



Situational Awareness Report

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Updated Analysis of Mass Shootings from December 2012 to October 2013 – Commonalities and Trends

10 October 2013

(U//FOUO) NJ ROIC Intelligence & Analysis Threat Unit ~ #IAU201310-2063

Introduction

(U//FOUO) The New Jersey Regional Operations Intelligence Center (NJ ROIC) provides the following updated analysis of mass shootings in the last year (December 2012 to October 2013) in order to provide law enforcement personnel, security managers and emergency personnel with identified commonalities and trends, as well as indicators of potential violence.

(U//FOUO) From December 2012 to October 2013, there were four mass shooting incidents in the United States, in which at least five people were killed. All of the four incidents are consistent with the findings previously presented in the NJ ROIC product *Mass Shootings Analysis – Commonalities and Trends*, dated 28 November 2012. That product examined 29 mass shooting incidents in the United States since 1999, to include the Sikh temple shooting in Oak Creek, Wisconsin; the Aurora, Colorado movie theater shooting; Rep. Gabrielle Giffords shooting in Tucson, Arizona; the Fort Hood, Texas military base shooting, among others. [insert hyperlink]

Key Findings

(U//FOUO) The four mass shootings incidents from December 2012 to October 2013 were analyzed to identify commonalities and trends. These include the following:

- All of the recent attacks were conducted by males between the ages of 20 and 42.
- The shootings all occurred in varied locations. One being considered a “spree killing” since it occurred in more than one location.
- All of the active shooters were single attackers.
- In all of the latest incidents, the active shooters took their own lives or were shot by law enforcement, thus leaving their true motives uncertain.
- Only one of the four incidents involved a former member of the U.S. military.
- In at least two of the incidents, the shooters were known to have some type of mental illness.
- Semiautomatic handguns remain the weapon of choice for mass shootings. The mass shootings that have occurred in the past 10 months are consistent with previous commonalities and trends reported.

Recent U.S. Mass Shooting Events

(U//FOUO) On September 16, 2013 former Navy Reservist, Aaron Alexis shot and killed 12 people and wounded 4 at the headquarters of the Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) inside the Washington Navy Yard in Southeast Washington, D.C., before he was shot and killed by law

enforcement.¹ The Washington Navy Yard Shooting is considered one of the deadliest military installation shootings since the November 2009 Fort Hood shooting.

(U//FOUO) Alexis was an information technology employee with a defense company, who used a valid identification to gain access into the Washington Navy Yard.² Alexis used a Remington 870 shotgun during his shooting spree, which he purchased at the Sharpshooters Small Arms Range in Virginia. Alexis inquired about purchasing a handgun, but was denied because the federal law prohibits the sale of handgun directly to non-state residence.³

(U//FOUO) On the day of the shooting, Alexis entered Building 197 of the NAVSEA with the disassembled shotgun concealed in his back pack. He assembled the shotgun in the bathroom and then began shooting random employees. During the shooting spree, Alexis killed a security officer and took his Beretta 9MM semiautomatic pistol, which he also used after he ran out of ammunition for his shotgun.⁴ Both of the weapons were recovered at the scene and submitted to the FBI. According to the FBI, there were alterations made and writing on the shotgun. For example:⁵

- The Remington 870 shotgun had been altered with a sawed-off barrel and stock.⁶
- Purple duct tape covered the end of the stock and handwritten etchings were present on various parts of the shotgun.⁷
- Etched into the barrel of the shotgun were the words “End to the torment!”⁸
- Etched into the right side of the shotgun receiver were the words “Not what yall say!” and;⁹
- Etched into the left side of the receiver were the phrases “Better off this way!” and “My ELF weapon!”¹⁰

(U//FOUO) The term ELF is believed to mean ‘Extremely Low Frequency,’ and can refer to weather or communication efforts.¹¹ The investigation showed multiple indicators that he had delusions that he was being controlled by extremely-low-frequency (ELF) electromagnetic waves. Investigators believe that the etching of “My ELF weapon!” on the receiver of the shotgun is a reference to these waves. In one of the documents found on his electronic devices, Alexis wrote: “An ultra low frequency attack is what I’ve been subjected to for the last three months, and to be perfectly honest, that is what has driven me to this.” The FBI says that the Navy has legitimately used ELF technology, but that there are conspiracy theories regarding the use of ELF waves in government mind-control and manipulation programs.

(U//FOUO) It was also reported that Alexis had a history of run-ins with law enforcement as well as a history of mental illness.

