



Trump and Clinton Talk About Nice, France Attack in TV Interviews

In interviews with national talk-show hosts on July 14, presumptive Republican and Democratic presidential candidates Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, respectively, shared their views concerning the deadly terrorist attack in Nice, France, that evening.

Shortly before the interviews, Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel, a native of Tunisia living in Nice, deliberately drove an 18-ton truck into crowds celebrating Bastille Day along the seaside resort's Promenade des Anglais, killing a least 84 people. The attacker's rampage ended only after police shot and killed him. He reportedly shouted "Allahu Akbar" as he drove into the crowd.



Trump expressed his first thoughts on the attack via Twitter: "When will we learn? It is only getting worse."

Trump then told Fox television by phone that he would be prepared to declare war on unspecified terrorists and commit NATO troops in a "world war." "I am, indeed, the law and order candidate," Trump said during his phone call. "Hillary is weak and ineffective."

The Republican candidate said Clinton "created ISIS with her stupid policies" as Obama's first secretary of state.

Interestingly, at the time of his call, the driver of the truck who plowed into the crowd in Nice had not yet been identified, but Trump, as he has repeated, called for President Obama to use the term "radical Islamic terrorists."

Prompted by Fox News host O'Reilly's question, Trump said, if elected, he would ask Congress for a declaration of war against the major terrorist organization, ISIS. "This is war, Bill," Trump responded, adding, "Unless we get strong and really, really smart leadership, it's only going to get worse."

Trump added that the United States is letting Muslim refugees into the country who might actually be terrorists. "Hillary Clinton wants to allow 550 percent more," Trump said of U.S. immigration quotas. "It's out of control.... We need law and order! ... Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama want to let more in.... What are they doing? We will be very strong if I win. We will be very, very smart."

The Observer reported that Clinton responded promptly with two phone interviews: first with O'Reilly on Fox, and then with Anderson Cooper on CNN.

When O'Reilly questioned her about Trump's stated intention to wage war on the terrorists, Clinton replied, "It is the dream of ISIS to put American ground troops" in a land war in the Middle East.



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The former secretary of state told O'Reilly: "We got to do more to understand that this is a war against these terrorist groups ... a different kind of group.... We have to be smart in how we wage it.... One of my priorities is to launch an intelligence surge."

"We need strong, tough diplomacy, starting with our friends," Clinton continued. "We need to be prepared to work with each other to ferret out these terrorists and prevent future attacks."

When O'Reilly mentioned Trump's proposed strategy for overcoming the ISIS stronghold city of Raqqa in Syria, Clinton said it was "not the most effective way" to defeat the terrorists.

Clinton told Cooper about "progress on the battlefields of Syria and Iraq" but said that it was a mixed blessing. "As a result ... [the terrorists'] urgent desire to inflict terrorists attacks elsewhere has led them to accelerate, reaching out directly and indirectly through radicalization online," she said. She called the ISIS fighters "jihadists who use Islam to recruit and to radicalize others in order to pursue their evil agenda."

Clinton said she's heard calls from radicals to declare what amounts to World War III and "we could be easily misled" with a bellicose response.

"We've got to be smart about this," she said.

As for Lahouaiej-Bouhlel, Reuters reported that his neighbors described him as a handsome but "frightening" man. He had a history of violent tendencies and was convicted for the first time last March for road rage, French Justice Minister Jean-Jacques Urvoas said. "There was an altercation between him and another driver and he hurled a wooden pallet at the man," Urvoas told reporters.

Since it was his first conviction, Lahouaiej-Bouhlel was given a six-month suspended sentence and had to contact police once a week, which he did, Urvoas added. Though he was born in Tunisia, he was not on the French intelligence services' list of suspected militants.

Although no links between the Nice attacker and terrorist groups such as ISIS have been found, the large number of fatalities naturally made this event seem more like a terrorist attack than a simple case of a driver losing his temper and deciding to take his frustrations out on a crowd of innocent people. Undoubtedly, the French government will investigate the incident further to see if they have missed anything.

Moreover, considering the terrorist attacks in Paris last November 13, there is a precedent for such incidents in France. There is also the fact that both Lahouaiej-Bouhlel and Abdelhamid Abaaoud, the individual who masterminded the Paris attacks, were natives of North Africa, with Abaaoud being from Morocco. There have also been ISIS attacks in Lahouaiej-Bouhlel's homeland of Tunisia. An MSNBC report in 2015 headlined "Tunisia: ISIS Breeding Ground," observed, "The country whose revolution sparked the Arab Spring is now a top breeding ground for new ISIS fighters."

While these facts do not, in themselves, implicate Lahouaiej-Bouhlel with organized Islamic terrorism, they do raise red flags.

Such fears have caused not only Trump, but also Clinton, to recognize the terrorist threat in France. "What is happening is terrorist groups are seeing that they have opportunities inside France for homegrown terrorism and supporting terrorists," Clinton said in her phone interview on CNN Thursday evening.

Photo is of U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry (with white flowers) laying flowers at French embassy



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