66 Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart, A 43 Bü 2, Bü 3, Bü 9.
- 67 Bechstein (1973, pp. 316-317); Helleiner (1930, p. 341); Scribner (1988, p. 30).

The search for itinerant arsonists put a severe strain on the abilities of early modern law enforcement agencies. If an incendiary was not arrested immediately, the 'police' forces and courts of several jurisdictions had to cooperate to have a chance to catch the vagrant. During their



fight against the alleged Bundschuh in 1517 Freiburg and Rötteln went out of their way to entice the other principalities of Southwest Germany to cooperate with them against the alleged rebels and their itinerant arsonist henchmen. In the 1530s, the Württemberg government was eager to be informed about arson committed in the electorate of Trier<sup>63</sup>. It comes as no surprise that in the late seventeenth century Salzburg authorities were worried about news from North Germany and Transylvania about arsonists paid by the Turks<sup>64</sup>. Arsonists from Sachsen-Gotha and Sachsen-Weißenfels were not only searched for in Hanover they were even supposed to constitute a serious threat for this principality in 1725<sup>65</sup>. Long lists of supposed accomplices with often detailed descriptions of their appearance became a standard feature of the criminal records in cases of arson. Authorities sent these lists to the courts of neighbouring principalities routinely or on request. As early as 1536 the extraordinarily well-organized government of Württemberg had lists of supposed Mordbrenner who were searched for between Tuttlingen and Frankfurt, Trier and Munich<sup>66</sup>. State authorities produced, exchanged, collected and – ideally at least – updated information concerning suspected incendiarists. They often based their practical activities on these data. This procedure required a certain level of professionalism in the law enforcement agencies that could by no means be taken for granted in the principalities of early sixteenth century Germany. Even though these lists contained numerous errors and were often outdated, in the form of warrants of apprehension they had considerable influence on criminal investigations and on the imagination of arson in the popular mind. The peasants and townspeople, the so-called subjects, were very interested in obtaining that kind of information, too. Private persons owned copies of Mordbrenner lists. Starting in 1540, lists of suspects were printed and sold as news sheets<sup>67</sup>.

- 68 Bechstein (1973, pp. 310-318); Helleiner (1930, p. 328); Spicker-Beck (1995, pp. 140-141).

The 'common people' seem to have been eager to support the authorities in their fight against organized arson. There were numerous denunciations of supposed arsonists<sup>68</sup>. Arson was clearly one of those kinds of crime that was particularly well suited to inspire a feeling of solidarity between the subjects and their respective lordship. By sanctioning arson, the authorities of the emerging states emphasized their claim to be the guardians of the common good. They appeared willing and capable to protect society from its collective enemy, the itinerant gangs of arsonists. These arsonists were vagrants, i.e. foreigners or at least strangers. They were said to work on the behalf of foreign powers. The fight against them was apt to teach sixteenth century society to accept the idea of territorial organization. The structures of territorial states that slowly marginalized feudal ties, covenants and community organizations not only proved their power and usefulness when they punished arsonists. These arsonists were supposed to be mostly foreigners and to 'work' on the behalf of other foreigners. Thus, the fear of arson might have made it easier for the population of an individual principality to develop a sense of belonging to this principality and to accept its emerging administrations as legitimate or indeed as necessary. This development was not hindered but facilitated by the fact that investigations against itinerants required the authorities of various territories to work together: When territorial lordships cooperated to organize man-hunts in wide areas they provided a service for public safety which communal or manorial authorities could not compete with.

- 69 Timcke (1965, pp. 27-30); Helleiner (1930, pp. 338-339).
- 70 For the history of fire-fighting and its significance for state building cf. Roberts (1997, p. 9); (...)

