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Blowback: Attack on Canadian Parliament Leaves Ottawa Stunned

By Jason Ditz

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An attack on Parliament Hill in the Canadian capital city of Ottawa left the city, and indeed the world, stunned, as a gunman killed a Canadian soldier at the war memorial before being gunned down himself.

The soldier was an honor guard at the National War Memorial, and officials say his gun was ceremonial, and wasn't even loaded. Canadian military officials have ordered troops in the Ottawa area to not go out wearing uniforms unless they're on duty.

The big question mark over the incident remains reports of multiple shooters earlier in the day. Only the single attacker was ever caught, and people are awfully nervous about the prospect that the attack is not actually over.

They weren't the only ones who were nervous, as the incident also sent NORAD into an alert posture, with more warplanes flying across North America on the prospect of having to respond to such an attack.

Ottawa, a city of almost 900,000 people, has seen only five murders all year, and terror attacks in Canada are virtually unheard of. Yet Canada's foreign policy, and particularly its role in NATO's overseas operations have meant resentment was building, and this sort of blowback was only a matter of time.

There doesn't seem to be any real dispute that the attack was ideological in nature, and Canadian Premier Stephen Harper says the shooter, Michael Zehaf-Bibeau, was known to Canadian authorities already, and designated a "high-risk traveler" who could not travel abroad.

That must inevitably draw comparison to Monday's hit-and-run attack in Quebec by Martin Couture-Rouleau, who ran over a pair of Canadian soldiers and sped off. He was also being tracked as a potentially "radicalized" citizen of Canada.

The incidents both come as Canada's parliament is moving forward with more draconian anti-terror laws, aiming to dramatically increase the power of security agencies.

Unfortunately for Canadians, the very same policies that are triggering this blowback are likely to only get worse in the wake of the attacks, as officials are already talking up granting even more power to the CSIS spy agency.