



TERRORISM ASSESSMENT

August 4, 2010

NYPD Counterterrorism Bureau
Terrorism Threat Analysis Group

Open Source Assessment

Active Shooter Incident: Hartford Distributors

Information Cutoff: 12 p.m. August 4, 2010

Key Points

- Shortly after 7:30 a.m. on August 3, 2010, Omar Thornton opened fire at employees at Hartford Distributors, a Budweiser warehouse in Manchester, CT.
- The shooting occurred after Thornton, a driver, complied in signing a letter of resignation at a disciplinary hearing.
- Thornton shot and killed 8 employees, wounded 2 others, before killing himself.
- After shooting his coworkers, Thornton phoned family members and allegedly revealed his motive for the attack.



Image of Budweiser warehouse (AP)

Details of Incident

Thornton was called in by his employer and shown video surveillance footage of him stealing beer from the facility. After calmly signing a letter of resignation, and not contesting the accusations against him, Thornton opened fire on coworkers at the facility for a period spanning only minutes.¹ One witness suspected that Thornton was carrying a weapon in the lunch bag he brought to work.²

Authorities stated that victims were found throughout the facility, and it is unclear if specific individuals were targeted. However, among the dead were some who attended Thornton's disciplinary hearing. Around 35-40 employees were in the 77,000 square foot facility at the time of the attack, according to the company VP.³ After shooting the employees, Thornton phoned his mother, speaking with her and his uncle. His mother spoke to him for 10 minutes, but was unsuccessful



Authorities converge on facility (AP)

¹ Bailey Jr., Everton, "Family: Racial bias caused Conn. gunman to snap," *Associated Press*, August 4, 2010.

² Altimari, Dave, and, Owens, David, "9 Dead In Manchester, Conn. Workplace Shooting," *Hartford Courant*, August 3, 2010.

³ Altimari, Dave, and, Owens, David, "9 Dead In Manchester, Conn. Workplace Shooting," *Hartford Courant*, August 3, 2010.

in talking Thornton out of killing himself. According to his uncle, after shooting co-workers, Thornton hid as police moved in.⁴

According to local media, police units from Manchester and neighboring communities, including East Hartford SWAT, responded to the shooting. The scene was described as ‘chaotic,’ with employees fleeing and a fire inside the facility caused by a tipped-over forklift. Police first searched the warehouse area, and then the office of the facility where they came across Thornton, who was dead from an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound.⁵ A police spokesman speculated that Thornton shot himself after being ‘funneled’ to an area of the building.⁶ Police later found weapons in Thornton’s car, but did not specify make or model. Employees were evacuated from the facility to a local high school.

Background & Possible Motive

Before being confronted on stealing beer from his workplace, Thornton, 34, had no history of complaints/disciplinary action against him. According to his girlfriend, Thornton possessed a pistol permit.

His relatives claim that Thornton, who is African-American, suffered from racial harassment, and finally ‘cracked.’ According to his girlfriend’s mother, Thornton said he found a picture of a noose and a racial epithet written on a bathroom wall. While on the phone after the shooting, Thornton stated, “I killed the five racists that was there that was bothering me,” according to the uncle. However, according to a union official, Thornton never filed complaint on grounds of racism.⁷

Conclusions

This incident suggests that active shooter incidents may involve individuals who do not exhibit traits that can signal a potential threat; such as aggressive behavior, or visible animosity towards coworkers. Active shooter incidents may instigate a response from law enforcement personnel in more than one jurisdiction, requiring coordination to effectively identify and deal with the threat. This example demonstrates that security personnel and police may be confronted with a complex scenario; a chaotic scene at a large facility where it may be difficult to immediately identify and interdict the threat.

Implications for New York City

- Active shooter attacks continue to occur in schools, workplaces, and public venues.
- Disgruntled attackers may not signal their intent by openly revealing their hostility.
- In the first few minutes, the initial response will involve facility security personnel and employees. Response procedures should include:
 - Evacuate the building if it can be done in a safe manner
 - Relocate to a safe area and secure the area to the degree possible
 - Call 911 and relay information as calmly as possible
- In order to aid responding law enforcement, do not lock exit doors. When approached by a responding officer, stop moving and raise your hands so as to not appear as a threat.

⁴ Bailey Jr., Everton, “Family: Racial bias caused Conn. gunman to snap,” *Associated Press*, August 4, 2010.

⁵ Altimari, Dave, and, Owens, David, “9 Dead In Manchester, Conn. Workplace Shooting,” *Hartford Courant*, August 3, 2010.

⁶ FOX CT news broadcast, August 3, 2010.

⁷ Bailey Jr., Everton, “Family: Racial bias caused Conn. gunman to snap,” *Associated Press*, August 4, 2010.