

RESCUE, RESPONSE, AND RESILIENCE

A critical incident review of the Orlando public safety response
to the attack on the Pulse nightclub

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COPS
Community Oriented Policing Services
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Letter from the Director of the COPS Office

Colleagues:

I don't think any of us will forget the horror of the Pulse Nightclub attack in June of 2016. This horrific act claimed the lives of 49 innocent people and injured 58 others, making it at the time the worst attack in our country since September 11, 2001. Nor should we forget the bravery, strength, and professionalism of the Orlando Police Department (OPD) and the other first responders who responded to the incident. They performed with great heroism and skill in the midst of chaos and carnage.

The OPD's response, which was appropriate and consistent with national guidelines and best practices, saved lives. And the department also learned important lessons from this event, which can be of great value to other law enforcement and public safety organizations. To share them and identify best practices for effective response to similar attacks and mass casualty events, OPD Chief John W. Mina asked the COPS Office to conduct a critical incident review.

This report, which details aspects of the event and its aftermath, underscores the need for a national conversation about law enforcement policies, practices, and training for handling acts of mass public violence and terrorism. This discussion is especially important now, in an era when we face coordinated events, multisite attacks, explosive devices, and other unforeseen threats.

The report also stresses the fact that developing partnerships before an event occurs is critical to a successful response. In addition, it notes the vital role that communication to the public plays and highlights the importance of meeting the mental health needs of officers who have been involved in mass casualty incidents.

I applaud Chief Mina for requesting this comprehensive review and thank the Police Foundation and its technical team for developing the report. Its findings and recommendations will not only benefit the OPD but can also help other agencies prepare for similar situations.

As threats of terrorism persist and our law enforcement officers and first responders continue to put themselves in harm's way to protect us, efforts such as this can help save many lives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Russ Washington". The signature is stylized, with the first name "Russ" written in a cursive-like font and the last name "Washington" written in a more blocky, slightly slanted font.

Russ Washington
Acting Director
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services

Letter from the President of the Police Foundation

As I write this letter on October 2, 2017, the country is learning of yet another deadly shooting that occurred last night in Las Vegas, Nevada. It now has the dubious distinction of the worst mass murder on American soil since 9/11. At this moment, Las Vegas first responders are responding to a scene where at least 58 people were killed and hundreds wounded by a gunman who fired on a large crowd at a concert.

It is unfathomable to me how frequently our first responders are confronted with responding to horrific incidents such as this one and the one that occurred at Pulse on June 12, 2016. In recent years, there have been countless domestic and international mass casualty and terrorist attacks that highlight both the worst of humanity and the best—such as the bravery and resilience demonstrated by communities like Orlando.

Like many across the nation on June 12, 2016, my heart broke as I watched the news that Sunday morning. As the sun rose, it became apparent that Orlando was at that time the site of the deadliest terrorist attack on American soil since September 11, 2001. More than 100 innocent people were shot—leaving 49 dead and 53 with gunshot wounds, as well as five people with other injuries—as part of a vicious and senseless attack at the Pulse nightclub.

The challenges confronting the principal public safety agencies responding to this incident included: transitions in the operational and tactical strategies from active shooter to barricaded suspect with hostages to terrorism; the dark and difficult layout of the nightclub; the safety and well-being of countless hostages and officers; multiple local, state, and federal agencies arriving with sometimes overlapping roles and responsibilities; and agencies with differing policies and practices using different communications systems and protocols. In addition, the constant threat of secondary attacks and explosions required decisive action with little conclusive information under extremely grisly and difficult circumstances.

While our assessment team confirmed that the Orlando Police Department's (OPD) tactical response was consistent with its policies, procedures, and training as well as recognized promising practices, the current and evolving threat environment demands that our nation's public safety agencies better prepare command personnel and first responders to prevent and respond to the next attack. It is imperative that our national homeland security, law enforcement, and public safety communities coordinate, debate, and create guidelines on the police response to acts of mass public violence and terrorism that meet this increasing and evolving threat.

Bringing new advances to policing lies at the core of the Police Foundation’s mission. Central to our research and work with law enforcement agencies is the idea that it is imperative to honestly examine, analyze, and study police-involved incidents to identify “lessons learned” to continually advance the profession. The increased frequency of these incidents and the continual evolution of the challenges faced mandate that public safety agencies must continue to evolve and adapt their training and responses to meet these challenges. Certainly, that is true of this incident.

Those who responded to the Pulse that night are some of the bravest and most dedicated of public servants. Undoubtedly, their well-trained and decisive actions saved lives. It is because of the efforts of all involved in the response on June 12 that the suspect was neutralized before he could inflict more damage and devastation. This assessment—and the lessons learned—are not designed to “Monday morning quarterback.” Rather, they are intended to provide a basis for careful study of the tactics used by the terrorist and the actions taken by Orlando-area public safety agencies that day. It is an effort to enhance the safety of first responders and the public at large and further aid in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from mass casualty and terrorist incidents like the one that occurred last night.

I am grateful to Orlando Police Chief John W. Mina and the OPD for their cooperation with our review. Not only were they willing to answer our questions, provide us access to their department and vital information, and provide us unwavering support but they also invited our team and our examination of the response to this attack in an effort to help advance policing response to terrorist attacks. Deputy Chief Robert Anzuetto provided our team with exceptional access and support throughout the project. In addition, I am grateful to the hundreds of interviewees who generously gave us their time. They answered questions candidly, and we are forever thankful for their willingness to tell us the story of their experiences and rehash traumatizing moments. It was only through their eyes that we were able to gain a true understanding of the complexities involved. It is extremely important to acknowledge the dedication and professionalism of the many law enforcement and first responder agencies involved in this incident. In addition to the Orlando Police Department, the individuals from 26 additional agencies that responded all performed their duties valiantly. They are listed in appendix F.

I would like to express my gratitude for the hard work of our assessment team: Chief Frank Straub (ret.), PhD; Jack Cambria; Chief Jane Castor (ret.); Ben Gorban; Dr. Brett Meade; David Waltemeyer, and Jennifer Zeunik. In addition, I would like to thank our Police Foundation staff, including Blake Norton, James Burch, Rebecca Benson, Joyce Iwashita, and Siobhan Scott for their hard work and support throughout the review.

Finally, we offer this work as a tribute to the memory of the victims and survivors of the attack on Pulse, and to the resiliency of the City Beautiful. May we remember them and honor them by diligently applying the lessons learned.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Bueermann". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

Chief Jim Bueermann (ret.)
President
Police Foundation

Executive Summary

On June 12, 2016, what began as an active shooter incident when a lone gunman entered the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida, and began shooting innocent club goers transitioned into a barricaded suspect with hostages incident and ended as the deadliest terrorist attack¹ on American soil since September 11, 2001. By the time the incident was over, at least one of every three people in Pulse was either wounded or killed.² One hundred two innocent people had been shot: 53 injured and 49 killed. The destruction that occurred on June 12 was the direct result of the shooter's actions. The decisions made and actions taken by the men and women of the Orlando Police Department (OPD) and Orlando's other law enforcement agencies embody the bravery, strength, and professionalism of our nation's law enforcement and public safety first responders as well as the strength of the Orlando community.

As demonstrated by many other events—the Boston Marathon terrorist bombings in 2013; the coordinated terrorist attacks in Paris and in San Bernardino, California, in 2015; in Brussels in 2016; in Charleston, South Carolina, in 2016 and Newtown, Connecticut, in 2012 and throughout Europe in June 2017—persons and groups motivated by violent ideological, political, or individual factors continue to commit acts of mass public violence and terrorism. Instances of mass shootings increased in both frequency and lethality during the period from 2000 to 2013, and it is undeniable that communities across the United States will continue to be the targets of these events.³ According to a Washington Post article, there were 154 mass shootings in the first half of 2017, including the June 14, 2017, attack on Republican members of Congress.⁴ Still, our law enforcement officers and their public safety partners continue to put themselves in harm's way to protect the communities they serve.

¹ The FBI labeled the Pulse attack an act of terrorism according to 18 U.S.C. § 2331 (2009), <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/USCODE-2009-title18/pdf/USCODE-2009-title18-partI-chap113B-sec2331.pdf>.

² Marc Santora, "Last Call at Pulse Nightclub, and Then Shots Rang Out," *The New York Times*, June 12, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/13/us/last-call-at-orlando-club-and-then-the-shots-rang-out.html? r=0>; chief executives of responding agencies, interviews with assessment team members, December 15–16, 2016; witness statements to Florida Department of Law Enforcement, provided to assessment team December 15, 2016.

³ J. Pete Blair and Katherine W. Schweit, *A Study of Active Shooter Incidents, 2000–2013* (Washington, DC: Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2014), <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/active-shooter-study-2000-2013-1.pdf/view>.

⁴ Christopher Ingraham, "By One Definition the GOP Baseball Shooting is the 154th Mass Shooting This Year," *The Washington Post*, June 14, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2017/06/14/the-gop-baseball-shooting-is-the-154th-mass-shooting-this-year/?utm_term=.2447413407f8.

OPD Chief John W. Mina asked the US Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) to conduct an independent critical incident review of the OPD's response to the attack to identify best practices and lessons learned to improve the department's planning, training, policies, procedures, and practices regarding events of this nature and magnitude. This review also provides lessons for law enforcement and public safety agencies across the nation as they prepare to face increasing acts of mass public violence and the growing threat of terrorism.

Major themes of the report include the following:

- The OPD and their law enforcement partners responded to the Pulse terrorist attack in a manner consistent with recognized promising practices under extremely volatile and difficult circumstances, saving the lives of innocent people.
- Recognizing that the threat of mass casualty and terrorist attacks represents a continuing—if not growing—threat, law enforcement must continue to evaluate and adapt training, policies, and strategies. The national homeland security, law enforcement, and public safety communities should coordinate, debate, and create guidelines on policies, procedures, practices, and training related to the police response to acts of mass public violence and terrorism. While the tactical response by the OPD was consistent with the department's policies, procedures, and training as well as recognized promising practices, the current and evolving threat environment demands that our nation's public safety agencies better prepare command personnel and first responders to prevent and respond to the next attack. Decision makers including law enforcement, fire, and emergency management leaders; local, state, and federal elected officials; and community leaders should create guidance that will help prepare first responders to operate in environments where the suspect(s) are committed to killing large numbers of innocent people, where improvised explosive devices (IED) are present, where first responders may be the target of secondary attacks, and where simultaneous multisite attacks are a reality (chapters 3 and 4).
- Collaboration, pre-existing relationships, and partnerships are a critical part of a successful, unified response to critical incidents. The OPD successfully leveraged existing relationships with federal, state, and local public safety agencies in their response to the Pulse nightclub terrorist attack (chapter 2).
- Understanding and applying the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and incident command system (ICS) is crucial to ensure that all public safety and other resources are coordinated and brought to bear in response to critical incidents (chapter 3).
- Ensure officers are trained and equipped to respond to acts of mass public violence and terrorism including being able to provide emergency medical care for people with catastrophic injuries (chapters 4 and 5).

- Control the narrative; do not let unofficial social media control information regarding the incident or the department. The OPD’s communications team in close partnership with the City of Orlando’s communications team used social media to inform the community, to refute false information, and to provide a message of resilience and hope (chapter 9).
- Pay attention to the needs—particularly the mental health needs—of all personnel involved in a critical incident. Resilient agencies and communities must focus on healing of all personnel engaged in the mass casualty response as well as on the healing of the community (chapters 6, 7, and 10).

The critical analysis of the response by the OPD and regional public safety agencies to the Pulse nightclub terrorist attack is intended to provide objective feedback to the OPD—not in judgement but in careful study. It is also intended to add to the growing body of literature that national and international law enforcement, public safety agencies, and the communities they serve can draw on to prepare for future acts of mass public violence and terrorism.⁵

⁵ Access many of these reports at “Critical Incident Reviews,” Police Foundation, accessed June 27, 2017, <http://www.incidentreviews.org>.

Introduction

The City of Orlando, Florida, is home to approximately 270,934 people, and is the seat of Orange County, which has a population of approximately 1,288,126.⁶ In addition to those who call Orlando home, many more visit and spend time enjoying the amenities the city offers. For example, Orlando has one of the largest convention centers in the nation, attracting millions of people to visit the city each year. In addition, seven of the top 25 amusement and theme parks in the world⁷ are located no more than 20 miles away—including Walt Disney World, Universal Studios Florida, and SeaWorld—making Orlando one of the most popular travel destinations in the United States.⁸ The University of Central Florida, one of the largest universities in the nation (based on student enrollment of more than 64,000 students) also resides in Orlando.⁹ All of these features, along with the city's location in the “sun belt”¹⁰ make Orlando's nicknames—“Theme Park Capital of the World” and “the City Beautiful”—all the more appropriate.¹¹

The Orlando Police Department (OPD) protects the city with 743 sworn officers across four bureaus. According to 2016 data, that year OPD officers responded to 389,505 calls for service and made 13,092 arrests.¹² The OPD is a nationally recognized police department focused on the safety of its community. According to its website, “Our job is to protect the citizens of Orlando and we intend to accomplish that mission, even at risk to our own lives.”¹³ The department demonstrated this commitment on June 12, 2016.

At approximately 2:00 a.m. on June 12, a gunman entered the Pulse nightclub in downtown Orlando and began shooting innocent staff and clubgoers. The attack that began as an active shooter incident transitioned into a barricaded suspect with hostages incident and ended as the deadliest terrorist attack in the United States since September 11, 2001. By the time the incident was over, at least one out every

⁶ “Quick Facts: Orange County and Orlando City, Florida,” United States Census Bureau, accessed June 4, 2017, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/12095,1253000>.

⁷ Judith Rubin, *TEA/AECOM 2015 Theme Index and Museum Index: The Global Attractions Attendance Report* (Burbank, CA: Themed Entertainment Association, 2016), http://www.teaconnect.org/images/files/TEA_160_611852_160525.pdf.

⁸ Jennifer Pollard, “The 25 Most Popular Travel Destinations in the US,” *Business Insider*, April 1, 2015, <http://www.businessinsider.com/the-25-most-popular-travel-destinations-in-the-us-2015-3?op=1/#-portland-oregon-7>.

⁹ “We Are UCF,” University of Central Florida, accessed June 16, 2017, <https://www.ucf.edu/>.

¹⁰ Dictionary of American History, “Sun Belt,” *Encyclopedia.com*, accessed June 2, 2017, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/places/united-states-and-canada/miscellaneous-us-geography/sun-belt>.

¹¹ “Welcome to Orlando, Florida,” Visit Orlando, accessed June 4, 2017, <http://www.visitorlando.com/>.

¹² Orlando Police Department, *Courage. Pride. Commitment: Orlando Police Department 2016 Annual Report* (Orlando, FL: Orlando Police Department, 2017), <http://fliphtml5.com/gydm/xifo>.

¹³ “Police Department,” City of Orlando, accessed June 4, 2017, <http://www.cityoforlando.net/police/>.

three people in the Pulse nightclub was either wounded or killed.¹⁴ One hundred two innocent people had been shot: 49 people were killed and 53 injured, and another five people had non–gunshot related injuries. An OPD detective who was working an extra duty detail at Pulse that night reacted quickly to the attack, engaging the shooter and calling for assistance. OPD officers, including members of the special weapons and tactics (SWAT) team, were on scene in less than three minutes and initiated a response to the active shooter. By sunrise, 27 public safety agencies from across the region had participated in a coordinated response to extricate critically wounded patrons, rescue the hostages, and neutralize the suspect.

This report details the multiple phases of the OPD response to the incident and describes the public safety response more generally to provide context. The report examines the decisions that were made by the OPD’s leadership, the actions taken to resolve the incident, and the concerted effort by the entire community to recover from the terrorist attack. It also provides observations and lessons learned from the response, identified through an independent, objective, and comprehensive analysis. The report is designed to benefit the OPD and the Orlando community as well as to provide law enforcement and public safety agencies across the nation with critical guidance and recommendations to inform the response to an increasingly complex and violent threat environment.

COPS Office Critical Response Technical Assistance

The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) established the Critical Response Technical Assistance program in 2013 to provide “targeted technical assistance to law enforcement agencies dealing with high-profile events, major incidents, or sensitive issues of varying need.”¹⁵

The purpose of this COPS Office Critical Incident Review is to conduct a comprehensive after-action assessment of the OPD’s preparation for and response to the terrorist attack that occurred on June 12, 2016, as well as the strategies and processes implemented following the event.¹⁶

¹⁴ Santora, “Last Call” (see note 2); chief executives of responding agencies, interviews (see note 2); witness statements to Florida Department of Law Enforcement (see note 2).

¹⁵ “Critical Response,” Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, accessed June 28, 2017, <https://cops.usdoj.gov/Default.asp?Item=2806>. For more information about the COPS Office in general, see page 182.

¹⁶ COPS Office, “Department of Justice to Conduct After-Action Review of Police Response to Orlando Nightclub Mass Shooting,” press release, July 15, 2016, <https://cops.usdoj.gov/Default.asp?Item=2878>.

Scope and goals of the review

“This process allows for open feedback in a constructive way and enables law enforcement officials to speak with total candor in an open forum. It allows partner agencies to give honest feedback, which leads us all closer to the ultimate goal of developing best practices for dealing with high-risk incidents in our changing world.”

— *John W. Mina, Chief of Police, Orlando Police Department*

This report focuses primarily on the OPD’s response to the terrorist attack. However, to be thorough and complete, the report includes the broader response of the numerous local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies; other public safety organizations; the City of Orlando; and the community. Reviewing every aspect of the incident, the response, and its aftermath allows for a robust discussion of how the decisions made and actions taken by the OPD and their law enforcement partners affected the response to the terrorist attack. The review identifies observations and lessons learned for the OPD, law enforcement agencies, public safety organizations, elected officials, and the communities they serve to consider in an era of increasing acts of mass public violence and a growing terrorist threat.

In reviewing the entirety of the public safety response to this incident, the report examines current active shooter and hostage negotiation protocols within the context of a terrorist event. The review further examines leadership and interagency relationships, tactical response protocols, command and control challenges, equipment and training, emergency medical care, officer safety and post-event responder wellness, post-event victim and survivor welfare, post-incident investigations, media and public information practices, and community engagement.

The observations and lessons learned are intended to be catalysts for strengthening the OPD’s policies, procedures, tactics, and operations. While the tactical response by the OPD was executed according to the department’s policies, procedures, and training as well as recognized promising practices and protocols, the Pulse nightclub terrorist attack presented unconventional tactical issues that challenged decision makers to respond to a quickly developing, complex, and highly volatile incident marked by overwhelming devastation and human suffering. The response required, in some cases, that untested strategies and tactics be implemented to save the lives of seriously wounded victims and hostages and neutralize the threat.

National and international implications

The terrorist attack on the Pulse nightclub was the deadliest attack on US soil since September 11, 2001. It is imperative that our nation learn lessons from this event that transcend political and cultural issues and focus on strengthening the security and safety of our communities. As demonstrated by events such as the Boston Marathon bombings in 2013;¹⁷ the terrorist attacks in Paris¹⁸ and in San Bernardino, California, in 2015¹⁹ and in Brussels, Belgium, in 2016;²⁰ mass shootings in Newtown, Connecticut, in 2012 and Charleston, South Carolina, in 2016; and the terrorist attacks in early summer 2017 in Manchester and London, England²¹—persons and groups motivated by a variety of ideological, political, or individual factors represent a growing threat to our and other nations' security. Police officers will continue to be the first responders to these increasingly deadly and frequent incidents. We must ensure they have the information, equipment, and training necessary to meet the challenges ahead. This critical analysis of the OPD and other law enforcement and public safety agencies' response to the Pulse nightclub attack adds to the growing body of literature that national and international public safety agencies and communities can use to prepare for future acts of terrorism and mass public violence.

The OPD and their law enforcement partners responded to the Pulse terrorist attack in a manner consistent with recognized promising practices under extremely volatile and difficult circumstances, saving the lives of innocent people. Recognizing that the threat of mass casualty and terrorist attacks represents a continuing—if not growing—threat, law enforcement must continue to evaluate and adapt training, policies, and strategies.

¹⁷ Edward F. Davis III, Alejandro A. Alves, and David Alan Sklansky, *Social Media and Police Leadership: Lessons from Boston*, *New Perspectives in Policing Bulletin* (Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, 2014), <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/244760.pdf>; *After Action Report for the Response to the 2013 Boston Marathon Bombings* (Boston: Massachusetts State Police, 2014), <http://www.mass.gov/eopss/docs/mema/after-action-report-for-the-response-to-the-2013-boston-marathon-bombings.pdf>.

¹⁸ Global Terrorism Database, "Incident Summary: 11/13/2015," National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, accessed June 3, 2017, <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtdid=201511130008>.

¹⁹ Rick Braziel et al., *Bringing Calm to Chaos: A Critical Incident Review of the San Bernardino Public Safety Response to the December 2, 2015, Terrorist Shooting Incident at the Inland Regional Center*, Critical Response Initiative (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2016), <https://ric-zai-inc.com/ric.php?page=detail&id=COPS-W0808>; Frank Straub, Jennifer Zeunik, and Ben Gorban, "Lessons Learned from the Police Response to the San Bernardino and Orlando Terrorist Attacks," *CTC Sentinel* 10, no. 5 (May 2017), https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/CTC-Sentinel_Vol10Iss515.pdf.

²⁰ Pieter Van Ostaeyen, "Belgian Radical Networks and the Road to the Brussels Attacks," *CTC Sentinel* 9, no. 6 (June 2016), https://ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/CTC-SENTINEL_Vol9Iss613.pdf.

²¹ Greg Myre, "Manchester Bombing Is Europe's 13th Terrorist Attack Since 2015," NPR, May 23, 2017, <http://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2017/05/23/529645904/manchester-bombing-is-europes-12th-terrorist-attack-since-2015>.

Methodology

To conduct this review, the Police Foundation in consultation with the COPS Office assembled a team of subject matter experts with extensive experience in law enforcement leadership, operations, decision-making, tactical and critical incident response, and hostage negotiations.²² From January through April 2017, the team conducted interviews and focus groups; reviewed materials including 911 call logs, policies, procedures, and official after action reports; reviewed incident data; examined open source media related to the OPD and the incident; researched national and international promising practices and model policies; and studied after action reports from previous terrorist attacks and mass casualty incidents. Based on the analysis of this comprehensive body of information, the assessment team developed the observations and lessons learned contained in this report. A full detailed methodology can be found in appendix E on page 158.

Limitations of this report

The OPD and supporting agencies provided the assessment team exceptional access and assistance in gathering information for this review. The OPD command staff should be commended for requesting this review and for their assistance throughout the process. Their consistent support with scheduling interviews and focus groups with relevant personnel, providing resources and images for the report, and communication and insight were invaluable to the team.

Because of ongoing criminal investigations, however, the assessment team did face restrictions regarding some of the important details regarding the June 12, 2016, terrorist attack and response. The team did not review FBI reports, intelligence, ballistics reports, evidence, crime scene documentation, or classified information related to the suspect or potential law enforcement friendly fire during the incident. These parameters were put in place to ensure that the investigations were not compromised in any way by the team's review and to maintain the integrity and focus of this report.

In addition, while the assessment team did attempt to reach out to survivors of the Pulse incident through representative advocacy groups, the OPD, victims' advocates and city liaisons, direct social media contact, family members, and other approaches, only one survivor was willing to talk with us directly. The assessment team was sensitive to the raw and fresh trauma that these individuals have suffered because of the actions of the suspect. Because of this, the assessment team did not aggressively pursue direct contact with survivors without their express consent and interest in talking with the team. The assessment team did, however, have access to and reviewed 10 witness statements provided directly to law enforcement as part of their investigations and countless media articles that included statements, video, and quotes from survivors and witnesses.

²² Full bios of assessment team members can be found beginning on page 178.

Report organization

The report begins with a full timeline of incident events; chapter 1 then provides a detailed chronology of the attack on the Pulse nightclub and the public safety response in the form of a narrative description broken up into phases that describe how the incident evolved. Phase I describes the response to the active shooter part of the incident. Phase II shows the response to a barricaded suspect with hostages. Phase III depicts the realization that this incident was an act of terrorism. Phase IV describes the final entry and neutralization of the suspect. Finally, phase V outlines the subsequent investigation and the recovery process.

Chapters 2 through 10 focus on issues that impacted the response, including leadership and interagency relationships, tactical response and command and control, equipment and training, emergency medical care, officer safety and post-event responder wellness, post-incident investigations, media and public information, and community engagement. Each of these chapters provides information on the identified topic or topics as well as important observations and lessons learned as they relate to the OPD's response to the Pulse nightclub terrorist attack. The conclusion summarizes the key themes and identifies topics that require further study.

Timeline of Events— Sunday, June 12, 2016

The assessment team created the following timeline of the Pulse nightclub terrorist attack based on information and documents provided by the Orlando Police Department (OPD), the Orange County Sheriff's Office (OCSO), the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), news media accounts, and other sources.²³ Unless otherwise indicated, the times and descriptions are based on the OPD timeline that has been released to the public.²⁴ All times are Eastern Daylight Time.

While the timeline is intended to provide a chronology of events, a more detailed description can be found in the narrative that follows it.

- Just before 2:00 a.m. The suspect parked a rented car in the parking lot of the neighboring car shop, Pro Tint & Detailing, and walked south toward the Pulse nightclub.
- 2:02 a.m. The suspect, armed with a Sig Sauer MCX semiautomatic .223 caliber rifle (military-style rifle) and a Glock 17 (9mm) handgun, entered the Pulse nightclub through the south door. He immediately shot a patron who was standing inside the front parlor.
- 2:02:17 a.m. An OPD detective working extra duty at the club reported on the Patrol East radio channel: "Shots fired, shots fired, shots fired!" The police dispatcher immediately broadcast a signal 43 (officer needs immediate assistance). At this point, the OPD detective's exact location is unknown to the dispatcher and responding units.
- 2:02:35 a.m. The OPD detective reports "Shots fired 1912 S. Orange Ave. Shots fired, multiple down!" Over the next one minute and nine seconds, the OPD detective made three more radio transmissions, reporting that shots were being fired inside the club.
- 2:02 a.m. Dozens of the patrons inside Pulse ran out of the club through exits on the south side of the club, through the main entrance, through a patio on the east side, and into a fenced alleyway on the north side. One of the Pulse security officers kicked a hole in the fence, which allowed approximately 20 patrons to escape into the parking lot of a neighboring business to the north.

²³ A full detailed methodology of the documents and materials reviewed, interviews and focus groups conducted, and research conducted can be found in appendix B on page 145.

²⁴ Orlando Police Department timeline provided by email to assessment team May 11, 2017.

- 2:02 a.m. While taking protective cover behind a vehicle in the south parking lot, the OPD detective fired several rounds at the suspect, who was standing just inside a set of double doors and continued to fire multiple shots inside the club.
- 2:03 a.m. According to the OPD, less than one minute and 20 seconds after the signal 43 was broadcast, the first backup officer arrived on scene. A second backup officer arrived about a minute later.
- 2:05 a.m. Over the radio, the OPD detective advised that the suspect had an assault rifle. The OPD detective fired three shots at the suspect as the sound of rapid fire gunshots were heard inside the club.
The gunfire inside the club stopped.
- 2:06 a.m. The OPD detective assembled a contact team with three other officers and they began to approach the club from the east patio area.
- 2:07 a.m. The OPD special weapons and tactics (SWAT) commander—a lieutenant who was also the on-duty watch commander—arrived on scene.
- 2:08 a.m. A sergeant took the OPD detective’s place on the initial contact team on the east side of the club. A second contact team, located on the south side of the club, was organized by the SWAT commander. The second team consisted of the SWAT commander and five officers.
- 2:09 a.m. The contact team on the east patio directed a patron from the main dance floor area out of the club through the patio, to South Orange Avenue.
(Total individuals rescued by law enforcement to this point: 1)
- 2:10 a.m. An officer from the contact team assisted a bartender who had been hiding behind the patio bar since the shooting started. The bartender, who was not injured, was directed out of the club to South Orange Avenue.

At least five additional shots fired by the suspect were heard further inside the club. The SWAT commander’s team entered the club through a large window they had broken. They moved toward the sound of the gunshots. The officers believed the suspect had barricaded himself in one of two restrooms at the end of a small hallway on the west side of the club. The team positioned itself behind a bar at the end of the hallway, keeping the suspect contained in the restroom.

One individual inside the north restroom called 911 advising that he was hiding in the handicapped-accessible stall with at least 10 other people and that the suspect was “in the bathroom. He’s in the bathroom.”²⁵ At this point, the nature of the incident transitioned to a barricaded suspect with hostages.

No more gunshots were heard being fired by the suspect until the final breach.

(Total individuals rescued by law enforcement to this point: 2)

2:14 a.m. On the other side of the club, two officers from the initial contact team located a group of 22 patrons hiding in a restroom at the southeast corner of the main dance floor. One officer provided cover while the other officer escorted the patrons out through the east patio to awaiting officers.

(Total individuals rescued by law enforcement to this point: 24)

2:15 a.m. Officers found a person hiding behind a bar on the east patio and quickly helped him out toward South Orange Avenue.

(Total individuals rescued by law enforcement to this point: 25)

2:15 a.m. At least seven people²⁶ in the main dance floor area were quickly extracted through the main entrance on the south side of the club or through the east patio to waiting officers and deputies.

(Total individuals rescued by law enforcement to this point: at least 32)

2:17 a.m. The SWAT commander and sergeant in the west bar area fired shots at the suspect. The SWAT commander was heard yelling “Let me see your hands now!” just prior to firing his weapon.²⁷

2:18 a.m. The SWAT commander asked dispatch to initiate a “full SWAT callout.”

2:18–2:28 a.m. During this time, officers and deputies moved through the main dance floor area checking injured persons and looking for survivors. They helped at least 14 incapacitated individuals out of the club through the east patio or main entrance.

(Total individuals rescued by law enforcement to this point: at least 46)

²⁵ “911 transcripts (pages 1–68) from 6-12-16 (PDF),” City of Orlando, accessed June 4, 2017, <http://www.cityoforlando.net/cityclerk/pulse-tragedy-public-records/>.

²⁶ According to the OPD, it was difficult to accurately document exactly how many individuals were rescued, especially in times when there were larger groups rescued at once. Therefore, the OPD timeline uses the phrase “at least” from this point onward, and this usage is repeated in this timeline.

²⁷ “Pulse Police Body Camera Videos Release: June 1, 2017,” City of Orlando, accessed June 2, 2017, <http://www.cityoforlando.net/cityclerk/pulse-tragedy-public-records/>.

- 2:21 a.m. A person who had been shot was able to escape from one of the west restrooms and crawl out to the west bar, where he was helped out of the club by officers and moved into the south parking lot area.
- (Total individuals rescued by law enforcement to this point: at least 47)*
- 2:25 a.m. Three officers extracted a person hiding inside a fenced-in storage area just outside the double doors located on the south side of the club.
- (Total individuals rescued by law enforcement to this point: at least 48)*
- 2:30 a.m. An unidentified man, believed to be the suspect by the OPD,²⁸ called 911, spoke in a unknown language, and quickly hung up.
- 2:32 a.m. A sergeant assisted by other officers rescued five people who were hiding in the kitchenette behind the main bar. Two of the five were injured and had to be carried out; the other three, who could walk, were escorted out of the club to the east patio and were handed off to officers and deputies.
- (Total individuals rescued by law enforcement to this point: at least 53)*
- 2:35 a.m. A sergeant and assisting officers rescued six people who were hiding in an upstairs office area above the main dance floor. They were escorted across the dance floor and out the east patio to awaiting officers and deputies.²⁹
- (Total individuals rescued by law enforcement to this point: at least 59)*
- 2:35 a.m.³⁰ The suspect called 911 and told the call-taker that he “did the shooting in Orlando.” The call lasted 50 seconds.
- 2:48 a.m. The crisis negotiation team (CNT) sergeant called the suspect back. The call lasted six minutes. During the conversation, the suspect suggested he was wearing an explosive vest and claimed there was a vehicle in the parking lot with explosives inside.
- 3:06 a.m. A person who had been shot and who had been hiding in one of the west restrooms was able to crawl out to the west bar, where members of the SWAT team rescued him and brought him to officers in the south parking lot.
- (Total individuals rescued by law enforcement to this point: at least 60)*

²⁸ After further investigation by the FBI following the incident, it was determined that this call was not made by the suspect.

²⁹ “Communication/911 Calls for June 12, 2016,” City of Orlando, accessed June 28, 2017, <http://www.cityoforlando.net/cityclerk/pulse-tragedy-public-records/>.

³⁰ “Transcripts of Calls with Suspect 6-12-16,” City of Orlando, accessed June 1, 2017, <http://www.cityoforlando.net/cityclerk/pulse-tragedy-public-records/>. According to the FBI, the call occurred at 2:39 a.m., but the inconsistency could be the result of the time indicated on the suspect’s phone.

- 3:12 a.m. Additional members of the SWAT team arrived on scene and began relieving officers and deputies inside the club.
- 3:13 a.m. OPD public information officers arrived on scene and began sharing information on Twitter.
- 3:20 a.m. An OPD Avatar III Tactical Robot was sent into the club to provide images of the urinal and south restroom, but it could only partially enter the restroom because of obstructions. The OPD used the public address system on the robot to advise the hostages that the police were working on a rescue.³¹
- 3:25 a.m.³² After a report indicated that gunfire was heard in the lobby of Orlando Regional Medical Center (ORMC) the hospital was locked down for approximately one hour and implemented its “code silver” active shooter plan.
- 3:42 a.m. SWAT members rescued four club workers who were hiding in the north dressing room.
(Total individuals rescued by law enforcement to this point: at least 64)
- 4:03 a.m. The OCSO hazardous device team (HDT) arrived on scene. A K-9 from the Greater Orlando Aviation Authority arrived on scene and alerted on the suspect’s vehicle.
- 4:29 a.m. A person who was held hostage inside the club sent a text message to her brother. She told her brother the suspect was going to attach four bomb vests to hostages.
- Approx. 4:30 a.m. SWAT team officers rescued a group of eight patrons hiding in a dressing room on the west side of the club, just north of the restrooms. They jarred an air conditioning unit that was protruding from the exterior wall loose and directed the people inside the dressing room to pull in the unit while SWAT team officers pushed it through the opening. Once the unit was removed, SWAT team officers pulled eight people out of the dressing room through the hole in the wall.
(Total individuals rescued by law enforcement to this point: at least 72)

³¹ Robert Anzueto, deputy chief, Orlando Police Department, in email to assessment team members, May 31, 2017.

³² Michael L. Cheatham, et al., “Orlando Regional Medical Center Responds to Pulse Nightclub Shooting,” Bulletin of the American College of Surgeons, November 1, 2016, <http://bulletin.facs.org/2016/11/orlando-regional-medical-center-responds-to-pulse-nightclub-shooting/>.

- 4:59 a.m. The OSCO HDT made final preparations for an explosive breach to the west wall.
- 5:02 a.m. The explosive charge was detonated; the wall was partially breached.
- 5:08 a.m. A SWAT team BEARCAT³³ began to breach the west wall.
- 5:09 a.m. A SWAT team officer was heard on a loudspeaker telling people inside the club to move away from the wall.
- 5:10–5:13 a.m. SWAT team members rescued people from the southwest restroom.
(Total individuals rescued by law enforcement to this point: at least 85)
- 5:14 a.m. As another SWAT officer was widening the hole in the south restroom wall, the suspect began firing in the north restroom. The SWAT team deployed two flash-bangs (stun grenades) near the wall where the SWAT team was positioned.
- 5:15 a.m. SWAT team officers exchanged gunfire with the suspect, firing numerous rounds. An OPD SWAT team officer was hit in his helmet by a round fired by the suspect. The OPD reported the suspect was down after the exchange of gunfire.
- 5:17–5:26 a.m. People continued to be extricated from the club. An estimated total of 18 individuals were rescued from the restrooms by members of the SWAT team: approximately 13 rescued from the south restroom before the suspect was killed and approximately five rescued from the north restroom after he was killed.
- 5:27 a.m. All remaining individuals were extricated from the club and all of the hostages who survived were rescued. Officers withdrew from the club because of the threat of explosives.
(Total individuals rescued by law enforcement to this point: at least 90)
- 11:15 a.m. The OPD SWAT, OCSO HDT, and Federal Bureau of Investigation SWAT team officially determined the Pulse nightclub and the suspect’s vehicle were safe.³⁴

³³ “BEARCAT” is an acronym for *ballistic engineered armored response counter attack truck*, a military-style truck. Bryant Jordan, “This Armored Vehicle Punched Hole in Wall to Save Orlando Club Patrons,” DefenseTech, last modified June 13, 2016, <https://www.defensetech.org/2016/06/13/bearcat-made-a-lifesaving-hole-in-the-wall-for-orlando-club-patrons/>.

