

New York 62° | 48°

News, Quotes, Companies, Videos

OPINION

GET 8 WEEKS FREE SUBSCRIBE NOW! THE PRINT JOURNAL THE ONLINE JOURNAL

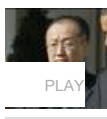
U.S. Edition Home Today's Paper People In The News Video Blogs Journal Community

Subscribe Log In

World U.S. New York Business Markets Tech Personal Finance Life & Culture Opinion Careers Real Estate Small Business

Leisure & Arts Book Reviews Letters to the Editor Political Diary Columns

TOP STORIES IN Opinion



Opinion: Calling Doctor Kim

9 of 12

Terry Anderson: At Last, Some Bright Spots in Indian Country

10 of 12



Alberto Mingardi: The European Union According to Hayek

11 of 12

OPINION | March 23, 2012, 7:01 p.m. ET

France's Jihadist Shooter Was No Lone Wolf

Mohamed Merah was practically a prince in violent extremist circles.

Article

Comments (74)

MORE IN OPINION »

Email Print Save Like 89 2 Tweet 39

ARTICLE FREE PASS Enjoy your free sample of exclusive subscriber content. GET ALL OF WSJ.COM: SUBSCRIBE NOW - GET 8 WEEKS FREE

By JYTTE KLAUSEN

Mohamed Merah, the Frenchman who assassinated three French paratroopers of North African background and then launched a terrible attack on a Jewish school—murdering a teacher, his two young sons and an 8-year-old girl—claimed to act for al Qaeda. Skeptics have dismissed the claim, saying al Qaeda barely functions anymore. But Merah was no "lone wolf" and did indeed bear the imprint of al Qaeda.

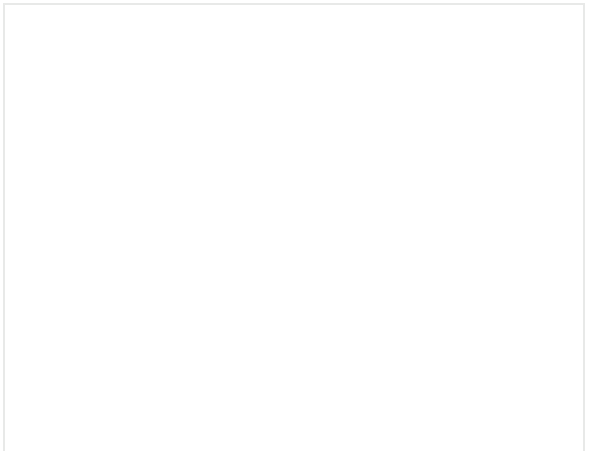
Young and alienated, Merah had served two years in a juvenile prison for robbery. Was he rejected by French society because of his Algerian background? "He snapped," say friends. After prison, he was completely cut off from reality, said his lawyer.

In fact, Merah was practically a prince in French jihadist circles. His mother is married to the father of Sabri ESSID, a leading member of the Toulouse radical milieu who was captured in Syria in 2006. ESSID and another Frenchman were running an al Qaeda safe house in Syria for fighters going to Iraq. In a 2009 trial that came to be known in the press as "Brothers for Iraq," they and six others were convicted in France of conspiracy for terrorist purposes. ESSID was sentenced in 2009 to five years imprisonment.

Family contacts could have been instrumental in setting up Merah's jihadist contacts and facilitating his travels to South Asia. Le Monde reports that the Pakistani Taliban and the Uzbek Islamic Movement trained Merah to become a killer. In 2010, he was captured in Afghanistan (reportedly by Afghan forces) and handed over to the French government, yet French media report that he was able to return to Northwest Pakistan in 2011.

The French police have confirmed that Merah was under periodic surveillance in recent months. That he slipped through and was able to carry out his attacks will become a source of criticism and self-recrimination on the part of the generally efficient French police. It certainly suggests that he had help from a network.

