# Orlando Terror Attack

Fireguard 6/12/16





# June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016: Orlando ISIS Gunman Attacks Gay Nightclub

### <u>ISIS sympathizer opens fire</u> <u>in crowded nightclub</u>

Attacks with military-style weapons

Assault rifle, handgun

3-hour standoff with hostages

Most shooting in first 16 min

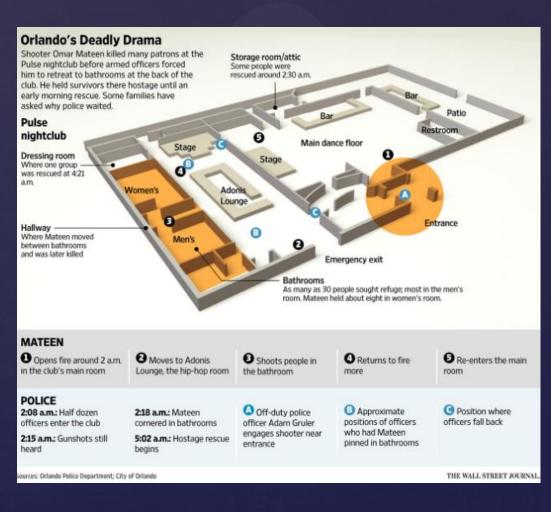
Pledges allegiance to ISIS

Phone call and social media

### Worst Mass Shooting in U.S. History

50 dead

49 victims, plus gunman
 53 injured



# Initial Attack: Mass Shooting

1:58 am: Gunman enters club and begins shooting

2:02 am: Off-duty police officer (working as security guard) returns fire

2:08 am: Police respond and officers force gunman to retreat to the bathroom, where he takes hostages.

2:18 am: SWAT team responds



- Tactics soon switch from "active shooter" to "hostage barricade"
- Police units are withdrawn from the building

## Standoff in the Club

2:35 am: Gunman calls 911 and pledges his allegiance to ISIS

2:48-3:27 am: Three phone calls with police negotiators

- Says attack is in response to U.S. military operations against ISIS
- Claims to have a vehicle rigged with explosives parked outside
- Uses Facebook to post his allegiance

4:21 am: Police help 8 victims escape through an air conditioning vent

4:29 am: Escapees report plans to strap victims with explosives

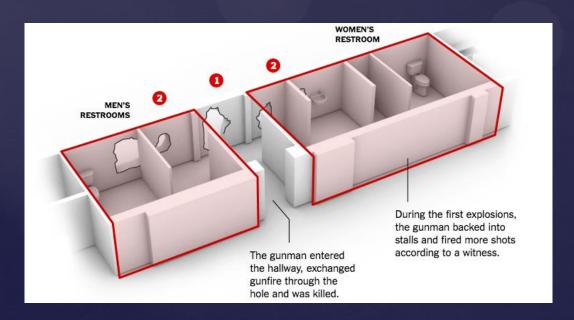


# Police Make Entry

5:02 am: Police use armored vehicle to break through building wall

5:14 am: Police enter and kill gunman in shootout

- Responders reach victims inside club
- 40 pronounced dead at the scene
- 26 transported, 9 died at the hospital





# **Homegrown Terrorist**

### Gunman identified as 29-year-old Omar Mateen

- American citizen born in NY, lived in Florida
- No direct communication with ISIS
- Noted history of homophobia
- History of domestic violence
- Religious practice recently became more devout

### Previously investigated for terrorist ties

- FBI investigated in 2013 and 2014
  - Suspected ties to Florida-born ISIS militant
  - Reportedly boasted of Al Qaeda, Hezbollah ties
- Investigations were closed



# **Key Takeaways**

- 1) Delayed medical response
- 2) Venues as soft targets
- 3) Military-style equipment
- 4) Electronic messaging
- 5) MCI at the Firehouse

# 1) Delayed Medical Response

Emergency medical attention to gunshot victims was delayed when police units withdrew from the building

### Threat of secondary explosive devices led to withdrawal of responders

- Gunman claimed to have bombs
- Battery from exit light mistaken for explosive
- PD remained outside during 3-hour standoff

### Paramedics were denied entry to the building

- Needed PD force protection to make entry
- Remained at staging area out of blast range
- No triage and rapid treatment was attempted



Police help remove a victim, who was then transported in a pickup truck

Critically wounded victims received no treatment for 3 hours

# Impact of Delayed Access

Rapid access to patients is vital in an active shooter incident

### START is a primary pre-hospital MCI tactic

- START = Simple Triage And Rapid Treatment
- Identify and treat life threatening injuries
- Gunshot wounds, heavy bleeding addressed
- Quick access is critical

### Victims in club treated when area was safe

- Over 3 hours after initial attack
- Of 66 people found inside, only 17 survived.
- Many victims had multiple gunshot wounds



Civilians carry a gunshot victim to responders, staged a distance away

### Similar incident

San Bernardino, 2015: SWAT team with medic made rapid entry

# Active Shooter vs. Hostage Barricade

Transition from "active shooter" to "hostage barricade" protocol delayed entry for medical treatment

PD determined gunman's actions became a hostage situation

Retreated to bathroom, took hostages, stopped shooting

Tactics changed to a more defensive approach

- PD units withdrew to building exterior
- Paramedics could not enter with PD protection
- Prioritized preventing escalation over treating existing victims