³⁴ Robert Anzueto, deputy chief, Orlando Police Department, in phone call with assessment team member, October 2, 2017.

1. Incident Description

This chapter provides a description and renderings of the Pulse nightclub on June 12, 2016; a detailed chronology of the attack and the public safety response to serve as contextual background for the report.

Inside Pulse moments before the attack

As the time approached 2:00 a.m., approximately 300 people—many from the Orlando-area LGBTQ and Hispanic communities—were still packed into the 4,500–square foot Pulse nightclub, enjoying the last 30 minutes of the Latin Night event.³⁵ As Pulse was one of the few bars in the area open to those as young as 18 (rather than requiring patrons to be 21), its 300 patrons that night were an amalgam of diverse backgrounds and ages. Some were frequent patrons of the club; others were in town from neighboring cities for the Latin Night event; and still others were in Orlando on vacation.³⁶

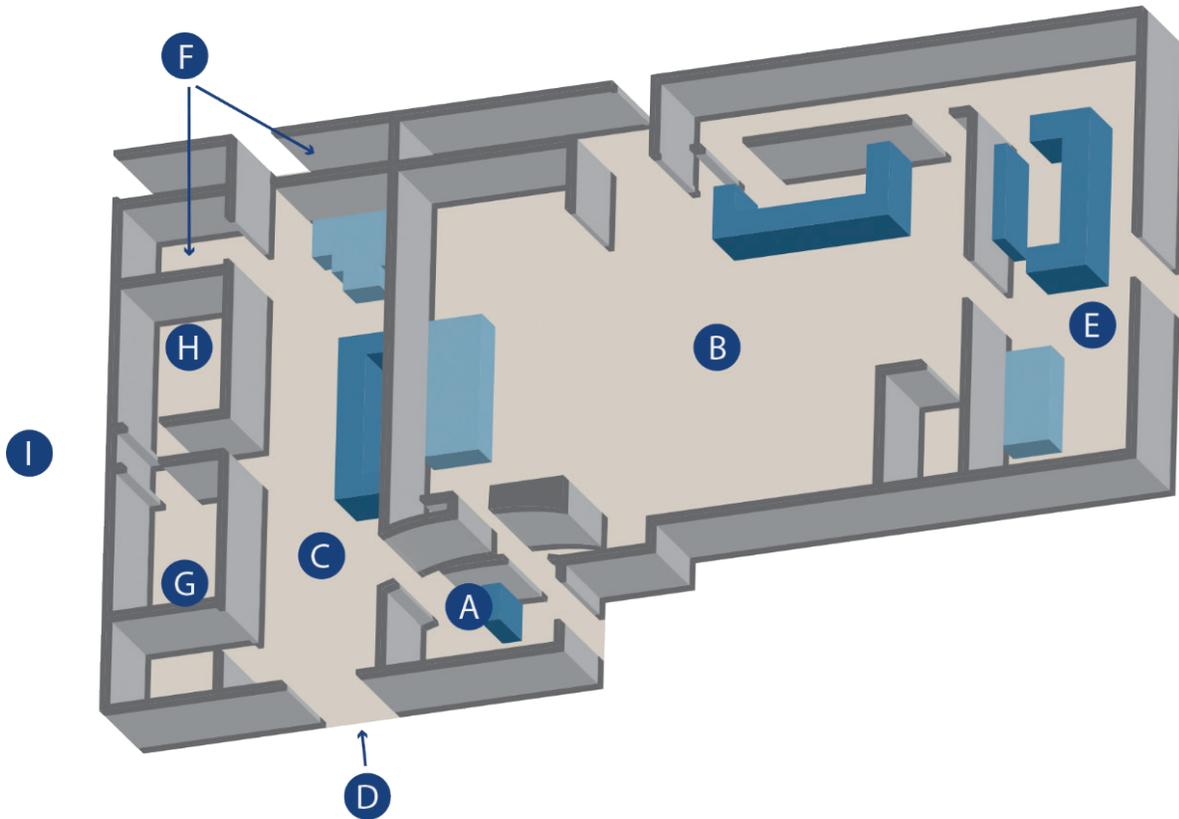
At each of the club’s three bars, patrons lined up to get their last drinks of the night as bartenders had just announced last call; some were finishing their last bites of food. Others were dancing in the three sections of the club—the main dance floor located to the right of the front entrance, known as the “Jewel Box;” the smaller “Adonis Room,” located directly behind the main entrance; and the fenced-in outdoor patio area located just off the Jewel Box (see figure 1 on page 14 for the layout of the Pulse nightclub). Live entertainment was taking place on stages in the Jewel Box and the Adonis Room. The club was relatively dark, except for the rotating strobe lights. Music was blaring, a different type of music coming from each DJ in the club.³⁷

³⁵ Katie Mettler, “Orlando’s Club Pulse Owes its Name and Spirit to ‘Loving Brother’ Who Died from AIDS,” *The Washington Post*, June 13, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2016/06/13/more-than-just-another-gay-club-pulse-was-founded-in-her-brothers-memory-and-named-for-his-beating-heart/?utm_term=.5584125ac7e2.

³⁶ Witness statements to Florida Department of Law Enforcement (see note 2).

³⁷ Santora, “Last Call” (see note 2).

Figure 1. Layout of Pulse nightclub



A – South entrance/reception area

B – “Jewel Box”

C – “Adonis Room”

D – Emergency exit

E – Patio

F – North dressing rooms

G – South Restroom

H – Restroom where suspect barricaded

I – Wall that was breached

Phase I. Active shooter (2:00–2:15 a.m.)

At approximately 2:00 a.m., just beyond the black fence of the club’s patio and outdoor area, the suspect parked a rented car in the parking lot of the neighboring car shop, Pro Tint & Detailing.³⁸ The suspect—an almost six-foot-tall man wearing a green, blue, and white plaid dress shirt; a white T-shirt underneath; and tan cargo pants³⁹—exited the vehicle and walked south through the parking lot of Pulse along the fence line (see figure 2 on page 15). It was a club he had previously cased.⁴⁰

³⁸ Orlando Police Department timeline (see note 24).

³⁹ *Report of Autopsy of Omar Mir Seddiq Mateen* (Orange County, FL: Office of the Medical Examiner District Nine, June 13, 2016).

⁴⁰ Federal Bureau of Investigation notes to COPS Office, provided to assessment team September 5, 2017.

Figure 2. Suspect's path into nightclub



- A – Suspect parked his vehicle at the neighboring Pro Tint & Detailing car shop.
- B – Route suspect took from vehicle to Pulse entrance, ensuring he avoided being seen.
- C – Extra duty OPD detective working security detail and his vehicle.

Photo courtesy of Orlando Police Department

At 2:02 a.m., the suspect entered the club and immediately began firing a Sig Sauer MCX semiautomatic .223 caliber rifle and a Glock 17 9mm (shown on page 16) as fast as he could pull the triggers. Some rounds struck the first victims at close range; other rounds ricocheted off the cinderblock and stucco walls, the reception desk, and the chandelier, pockmarking the walls and hitting victims.

Deeper inside the club, some patrons were not immediately startled by the shots. The staccato sound did not sound like shots being fired; some believed the sound was part of the music or a special sound effect employed by a DJ; to others it sounded like a BB gun.⁴¹ Even some employees thought the sounds

⁴¹ Michael Sallah et al., “What Happened between 2 and 5 a.m.? The Orlando Massacre, Minute by Minute,” *Miami Herald*, June 15, 2016, <http://www.miamiherald.com/news/state/florida/article84076637.html>.



Sig Sauer MCX rifle (L) and Glock 17 handgun (R) similar to those used by the assailant at Pulse.

Photo of Sig Sauer MCX courtesy of Police Foundation; photo of Glock 17 courtesy of Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives

were something other than gun shots. One of the bartenders in the Adonis Room thought that there was a problem with the wiring of the speakers, and the DJ outside believed someone had set off a string of firecrackers.⁴² Some in the club continued what they were doing, paying little attention to the sound.

At 2:02 a.m., still within the first minute of the attack, one of the three DJs in the club turned his music down and listened closer. With the volume lower and the sounds no longer matching the beat of the music, it was clear that it was not a special effect but something much more real.⁴³ The DJ turned the music off and yelled, “Run! Get out! There’s a guy with a gun!”⁴⁴

Outside, in the Pulse parking lot, an Orlando Police Department (OPD) detective who was working extra duty at the club—to provide outside security and to provide assistance to security personnel inside the club if needed—heard the shots that were being fired; at 2:02:17 a.m., he broadcast over the radio, “Shots fired, shots fired, shots fired,” and requested additional officers to respond.⁴⁵ The detective told the assessment team that he immediately recognized that his Sig Sauer P226⁴⁶ 9mm handgun (shown on page 17) was no match for the .223 caliber rifle being fired inside the club and moved to a position that afforded him more cover in the parking lot. Two patrons attempted to flee through an emergency exit on the south side of the club. When the detective saw the suspect shoot them, he fired at the suspect.⁴⁷

⁴² Santora, “Last Call” (see note 2).

⁴³ Witness statements to Florida Department of Law Enforcement (see note 2).

⁴⁴ Gal Tziperman Lotan et al., “Orlando Nightclub Shooting Timeline: Four Hours of Terror Unfold,” *Orlando Sentinel*, May 31, 2017, <http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/pulse-orlando-nightclub-shooting/os-orlando-pulse-nightclub-shooting-timeline-htmlstory.html>.

⁴⁵ Orlando Police Department timeline (see note 24).

⁴⁶ Florida Department of Law Enforcement Investigative Report, provided by Danny Banks, special agent in charge, Florida Department of Law Enforcement, to assessment team, December 15, 2016.

⁴⁷ Detective, Orlando Police Department, interview with assessment team, January 26, 2017.



OPD detective's Sig Sauer P226 handgun

Photo courtesy of Orlando Police Department

Around the time the shots began, the first 911 calls began to come in. The first calls indicated the confusion and chaos inside the club regarding what was happening and the number of shooters.⁴⁸ For instance, one caller said, “They are just shooting, they are spraying bullets right now. They are spraying bullets,” and questioned the cause of the shooting, saying, “It’s not like a shooting it’s not, like, you know what I mean.”⁴⁹ Other survivors also believed that initially the shooting was a “club shooting” associated with criminal activity or specifically targeting one or more individuals, and they were confused when the shooting did not stop.⁵⁰ Call takers and dispatchers could hear the shots being fired and the chaos inside Pulse as they answered calls or held open lines with people who had been shot. A 911 operator indicated, “I still have active shooting going on in my call. You can hear the shots in the background.”⁵¹

⁴⁸ Video surveillance footage from inside the club showed there was only one shooter during the entire incident.

⁴⁹ “911 transcripts (pages 1–68)” (see note 25).

⁵⁰ Heather Leigh et al., “3 Describe Chaos inside Pulse Nightclub,” News4Jax, last modified June 14, 2016, <http://www.news4jax.com/news/florida/3-survivors-share-stories-from-inside-pulse-nightclub>; witness statements to Florida Department of Law Enforcement (see note 2).

⁵¹ “911 transcripts (pages 1–68)” (see note 25).

As soon as OPD dispatchers heard the shots fired call, at approximately 2:02 a.m., they broadcast a signal 43 (officer needs immediate assistance) over the police radio, which is not unusual in Orlando.⁵² The previous night, there had been a high-profile shooting, and many of the officers that responded to the Pulse nightclub had also responded to that incident. Many of the officers expected that similar to that call, by the time they arrived at Pulse the shooting would be over.⁵³ Meanwhile, call takers and dispatchers at the OPD Communications Center tried to gather information from callers inside Pulse and relayed the information to responding officers while attempting to calm the callers.⁵⁴

Once clubgoers recognized the sound as gunfire, the club became chaotic. Still within the first minute, an employee kicked a hole through an eight-foot fence on the north side of the patio, which allowed 22 patrons to escape.⁵⁵ Patrons ran for exits (see figure 3 on page 19); hid in dressing rooms, closets, and restrooms; or ducked behind the bars. Many of them were already wounded. During this time, crammed into these hiding places, people hugged one another; screamed and yelled for help; and made calls to 911, friends, and family.

After the detective fired at the suspect, the suspect doubled back into the club and walked deeper into the Jewel Box section. He made his way through the main dance area, indiscriminately firing his weapons (a rifle and handgun). As the suspect traversed the club, at 2:05 a.m., the OPD detective engaged him again, firing from the parking lot into the club.⁵⁶ Patrons continued to escape or find a place to hide. Others fell to the ground, took cover, pretended to be dead, or had been shot. According to survivors, as the suspect moved through the Jewel Box at this time, he stood over the individuals lying on the floor and fired additional rounds into them at point-blank range without regard for whether they were alive or already dead.⁵⁷

The suspect then continued to make his way toward the patio, moving between the main dance floor and the west bar area. He continuously fired his weapons as he moved. According to OPD estimates, calculated by listening to all of the 911 recordings, the suspect fired approximately 200 rounds in less than five minutes, stopping only to reload.⁵⁸

⁵² There were 14 signal 43 calls in 2015 and 21 signal 43 calls in 2016, according to Orlando Police Department computer-aided dispatch.

⁵³ Orlando Police Department SWAT team members, focus group with assessment team, January 24, 2017.

⁵⁴ Orlando Police Department 911 call takers and dispatchers, focus group with assessment team, February 21, 2017.

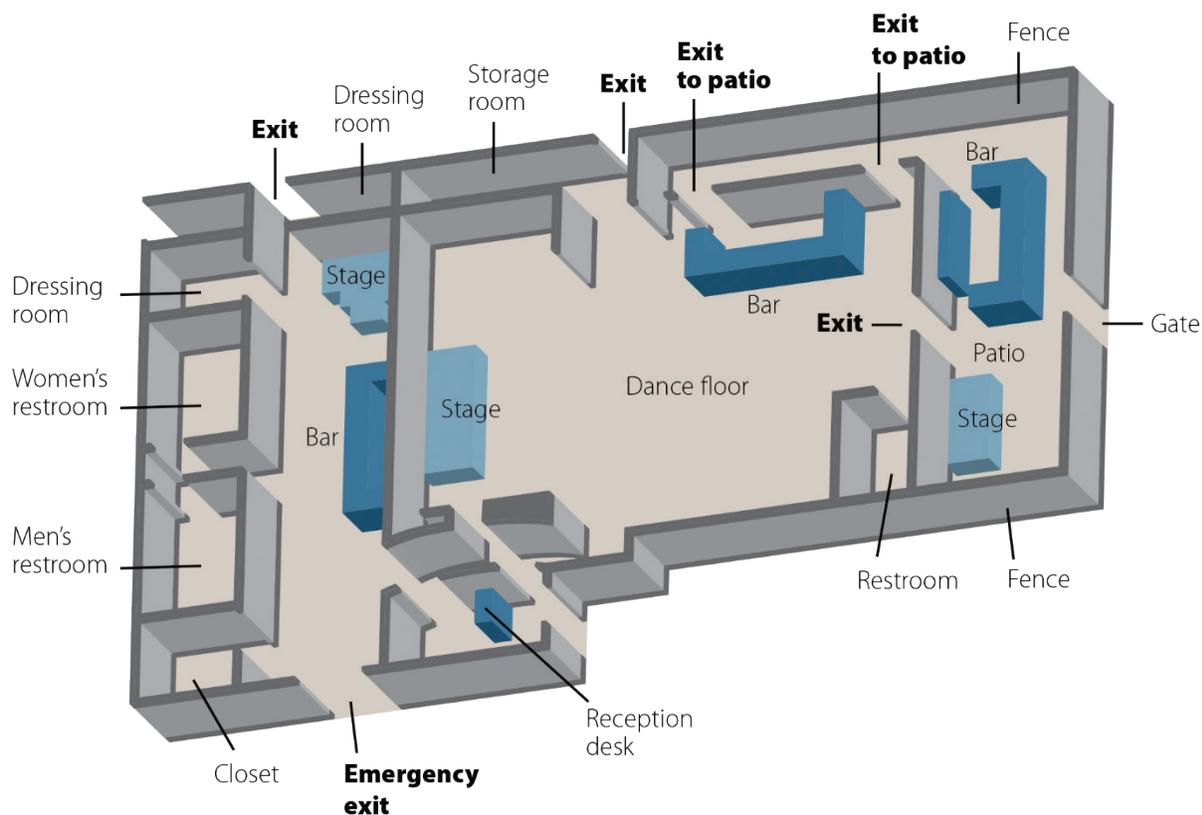
⁵⁵ Orlando Police Department timeline (see note 24).

⁵⁶ Orlando Police Department timeline (see note 24).

⁵⁷ Leigh et al., "3 Describe Chaos" (see note 50).

⁵⁸ Robert Anzueto, deputy chief, Orlando Police Department, interview with assessment team, January 25, 2017.

Figure 3. Location of Pulse nightclub exits



Three additional officers arrived on scene at approximately 2:06 a.m. and formed a contact team with the detective.⁵⁹ The team staged outside the club when the shooting paused to determine the status and location of the suspect.

Approximately two minutes later, at 2:08 a.m., officers from various agencies—including members of the OPD SWAT team, the Orange County Sheriff's Office (OCSO), and the Belle Isle Police Department—arrived on scene and formed a second contact team. Also at 2:08 a.m., the initial contact team, now led by an OPD sergeant, entered the club through the patio. At just more than six minutes after the shooting began, the contact team immediately began rescuing people. They were followed approximately one minute later by the second contact team, which was led by the SWAT commander—a lieutenant who was also the on-duty watch commander. The second contact team entered through a large window in the reception area, which they broke, and headed toward the Jewel Box area to locate the suspect and assist in the rescue efforts.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Orlando Police Department timeline (see note 24).

⁶⁰ Orlando Police Department timeline (see note 24).

According to officers who entered the building, what they saw in the largest room of the club was a scene unlike any they had ever seen before. Bodies were piled up on the stage and across the dance floor; individuals with devastating wounds and deceased victims were everywhere.⁶¹ A disco ball and colored lights were the only source of light in the otherwise dark room.⁶² There was an “eerie quiet”⁶³—broken only by occasional gunfire, cries for help, and ringing cell phones strewn across the floor or in the pockets of victims as friends and family tried to reach those inside the club.⁶⁴

While they were tending to individuals in the Jewel Box, at 2:10 a.m., the contact team led by the OPD SWAT commander responded to gunshots in the Adonis Room. Upon entering the Adonis Room, they determined the shots were coming from a narrow and dimly lit hallway. Just as quickly as the shooting began, it stopped.⁶⁵ The OPD SWAT commander recalled that at this time, he believed they had contained the suspect in one of the two restrooms located at the end of the narrow hallway.⁶⁶ The SWAT commander directed the team to take up positions to cover the hallway and prevent the suspect from advancing down the hallway. The contact team also rescued two patrons who had hidden behind the bar some of the officers were using as cover.⁶⁷

At approximately 2:10 a.m., one of the injured hostages inside the north restroom called 911. During the call, he advised that he was hiding in the handicapped-accessible stall with at least 10 other people, that he was shot in the leg and the knee, and that there were several other people who had been shot multiple times. The injured hostage was also able to provide the operator with a key piece of information referring to the suspect: “He’s in the bathroom. He’s in the bathroom.” As the OPD operator and the Orlando Fire Department (OFD) call taker tried to keep the injured hostage calm and gather more information regarding which restroom the suspect was in, the injured hostage expressed confusion regarding who the shooter was, what was going on outside, and which restroom they were in, admitting at one point, “I don’t need to hang up. I just don’t know what to do.” The caller was only able to say further, “It’s the restroom in the nightclub, they are unisex,” but was otherwise unable to identify where they were. The injured hostage stayed on the line but could not provide any additional information.⁶⁸ Information provided by the caller helped confirm that the suspect was in one of the two restrooms down the hallway where the officers had taken containment positions.

⁶¹ The 49 victims who died had an average of 4.5 entry and exit wounds apiece. Orange County Medical Examiner’s Office, interview with assessment team, January 27, 2017; Orlando Police Department SWAT team members, focus group (see note 53).

⁶² Statement by Orlando Police Department officer, July 19, 2016, provided to assessment team by Orlando Police Department December 15, 2016.

⁶³ Orlando Police Department first responders, focus group with assessment team, February 23, 2017.

⁶⁴ Orlando Police Department SWAT team members, focus group (see note 53).

⁶⁵ Orlando Police Department timeline (see note 24).

⁶⁶ Orlando Police Department SWAT team members, focus group (see note 53).

⁶⁷ Orlando Police Department SWAT team members, focus group (see note 53).

⁶⁸ “911 transcripts (pages 1–68)” (see note 25).

“Mindset is Key”

Throughout the interviews conducted by the assessment team, Orlando Police Department (OPD) officers, Orange County Sheriff’s Office deputies, other officers, and executives requested that the report describe the chaos, devastation, and horrific circumstances under which they operated during the Pulse response.

One first responder who had served three tours in the US military (Somalia, Afghanistan, and Iraq) described his experience: “I was a platoon sergeant again. I stepped out of being a cop and back into being a platoon sergeant. We were in a war zone.”

From the extra duty OPD detective’s initial radio call until the suspect was neutralized, OPD officers and their public safety partners operated in an overwhelming scene of human carnage and suffering. Within this environment, first responders assembled contact teams, moved toward the shooting, rescued people, and contained the suspect in a restroom at the end of a narrow and dimly lit hallway. Other officers directed severely injured survivors to exit the club if they could walk or crawl to safety. Officers outside the club, blood-soaked, assisted survivors to triage areas or transported them in their vehicles to the nearby trauma center, while others tried to explain to bystanders what was happening as more and more first responders arrived on scene. Command personnel made tactical decisions within a rapidly evolving, complex, and novel environment that presented circumstances that emergency and crisis planning had not fully anticipated.

The chaos and horror of the terrorist attack extended well beyond the nightclub. Dispatchers reported having to occasionally mute their phones to compose themselves before they continued talking with panic-stricken and sometimes critically wounded callers inside the club. The dispatchers relied on their training to keep callers calm so they could obtain critical information regarding the suspect, the location of persons hiding in the club, or the bomb vests the shooter claimed to have and provide that information to officers and command personnel at the scene.

Many of the law enforcement, fire, emergency medical services, and medical personnel interviewed by the assessment team stressed that the “mindset [of first responders] is key” to their ability to operate in overwhelming and unimaginable environments. They repeated over and over again that command personnel and officers needed to train and practice decision-making and tactics in environments that simulate, as much as possible, the realities of uncertain, devastating, and overwhelming operating environments.

Source: Orlando Police Department first responders, focus group (see note 63).

At 2:14 a.m., while the second contact team remained in the Adonis Room containing the suspect, the other contact team—joined by additional officers and deputies—began clearing the patio, the Jewel

Box, and any of the other areas they could access. As one team provided security, the other triaged the injured and started rescuing those with the most critical injuries. More than 20 patrons were rescued from a restroom in the southeast corner of the Jewel Box section of the nightclub.

Phase II. Barricaded suspect with hostages (2:15–2:35 a.m.)

At 2:18 a.m., the OPD SWAT commander initiated a full SWAT call-out as the suspect was contained in the restroom with hostages. The SWAT commander also requested that a triage team be formed to remove injured people from the club.⁶⁹

As the triage team—consisting of officers from agencies including the Apopka, Belle Isle, Eatonville, Maitland, Winter Garden, and Winter Park Police Departments, the OCSO, and the Seminole County Sheriff’s Office⁷⁰—rescued the injured survivors, others pulled on the legs of officers and begged for help. One officer, responding to the number of severely wounded or deceased victims, told survivors, “if you’re alive, raise your hand,”⁷¹ as he continued to rescue survivors. Many of the survivors were too severely injured or in shock and unable to move by themselves, so officers and deputies carried them to the makeshift triage center, located behind the Einstein Bros. Bagels store approximately 200 feet from the club. Between 2:18 a.m. and 2:28 a.m., despite being physically exhausted from carrying severely injured individuals to the triage area,⁷² officers continued, rescuing 14 people from inside the club.⁷³

When the triage area became too crowded to handle the number of critically injured persons and responders administering first aid, officers and deputies loaded injured individuals into their vehicles and transported them to Orlando Regional Medical Center (ORMC), the Level 1 Trauma Center less than half a mile away. Between 20 and 25 gunshot victims were transported by law enforcement to ORMC in their vehicles.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Orlando Police Department timeline (see note 24).

⁷⁰ For a complete list of responding agencies, see appendix C on page 162.

⁷¹ *Pulse Presentation*, Orlando Police Department, provided to assessment team December 15, 2016.

⁷² Orlando Police Department and Orange County Sheriff’s Office first responders, focus group with assessment team, February 22, 2017.

⁷³ Orlando Police Department and Orange County Sheriff’s Office first responders, focus group (see note 72).

⁷⁴ Orlando Police Department Homicide Unit Supplement Report, provided by Orlando Police Department to assessment team December 15, 2016.

The Importance of the Golden Hour

During the response to any incident in which numerous individuals are critically injured, triage and transportation to the appropriate medical facility is of premier importance. In the medical field, it is widely believed that if paramedics transport the wounded within less than 60 minutes—known as the “golden hour”—their likelihood of survival greatly improves. First responders at Pulse were aware of this and made it a priority to extricate as many of the injured as possible from the nightclub and move them to ORMC. Within 40 minutes, all of the critically injured individuals except the hostages in the restrooms were removed. Of the 69 critically injured individuals who were removed from the club, 58 survived their injuries, a testament to the importance of the “golden hour” and a key lesson learned to preserve life.

Source: Charlie Eisele, “The Golden Hour,” *Journal of Emergency Medical Services*, August 31, 2008, <http://www.jems.com/articles/2008/08/golden-hour.html>.

At 2:20 a.m., as the club was being secured and people were being rescued, another individual—this time from inside the restroom with the suspect—called 911. The hostage advised the call taker that the suspect was reloading his weapons and that although he was no longer firing, there were injured hostages who needed medical attention.⁷⁵ One minute later, a hostage escaped from one of the restrooms down the hallway.⁷⁶

At 2:30 a.m., 11 more persons—five who had been hiding in the drink preparation and kitchenette room behind the main bar in the Jewel Box and six who had been hiding in an upstairs office area above the main dance floor—were rescued by an OPD sergeant and a team of officers.⁷⁷ By approximately 2:35 a.m., all the critically injured individuals in the club except the hostages and the survivors in the Adonis Room area, the restrooms, and the dressing rooms—had been rescued.

At 2:35 a.m., another 911 call was answered in the Communications Center: a call that would change the nature of the incident from a barricaded suspect with hostages to a terrorist event.⁷⁸

Phase III. Terrorism in Orlando (2:35–4:45 a.m.)

When the 911 operator answered the call at 2:35 a.m., it was difficult for her to hear because of the noise and commotion in the Communications Center. Initially, the suspect spoke in Arabic; however, he soon switched to English and clearly stated, “I’m in Orlando and I did the shooting.” When the 911 operator asked for the individual’s name, he replied, “My name is, ‘I pledge allegiance to Abu Bakr Al-

⁷⁵ “911 transcripts (pages 1–68)” (see note 25).

⁷⁶ Orlando Police Department timeline (see note 24).

⁷⁷ Orlando Police Department timeline (see note 24).

⁷⁸ John W. Mina, chief, Orlando Police Department, and Ron Hopper, assistant special agent in charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, emails to assessment team, December 15–16, 2016.

Baghdadi of the Islamic State’.”⁷⁹ He repeated his allegiance to the leader of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the organization when asked for his name again. As soon as the call taker realized she was talking to someone who was claiming responsibility for the shooting, she notified her supervisors.⁸⁰ Less than one minute after the call was answered, it ended.

After hanging up, the suspect also called a local cable channel to publicly profess that he was the shooter. At approximately 2:45 a.m., the suspect told a producer, “I’m the shooter. It’s me,” and reaffirmed that “I did it for ISIS”—the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria⁸¹—before hanging up.⁸²

Using geospatial triangulation capabilities within the communications center, OPD personnel verified that the cell phone call came from inside or from a location very close to the Pulse nightclub. Based on the caller’s statement that he was the shooter, the location of the phone from which the call was received, and the suspect’s pledge of allegiance to the Islamic State, OPD and FDLE officials began tracking down information on the cell phone’s owner.⁸³ At 2:47 a.m., an OPD dispatcher radioed that the cell phone was listed to Omar Mir Seddique Mateen.⁸⁴

At 2:48 a.m., an OPD crisis negotiation team (CNT) sergeant called the number, and the suspect answered. Instead of providing his name, the suspect advised the negotiator, “You’re speaking to the person who pledged allegiance to the Islamic State.” The suspect told the negotiator, “What’s going on is that I feel the pain of the people getting killed in Syria and Iraq,” and he said that he was following the example set by the Boston Marathon bombers.⁸⁵ He then told the negotiator, “There is some vehicles outside that have some bombs” and that “they can take out a whole city block almost.”⁸⁶ In addition to those vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIED), the suspect told the negotiator that he had a vest similar to the ones used in Paris (alluding to the explosive vests used during the coordinated attacks at the Stade de France, Bataclan concert hall, and bars and cafes on November 13, 2015).⁸⁷ After nine minutes, the suspect ended the call. Having made two calls to 911, the suspect then used his phone to search the internet for news of the shooting.⁸⁸

⁷⁹ “Transcripts of Calls with Suspect 6-12-16” (see note 30).

⁸⁰ Orlando Police Department 911 call takers and dispatchers, focus group (see note 54).

⁸¹ The Islamic State, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) all refer to the same terrorist organization led by Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi.

⁸² Michael E. Miller, “I’m the Shooter. It’s Me’: Gunman Called Local TV Station during Attack, Station Says,” *The Washington Post*, June 15, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2016/06/15/im-the-shooter-its-me-gunman-called-local-tv-station-during-attack-station-says/?utm_term=.d2c83581b594.

⁸³ Orlando Police Department CNT sergeant, interview with assessment team, January 25, 2017.

⁸⁴ Orlando Police Department timeline (see note 24).

⁸⁵ “Transcripts of Calls with Suspect 6-12-16” (see note 30).

⁸⁶ “Transcripts of Calls with Suspect 6-12-16” (see note 30).

⁸⁷ “Transcripts of Calls with Suspect 6-12-16” (see note 30).

⁸⁸ Orlando Police Department Homicide Unit Supplement Report (see note 74).

Given the potential of VBIEDs and other explosives, at 2:57 a.m., three K-9s were requested: one from the OPD, one from the University of Central Florida Police Department (UCFPD), and one from the Seminole County Sheriff's Office.⁸⁹ The UCFPD K-9 swept the triage area and the nearby OFD station and the area around it and moved north towards the ORMC. Meanwhile, the OPD K-9 searched the parking lot. The OPD K-9 handler advised that his dog was distracted by officers holding perimeter positions in and around the club and he was unable to determine if his dog had also alerted to the vehicle. Because of the uncertainty, an OPD sergeant requested another K-9, this one from the Greater Orlando Aviation Authority.⁹⁰ The Seminole County Sheriff's Office K-9 was used to sweep the 7-Eleven and other locations near Pulse and the Arnold Palmer Hospital.

After trying to reconnect with the suspect multiple times, at approximately 3:03 a.m., the suspect answered another call from the CNT sergeant. The suspect continued to talk about air strikes and said, "In the next few days you're going to see more of this type of action going on." Though this call lasted 16 minutes, other than the beginning of the call, the suspect and negotiator went back and forth with little substantive information exchanged as the suspect repeatedly expressed frustration about the bombings in Syria and Afghanistan, questioned the CNT sergeant, and refused to answer any questions before he hung up.⁹¹ Each time the suspect hung up, the CNT sergeant attempted to call him back and get him on the phone, reasoning that if he was talking he wasn't shooting. At the same time that the CNT sergeant was trying to reconnect with the suspect, another member of the CNT relayed information from the calls to the command center.

At approximately 3:18 a.m., the OPD mobile command center (MCC) and CNT vehicle arrived at the scene and became operational. Both vehicles were parked in an open lot on South Orange Avenue just north of the OFD fire station and across the street from Pro Tint & Detailing and Pulse. The initial staging area was selected because it was behind OFD station 5 and near the 7-Eleven where arriving officers were checking in and the triage area in the Einstein Bros. Bagels store's parking lot. As OPD SWAT officers arrived on scene, they were directed into the club to relieve officers and deputies who had been holding their positions for more than an hour.

At approximately 3:20 a.m., the OPD sent its Avatar III Tactical Robot (shown on page 26) into Pulse to provide images of the urinal and the south restroom. The robot was able to fully enter the area with the urinal and determine that the area was clear, but because of obstructions, it could only partially enter the south restroom. The robot was equipped with two-way audio, which allowed OPD command staff to hear inside the club and to advise the hostages via a public address system that it was the police and that they were working on a rescue.⁹²

⁸⁹ Orlando Police Department Computer Aided Dispatch Report, June 12, 2017, provided to assessment team December 15, 2016.

⁹⁰ Orlando Police Department Homicide Unit Supplement Report (see note 74).

⁹¹ "Transcripts of Calls with Suspect 6-12-16" (see note 30).

⁹² Anzueto, deputy chief, Orlando Police Department, email (see note 31).



Avatar III tactical robot.

Photo courtesy of RoboteX

At approximately 3:24 a.m., the suspect answered the final call that he would take from the CNT sergeant. The suspect indicated that he was annoyed with all the phone calls, recapped all his previous statements, and hung up.⁹³ That call lasted about three minutes.

At approximately 4:03 a.m., the K-9 from the Greater Orlando Aviation Authority arrived on scene.⁹⁴ As this was happening, the OCSO HDT arrived on scene and was notified about the K-9 alerts.⁹⁵ A member of the OCSO HDT recommended that a 1,000-foot perimeter⁹⁶ (see figure 4 on page 27) be established around the car to ensure the safety of all first responders and injured who were being triaged.⁹⁷ However, this recommendation was ignored as officers and deputies held their positions and did not back away.

⁹³ In total, the suspect spoke with authorities four times for a total of 29 minutes.

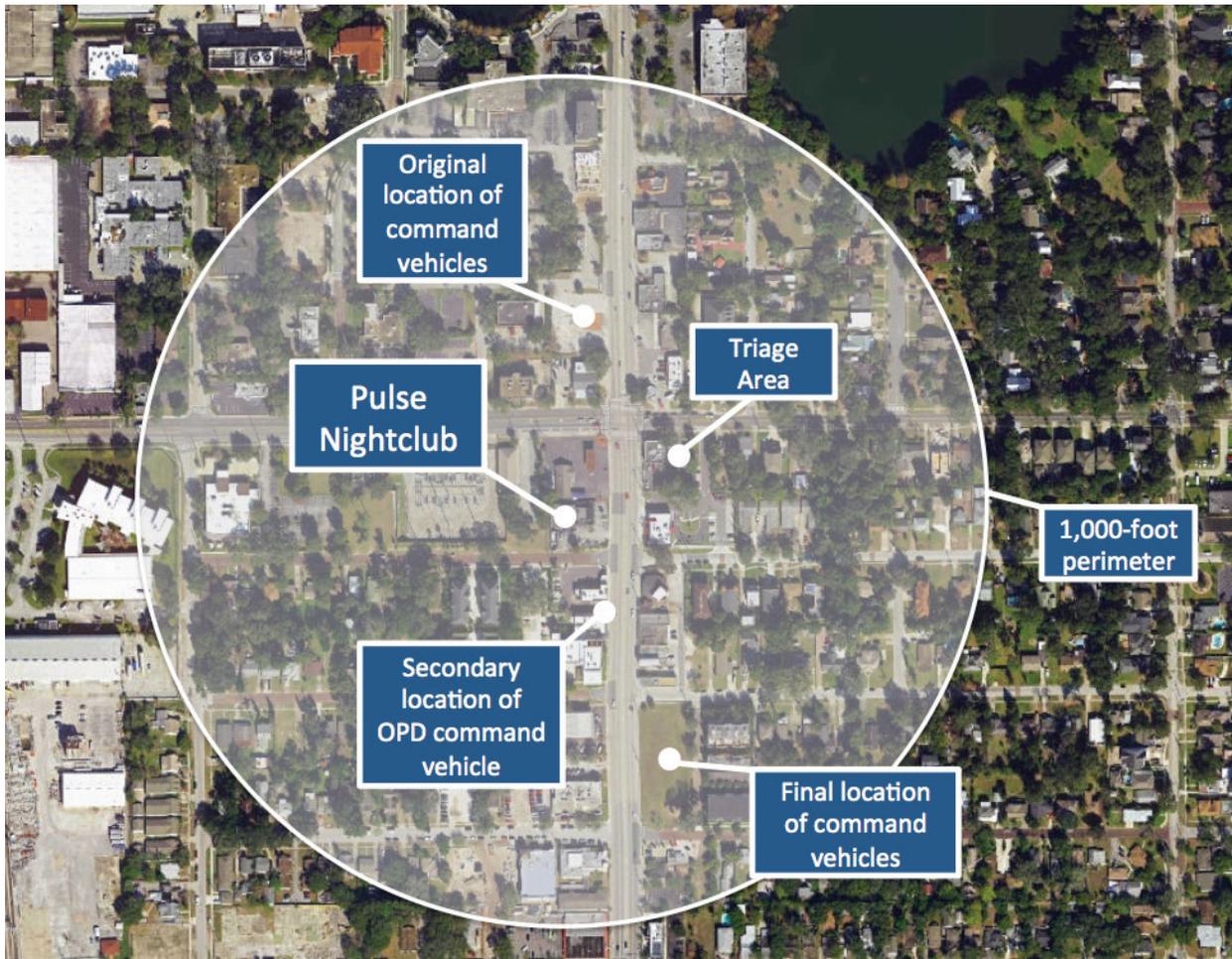
⁹⁴ The Orlando International Airport—where the Greater Orlando Aviation Authority is located—is approximately a 20-minute drive from Pulse.