The fear of arson was one of the reasons why early modern state organizations took a keen interest in fire fighting and in measures designed to prevent fires<sup>69</sup>. These measures often implied direct interference with the everyday life of townspeople and villagers: Watches had to be organised, regulations concerning building materials and fire safety were enforced. Territorial legislation concerning fire fighting soon replaced local customs. The Feuerbeschauer (surveyor of hearths) was among the oldest local office holders in Germany. The impact of organized administrative and legal power on the 'common people's' lives could take the simple and unobtrusive form of a bucket full of water everyone had to have in his house ready for inspection by state officials<sup>70</sup>.

- 71 Scribner (1988, pp. 47-48.)
- 72 Ramsay (1992, pp. 159-240).

The organization of the territorial state, its courts, bureaucracies, and law enforcement agencies grew with the responsibilities they claimed<sup>71</sup>. It is an undisputed fact that the Grande Peur contributed massively to the consolidation of the revolutionary order in France<sup>72</sup>. The same can be said about the arsonist scare and state building processes in general. Measures against alleged



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arsonists' conspiracies directly promoted state building and the acceptance of administrative authority by the 'subjects'.

### Conclusions and Suggestions

It is highly improbable that politically motivated organized arson, perpetrated by vagrants and paid for by princes, ever existed. Is it important whether organized arson was imaginary or real? Delumeau contended himself with pointing out the significance the fear of arsonists had for the contemporaries<sup>73</sup>. The government apparatus grew and became more and more diversified whether the political crime it persecuted existed or not. However, the critical discussion of the source materials enabled us to correct the historical reconstruction of vagrancy. In addition to that, we could demonstrate that the emerging modern states not only persecuted a fictive crime but that the fear of an imaginary political crime influenced state building itself. It is a truism that criminalization is a highly flexible process and crime as such a construction of legal and administrative agencies. However, our discussion of the persecution of organized arson is not about 'labelling', i.e. the authoritarian definition of certain acts as being illegal. Rather, it is about a fundamentally different issue: The belief in a murderous conspiracy that had no basis in the actual behaviour displayed by those who were punished as members of that conspiracy. The brief sketch of laws and administrative measures against organized arson provided here might serve as a basis for further research. In order to improve our understanding of the role of the arsonists' scare for the development of the policing apparatus we need comparative studies on a European level.

- 73 Delumeau (1989, pp. 267-273).
- 74 Hiro (2002); Hoffman (1998).
- 75 Cf. the critical account Jenkins (2003).
- 76 Gueniffey (2000).

In this article, I repeatedly used the terms 'terrorism' and 'terrorist'. According to a definition widely accepted by criminologists and law enforcement agencies terrorism is violence or the threat of violence used to achieve political ends either by non-government agencies or by government agencies working secretly<sup>74</sup>. Thus, the alleged crimes of the vagrant arsonists could indeed be called terrorism or rather imaginary terrorism. This may seem to be an inappropriate actualization or even a political misuse of a historical topic. However, the apparent anachronism could open a new avenue for research. The true scope of terrorism and terrorist scares as historical phenomena is yet to be found. Evidently, it is not enough to discuss terrorism as a problem of nineteenth and twentieth century history only<sup>75</sup>. Even though the term 'terrorism' was not used till the 'terreur' of the French Revolution<sup>76</sup> implanted it into modern parlance the concept of terrorism was well known at least since the poisoners of the fourteenth century. Any history of terrorism has to keep in mind the essential fact that authorities might misunderstand or misrepresent their respective terrorist enemies. Nevertheless, whether the terrorist threat was real or imaginary is of secondary importance. It should be asked how terrorism was perceived of. In what ways did the fear of terrorism influence state building processes? How did 'state builders' react to the alleged activities of 'state destroyers'? The various constructions of terrorist threats and the state response to these threats deserve further attention from historians of all periods.

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### Notes

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[2](#) Hauptstaatsarchiv, A 43 Bü 3, cf. Spicker-Beck (1995, p. 167).

[3](#) Rosenkranz (1927); Blickle (2004).

[4](#) Roberts (1997).

[5](#) Scribner (1988, pp. 31-33).

[6](#) Scribner (1988, pp. 32-33); Helleiner (1930, pp. 327-335).

