

Incident Assessment

Mass Shooting at Colorado Movie Theater

Aurora, Colorado

Friday, July 20, 2012



NJ ROIC Analysis Element

AE201207-1246

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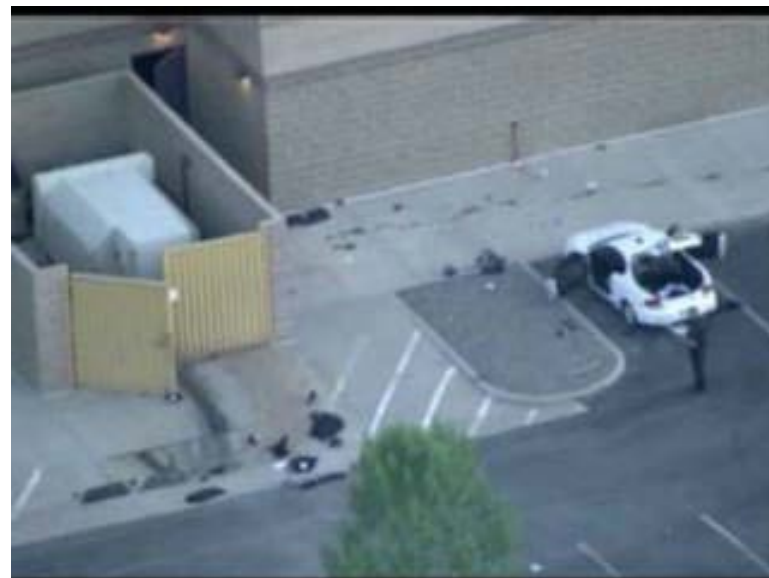
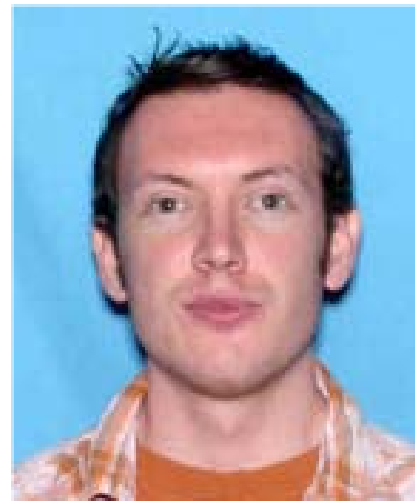
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Incident Overview

- **July 20, 2011:** James Eagan Holmes, a 24-year-old male, allegedly shot and killed 12 people and wounded approximately 38 more after opening fire in a crowded movie theater during a showing of the new Batman movie, “The Dark Knight Rises.”
 - The shooting erupted during the midnight showing at the multiplex in Aurora, Colorado, not far from Denver, where a large crowd had gathered, some dressed as characters from the highly anticipated Batman sequel.
 - Holmes began the attack by throwing two gas canisters into the theater after entering through an exit door that had been propped open. Witnesses stated many assumed it was a promotional stunt related to the movie and did not initially react. After both canisters had deployed, Holmes commenced shooting into the crowd.
 - Holmes departed the theater after the attack and was arrested by local police next to his vehicle without incident.
 - Police later recovered a total of 4 guns, including 2 pistols, a rifle, and a shotgun as well as a gas mask. Holmes was also wearing a bulletproof vest.
 - After his arrest, Holmes warned police that his apartment (located nearby in Aurora, CO) was booby-trapped, leading police to evacuate the apartment complex. Current reports, not confirmed at this time, indicate this claim is true as the investigation continues.

Suspect Information

- James Eagan Holmes
- 24 years old, D.O.B. 12/13/87
- White male
- 6 feet, 3 inches tall
- Address: Apartment complex in Aurora, approximately five miles from the Century 16 movie theater
- Graduated High School in San Diego, California
- Dropped out of University of Colorado Medical School in June
- Motive: Unknown, appears to be a lone offender



Threat Overview

- The New Jersey ROIC has no specific information regarding a credible threat related to this event in New Jersey.
- This is not considered a terrorist act at this time. There is no known connection between the suspect and any terrorist networks.
- The greatest threat facing security officials today is that of the Lone Offender or Homegrown Violent Extremist due to the focus on relatively simple plots with short operational cycles which limit opportunities for law enforcement to detect and disrupt plots.
- While this incident does not involve any nexus to terrorism, it highlights the inherent difficulties in dealing with lone offender / active shooter incidents.
- Incident also shows the inherent vulnerability of traditionally “soft targets” in the commercial sector which includes Casinos/Hotels, Malls, Shopping Centers, Sports and Entertainment venues, Schools (including Faith Based), and Hospitals.

Indicators of Pre-Operational Activity

- *Law enforcement officials and private sector security personnel should be vigilant of suspicious behaviors indicating potential pre-operational activity. Such indicators include, but are not limited to:*
 - Surveillance of potential targets
 - Increase in threats from unidentified sources by phone, e-mail, or postal mail
 - Photographing or videotaping facilities, security posts, and entry/exit points
 - Taking notes of activities, ceremonial times, or celebrations drawing large crowds
 - Questioning of facility employees or employees associating with suspicious individuals
 - Marking camera locations
 - Possession of fraudulent ID documents, blueprints, evacuation plans
 - Bulky clothing used to conceal explosive devices or small arm weapons
 - Unattended backpacks, briefcases, duffel bags, boxes, or other items
 - Suspicious vehicles (unattended, close proximity, parked illegally, etc.)
 - Nervous behavior (limited eye contact, profuse sweating, avoidance of security officials, etc.)

Implications for New Jersey

- At this time there is no connection to New Jersey or nexus to terrorism. Indices checks were run and suspect does not appear to have any connection to New Jersey at this time.
- The potential terrorist threat to the commercial sector in New Jersey is high and an incident such as this illustrates the inherent vulnerability of soft targets throughout the state.
- The potential exists for actors to mirror or become inspired by previous events (copy-cat).

Suspicious Activity Reporting & Contact Information

Any suspicious activity with a possible nexus to terrorism in New Jersey should be reported immediately following existing protocols specific to respective counties. Activity can also be reported to CT Watch located at the ROIC by dialing 2-1-1 or (866) 4SAFENJ (866-472-3365), or by e-mailing Tips@NJHomelandSecurity.gov.

Any agency with information or comments/questions about this document should contact the NJ ROIC Analysis Element - Threat Analysis Program at (609) 963-6900, ext. 6243, or njroicanalysis@gw.njsp.org.