⁹⁵ The OCSO HDT is primarily a part-time service and many of the members were performing their regular duties or working extra duty details at other venues throughout the county. Once they received the callout, many of them had to retrieve their equipment—including the explosives that would be used to breach the wall—and meet on scene. For more about the OCSO HDT, see the sidebar on page 49.

⁹⁶ *The IED and VBIED Threat (Improvised Explosives Device) (Vehicular Borne IED)*, CJTF-7 OIF Smart Card 4 (Camp Victory, Baghdad, Iraq: Combined Joint Task Force 7 Operation Iraqi Freedom, 2004), <https://fas.org/irp/doddir/army/ied-smartcard.pdf>.

⁹⁷ Orlando Police Department Homicide Unit Supplement Report (see note 74).

Figure 4. Perimeter recommended by OCSO HDT



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At 4:29 a.m., a text message was sent by one of the hostages who was in the restroom with the suspect to the hostage's brother. According to the brother, the text message indicated that the suspect claimed he had four additional explosive vests that he intended to place on hostages and detonate.⁹⁸

At approximately 4:30 a.m., OPD SWAT team members rescued a group of eight patrons hiding in a restroom on the west side of the nightclub, directly behind the restroom where the suspect was barricaded. SWAT team officers talked to the patrons in the dressing room via an employee's cell phone and told them the only safe way out was to remove the air conditioning unit from the wall and climb through the opening. The SWAT team officers and eight uninjured survivors devised a coordinated effort to loosen the unit and push it into the dressing room, where the survivors would slowly and quietly lower it to the floor in an effort not to alert the suspect. A SWAT team officer told the person on the line to ensure that all the patrons were out before he exited the room. SWAT team officers jarred the air conditioner loose, and the survivors pulled the unit into the dressing room while the SWAT team pushed

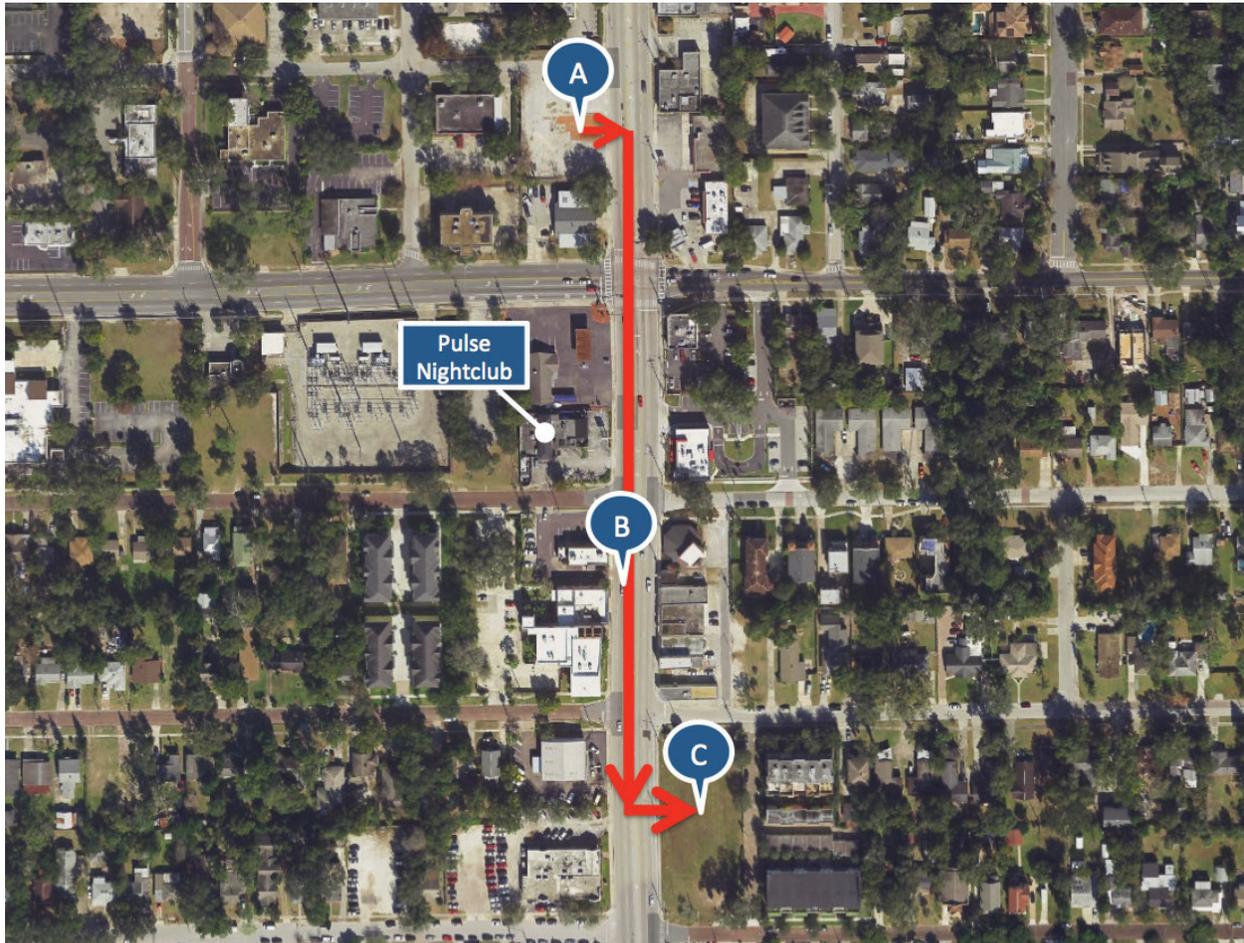
⁹⁸ Orlando Police Department timeline (see note 24).

it in to them. Once the unit was removed, SWAT team members assisted the eight people through the opening to safety. The last one to exit was indeed the person who had been on the phone with the OPD SWAT officer.

At approximately 4:33 a.m., based on the text message and other information received from 911 callers and survivors who had been rescued from other rooms inside Pulse regarding the possibility of IEDs and based on the K-9 alerts on the suspect's vehicle, the MCC and the CNT vehicles were moved from their initial location to an intersection further south (see figure 5 on page 29).⁹⁹ In addition, inside the MCC, the OPD command staff, fearing the imminent loss of life, changed their strategy from negotiation to taking immediate action to free the hostages and neutralize the suspect.

⁹⁹ Orlando Police Department Homicide Unit Supplement Report (see note 74).

Figure 5. Location of Orlando command post



A – Original location of command vehicles

B – Relocated OPD command post

C—Final location of command vehicles

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Phase IV. The incident comes to an end (4:45–5:15 a.m.)

At 4:59 a.m., the OCSO HDT squad prepared an explosive charge to breach the exterior western wall of the nightclub. Command personnel determined that an exterior breach offered a safer option than a direct assault down the narrow hallway to rescue the hostages. The HDT team detonated the charge at 5:02 a.m. Because of the wall's structure, the detonation only partially breached the wall and did not create a hole large enough for the OPD SWAT team to enter.¹⁰⁰ An OPD BEARCAT equipped with a ram

¹⁰⁰ Orange County Sheriff's Office hazardous device team members, focus group with assessment team, January 25, 2017.

Figure 6. Breaches of Pulse nightclub exterior wall



Photo courtesy of Orlando Police Department

completed the hole at 5:08 a.m.¹⁰¹ The first hole was made in the hallway wall between the two restrooms. Recognizing that they had not breached the wall in the south restroom where some of the hostages were hiding, the armored vehicle was repositioned and breached a hole large enough for the OPD SWAT members to rescue the survivors (all breaches are numerically ordered in figure 6).

A SWAT team member was widening the hole in the south restroom wall, and as he was doing so the suspect started shooting from within the north restroom.¹⁰² The SWAT team deployed two flash-bangs—one right after the other—into the hole where the hallway was located, and the SWAT commander immediately sent the BEARCAT to breach the north restroom wall.

¹⁰¹ Orlando Police Department timeline (see note 24); Jordan, “This Armored Vehicle” (see note 33).

¹⁰² Orlando Police Department timeline (see note 24); Jordan, “This Armored Vehicle” (see note 33). This information was also verified by a 911 caller who stated that shots were being fired in the restroom and by a Pulse nightclub survivor in an interview with the assessment team, May 3, 2017.



OPD SWAT team officer's gunshot-damaged helmet.

Photo courtesy of Orlando Police Department

As the first breach occurred in the north restroom wall, the suspect emerged at approximately 5:15 a.m. and engaged officers and deputies in a shootout. During the shootout, one OPD SWAT team officer was struck in his ballistic helmet by a shot fired by the suspect (the damaged helmet is shown here). The officer fell to the ground; while lying on his side, he returned fire, emptying his magazine. The SWAT officer then returned to his feet and ran approximately 10 yards to the south and reloaded his weapon. At this time, a second SWAT officer realized that his partner had been shot and had other SWAT team members remove him from the scene. Once the threat was neutralized, the SWAT officer's injury was quickly assessed, and he was transported to ORMC via an OPD pickup truck.

At 5:15 a.m., the suspect was killed.

Phase V. Recovery and investigation

After the suspect was killed, SWAT team officers extricated hostages from the north restroom, and officers and deputies carried or assisted them to triage areas, working quickly due to the continued threat of explosives. OPD SWAT team officers and OCSO HDT personnel and the OPD Avatar III tactical robot entered the club and began searching for additional victims and any potential explosive devices. Between 5:17 a.m. and 5:26 a.m., five individuals were rescued from the north restroom and 13 from

the south restroom. At 5:27 a.m. an announcement was made over the radio that all injured and uninjured survivors—approximately 90 people—had been removed from Pulse and that officers and deputies were to back away because of the continuing possibility of IEDs.¹⁰³

Because of the number of patrons' bags and electronic devices, the possibility of secondary devices, and the limitations on the number of personnel that were allowed inside the club, clearing Pulse was an intense and dangerous undertaking as officers and FBI agents methodically searched each victim, bag, and electronic device in the club for IEDs.¹⁰⁴ At 11:15 a.m. on Sunday, June 12, OPD SWAT, the OCSO HDT, and FBI SWAT team officially determined the Pulse nightclub and the suspect's vehicle safe.¹⁰⁵

The aftermath

With all survivors rescued from inside the club and receiving medical treatment at one of four area hospitals—ORMC, Florida Hospital, Dr. Phillips Hospital, and Winter Park Hospital¹⁰⁶—the overall focus shifted to finding and identifying the injured and deceased and notifying their families. Because all the critically injured survivors had been transported to ORMC, and because of its proximity to Pulse, concerned family members and friends flooded the ORMC waiting room. Officers securing the perimeter also directed family and friends to ORMC (discussed further in chapter 7 beginning on page 86).

After being notified of the incident by law enforcement personnel, victim advocates from the UCFPD victim services unit responded to the four hospitals that received injured survivors. The victim advocates worked to console individuals and groups in the hospital lobbies as they waited for information and updates about loved ones. Victim advocates also collected contact information from representatives of each group as well as the names of the individuals they were waiting to hear from so that they could pass along the information they received. The director of the UCFPD victim services unit, who is also a member of the Florida Crisis Assistance Response Team, immediately initiated a statewide callout of victim advocates.¹⁰⁷ As a result, an additional 80 victim advocates—specially trained law enforcement officers and Spanish-speaking personnel—responded to assist the survivors and the families and friends of survivors and victims.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ Orlando Police Department timeline (see note 24).

¹⁰⁴ Orange County Sheriff's Office hazardous device team, focus group (see note 100).

¹⁰⁵ Use of Force Investigation (see note 34).

¹⁰⁶ Individuals from the Pulse shooting received medical attention at area hospitals as follows: 35 at ORMC, 20 at Florida Hospital, two at Dr. Phillips Hospital, and one at Winter Park Hospital.

¹⁰⁷ University of Central Florida Police Department victim advocates, interview with assessment team, January 26, 2017.

¹⁰⁸ The FBI also dispatched dozens of victim advocates to assist families and victims at the Family Assistance Center at Beardall Center, Camping World Stadium, and the LGBT Center of Central Florida. They also dispatched Spanish-speaking advocates, who were essential because some family members spoke only Spanish.

As more information became available, including the names of the victims, the FDLE took the lead in making death notifications with assistance from the UCFPD victim advocates. This task was taken on by the FDLE as a way to support the response and allow the OPD to focus on duties and responsibilities at Pulse. Notifications began to be made in an unused meeting room just outside the lobby in ORMC. FDLE officials and UCFPD victim advocates soon determined that ORMC was not the appropriate place to make death notifications as distraught families and friends had to make their way back through the crowded ORMC lobby, passing other families awaiting information about their own loved ones, after they were told their loved ones had died.¹⁰⁹

During planning for a mass casualty event, ORMC had previously arranged with the Hampton Inn & Suites, located less than a quarter of a mile north of the hospital, that in the event of a critical incident, hotel meeting space would be available to support a family reunification center (FRC).¹¹⁰ The FDLE and the victim advocates moved to the Hampton Inn & Suites, which provided more space and a more private location in which to make the notifications.

The FDLE made as many of the notifications to victims' families in person as possible. While there were complications in doing so, because some next-of-kin were international or because of strained family relationships, 48 of the 49 notifications were made by Monday, June 13.¹¹¹

With a city and a nation in shock, the Orlando community began the healing process in the days and weeks following the attack. Vigils and prayer services were held and volunteers donated food, blood, and time to helping survivors and families of those who lost their lives. The OPD—along with the OCSO and Florida Highway Patrol—continued to support these activities by providing security, managing parking and traffic, and ensuring temporary memorials were protected. The FRC transitioned to a family assistance center where services were provided to survivors, families, and friends. Community leaders—particularly Mayor Buddy Dyer and Police Chief John W. Mina—continued to assert, “We will not be defined by the act of a hateful murderer,” and “We will be defined by how we respond and how we are responding: with love, with compassion, with unity among our city.”¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ University of Central Florida Police Department victim advocates, interview (see note 107).

¹¹⁰ Orlando Regional Medical Center emergency preparedness manager, interview with assessment team, January 26, 2017.

¹¹¹ Orange County medical examiner, interview with assessment team, January 27, 2017.

¹¹² Jeff Weiner, “Mayor Buddy Dyer: ‘I Don’t Think We Change A Bit’,” *Orlando Sentinel*, June 13, 2016, <http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/pulse-orlando-nightclub-shooting/os-orlando-mass-shooting-buddy-dyer-20160613-story.html>.

2. Leadership and Relationships

The terrorist attack at Pulse—which included threats of suicide bombers and of bomb vests being placed on hostages and possibly secreted in vehicles—unfolded in one of the most popular travel destinations in the country,¹¹³ once again demonstrating that acts of mass public violence and terrorism can happen anywhere at any time. Leadership—both internal and public-facing—is imperative to develop and implement a cogent response to reduce chaos and save lives during a critical incident such as the Pulse nightclub terrorist attack. Leadership requires bringing a sense of composure, an awareness of individual and agency capabilities and needs, decision-making based on limited and constantly evolving information and circumstances, and calm to a highly charged, dynamic, and volatile situation.

Examples of leadership, regardless of title, can be seen throughout the response and during the days and weeks that followed the attack. During the assessment team’s review, the team identified decision-making, pre-existing relationships, information sharing, trust and understanding, unity of message, self and organizational awareness, and learning from previous after action reports as key factors during the response to the attack at the Pulse nightclub.

Decision-making

While decision-making ability is a key characteristic of any organizational leader, strength of that character is tested during critical incidents. During the terrorist attack at the Pulse nightclub, the Orlando Police Department (OPD) and partner agency leaders were forced to make decisions in an urgent, high-stakes, and unpredictable environment. Creative and decisive actions were required to resolve situations that arose as the incident played out.¹¹⁴ OPD command personnel and individual first responders were required to make split-second tactical and operational decisions, often weighing bad options against worse, putting victims’ safety ahead of their own.

Recent body-worn camera footage captured the intensity of the response at Pulse and the critical and difficult decisions facing officers and commanders alike. During one exchange with a bystander outside the club, one officer explained one of the many challenges of the response:

Bystander: “Y’all is gonna shoot his [expletive]?”

Officer: “We can’t, ma’am.”

Bystander: “What do you mean, you can’t?”

¹¹³ Polland, “The 25 Most Popular Travel Destinations” (see note 8).

¹¹⁴ Chief executives of responding agencies, interviews (see note 2).

Officer: “We can’t; there’s more victims in there. If we started to shoot, we might shoot other people.”

Bystander: “[Expletive] go in there and shoot his [expletive], man.”¹¹⁵

Orlando Police Chief John W. Mina and other command personnel made effective decisions in response to the myriad challenges that arose during the incident. As the incident progressed from an active shooter situation to a suspect barricaded with hostages to a terrorist holding hostages, the decisions became more complex and more difficult. Variables included the number of hostages; the location of the hostages in a restroom at the end of a narrow hallway; the large number and location of survivors, some critically injured, inside the club; the possibility of secondary devices inside the club and in vehicles outside; the possibility that hostages would be sent out of the restroom wearing bomb vests; the safety of his officers as they rescued individuals and prepared to rescue the hostages and engage the suspect; and the reliability of the information being provided.

As demonstrated in the Pulse response, leaders—and for that matter all personnel—must be prepared to take quick, decisive, and creative action with little to no reliable information.¹¹⁶ They will often be required to choose between two or more undesirable options, and the consequences of those decisions will be significant as the lives of victims and first responders may be at stake. In addition, agency leaders must prepare their officers—at every level—to make effective decisions in uncertain and dynamic environments. “Agencies cannot wait for a complex or novel critical incident before they engage in conversations regarding decision-making and tactics. Rather, they must invest in training opportunities that create highly complex scenarios to build situational awareness, decision-making, and complex creative problem solving skills.”¹¹⁷

Pre-existing relationships

Jurisdictional and operational decisions can be contentious during routine incidents. When incidents such as the attack at the Pulse nightclub occur, a decision on who should lead the response and which agencies should play a supporting role can become particularly antagonistic. Any delay due to indecision, leadership debates, or political posturing can compound the challenges faced during a critical incident. However, jurisdictional decisions can be made expeditiously if leaders have established solid personal and professional relationships before a critical incident takes place as demonstrated during the response to the terrorist attack at Pulse.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ “Pulse Police Body Camera Videos Release: June 1, 2017” (see note 27).

¹¹⁶ David H. Freedman, “A Few Good Principles,” *Forbes.com*, last modified May 29, 2000, <https://www.forbes.com/asap/2000/0529/201.html>.

¹¹⁷ Rick Braziel, Devon Bell, and George Watson, *A Heist Gone Bad: A Police Foundation Critical Incident Review of the Stockton Police Response to the Bank of the West Robbery and Hostage Taking* (Washington, DC: Police Foundation, 2015), <https://www.policefoundation.org/publication/a-heist-gone-bad/>.

¹¹⁸ *Police Under Attack: Southern California Law Enforcement Response to the Attacks by Christopher Dorner* (Washington, DC: Police Foundation, 2013), <http://www.policefoundation.org/critical-incident-review-library/police-foundation-regional-review-of-police-response-to-the-attacks-by-christopher-dorner/>.

In fact, leadership during the terrorist attack at the Pulse nightclub was similar in many ways to leadership demonstrated during the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing and the 2015 San Bernardino terrorist attack. While the OPD’s Chief Mina was the incident commander, the leaders from the federal, state, and local agencies who assembled in the command center agreed that the overarching mission was to save lives, and they rallied around doing so—providing whatever resources they could to accomplish the goal. While individual law enforcement and elected officials took charge of specific aspects of the response—tactical operations and investigations; media relations and public information; setting up a centralized donation site; and providing services to the victims and their families—no single individual claimed responsibility or credit for the response.

To some degree, the OPD response was informed by the after action report that followed the Boston Marathon bombing, including the principles of swarm intelligence:

- “1. An overriding object that forges unity of mission and connectivity of action . . .
2. A spirit of generosity that rallies groups and individuals to assist one another and overcome constraints of resources, know-how, or tools to achieve the paramount mission . . .
3. Respect for the responsibilities of others, described as ‘staying in one’s lane’ while assisting others to succeed in their lane to accomplish mission critical duties and tasks . . .
4. Neither taking undue credit nor pointing blame among key players, oftentimes portrayed as ‘checking your ego at the door’ . . .
5. Genuine interpersonal trust and respect developed well before the event so that existing and dependable leadership relationships, integrity and camaraderie can be leveraged during the event, often described as ‘don’t wait for an emergency to exchange business cards.’”¹¹⁹

The local, state, and federal law enforcement leaders involved in the response to the terrorist attack at the Pulse nightclub told the assessment team that as they faced the most challenging set of circumstances in their careers,¹²⁰ the concept of swarm intelligence—specifically the pre-existing trusting professional and personal relationships—contributed immensely to the success of the response. Every public safety leader interviewed by the assessment team reported that the biggest advantage they had while managing the response was the relationships they had developed over many years of working together and supporting one another, in whatever way needed, regardless of their title or agency affiliation. These pre-existing relationships led to the open and honest sharing of information, open discussions between federal officials and their local counterparts regarding the terrorist designation of the attack, decisions regarding who would lead the response and the terrorism investigation, what roles

¹¹⁹ Leonard J. Marcus et al., *Crisis Meta-Leadership Lessons from the Boston Marathon Bombing Response: The Ingenuity of Swarm Intelligence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard School of Public Health, 2014), https://cdn2.sph.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2013/04/Crisis-Leadership-Lessons_Boston-Marathon.pdf.

¹²⁰ Chief executives of responding agencies, interviews (see note 2).

and responsibilities different agencies would play, the order in which they would speak during press conferences, and how information would be provided to the media and the community. Although this was the OPD's incident to manage, some agencies self-deployed, their personnel finding jobs to do during and after the incident with little or no direction from the OPD or other command personnel. Paraphrasing the words of one command officer, first responders found a job and did it.¹²¹

OPD Chief Mina and Orange County Sheriff Jerry Demings have been friends and professional colleagues for many years. Prior to being elected to lead the Orange County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) in 2008, Demings served as the OPD's chief from 1998 to 2002 and as the Orange County Public Safety Director from 2002 to 2008. During Demings' tenure as chief of the OPD, Mina served as a commander under him. In 2014, Mina was appointed to lead the OPD and the positive and effective working relationship continued. The two frequently saw each other at events in the city and county, and their agencies routinely partner with one another during day to day operations. Their relationship and the operational experiences that Mina and Demings had shared during their careers facilitated decision-making and operations during the Pulse response.

As a former OCSO deputy sheriff, the special agent in charge (SAC) of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement's (FDLE) Orlando field office, Danny Banks, was also accustomed to working with Chief Mina and Sheriff Demings. After being notified about the incident, Banks arrived at the unified command center and offered assistance. In addition to deploying more than 70 agents and analysts to assist in gathering intelligence during the incident, the FDLE also assisted in victim identification and led the next-of-kin notifications. The FDLE also followed up on intelligence and investigative leads throughout the state and assisted in the location, identification, and return of victims' vehicles. The OPD and the FDLE have in place an active memorandum of understanding indicating that the FDLE will investigate all OPD officer-involved shootings.

Sheriff Don Eslinger of Seminole County responded to the UCC to offer his deputies' assistance. Eslinger, who had been sheriff for 26 years, also provided support and advice in the UCC.

At the federal level, the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) assistant special agent in charge (ASAC) of the Tampa field office—whose responsibility extended to Orlando—had long-standing, trusting relationships with both Chief Mina and Sheriff Demings. The ASAC, Ron Hopper, had worked with the two local leaders for many years prior to the attack on Pulse, including supporting both agencies during operations and facilitating antiterrorism training for both the OPD and the OCSO. The relationship between Hopper, Mina, Demings, and SAC Banks proved to be critical during the early stages of the attack at Pulse and during the weeks that followed as information was openly exchanged between the leaders and their agencies worked cooperatively.

Because of the magnitude of the attack, numerous tasks and responsibilities needed to be undertaken, and agencies were asked to assume nontraditional roles and responsibilities. For example, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) took on the responsibility of assisting victims' family members and

¹²¹ Chief executives of responding agencies, interviews (see note 2).

next of kin in dealing with a host of medical, insurance, financial, and other issues.¹²² Over the course of 10 days, DEA agents, with assistance from the FDLE, cataloged, searched, and facilitated the release of 130 vehicles to their owners or to the next of kin of the deceased. This was done while other DEA agents assisted the FBI with witness interviews and performed other investigative responsibilities.

Trust and understanding

Trusting and sustained relationships are not built by simply networking at a local event or exchanging pleasantries a few times a year during awards banquets or other ceremonies.¹²³ Rather, they are established through frequent and genuine personal contacts over time. The interpersonal relationships within the Orlando law enforcement community and between Mayor Buddy Dyer and Chief Mina were built over many years and through sustained efforts to do so. Dyer trusted and empowered Mina to lead the law enforcement response and provided assistance if and when it was needed by the law enforcement team. When the mayor was interviewed by the assessment team and asked what lessons he wanted to share he said one of the most important was “Stay out of the way of the chief – let him or her do their job.”¹²⁴ Mina also discussed the importance of his relationships with other city department heads and their ability to work together to respond to the incident.¹²⁵

In addition to developing relationships among agency heads, law enforcement leaders should encourage their personnel to develop similar relationships among their colleagues, particularly among mutual aid partners.¹²⁶ Pre-existing relationships are instrumental to ensuring that upon arriving at a scene, supervisors and commanders from different agencies can work together to address issues. Likewise, operational personnel from patrol to special operations components need to have relationships among their peers, because they will undoubtedly be the first responders on scene. As demonstrated during the initial stages of the Pulse nightclub response, officers from at least six different agencies formed entry teams and went in to the nightclub together to address the suspect, worked together to treat and rescue victims, and shared resources.¹²⁷ The seamless response was accomplished as supervisors and commanders met regularly to discuss critical incident planning and had come together after previous incidents to critically evaluate their overall performance.¹²⁸ These types of regular planning meetings, along with honest and open assessments, broke down barriers to communication and collaboration—all of which were critical to the Pulse response.

¹²² Danny Banks, special agent in charge, Florida Department of Law Enforcement, interview with assessment team, February 21, 2017.

¹²³ Ron Hopper, assistant special agent in charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, interview with assessment team, December 15, 2016.

¹²⁴ Buddy Dyer, mayor, Orlando, Florida, interview with assessment team, December 16, 2016.

¹²⁵ John W. Mina, chief, Orlando Police Department, interview with assessment team, December 16, 2016.

¹²⁶ *Police Under Attack* (see note 118).

¹²⁷ Braziel et al., *Bringing Calm to Chaos* (see note 19).

¹²⁸ *Police Under Attack* (see note 118).

State and Local Law Enforcement Executives and Elected Officials Security Clearance Initiative

In response to the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001, the FBI established the State and Local Law Enforcement Executives and Elected Officials Security Clearance Initiative to provide these stakeholders with the security clearances necessary to be able to share classified information that “would or could affect their area of jurisdiction.” For more information about the initiative, visit “Security Clearances for Law Enforcement,” Federal Bureau of Investigation, accessed June 29, 2017, <https://www.fbi.gov/resources/law-enforcement/security-clearances-for-law-enforcement>.

Information sharing

The personal and professional relationships between the leaders of the local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies that responded to the Pulse attack facilitated the seamless, immediate, and consistent flow of information throughout the incident. This was further aided by the fact that prior to this event, local and state law enforcement officials had obtained federal security clearances that allowed them to receive classified briefings from the FBI and other federal law enforcement agencies.

After the suspect called 911 and pledged his allegiance to the leader of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and indicated that he had explosives similar to those used in other recent terrorist attacks, officials recognized that the Pulse nightclub suspect could be a terrorist. These suspicions were confirmed after he was identified and prior contacts with the FBI were confirmed. Much of the FBI’s information regarding the suspect was classified; however, because local and state law enforcement leaders had obtained the appropriate federal security clearances, the FBI could share information with them regarding the suspect. This information was critical to informing many of the tactical decisions made during the incident. The law enforcement leadership group decided without hesitation that the OPD would lead the response and that, based on the determination that the incident was a terrorist attack, the FBI would take over the scene once the suspect was in custody or neutralized. During the days following the attack, the FBI held daily classified briefings, during which they updated local and state law enforcement leaders on the progress of their investigation.

Unity of message

During and immediately following a critical incident, leadership must set the tone for the days, weeks, and months to follow.¹²⁹ Through early statements, consistent messaging, and demeanor, Mayor Dyer, Chief Mina, Sheriff Demings, and FBI ASAC Hopper set the tone of the response, which was one of calm determination, resiliency, and unity. Executives from other city and county agencies aligned in support

¹²⁹ Braziel, Bell, and Watson, *A Heist Gone Bad* (see note 117).

of this message and ensured that their agencies were available to provide any required resources.¹³⁰ Other political officials, including the governor, were also supportive of the unified message and response and allowed responding public safety agencies to perform their responsibilities without interfering in the decision-making and tactical processes. Demonstrating unity and cooperation between public safety leadership and political officials was essential in gaining the confidence of the community.¹³¹

All of the city and county leaders interviewed by the assessment team said they recognized early on that they had to come together and present a unified front to show consistency in their messaging. Yet again, pre-existing relationships proved beneficial when deciding who would conduct media briefings and what information should be conveyed to the media and the public. Before each media briefing, the speakers and their respective staffs—including Chief Mina and the OPD public information officers (PIO)—collaborated to determine the order in which participants would speak and what information would be shared. All participants understood their roles and remained on message. Effective and consistent messaging by the leadership team created confidence in the Orlando community and the nation as they wrestled with this tragic event (more about the public information and media relations in chapter 9 beginning on page 100).

Organizational awareness

The days, weeks, and months following a high-profile critical incident can be overwhelming for city and public safety leaders. Many additional political and community-related obligations and responsibilities follow a critical incident, often pulling agency leaders further away from their organizations. The OPD and other public safety officials were also asked to attend numerous community and political events in recognition of their leadership and their department's performance during the incident. As a result, leaders must recognize the need to balance the attention they give to external responsibilities with the time they spend within their agency communicating with and caring for their personnel.¹³²

Managing time between external events and internal agency activities can be accomplished by identifying opportunities—such as roll calls and other events—to personally recognize agency personnel for their efforts, answer questions, and check on their well-being regardless of the role they played. Beginning on the night of June 12, 2016, Chief Mina emailed the entire OPD staff to express his gratitude for all of their work.¹³³ Mina and the command staff also met personally with dozens of officers and civilians both formally and informally in the days and weeks afterward, including at the beginning of the Critical Incident Stress Management debriefings and before then FBI Director James Comey spoke with hundreds of officers. Mina also made several visits to the OPD Communications Center and personally thanked the 911 call takers and dispatchers on each visit. Beginning in July 2016, Mina also met with

¹³⁰ Orlando Police Department, Orlando Fire Department, and City of Orlando public information officers and communications personnel, focus group with assessment team, February 23, 2017.

¹³¹ Braziel et al., *Bringing Calm to Chaos* (see note 19).

¹³² Braziel et al., *Bringing Calm to Chaos* (see note 19).

¹³³ See appendix B for the full text of Chief Mina's email to the staff.

groups of 40 to 50 officers at a time as part of his regularly scheduled Chief’s Message portion of in-service training, in which he dedicated the majority of the time to thanking and praising everyone for the role they played in the response to the Pulse terrorist attack—even if they were not on the scene—and stressed the importance of letting the command staff know of heroism or other extraordinary acts that were deserving of recognition. He was aware that often not everyone is recognized after large critical incidents.

Chief Mina continued to seek ways to acknowledge and support OPD personnel involved in the Pulse response when he requested the US Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) provide peer-to-peer technical assistance to discuss recognition opportunities and officer mental health with leaders of other agencies who had been through similar large-scale mass casualty incidents. Many tactical team members were honored for their response and teamwork, and some individual officers were given city and community awards for bravery. It should be noted, however, that during assessment team interviews conducted before May 2017, some OPD personnel expressed concern that not everyone felt they had been properly thanked or recognized for their actions during or after the incident.¹³⁴ On May 5, 2017, more than 300 individual and team awards were given at the OPD Pulse Award Ceremony.¹³⁵ This agency recognition and employee engagement facilitated the healing process and fostered esprit de corps. Agency leaders should be aware that while they must work to acknowledge all contributions to the response, some individuals may still feel as if they were not acknowledged in a way that they felt they deserved.

Another aspect of organizational awareness involves law enforcement leaders assessing and testing the strengths and needs of their agencies as well as those of their mutual aid partners to build a regional response capability. During a critical incident, the number of tasks that need to be accomplished and the amount of resources required to manage the incident can grow quickly as the incident evolves and in the days, weeks, and months that follow. Few agencies have all of the resources to manage a major critical incident and its aftermath. Therefore, agencies should train and plan with their mutual aid partners to identify the resources they may need to call on in response to a critical incident.¹³⁶

It is critical that interagency planning and training consider resources beyond those found in the law enforcement community. The disconnect between OPD leadership and the leadership of the Orlando Fire Department (OFD), for example, affected the overall response. Because of miscommunication within the fire department chain of command, the chief of the OFD was not notified about the ongoing incident, and he did not arrive on scene until well after the suspect was neutralized. In addition, the OPD

¹³⁴ On May 5, 2017, the OPD formally recognized the personnel and agencies that contributed to the Pulse response.

¹³⁵ This event had originally been scheduled for January 2017, but because an officer was killed in the line of duty it had to be postponed. See appendix C for the full list of OPD Pulse Award Ceremony awards and recipients.

¹³⁶ Frank Straub et al., *Managing the Response to a Mobile Mass Shooting: A Critical Incident Review of the Kalamazoo, Michigan, Public Safety Response to the February 20, 2016, Mass Shooting Incident* (Washington, DC: Police Foundation, 2017), <https://www.policefoundation.org/publication/managing-the-response-to-a-mobile-mass-shooting/>.

and OFD maintained separate command posts for several hours, which exacerbated the lack of coordination between police, fire, and emergency medical services (EMS) command personnel and first responders during the incident.

Critical incident debriefs and organizational learning

The attack on the Pulse nightclub challenged Orlando public safety leaders and their personnel as they confronted threats and other issues they had not previously encountered. However, many members of the command staff, mid-level leaders, members of specialized teams, and patrol officers advised the assessment team that they had studied critical incident debriefs and reports from similar incidents and believe that, as a result, they were better prepared for some of the challenges that emerged during the incident.¹³⁷ In fact, some of the OPD command staff and special weapons and tactics (SWAT) team members indicated that they had read the assessment of the San Bernardino terrorist attack published by the COPS Office and the Police Foundation¹³⁸ as well as other after action reports going back as far as the Columbine High School attack in Colorado in 1999. SWAT personnel and some patrol officers said they responded instinctively during the incident because they had participated in training scenarios drawn from the after action reports.¹³⁹ The OPD, for example, had conducted in-service training—in some cases ad hoc training—for patrol officers responding to active shooter events with high levels of environmental stimulation—darkness, alarms, people screaming and asking for help, simulated devastating injuries, etc. In addition, members of the command staff had reviewed the movie theater shooting in Aurora, Colorado, in 2012 and noted the need to transport critically injured victims to a trauma center if it was close to the incident scene, rather than staging, which led to officers quickly transporting critically injured victims to the trauma center in lieu of delaying treatment while waiting for EMS resources to arrive on scene. Likewise, in their review of the San Bernardino terrorist attack, OPD personnel noted the importance of keeping ingress and egress open for ambulances, fire apparatus, and specialized response vehicles.¹⁴⁰

After the terrorist attack at Pulse, some of the agencies involved conducted independent after action reviews of their agency's performance. In particular, OPD Chief Mina—who acknowledged learning from critical incident reviews of previous mass casualty and terrorist attacks—requested this COPS Office independent and comprehensive after action assessment of his agency's response. He also acknowledged that a lesson learned from this incident was that a multiagency after action review (AAR) would be a powerful organizational learning tool for all involved. He suggested that the AAR include all

¹³⁷ Access more after action and critical incident assessment reports at “Critical Incident Reviews,” Police Foundation, accessed June 27, 2017, <http://www.incidentreviews.org>.