[7](#) Scribner (1988, p. 33); Spicker-Beck (1995, pp. 122-124).

[8](#) Spicker-Beck (1995, pp. 137-144).

[9](#) Roberts (1997, pp. 20-22).

[10](#) Helleiner (1930, pp. 345-347).

[11](#) Lefebvre (1988).

[12](#) Hobsbawm (1975, pp. 239-241).

[13](#) Dolan (2001, pp. 396-401); Lefebvre (1988, pp. 81-155).

[14](#) Spicker-Beck (1995, pp. 319-331). Essentially the same arguments in Spicker-Beck (1999).

[15](#) Scribner (1988, especially pp. 33-34, 38-39, 50-52).

[16](#) Scribner (1988, pp. 31-32, 42).

[17](#) Schulte (1984, pp. 139-141).

[18](#) Spicker-Beck (1995, pp. 171-177).

[19](#) Bechstein (1973, pp. 318-320); Roberts (1997); Spicker-Beck (1995, pp. 95-115); the arson records Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart, A 43 Bü 2-3, 7-9, 15, Bü 20-21, 24; U 436,1; U 502; U 741; U 888; Staatsarchiv Bremen, D 16b, D 16g2 Bd. 4, 2 D 16d Bd. 1, 2 D 16f Bd. 1-2, 2 D 19f1, 2 D 19f3, 2 D 17e7, Bd. 1-2; Stadtarchiv Freiburg, C1 Criminalia.

[20](#) Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart, A 43 Bü 15. Spicker-Beck believed that Geroldseck had really spoken in an overbearing fashion (« markige Sprüche») to an arsonist. At that time, this arsonist had already been hired for Geroldseck's private war against Württemberg by one of the aristocrat's officeholders. Why should the nobleman Geroldseck talk at any length with the vagrant arsonist? He had no reason whatsoever to discuss his plans and motives with a vagabond. On the contrary, it would have been foolish to seek the company of those he paid to do the 'dirty work'.

[21](#) Helleiner (1930, p. 330); Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart, B 17, Bd. 21, fol. 580v-581v.

[22](#) Examples in Bechstein (1973, Table V); Spicker-Beck (1995, pp. 102, 106-110).

[23](#) The undated original is Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe, 79/3384. Reproductions in Rosenkranz (1927, vol. 1, pp. 292-294); Scott (2001, p. 34).

[24](#) Spicker-Beck (1995, pp. 130-133).

[25](#) Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe, 79/3384.

[26](#) Rosenkranz (1927, vol. 1, p. 465); Spicker-Beck (1995, pp. 77-82); Scribner (1988, pp. 44-47).

[27](#) Baumann (1994, pp. 48-62, 72-86); Fiedler (1985, pp. 56-83).

[28](#) Jütte (2000, pp. 237-241).