- In August 2013, Alexis complained to Newport, Rhode Island police that people were talking to him through the walls and ceilings of his hotel rooms and sending microwave vibrations into his body to deprive him of sleep. According to open source reporting, the report by local police was provided to the Navy base in Newport but may not have been forwarded to Alexis’s employer or other Navy officials.¹²
- In 2010, in Fort Worth, Texas he fired a gun through his apartment ceiling.¹³
- In 2004 in Seattle, Washington he shot the tires of a truck belonging to someone he thought had disrespected him; it was described to officers as an “anger-fueled blackout.”¹⁴

(U//FOUO) Alexis sought treatment at two different U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) hospitals in recent months for insomnia and told doctors he was not thinking of harming others.¹⁵ The visits to the VA hospitals started two weeks after the Rhode Island incident.

(U//FOUO) The investigation has determined that Alexis acted alone. There are no indications that he was targeting specific individuals. Investigators believe that he fired at random targets. Alexis had a meeting regarding a performance-related issue on September 13, but there is no indication that this triggered the incident. There are no indications that Alexis knew any of the individuals he shot.

(U) In addition to the Washington Navy Yard shooting, three additional incidents resulting in the deaths of at least five people have occurred from the period of late December 2012 – October 2013:

- ***Hialeah Apartment Shooting*** – Hialeah, FL (July 2013) - Pedro Vargas, 42, set fire to his apartment, killed six people in the complex, and held another two hostages at gunpoint before a SWAT team stormed the building and fatally shot him.¹⁶
- ***Santa Monica Rampage*** – Santa Monica, CA (June 2013) - John Zawahri, 23, armed with a homemade assault rifle and high-capacity magazines, killed his brother and father at home during an alleged domestic dispute then headed to Santa Monica College, where he was eventually killed by police. Five people were killed and four people injured in the incident.¹⁷
- ***Sandy Hook Elementary School Shooting*** – Newtown, CT (December 2012) - Adam Lanza, 20, shot his mother dead at their home, then drove to Sandy Hook Elementary School where he forced his way inside and opened fire, killing 20 children and six adults before committing suicide.¹⁸ This was the worst elementary school shooting ever in the United States. In terms of number of deaths, it is the second-worst school shooting in the United States, exceeded only by the Virginia Tech massacre in April 2007.

(U//FOUO) The following chart provides detailed information on four mass shootings that occurred from December 2012 to October 2013:

	Washington, DC September 2013	Hialeah, FL July 2013	Santa Monica, California June 2013	Newtown, Connecticut December 2012
Age	34	42	23	20
Weapon/s	Remington 870 shotgun, altered with sawed off barrel and stock	Semiautomatic handgun	One rifle (assault), one handgun	Two semiautomatic handguns, one rifle (assault), one shotgun (assault)
Disguise	None	None	None	Military type clothing with bullet proof vest
Procedure	Carried weapon in backpack, assembled in men's room then opened fire inside building	Started fire then shot building managers and proceeded to shoot others before taking hostages	Killed father and brother at home, then set house on fire. Opened fire on campus.	Shot through glass door with rifle and opened fire at close range
Number of Assailants	1	1	1	1
Target Location	Military workplace	Apartment Building	Home and University	School
People Killed/Wounded	12 killed/4 injured	6 killed	5 killed/3 injured	26 killed/2 injured
Affiliation with Target	Former Navy Reservist	Fellow apartment residents	Relatives and unknown	Former student
Motive/Target	Former contractor	Unknown	Domestic	Unknown
History of Mental Illness/Incidents	Yes	Unclear	Unclear	Unclear
Prior Criminal Incidents	Yes	Yes	No	No
Warning Signs/Indicators	Yes; paranoia, heard voices	Yes; issues with harassment of former co-workers	No	No
Prior Military	Yes	No	No	No

Active Shooters: How to Respond

(U//FOUO) Following the tragedy that occurred at Virginia Tech in 2007, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security released a document with recommendations on what to do in the event of an active

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shooter situation. The most critical recommendation is for both law enforcement and the private sector to have training and conduct drills in order to be prepared for an active shooter incident.