¹³⁸ Braziel et al., *Bringing Calm to Chaos* (see note 19).

¹³⁹ OPD SWAT team members and OPD watch commanders, anonymous focus groups with assessment team, January 24, 2017.

¹⁴⁰ OPD SWAT team members, anonymous focus group (see note 139).

responding organizations and stakeholders to enable each organization to view the incident response from others' perspectives.¹⁴¹ Critically assessing the response to a major incident is commendable and essential to learning and improving individual agency, regional, and national response capabilities.

Leadership and relationships observations and lessons learned

Observation 2.1. OPD responders, and leaders in particular, took creative and decisive action under dire, complex, and dynamic circumstances with little to no reliable information.

Lesson learned 2.1.1. Responders and their leaders will be required to quickly make creative decisions with little to no reliable information under constantly changing and sometimes horrifying circumstances. These decisions could mean life or death for victims, department personnel, and bystanders.

Lesson learned 2.1.2. Leaders should prepare and empower their command staff and responders—at every level of the organization—to make decisions under difficult circumstances through training and practices that focus on critical thinking, situational awareness, and collaboration.

Observation 2.2. OPD leadership used the tenets of “swarm intelligence”—particularly pre-existing professional relationships with Orlando-area federal, state, and local leaders—to respond to the terrorist attack at Pulse nightclub.

No agency or leader claimed the spotlight or special recognition for their role. Leaders agreed that the overarching mission was to save lives, and they rallied around doing so—providing whatever resources they could to accomplish the goal.

Lesson learned 2.2.1. Response to and management of critical incidents are greatly enhanced when pre-existing relationships exist between leaders and supervisors from all potential first responder agencies.¹⁴² Each leader involved in the response indicated that pre-existing relationships and trust amongst leaders enhanced decision-making, identifying steps that needed to be taken, allocation of resources, and delineation of roles and responsibilities for each agency.

Lesson learned 2.2.2. Mutual trust and respect between agency leaders and command personnel within and across agencies, along with trust among line-level personnel working toward a unified goal, are overarching components for reducing competing interests and ensuring a collaborative response.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ John W. Mina, chief, Orlando Police Department, interview with assessment team, December 16, 2016.

¹⁴² Braziel et al., *Bringing Calm to Chaos* (see note 19).

¹⁴³ *Police Under Attack* (see note 118).

Observation 2.3. Sharing classified information and intelligence during the response to the Pulse terrorist attack informed tactical operations and led to the seamless transition of on-scene leadership from the OPD to the FBI once the incident was resolved.

Lesson learned 2.3.1. Ensuring that public safety leaders possess the necessary security clearances prior to a critical incident facilitates information sharing before, during, and after a terrorist incident. Incidents involving terrorism and federal law enforcement will require leaders to possess security clearances to participate in classified briefings.

Observation 2.4. Through early and consistent unified messaging, Orlando Mayor Dyer and OPD Chief Mina set the tone for the response from their agencies, the Orlando community, and the nation.

Orlando leaders set the tone of calm determination, resiliency, and unity in the face of the tragic event. Responding agency executives from the city and the county aligned in support, as did community leaders. In addition, other political officials, including the governor, were supportive and allowed responding agencies to perform their responsibilities without interfering in the decision-making and tactical processes.

Lesson learned 2.4.1. Leadership and unity of message before, during, and immediately following a critical incident set the tone for the days, weeks, and months to follow.¹⁴⁴

Lesson learned 2.4.2. Demonstrating unity and cooperation between public safety leadership and political officials is essential to gaining the confidence of the community.

Observation 2.5. In the hours during the Pulse attack as well as in the days and months following it, OPD command staff have been faced with enormous demands on their time, energy, and focus.

In addition to their regular duties, OPD leaders have attended hundreds of Pulse-related events, traveled around the world to make presentations to law enforcement and security professionals about the response to the attack, and addressed many additional requests. This requires a delicate balance of organizational awareness, continuing to run a large agency, helping their employees recover, and being responsive to their own personal and family commitments.

Lesson learned 2.5.1. Leaders must recognize the need to balance the attention they give to external responsibilities with the time they spend within their agency, communicating with and caring for their personnel, their community, and themselves.

The hours during and days, weeks, and months following a high-profile incident can be overwhelming, requiring leaders to balance the increased demands on their time, focus, and energy as well as that of their organization.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ Braziel, Bell, and Watson, *A Heist Gone Bad* (see note 117).

¹⁴⁵ NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness), *Preparing for the Unimaginable: How Chiefs Can Safeguard Officer Mental Health Before and After Mass Casualty Events* (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2016), <https://ric-zai-inc.com/ric.php?page=detail&id=COPS-P347>.

Lesson learned 2.5.2. Some OPD personnel expressed concern for the limited attention and recognition command staff gave to those who responded to the Pulse attack.

Command staff should take extra steps to personally acknowledge the efforts of all individuals who played a role in the response.¹⁴⁶

Observation 2.6. OPD leaders were aware of their internal resources and capabilities and used them effectively to address many of the challenges that arose during the response to the Pulse attack, but they acknowledged that awareness could be improved in other areas.

For example, OPD leaders relied on the OCSO hazardous device team (HDT) to conduct the explosive breach, but they admitted that they had not trained on a regular basis with the HDT. This led to some confusion and lack of coordination during the final assault. On the other hand, some agencies sent duplicative resources that went unused while other resources were needed—particularly by public information officers—but were unavailable. The number of tasks that needed to be accomplished and the amount of resources required grew within—and especially between—the phases of the response, requiring greater familiarity, collaboration, and interagency training in preparation for critical incidents.

Lesson learned 2.6.1. Assessing and testing the strengths and needs of your own agency and surrounding first responder agencies in preparation for a critical incident can expedite mutual aid, facilitate interagency coordination, streamline operations, and identify deficits in regional resources.

For example, both OPD SWAT and the OCSO HDT acknowledged the need for regular training between their teams to improve joint operations during routine and crisis events.

Lesson learned 2.6.2. Conducting executive level, multiagency tabletop exercises—including elected and appointed officials as well as department heads from other government agencies—in preparation for a critical incident can help define roles and responsibilities, identify available resources, and have an agreed-upon incident command system in place.¹⁴⁷

Regional planning exercises helped Orlando public safety leaders strengthen relationships and operations and identify resources as well as the roles various agencies would play in a multiagency response to a critical incident.

Lesson learned 2.6.3. Interagency planning and training should consider access to resources beyond those found in the law enforcement community.

For several hours, the chief of the OFD was not notified about the ongoing incident, and the OFD established a separate incident command post, which exacerbated lack of coordination between police, fire, and EMS leaders and command staff. Greater emphasis must be placed on ensuring that unified command includes agencies outside of law enforcement, including fire, EMS, and other critical agencies, to ensure a multidisciplinary response and the use of all public safety assets and capabilities as soon as practical during a critical incident.

¹⁴⁶ Braziel, Bell, and Watson, *A Heist Gone Bad* (see note 117).

¹⁴⁷ Braziel et al., *Bringing Calm to Chaos* (see note 19).

Observation 2.7. The OPD prioritized studying and learning from AARs and debriefs and crafted training and exercises based on them to prepare for critical incidents.

The OPD began conducting tabletop and reality-based training for patrol officers on active shooter events following the Columbine High School shooting in 1999. In more recent exercises, the OPD focused on responding to such incidents with high levels of environmental stimulation—darkness, alarms, people screaming for help, and simulated devastating injuries. Members of the OPD command staff reviewed the Aurora movie theater shooting and the San Bernardino terrorist attack and implemented many of the lessons learned from those reports in this response. Chief Mina also asked for this incident review to be conducted in an effort to continue to learn from the Pulse tragedy and so that he could share those lessons with his peers nationwide.

*Lesson learned 2.7.1. Identify and implement promising practices and lessons learned from other relevant incident reviews and AARs, both internal and external to your jurisdiction.*¹⁴⁸

Lesson learned 2.7.2. Conduct AARs and incident reviews, particularly those that include all stakeholder groups, on large-scale incidents to provide lessons internally and among regional partners to build organizations that are constantly learning and improving operations and tactics.

In the field of emergency preparedness, the lessons learned approach stands on the assumption that learning from experience, whether it be our own experience or others' and whether it be from real events or simulations, improves practice and minimizes avoidable deaths and negative economic and social consequences of disasters. Thus, the appeal of learning from experience to avoid duplicating mistakes is widely appreciated in the emergency preparedness arena, and many organizations have adopted formal procedures for identifying, documenting, and disseminating lessons learned from prior response to emergency situations and simulations.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ Braziel et al., *Bringing Calm to Chaos* (see note 19).

¹⁴⁹ Elena Savio, Foluso Agboola, and Paul D. Biddinger, "Use of After Action Reports (AARs) to Promote Organizational & Systems Learning in Emergency Preparedness," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 9, no. 8 (August 2012), 2949–2963, doi:10.3390/ijerph9082949.

3. Tactical Response and Command and Control

A comprehensive tactical response strategy that is directed by a coordinated and collaborative unified command and control structure is critical to responding to and resolving complex events involving multiple phases and multiple jurisdictions. Because the Orlando Police Department (OPD) has had a longstanding policy,¹⁵⁰ a set of checklists, and trainings related to the department's response to man-made and natural major incidents, many of the tactics employed in the response to the terrorist attack on the Pulse nightclub were second nature to the first responders.¹⁵¹ However, as the incident became more complex, the multiagency response was at times uncoordinated and confused, demonstrating the importance of multiagency coordination systems and the need to quickly establish unified command and control.¹⁵² The goal of this chapter is to discuss command and control, tactics, and strategies employed during the OPD's response to the terrorist attack on the Pulse nightclub.

Incident command and command posts

During the initial response to the shots fired call, an OPD SWAT commander, who was also the on-duty watch commander, established incident command when he began providing tactical instructions over the radio. As soon as he arrived on scene, he immediately formed a contact team with the other officers who had responded and entered the club. He remained the forward tactical lead inside the club and during the final assault.

While the SWAT commander led the response inside the club, during the first hour of the incident there was no one who assumed command outside the club to manage the overall operation as well as the staging and deployment of personnel and resources as they arrived on the scene. Once the unified command center (UCC) was established, decision-making, strategies, and assignments were generally well coordinated and effective.

As the incident progressed, some agencies such as the Orlando Fire Department (OFD) established their own incident command posts, which negatively impacted information and resource sharing, coordination, and overall situational awareness. For example, firefighters assigned to station 5, located within a block of the incident, remained locked down, under the command of the on-duty battalion chief. According to the OFD, firefighters were waiting for the OPD to give them a "safe to enter"

¹⁵⁰ Orlando Police Department Policy and Procedure, Policy 1308.3 – Major Incidents, provided to assessment team March 30, 2017.

¹⁵¹ Orlando Police Department Policy and Procedure, Policy 1308.3 (see note 150).

¹⁵² *National Incident Management System* (Washington, DC: US Department of Homeland Security, 2008), https://www.fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nims/NIMS_core.pdf.

notification before they responded to the scene.¹⁵³ Other OFD responders, operating under the direction of the independent OFD command post, began designating roles and responsibilities for themselves within the OFD incident command system blocks away from the law enforcement command center. It should be noted that once the OFD received notification that it was safe to operate outside the club, they assisted in the triage area as well as in the transportation of numerous victims to area hospitals and the trauma center.¹⁵⁴

Tactical response

Upon hearing the first shots fired by the suspect, the OPD detective who was working his extra duty security detail at Pulse determined that rapid intervention was necessary and quickly positioned himself to engage the suspect.¹⁵⁵ As he was doing so, he immediately radioed and confirmed with OPD dispatch that shots had been fired inside the club and that there were multiple injuries. He requested additional units and the establishment of a secure perimeter.

Within two minutes of the initial broadcast of shots fired, the OPD SWAT commander, who is a lieutenant and was the on-duty watch commander, was en route to the scene and encouraged the detective to stay off the radio—a tactic employed to prevent the suspect from overhearing approaching officers or following the police response on a scanner—and directed the detective to engage the suspect.¹⁵⁶ When the detective saw the suspect temporarily emerge from the emergency exit doors, he engaged the suspect; and when he saw the suspect traversing the dance floor he engaged the suspect for a second time, forcing him to retreat back into the club. Once three additional officers arrived, they followed tactics learned in their active shooter and casualty rescue training. They created an initial contact team and planned to enter the club.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ Roderick Williams, chief, Orlando Fire Department, presentation given to the assessment team and to chief executives of other responding agencies during interviews with assessment team, December 15–16, 2016.

¹⁵⁴ Williams, presentation (see note 153).

¹⁵⁵ According to the International Association of Chiefs of Police Active Shooter Model Policy, “rapid intervention” is defined as “Immediate response by one or more officers to an active shooting based on a reasonable belief that failure to take action pending the arrival of additional officers would result in death or serious bodily injury.” *Active Shooter Model Policy*, (Alexandria, VA: International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2014), 1, <http://www.theiacp.org/Portals/0/documents/pdfs/MembersOnly/ActiveShooterPolicy.pdf>.

¹⁵⁶ SWAT commander, Orlando Police Department, interview with assessment team, January 24, 2017; Use of Force Investigation (see note 34).

¹⁵⁷ Orlando Police Department “Response to Active Killing Incident,” lesson plan outline, provided to assessment team May 12, 2017.

Specialized Orlando Police Department and Orange County Sheriff's Office Responding Units

The Orlando Police Department (OPD) special weapons and tactics (SWAT) team is a part-time volunteer group staffed by approximately 50 sworn members from various units and divisions of the OPD. The SWAT team maintains two groups directed by a team supervisor, and is commanded by and receives orders from a SWAT team commander, deputy team commander, or ranking SWAT team supervisor at a scene. The SWAT team trains twice per month and is issued special equipment and firearms. The SWAT team may be activated by any OPD employee of the rank of lieutenant or higher or any acting watch commander.

The Orange County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) SWAT team is a part-time volunteer group staffed by approximately 30 sworn members from various units and divisions of the OCSO plus four tactical medics and is overseen by four full-time SWAT team members—a captain, a lieutenant, a training sergeant, and a deputy quartermaster. The SWAT team trains every other Tuesday in the use of advanced tactics and specialized weapons and equipment to allow them to effectively handle difficult and dynamic situations including hostage rescue, armed barricaded subjects, high-risk search warrants, and violent fugitive apprehensions.

The OCSO hazardous device team (HDT) is a part-time volunteer group staffed by approximately 12 sworn members from various units and divisions of the OCSO and is commanded by a full-time lieutenant. The HDT trains at least twice per month in all aspects of hazardous device management including the detection, identification, and safe disposal of explosive devices.

When a second group of officers arrived—including the OPD SWAT commander, four other members of the OPD SWAT team, and officers from other agencies—a second contact team was formed. The two contact teams coordinated their entries into the club to maximize their ability to identify and engage the suspect(s) (as at the time it was not yet clear that there was just one assailant) and prevent being caught in one another's crossfire. The first team entered through the patio, and the second team broke a large window near the main entrance and moved to the main dance floor in the Jewel Box area (see figure 1 on page 14). Once inside, the contact teams planned to stop the active threat. As soon as the suspect barricaded himself in a restroom and stopped shooting, SWAT team officers took tactical positions behind a bar located at the end of the hallway that led to the restroom, containing the suspect. With the suspect contained, officers in the main areas of the club began triaging and rescuing victims.

The initial tactical response was consistent with the OPD’s active shooter training and recognized promising practices. However, as the incident became more complex and prolonged, transitioning from a barricaded suspect with hostages to an act of terrorism, the OPD’s operational tactics and strategies were challenged by the increasing threat posed by the suspect’s claim of improvised explosive devices inside the club and in vehicles surrounding the club.

Self-deployment

Because the attack took place early Sunday morning, the number of OPD officers immediately available to respond to Pulse was increased because of extra duty assignments at nearby bars and clubs in downtown Orlando. In addition, many of the officers who were working extra duty assignments were also on the SWAT team, which brought highly trained and well equipped personnel very quickly to the scene. Officers from several other agencies also responded to the “shots fired” and “an officer needs assistance” call.

The number of law enforcement personnel who responded to the Pulse nightclub was appropriate given the urgency and gravity of the radio broadcasts, conflicting information about the number of suspects, the number of victims, and the number of injured persons and the severity of their injuries. Although the majority of the first responders were not formally dispatched to the scene, their response was consistent with OPD and regional mutual aid policies, procedures, and protocols. Their immediate response, the formation of contact teams, and those teams’ entry into the club saved innocent lives by stopping the killing and containing the suspect. In addition, many officers who responded in the second wave—again, many of whom were not formally dispatched—played an integral role in triaging injured persons and rescuing them from the club. During the initial response, other officers took it upon themselves to ensure that South Orange Avenue remained open to ambulances and other emergency vehicles.

However, as the number of officers on scene grew, self-deployment negatively impacted an already chaotic situation. Within the first three hours, approximately 300 local law enforcement officers were on scene.¹⁵⁸ Instead of responding to the UCC or other staging areas to check in and receive assignments, many officers armed with patrol rifles self-deployed into the club or took positions along the perimeter. Others stood by and waited for direction. According to OPD officers and Orange County Sheriff’s Office (OCSO) deputies inside the club and on the inner perimeter, they had never seen so many guns pointed at them and they questioned the necessity of having so many heavily armed officers in unnecessary positions when they could have been performing other critical functions.¹⁵⁹ Likewise, other first responders who had carried injured victims from the club said that when they got outside, they struggled to identify officers to whom they could pass the victims to bring them to the triage area, which suggests that officers may have been more effectively assigned to particular duties.

¹⁵⁸ OPD Pulse Presentation, Orlando Police Department, provided to assessment team December 15, 2016.

¹⁵⁹ Orlando Police Department and Orange County Sheriff’s Office first responders, focus group (see note 72).

It is critical in large scale events that unified command be established as quickly as possible, a scene safety officer designated, and staging areas designated and secured to coordinate the arrival and assignment of law enforcement and other public safety resources.

Uncontrolled self-deployment depletes resources that may be necessary to respond to ongoing calls for service unrelated to the event. For example, two OPD dispatchers remarked that at one point during the Pulse response there were no available units to respond to calls for service in the city or the county.¹⁶⁰ “Besides causing a chaotic situation, self-deployment . . . also deplete(s) the pool of available officers who might be needed to respond to different venues where multiple active shooting assaults are occurring. While it is a natural human propensity to rush in to help, an uncoordinated response instead results in chaos and ineffectual deployment.”¹⁶¹

In November 2008, terrorists conducted sequential and highly mobile attacks in Mumbai, India. Multiple teams attacked several locations at once—combining armed assaults, carjackings, drive-by shootings, improvised explosive devices (IED), targeted killings, and building takeovers, as well as barricade and hostage situations that quickly overwhelmed local police and military assets.¹⁶² Similarly, in November 2015 terrorists engaged in multisite attacks in Paris, targeting the Stade de France, restaurants in the 10th and 11th arrondissements, and the Bataclan concert hall. In a little over three hours, the nine Paris attackers killed 130 and wounded 368 people.¹⁶³ Although US law enforcement has not been challenged by a simultaneous multisite attack as experienced overseas, there is legitimate potential for such an event to occur. According to Mark Lomax, then executive director of the National Tactical Officers Association, “You might not want to send all your assets to a scenario until you get further intelligence” and get a global view of what is happening as quickly as possible.¹⁶⁴ In Orlando, because approximately 300 officers and deputies from 27 agencies—including many of their chief executives—responded to the scene, a secondary attack in the region could have proved difficult to respond to and manage.

¹⁶⁰ Orlando Police Department 911 dispatchers, forum with assessment team, February 20, 2017.

¹⁶¹ Joel M. Justice, *Active Shooters: Is Law Enforcement Ready for a Mumbai Style Attack?* (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, 2013), 69, <http://calhoun.nps.edu/handle/10945/37645>.

¹⁶² Angel Rabasa et al., *Lessons of Mumbai* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2009), 5, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/occasional_papers/2009/RAND_OP249.pdf.

¹⁶³ QuinnWilliams, LLC, *The Attacks on Paris: Lessons Learned* (Los Angeles: Homeland Security Advisory Council, 2016), 3, https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5782ad8f9de4bb114784a8fe/t/5783fec9d482e95d4e0b79bf/1468268235955/HSAC-Paris_LessonsLearned_WhitePaper.pdf.

¹⁶⁴ Martin Kaste, “American Police Learn Conflicting Lessons of Terrorist Attacks,” NPR, last modified November 16, 2015, <http://www.npr.org/sections/the-two-way/2015/11/16/456269321/american-police-learn-conflicting-lessons-of-terrorist-attacks>.

Another area of concern is the use of secondary devices to target first responders, as seen in the San Bernardino terrorist attack in December 2015 as well as in numerous attacks in Europe and the Middle East. The potential presence of secondary devices suggests the importance of officers being directed to secure staging areas, keeping lanes of ingress and egress open for emergency medical and specialized response vehicles, carefully considering the location of command posts, and establishing triage sites.¹⁶⁵

Securing victims, witnesses, and staging areas

As OPD officers and other law enforcement personnel arrived on scene they were overwhelmed by hundreds of panicked patrons fleeing the club through multiple exits, some of whom were gravely wounded. In addition, they received conflicting information regarding the number of shooters and the circumstances inside the club. In their efforts to quickly move the patrons from danger and render aid to injured victims, many officers and deputies did not identify patrons or search them for weapons or IEDs. In addition, the triage area and perimeter were established without searching the areas for IEDs. The confusion among arriving law enforcement officers reinforces the importance of establishing a scene safety officer as soon as practical to manage dispatched and self-deploying officers and resources as well as to ensure that appropriate security measures are put in place to protect victims and first responders from secondary devices or attacks.

In their efforts to rapidly transport critically injured victims to the Orlando Regional Medical Center (ORMC), officers and deputies did not search victims for weapons or other dangerous articles. This security gap complicated reports of an active shooter inside the hospital as officers and security personnel were unsure if they had transported a suspect to the hospital. In part, this uncertainty contributed to the hospital being locked down for approximately an hour as OPD officers and hospital security cleared the building.¹⁶⁶

The OCSO's after action report noted that the area in which the command post was initially staged was never swept for secondary devices, even after the Greater Orlando Aviation Authority K-9 successfully alerted to the suspect's vehicle.¹⁶⁷ In an interview with the assessment team, an OPD deputy chief acknowledged the security issues and recognized that they were important lessons learned.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ "FBI Again Warns of Secondary Explosive Devices, Cautions Officers to Watch Surroundings," PoliceOne.com, last modified May 16, 2004, <https://www.policeone.com/terrorism/articles/86852-FBI-Again-Warns-of-Secondary-Explosive-Devices-Cautions-Officers-To-Watch-Surroundings/>; Office of Justice Programs, "A Guide for Investigating Bomb and Explosion Scenes: Arriving at the Bomb and/or Explosion Scene," National Institute of Justice, last modified June 1, 2009, <https://www.nij.gov/topics/law-enforcement/investigations/crime-scene/guides/explosion-bombing/pages/arrive.aspx>; Robert Mueck, "Revisiting the Staging Area Manager," Domestic Preparedness, last modified July 23, 2014, <https://www.domesticpreparedness.com/preparedness/revisiting-the-staging-area-manager/>.

¹⁶⁶ Cheatham et al., *Orlando Regional Medical Center Responds* (see note 32).

¹⁶⁷ *Orange County Sheriff's Office After Action Report: Pulse Nightclub June 12, 2016–July 12, 2016* (Orange County, FL: Orange County Sheriff's Office, 2016).

¹⁶⁸ Anzueto, deputy chief, Orlando Police Department, interview (see note 58).

In another example, regarding the threat posed by IEDs and secondary devices, an OCSO hazardous device team (HDT) lieutenant recommended that a 1,000-foot perimeter be established around Pulse and the suspect's vehicle after the suspect claimed to have left a device in it and K-9s alerted on the vehicle. However, despite the potential threat, officers and deputies maintained their positions to contain the suspect and to protect officers and deputies who continued to rescue wounded patrons. During the final assault, one OPD SWAT team officer remarked that he considered that he might lose his legs if the suspect detonated a device, but he hoped that because he was behind an armored personnel carrier he would survive the explosion.¹⁶⁹

Even though the UCC and command vehicles were moved, they remained within the 1,000-foot perimeter. A member of the OPD command staff admitted more attention should have been given to the location and security of the UCC to ensure continuity of operations had IEDs been present or detonated.

The decision to negotiate or assault

There has been some debate in the media as to whether the OPD should have engaged the suspect in the restroom sooner, especially after he called 911 and pledged his allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Regardless of ideology, the priority in active shooter response is to push forward, to confront the threat, and to stop the killing as soon as possible. From the moment that the OPD detective became aware of the attack, he engaged the suspect. As soon as additional officers arrived, they formed contact teams, entered the club, and drove the suspect into the restroom, containing him and suppressing further violence. Once the suspect was contained, officers and deputies searched for and rescued barricaded patrons and extricated the injured persons from the club. The officers held their positions despite the threat of secondary explosive devices as command personnel assessed their options to rescue hostages, and arrest or neutralize the suspect.

With the suspect contained—and the fact that no shots were being fired by the suspect, the uncertainty as to the number of hostages, and the exact location of the suspect and hostages still undetermined—the initial contact team, made up of responding SWAT officers, also took into account the layout of the Adonis Room and the poor visibility as they weighed whether they should hold their containment positions or conduct a direct assault down the hallway to rescue the hostages. The Adonis Room is more than 60 feet long and more than 30 feet wide, with three restrooms, two dressing rooms, a pair of thin and narrow hallways, and no windows (see figure 7 on page 56).

¹⁶⁹ Orlando Police Department SWAT team members, focus group (see note 53).

When the initial contact team entered the Adonis Room the only sources of light were the exit signs and television screens around the bar, the reflections of their flashlights in the mirrors, and the open emergency exit doors.¹⁷⁰ In focus groups with the assessment team, numerous officers said they could see neither down the long narrow hallway leading to the two dressing rooms and the emergency exit at the far end of the room nor down the hallway leading to the restroom where the suspect was contained with hostages.¹⁷¹

Without clear visuals and with incomplete information regarding the exact location of the suspect and hostages, SWAT officers determined it was too risky to conduct a direct assault and maintained their positions behind and around the bar, approximately 15 feet away from the entrance to the restroom where the suspect was contained. In addition, the lack of gunfire led officers to determine that the situation had transitioned from an active shooter to an armed barricaded suspect with hostages. While the suspect was contained, officers searched and secured the remainder of the Adonis Room, leading several patrons to safety.

While terrorists may be willing to die for their cause, and their “calling card is to start killing people straight away,”¹⁷² there is ample evidence to suggest that they are just as ready to embrace a resolution that provides them with some sense of accomplishment or victory.¹⁷³ Negotiations can create meaningful dialogue, exchange of information, and opportunities to resolve the event without risking further injury to hostages, law enforcement personnel, or the suspect. In addition to buying time and gaining important intelligence, the negotiation process provides much-needed time to assemble tactical teams and prepare them for an assault if it does not succeed in securing a peaceful surrender.¹⁷⁴

In several instances, suspects have given up voluntarily to police responding to acts of mass public violence or terrorist incident. For instance, Naveed Haq killed one person and injured five during an attack with two semiautomatic pistols at the Seattle Jewish Federation office in July 2006. After negotiating with the police, Haq surrendered. In June 2009, Carlos Bledsoe carried out a drive-by shooting at a military recruiting base in Little Rock, Arkansas. The attack resulted in the death of a US soldier and the injury of another. After being stopped by the police, he exited his car and surrendered without incident. On July 20, 2012, James Holmes was arrested without incident outside the Aurora Theater in which he killed 12 and wounded 58.¹⁷⁵ In the aftermath of the Boston Marathon bombing in April 2013, in which three people were killed and more than 260 injured, suspect Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, one of the two brothers who committed the bombings, surrendered after being shot by police while

¹⁷⁰ Use of Force Investigation (see note 46)

¹⁷¹ OPD SWAT team members and OPD watch commanders, anonymous focus group (see note 139).

¹⁷² Mark White, “Police to Confront Terrorists in New Tactic,” Sky News, last modified December 1, 2015, <http://news.sky.com/story/police-to-confront-terrorists-in-new-tactic-10337529>.

¹⁷³ Adam Dolink and Keith M. Fitzgerald, *Negotiating Hostage Crisis with the New Terrorists* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2007), 2.

¹⁷⁴ Dolink and Fitzgerald, *Negotiating Hostage Crisis* (see note 173).

¹⁷⁵ Gary Strauss, “Aurora Officers Describe Arresting James Holmes,” *USA Today*, January 8, 2013, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2013/01/08/james-holmes-aurora-hearing/1816875/>.

hiding in a boat in Watertown, Massachusetts. In January 2017, Esteban Santiago shot and killed five people and wounded six others in the Ft. Lauderdale airport. After emptying magazines full of ammunition, Santiago dropped his pistol, lay on the ground, and waited for the police to arrest him.¹⁷⁶

As demonstrated in the attack on the Seattle Jewish Federation and a 2004 attack on Beslan school in North Ossetia, Russia,¹⁷⁷ established crisis and hostage negotiation protocols can be effective in resolving horrific incidents of mass public violence and terrorism. However, recognizing that extremist terrorism represents a continuing if not a growing threat, the OPD and other law enforcement agencies should develop specific negotiation protocols recognizing that an immediate and overwhelming tactical assault may be the safest and most effective response to resolve a hostage incident during a terrorist attack.¹⁷⁸

The OPD crisis negotiation team (CNT) followed OPD Policy and Procedure 1505.4 (Crisis Negotiation Team) and Policy and Procedure 1306.0 (Guide for Hostage, Suicidal, and Barricaded Person Situations) in response to the Pulse attack. In accordance with policy, the CNT was activated because the suspect was both “a contained person who [was] holding others against their will and [was] threatening the lives or safety of others” and “a sniper or terrorist.”¹⁷⁹ The CNT sergeant deployed to the OPD communications center and followed one of the central philosophies of the OPD’s Guide for Hostage, Suicidal, and Barricaded Person Situations: “Once a situation has been contained in a specific location, time is on your side. Stop and think before you act” and “utilize all resources available to them to reduce the risk of injury or death.”¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶ Dean C. Alexander, “Combating Terror Threats Against Police,” *Homeland Security Today*, last modified May 3, 2017, <http://www.hstoday.us/singel-article/exclusive-combating-terror-threats-against-police/93e5c68de46091572aebec571a5bfd4.html>.

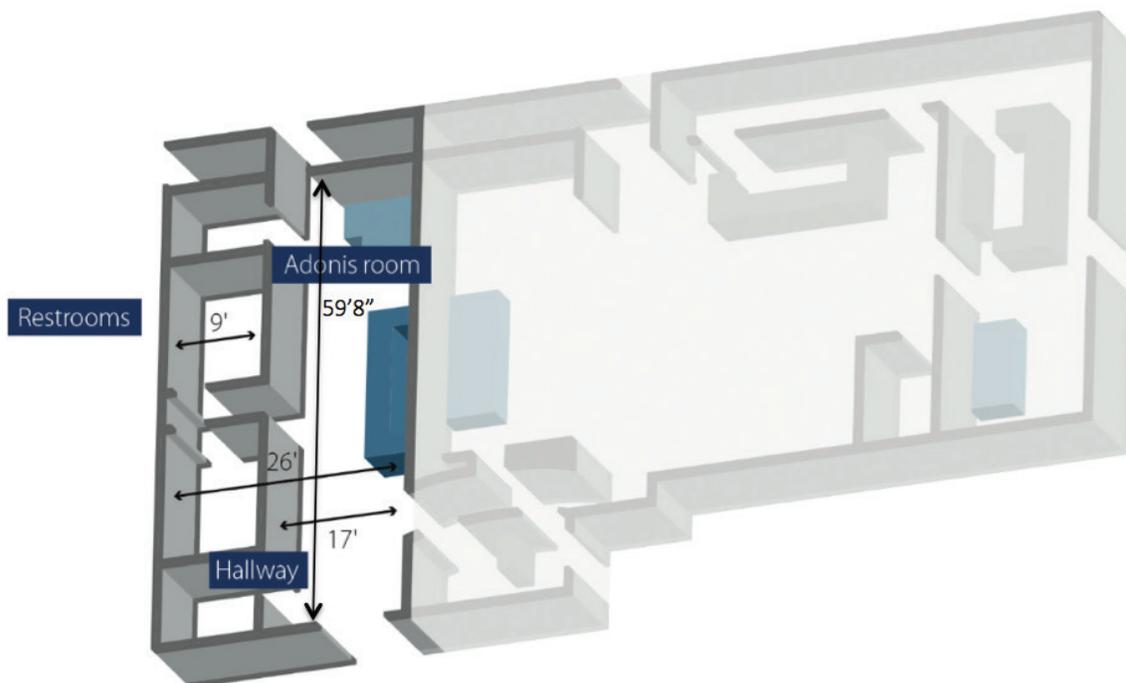
¹⁷⁷ Neil Shortland, “Crisis Negotiation Techniques in Terrorist Incidents: It’s Been 10 years Since Beslan—What Have We Learned?” Center for Terrorism and Security Studies at UMass Lowell, last modified August 12, 2014, <https://blogs.uml.edu/ctss/2014/08/12/crisis-negotiation-techniques-in-terrorist-incidents-its-been-10-years-since-beslan-what-have-we-learned/>.

¹⁷⁸ Paul Cruickshank, “A View from the CT Foxhole: James A. Gagliano, Former FBI Hostage Rescue Team Counterterrorist Operator,” *CTC Sentinel* 10, no. 5 (May 2017), https://ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/CTC-Sentinel_Vol10Iss516.pdf.

¹⁷⁹ Orlando Police Department Policy and Procedure 1505.4 – Crisis Negotiation Team, provided to assessment team March 30, 2017.

¹⁸⁰ Orlando Police Department Policy and Procedure 1306.1 – Guide for Hostage, Suicidal, and Barricaded Person Situations, provided to assessment team March 30, 2017.

Figure 7. Layout of Adonis Room



The dimensions of the Adonis Room were provided by Robert Anzueto, deputy chief, Orlando Police Department, in discussion with Jennifer Zeunik, director of programs, Police Foundation, May 22, 2017, and in Federal Bureau of Investigation notes to the COPS Office, provided to the assessment team September 5, 2017.

As soon as the CNT sergeant established contact with the suspect, the sergeant listened and asked questions to extract more information about the ongoing incident, keeping the suspect from engaging in additional violence. Even when the suspect hung up multiple times and refused to speak with the negotiator, the CNT sergeant called back 76 times over the course of the incident, left multiple voicemails, and texted the phone number. After each call with the suspect, the CNT sergeant had a liaison and a dispatcher pass information to command personnel and officers on scene.¹⁸¹ The efforts of the CNT team developed critical intelligence information regarding the suspect, his allegiance to ISIL, and the potential presence of IEDs as well as suicide vests that informed many of the tactical decisions made and implemented during the event.

The crisis negotiations, supported by SWAT team operations that kept the suspect contained in the restroom, allowed law enforcement personnel to successfully search for, locate, and rescue patrons and staff—many of whom were critically injured—from the club. Negotiations gathered critical information concerning the suspect, his thinking, and his intentions, informing the decision to move to a tactical assault.

¹⁸¹ Orlando Police Department CNT sergeant, interview (see note 83).

The final breach

The final assault on the club to rescue hostages and arrest or neutralize the suspect using an explosive breach was an appropriate tactical decision.

While OCSO HDT deputies prepared and placed the charge on the west wall of the club, the OPD SWAT team provided cover. However, though the two teams worked together to determine where they should place the charge to gain access into and rescue hostages from the south restroom, they placed it in a location that they thought was the south restroom; the location was in fact against the hallway. When the charge was detonated, it was a partial breach to the point where a small linear section of the drywall was visible—but the team was unable to see what was on the other side of the wall. Therefore, the SWAT commander ordered the OPD BEARCAT operator to ram the wall with the extended ram. Once the hole was big enough to see through to the other side, the SWAT commander realized it was the hallway and ordered the BEARCAT operator to move further south along the wall and ram that section. When that hole was large enough, SWAT officers rescued hostages from the south restroom.

As the last hostage was being pulled through the hole in the south restroom wall and while team members were widening the hole with the hand-held ram, the suspect fired shots from inside the north restroom. The SWAT team immediately deployed two flash-bangs, one right after the other, and sent the BEARCAT to breach the north restroom wall. When the BEARCAT operator rammed the north restroom wall, the suspect emerged from behind the door and engaged in a firefight with the SWAT team. During the shootout, a SWAT team officer was struck in his ballistic helmet, and the suspect was shot and killed.