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- [29](#) Graus (2002); Jütte (2000, pp. 219-221, 239-241); Hartung (1982, p. 87); Irsigler, Lassotta (1984, pp. 30-31, 60-61).
- [30](#) Jütte (2000, pp. 209-215); Roeck (1993, pp. 67-71, 138-141). Cf. also Ammerer (2003).
- [31](#) Abbiateci (1971); Abbiateci (1978, pp. 166-169); Schulte (1984, pp. 120-123).
- [32](#) Delumeau (1989, pp. 412-455); Po-chia Hsia (1988). Concerning witch trials and the imagery of witchcraft cf. Schild (2004).
- [33](#) Ginzburg (1992, pp. 47-75); Monter (1976, p. 47); Roberts (1997, p. 24); Fritz (2003, pp. 28-29); Naphy (2002).
- [34](#) For all the 'facts' about the Bundschuh of 1517 in the following text cf. Rosenkranz (1927, vol. 2, pp. 235-310). Köhn is critical but basically accepts the 1517 arsonist conspiracy as a fact, Köhn (2004). For a more detailed analysis of the source materials, cf. Dillinger (2005).
- [35](#) The statements of two other Bundschuh rebels referred in all likelihood to the 1513 rebellion. In any case, they contradicted each other as well as the confessions of Fleckstein and Michael, Rosenkranz (1927, vol. 2, pp. 305-309).
- [36](#) Dillinger (2004, 2005).
- [37](#) Dillinger (2005); Scott (1986, pp. 332-353).
- [38](#) Cf. also Bechstein (1973, pp. 309-310); Helleiner (1930, pp. 332-335, 337-338); Delumeau (1989, pp. 245-248); Roberts (1997, pp. 14-15); Scribner (1988, pp. 30-31). Cf. Ramsay's analysis of the channels of communication through which the Grande Peur of 1789 spread (Ramsay, 1992, pp. 81-122).
- [39](#) Cf. also Helleiner (1930, pp. 343-344); Delumeau (1989, pp. 272-273); Roberts (1997, pp. 10-12); Scribner (1988, p. 33, 46). Ramsay (1992, pp. 215-240).
- [40](#) Cf. also Bechstein (1973, p. 309); Delumeau (1989, pp. 273-274); Roberts (1997, pp. 11-12); Helleiner (1930, pp. 327-329); Scribner (1988, pp. 29-33).
- [41](#) Delumeau (1989); Metzger (2001).
- [42](#) Schubert (1995, pp. 111-121).
- [43](#) Dillinger (2004, pp. 179-181).
- [44](#) Jütte (1988); Schwerhoff (1999, pp. 133-135).
- [45](#) Guazzo (1988, pp. 95-96); Dillinger (1999, pp. 187, 432); Fritz (1998, pp. 208-212). Arson per se does not seem to have had magical implications, cf. Hellwig (1910).
- [46](#) E.g. Geremek (1991), pp. 357-362; Geremek (1976), pp. 340-348. Delumeau (1989, pp. 92-193); Helleiner (1930, p. 344); Jütte (2000, pp. 209-219).
- [47](#) Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart, A 43 Bü 3. Cf. Abbiateci (1978, p. 157).
- [48](#) For an outline of the historiography of crime, its source materials, methods and theories, Schwerhoff (1999, especially pp. 15-69), for the development of the historiography of witchcraft Behringer (2004).
- [49](#) Avé-Lallement (1858, vol. 3, pp. VIII-XVIII). Cf. also Schwerhoff (1999, pp. 130-133).
- [50](#) In addition to that, Helleiner considered the brutality of the First World War corroborative evidence for the reality of the arsonists' conspiracies: After what had happened in the Great War, everything seemed possible to him, Helleiner (1930, pp. 329, 336-337, 349).
- [51](#) Rosenkranz (1927, vol. 1, pp. 452-462).
- [52](#) Franz (1984, pp. 76-79). Concerning Franz' affiliation with Nazism cf. Behringer (1999).
- [53](#) The most comprehensive study about laws against arson in the medieval and the early modern period is still Timcke (1965).
- [54](#) Concerning arson as the typical weapon of feuds in the context of state building cf. Blickle (2000, vol. 2, pp. 164-165).
- [55](#) Timcke (1965, pp. 16-17, 23-26, 31-34). The legal concept of the Mordbrenner is perfectly summarized in Zedler (1961, vol. 21, pp. 1582-1588). For arson in the nineteenth and twentieth century cf. Grassberger (1928) and Kästle (1992).
- [56](#) Timcke (1965, pp. 37-41, 43-48, 50-57).
- [57](#) Timcke (1965, pp. 32-34, 48-49, 60-61, 66); Abbiateci (1971, pp. 24-25).
- [58](#) Scotti (1832, vol. 1, 299-300).