(U//FOUO) In many of the case studies discussed, there were indicators of potential violence. The following is a list of warning signs that an employee may exhibit in the workplace¹⁹:

- Increased use of alcohol and/or illegal drugs.
- Unexplained increase in absenteeism; vague physical complaints.
- Noticeable decrease in attention to appearance and hygiene.
- Depression/withdrawal.
- Resistance and overreaction to changes in policy and procedures.
- Repeated violations of company policies.
- Increased severe mood swings.
- Noticeably unstable, emotional responses.
- Explosive outbursts of anger or rage without provocation.
- Suicidal; comments about “putting things in order.”
- Paranoid behavior or utterances (“Everybody is against me”).
- Increasingly talks of problems at home.
- Escalation of domestic problems into the workplace; talk of severe financial problems.
- Talk of previous incidents of violence.
- Empathy with individuals committing violence.
- Increase in unsolicited comments about firearms, dangerous weapons and violent crimes.

Suspicious Activity Reporting

(U//FOUO) 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 Tips@NJHomelandSecurity.gov.

Contact Information

(U//FOUO) Any agency with information or comments/questions about this document should contact the NJ ROIC Intelligence & Analysis Unit at (609) 963-6900, ext. 6212, or njroicanalysis@gw.njsp.org.

¹ (U) The Washington Post, “Authorities Identify Seven of the 12 People Killed in Navy Yard Shooting.” Available at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/police-search-for-active-shooter-on-grounds-of-washington-navy-yard-in-southeast-dc/2013/09/16/b1d72b9a-1ecb-11e3-b7d1-7153ad47b549_story.html

² (U) The New York Times, “Gunmen and 12 Victims Killed in Shooting at DC Navy Yard,” September 16, 2013. Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/17/us/shooting-reported-at-washington-navy-yard.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

³ (U) The Washington Post, “Inside Sharpshooters, the Newington Gun Store Where Aaron Alexis Bought his Shotgun,” September 18, 2013. Available at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/local/wp/2013/09/18/inside-sharpshooters-the-newington-gun-store-where-aaron-alexis-bought-his-shotgun/>

⁴ (U) Newsday, “Navy Yard Gunmen Aaron Alexis Had Mental Problems: Sources,” September 16, 2013. Available at: <http://www.newsday.com/news/nation/navy-yard-gunman-aaron-alexis-had-mental-problems-sources-1.6088123>

⁵ (U) Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington Field Office, “Law Enforcement Shares Findings of the Investigations into the Washington Navy Yard Shooting,” September 25, 2013. Available at: <http://www.fbi.gov/washingtondc/press-releases/2013/law-enforcement-shares-findings-of-the-investigation-into-the-washington-navy-yard-shootings>

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ The Washington Post, "Officials: Navy Yard Shooter Carved Odd Messages into His Gun Before Carnage," September 18, 2013. Available at: http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-09-18/local/42167335_1_enforcement-police-rhode-island

¹² (U) USA Today "Navy base didn't consider Navy Yard shooter a threat", September 19, 2013, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2013/09/18/navy-yard-shooting-aaron-alexis/2832451/>

¹³ (U) NBC Dallas Fort Worth, "Aaron Alexis' History of Gun Incidents", September 17, 2013, <http://www.nbcdfw.com/news/local/Aaron-Alexis-Fort-Worth-Arrest-Report-223953911.html>

¹⁴ NBCDFW, "Aaron Alexis' History of Gun Incidents," September 17, 2013. Available at: <http://www.nbcdfw.com/news/local/Aaron-Alexis-Fort-Worth-Arrest-Report-223953911.html>

¹⁵ (U) Washington Post, "Navy Yard gunman Aason Alexis told VA doctors he was not thinking of harming others" September 18, 2013, http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-09-18/politics/42184997_1_va-doctors-veterans-affairs-medication

¹⁶ (U) CBS News. "Pedro Vargas ID'd as gunman behind deadly rampage in Hialeah, Florida", July 27, 2013. Available at: http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-201_162-57595796/pedro-vargas-idd-as-gunman-behind-deadly-rampage-in-hialeah-florida/ <http://www.miamiherald.com/2013/07/28/3528362/little-about-pedro-vargas-life.html>

¹⁷ (U) CBS News, "John Zawahri, suspected gunman in deadly Santa Monica shooting, left farewell note, police say", June 14, 2013. Available at: http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-504083_162-57589327-504083/john-zawahri-suspected-gunman-in-deadly-santa-monica-shooting-left-farewell-note-police-say/

¹⁸ (U) NBC News, "Authorities ID gunman who killed 27 in elementary school massacre", December 14, 2012. Available at: http://usnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2012/12/14/15911025-authorities-id-gunman-who-killed-27-in-elementary-school-massacre

¹⁹ (U) DHS, *Active Shooter: How to Respond*, October 2008, http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/active_shooter_booklet.pdf