OCSO HDT and OPD SWAT have trained together numerous times since 2007, which was demonstrated by the teams' familiarity with one another's tactics during the Pulse response.¹⁸² However, with the increasing threat of mass casualty and terrorist attacks, the OCSO HDT and OPD SWAT will now focus more on breaching techniques and rapid response tactics to combat situations similar to Pulse.

The command center did not advise personnel outside of the assault team that a breach was about to occur, leading to confusion among officers, deputies, and other first responders when the charge was detonated. Many perimeter officers were caught off guard and were unprepared to assist injured survivors rescued by SWAT team officers as the assault was made. Although the suspect was quickly neutralized by law enforcement, he surprised the assault team when he emerged from the restroom and began shooting at the officers, some of whom had neither cover nor concealment.

¹⁸² See appendix D for full list of training exercises for the OPD, OFD, and Orlando-area first responders.

Tactical response and command and control observations and lessons learned

Observation 3.1. The OPD followed their tactical and hostage negotiation policies and protocols as well as recognized promising practices as they pertain to active shooter and barricaded hostage situations.

However, OPD policies and protocols and recognized practices and training need to be re-examined in light of the increasing threat of mass public violence and terrorist attacks.

Lesson learned 3.1.1. The law enforcement community should consider the need to modify the application of current active shooter and barricaded hostage response protocols to terrorist incidents, and a review should be held by the law enforcement community.

“While a debate can be had about whether such protocols should change in the case of standoffs with Islamist terrorists seeking to kill and be killed, it is worth emphasizing that current best practices are designed to avoid the death of hostages and putting police officers in unreasonable danger. Recognizing that the threat of such extremist terrorism represents a continuing—if not growing—threat, it may be appropriate to develop specific protocols for hostage events during terrorist attacks.”¹⁸³

Observation 3.2. OPD officers and other responders formed two contact teams and entered the nightclub approximately six minutes after the attack began with a clear plan to engage, contain, apprehend, or neutralize the suspect.

As soon as they could determine where the suspect was, the contact team, led by the OPD SWAT commander, engaged the suspect and forced him to retreat into the restroom while the other contact team triaged and rescued victims.

Lesson learned 3.2.1. The first officers on scene of an active shooting incident should organize contact teams to engage, contain, apprehend, or neutralize the gunman and rescue victims.

Observation 3.3. While OPD SWAT and OCSO HDT played coordinated roles throughout the Pulse incident, members of both teams reported that the response during and immediately following the initial breach became disorganized and uncoordinated. Specialty units—particularly interagency units—must train together to avoid confusion and disorganization during joint tactical operations.

Lesson learned 3.3.1. Incorporate special units—such as SWAT or HDT—in regular planning and training exercises so they are familiar with one another’s command and control and tactical protocols.

Lesson learned 3.3.2. Command-level personnel should ensure appropriate interagency communications, planning, and execution to ensure the safety of law enforcement personnel during tactical operations.

¹⁸³ Straub, Zeunik, and Gorban, “Lessons Learned” (see note 19).

Observation 3.4. The self-deployment of approximately 300 Orlando area law enforcement personnel needed greater coordination at the scene and citywide.

Uncoordinated self-deployment placed some officers in danger inside Pulse as well as outside from improvised explosive devices. In addition, as evidenced by the multisite attacks in Paris and Mumbai as well as attacks in the United Kingdom in the summer of 2017,¹⁸⁴ police departments must be prepared to deploy and respond to multiple locations and coordinated attacks.

Lesson learned 3.4.1. Law enforcement supervisors must anticipate and train to prevent uncoordinated and inefficient self-deployment.

Lesson learned 3.4.2. After adequate personnel are on scene, additional personnel should be directed to staging areas for assignment of duties and should be directed to return to the staging area prior to their dismissal, or return to their regular assignment after being relieved.

Uncoordinated self-deployment, particularly in instances of mass public violence and or a terrorist attack, presents officer safety challenges and depletes resources that may be needed to respond to secondary attacks or regular calls for service.

Lesson learned 3.4.3. As soon as practical a supervisor should be designated as the scene safety officer to direct personnel and resources to staging areas, coordinate assignments, and ensure that adequate ingress and egress are maintained.

Observation 3.5. Unified law enforcement command was established at the Pulse attack scene within the first hour. However, Orlando Fire Department and emergency medical services (EMS) officials were not included in the unified command center and were unaware of the discussions occurring and the decisions being made as a result.

Lesson learned 3.5.1. As soon as possible and practical during an incident, establish a unified command of all primary first responders—including fire and EMS—to facilitate communication, situational awareness, operational coordination, allocation of resources, and delivery of services.

Lesson learned 3.5.2. Engender buy-in of traditional incident command system (ICS) training for law enforcement, which continues to present challenges.

For example, first responders from both the OPD and the OCSO reported that paying attention during ICS training is difficult as it does not connect the structure to “real” incidents.¹⁸⁵ Law enforcement leaders and researchers should endeavor to re-examine ICS and build a model that will be accepted and implemented in response to critical incidents.

Lesson learned 3.5.3. ICS planning, training, and implementation must involve all public safety first responders and medical facilities to ensure situational awareness across specialties and the effective coordination and use of resources.

¹⁸⁴ Faith Karimi, Hilary Whiteman, and Kara Fox, “How the London Terror Attack Unfolded,” CNN, last modified June 4, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2017/06/04/europe/london-how-the-attack-unfolded/index.html>.

¹⁸⁵ Orlando Police Department and Orange County Sheriff’s Office first responders, focus group (see note 72).

Observation 3.6. The OPD could have better identified, established, and communicated the location of staging and assembly areas for arriving law enforcement officers, fire, and EMS to ensure that the area was safe and secure.

OPD personnel did not establish a secure staging area during the Pulse response, nor did they initially consider the safety of the location of the command post. They did, however, ensure that ingress and egress routes were secure.

Lesson learned 3.6.1. Be mindful of secondary explosive devices and potential secondary attacks. Have arriving explosive ordinance disposal units sweep staging, assembly, and command post areas to guard against secondary devices.

Lesson learned 3.6.2. Responders and supervisors should constantly evaluate security risks of command post, victim and witness triage, and personnel locations and make appropriate adjustments as required.

Lesson learned 3.6.3. Responders and responding agencies should continually plan and evaluate ingress and egress routes during critical incidents to ensure that routes are clear for ambulances and other emergency vehicles.

The OPD did keep South Orange Avenue open for emergency medical and specialized response vehicles.

4. Equipment and Training

The goal of this section is to discuss what equipment and prior training was effective in responding to the terrorist attack and what equipment needs and additional training may assist the Orlando Police Department (OPD) and other agencies faced with an incident of this magnitude.

Equipment

From the initial response to the Pulse active shooter call until its conclusion, the OPD and its law enforcement partners leveraged specialized equipment to provide tactical advantages and to protect victims, law enforcement and public safety first responders, and the community.

Weapons and personal protective equipment

Individual officers and deputies who responded to Pulse were equipped differently based on their individual agency policies and procedures, budgets, and operating philosophies. OPD officers were trained on and equipped with 9mm handguns, and those who responded in their department vehicles had patrol rifles. Some OPD officers were also issued shotguns.

The OPD mandates that all first responders wear protective body armor when assigned to a uniformed function and “while engaged in field activities to include on-duty and extra duty employment.”¹⁸⁶ The OPD SWAT team members and other responding officers did have their protective vests on, but they did not don the advanced hit gear that they normally would prior to an operation. However, it is important to note that the department-issued vests are level I (with the option for the officer to pay for an upgrade to level II), meaning that they are tested to stop ammunition fired from short barrel handguns but are not designed to protect against rifle ammunition, especially the type used by the suspect during the Pulse attack.¹⁸⁷ Several officers told the assessment team that they had purchased and used their own personal protective equipment (PPE), particularly upgraded vests with ballistic inserts to provide greater protection from high caliber bullets.¹⁸⁸ OPD special weapons and tactics (SWAT) team members have customized rifles, ballistic vests, and helmets issued to them because of their tactical duties.

Orange County Sheriff’s Office (OCSO) deputies are issued Glock 45-caliber handguns, shotguns, and some patrol rifles.

¹⁸⁶ Orlando Police Department Policy and Procedure 1624.14 – Uniforms, provided to assessment team March 30, 2017. (Of the initial responding agencies, most but not all have similar policies regarding issued equipment.)

¹⁸⁷ For more information about different types of body armor; performance standards; and how to select, purchase, wear, and care for body armor, visit “Body Armor,” National Institute of Justice, last modified July 12, 2013, <https://www.nij.gov/topics/technology/body-armor/Pages/welcome.aspx>.

¹⁸⁸ Orlando Police Department first responders, focus group with assessment team, February 22, 2017.

It should be noted that initially, some of the OPD SWAT team officers and tactical officers from other agencies entered Pulse without donning their specialized protective equipment. It is essential that officers take the additional seconds to equip themselves to meet the threat posed by individuals determined to kill as many persons as they can so that they can safely and effectively engage the threat.

Decontamination equipment

Many officers and deputies lacked the necessary equipment to protect themselves from the blood-borne pathogens they came in contact with while rescuing critically injured victims from the club and transporting them to the hospital. During interviews, officers and deputies noted that they did not have rubber gloves to put on before assisting with the extrication and transportation of victims. In fact, some officers and deputies described being “soaked” in blood, to the point that they had to wring blood from their clothing, socks, and shoes and that they had family members meet them outside of their homes with garbage bags so that they could immediately remove everything they were wearing and dispose of it.¹⁸⁹ One officer described having to buy industrial-strength cleaner to decontaminate the bed of his truck because of the blood and body matter that was left after transporting victims from the triage area to the hospital.

While OPD Policy and Procedure 1301.8 (Significant Exposure and Control Plan) was followed, it was not written with an attack of this magnitude in mind. The policy does not include large-scale decontamination policies, procedures, or protocols for officers before they are relieved of duty from a mass casualty incident. The supervision of officer decontamination could also be a duty and responsibility of a scene safety officer or supervisor as previously discussed.

Robots

After the suspect said he had an explosive vest and hostages told law enforcement officers they had overheard the suspect saying he was going to place bomb vests on four of the hostages and detonate them, the OPD deployed a tactical robot into the club to gather intelligence. The OPD Avatar III tactical robot (shown on page 26) entered the nightclub at 3:20 a.m. to provide images of the interior and additional situational awareness for SWAT team commanders and the high-risk incident commander on scene outside Pulse. Of particular concern were the length and dimensions of the hallway in the Adonis Room that led to the restrooms and obtaining any additional information about the position of the suspect to determine if a direct assault on the restroom was possible.

The robot was able to fully enter the urinal area and determine that the area was clear, but because of the number of deceased victims it was only partially able to enter the south restroom. In addition, the robot was unable to fully explore the hallway or the restrooms in which hostages and the suspect were contained.¹⁹⁰ However, the images provided by the robot helped command personnel determine that an

¹⁸⁹ Orlando Police Department first responders, focus group with assessment team, January 24, 2017.

¹⁹⁰ Anzueto, deputy chief, Orlando Police Department, email (see note 31).

assault down the hallway to rescue hostages from the restrooms and to neutralize the suspect would be extremely dangerous for the hostages and officers engaged in the assault. Shortly thereafter, the OCSO hazardous device team (HDT) prepared to conduct the explosive breach of the exterior wall of the restroom to rescue the hostages and apprehend or neutralize the suspect.¹⁹¹

The Orlando Fire Department's bomb squad also deployed its Remotec Andros F6B robot to search the suspect's vehicle for explosive devices.¹⁹²

After the exterior wall was breached and the suspect was neutralized, the OCSO deployed two robots into Pulse—a Remotec Andros F6B and a Remotec Wolverine—to assist in searching the suspect and the club for improvised explosive devices (IED).¹⁹³

Armored personnel carriers

The OPD deployed two armored personnel carriers (APC) to the nightclub to assist with the response. These APCs were instrumental in protecting the officers who would have otherwise been directly in the suspect's line of fire following the breach of the wall.¹⁹⁴ In addition, a ram affixed to the OPD's BEARCAT was used to breach the wall after the partial breach by the explosive charge. It should be noted that the City of Orlando had purchased the BEARCAT with its own funds to better protect the community and to enhance the OPD's ability to respond to violent incidents.¹⁹⁵ The other OPD BEARCAT, which was deployed as cover for SWAT officers at the south double door exit, was purchased using Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) Program funds. The OCSO's APC, which was deployed but not used, was also purchased using UASI Program funds as a regional asset.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹¹ Orange County Sheriff's Office hazardous device team, focus group with assessment team, January 25, 2017.

¹⁹² Orlando Fire Department, phone call with assessment team, June 20, 2017.

¹⁹³ Orlando Police Department SWAT team members, focus group (see note 53).

¹⁹⁴ Orlando Police Department SWAT team members, focus group (see note 53).

¹⁹⁵ Dyer, interview (see note 124).

¹⁹⁶ Orange County Sheriff's Office hazardous device team member, phone call with assessment team, June 20, 2017.



The OPD's BEARCAT with ram.

Photo courtesy of Orlando Police Department

Communications

A primary communication challenge during the OPD's response to Pulse stemmed from the numerous radio channels that were used during the incident. While call takers and dispatchers in the communications center can patch all OPD radio stations together, patch the OPD and OCSO SWAT channels together, or patch other agency channels together, some individuals and groups declined to be patched during the response to the Pulse incident to preserve operational integrity and safeguard tactics. Some officers said they were concerned that shifting between channels as they were operational would have diverted their focus and potentially jeopardized their safety, so they remained on their normal operating radio channel throughout the incident. In other cases, specialized units or groups did not open their channel(s) to prevent unnecessary radio traffic from interfering with their tactical operations. The lack of a common radio channel and a tactical dispatcher became problematic when the OCSO HDT announced the impending detonation of the explosive device they had placed to breach the west wall, and several officers and deputies were unaware that the breach was about to occur.

As the volume of 911 calls and law enforcement activity increased, so did the load on the computer-aided dispatch system and on the call takers and dispatchers. The communications center was fortunate in that there were four dispatch supervisors in the communications center that Saturday night and

Sunday morning as the calls began coming in instead of the usual two.¹⁹⁷ Supervisors were able to provide additional direction when needed and also had long-standing relationships with some of the first responders, which facilitated emergency communications.¹⁹⁸ But even though the Orlando Fire Department (OFD) communications center is co-located with the OPD communications center and the two agencies transferred calls back and forth, the OFD was unable to assist in dispatching law enforcement personnel or resources because the agencies operate on separate radio systems.

Communication challenges also arose from an outdated paging system. While the OFD communications supervisor sent out an initial page in the early hours of the incident, there were no follow up pages sent or protocols to ensure that the pages were received. As a result, the chief of the OFD was not notified of the incident until approximately 5:00 a.m., and there was no OFD representation in the UCC until after the suspect had been neutralized.¹⁹⁹

Training

The OPD detective working extra duty at the Pulse nightclub on June 12 said that tactical firearms training provided by the department was instrumental in how he reacted during his initial response to the shooting. He praised and credited OPD departmental firearms instructors and training staff and said the reason he was able to engage and survive is because of the quality of training he had received. He also said he did not have a conscious thought the entire time; his actions were instinctive.²⁰⁰ The sentiment that training took over and informed many of the actions taken and decisions made that night was echoed by all of the OPD and OCSO officers and deputies and civilian support staff interviewed by the assessment team. The importance of appropriate equipment and training cannot be overstated.

Active shooter training

Since the Columbine High School mass shooting in Colorado in 1999, law enforcement agencies in central Florida began modifying their response to active shooter incidents.²⁰¹ While the previous strategy had been to hold the perimeter and call SWAT, following that school shooting law enforcement modified their response to actively find the shooter or shooters and stop the threat—either in a group formation or if necessary through the actions of a single officer. OPD officers' and OCSO deputies' actions at Pulse were consistent and in accordance with these updated active shooter trainings nationwide. According to Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training, the priorities in an active

¹⁹⁷ Orlando Police Department 911 call takers and dispatchers, focus group (see note 54).

¹⁹⁸ Orlando Police Department 911 call takers and dispatchers, focus group (see note 54).

¹⁹⁹ Williams, presentation (see note 153).

²⁰⁰ Detective, Orlando Police Department, interview (see note 47).

²⁰¹ Orlando Police Department SWAT team members, focus group (see note 53).

shooter situation are first to stop the killing and second to stop the dying.²⁰² During the response, OPD officers and other law enforcement personnel were able to contain the suspect, establish an inner and outer perimeter, rescue victims, and rapidly evacuate all injured victims from inside and outside Pulse.

In 2015, the OPD conducted agency-wide active shooter training and incorporated the OFD rescue task force to serve as a casualty rescue component of an entry team. It should be noted that despite this joint training, the rescue task force did not play a role in the response to the shooting. It should also be noted, however, that it was at least 20 minutes before the scene went from a “hot zone” to a “warm zone.” It would have been too dangerous for fire or EMS personnel to enter the area during those first 20 minutes—but after 20 minutes, it would have been reasonable for fire or EMS to enter with a law enforcement cover to assist. A similar situation occurred in the San Bernardino terrorist attack when members of the Rancho Cucamonga Fire Department’s rescue task force responded but were not deployed to assist in the removal of victims from the warm zone.²⁰³ It is incumbent on public safety leaders to create similar teams and to integrate the teams during training exercises and use these resources during “real” critical incidents. To accomplish the deployment of fire-based rescue task forces, memoranda of agreement or similar documents should be executed. Deployment protocols and responsibilities should be clearly defined, and the fire service should be represented in the UCC to coordinate deployment with law enforcement tactical units.

Incident command system training

All OPD officers are also required to complete Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) independent study (IS) training module IS-700 (National Incident Management System ‘NIMS’: An Introduction). Meanwhile, all OPD supervisors are required to attend IS-800 (National Response Framework: An Introduction), IS-200 (Incident Command System ‘ICS’ for Single Resources and Initial Action Incidents), and IS-100 (Introduction to Incident Command System).²⁰⁴ All OPD general and command staff (lieutenants, captains, deputy chiefs, and chief of police) received G-300 (Intermediate ICS for Expanding Incidents) and G-400 (Advanced ICS) training. While these trainings provide critical knowledge regarding management of large-scale critical incidents, few law enforcement agencies nationwide include ICS in routine operations. As previously noted, greater effort should be made to develop and implement an ICS protocol that more closely aligns with the law enforcement response to routine emergencies and crisis events.

²⁰² “Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training at Texas State University,” Texas State University, accessed May 2, 2017, <https://alerrt.org/>.

²⁰³ Braziel et al., *Bringing Calm to Chaos* (see note 19).

²⁰⁴ The entire FEMA IS Course List, course overviews, prerequisites, continuing education units (CEUs), and course lengths are available online at FEMA Emergency Management Institute, “Course List,” Federal Emergency Management Agency, last modified December 4, 2014, <https://training.fema.gov/is/crslist.aspx?all=true>.

Safety Zones and Perimeters Defined

Hot zone. The area where a direct and immediate threat exists. A direct and immediate threat is dynamic and is determined by the complexity and circumstances of the incident. Examples of direct and immediate threats are an active shooter, a barricaded suspect, a hostage situation, a high-risk warrant service, and possible terrorist acts. This could also be classified as the “inner perimeter” by law enforcement, an area within the range of active gunfire or secondary devices posing immediate danger to life and health (IDLH). Law enforcement should also consider the area to be IDLH if they can visualize the shooter or determine a threat.

Warm zone. The area where a potential threat exists but the threat is not direct or immediate. An example of a threat that is not direct or immediate is an unknown location of suspects in a given area already cleared. Fire department resources may be requested to enter warm zones, but this should only be done with force protection, with cover and concealment, or in accordance with local fire department policies. These instances could be used for rapid extraction of multiple victims or officers down who need immediate assistance. Prior to entering a warm zone, a risk-versus-gain analysis should be completed. Law enforcement could also refer to the warm zone as part of the inner perimeter.

Cold zone. The area where no significant danger or threat can be reasonably anticipated. This designation could be achieved by distance, geographic location, or inaccessible areas from the incident. The cold zone is the location for staging of resources, the incident command post, and treatment and transportation of patients. This area could also be classified “outer perimeter” by law enforcement.

Source: FIREScope, *Emergency Response to Tactical Law Enforcement Incidents* (Sacramento, CA: Firefighting Resources of California Organized for Potential Emergencies, 2015,) http://www.firescope.org/meetings/bod/2015/bod_meeting3/documents/ics%20701.pdf.

Regional multidiscipline and scenario-based training exercises

Regional tabletop exercises and larger-scale, scenario-based training exercises should be used to enhance and deepen interagency relationships. These types of training exercises should not only prepare agencies and their personnel for critical incidents but they should also facilitate interpersonal interactions and team building between allied agency personnel. If this dynamic does not exist, the effectiveness of the entire incident response may be compromised as may the sustainability of operations required after a critical incident.

In conducting tabletop and other practical exercises, agencies must build upon the lessons learned from previous events and after action reviews. It is also becoming increasingly evident that there is a nexus between terrorist attacks in Europe and other areas of the world and US attacks. For example, the suspect in the Pulse attack referenced the Paris attacks and the use of suicide vests, suggesting that he was wearing a similar device. Going forward, US law enforcement and other public safety officials must recognize the potential for suicide bombings, secondary devices and attacks, and multisite attacks in planning and training exercises.

Reality-based training

Despite their training, almost all of the first responders who made entry to contact and isolate the suspect, participated in protecting the inner perimeter, or evacuated injured survivors still inside the nightclub stated that the sight of victims “piled up like matchsticks,” the sound of constantly ringing cell phones for those trying to contact victims, and hearing victims pleading for help or feeling victims grabbing their ankles as they were moving through the club will be with them forever.²⁰⁵ Even seasoned SWAT team members and officers who have been through military deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq were initially shocked and had difficulty processing what was occurring.²⁰⁶ An OPD lieutenant said that his agency has never faced or trained for a situation of this magnitude and that at least initially, “checklists went out the window.” During a focus group with the assessment team, he asked, “How do you train and prepare for a situation like this?”²⁰⁷ Many of the officers and deputies stressed the need for realistic physically and mentally challenging training, because “your body can’t go where your mind has never been.”²⁰⁸ In many ways, because officers and deputies relied on their training and trusted their peers who responded with them, they were able to overcome their hesitation and shock and successfully respond to the Pulse nightclub attack.²⁰⁹

According to research conducted at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, “a critical component of officer safety and survival is the ability to make effective decisions under stress. This capacity is most critical in those situations that rapidly escalate to the point at which an immediate and appropriate response is necessary for survival. . . . Cognitive processing and preparation are critical skills that must . . . be a part of law enforcement training.”²¹⁰

²⁰⁵ Orlando Police Department and Orange County Sheriff’s Office first responders, focus group (see note 72).

²⁰⁶ Orlando Police Department and Orange County Sheriff’s Office first responders, focus group (see note 72).

²⁰⁷ Orlando Police Department watch commanders, focus group with assessment team, January 24, 2017.

²⁰⁸ Orlando Police Department SWAT team members, focus group (see note 53).

²⁰⁹ Orlando Police Department SWAT team members, focus group (see note 53); Orange County Sheriff’s Office hazardous device team members, focus group (see note 100).

²¹⁰ James L. Meyerhoff, *Stress and Decision-making* (Washington, DC: Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, 2011), 1–14, https://www.fletc.gov/sites/default/files/imported_files/reference/research-papers/Stress-and-Decision-Making-04-06-12--Approved---Pulic-Release--508-Accessible.pdf.

As demonstrated in Orlando, San Bernardino, and other cities that have experienced acts of public mass violence or terrorism, patrol officers are increasingly the first law enforcement personnel to arrive on scene. While significant emphasis has been placed on training tactical units to respond to these novel, complex, and rapidly evolving events, these recent incidents have demonstrated that the actions taken by patrol and other nontactical unit officers greatly impacts the outcome of the incident. The presence of or potential for IEDs, suicide bombers, or hostages suggests that greater emphasis must be placed on providing training for patrol officers arriving on the scene of a terrorist attack. In addition to tactics, training must include decision-making and critical thinking components to strengthen the patrol officer's ability to conduct a situational assessment and develop and execute an appropriate course of action in overwhelming operational environments.²¹¹

OPD patrol officers told the assessment team that the in-service firearms, active shooter, and ad hoc training they had received prepared them to respond to the Pulse terrorist attack. However, all acknowledged the need for increased agency-based and multiagency training consistent with the evolving threat environment to continuously build individual and department-wide skills, tactics, and protocols.

Training for all personnel

The importance of training for critical incidents also extends to civilian and support personnel, particularly communications staff. The OPD communications center is jointly housed with the OFD, and OPD and OFD dispatchers and communications supervisors are co-located in a room that serves as the City of Orlando Emergency Operations Center. As emergency calls came in—and the realization that this was a significant mass casualty event became more apparent—the communications center supervisors, dispatchers, and 911 call takers said their training kicked in and they were “in the zone,” even as the communications center was being overwhelmed with calls. Prior active shooter training for communications personnel was invaluable because it prepared them to mute their lines if they became emotional, focus on keeping victims calm, obtain crucial information from them to relay to those on scene, and prepare survivors for rescue by telling them to do exactly what the officers told them to do.²¹²

²¹¹ Straub, Zeunik, and Gorban, “Lessons Learned” (see note 19).

²¹² Orlando Police Department 911 call takers and dispatchers, focus group (see note 54).

Relying on Training When It Matters Most

In the early morning hours of June 12, 2016, an Orlando Police Department communications center employee was returning from her break, heard the commotion, and realized something big was happening. Several dispatchers and communications supervisors said initially they did not think the calls were real, but she did. She returned to her duty station and began taking 911 calls from victims. As she was speaking to one victim, the employee heard gunshots and realized the victim had just been killed as she was talking with her. She then received a call from another victim. Relying on her extensive training, she was able to keep the victim calm on the phone and was instrumental in his eventual rescue. On several occasions, she relied on what she had learned—that during emotional times it is important to mute the phone, regain composure, and return to the task at hand—and muted the phone so the victim could not hear her becoming emotional before quickly reopening the line and returning to help him.

Several employees were distraught and the emotional toll was apparent, but because of their training, they were all able to provide a calming presence to the victims and relay important information to officers on scene. Supervisors immediately requested department chaplains respond to assist call takers and dispatchers dealing with emotional trauma. One dispatcher summed up the mood, stating, “We did not do enough.”

Source: Orlando Police Department 911 call takers and dispatchers, focus group (see note 54).

Equipment and training observations and lessons learned

Observation 4.1. The OPD and the OCSO gained tactical advantages and maintained officer safety because of their access to specialized equipment.

Prior to the suspect being neutralized, the OPD Avatar III tactical robot was deployed and provided images from parts of the Adonis Room that contributed to the determination that an assault down the hallway would be too dangerous and the results too unpredictable. After the suspect was neutralized, the OCSO and the Orlando Fire Department (OFD) were able to use their robots as well to aid in the clearing of the nightclub and the suspect’s vehicle.

Lesson learned 4.1.1. Departments should consider the purchase of tactical robots on an individual basis or as a regional asset to increase their ability to gain intelligence to inform tactical decisions in highly volatile operating environments.

Observation 4.2. Many of the law enforcement first responders were ill-equipped to protect themselves from the threat posed by the suspect.

Specifically, the body armor issued to patrol officers and others who were not assigned to specialized units did not provide sufficient protection against the .223 caliber rounds fired by the suspect. Some of the other officers who had been issued higher level ballistic vests and helmets nevertheless failed to don the equipment before entering the Pulse nightclub during the initial assault.

Lesson learned 4.2.1. Agencies should ensure that adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) is issued to and used by first responders.

PPE should include active shooter armor kits (ballistic helmets and ballistic vests with ceramic plates) that afford greater protection from semi- and fully automatic weapons and .223 caliber and other ammunition.

Lesson learned 4.2.2. The balance between “militarizing” the police and ensuring they have the necessary equipment such as armored personnel carriers to protect themselves and the community during incidents of mass public violence and terrorism needs continued discussion and analysis.

Observation 4.3. The ability of the OPD communications center staff to patch the radio channels from all four of OPD’s geographic sectors facilitated information sharing amongst all OPD personnel.

Lesson learned 4.3.1. Interoperability and the ability to patch together responding agency radios facilitated the sharing of information which greatly enhances response coordination when necessary.

Observation 4.4. Because of the medical equipment in the Orlando Regional Medical Center (ORMC) and some signal dead zones, OPD officers responsible for clearing the hospital during the report of an active shooter in the facility experienced challenges in communicating with command staff.

Although the hospital was cleared in approximately one hour, OPD had to have an officer stand outside the ORMC and relay information to and from the command center to ensure they stayed informed about the presence of a secondary attack or additional suspects.

Lesson learned 4.4.1. Agencies should identify facilities within their communities that pose radio and cell phone transmission and reception difficulties. These facilities can be used to train personnel and identify ways to mitigate poor communication.

Observation 4.5. The OFD chief was not notified about the Pulse attack in a timely manner because the fire department’s outdated paging system failed.

Lesson learned 4.5.1. Agencies should build redundancy into command notification protocols to ensure all appropriate notifications of a critical incident occur in an organized and timely manner.

Lesson learned 4.5.2. Public safety communication centers should be designed to create situational awareness among dispatchers so that even if police, fire, and emergency medical services (EMS) operate on different systems—radio or paging—all public safety agencies are aware of activities in other disciplines and can act to support those activities if needed.

Observation 4.6. Almost all OPD officers, OCSO deputies, and civilian support staff interviewed by the assessment team agreed that training in their respective areas of responsibility took over and informed the decisions they made and actions they took in response to the Pulse attack.

Lesson learned 4.6.1. The OPD and other law enforcement agencies should continue to develop and implement reality-based training that develops situational awareness, critical thinking, and the ability to execute tactics under high levels of stress.

Lesson learned 4.6.2. Agencies should continue to regularly plan, train, and exercise using tabletop and practical exercises that incorporate recognized practices and lessons learned from critical incident reviews and after action reports.

Needs evaluations, planning, training, and practical exercises should be ongoing activities.

Observation 4.7. Law enforcement counterterrorism training must recognize the evolution of the tactics used during terrorist attacks in the United States or abroad and be updated accordingly.

Federal, state, and local training must recognize the changing threat environment and prepare law enforcement personnel, especially those who are not assigned to specialized units, to respond to incidents where high capacity weapons, IEDs, and other devices may be employed by well-trained and -equipped assailants.²¹³

Lesson learned 4.7.1. Improved counterterrorism training is necessary to strengthen both community and officer safety.

In general, counterterrorism training for law enforcement personnel, especially those who are not assigned to specialized units, has not progressed significantly since 9/11.

Lesson learned 4.7.2. Increased attention should be paid to policies, procedures, and training regarding the law enforcement response to suicide bombers, secondary devices, and multisite attacks.

²¹³ Dan Atkinson, "BPD to Use Mideast Conflict as Training to Fight US Terror," *Boston Herald*, March 30, 2017, http://www.bostonherald.com/news/local_coverage/2017/03/bpd_to_use_mideast_conflicts_as_training_to_fight_us_terror.

Observation 4.8. Training should prepare responders, particularly patrol officers, for situations they may experience when responding to terrorist attacks.

OPD active shooter training prior to the Pulse attack included sensory deprivation and stimuli that officers experienced during the incident. Going forward, OPD and national training must recognize and prepare law enforcement personnel to make decisions in overwhelming, novel, complex, and rapidly evolving environments.

Lesson learned 4.8.1. Training should consider transitions, phases, and additional risks posed by terrorists including those that extend beyond the arrest or neutralization of the suspect(s).

Training should include transitioning from a dynamic active shooter situation (a situation that is evolving very rapidly consistent with the suspect's actions) to a static situation (a situation that is not evolving or in motion because the suspect is contained, has escaped, or is incapacitated) and potentially back to dynamic or mass casualty situations, requiring transitions back and forth over the course of the response. It is important to account for all the challenges, considerations, and roles and responsibilities that arose in this response.

Lesson learned 4.8.2. Training should attempt to create as much sensory deprivation or stimuli as possible to simulate real-world scenarios. The ability to understand and apply response strategies in a high stress environment improves performance.

First responders entering the nightclub encountered a barrage of sensory stimuli: They saw deceased victims and injured persons, heard screaming and moaning from victims, smelled the odor of gunpowder, felt water and blood, experienced movement as injured and uninjured victims ran from the building, the club was relatively dark except for the rotating strobe lights, and experienced a heightened level of fear because of the potential presence of IEDs. This level of chaos can cause a high stress situation that affects officers' abilities to apply response strategies learned during training. Therefore, this level of chaos should be considered and even simulated during training.

Observation 4.9. Many of the OPD civilian staff, other city personnel, and volunteers who provided support in the emergency operations center, the family reunification center, and the family assistance center had not been trained to handle high stress situations such as mass casualty incidents.

Although City staff members regularly attend FEMA-related training to work as volunteers at the emergency operations center, the family assistance center, and other post-disaster centers, this training is traditionally focused on weather-related catastrophes. Some of the people who answered hotline calls, Spanish-speaking City employees, and City finance personnel were not prepared for some of the things they heard and saw, but their support was integral to the success of the overall response. By the second and third day, properly trained personnel from the Red Cross, United Way, and other victim-oriented organizations were in place answering hotline calls.

Lesson learned 4.9.1. Provide mass casualty and emergency response training to those in nontraditional roles who may be needed in an emergency situation to ensure they are prepared to deal with difficult and emotional calls and information.

Lesson learned 4.9.2. Post-event responder welfare should be included in agency planning, training, and exercises so responders are better prepared to operate in high stress environments.

Observation 4.10. OCSO HDT and OPD SWAT have trained together numerous times since 2007, which was demonstrated by the two teams' familiarity with one another's tactics during the Pulse response. However, with the increasing threat of mass casualty and terrorist attacks, the OCSO HDT and OPD SWAT will focus more on breaching techniques and rapid response tactics to combat situations similar to Pulse. Similarly, fire, EMS, and other government stakeholder agencies have participated in crisis response training with OPD.

Previous training events and Orlando-area joint operations built a level of familiarity between the teams' overall tactics, demonstrated throughout the Pulse response. However, challenges followed the partial breach.

Lesson learned 4.10.1. Specialized law enforcement units should regularly train together to ensure familiarity with each unit's policies, procedures, and tactics.

Lesson learned 4.10.2. Law enforcement agencies should engage regional first responder agencies—including other law enforcement, fire, EMS, emergency management, and government and nongovernment stakeholders—in crisis response training.

Lesson learned 4.10.3. Training exercises should continue past the point where the threat no longer exists and extend to the coordination of the medical response, the notification of victims' families, establishing reunification and assistance center(s), and providing resources to vigils and funerals and prolonged impact on the immediate community.

Too often, training events stop after the shooters are located and the threat eliminated. This leaves first responders with a lack of knowledge and appreciation for how the entire response system functions and how their actions influence other steps of the process. In this instance, the OPD had not fully accounted for family reunification and notification, survivor and witness interviews, and staging areas that provided privacy from the media and were able to hold the number of people expected.

5. Emergency Medical Care

Recent improvised explosive device (IED) and active shooter incidents have led first responders to adapt and adopt emergency-based tactics and strategies that focus on reducing the time it takes to safely get to victims and provide emergency medical care.²¹⁴ Especially with the increasing severity of injuries caused by expanding bullets fired from high capacity semiautomatic rifles similar to the one used in the Pulse attack, prioritizing emergency medical care is imperative. “Once [expanding bullets] enter the body, they fragment and explode, pulverizing bones, tearing blood vessels, and liquefying organs.”²¹⁵ Therefore, emerging alternatives to the traditional policy suggest that law enforcement agencies adapt the basic tenets of tactical combat casualty care and collaborate to allow emergency medical services (EMS) personnel with appropriate protective equipment to quickly enter the scene of a critical incident with law enforcement officers to stabilize patients and minimize fatalities.²¹⁶ This chapter will discuss the emergency medical care the Orlando Police Department (OPD) and partner agencies provided during the response to the terrorist attack at Pulse.

An increasing number of law enforcement agencies nationwide are providing basic trauma care and equipment for their officers. The International Association of Chiefs of Police adopted a resolution recommending the following:

“that every law enforcement officer should receive tactical emergency medical training including critical core skills of early, life-threatening hemorrhage control and rapid evacuation of mass casualty victims to a casualty collection point. Tactical emergency medical skills are critical life-saving interventions in the officer-down situation, whether as officer applied self-aid or given to a fellow officer, or to victims of a mass casualty situation such as an active shooter or bombing event.”²¹⁷

While the primary goal of tactical emergency medical training is to assist wounded officers, the benefits of such training and equipment to save the lives of critically injured civilians has been demonstrated repeatedly in critical situations. For example, on February 20, 2016, several people were shot during a mobile active shooter incident in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Lives were undoubtedly saved because

²¹⁴ Straub et al., *Managing the Response* (see note 136).

