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## Programmed to Kill

# The Cold Aggression of a Mass Murderer

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**What goes through a person's mind during a 90 minute killing spree? Once they have decided to engage in the most extreme of acts, killers like Anders Breivik conduct their slayings mercilessly and in cold blood. Psychologists say they enter a primal hunting mode in which their emotions are completely shut down.**

When Anders Beivik arrived at Utøya, he wasn't in a state of rage -- he was relaxed. He even offered a plausible story to the guard responsible for controlling entry to the Norwegian island on Friday, telling him he needed to check the security following the terrorist attacks in Oslo. Breivik, who was disguised in a police uniform and was wearing a bullet-proof vest and carrying a heavy bag, was quiet and moved slowly. And when he met the youth who had gathered at the camp, witnesses said he exuded trustworthiness.

But then he started to kill and continued to do so for 90 minutes. "It looked as though he didn't really care," a survivor would later say. For 90 minutes, Breivik hunted down his victims and shot at them. For 90 minutes, he remained ice cold, not displaying any emotion and concentrating entirely on his mission. He didn't even express any irritation over the first police helicopters that began flying over Utøya. He ruthlessly continued to pursue his goal -- literally assassinating as many young people as he could, 76 according to the latest police figures.

How is a human being capable of remaining so cold-blooded for such a long period of time? Researchers who have looked into mass slayings are familiar with the phenomenon. It is part of our biology, they argue, and experts call it cold aggression.

"The perpetrator is in a hunting mode," explained Jens Hoffman, director of the Institute of Psychology and Threat Management in Aschaffenburg, Germany. Hoffman views the case as one of a mass killer. "He acted in a calculated and planned manner, his emotions were completely shut down," he said. Breivik just celebrated, giving out calls of victory, one survivor said. Others say they heard him scream, "I will kill you all."

In contrast to cold rage, the psychologist says that in this case it was cold aggression that prevailed. If a person feels acutely threatened, he explains, then that person reacts impulsively and cannot think clearly. Their heartbeat then rises and muscles become tense. After an outbreak of anger or violence, as soon as the threat has dissipated, this condition ends very quickly.

### Perpetrators Like Breivik Feel No Threat Whatsoever

But that's not the case with cold aggression. "When in hunting mode, the perpetrator feels no threat whatsoever. That's why the person can think clearly and act in a focused manner," Hoffman told SPIEGEL ONLINE. "He can maintain this condition for as long as he wants to." The psychologist says that this hunting mode is biologically anchored in every person. Earlier, hunters and gatherers needed it in order to secure their food. On Friday, Breivik activated it in order to hunt other people.

In his 1,516-page long manifesto, Breivik explains in some passages how he mentally prepared for the act. It is just a small part of his work, which is filled with delusional ideology. But this, too, shows how obsessed Breivik was with his idea. In the manifesto, he also explains how one can maintain the "capability to motivate/indoctrinate yourself over a prolonged period of time."

"You have to overcome difficult initial psychological challenges and perform a slight subsequent mental check every single day until the operation is complete," the killer wrote. "Embracing

martyrdom is not something you suddenly decide to do, but it is a process that takes time and requires effort and self contemplation."

Breivik wrote that he went on a 40-minute walk each day. If his writings are to be believed, he spent this time "philosophizing ideologically/performing self indoctrination and the mental simulation of the operation."

He writes that he played through the entire operation mentally, simulating different scenarios -- resistance efforts, confrontations with police, future interrogation scenarios and even possible future court appearances. He even planned for future press interviews. During his mental training, Breivik wrote, he listened to "motivational and inspiring music."

### **'Everything Is in Black and White'**

"He used common mentalization strategies," says Hoffmann. The long-term preparation, with an eye on triumph and the "historic mission" are typical behavior patterns. He justified his action with his ideology. It was terrible, but necessary, Breivik said, after he completed his operation and was arrested.

Breivik's rigidity also fits into a typical pattern, Hoffmann says. "Such perpetrators have very assiduous tendencies and think in stereotypes. Everything is in black and white." An Australian colleague of Hoffmann's was told once by a gunman after his crime that he had not wanted to commit it in the end, but it had been planned for so long and he had chosen the date so far in advance that he didn't know what else to do other than to carry it out. He had to follow his plan.

One unusual item out of Breivik's manifesto is when he details what kinds of amphetamines one must use to make the operation function well. He explains what combinations of drugs work the best, where one can get them easily, in what doses they should be taken, and what the best time is to take them.

Physical strength, agility, and focus are all enhanced by stimulants by 30 to 50 percent and for one to two hours, Breivik writes. Whether or not he actually took the substances during his crime spree remains unclear. And it is equally unclear how much desired effect the drugs would bring. It is known that many offenders drink small quantities of alcohol before committing their crimes in order to calm their nerves. But aside from that, drugs and alcohol hardly play a role in cold-blooded crimes.

### **A Need for Reward at Any Cost**

What likely goes on in the minds of such violent criminals is extremely difficult to assess. Psychologists and neurobiologists have both looked for answers. Last year, United States researchers at Vanderbilt University in Tennessee discovered an especially pronounced mechanism in the brain of psychopaths, namely that they have a need for reward at any cost.

Joshua Buckholtz, who led the Vanderbilt study, and his colleagues analyzed brain scans of people with psychopathic traits in their study. Whether or not Breivik's brain is also damaged in such a way remains unclear. And it would be almost incomprehensible to look for a passing diagnosis for such a crime.

Breivik is not the only mass murderer in history to painstakingly plan and organize his crime. "The biggest difference is that it worked," says Hoffmann, because killing so many people would involve especially complex planning.

Self-aggrandizement is another common trait among cold-blooded killers like Breivik, according to Hoffmann. "He enjoys being the lord over life and death," he says.

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