Prisoners were more likely "doomed captives" than "hostages"

- Tactic used by ISIS and other Islamic terror groups
- Intention is to kill the "hostages" no matter what
- Purpose = maximize media coverage by lengthening attack
  - Tactic referenced in AQ "Inspire" bulletin (see slide 13)

### Similar incidents

- Mumbai, 2008 Jewish Center
- Paris, 2015 Bataclan Theater



# 2) Venues as Soft Targets

### Large entertainment venues can be prime soft targets

- Large number of unsuspecting victims
- Limited egress for fleeing crowds
  - May not be aware of alternate exits
- Can be dark and loud
  - Obscures reality of attack
- Party atmosphere can contribute to confusion
  - Possibly intoxicated victims
  - Expectation of entertainment, costumes

Many Pulse victims thought gunshots were part of the music

### Similar incidents

- Paris, 2015 Bataclan Theater (89 dead)
- Aurora, 2012 Movie Theater (12 dead)
- Moscow, 2002 Dubrovka Theater (170 dead)



Interior of Pulse nightclub

# Targeted: Gay Nightclub

### Pulse: popular gay nightclub

- Crowded near capacity roughly 300 people
- Limited egress points = trapped victims
- Loud music masked gunshots
  - Delay in recognizing attack

### Gunman was familiar with club

- Had previously frequented the club
- Knew layout, egress points

### Possible anti-gay motivation

- Homosexuality condemned by radical Islam
  - Punishable by death in some countries
- ISIS has history of executing gay men
  - Distributed multiple videos of executions



Most victims were part of the gay community

# Al Qaeda Offers its Insight

AQ issued a bulletin to celebrate the Orlando attack and analyze tactics for future "Lone Jihadists"

### AQ's benefits of targeting "general gatherings"

- Enclosed area made it easy to "chase and hunt targets"
- Late night timing ensured targets were drunk
- Enabled him to "take many hostages and lengthen the battle for as long as possible...so the whole world listened"

### AQ's future recommendations

- Add homemade explosives to gunfire to maximize death toll
- Attack "areas where the Anglo-Saxon community is generally concentrated"



# 3) Military-style Equipment

Military-style equipment was central to the attack and police response

### Terrorist used military-style weapons to maximize bloodshed

- Strength of firearms and size of ammunition contributed to high death toll
- Background as security guard gave him experience with firearms

Sig Sauer Assault Rifle
.223 caliber
30 round magazine capacity
Similar to AR-15



Glock 17 semi-automatic handgun
17 round standard capacity
9mm caliber



# Life-saving Protection

Military-style protective equipment enabled the police to engage and kill the gunman

Kevlar helmet saved the life of an officer shot in the head while entering the building

(actual helmet pictured)



Armored vehicle was used to breach the building wall, allowing police to engage the gunman

(photo of similar vehicle - not from this incident)



# 4) Electronic Messaging

Electronic messaging and social media were used throughout the attack by both the victims and the attacker.

- Gunman used social media (Facebook) to pledge his allegiance to ISIS and threaten future attacks
- Many hostages sent text and other messages, leading gunman to confiscate cell phones
- Several victims' last moments were captured through electronic messaging (text messages, social media)
- Pulse nightclub used social media (Facebook) to make emergency announcement



Image of Snapchat video sent to family member before victim was killed

# Real-time Intelligence

Electronic messaging provided real-time intelligence from inside the club

### PD obtained info through 3<sup>rd</sup> party

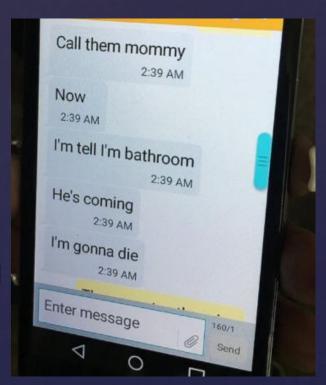
- People texted friends/family, who then told PD
- Victims could have communicated to PD directly

### 911 calls from bathroom, forced to whisper

Speaking may compromise safety

### Social media is emerging communication channel

- Victims posted to Twitter from inside club
- Gunman posted to Facebook during attack
- Club posted emergency message to Facebook



Text messages sent by a victim to a family member before he was killed

Responders should consider seeking a means of receiving electronic messaging directly from the public

# 5) MCI at the Firehouse

Bloodied victims arrived at firehouse before firefighters

were aware of the attack

### Firefighters faced with mass casualty incident with no warning or dispatch information

- Firehouse was down the street from attack
- Disoriented, bloody victims came to the door
- Gunshots could be still be heard

### Critical decision:

Danger to responders vs. Life threatening injuries to victims

- How much action should be taken when faced with uncertain danger?

Consider all available information



Triage was set up across the street from firehouse

Decision made to wait inside firehouse until armed police could be seen outside Once assured of safety, firefighters opened doors and provided care

# Next Steps

Agencies nationwide are working to develop active shooter response policies

### Potential challenges:

### Interagency coordination

- Response will involve multiple agencies
  - Law enforcement (local PD, FBI, etc.)
  - Medical care (FD, EMS, Hospitals)

### Need for specialized protective equipment

Responders must be trained

### Identifying potential targets

- Terrorists look for "general gatherings"
- Be aware of areas of public assembly



Recent video shows ISIS flag over the Las Vegas strip

All responders must know response procedures
Active shooters can strike anywhere...