²¹⁵ Leana Wen, “What Bullets Do to Bodies,” *The New York Times*, June 15, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/15/opinion/virginia-baseball-shooting-gun-shot-wounds.html>.

²¹⁶ Office of Health Affairs, *First Responder Guide for Improving Survivability in Improvised Explosive Device and/or Active Shooter Incidents* (Washington, DC: US Department of Homeland Security, 2015), <https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/First%20Responder%20Guidance%20June%202015%20FINAL%202.pdf>.

²¹⁷ Police Physicians Section, “Tactical Emergency Medical Training for Law Enforcement Personnel: Adopted at the 120th Annual Conference, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, October 23, 2013,” International Association of Chiefs of Police, last modified October 23, 2013, <http://www.theiacp.org/ViewResult?SearchID=2310>.

responding officers from the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety and the Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Office had tactical emergency medical kits and training, which they used to treat some of the gunshot wounds. A similar situation occurred in Tucson, Arizona, in January 2011, when Pima County Sheriff's Department deputies saved the lives of then Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords and several others.²¹⁸ In fact, "based on the immediacy of the threat and the geographic location of victims, law enforcement officers providing casualty care may offer the best chance for victim survival."²¹⁹

In 2013, a group of public safety personnel representing fire, law enforcement, pre-hospital care, trauma care, and the military convened in Hartford, Connecticut, to develop consensus regarding strategies to increase survivability of in mass public shootings. Applying lessons learned from injuries experienced on military battlefields, the group of experts developed the acronym THREAT to address casualty management during high-threat tactical and rescue operations:

- **T**hreat suppression
- **H**emorrhage control
- **R**apid Extrication to safety
- **A**ssessment by medical providers
- **T**ransport to definitive care²²⁰

Recognizing that IED, active shooter, and other mass casualty incidents represent an increasing threat of devastating injuries to civilians and public safety personnel, all first responders should be trained and equipped to provide basic lifesaving measures in response to explosive injuries and gunshot wounds.

In Orlando, many of the first officers who responded to the terrorist attack were among the 772 officers that the OPD had trained in individual first aid kit (IFAK) tactical medical solutions.²²¹ While the initial contact team maintained their cover positions and kept the suspect contained, other OPD officers and Orange County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) deputies entered Pulse and immediately began triaging victims.

Once they were extricated from the club and brought to the triage area—located behind the Einstein Bros. Bagels store approximately 250 feet from Pulse—law enforcement officers, following the example of officers who responded to the Aurora, Colorado, movie theater shooting, transported critical patients to the hospital in police vehicles.²²² Because the level one trauma center Orlando Regional Medical

²¹⁸ Straub et al., *Managing the Response* (see note 136).

²¹⁹ Office of Health Affairs, *First Responder Guide* (see note 216).

²²⁰ Joint Committee to Create a National Policy to Enhance Survivability from Intentional Mass Casualty Shooting Events, "Improving Survival from Active Shooter Events: The Hartford Consensus," American College of Surgeons, last modified June 1, 2013, <http://bulletin.facs.org/2013/06/improving-survival-from-active-shooter-events/>.

²²¹ "IFAK Training Users—Current," TacMed Medical Solutions, provided to assessment team March 30, 2017.

²²² *Aurora Century 16 Theater Shooting: After Action Report for the City of Aurora* (Arlington, VA: TriData Division, 2014), https://www.courts.state.co.us/Media/Opinion_Docs/14CV31595%20After%20Action%20Review%20Report%20Redacted.pdf.

Center (ORMC) was less than half a mile from the club, officers and deputies placed injured victims in the beds of their trucks and back seats of their cars and drove them to the hospital, quickly returning to Pulse to transport more critically wounded victims. However, because this process was so rapid, the alert system had not even notified emergency room staff at ORMC that there was a mass casualty incident when victims started arriving.²²³

Of the 102 people shot and five others injured at Pulse, 69 were alive when first responders arrived. Because of the emergency medical care provided by first responders, the overwhelming majority of those 69—58 people, or 84 percent—survived. In addition, because of the emergency medical care provided by first responders and the timeliness with which patients were transferred to local hospitals, all of the 35 people who had been shot and reached operating rooms alive—even with the most critical of injuries—survived.²²⁴

Rapid Victim Transportation

On July 12, 2012, the city of Aurora, Colorado, experienced a mass shooting at Century 16 Theater movie complex when a lone gunman shot 70 people while 12 other people suffered injuries from fleeing the scene. As the number of police, fire, and emergency medical services responders increased, the theater quickly became a site of chaos and confusion, with no coordinated response. An unintended consequence was that police vehicles blocked ambulances from triage and treatment locations to pick up victims and transport them to local hospitals. In a creative improvisation, police officers decided to transport victims in their own vehicles, which was unprecedented and unplanned but saved lives. Of the 82 people injured, 60 were successfully transported to hospitals and survived, and police vehicles were responsible for transporting more victims than ambulances. Police were commended for thinking outside the box and preventing increased loss of life.

Source: *Aurora Century 16 Theater Shooting* (see note 222).

²²³ Orlando Regional Medical Center emergency preparedness manager, interview (see note 110).

²²⁴ Nadeen Yanes, “Orlando Officials Share Lessons Learned from Pulse Shooting,” Click Orlando, last modified April 26, 2017, <http://www.clickorlando.com/news/pulse-orlando-shooting/orlando-officials-share-lessons-learned-from-pulse-shooting>.

Emergency medical care observations and lessons learned

Observation 5.1. Because of the emergency medical care provided by Orlando first responders, the overwhelming majority of the injured extricated from Pulse survived.

The OPD and supporting agencies responding to Pulse made victim rescue a priority. Within 40 minutes, all critically injured victims except the hostages in the restrooms were rescued. Officers and deputies used patrol and other vehicles to transport the most critically injured victims to the nearby trauma center. Because of this quick action on the part of law enforcement in addition to the Orlando Fire Department (OFD) transporting patients from the triage area, 58 injured survivors (53 who had been shot and five with other injuries) were treated at local hospitals and survived. Only 11 individuals who were shot inside of the club and extricated alive did not survive.²²⁵ This is a testament to the importance of the “golden hour” and a key lesson learned to preserve life.²²⁶

Lesson learned 5.1.1. Law enforcement agencies should equip and train officers in the use of personal tactical emergency medical kits that include tourniquets, “quick clot” occlusive dressings, and Israeli bandages.

The OPD trained all officers in IFAK tactical medical solutions, which proved essential to saving a significant number of critically injured victims, particularly from the Jewel Box and patio areas of the Pulse nightclub.

Lesson learned 5.1.2. Law enforcement personnel should be prepared to improvise to save critically injured persons.

For example, the OPD and partner organizations used police vehicles to transport critically injured victims to the level one trauma center close to the incident location, saving numerous lives.

Observation 5.2. The OPD should continue to build relationships, train, and develop protocols with medical personnel from area hospitals, especially the regional level 1 trauma center, to improve the law enforcement response to mass casualty incidents.

Most of the injured victims from Pulse were brought to ORMC even before the hospital received notification from its alert system. While ORMC acknowledged that the OPD saved numerous lives by rapidly transporting victims to the trauma center, the emergency room was quickly overwhelmed. In addition, ORMC personnel said that had they been aware of the need for a decontamination facility for officers and deputies, they would have made outdoor showers at the hospital available.

Lesson learned 5.2.1. Create relationships with and include hospital and medical personnel in regional mass casualty or terrorist training.

²²⁵ Orlando Police Department timeline (see note 24).

²²⁶ Charlie Eisele, “The Golden Hour,” *Journal of Emergency Medical Services*, August 31, 2008, <http://www.jems.com/articles/2008/08/golden-hour.html>.

Lesson learned 5.2.2. Identify medical protocols and practices that can be adapted and administered in life-threatening situations.

While emergency medical care and tactical medical training can be cost-prohibitive for some agencies, partnering with hospitals and local medical professionals can provide law enforcement with practical training and can foster or enhance partnerships with critical stakeholders. In Orlando, ORMC staff commended officers and deputies for rescuing and saving the lives of so many victims and offered to engage in planning and training exercises to enhance the public safety and hospital response to mass casualty events.

Lesson learned 5.2.3. Law enforcement personnel should be assigned to medical facilities receiving patients from critical incidents to provide security and assist medical staff with situational awareness and communication.

During the Pulse incident response, emergency room staff members were not aware of why the hospital was locked down for approximately one hour. An OPD officer informed them so that they could safely continue their life-saving work. At the same time, emergency room staff members were able to provide OPD officers with information about the severity—and types—of the victims' injuries.

Observation 5.3. Prior to the Pulse attack, the OPD incorporated the OFD rescue task force to serve as a casualty rescue component in the “warm zone.”²²⁷

The intent in establishing the rescue task force was to provide faster access to life-saving emergency medical care for victims by integrating fire department and EMS personnel into contact teams. While in this incident the OFD personnel of the rescue task force did not enter the club with the OPD, this approach to tactical medical response is one example of possible collaborative options.

Lesson learned 5.3.1. Public safety agencies should consider, train, and exercise how they will deploy emergency medical responders in active shooter or other hostile events to ensure victim extraction, triage, and treatment.

Law enforcement agencies must ensure they are prepared for incidents that require medical responses like the ones required in San Bernardino and the Pulse terrorist attacks. They should determine whether to incorporate fire department or EMS personnel, have a tactical medic trained, train all personnel in emergency medicine, or implement a combination of these options.

Observation 5.4. The OPD had trained more than 700 officers in IFAK tactical medical solutions at the time of the shooting.

Lesson learned 5.4.1. To reduce the amount of time necessary for victims to receive emergency trauma care, law enforcement officers should be trained in IFAK or similar emergency medical care methods.

²²⁷ For more information about safety zones and perimeters, see the sidebar “Safety Zones and Perimeters Defined” on page 67.

6. Officer Safety and Post-Event Responder Wellness

Protecting the safety and wellness of officers during and in the aftermath of the response to a major incident is crucial. This chapter will review the strategies and equipment used by the Orlando Police Department (OPD) to protect their officers during and following the response to the Pulse attack.

Officer safety

Terrorists and other individuals intent on causing harm—particularly to law enforcement officers—study law enforcement protocols and responses to critical incidents and adapt their tactics accordingly.²²⁸ The use of high-caliber and high-capacity weapons and the use of secondary devices are becoming increasingly common in attacks in the United States. The primary intent of secondary devices is to kill or injure first responders during the response and the subsequent investigation at the location of the attack and at other areas pertinent to the response including the command post and the triage area.²²⁹

In Orlando, the suspect made multiple statements indicating that he was following this trend. He told the OPD crisis negotiation team (CNT) sergeant that there were cars with bombs outside the club that could detonate an entire city block and that he had an explosive vest.²³⁰ In addition, hostages rescued from inside the club relayed to OPD officers that they overheard the suspect say he had four additional explosive vests that he intended to put on hostages and detonate to kill and injure first responders. Although some law enforcement officers discounted the suspect's ability to enter the club with multiple suicide bomb vests while firing and reloading two weapons, the OPD operated under the assumption that the suspect was equipped with one or more devices.

As soon as this information was relayed to the unified command center (UCC), the Orange County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) hazardous device team (HDT) lieutenant was asked to provide his analysis and recommendations to the sheriff. The HDT lieutenant repeatedly said that if the suspect had the IEDs that he claimed he had, there would need to be a 1,000-foot perimeter established around the club and the car to provide safety. Despite this lieutenant's input, many officers were either unaware of this determination or actively chose to ignore it because of their commitment to rescuing victims and apprehending the suspect.

²²⁸ Braziel et al., *Bringing Calm to Chaos* (see note 127).

²²⁹ *Managing the Emergency Consequences of Terrorist Incidents: Interim Planning Guide for State and Local Governments* (Washington, DC: Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2002), <https://www.fema.gov/pdf/plan/managingemerconseq.pdf>.

²³⁰ "Transcripts of Calls with Suspect 6-12-16" (see note 30).

Post-event responder wellness

Terrorist attacks and other hostile events take an emotional toll on all involved as well as on those watching it play out from around the nation and the world. However, law enforcement officers, firefighters, and emergency medical services personnel are often expected to be “tough” and “resilient” and able to bounce back from trauma without much if any mental health treatment or professional attention. The culture of public safety—similar to the military’s in this way—has historically not embraced the need to attend to the mental health of its personnel.²³¹

The law enforcement profession has begun to recognize that “most police officers may be able to tolerate a more vivid exposure to death or violence than the general public, but there are situations, such as mass casualty events, where the traumatic stress simply exceeds an officer’s ability to cope without support.”²³² In addition, law enforcement personnel—including call takers and dispatchers, investigators, other officers, and support staff—who are not at the scene of a critical incident but respond in other ways can also be affected.²³³ Therefore, it is important that agencies acknowledge and provide mental health support to all personnel. In recognition of the fact that there is no one-size-fits-all wellness strategy that accommodates the needs of every individual involved in the response to a critical incident, it is imperative to ensure that an array of mental health and wellness resources are available immediately as well as in the days, weeks, and months following.²³⁴

In accordance with Policy and Procedure 1502.0 (Critical Incident Stress Management Team), the OPD critical incident stress management (CISM) team held a mandatory formal debriefing for all employees involved in the response to Pulse on Tuesday, June 14—less than 72 hours after the attack.²³⁵ The OPD also invited employees and responders of the 26 other agencies that supported the response at Pulse to participate in the debriefing; many of these responders were also required by their agencies to attend.

The session was held at a high school and began with all of the attendees being provided a general overview of the symptoms of post-traumatic stress and stress management information, assessments of the overall well-being of personnel, and a recap of all of the mental health and wellness resources available to officers. Attendees were then randomly divided into smaller groups and were led by individual CISM and peer support personnel in facilitated discussions of their role in the response and their personal reactions to the event. This was followed up by a second formal debrief in November

²³¹ NAMI, *Preparing for the Unimaginable* (see note 145).

²³² NAMI, *Preparing for the Unimaginable* (see note 145).

²³³ IACP National Law Enforcement Policy Center, *Critical Incident Stress Management: Concepts and Issues Paper* (Alexandria, VA: International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2011), 1, <http://www.theiacp.org/Portals/0/documents/pdfs/MembersOnly/CriticalIncidentStressPaper.pdf>.

²³⁴ John Nicoletti, Sara Garrido, and Mark J. Kirschner, “Supporting the Psychological Recovery of First Responders Following a Mass Casualty Event,” *The Police Chief* 83, no. 6 (June 2016), 40–45, <http://www.policechiefmagazine.org/supporting-the-psychological-recovery/>.

²³⁵ Orlando Police Department Policies and Procedures 1502.0 – Critical Incident Stress Management Team, provided to assessment team May 11, 2017.

2016. The second debriefing was another opportunity to have mental health experts describe the longer-term symptoms of post-traumatic stress and facilitate discussions about the emotional toll of the Pulse response on the attendees.²³⁶

In addition, OPD personnel were encouraged to use and in some cases were referred to a bevy of city and outside resources to ensure their mental and emotional well-being. The employee assistance program (EAP) available to all City employees was leveraged by both sworn and civilian personnel. The EAP provided a pool of mental health experts for individual counseling sessions to personally address the traumatic experiences that resulted from participating in the response to the Pulse attack. Some OPD officers and employees were also permitted to use mental health and well-being resources, including residential treatment programs, at other Florida law enforcement agencies.

It is important for leadership to set the tone for openly confronting and honestly discussing the mental health needs of an entire agency, particularly in times of crisis. “In a critical incident, it is easy for the department to single out personnel it believes are impacted and provide support to them. It is hard to make such a judgment when the personnel involved in the critical incident may not even know they need help.”²³⁷ This trauma, if left untreated, can lead to work performance and officer safety issues, particularly in law enforcement agencies. OPD Chief John W. Mina epitomized leadership’s setting the tone for an agency in the aftermath of a critical incident. In addition to openly acknowledging the importance of health and well-being for all personnel, Mina requested a peer-to-peer meeting with law enforcement mental health experts and chiefs who had led their agencies through a mass casualty incident, which the COPS Office facilitated in 2016.²³⁸

Mental health incident commander

In the aftermath of a terrorist attack or other mass casualty event, agencies should designate a mental health incident commander as soon as possible and practical. The primary role of the mental health incident commander is to monitor agency personnel in the aftermath of the event, to coordinate debriefings, to connect individuals to peer support or mental health professionals, to connect families of those involved in the incident response to support services if needed, and to ensure a continuum of care in the aftermath of the event. This position is also necessary to advise agency leadership regarding operational decisions that impact personnel mental health (including work and shift assignments) and vets and manages self-deployed mental health providers.

²³⁶ Orlando Police Department and Orange County Sheriff’s Office first responders, focus group (see note 72).

²³⁷ IACP National Law Enforcement Policy Center, *Critical Incident Stress Management*, 2 (see note 233).

²³⁸ As part of this Critical Incident Review, the COPS Office granted Chief Mina’s request and provided a meeting with two law enforcement mental health experts and a retired chief who had recently been through a mass casualty response.

Ideally, the mental health incident commander should be a person who has

- familiarity with the agency and public safety culture;
- credibility with agency personnel;
- mental health training;
- connections with the local mental health community;
- an understanding of the impact of trauma and familiarity with Psychological First Aid.²³⁹

In the aftermath of the Pulse terrorist attack, the OPD assigned a captain, who is the CISM commander, to serve as the mental health incident commander.

Officer safety and post-event responder wellness observations and lessons learned

Observation 6.1. The OPD did not assign an incident safety officer on scene during the response.

Many officers and deputies responded to the signal 43 by self-deploying, rushing into and around Pulse nightclub.²⁴⁰ Without an incident safety officer, special weapons and tactics (SWAT) team members rushed into the club before donning the entirety of their ballistic equipment, the 1,000-foot hazardous device team (HDT) perimeter was not communicated to all responders, and there was no decontamination process for responders as they were relieved of duty.

Lesson learned 6.1.1. An incident safety officer should be designated as quickly as possible during response to a mass casualty or emergency incident, especially a terrorist incident.

This officer is responsible for identifying, communicating, and mitigating (to the extent possible) all responder safety risks including adhering to perimeters when explosive devices are mentioned or found and there is the possibility of secondary devices and HDT perimeters.

Lesson learned 6.1.2. The incident safety officer should oversee decontamination protocols for decontamination of all responding personnel and their vehicles.

Observation 6.2. The OPD does not have decontamination protocols in place for first responding officers following large-scale critical incidents.

OPD Policy and Procedure 1301.8 (Significant Exposure and Control Plan) includes officer safety and wellness evaluations, testing, and follow-up procedures for individuals and vehicles, and OPD Policy and Procedure 1308.3 (Major Incidents) includes checklists for various major incidents. Neither of these

²³⁹ NAMI, *Preparing for the Unimaginable* (see note 145).

²⁴⁰ Signal 43 is the signal code for “officer needs immediate assistance.”

policies and procedures addresses officer and vehicle decontamination processes for large-scale critical incidents. For many of the first responders, the individual decontamination that officers and deputies had to do themselves was one of the more traumatizing parts of the response.

Lesson learned 6.2.1. Decontamination protocols should be established before a critical incident occurs.

Observation 6.3. OPD leadership prioritized the mental health of all OPD personnel following the response to Pulse.

All OPD personnel and OCSO deputies the assessment team interviewed said that they were offered—and in some cases required to use—a variety of mental health resources. From the mandatory CISM debriefs less than 72 hours after the incident and six months later to the availability of EAP sessions to the willingness of Chief Mina to allow employees to use external resources, the OPD ensured that mental well-being was a primary focus following the response to Pulse.

Lesson learned 6.3.1. Organizational leadership should ensure that all involved in the response feel valued and are provided access to the physical and mental health resources they may need after a critical incident.

Lesson learned 6.3.2. Agencies should create a post-event wellness strategy that accommodates everyone, including on-scene responders, support personnel, and other agency employees.

As much as possible, create a responder mental health strategy that accommodates employees who respond better to immediate debriefs and counseling, those who prefer time before debriefs and counseling, and those who prefer a combination, and determine what level of participation will be compelled versus suggested and who will be included. During assessment team interviews and focus groups with OPD and OCSO personnel, some individuals expressed appreciation for the immediate CISM debrief because it helped them put their emotions in perspective, provided opportunities to hear some positive outcomes of the response, and almost immediately addressed some issues and concerns they had. Other employees remarked that the mandatory debrief immediately after the incident was unhelpful because they had not recuperated from the physical stimulation caused by the response, much less fully processed their own emotions. In addition, while some individuals appreciated being randomly assigned to the facilitated discussion groups, others felt the debriefs would have been more useful and comfortable with members of their own team. Likewise, some felt that being compelled to talk was beneficial while others said it was hard to identify emotions that soon after the attack. However, everyone interviewed agreed that they were provided a significant number of resources and opportunities to ensure their mental health and well-being.

Observation 6.4. While the OPD did provide various opportunities for healing following the incident, including debriefs and counseling through EAP, some employees felt that given the extraordinary circumstances of a critical incident the EAP system did not meet their personal needs.

Lesson learned 6.4.1. Jurisdictions and individual agencies should consider whether their traditional EAP and mental health structure will suffice in the aftermath of a critical incident or if adjustments should be made for employees in need of other outside services.

Observation 6.5. The OPD assigned a designated mental health incident commander.

The primary role of the mental health incident commander is to monitor agency personnel in the aftermath of the event, to coordinate debriefings, to connect individuals to peer support or mental health professionals, to connect families of those involved in the incident response to support services if needed, and to ensure a continuum of care in the aftermath of the event. This position is also necessary to advise agency leadership regarding operational decisions that impact personnel mental health (including work and shift assignments) and to vet and manage self-deployed mental health providers.

Lesson learned 6.5.1. To further focus and prioritize the mental health in the aftermath of the Pulse incident, OPD and other law enforcement agencies should assign a mental health incident commander.

The OPD assigned a captain of the CISM team as a mental health incident commander. The captain's role was to monitor agency personnel, coordinate the CISM debriefs, and provide and guide employees to special services.

7. Post-Event Victim Welfare

“[Pulse] showed us that we were the community we thought we were.”

— *Executive Director, Orlando Chamber of Commerce*

For law enforcement agencies and emergency operations centers, response to critical incidents does not end once the threat is neutralized and injured victims are transported for medical care. Emergency operations require a phased approach, handled by assigned city and community organizations in collaboration with police departments, to address the long-term needs of a community after a crisis. Family and friends of victims have questions about the well-being of loved ones, victims need assistance identifying continued support, and the community needs to know ways in which they can help. Fortunately for Orlando, training and experience over the years—from active shooter incidents to hurricanes—have prepared all stakeholders and partners to respond to these needs. The City of Orlando’s Disaster Operations Center, the Police Emergency Operations Center, and the City Emergency Operations Center all consolidated into one emergency operations center (EOC) that included all relevant stakeholders to support the overall mission of the Orlando Police Department (OPD) and City of Orlando response to the Pulse attack. The purpose of this chapter is to review the processes and systems Orlando used to provide services to victims in the aftermath of the Pulse incident.

Activation of the emergency operations center

During the Pulse incident, Orlando activated its level 1 EOC in the OPD communications center on the morning of June 12, 2016, and continued operating nonstop through June 22, 2016. During that time, their mission was to provide operational coordination and support for the following:

- OPD command post and on-scene operations during the incident
- The emergency information center (EIC) and help line
- Dignitary visits, funerals, memorial services, and vigils
- Family reunification center
- Family assistance center
- Orlando united assistance center
- OneOrlando Fund²⁴¹

²⁴¹ City of Orlando Emergency Management, *Emergency Management Response to the Pulse Nightclub Shooting*, presentation to assessment team February 23, 2017.

The mayor's declaration of a state of emergency and activation of the EOC allowed the City to allocate additional resources to support the emergency operations of the OPD during response to the Pulse incident, provide services for victims and their families in the aftermath of the incident, and provide additional funding opportunities for the OPD and the City to support the response.²⁴²

The EIC and help line were established to provide information to victims' families and friends. The EIC also served as the victim information center for staff members from the Florida Emergency Mortuary Operations Response System (FEMORS).²⁴³ It was staffed by community service officers, City staff, local volunteers, and American Red Cross volunteers. The EIC started with a bank of 12 phones but quickly expanded to 23 phones and answered approximately 6,800 calls. The overwhelming number of calls taken and the broad range of information requested during those calls solidified the EOC's need for ample resources including staff members who were trained and prepared for the emotional impact taking crisis calls can have on volunteers. This help line relieved the pressure on the OPD to answer questions and attend to the needs of the community in the aftermath of the incident.

Family reunification center

In the moments and hours during and immediately following the incident, Pulse victims were taken or sent to Orlando Regional Medical Center (ORMC). In addition, "Anytime the media, the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation], or the OPD encountered a family member—particularly in the first few hours—they told them to come to ORMC."²⁴⁴ This caused challenges as the ORMC notification system did not fully prepare hospital staff to receive so many people. By 11:00 a.m. on June 12, the ORMC was completely overwhelmed. Family and friends of Pulse-related victims had extended past the emergency room (ER) and hallways, were then moved to a hotel across the street, and still needed more space. ORMC contacted the city Office of Emergency Management (OEM) to ask for assistance in setting up the family reunification center (FRC). Within hours of the incident, the OEM established the FRC at the Beardall Senior Center near the Pulse site and the ORMC for next-of-kin notifications and victim

²⁴² Florida Governor Rick Scott also called a statewide state of emergency on June 13, 2016. Buddy Dyer, "City of Orlando Update 10:20 a.m.," City of Orlando, June 12, 2016, <http://www.cityoforlando.net/mayor/2016/06/city-of-orlando-update-1020-a-m/>.

²⁴³ The Florida Emergency Mortuary Operations Response System (FEMORS) is made up of about 187 volunteers from across the state of Florida who assist in mass fatality situations when local resources are exhausted. The group is comprised of autopsy assistants, forensic scientists, dentists, and others who can assist with tasks that include identifying victims in these incidents. About 40 members of FEMORS rushed to Orlando the morning after the Pulse shooting to help quickly identify the bodies of the 49 victims shot and killed at Pulse. According to the FEMORS director, the physical aspect of identifying bodies takes less of a toll than the emotional on the volunteers. "It isn't the presence of human remains that may be difficult for them; this is what they deal in their normal day," he said. "It's the scale of the event, the impact on your community. That is a difficult thing to try to train for." Katelyn Newberg, "UF Employees among Emergency Responders in Orlando Shooting Response," *Gainesville Sun*, last modified June 21, 2016, <http://www.gainesville.com/news/20160616/uf-employees-among-emergency-responders-in-orlando-shooting>.

²⁴⁴ John Hick, "Lessons Learned from the Pulse Nightclub Shooting: An Interview with Staff from the Orlando Regional Medical Center," *The Exchange* 1, no. 3 (2016), <https://asprtracie.hhs.gov/documents/aspr-tracie-newsletter-the-exchange-issue-3.pdf>.

identification. The center had the space and the capacity to more comfortably accommodate victims' loved ones as they waited to receive information. It was close to the hospital and also provided parking. The FRC operated from June 12 to June 14 to provide notification and support to families of victims regarding the status of their loved ones who had been at Pulse that night. The FBI crisis team, the FEMORS staffers, and members of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) were there to provide the necessary and often difficult information on victims of the shooting. The establishment of the FRC allowed the OPD to delegate the reunification of survivors and loved ones and conduct next-of-kin notifications for victims killed during the attack.

The after action report of the Washington, D.C., Navy Yard shooting in 2013 emphasized the importance of planning and communicating the process and location for both the FRC and a family assistance center (FAC) in the aftermath of a critical incident.²⁴⁵ The nexus of raw emotion and logistical challenges makes this process difficult under any circumstances and particularly in the case of mass violence. In Orlando, the questions of where to do the notifications, who should be involved in the process, and who should be notified were all areas of consideration. It was deemed too difficult to conduct the notifications at ORMC because responders quickly noted that the families being led back were going to the “room of doom,” where they heard the worst possible news about their family member. Because of where the notification rooms were located, family members who had just been told their loved one had been killed then had to walk back through a labyrinth of other family members and friends waiting to hear about the fate of their own loved ones. Victim advocates were also challenged because they were responsible for ushering the families to and from the room but were required not to say anything to the families about what to expect because the FDLE was the only agency authorized to handle notifications. Some families were frustrated at the victim advocates for not telling them and making them wait through the formal process. In some cases, the victim advocates were unprepared for the vitriol directed at them. Finally, some of the victims' complicated family situations—including being disowned or otherwise not having relationships with their next of kin and some families not knowing, wanting to believe, or understanding why their decedent was at a gay nightclub—and some family members not speaking English added extra levels of challenge to the already difficult notification process.²⁴⁶

The establishment and operation of the FRC was an important step toward healing for the community and showed important partnerships within the city of Orlando. While the EOC, the FDLE, and the victim advocates undertook this difficult work, the OPD was able to focus on assisting with the investigation, preparing for press conferences, taking on public relations and media work, and receiving information from the FBI and the FDLE—not to mention getting back to the work of responding to other calls for service in Orlando.

²⁴⁵ *After Action Report Washington Navy Yard September 16, 2013: Internal Review of the Metropolitan Police Department Washington, D.C.* (Washington, DC: Metropolitan Police Department, 2014), <http://www.policefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Washington-Navy-Yard-After-Action-Report.pdf>.

²⁴⁶ University of Central Florida Police Department victim advocates, focus group with assessment team, January 26, 2017.

While the Beardall Center offered the space needed to make family notifications, City and OPD officials did not originally account for the media response to the FRC. Members of the media, particularly those from outside the local market, were able to find and access victims' family members as they walked from their cars into the Beardall Center. Information-hungry reporters shoved cameras and microphones in their faces with little consideration for their need for privacy or state of grief at the time. A similar situation occurred after the San Bernardino terrorist shooting; there, officers eventually created a human perimeter to protect victims and witnesses from reporters as they walked to a bus that would transport them from one family reunification location to another.²⁴⁷

Family assistance center

Once the next-of-kin notifications were completed, the EOC closed the FRC and the FAC was opened to support the immediate needs of families, friends, and victims. The FAC was opened at Camping World Stadium on June 15 and remained open until June 22. The location was chosen based on its accommodations; its secure parking area; its parking, security, and logistical staff already in place; and the fact that it had a designated media area. The facility was large enough to handle the more than 900 individuals and 255 families served by the FAC as well as the 50 to 60 government, community, and business organizations that sent representatives to provide support. It also provided the logistical and technological capacity necessary for the City information technology (IT) department to set up a phone bank and computer support. Those who were there described the FAC as being set up somewhat like a job fair where victims or their families could come and stop by the booth of any of the represented organizations for assistance. Once established, the FAC provided a myriad of services and information to victims and their families. Airlines provided support (and donations) to support getting family to and from funerals. LGBTQ community groups provided information and support to those in the LGBTQ community who needed various services. Children's and pet services were also offered. The organizations represented at the FAC are as follows:²⁴⁸

- African-American Chamber of Commerce
- American Airlines
- American Red Cross
- Aspire Health
- Catholic Charities
- Caribbean American Chamber of Commerce
- Children's Home Society
- Colombian consulate
- Delta Airlines
- FBI
- Florida Attorney General's Office
- Florida Crisis Response Team
- Florida Department of Children and Family
- Florida Department of Vital Statistics
- Florida Morticians Association
- Government of Puerto Rico

²⁴⁷ Braziel et al., *Bringing Calm to Chaos* (see note 19).

²⁴⁸ April Taylor and Kathy DeVault, *Emergency Management Response to the Pulse Nightclub Shooting* (Orlando, FL: City of Orlando Emergency Management, 2017), http://ema.ohio.gov/Documents/DirectorsConference/2017_Spring/Emergency%20Management%20Response%20to%20the%20Pulse%20Nightclub%20Shooting.pdf.

- Greater Orlando Aviation Authority
- Heart of Florida United Way
- Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Howard Phillips Center for Children and Families
- JetBlue
- Legal Aid Society
- LGBT Chamber of Commerce
- LGBT Community Center
- Lynx
- Medical Examiner’s Office
- Mexican consulate
- Orange County Sheriff’s Office victim advocate
- Orlando Utility Commission
- Osceola County
- Pet Alliance
- Salvation Army
- Senior Resource Alliance
- Social Security Administration
- Southwest Airlines
- Tax Collector
- Therapy Dogs International
- United Airlines
- US Department of Veterans Affairs
- Zebra Coalition

The FAC was publicized via a flier that was posted on websites and social media and distributed in print throughout Orlando.

The after action report of the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing recommended that a plan for a family assistance center be established prior to a mass casualty incident so that jurisdictions can quickly establish necessary services for victims and their families in the aftermath of a large scale event.²⁴⁹ Likewise, the San Bernardino terrorist shooting incident review recommended identifying a location for the FAC where amenities such as food, water, and charging stations were provided for victims while they waited to receive information and access services.²⁵⁰ The Orlando OEM reviewed these case studies and learned from them, preparing their plan for an FAC.²⁵¹

The OEM practiced their plan, collaborating with and bringing in businesses, community organizations, and other nongovernmental organizations in addition to nontraditional government organizations to meet face to face, explain their roles in the event of an emergency, and begin to build relationships. Camping World Stadium was selected based on its readiness to host large numbers of people. When the need for an FAC did come, the location and partners were primed and ready to respond.

²⁴⁹ *After Action Report for the Response to the 2013 Boston Marathon Bombings*, 105 (see note 17).

²⁵⁰ Braziel et al., *Bringing Calm to Chaos* (see note 19).

²⁵¹ Manuel Soto, City of Orlando emergency manager, interview with assessment team, February 23, 2017.

At the direction of OPD commanders, the OPD and the OCSO provided security at the Hampton Inn & Suites and at the Beardall Center to ensure that victims and their families and friends were safe and not hounded by the media. However, as in San Bernardino, there was still a “gauntlet” of media that the families and friends had to go through to get in. Part of the reason Camping World Stadium was selected as the location of the FAC was because security staff was already in place and the OPD was familiar with the security of the stadium.

Orlando united assistance center

Through a partnership between the City of Orlando, the Orange County government, and the United Way, the Orlando united assistance center (OUAC) opened on June 23, 2016, and is still open at the time of publication one year later. The OUAC serves as a navigation point to assess the needs and provide information, support, and resources to those directly affected by the Pulse incident. It provides long-term family services and mental health and counseling services.

The Orlando OEM established the FRC at the Beardall Center first, then transitioned to address immediate victim services at the FAC at Camping World Stadium, then transitioned again to the OUAC. They had planned, prepared, coordinated, and practiced their plan to address victims’ needs before the Pulse event ever took place. This planning and use of resources helped provide much-needed services to the victims of the terrorist attack, served as support to the OPD’s overall response, and relieved the OPD of needing to provide these services to the victims so that they could focus on other aspects of the response.²⁵²

Helping Victims of Mass Violence and Terrorism Toolkit

The Office of Victims of Crime—in coordination with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Office for Victim Assistance, and the Office of Justice for Victims of Overseas Terrorism—developed a toolkit to assist communities in preparing for and responding to victims of mass violence and terrorism in an efficient, effective, and compassionate manner. The toolkit reviews the steps involved in identifying partners and creating and maintaining partnerships; addresses resource gaps; and includes response and recovery tools that review how first responders and service providers can use appropriate victim assistance protocols in the aftermath of an incident as well as checklists, guides, and templates.

Source: OVC, *Helping Victims of Mass Violence & Terrorism* (see note 252).

²⁵² OVC (Office for Victims of Crime), *Helping Victims of Mass Violence & Terrorism: Planning, Response, Recovery, and Resources*, Office of Justice Programs, last modified August 2015, <https://www.ovc.gov/pubs/mvt-toolkit/>.

Post-event victim welfare observations and lessons learned

Observation 7.1. Activating the EOC and declaring a state of emergency allowed the City of Orlando to create a central location from which to direct and allocate resources both to support the OPD response to the Pulse incident and to provide critical information, resources, and services to victims and the community.

Lesson learned 7.1.1. Activating the EOC and declaring a state of emergency early in the process can help secure additional resources, relieving pressure and responsibility on the police department so that they can focus on other important law enforcement aspects of the response.

Observation 7.2. The OPD and the City of Orlando had a pre-existing plan for reunifying families in the aftermath of a critical incident.

Because of multiple large-scale critical incident exercises, the emergency preparedness manager for the Orlando Regional Medical Center (ORMC) knew the waiting room of the hospital would quickly be overwhelmed and determined that the Hampton Inn & Suites would have more room and resources to accommodate family notifications and reunification. The hospital and the hotel had a pre-existing understanding, and as soon as the waiting room became overcrowded with family members and friends of Pulse victims, the transition was made smoothly to the FRC. The City of Orlando, the OPD, and Orlando Health did have plans in place for reunification, but those plans were not designed to respond to incidents of this magnitude. The City and Orlando Health implemented changes on the move to scale up and work within their existing plans.