In executing his attacks, Merah did everything by the jihadist textbook. He made sure he would die a martyr's death that would be witnessed on television screens around the



Available to WSJ.com Subscribers

SEC Probes Rapid Trading

Health Law Slow to Win Favor



French Candidates Focus on Security



Trying to Make China More Like Us



world. He murdered with a video camera strapped to his body, making him star and director of his own epic. He told journalists his videos would soon be uploaded. In the attack at the Jewish school Monday morning, Merah held a little girl by her hair while he paused to reload his gun. He then shot her. In a recording found in his apartment he tells another victim, a soldier: "You kill my brothers, I kill you." This is theater.

The Internet was his friend. "I have changed my life . . . on video," said one of his last tweets (in French) during the siege. His account ID featured a black knight on a horse holding high the flag of jihad.

He signed that last tweet "Mohamed Merah-Forsane Alizza." Forsane Alizza, or "Knights of Glory," is a France-based jihadist media organization that was banned in January by French authorities after they discovered members preparing to train in armed combat. The ban made little difference, as content was uploaded to new sites. A website using the Forsane Alizza alias is still active—and registered with a domain name registrar and Web hosting company based in the state of Washington.

Two hours before the police arrived at his apartment, Merah was calling a French TV station. He appears to have had the media on speed-dial and was an active user not only of Twitter but of Facebook and YouTube. (Authorities took down his online outlets one-by-one on Wednesday.)

Merah's shootings in Toulouse again shatter the illusion that counterterrorism can be 100% successful. Jihadist terrorism exploits our freedoms and opportunities in a global campaign linking foreign insurgencies and extremist activism in the West. Highly scripted and planned with the assistance of accomplices in and outside of France, Merah did not act in isolation.

Ms. Klausen, a professor of politics at Brandeis University and author of "The Cartoons That Shook the World" (Yale University Press, 2009), is founder of the Western Jihadism Project, which tracks and analyzes the development of jihadi networks in the West.

Get your 8 week risk free trial [SUBSCRIBE NOW](#)

Most Popular on Facebook

[Login](#) You need to be logged into Facebook to see your friends' recommendations.

-  **Whatever You Do, Don't Buy an Airline Ticket On ...**
3,238 people recommend this.
-  **Death of a Playboy**
1,066 people recommend this.
-  **Why My Father Hated India**
15,163 people recommend this.
-  **No More Résumés, Say Some Firms**
3,807 people recommend this.

Facebook social plugin

Most Popular Video

- Building a Better Brain for Memory**
2:14
- Inside a Russian Billionaire's \$300 Million Yacht**
3:55
- Rugby Mom Takes on Philippine Volcanoes**
3:26

More in Opinion

- Gina Raimonda: The Democrat Who Took on the Unions
- Death Tax Defying
- Jenkins: Apple's Non-Bubble Bubble
- Conscience Against Castro
- Jihad in Toulouse

Most Popular

[Read](#) [Emailed](#) [Video](#) [Commented](#)

- Obama Adds Voice to Florida Shooting Case**
- Billionaire Doles Out Election Checks**
- French Killer's Path to Jihadist Rampage**
- Student-Loan Debt Tops \$1 Trillion**
- Opinion: Liberty and ObamaCare**

[Most Read Articles Feed](#)

[JOIN THE DISCUSSION](#)
74 Comments, add yours

[MORE IN Opinion »](#)

[Like](#) [Send](#) 89 people like this.

[Tweet](#) 39 [Share](#) 1 [2](#) [Email](#) [Print](#) [Order Reprints](#)

President Lowers Mortgage

If you owe under \$729k you probably qualify for the Govt Refi Program.
www.MortgageRatesExperts.com

The Lone Wolf Collection

All 16 Films on one Premium DVD Collection! 1936-1955
www.skaryguyvideo.com

Need Best Stock Charts?

AnyStock - interactive, fast charts with tech indicators for websites
www.AnyChart.com

Unlimited Cloud Storage

Backup Your PC Online and Access Your Files Anywhere, Anytime.
www.JustCloud.com

Add a Comment

[View All Comments \(74\)](#)

JOURNAL COMMUNITY

[Community rules](#)

To add a comment please

Latest Headlines

- Health Law Slow to Win Favor
- Obama Adds Voice to Florida Shooting Case

[Log in](#)

[Create an Account](#)

Your real name is required for commenting.