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- [59](#) Helleiner (1930, pp. 337-338).  
[60](#) Reyscher (1828, vol. 12, p. 293).  
[61](#) Staatsarchiv Bremen, 2 D 19f1.  
[62](#) The table is far from complete. It is almost exclusively based on the materials that have been made available so far by Helleiner (1930) and Härter, Stolleis (1996-2004).  
[63](#) Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart, A 43 Bü 2.  
[64](#) Helleiner (1930, pp. 347-348).  
[65](#) Staatsarchiv Bremen, 2 D 17e7, Bd. 1.  
[66](#) Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart, A 43 Bü 2, Bü 3, Bü 9.  
[67](#) Bechstein (1973, pp. 316-317); Helleiner (1930, p. 341); Scribner (1988, p. 30).  
[68](#) Bechstein (1973, pp. 310-318); Helleiner (1930, p. 328); Spicker-Beck (1995, pp. 140-141).  
[69](#) Timcke (1965, pp. 27-30); Helleiner (1930, pp. 338-339).  
[70](#) For the history of fire-fighting and its significance for state building cf. Roberts (1997, p. 9); Kramer (1974, pp. 20-22); Jones / Porter / Turner (1984); Underdown (1992); Wucke (1995); Heydenreuter (2000); Ventzke (2002).  
[71](#) Scribner (1988, pp. 47-48).  
[72](#) Ramsay (1992, pp. 159-240).  
[73](#) Delumeau (1989, pp. 267-273).  
[74](#) Hiro (2002); Hoffman (1998).  
[75](#) Cf. the critical account Jenkins (2003).  
[76](#) Gueniffey (2000).

### Police Commander: Arson is a New Form of Terrorism

Source: <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/158767#.UXO9Lkqd110>

Hagai Dotan, the commander of the Coastal District of the Israeli Police, ordered on Thursday evening the establishment of a special investigative unit to look into the circumstances surrounding the recent fires.



Dotan said that the fires, which have raged in several areas in Israel in recent days, are a new form of terrorism.

“The suspicion now is that the arson was nationalistically motivated,” he said. “We have no intelligence to support that, but if you look at the entire country, we see arson in Tivon, in Jerusalem and in Beit Shemesh – such a sequence of fires cannot be coincidental.”

His comments come after several blazes broke out in Israel on Thursday. One, near Sha'ar HaAmakim, in the southeastern approach to Haifa, was spreading toward Tivon in the afternoon.

The residents of three streets were evacuated from their homes. Residents of an old age home were also evacuated. Two homes were reportedly damaged but no one was hurt.

Outside Jerusalem, near Even Sapir, the fire that burned Wednesday reignited and was brought under control after dozens of local residents were evacuated from their homes in the western part of the community.

In addition, a fire broke out near an IDF ammunition depot in the Rehovot area, near Tel Nof. No one was hurt. Fire crews were able to bring the blaze under control in a relatively short time.

Earlier on Thursday, sources in the fire department and the Zevulun precinct police told *Arutz Sheva* that the fires are the result of arson.

While high temperatures and irresponsibility by campers are always potential causes of fires, it is a well known fact that Arabs intentionally set fires as an easy way of terrorizing Jews and destroying their property. Arab inciters have called on Arabs to do just this, on more than one occasion.

When a fire broke out near Jerusalem six weeks ago, Major General Niso Shaham, who was then Commander of the Jerusalem Police, told a *Channel 2* reporter that there is currently a plethora of



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arson attacks in the Jerusalem area. The reporter said that fire fighters told him that there were several incidents of arson every day in the Jerusalem area alone, and Shaham did not deny this. Arabs have been documented setting fires to fields in Judea and Samaria, where this is a common practice of theirs.



**"Pyroterrorism" or "Pyro-Terrorism"** is the act of setting fire to large amounts of land and/or property for political reasons, usually in a systematic or random approach in order to escape capture from authorities. The purpose of pyroterrorism is to destroy a particular country or region's local economy and kill innocent civilians in a way that prevents the would be arsonist from being easily identified or captured. In ancient times pyroterrorism was used as a war tactic to raze crops and destroy an enemy's ability to feed themselves, thus weakening the foe. Some believe that pyroterrorism presents a very serious threat to the future of the United States.

**The topic of pyroterrorism has received very little media attention except in countries like Australia, Lebanon, Greece and most recently in California in the United States.**