Lesson learned 7.2.1. Identify the location for an FRC near primary hospitals prior to a critical incident. The FRC should be a scalable, safe, stable, and comfortable facility that provides access to amenities such as restrooms and outlets to charge cell phones.

Lesson learned 7.2.2. In mass casualty events, the next-of-kin notification process should account for logistical issues, and notifications should be made in a timely manner to lessen the stress on family members and significant others as they wait to hear about loved ones involved in the incident.

Whenever possible, notifications should be made in person. The Orange County Medical Examiner's Office, the FDLE, and the FBI identified 48 of the 49 decedents in less than 24 hours, and most of the next-of-kin notifications were made as soon as the decedents were identified. This kept families from having to wait to get closure and begin the process of moving forward.

Lesson learned 7.2.3. Police departments challenged by the need to identify and interview large numbers of victims and witnesses should consider staffing to expedite the interview process and request assistance from other agencies, if appropriate.

Some of the victims and witnesses of the Pulse terrorist attack expressed frustration about having to wait to be interviewed before they were released and not having the ability to contact their loved ones.²⁵³

Observation 7.3. The OPD provided safe, comfortable provisions for victim and witness care while they awaited interview and notification.

OPD command staff said they learned from the after action report of the San Bernardino attack, which highlighted that “victims expressed concern regarding the amount of time spent on the golf course (approximately three hours),” and “victims expressed concern and frustration with the inability to contact family members, lack of counseling services, and the lengthy interview and photographing process.”²⁵⁴ Having the FRC at a hotel allowed for victims to have access to restrooms and electricity. Similarly, uninjured witnesses who were placed on buses and transported to OPD headquarters were afforded the opportunity to wait inside with water and facilities available and electricity to charge their devices, as well as phones for those who had left theirs in the club.

Lesson learned 7.3.1. Consider provisions for victim and witness care while they are awaiting interviews and being notified.

These may include making cell phone charging stations and other forms of communication available, providing food and beverages, and providing access to counselors and clergy.²⁵⁵

Lesson learned 7.3.2. Designate a special area where clergy and counselors can assemble within the FRC and be made available to those who request them.

Some OPD chaplains and additional self-deployed religious leaders from throughout the Orlando community arrived at the FRC to offer their assistance to victims and families. However, the clergy did not have a room in which to provide counseling, so they had to do it in the middle of the room with other victims and family members nearby. This created situations where individuals who needed counseling were unable to receive it in a timely or private manner and chaplains were mistakenly included with victims in some instances.

Observation 7.4. Victims, witnesses, and their families could have been provided better cover from media access as they entered the FRC.

The scale of this incident resulted in an overwhelming amount of media on the scene, near the hospitals, and throughout the Orlando area. Victims, witnesses, and their families expressed frustration to OPD officers and University of Central Florida Police Department (UCFPD) victim advocates about having to walk through a media gauntlet on the way in and out of the FRC. Once the aggression of the national

²⁵³ Anzueto, deputy chief, Orlando Police Department, interview (see note 58); University of Central Florida Police Department victim advocates, focus group (see note 246).

²⁵⁴ Braziel et al., *Bringing Calm to Chaos* (see note 19).

²⁵⁵ Braziel et al., *Bringing Calm to Chaos* (see note 19).

media was observed, additional security was put in place and attempts by PIOs to control the media were implemented. OPD officers began acting as valet parkers so that the families could go straight into the hotel, avoiding exposure to the media. Local media were cooperative.

Lesson learned 7.4.1. Ensure security and privacy for families of victims going to and from the FRC as members of the media or other unscrupulous individuals may go to great lengths to access or harass them.

Lesson learned 7.4.2. Designate one or more areas near but not immediately surrounding or adjacent to the FRC where the public and the media can gather without interfering.

Observation 7.5. The scale of this incident far exceeded the natural disasters that most EOCs and their respective hotlines traditionally deal with, and the EOC was not fully prepared for the level and type of calls that came in to the hotline. However, within 36 hours, trained call takers were in place.

Beginning with the first press conference, Mayor Buddy Dyer provided the phone number for the public hotline that the EOC had established to provide information about the FAC. Originally, the hotline was linked to 12 phones, but it quickly expanded to 23 phones and answered approximately 6,800 calls. With the phone bank quickly growing, support staff members were untrained and unprepared for the emotional impact of the calls they were required to answer, which contributed to mental health and wellness concerns after the EOC was deactivated.

Lesson learned 7.5.1. When establishing any type of public hotline to provide information on a critical incident, the infrastructure, staffing, and ability of the staff to handle the calls, including call takers trained in crisis response, should be in place prior to public announcement being made.

Observation 7.6. The Orlando FAC provided immense support and assistance to the survivors and families of victims of the Pulse nightclub terrorist attack.

Whether the responsibility of the police department, the City, or the EOC, this resource was extremely helpful to the Orlando community.

Lesson learned 7.6.1. Establish an FAC that provides a one-stop location for victims and their families to access any products and services necessary in the aftermath of the incident. Publicize the availability of victim services at all press conferences, through fliers, and on social media.

The FAC was opened at Camping World Stadium based on the stadium's ability to accommodate the 956 individuals and 298 families that ended up coming, in addition to the 50 to 60 government, community, and business organizations that sent representatives to provide support. The location also provided the logistical and technological capacity necessary for the City IT department to set up a phone bank and computer support; many of the logistical details—including parking, food vendors, security staff, offices, etc.—were already established; and public safety personnel were familiar with the layout, which allowed for additional security measures and protection of individuals and families from the media.

Lesson learned 7.6.2. Partner with nontraditional jurisdiction agencies and stakeholders—including IT, public transportation, financial services, airlines and hotels, etc.—when creating an FAC to expedite the setup process and ensure the availability of various resources.

OEM had learned from previous critical incident reports that the FAC should provide a myriad of services and information to victims' families. Through practice and other exercises, OEM fostered partnerships with private and public businesses, associations, and other stakeholders so that when needed, their resources would be available. As soon as the FAC was established, OEM was able to rely on airlines, LGBTQ and Hispanic community groups, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the Muslim population, and other organizations to provide a host of services to families of decedents and survivors.

8. Investigations

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) began its investigation once it was determined that the suspect was a terrorist, but as previously noted, the Orlando Police Department (OPD) remained the incident commander until the suspect was neutralized. The FBI led the Pulse crime scene investigation and was assisted by the OPD and other federal, state, and local agencies.

The OPD and the Orange County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) requested that the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) conduct an investigation into the use of force by all law enforcement officers who engaged the suspect during the Pulse response. Concurrently, the State's Attorney Office for the Ninth Judicial Circuit conducted a separate investigation of the OPD officers who fired their weapons during the incident.

This chapter reviews the investigative process that followed the incident.

Promising practices

Throughout the investigative process, the leaders of the federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies involved in the Pulse response coordinated decision-making and operations through the unified command center (UCC).

Before the incident was officially declared an act of terrorism, the assistant special agent in charge of the FBI field office in Orlando mobilized the Joint Terrorism Task Force, the Crisis Management Coordinator, the special weapons and tactics (SWAT) team, hostage negotiators, the evidence response team (ERT) and the various squads under his command. The FBI also dispatched its mobile command post to the scene. Once the determination was made that the shooting was an act of terrorism, the FBI assumed primary jurisdiction over the investigation, the crime scene, and evidence.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the FDLE, and local agencies—primarily the OPD and the OCSO—supported the FBI in various capacities. For example, FDLE aided the FBI by conducting intelligence scans and gathering information regarding the suspect and the incident, investigating leads throughout Florida, and searching for information about possible other shooters or related incidents in the Orlando area. The DEA also took the lead in searching and clearing each of the vehicles within the outer perimeter prior to releasing them to survivors and family members in the days following the incident. OPD detectives were attached to the FBI to assist with information sharing between law enforcement and the US attorney in the command post.

The crime scene investigation began slowly as FBI SWAT agents and bomb technicians—along with OCSO hazardous device team (HDT) members—methodically searched the Pulse for improvised explosive devices. Following the assault, the suspect was found lying on the ground with a battery pack lying between his legs with wires coming out of it.

Florida’s Open Record Laws

Florida is known for its progressive and all-inclusive open records laws, commonly known as the “government in the sunshine” or “sunshine” laws. According to Title X, Chapter 119, Section 119.01, “It is the policy of this state that all state, county, and municipal records are open for personal inspection and copying by any person. Providing access to public records is a duty of each agency.” Given the broad applicability of the law to many of the records that were generated during and after the attack at Pulse nightclub—any documents, photographs, sound recordings, and other materials—there were significant implications for the investigations. Because the primary agencies conducting or assisting in concurrent investigations—including OPD, OCSO, the State’s Attorney Office for the Ninth Circuit, and FDLE—are subject to this law, the investigators coordinated with federal investigators to ensure that any evidence that was photographed or taken by local or state agencies would not jeopardize any potential federal investigations or prosecutions. The City of Orlando also proactively created a page on the City website, <http://www.cityoforlando.net/cityclerk/pulse-tragedy-public-records/>, for all public records.

Source: Public Officers, Employees, and Records, Fla. Stat. tit. X, ch. 119 (2016), http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=0100-0199/0119/Sections/0119.011.html.

Initially, OPD SWAT and OCSO HDT believed the box might have been the explosive the suspect claimed he had. Investigation revealed that it was actually an emergency lighting box that had fallen on the suspect during the shootout.

By the time the interior of the club was determined to be free of explosives, the FBI’s ERT from headquarters was on scene and took the lead in collecting the evidence. The ERT worked with the OPD and the Orange County Medical Examiner’s office to remove and identify all of the victims and the suspect, who were then transported to the Orange County Morgue for identification and autopsies. Next, investigators from the FDLE and the State’s Attorney’s Office for the Ninth Judicial Circuit worked in conjunction with the ERT to determine what evidence they would need to inform their use of force and officer involved shooting investigations. The state’s attorney and the FDLE were aware that because of Florida’s public information laws—known as “sunshine laws”—agencies would eventually be required to make all evidence and information that they collected public, so they coordinated with the FBI to ensure the federal investigation was not compromised.

Survivors and witnesses

The logistics associated with the identification and interviewing of survivors and witnesses were immense. Given the chaos created by hundreds of people running from the nightclub, law enforcement investigators, including the OPD, struggled to identify all the patrons who were at Pulse that night. To obtain statements from the survivors and to reunify injured survivors with their families and friends, the

OPD ran concurrent processes. Individuals who were uninjured were transported to OPD headquarters on city buses to be interviewed. By using the department's headquarters, the OPD ensured that the survivors could provide their statements in a comfortable and secure environment where they had access to water, coffee, telephones, and restrooms while they waited.²⁵⁶ Meanwhile, the family reunification center (FRC), initially established at the Hampton Inn & Suites less than a quarter of a mile north of Orlando Regional Medical Center (ORMC), was used to reunite injured survivors and their families as well as to connect them to services.

The complexity and challenge of identifying and interviewing witnesses and collecting evidence in a large-scale mass casualty event like the terrorist attack on Pulse cannot be overstated. Collaborative relationships facilitated the smooth transition of responsibility, identification of roles, and sharing of resources.

Investigations observations and lessons learned

Observation 8.1. Local, state, and federal agencies responding to the Pulse incident, including the OPD, delineated roles and responsibilities, coordinated efforts, shared information and evidence, and collaborated throughout the incident and its aftermath.

Rapid and effective decision-making, clear division of work and responsibilities, frequent sharing of information and resources, pre-existing relationships among the executives of the agencies, and constant collaboration in the UCC—led by the OPD—allowed multiple investigations to progress simultaneously.

Lesson learned 8.1.1. The ability to immediately determine specific agency investigative roles and responsibilities is crucial to effective incident and investigation management.

Orlando area federal, state, and local responding agencies were quickly able to determine investigative roles.

Lesson learned 8.1.2. Critical incident training and exercises should continue through all aspects of survivor and witness identification, interviewing, and reunification.

The OPD did not initially have victim advocates or a strategy for handling identification, interviewing, and reunification of the number of victims and witnesses who were affected at the Pulse nightclub. OPD command staff acknowledged the difficulties in interviewing all of the patrons at the club on June 12, because many patrons fled when the shooting began and did not return to the area or go to OPD headquarters. The OPD had not developed protocols for interviewing large numbers of witnesses and victims during a mass casualty event.

²⁵⁶ The OPD was not involved in the transfer of uninjured survivors to the FRC. Once they were released from OPD headquarters, the uninjured survivors were free to go.

Taking on Nontraditional and Nonpublicized Tasks for the Greater Good

During the investigative process, DEA agents displayed tremendous professionalism and compassion for those effected by the attack. Agents took money out of their own pockets to pay for taxis that would arrive with survivors and loved ones coming to pick up vehicles. Many individuals had no money because their purses or wallets were either in their vehicles or still in the club. Agents were also seen taking food provided for first responders to survivors and loved ones there to pick up vehicles because they had not eaten in hours and did not have money to purchase food. These acts of compassion and professionalism displayed by the DEA defined the public safety response to the Pulse nightclub attack and emphasized the need to adjust to the demands of a critical incident and remain focused on the overall mission.

Later, the DEA and the FDLE partnered to identify vehicles and their owners inside the FBI perimeter near Pulse to return survivors' vehicles to their owners. This job, although outside the scope of what either agency may traditionally be responsible for, provided unpublicized services to those affected by the incident.

Source: Danny Banks, special agent in charge, Florida Department of Law Enforcement, interview with assessment team, February 20, 2017.

9. Media and Public Information

In critical incidents, law enforcement agencies face a delicate balance between informing the public about what is taking place as it is occurring, protecting victims and officers, and ensuring the integrity of the response.

Law enforcement leaders should anticipate that some people experience added fear as an event unfolds, particularly one that is part of a coordinated set of terrorist acts—as experienced, for example, on September 11, 2001, domestically and more recently in Mumbai, Paris, Brussels, and the United Kingdom internationally. Especially in a city with multiple large venues for concerts and sporting events, hundreds of bars and nightclubs, and one of the largest tourist attractions in the world, a coordinated set of attacks is a legitimate possibility.

In addition to the fear that unfolds in the community, the news media's desire for breaking news 24 hours a day, seven days a week and the constant stream of content available online can complicate law enforcement's ability to manage the delivery and release of information to viewers and followers—these outlets sometimes report inaccurate information. Furthermore, online outlets—particularly unaffiliated individuals posting on social media—can often operate without scrutiny and rigor leading to rumors that spread quickly. The speed at which these rumors spread, as well as the public's associated reactions, can hamper the ability of law enforcement agencies to ensure the safety of first responders' efforts and the investigation of an event as they are forced to divert resources to rumor control.

When multiple federal, state, county, and local agencies are involved in the response to an event, there is increased potential for conflict and confusion regarding public information with each agency operating under different media guidelines. With 27 agencies from diverse jurisdictions involved in the response to the terrorist attack at the Pulse nightclub, the potential for discrepancies in what information was released, by whom, and when was magnified. However, with a coordinated public information strategy that encompassed news media, nontraditional media, and social media, the numerous individuals and agencies involved were able to successfully keep the public informed. This chapter will explore the City of Orlando and Orlando Police Department's (OPD) coordinated public information strategy and discuss lessons learned from its public information officers (PIO).

Media and public relations

One of the hallmarks of Orlando's response to the Pulse nightclub attack was the citywide structured, coordinated, and disciplined handling of media and public relations. Prior to this incident, city officials conducted annual emergency management tabletop exercises in which communications was a key function. While most of the previous exercises had focused on natural disasters and weather-related emergencies like hurricanes, following the unrest in Ferguson, Missouri, and in Baltimore, city officials determined that they needed to be prepared for similar situations.

The city conducted a tabletop exercise focused on the law enforcement and broader government response to civil disobedience. Through the exercise, the city established a process for communicating about different types of events, including which entity would take the lead to avoid some of the initial confusing and contradictory social media messaging that occurred during similar responses, including the Boston Marathon bombings.²⁵⁷ Because of this strategy, it was predetermined that the OPD media relations office, which consists of two PIOs—one civilian and one sergeant—and a handful of support staff, would lead media and public relations, and the City would use its social media accounts to complement and share the messages being posted by police.²⁵⁸

During the attack

The PIOs were notified of the ongoing active shooter and hostage situation with multiple casualties at approximately 3:13 a.m. They knew that the murder of Christina Grimmie—a contestant on “The Voice” who had just given a performance at the Plaza Live theater—the night before²⁵⁹ meant that the public was already on edge and that nontraditional media outlets in addition to the regular litany of media would be associated with an event of this magnitude. They also knew that social media was already overflowing with posts from people inside and outside the Pulse nightclub. All of this information led the PIOs to predict that the scene was only going to become more chaotic. In accordance with OPD Policy and Procedure 1308.3 (Major Incidents), the PIOs immediately deployed to the scene to establish a media briefing area and begin disseminating information.²⁶⁰

Once they arrived on scene, the PIOs received a quick overview of the events from OPD command staff and used the department’s Twitter feed to establish their presence and provide credible information about the ongoing incident, especially about the victims, as quickly as possible. While the OPD hosted a number of social media accounts—including Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, Nextdoor, Pinterest, and Flickr—the decision was made to use Twitter almost exclusively to provide the public and the media with updates. This would allow information to be shared in a timely and efficient manner without having to individually respond to the rising volume of press inquiries. The other social media

²⁵⁷ Sharon Burke, Alyssa Sims, and David Sterman, *War and Tweets: Terrorism in America in the Digital Age* (Washington, DC: New America, 2016), <https://na-production.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/War-And-Tweets10.27.pdf>.

²⁵⁸ Burke, Syms, and Sterman, *War and Tweets* (see note 257).

²⁵⁹ Jillian Sederholm et al., “Gunman Who Killed ‘The Voice’ Singer Christina Grimmie Had Two Weapons, Ammo, Knife: Police,” NBC News, last modified June 11, 2016, <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/voice-singer-christina-grimmie-shot-after-florida-concert-n590161>.

²⁶⁰ Orlando Police Department Policy and Procedure 1308.3 – Major Incidents, provided to assessment team March 30, 2017.

channels were used to point people to the OPD Twitter feed. The first two tweets, timestamped at 3:58 a.m., alerted the public of police activity and multiple injuries at Pulse²⁶¹ and noted that all official updates would come from the OPD Twitter account.²⁶²

Over the course of the next several hours, as the event progressed, the OPD continued to use Twitter to inform the public and the media about new developments and to remind them that the situation was fluid. It also used Twitter to provide updates from Orlando Regional Medical Center (ORMC) and the family reunification center (FRC), to share information about—and from—press briefings, and to confirm certain information and correct misinformation that had gone viral. Particularly after witnesses and media outlets reported hearing a loud explosion and linked it to the suspect’s earlier claim that he had explosive devices, the OPD quickly corrected the false reports and explained that the sound was the Orange County Sheriff’s Office’s (OCSO) planned detonation of a controlled explosion to breach the exterior wall of the club.²⁶³

Even after the incident was officially designated a terrorist attack, the OPD remained the lead agency on disseminating information related to the tactical response both because that response was still being led and coordinated in the UCC by the OPD and because the OPD had the following of the local community and the local media as well as the national and international outlets that joined over the previous hours to receive updates.

According to local reporters, “the police department did a decent job of releasing information through [their Twitter account] in a timely manner.”²⁶⁴ Because of its established presence, OPD’s Twitter account was the first to confirm that the suspect had been neutralized.²⁶⁵

After the attack

After the suspect was neutralized and all remaining threats were resolved, the importance of the unity of message and coordination of who would focus on different aspects of the response remained, even as the media and public information strategy shifted to calming public fears and leading the charge of

²⁶¹ Orlando Police Department (@OrlandoPolice), “Shooting at Pulse Nightclub on S Orange. Multiple injuries. Stay away from area,” Twitter post, June 12, 2016, 3:58 a.m. [Twitter archive: 12:58 a.m. PDT], <https://twitter.com/orlandopolice/status/741902485070045184>.

²⁶² Orlando Police Department (@OrlandoPolice), “Official updates will come from this Twitter account. No email or phone calls please,” Twitter post, June 12, 2016, 3:58 a.m. [Twitter archive: 12:58 a.m. PDT], <https://twitter.com/orlandopolice/status/741902588589707264>.

²⁶³ Orlando Police Department (@OrlandoPolice), “That sound was a controlled explosion by law enforcement. Please avoid reporting inaccuracies at this time,” Twitter post, June 12, 2016, 5:05 a.m. [Twitter archive: 2:05 a.m. PDT], <https://twitter.com/orlandopolice/status/741919251678826496>.

²⁶⁴ Burke, Sims, and Sterman, *War and Tweets* (see note 257).

²⁶⁵ Orlando Police Department (@OrlandoPolice), “Pulse Shooting: The shooter inside the club is dead,” Twitter post, June 12, 2016, 5:53 a.m. [Twitter archive: 2:53 a.m. PDT], <https://twitter.com/orlandopolice/status/741931400392249344>.

unity and resilience. Chief executives from the mayor's office, the OPD and the OCSO, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and other federal agencies worked together and met regularly to prepare for press conferences and determine the information that would be released at each.

In a separate mobile command vehicle at the scene—provided by the OCSO media relations office—as well as at the emergency operations center (EOC), which had been activated at approximately 8:00 a.m. just after the first press conference, public affairs staff and PIOs from the same agencies coordinated how information would be released, the appropriate format for the press conferences, and the importance of ensuring unity of message. The OPD decided that they would not release anything on social media until the information was first mentioned by Chief John W. Mina or Mayor Buddy Dyer during a press conference, and the other public affairs staff and PIOs followed suit. In addition, while the original plan for the initial press conference was to have Mina provide an update with available details, leaders determined that it was more important for Dyer to begin the first press conference to present the message that the overall response was and would continue to be a local community-driven response focused on trust and unity, not a law enforcement response focused on an investigation and terrorism. This same format was repeated for the second news conference, especially given the gravity of the information that was about to be released. Dyer took the podium and began by stating that since the first press conference, investigators had gotten better access to the nightclub and determined that the number of casualties was not the 20 that had been previously reported, but 50 (including the suspect). Dyer used that information to reiterate the initial message that Orlando “won’t be defined by hate, but by how we respond, with love, compassion, and unity” and that this attack was not a referendum on the LGBTQ, Hispanic, or Muslim communities. He also invited the president of the Islamic Society of Florida to address the press.²⁶⁶

During the times before and between press conferences, Chief Mina would handwrite his statements and send pictures to the OPD PIOs. This allowed the PIOs to simultaneously tweet important pieces of information as he was addressing the press and the City was live-streaming the press conference, allowing for multiplatform delivery of information to the public. The OPD also used Twitter later in the day to portray the heroism of the responders by tweeting a picture of the Kevlar helmet worn by the OPD officer who was hit during the final exchange of gunfire.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁶ Burke, Sims, and Sterman, *War and Tweets* (see note 257).

²⁶⁷ Orlando Police Department (@OrlandoPolice), “Pulse shooting: In hail of gunfire in which suspect was killed, OPD officer was hit. Kevlar helmet saved his life,” Twitter post, June 12, 2016, 11:05 a.m. [Twitter archive: 8:05 a.m. PDT], <https://twitter.com/orlandopolice/status/742009920808210432>.

Over the course of the first 24 hours, the City received innumerable press requests, particularly for one-on-one interviews with the chief or the mayor. In order to process these requests, the OPD PIOs created an automatic reply for all incoming email requests, which read as follows:

The Orlando Police Department Media Relations Department and Public Information Officers are working hard to provide updates on the Pulse nightclub shooting. In order to do that, we are *not responding* to individual emails or phone calls until further notice.

All official updates will come from either the live media briefings, which are happening roughly every three hours on scene, or through the OPD Twitter account @orlandopolice on Twitter. Do not contact the communications center or ask for a watch commander. All information is coming through us, via Twitter only. Any media releases will be placed on the City of Orlando website and linked to from Twitter.

The FBI is the lead federal agency on the Pulse nightclub shooting. Its main national press office can be reached at 202-324-3691.

Thanks for letting us do our jobs, so we can help you do yours.

They also changed their voicemail greeting message to relate that they would not be responding to individual emails or phone calls until further notice and that all official updates would come via their live briefings or Twitter. This allowed the PIOs to dedicate their attention to the chief and the meetings at the joint information center (JIC) instead of attempting to answer the flood of calls and emails, vet and prepare officers before speaking to the media, and restrict potential leaks and release of unverified information. Nevertheless, the contact information of the requestors and the contents of their requests were entered into a running spreadsheet, which was used to respond and track responses after the initial chaos subsided and the OPD could begin granting individual interviews. Even then, interviews were restricted to the mayor, the chief, and a Spanish-speaking deputy chief.

The following days

In the days following the attack, as the initial chaos subsided and evolved, the media and public relations aspects of the response continued to evolve as well. Because of their increased Twitter following, the PIOs continued to use the account to provide updates about the heroism of the responders, to mourn victims, and to thank—and grieve with—the community. The OPD also worked with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) staff to ensure that next-of-kin notifications were made and the information was verified so that the OPD could honor the deceased via social media. Pictures and messages of gratitude for the donations they received, messages of support from around the globe, and pictures from the vigils throughout the city were also tweeted and retweeted by the OPD, further demonstrating their commitment to embracing the community.

In addition, while the majority of the response focused on the services provided to the next-of-kin of the decedents and the survivors—and thus transitioned to being handled by the City—a handful of media outlets changed course. As soon as the names of the officers involved in the shooting were made public,

some media outlets began aggressively tracking down the officers and their families (presumably seeking comments and additional information), in some cases even knocking on their doors and dispatching affiliates in other states to do the same with officers' family members nearby.

Others attempted to generate contention between survivors and responding agencies by asking leading questions surrounding whether or not officers waited too long to neutralize the suspect, asking business owners who were not allowed within the perimeter how they felt, and looking for an exclusive story of some sort.²⁶⁸ In response to questions about the tactical response, an OPD special weapons and tactics (SWAT) team commander was briefed on what information could and could not be released, and he proceeded to walk down the line of media and address their concerns. The PIOs also created a timeline identifying how many hostages were safely and successfully rescued, where they were in the club, and when they were rescued to counter the emerging contentious narrative.²⁶⁹

In response to the aggression of the national and international media and in deference to the local media, when the OPD began conducting exclusive interviews, the first ones were provided to the local outlets.²⁷⁰

OPD PIOs are equipped with laptop computers with internal wifi that enable them to conduct all police department business remotely. However, on the morning of June 12, they relied solely on cell phones because they were working from the street. Despite only having department-issued smart phones with them as they worked from the scene, the PIOs successfully worked from a handful of different locations during the response, generated 203 more tweets in June 2016 than they had generated in May, helped to design and disseminate fliers about the FRC and the family assistance center (FAC), and helped to coordinate and provide information about the vigils and ceremonies throughout the area. The City of Orlando has a mechanism by which all social media posts on all the City's accounts and platforms are archived.

Elected officials

Members of the press were not the only group to descend upon the scene in large numbers in the aftermath of the attack. The President and Vice President of the United States traveled to Orlando to visit the scene, pay their respects, and offer their support and gratitude to the responders. The Director of the FBI also visited first responders and investigators at the nightclub. In addition, with the Republican and Democratic National Conventions both less than two months later, candidates vying for their party's nominations arrived in Orlando. State officials made their way to Orlando as well. In some cases, these officials merely wanted to offer their condolences to the victims and survivors and show their support for first responders; others sought more in-depth information on the tactical

²⁶⁸ Public information officers (PIO), Orlando Police Department, Orlando Fire Department, and City of Orlando, focus group with assessment team, February 23, 2017.

²⁶⁹ PIOs, focus group (see note 268).

²⁷⁰ OPD PIOs noted that local media outlets appreciated the opportunity to get exclusive interviews prior to national outlets. PIOs, focus group (see note 268).

response and the suspect. In response, personnel were allocated from both the OPD and the mayor's office to assist the elected officials arriving in Orlando without impacting or impeding the ongoing investigation at the scene.

Local elected officials limited their involvement to supporting law enforcement officers and uniting and grieving with the community. In the early morning hours of June 12, as soon as Mayor Dyer was notified of the ongoing incident, he went to the unified command center (UCC). He did not involve himself in the tactical and operational decisions being made and did not seek to inject politics or optics into the decision-making process. Instead, Dyer deferred to Chief Mina, simply offering the full resources of the City to the OPD and doing whatever he could to support the first responders and the overall response. He did contribute to the response by using his leadership and position as a trusted local official to shape how the public viewed the response, including clear and comforting language in all of his press conference statements, acknowledging the LGBTQ and Hispanic communities and the Muslim population, assuaging the community's fears, and continuing the unity of response that had been started by law enforcement.²⁷¹

Media and public relations observations and lessons learned

Observation 9.1. Prior to the attack at the Pulse nightclub, the PIOs of all Orlando city agencies established a process for communication during events of varying types. The process included protocols regarding which entity would take the lead, what the other agencies would do, and what the overall tone of the messages would be.

Lesson learned 9.1.1. A media and public relations strategy that ensures the coordination of all jurisdiction-department public information officers (PIOs) and all information being released through various platforms and accounts is integral to effectively handling the media during a critical incident.

For each phase of the response in Orlando, a thoughtful and coordinated media and public relations strategy that included traditional and social media was developed. During the incident, the OPD relied primarily on its Twitter account to provide breaking news and images from the scene and used its other social media channels to point interested followers to Twitter. As the response shifted, the City's Facebook page was used for messages about the city response and city messages, and Periscope was used for live-streaming press conferences.

Lesson learned 9.1.2. The depth of the department's media and public relations team and strategy is extremely important to consider before a critical incident.

Major incidents place a significant amount of strain on media and public relations teams and PIOs throughout the jurisdiction, and it is imperative that communications teams have the depth to handle the workload. Ensure that the team is able to communicate with significant segments of the community, including non-English speakers. Personnel should also be available to address media

²⁷¹ Burke, Sims, and Sterman, *War and Tweets* (see note 257).

outlets in different time zones and countries. Be aware that after a critical incident, business as usual will continue for the rest of the jurisdiction, but the public information needs related to the incident will continue for weeks, months, and years.

Observation 9.2. With the OPD’s coordinated media and public information strategy, the numerous individuals and agencies involved successfully kept the public informed.

With 27 agencies involved in the response to the terrorist attack at the Pulse nightclub, discrepancies could have existed in what information was released, by whom, and when. However, with a coordinated public information strategy, the numerous individuals and agencies involved were able to successfully keep the public informed. Deferring to the OPD and having all city and county social media accounts, email addresses, and phone messages direct news media to the OPD ensured that all media and public relations were handled consistently.

Lesson learned 9.2.1. Unity of message and communications that focus on resilience are imperative to the overall success of the response.

Observation 9.3. The OPD leveraged resources such as their pre-existing social media followings and held press conferences to control their story.

Despite the chaos caused by intensive media coverage, OPD PIOs put standardized voicemail greeting messages on their desk phones and cell phones and an automatic reply on their general email address directing everyone to the OPD Twitter account and instructed them to leave their information and interview requests in a message. This allowed for department personnel to focus on managing the initial flood of questions and requests and the tasks at hand during the event. Essentially, through its PIOs, the OPD became its own news agency, using social media to correct rumors, share information and images, and frame the narrative. To help sort through the many hundreds of emails, the communications group at Orlando City Hall tracked all media requests and added them to a single Excel spreadsheet. This was accomplished by directing all emails to the dedicated PIO email address.

Lesson learned 9.3.1. Police departments should leverage pre-existing social media followings to act as a single primary source of information and communication with the public during a critical incident.

Agencies that regularly use social media to communicate with the public will have an established audience for distribution of information in a critical incident. However, during a critical incident is not the time to attempt to establish a social media following.

Observation 9.4. In some instances, OPD PIOs did not have access to the resources they needed to the keep the public informed but instead adapted work-arounds.

OPD PIOs were deployed on scene and were responsible for keeping the public informed about the safety of area around Pulse, incident outcomes and status, available resources for victims, locations for vigils, and other important information. At times, however, they did not have the resources available to them to facilitate that work. For example, there was no room in the UCC for the PIOs to sit in on

briefings. Instead, PIOs received updates from Chief Mina and senior staff via text or in person right after the briefings in the UCC. In addition, they often did not have the equipment they needed to work on scene.

Lesson learned 9.4.1. PIOs should be involved and included in the UCC to directly participate in and observe decisions made related to press conferences and social media posts. Receiving information secondhand can eliminate important context behind statements.

Because there was no room in the UCC for the PIOs, they received information following briefings. This was especially challenging for the PIOs prior to press conferences, when Chief Mina had to handwrite his statements and send images of them by text message to the PIOs so that they could prepare to post them as he made his statements during the press conferences.

Lesson learned 9.4.2. PIOs should be provided with mobile resources necessary to undertake their duties over a long period of time and in any location (laptops with necessary software and smart phones).

Observation 9.5. OPD PIOs acknowledged that—particularly with the limited characters of social media—it is important to be thoughtful and cautious in communications so that they are sensitive to decedents’ family members, victims, witnesses, and the larger community.

Lesson learned 9.5.1. Ensure that public statements—including during press conferences and interviews and on social media—properly balance law enforcement terminology with the perceptions and impacts on victims, their families, survivors, and the larger community.

Observation 9.6. The decision to have Mayor Dyer and Chief Mina speak at the first press conference before federal officials was made strategically to set the tone that the response would be driven by the community, not by federal investigators.

Furthermore, having Mayor Dyer speak before Chief Mina allowed the mayor to shape how the public viewed the response, including using clear and comforting language in his press conference statements, acknowledging the LGBTQ and Hispanic communities and the Muslim population, and assuaging the community’s fears instead of focusing on investigating a crime.

Lesson learned 9.6.1. Having a recognizable local leader speak first at first press conferences portrayed a sense that the response was and would continue to be a local community-driven response led by trust and unity, not a federal response driven by terrorism.

Observation 9.7. To enhance relationships with local media outlets, the OPD provided them exclusive interviews before the national and international media.

Local media outlets do not have the resources to be as aggressive and persistent as national and international outlets, but they will be the outlets that remain when the major incident and the initial response are over and the national and international media leave. The OPD recognized the importance of maintaining its positive relationships with their local media outlets by offering exclusive interviews and stories before going to the national and international channels.

Lesson learned 9.7.1. Prioritize the needs and requests of the local media before that of national and international media outlets.

The OPD purposefully responded to and provided local media outlets with exclusive interviews and information first as a way to build trust and relationships with them. According to the OPD PIO, “They [local media outlets] are going to be here long after the national media has gone home.”²⁷²

Lesson learned 9.7.2. Establish a JIC or other location where PIOs or other personnel from stakeholder agencies can coordinate the incident media response and can monitor media and social media to keep abreast of erroneous information being reported and quell rumors.

The JIC was established as part of the EOC, but prior to the establishment of the EOC, the PIOs from the responding law enforcement agencies and the City worked out of the OCSO PIO truck that came to provide support. OPD PIOs acknowledged that it would have helped to have the ability to follow media reporting so that they could quickly correct erroneous information and be more proactive in addressing rumors as they did following the posts of a potential bomb that was really the explosive breach.

Lesson learned 9.7.3. Prepare for negative questions and shifts in the news cycle from being on your side to looking for an exclusive story and trying to generate contention.

OPD PIOs acknowledged that one of the biggest lessons they learned was to balance between transparency and the implications on the officers and family members. Prior to releasing the names and information of officers involved in this incident, they should have better considered the implications of media outlets becoming aggressive in tracking down officers, calling and showing up at their houses, and potentially tracking down relatives.

²⁷² PIOs, focus group (see note 268).

Observation 9.8. Because Mayor Dyer and representatives from his office had been involved in critical incident response exercises, he was aware that his role was to focus on unifying the community and setting the tone for the city.

As soon as Mayor Dyer was made aware of the ongoing incident, he responded to the UCC. When he arrived, instead of interjecting himself and politics into the decision-making process, he focused on collecting information and determining the tone and message of the response he would provide to his community. Other local elected officials followed suit and focused on calming and unifying the community as well as demonstrating resiliency instead of getting involved in the investigation and tactical response.

Lesson learned 9.8.1. Include elected officials' roles and responsibilities in planning and managing critical incidents, and include them in training and exercises. After a critical incident, be prepared to handle elected officials of all levels and political affiliations, providing them with constructive roles when possible.