Track replies to my comment

[Login with Facebook](#)

Subscribe Now for Full Access to WSJ.com and Get

8 WEEKS FREE

[SUBSCRIBE NOW](#)

WSJ Subscriber's content provides:

- **Personalized** tracking of industries
- **Heard on the Street:** up-to-the-minute news and analysis that affects the markets and industries
- **Core business news:** "What's News" and new "Management" section

[Bales Charged in Killing of 17 Afghans](#)

[Court Orders FDA Action on Farmers' Antibiotics Use](#)

[Texas Nears Approval of Multistate Nuclear-Waste Dump](#)

[Jobless Claims Decline](#)

[Some Clean-Energy Loans Raise Flags](#)

[Senate Passes Bill Easing IPO Rules](#)

[Terror Agency to Keep Data Longer](#)

[IRS Ramps Up Audits of Wealthiest](#)

[More Headlines](#)

Free Penny Stock Alerts

Join our free newsletter and get penny stock picks that jump high. www.PennyStockAdvice.com

Local Coupons

1 ridiculously huge coupon a day. Save 50-90% on your city's best! www.Groupon.com

1000%+ Penny Stock Picks

Join our 100% Free Newsletter today and get picks that skyrocket! www.AwesomePennyStocks.com

Editors' Picks



A Canyon Separates Foes in Grand Battle



Hard Act to Follow at McDonald's



Egypt's Brewing Crisis: Subsidies



Winning a Little Dignity



Pop-Ups Are Taking Over the Kitchen

[BACK TO TOP](#)

Customer Center:

- [My Account](#)
- [My Subscriptions](#)

Create an Account:

- [Register for Limited Access](#)
- [Subscribe to WSJ.com](#)
- [Sign up for WSJ Professional](#)
- [Subscribe to WSJ Weekend - Print Edition](#)

Help & Information Center:

- [Help](#)
- [Customer Service](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Global Support](#)
- [New on WSJ.com](#)
- [Print Subscriber Services](#)

About:

- [Content Partnerships](#)
- [Reprints](#)
- [Advertising](#)
- [Classifieds](#)
- [Advertise Locally](#)
- [Conferences](#)
- [About Dow Jones](#)
- [Privacy Policy - UPDATED 10/18/2011](#)
- [Your Ad Choices](#)
- [Subscriber Agreement & Terms of Use - Updated](#)
- [Copyright Policy](#)
- [Jobs at WSJ.com](#)

WSJ.com:

- [Site Map](#)
- [Home](#)
- [World](#)
- [U.S.](#)
- [New York](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Markets](#)
- [Market Data](#)
- [Tech](#)
- [Personal Finance](#)
- [Life & Culture](#)
- [Opinion](#)
- [Autos](#)
- [Careers](#)
- [Real Estate](#)
- [Small Business](#)
- [Student Journal](#)
- [Corrections](#)
- [SafeHouse - Send Us Information](#)

Tools & Formats:

- [Today's Paper](#)
- [Video Center](#)
- [Graphics](#)
- [Columns](#)
- [Blogs](#)
- [Topics](#)
- [Guides](#)
- [Alerts](#)
- [Newsletters](#)
- [Mobile](#)
- [WSJ Social](#)
- [Tablet Edition](#)
- [Podcasts](#)
- [RSS Feeds](#)
- [Journal Community](#)
- [WSJ on Twitter](#)
- [WSJ on Facebook](#)
- [WSJ on Foursquare](#)
- [My Journal](#)
- [Portfolio](#)
- [WSJ Digital Downloads](#)

Digital Network

- [WSJ.com](#)
- [Marketwatch.com](#)
- [Barrons.com](#)
- [SmartMoney.com](#)
- [AllThingsD.com](#)
- [FINS: Finance, IT jobs, Sales jobs](#)
- [BigCharts.com](#)
- [Virtual Stock Exchange](#)
- [WSJ Radio](#)
- [Professor Journal](#)
- [WSJ U.S. Edition](#)
- [WSJ Asia Edition](#)
- [WSJ Europe Edition](#)
- [WSJ India Page](#)
- Foreign Language Editions:**
- [WSJ Chinese](#)
- [WSJ Japanese](#)
- [WSJ Portuguese](#)
- [WSJ Spanish](#)
- [WSJ Deutschland](#)

Copyright ©2012 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved