

# San Bernardino Terror Attack

## Fireguard



FDNY Center for Terrorism and Disaster Preparedness



# Dec. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2015, San Bernardino: Militant Homegrown Jihadist Duo Conducts Terror Attack at Holiday Party

- Planned attack on gathering attended by male perpetrator
- Confined to banquet room and immediate area; shooters left scene
- Secondary sites
  - 1) Street where shootout occurred 3½ hours after initial attack
  - 2) Jihadists' home and garage
- Weapons: semi-automatic rifles and pistols; IEDs
- 14 killed, 22 injured



# Attack – Initial Phase

*Married couple, Syed Ritzwan Farook (28) and Tashfeen Malik (29), leave six-month-old daughter with Farook's mother at their shared home in Redlands, Calif., on premise of doctor's appointment. Farook arrives early to Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino where staff meeting/training event is being held. Farook leaves abruptly, possibly under apparent "angry" circumstances, as event is transitioning from meeting to holiday luncheon.*

**10:59 am**: Farook returns to gathering with Malik, both wearing ski masks and dressed in black tactical-style clothing. The pair open fire in the banquet room with assault rifles, expending 65-75 rounds.

**11:00 am**: First 911 calls received

**11:03 am (approx)**: The masked assailants are seen calmly leaving the premises in a black SUV.

**11:04 am**: Police begin to arrive on scene. Witness describes suspects and vehicle to police.

**11:07 am**: First San Bernardino Fire units arrive



San Bernardino Fire  
@SBCityFire



SBFD units responding to reports of 20 victim shooting incident in 1300 block of S. Waterman. SBPD is working to clear the scene.

2:14 PM – 2 Dec 2015 3,763 Retweets 964 Likes

# Attack – Response Phase

11:05 am: SWAT team works with police and sheriffs deputies to clear first floor of building—turn hot zone to warm

11:05 am -12:25 pm (approx): Medic embedded with SWAT team works initial triage of banquet room with assistance from police officers, who carry wounded outside for initial bandaging, then to squad cars for transport to fire department treatment area

Before 12:25 pm (approx): IED discovered in building after wounded removed; bomb squad called in



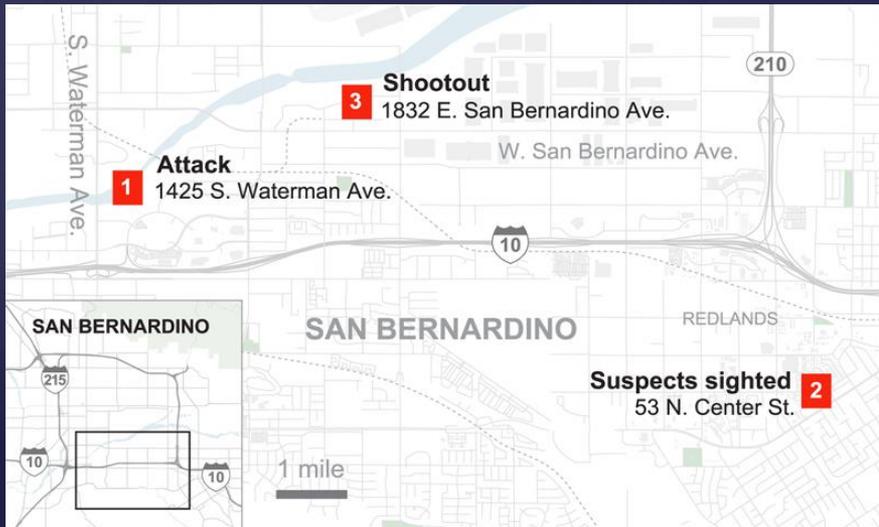
Site of shooting – outlined in red  
Patient care area – dotted circle



# Final Confrontation

3:00 pm: Police obtain address of Farook's Redlands home and head there for surveillance, but instead chase attackers as they flee the home.

3:25 pm: Police pursuit culminates in shootout on street (East San Bernardino Blvd, about three miles from original attack site) Farook was shot after exiting stopped vehicle and Malik was shot while firing at police from back seat.



# Key Takeaways

- 1) “Inspired” Attack Modality
- 2) Target of Opportunity
- 3) “Hit and Run” Attack
- 4) Crowdsourcing Intelligence
- 5) Rapid Tactical Response

# “Inspired” Attack Modality

*Modality was typical of attacks inspired by terrorist propaganda.*

*ISIS encourages “inspired” attacks – now they occur more frequently*

## Characteristics of Attack:

- 1) **Target was close to home**
  - Personal connection to target
- 2) **Not a suicide mission**
  - Attempted escape
- 3) **Intended additional attacks**
  - Had weapons for other targets
- 4) **Imperfect execution**
  - Explosives did not detonate

## Characteristics of Attackers:

- 1) **American citizen/resident**
  - One attacker was born and raised in U.S.
- 2) **Self-radicalized**
  - No direct contact with terrorist organization
- 3) **No combat experience**
  - Limited experience with weapons

# “Inspired” Attack vs. Directed Attack

## San Bernardino (2015)

- Inspired by terrorist propaganda
- Single attack location
- Not suicide – attempted escape
- Inexperienced attackers
- Explosives malfunctioned
- Attackers showed no prior terrorist activity

## Paris (2015)

- Directed by ISIS operatives
- Multiple coordinated attacks
- Suicide attackers
- Combat experienced attackers
- All explosives functioned
- Several attackers were known to authorities

# Similar “Inspired” Attacks

## Boston (2013)

- Two attackers detonated bombs at Boston Marathon, killing 3
- Attackers were American citizens (raised in U.S.)
- No combat history
- Not suicide attack – attempted escape
- Killed a police officer after bombing and intended additional attacks

## Chattanooga (2015)

- Lone gunman shot at military recruitment centers, killing 5
- Attacker was American citizen (raised in U.S.)
- No combat history
- Not suicide attack – killed in police shootout
- Attacked 2<sup>nd</sup> target after initial shooting

*Attackers at both incidents had no direct contact with a terrorist organization*

# Target of Opportunity

*Ease of availability, not strategic importance, makes target attractive*

- 1) Easily accessible, no security
- 2) Crowds of people present
- 3) Limited symbolic or strategic significance

## **Inland Regional Center as “Target of Opportunity”**

- Longtime work place of shooter = easy access and escape
- Pre-attack surveillance, attack rehearsal easily facilitated.
- Farook attended annual holiday gathering/meeting prior year

## **Other targets of opportunity discovered in investigation**

- Before meeting Malik, Farook planned attacks with a friend in 2012
- Prior targets included: Farook’s former college and a nearby highway

# Workplace as Target of Opportunity

## Fort Hood 2009

- Homegrown/self-radicalized jihadist (Nidal Hasan)
- (Legal) purchase of semi-automatic firearm
- Accumulation of thousands of rounds of ammunition
- First entered gathering—as insider—then opened fire
- Selected victims (uniformed over civilians)
- Initial report of three shooters
- 13 killed, 30 injured
- Attempted escape, killed in shootout

## San Bernardino 2015

- Homegrown/self-radicalized jihadist (Farook)
- (Legal) purchase of semi-automatic firearms (neighbor)
- Accumulation of thousands of round of ammunition
- First entered gathering—as invitee—then left, came back and opened fire
- Selected victims (confined to coworker gathering)
- Initial report of three shooters
- 14 killed, 22 injured
- Attempted escape, killed in shootout

# Hit and Run Attack

## *Not a suicide mission*

*Armed and ready for confrontation, but seek to escape.*

- While attackers may be willing to die, suicide/Fedayeen\* is not the plan
- Attackers plan to survive initial attack in order to carry out further attacks
- Attackers may be found with an arsenal of weapons

## Response concerns

- Law enforcement and other uniformed responders are legitimate targets
- Secondary devices are of great concern
- Number and whereabouts of attackers must be clarified

\*Fedayeen (Arabic: فدائيين *fidā'īyīn*, "those who sacrifice themselves")

Derives from the word فداء *fidā'*, which means redemption. Literally, someone who redeems himself by risking or sacrificing his life.

# Hit and Run vs. Suicide Attack

## Hit and Run

- 1) Boston 2013 (blow & go)
- 2) San Bernardino 2015 (shoot & scoot)

### *Characteristics:*

- Two attackers
- Immediately left scene
- Planned additional attack(s)
- Willing to kill their way to escape



## Suicide/Fedayeen

- 1) Mumbai 2008 (fedayeen)
- 2) Paris 2015 (suicide/fedayeen)

### *Characteristics:*

- Small groups of attackers
- Secondary Devices
- Responders Targeted
- Delayed patient care due to standoff



# Crowdsourcing Intelligence

*Information from the public was key to attack response*

- Witness on scene told PD the attackers left the scene in a black SUV
- Tip from neighbor led police to find attackers as they left their home
- Wounded coworkers were able to identify Farook by name



*Information from the public could have also helped identify suspicious behavior*

# Suspicious Activity Reporting

*Neighbors noticed suspicious activity at the attackers' house, but did not report it*

- Neighbor noticed many packages being delivered and increased activity in the garage.
- Source did not report due to fear of “profiling”
- Neighbors, friends, and family can often notice signs of radicalization before an attack
- Several hurdles to suspicious activity reporting:
  - Fear of being considered racially prejudiced
  - Unfamiliar with reporting procedure
  - Hesitant to be involved in criminal investigation



# Rapid Tactical Response

*The rapid tactical response was critical in minimizing fatalities*

- Police were on scene within 4 minutes of call
- SWAT team was at a nearby active shooter drill
  - They already had proper equipment
  - They were on-scene quickly
  - The SWAT team medic was present
- As SWAT cleared the area, the medic used white tape to triage patients
  - Patients were then brought to exterior site
- Sprinkler system and fire alarm activation complicated response



# San Bernardino FD Operations

- Fire Department operations were limited to patient care
- The first medic on scene was a San Bernardino firefighter who responded as part of the SWAT team
- This firefighter was “embedded” in the SWAT team as their medic and was specially trained for these incidents
- Later arriving firefighters also entered the warm area to assist in patient care and removal
  - Entry made after area secured by PD



# Prepared by the FDNY Center for Terrorism and Disaster Preparedness

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