Personnel from both the OPD and the mayor's office were allocated to assist the local, state, and federal officials who traveled to Orlando to visit the scene, pay their respects, and offer their support and gratitude to the responders. Some officials wanted to offer their condolences to the victims and survivors and show their support for first responders, while others wanted to be more involved. In addition, with the Republican and Democratic National Conventions both less than two months later, candidates vying for their party's nominations arrived in Orlando. In some cases, the officials were not received warmly by the community and their visits caused additional strain for already taxed agencies.

10. Community Engagement and Relationships

“Hate may have visited our community . . . but hate will not define us. And hate will not defeat us. Because we are one Orlando.”

— *Buddy Dyer, Mayor of Orlando*

Community resilience is “a measure of the sustained ability of a community to utilize available resources to respond to, withstand, and recover from adverse situations.”²⁷³ While there are many things that contribute to community resilience, some foundational aspects include community cohesion and collaboration and a shared responsibility and vision.²⁷⁴ For this reason, it is important to look at the Orlando Police Department (OPD) and larger public safety response to the Pulse shooting within the context of the strength of the Orlando community and its relationships. While the City of Orlando government did an outstanding job of considering and addressing the needs of Pulse victims, the true character of the city was also shown in the response by the community—individuals and organizations. In this way, the Pulse tragedy galvanized much of the community’s support for one another, their support for the police and the City’s support for its community; it galvanized the community’s resilience. This chapter will explore how the work done by the OPD to strengthen and sustain relationships with the Orlando community prior to the incident impacted the response to the Pulse terrorist attack and to the resilience of the city after the attack.

Community-police relationships in Orlando

The OPD is no stranger to working to build community trust and police legitimacy through engagement and transparency. Its efforts prior to the Pulse incident set the foundation on which community support during and after the Pulse incident was built. Indeed, the police department’s 2016 annual report positions community engagement as one of the top three priorities for the department and highlights that “[t]he Community Relations Unit also participated in more than 575 community events, meetings, surveys, and trainings in 2016.”²⁷⁵ Through activities such as Coffee with a Cop, Orlando Speaks, and the many other activities of the OPD community relations unit, officers regularly engage with diverse

²⁷³ “Community Resilience,” RAND Corporation, accessed June 4, 2017, <http://www.rand.org/topics/community-resilience.html>.

²⁷⁴ Deborah Spence, ed., *Improving Law Enforcement Resilience: Lessons and Recommendations*, Officer Safety and Wellness Group Meeting Summary (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2017), <https://ric-zai-inc.com/ric.php?page=detail&id=COPS-P362>.

²⁷⁵ Orlando Police Department, *Courage. Pride. Commitment* (see note 12).

segments of the Orlando community. In addition, the OPD is member of the Police Data Initiative, and its open data portal provides raw policing and crime data as well as maps and visualizations to the public for open transparency and accountability.²⁷⁶

The OPD also uses targeted engagement to engender trust with specific communities as well. The Orlando LGBTQ community has enjoyed a solid relationship with the OPD for some time, and that relationship continues to be cultivated today through efforts by both the OPD and the LGBTQ community. As part of the OPD's community policing and engagement effort to build relationships with the community, Chief John W. Mina appointed OPD's first LGBTQ liaison. The liaison began frequent contact and a focused engagement strategy with the LGBTQ community to ensure that the OPD understands the issues facing the LGBTQ community and that the community feels protected. According to the executive director of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Community Center of Central Florida (The Center Orlando), an LGBTQ community group, the OPD liaison officer and other OPD officers made a weekly habit of stopping in to The Center Orlando on a regular basis just to check in and to chat long before the Pulse incident occurred. "I have officers' personal cell phone numbers," he said.²⁷⁷ The foundation built by OPD and LGBTQ community leaders prior to the Pulse shooting established a relationship that bolstered the response during the incident and is now even stronger than before.²⁷⁸

Similarly, the OPD has enjoyed great relationships with Orlando's African-American and Hispanic communities and continually engages in many forms of outreach. As one example, the annual Hispanic Citizens' Police Academy—which is conducted entirely in Spanish by OPD officers and personnel—has a greater attendance each year than the Citizens' Police Academy conducted in English. The OPD also sponsors community barbecues and other get-togethers in communities throughout the city to enable residents to interact with officers in social settings and not just when they call for help. In addition, in the aftermath of Pulse, the City of Orlando assembled a team of Spanish-speaking communicators to translate all materials for a Spanish-language version of the City's website. They also translated many of the critical messages being sent out on social media. Even in the aftermath of the Pulse incident, recognizing that the majority of the victims in the attack were Hispanic, the OPD stressed the importance of its relationship with the Hispanic community. OPD command staff reached out to the Hispanic community daily to make sure all their needs were met and continue to do so to this day. This has continued the strong relationship with the Hispanic community that was built on a foundation of trust, dedication, and service to all.

²⁷⁶ "Welcome to Orlando's Open Data Website," City of Orlando, accessed June 4, 2017, <https://data.cityoforlando.net>.

²⁷⁷ Executive director, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Community Center of Central Florida, interview with assessment team, April 18, 2017.

²⁷⁸ Executive director, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Community Center of Central Florida, interview (see note 277).

Community support post-Pulse

A remarkable characteristic of the response to the Pulse nightclub shooting was not only the response from Orlando public safety agencies and the City of Orlando but also the response from the Orlando community at large. Almost universally, the assessment team heard from individuals interviewed who said that many segments of the Orlando community came together to support and to find ways to help in any way they could.

Immediately upon hearing of the incident, community leaders reported to the scene to stand in solidarity with victims and with city leaders, the OPD, and the other first responders. Some stayed at the site for days to address community needs, attend press conferences, and coordinate volunteer activities and products. Others, like the executive director of The Center Orlando, went to the hospital in the immediate aftermath so victims could see a familiar and friendly face. Counselors donated time to those in need, and many others donated food, water, office supplies, toys for children in victims' families, and other items. While the donations were appreciated and seen as an outpouring of love, the City had to establish systems for intake and distribution to ensure that they were used appropriately and went to the proper recipients. This is where organizations like the American Red Cross and The Center Orlando became critically important. They deployed volunteers to establish systems to intake and distribute resources such as food and water in necessary locations around the city. More than anything, the community came together to support one another and to show their appreciation for the city that supported them.

This support did not come from just one segment of the community; it can be seen through the many acts of kindness and generosity displayed by people of every culture and background in the year since the incident. The LGBTQ community held fundraisers and other events to raise money and to thank first responders. Local nonprofit organizations made and donated items to victims, families, and first responders of the Pulse incident throughout the year, like the group that donated Pulse themed quilts to the OPD and others.²⁷⁹ The Florida State Conference of the NAACP showed support following the incident with the following statement:

The Florida State Conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People sends our prayers, condolences, and thoughts to the victims and their family members of the senseless act of violence and hatred that occurred at Pulse Night Club in Orlando, FL. We commend the efforts of Local, State, and Federal Officials as well as Law Enforcement for their

²⁷⁹ "#QuiltsforPulse Charity Drive with the Orlando MQG," Modern Quilt Guild, last modified June 14, 2016, <https://themodernquiltguild.wordpress.com/2016/06/14/quiltsforpulse-charity-drive-with-the-orlando-mqg/>.

diligent efforts in securing and protecting the residents of the Orange County/Orlando, FL community. We also offer our support to local healthcare facilities who are working around the clock to treat and save the lives of all who have been negatively impacted. At this time, we pray for unity and strength as a State and Nation to combat the forces of intolerance and hatred.²⁸⁰

According to the executive director of the Orlando Chamber of Commerce, “The entire community rallied, not just the LGBT community.”²⁸¹

Leveraging Established Relationships

In the aftermath of the incident, one activist group took the opportunity to politicize their beliefs about the LGBTQ community by protesting events commemorating the victims of the Pulse shooting. The LGBTQ community was also out in force to remember the victims and to come together as a community. With OPD resources already stretched thin as they worked to protect a seemingly continual stream of dignitary visits and other Pulse-related events, this situation had the potential to turn disruptive and violent and could have further taxed those resources. However, building on the already established relationship with the LGBTQ community and community leaders, OPD officers leveraged strong lines of communication and trust to give direction, calm the crowd, and de-escalate the situation during the protests. They established a point of contact with one of the LGBTQ community leaders, who relayed messages to the counterprotesting crowd about when they were getting too loud or moving outside of their secure area. The officer kept the group informed of what was going on around them and how to best react in the tenuous situation to keep it under control. This mutual understanding and respect made the communication smooth and facilitated a peaceful ending to the event and contributed to everyone going home safely.

Similarly, the OPD has a historically strong relationship with the Hispanic community. This relationship has been built on a foundation of trust, dedication, and service to all. Because the majority of victims in this attack were Hispanic, the OPD leveraged and built on those relationships during the response to the attack on Pulse. The OPD reached out to the Hispanic community daily to make sure all of their needs were met and continue to do so to this day.

Source: Robert Anzueto, deputy chief, Orlando Police Department, in email to Police Foundation assessment team, September 28, 2017; executive director, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Community Center of Central Florida, interview (see note 277).

²⁸⁰ “FL NAACP Responds to Shooting in Orlando, Florida,” press release, accessed July 5, 2017, <http://www.flnaacp.com/naacp/23012/>.

²⁸¹ Executive director, Orlando Chamber of Commerce, interview with assessment team, April 18, 2017.

Police protection following the incident

In the hours and days following the shooting at Pulse, many in the LGBTQ community felt particularly threatened. They experienced feelings of intense fear because they had been targeted; some even felt unsafe leaving their homes. LGBTQ community leaders reached out to the OPD through established lines of communication to ensure that when community members were out holding vigils or marches or otherwise commemorating Pulse victims, they had police presence to keep them protected. Even as law enforcement dealt with the initial response to the attack at the nightclub, personnel were deployed across the city to provide security and protection to other LGBTQ commercial establishments. For example, K-9 units were dispatched to LGBTQ bars and clubs in the city and county to conduct external and internal building K-9 sweeps. In addition, in the days and weeks following the attack, law enforcement provided security at numerous LGBTQ community gatherings and vigils.

In the aftermath of a critical incident such as the attack on Pulse, it is incumbent on law enforcement to take additional steps to protect specific communities negatively affected by the incident.²⁸² The positive and trusting relationship the OPD had with the LGBTQ community in Orlando resulted in each supporting the other after the attack. The community came to law enforcement's defense when they faced criticism for their response to the attack. In turn, law enforcement maintained their support for the LGBTQ community and took additional steps to ensure their safety after they suffered such a terrible loss of life and sense of safety.

In addition to taking additional steps to protect a community directly impacted by the incident, the OPD and the Orange County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) took additional steps to remain connected to and protect specific communities from potential retribution. The attack on Pulse was identified as a terrorist attack, and the shooter who claimed to be Muslim and inspired by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). As a result, law enforcement responded to the Muslim community to show its support and to provide them with added protection. Specifically, the assessment team heard from a Council on American-Islamic Relations Florida leader that she reached out to Sheriff Jerry Demings, and together they were able to address security concerns in the immediate aftermath of the Pulse incident.²⁸³ Similarly, after the terrorist attacks in San Bernardino, California, law enforcement took steps to ensure that Muslim community members felt protected from retribution for the attack and stood with them to condemn the attacks publicly.²⁸⁴ These steps are important as a way to continue to engender trust with these communities to reduce crime and prevent terrorism.²⁸⁵ Building trusting relationships based on

²⁸² Braziel et al., *Bringing Calm to Chaos* (see note 19).

²⁸³ Muslim community group leaders, interview with assessment team, May 26, 2017.

²⁸⁴ Braziel et al., *Bringing Calm to Chaos* (see note 19).

²⁸⁵ Robert Wasserman, *Guidance for Building Communities of Trust* (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2010), <https://ric-zai-inc.com/ric.php?page=detail&id=COPS-P194>.

interaction and collaboration may lead to increased reporting of suspicious activity as well as sharing of information, target hardening, and improved coordination as communities attempt to prevent and respond to terrorist acts of violence.²⁸⁶

One of the ways the OPD demonstrated its positive relationship with Orlando's Muslim community was to invite and have a local imam stand side by side with law enforcement leaders during one of the early press briefings outside the nightclub.²⁸⁷ This demonstrated that the entire Muslim community was not and should not be held responsible for this horrific act of violence. It also demonstrated that law enforcement was committed to supporting and protecting the Muslim community as they were doing for the LGBTQ community. This display by law enforcement also brought the LGBTQ and Muslim communities together so they could support one another and ensure this tragedy did not tear them or their city apart.²⁸⁸ This was demonstrated when 68 local and national LGBTQ, Hispanic, and Muslim groups joined together days after the attack to sign a pledge to stand together against violence and hate.²⁸⁹ This, in conjunction with Mayor Dyer and Chief Mina's unified message of peace and unity, furthered the resilience of the Orlando community.

Providing additional security to certain locations such as mosques after terrorist incidents is an essential step for law enforcement. Ignoring this responsibility or not responding properly can have dramatic results not only physically but also on the emotional resilience of the community.²⁹⁰ For example, shortly after the attack on Pulse, a Ft. Pierce, Florida, mosque occasionally attended by the suspect was burned by an individual who opposed the teaching of Islam.²⁹¹

Getting business back on track after the incident

The area surrounding the Pulse nightclub (dubbed SoDo or "South Downtown" by some) boasts several small businesses as well as chain restaurants and other shops that had been the focus of economic development efforts prior to the Pulse incident. Dry cleaners, barber shops, a bike shop, doctors and dentists' offices, and other businesses on or near South Orange Avenue relied on foot and vehicle traffic for staff and customers to access the business. However, the Pulse incident required the Federal Bureau

²⁸⁶ International Association of Chiefs of Police, *Using Community Policing to Counter Violent Extremism: Five Key Principles for Law Enforcement* (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2014), <https://ric-zai-inc.com/ric.php?page=detail&id=COPS-P299>.

²⁸⁷ Jessica Durando, "After Orlando Shooting, Muslim Americans Show Support for Victims," *USA Today*, June 13, 2016, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2016/06/12/orlando-nightclub-muslim-reaction/85790320/>.

²⁸⁸ Selima Hussain, "South Florida Muslim and LGBT Communities Unite for Rally after Orlando Shooting," [Broward and Palm Beach, FL] *Sun Sentinel*, June 15, 2016, <http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/sfl-south-florida-muslim-and-lgbt-communities-band-together-after-orlando-shooting-20160615-story.html>.

²⁸⁹ Antonia Blumberg, "Outpouring Of LGBT, Muslim Groups Sign Statement Against Bigotry," *Huffington Post*, last modified June 22, 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/outpouring-of-lgbt-muslim-groups-sign-statement-against-bigotry_us_576aeb49e4b0c0252e7827f9.

²⁹⁰ NAMI, *Preparing for the Unimaginable* (see note 145).

²⁹¹ Kimiko de Freytas-Tamura, "30-Year Sentence for Man Who Burned Florida Mosque Attended by Omar Mateen," *The New York Times*, February 7, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/07/us/mosque-fire-florida.html?_r=1.

of Investigation (FBI) to keep the area surrounding the club closed for approximately 10 days to ensure the area's safety and to process it for evidence. Approximately 60 businesses were affected by the lack of access due to the street closure during this time.

While business owners understood the public safety need for the street closure, many of them were frustrated by the lack of communication and information coming from the City, the FBI, and the OPD on the plan for reopening the street. The City of Orlando leveraged the following:

- **Numerous partnerships and liaison programs.** The City of Orlando funds and manages multiple City-business programs—including the SoDo area's Main Street Program, which worked to maintain connections with business owners, and the Downtown South Partnerships coordinator, who met with affected businesses daily—and assigned multiple contacts from the City of Orlando Economic Development Department to remain in personal contact with affected businesses. The joint work of these methods and individuals advocating on behalf of the businesses resulted in accelerating the opening of the affected areas.
- **Direct visits, daily newsletters, and social media updates.** These communication methods were used regularly to communicate with affected businesses.
- **The Small Business Administration.** The Small Business Administration established a temporary office in the area and worked in conjunction with the City to assist the local businesses.²⁹²

However, some of the businesses lost at least 10 days of revenue as well as some customers, causing long-term impact.

To the extent possible, cities should provide consistent communication to businesses affected by long-term closures in the aftermath of large-scale critical incidents. A similar situation occurred on a larger scale in the aftermath of the Boston Marathon bombing. "On the morning of April 17, the mayor assigned the responsibility for planning the reopening of Boylston Street to [the Office of Emergency Management] and tasked all other City departments to support this critical mission."²⁹³ The Office of Emergency Management (OEM) in Boston laid out a detailed plan to reopen the businesses and to communicate that plan with the businesses and the public.

²⁹² OPD command staff, in phone conversation with assessment team member, October 3, 2017.

²⁹³ *After Action Report for the Response to the 2013 Boston Marathon Bombings* (see note 17).

Community resilience and moving forward

Since the Pulse incident, the City of Orlando and the Orlando community have worked together to provide opportunities for individuals and groups to mourn and commemorate the victims of the tragedy. From preserving the temporary monuments left to the victims on the Pulse site to the City Hall Christmas tree decorated with ornaments designed as a tribute to the signs in the windows of businesses all over the city supporting the survivors, the community continues to support the survivors and the victims' families. In a time when some survivors still suffer from physical pain from injuries that are inextricably tied to the trauma that occurred on that day, they have chosen to move forward and continue to heal. This shared experience of trauma has provided a place from which to build resilience and resolve.

On the one-year anniversary of the attacks, the City of Orlando and the Orange County Government, in collaboration with the owners of the Pulse nightclub, commemorated the victims and showed continued compassion and support to survivors, victims' families and friends, and others affected in the community with "Orlando United Day – A Day of Love and Kindness."²⁹⁴ The day was described as "an opportunity to join with others in acts of love and kindness to continue the unity that followed the tragedy."²⁹⁵ The day began with Orange County Mayor Teresa Jacobs and Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer presenting the Orlando United Day proclamation with Orlando District 4 Commissioner Patty Sheehan and Pulse nightclub owner Barbara Poma at the Orange County Administration Building. Those in attendance at the presentation were also able to donate blood and attach rainbow ribbons with messages of love onto area trees.²⁹⁶ Over the course of the day, the City of Orlando, Orange County, and countless community and business organizations participated in a myriad of events, vigils, community service and volunteer opportunities, and reflections occurring all over the city to continue to demonstrate the resilience of the city and support for the victims and survivors.²⁹⁷ The day included two ceremonies held at the nightclub:²⁹⁸ a community gathering and remembrance and a concluding ceremony that evening where the names of the 49 victims were read and 49 wreaths were displayed as speakers and musicians led gatherers in reflective prayers and focused on hope and healing.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁴ "Acts of Love & Kindness," OneOrlando Alliance, accessed June 22, 2017, <https://oneorlandoalliance.org/acts-of-love-and-kindness/>.

²⁹⁵ "Orlando United Day," Orange County, Florida, accessed June 22, 2017, <http://www.orlandounitedday.com>.

²⁹⁶ "Orlando United Day Tributes Remember the 49," Orange County Government, last modified June 13, 2017, <https://newsroom.ocfl.net/2017/06/orlando-united-day-tributes-remember-the-49/>.

²⁹⁷ "Orlando United Day" (see note 295).

²⁹⁸ "Orlando United Day: Event Schedule, Road Closures and Transportation Options," WESH2, last modified June 12, 2017, <http://www.wesh.com/article/orlando-united-day-event-schedule-road-closures-and-transportation-options/10008431>.

²⁹⁹ "Orlando United Day" (see note 295).

Community engagement, relationships, and resilience observations and lessons learned

Observation 10.1. Pre-existing Orlando police-community relationships, fostered and sustained over time, enhanced the resilience of the community in the aftermath of the Pulse terrorist incident.

The OPD and other Orlando officials were able to leverage the strong relationships that had been fostered and sustained prior to the attack at Pulse nightclub to enhance the resilience of the Orlando community during and in the aftermath of the incident. Community members and organization representatives, law enforcement personnel, and City and County officials interviewed by the assessment team and providing information through the media said that the strength of the pre-existing community-police relationships significantly enhanced the resilience of the community and the ability to quickly come together and support one another.

Lesson learned 10.1.1. Building strong community-police relationships can assist in the response and resilience of a community following a terrorist or mass casualty incident.

Observation 10.2. The OPD, the OCSO, and other Orlando-area public safety agencies were sensitive to the needs of particular groups most affected by the incident, including the LGBTQ, Hispanic, and Muslim communities.

Even as the OPD and its supporting agencies were still engaged in the initial response at Pulse nightclub, law enforcement personnel were deployed across the city and the county to provide security and protection to other LGBTQ commercial establishments and to mosques and Muslim institutions. The OPD dispatched K-9 units to LGBTQ bars and clubs in the city and county to conduct external and internal building sweeps, provided security at numerous LGBTQ and Hispanic community gatherings and vigils, and heightened security for the Muslim community and showed their support at mosques. In the hours and days following the incident, the OPD continued to be sensitive to the special needs of affected groups and provided protection during vigils and other commemorative events while also having an imam stand with city officials during press conferences.

Lesson learned 10.2.1. In the aftermath of a terrorist attack or other mass casualty incident, it is important for law enforcement to be sensitive to the needs of the particular group(s) most affected by the attack, including those victimized and those likely to face retribution.

Observation 10.3. The OPD and the City of Orlando have continued to support the victims of the attack and the community as a whole and have come together to support opportunities for individuals and groups to mourn and commemorate the victims of the Pulse tragedy.

While the days and weeks immediately following a critical incident are generally when the most attention is paid and the most support is raised for various charities and organizations, it is imperative to also prepare for anniversaries and other important times beyond the short term. Months before the first anniversary, the OPD and the City of Orlando began planning for it, declaring it “Orlando United Day” and preparing for vigils and remembrance ceremonies. It is also important to be prepared to address the event when similar incidents occur.

Lesson learned 10.3.1. Prepare for the long haul.

Both for the purposes of providing security and to support the community, the OPD continues to provide resources and to support events remembering the incident and commemorating the victims.

Observation 10.4. The City of Orlando, the state of Florida, and federal responding partners could have better coordinated and communicated with businesses near Pulse to address their needs and long-term impact of the response and investigation.

The City of Orlando leveraged direct visits, daily newsletters, and social media updates; numerous partnerships and liaison programs; and a temporary Small Business Administration office to communicate with business owners in the area. However, according to a liaison of the business community around the Pulse nightclub, approximately 60 businesses were financially impacted by the investigative perimeter. The liaison was not a City employee and had no direct City points-of-contact, which made it difficult to relay information regarding the reopening of the area to local business owners and likewise to share the concerns of the business owners with the City. This issue also arose when funding was being distributed to victims and local business owners did not qualify or have someone to advocate on their behalf. While federal partners report providing services to assist impacted businesses, many of the businesses were not aware of the services or were not able to leverage them.

Lesson learned 10.4.1. Consider the needs of local businesses and have a city or law enforcement liaison who can provide information to and advocate for impacted local businesses during a critical incident that requires them to be closed.

Conclusion

The Orlando Police Department (OPD), assisted by federal, state, and local law enforcement and public safety agencies, responded to the deadliest terrorist attack on US soil since the 9/11 World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks in a manner consistent with recognized promising practices under extremely volatile and difficult circumstances, saving the lives of innocent people. In doing so, the women and men of the OPD and their partner agencies demonstrated the professionalism, bravery, skill, and determination of our nation's law enforcement officers to protect the communities they serve—putting themselves in harm's way to save innocent lives.

Since 2001, individuals motivated by a range of ideological beliefs and individual factors have engaged in horrific acts of mass violence targeting innocent civilians in communities across the United States. According to a report by the Congressional Research Service in 2015, since 2010 these attacks have increased in frequency as well as lethality.³⁰⁰ The individuals who perpetrate these acts of mass public violence and terrorism are becoming more unpredictable and deadly in the strategies and tactics they employ, challenging the law enforcement community not only to use recognized promising practices but also to develop and implement next practices that anticipate the evolving threat environment.

Local law enforcement officers, particularly those assigned to patrol work, are the most important resource for identifying, preventing, and responding to threats. Routine patrol work places officers in neighborhoods where terrorists hide, plan, and attack, giving those officers the opportunity to gather critical intelligence as well as to identify potential threats. In addition to their role in preventing terrorist attacks, patrol and other officers working in non-tactical units must be properly trained and equipped to identify the threat, immediately engage the perpetrator(s), extricate and render aid to victims, assume incident command, and request appropriate public safety resources. Well established community-police relationships are vital to preventing and responding to incidents of mass public violence and terrorism as well as to building resiliency within the community.

On June 12, 2016, Orlando police officers and their counterparts entered an overwhelming scene of human suffering, and with laser-like focus they stopped the killing and saved the lives of innocent victims in Pulse. Well-defined, well-developed, and practiced protocols equipped responding officers to perform effectively during this tragic event. This critical incident review highlights the response and identifies lessons learned regarding the law enforcement response to acts of mass public violence and terrorism. In doing so, the review honors the victims of the Pulse nightclub attack and the bravery of the Orlando law enforcement community and serves as a call to action for our nation's elected officials and law enforcement and public safety leaders.

³⁰⁰ William J. Krouse and Daniel J. Richardson, *Mass Murder with Firearms: Incidents and Victims, 1999–2013* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2015), 15, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R44126.pdf>.

Appendix A. Observations and Lessons Learned

Observation 2.1. OPD responders, and leaders in particular, took creative and decisive action under dire, complex, and dynamic circumstances with little to no reliable information.

Lesson learned 2.1.1. Responders and their leaders will be required to quickly make creative decisions with little to no reliable information under constantly changing and sometimes horrifying circumstances. These decisions could mean life or death for victims, department personnel, and bystanders.

Lesson learned 2.1.2. Leaders should prepare and empower their command staff and responders—at every level of the organization—to make decisions under difficult circumstances through training and practices that focus on critical thinking, situational awareness, and collaboration.

Observation 2.2. OPD leadership used the tenets of “swarm intelligence”—particularly pre-existing professional relationships with Orlando-area federal, state, and local leaders—to respond to the terrorist attack at Pulse nightclub.

No agency or leader claimed the spotlight or special recognition for their role. Leaders agreed that the overarching mission was to save lives, and they rallied around doing so—providing whatever resources they could to accomplish the goal.

Lesson learned 2.2.1. Response to and management of critical incidents are greatly enhanced when pre-existing relationships exist between leaders and supervisors from all potential first responder agencies. Each leader involved in the response indicated that pre-existing relationships and trust amongst leaders enhanced decision-making, identifying steps that needed to be taken, allocation of resources, and delineation of roles and responsibilities for each agency.

Lesson learned 2.2.2. Mutual trust and respect between agency leaders and command personnel within and across agencies, along with trust among line-level personnel working toward a unified goal, are overarching components for reducing competing interests and ensuring a collaborative response.

Observation 2.3. Sharing classified information and intelligence during the response to the Pulse terrorist attack informed tactical operations and led to the seamless transition of on-scene leadership from the OPD to the FBI once the incident was resolved.

Lesson learned 2.3.1. Ensuring that public safety leaders possess the necessary security clearances prior to a critical incident facilitates information sharing before, during, and after a terrorist incident. Incidents involving terrorism and federal law enforcement will require leaders to possess security clearances to participate in classified briefings.

Observation 2.4. Through early and consistent unified messaging, Orlando Mayor Dyer and OPD Chief Mina set the tone for the response from their agencies, the Orlando community, and the nation.

Orlando leaders set the tone of calm determination, resiliency, and unity in the face of the tragic event. Responding agency executives from the city and the county aligned in support, as did community leaders. In addition, other political officials, including the governor, were supportive and allowed responding agencies to perform their responsibilities without interfering in the decision-making and tactical processes.

Lesson learned 2.4.1. Leadership and unity of message before, during, and immediately following a critical incident set the tone for the days, weeks, and months to follow.

Lesson learned 2.4.2. Demonstrating unity and cooperation between public safety leadership and political officials is essential to gaining the confidence of the community.

Observation 2.5. In the hours during the Pulse attack as well as in the days and months following it, OPD command staff have been faced with enormous demands on their time, energy, and focus.

In addition to their regular duties, OPD leaders have attended hundreds of Pulse-related events, traveled around the world to make presentations to law enforcement and security professionals about the response to the attack, and addressed many additional requests. This requires a delicate balance of organizational awareness, continuing to run a large agency, helping their employees recover, and being responsive to their own personal and family commitments.

Lesson learned 2.5.1. Leaders must recognize the need to balance the attention they give to external responsibilities with the time they spend within their agency, communicating with and caring for their personnel, their community, and themselves.

The hours during and days, weeks, and months following a high-profile incident can be overwhelming, requiring leaders to balance the increased demands on their time, focus, and energy as well as that of their organization.

Lesson learned 2.5.2. Some OPD personnel expressed concern for the limited attention and recognition command staff gave to those who responded to the Pulse attack.

Command staff should take extra steps to personally acknowledge the efforts of all individuals who played a role in the response.

Observation 2.6. OPD leaders were aware of their internal resources and capabilities and used them effectively to address many of the challenges that arose during the response to the Pulse attack, but they acknowledged that awareness could be improved in other areas.

For example, OPD leaders relied on the OCSO hazardous device team (HDT) to conduct the explosive breach, but they admitted that they had not trained on a regular basis with the HDT. This led to some confusion and lack of coordination during the final assault. On the other hand, some agencies sent duplicative resources that went unused while other resources were needed—particularly by public information officers—but were unavailable. The number of tasks

that needed to be accomplished and the amount of resources required grew within—and especially between—the phases of the response, requiring greater familiarity, collaboration, and interagency training in preparation for critical incidents.

Lesson learned 2.6.1. Assessing and testing the strengths and needs of your own agency and surrounding first responder agencies in preparation for a critical incident can expedite mutual aid, facilitate interagency coordination, streamline operations, and identify deficits in regional resources.

For example, both OPD SWAT and the OCSO HDT acknowledged the need for regular training between their teams to improve joint operations during routine and crisis events.

Lesson learned 2.6.2. Conducting executive level, multiagency tabletop exercises—including elected and appointed officials as well as department heads from other government agencies—in preparation for a critical incident can help define roles and responsibilities, identify available resources, and have an agreed-upon incident command system in place.

Regional planning exercises helped Orlando public safety leaders strengthen relationships and operations and identify resources as well as the roles various agencies would play in a multiagency response to a critical incident.

Lesson learned 2.6.3. Interagency planning and training should consider access to resources beyond those found in the law enforcement community.

For several hours, the chief of the OFD was not notified about the ongoing incident, and the OFD established a separate incident command post, which exacerbated lack of coordination between police, fire, and EMS leaders and command staff. Greater emphasis must be placed on ensuring that unified command includes agencies outside of law enforcement, including fire, EMS, and other critical agencies, to ensure a multidisciplinary response and the use of all public safety assets and capabilities as soon as practical during a critical incident.

Observation 2.7. The OPD prioritized studying and learning from AARs and debriefs and crafted training and exercises based on them to prepare for critical incidents.

The OPD began conducting tabletop and reality-based training for patrol officers on active shooter events following the Columbine High School shooting in 1999. In more recent exercises, the OPD focused on responding to such incidents with high levels of environmental stimulation—darkness, alarms, people screaming for help, and simulated devastating injuries. Members of the OPD command staff reviewed the Aurora movie theater shooting and the San Bernardino terrorist attack and implemented many of the lessons learned from those reports in this response. Chief Mina also asked for this incident review to be conducted in an effort to continue to learn from the Pulse tragedy and so that he could share those lessons with his peers nationwide.

Lesson learned 2.7.1. Identify and implement promising practices and lessons learned from other relevant incident reviews and AARs, both internal and external to your jurisdiction.

Lesson learned 2.7.2. Conduct AARs and incident reviews, particularly those that include all stakeholder groups, on large-scale incidents to provide lessons internally and among regional partners to build organizations that are constantly learning and improving operations and tactics.

In the field of emergency preparedness, the lessons learned approach stands on the assumption that learning from experience, whether it be our own experience or others' and whether it be from real events or simulations, improves practice and minimizes avoidable deaths and negative economic and social consequences of disasters. Thus, the appeal of learning from experience to avoid duplicating mistakes is widely appreciated in the emergency preparedness arena, and many organizations have adopted formal procedures for identifying, documenting, and disseminating lessons learned from prior response to emergency situations and simulations.

Observation 3.1. The OPD followed their tactical and hostage negotiation policies and protocols as well as recognized promising practices as they pertain to active shooter and barricaded hostage situations.

However, OPD policies and protocols and recognized practices and training need to be re-examined in light of the increasing threat of mass public violence and terrorist attacks.

Lesson learned 3.1.1. The law enforcement community should consider the need to modify the application of current active shooter and barricaded hostage response protocols to terrorist incidents, and a review should be held by the law enforcement community.

“While a debate can be had about whether such protocols should change in the case of standoffs with Islamist terrorists seeking to kill and be killed, it is worth emphasizing that current best practices are designed to avoid the death of hostages and putting police officers in unreasonable danger. Recognizing that the threat of such extremist terrorism represents a continuing—if not growing—threat, it may be appropriate to develop specific protocols for hostage events during terrorist attacks.”³⁰¹

Observation 3.2. OPD officers and other responders formed two contact teams and entered the nightclub approximately six minutes after the attack began with a clear plan to engage, contain, apprehend, or neutralize the suspect.

As soon as they could determine where the suspect was, the contact team, led by the OPD SWAT commander, engaged the suspect and forced him to retreat into the restroom while the other contact team triaged and rescued victims.

Lesson learned 3.2.1. The first officers on scene of an active shooting incident should organize contact teams to engage, contain, apprehend, or neutralize the gunman and rescue victims.

³⁰¹ Straub, Zeunik, and Gorban, “Lesson Learned” (see note 19).

Observation 3.3. While OPD SWAT and OCSO HDT played coordinated roles throughout the Pulse incident, members of both teams reported that the response during and immediately following the initial breach became disorganized and uncoordinated. Specialty units—particularly interagency units—must train together to avoid confusion and disorganization during joint tactical operations.

Lesson learned 3.3.1. Incorporate special units—such as SWAT or HDT—in regular planning and training exercises so they are familiar with one another’s command and control and tactical protocols.

Lesson learned 3.3.2. Command-level personnel should ensure appropriate interagency communications, planning, and execution to ensure the safety of law enforcement personnel during tactical operations.

Observation 3.4. The self-deployment of approximately 300 Orlando area law enforcement personnel needed greater coordination at the scene and citywide.

Uncoordinated self-deployment placed some officers in danger inside Pulse as well as outside from improvised explosive devices. In addition, as evidenced by the multisite attacks in Paris and Mumbai as well as attacks in the United Kingdom in the summer of 2017, police departments must be prepared to deploy and respond to multiple locations and coordinated attacks.

Lesson learned 3.4.1. Law enforcement supervisors must anticipate and train to prevent uncoordinated and inefficient self-deployment.

Lesson learned 3.4.2. After adequate personnel are on scene, additional personnel should be directed to staging areas for assignment of duties and should be directed to return to the staging area prior to their dismissal, or return to their regular assignment after being relieved.

Uncoordinated self-deployment, particularly in instances of mass public violence and or a terrorist attack, presents officer safety challenges and depletes resources that may be needed to respond to secondary attacks or regular calls for service.

Lesson learned 3.4.3. As soon as practical a supervisor should be designated as the scene safety officer to direct personnel and resources to staging areas, coordinate assignments, and ensure that adequate ingress and egress are maintained.

Observation 3.5. Unified law enforcement command was established at the Pulse attack scene within the first hour. However, Orlando Fire Department and emergency medical services (EMS) officials were not included in the unified command center and were unaware of the discussions occurring and the decisions being made as a result.

Lesson learned 3.5.1. As soon as possible and practical during an incident, establish a unified command of all primary first responders—including fire and EMS—to facilitate communication, situational awareness, operational coordination, allocation of resources, and delivery of services.

Lesson learned 3.5.2. Engender buy-in of traditional incident command system (ICS) training for law enforcement, which continues to present challenges.

For example, first responders from both the OPD and the OCSO reported that paying attention during ICS training is difficult as it does not connect the structure to “real” incidents. Law enforcement leaders and researchers should endeavor to re-examine ICS and build a model that will be accepted and implemented in response to critical incidents.

Lesson learned 3.5.3. ICS planning, training, and implementation must involve all public safety first responders and medical facilities to ensure situational awareness across specialties and the effective coordination and use of resources.

Observation 3.6. The OPD could have better identified, established, and communicated the location of staging and assembly areas for arriving law enforcement officers, fire, and EMS to ensure that the area was safe and secure.

OPD personnel did not establish a secure staging area during the Pulse response, nor did they initially consider the safety of the location of the command post. They did, however, ensure that ingress and egress routes were secure.

Lesson learned 3.6.1. Be mindful of secondary explosive devices and potential secondary attacks. Have arriving explosive ordinance disposal units sweep staging, assembly, and command post areas to guard against secondary devices.

Lesson learned 3.6.2. Responders and supervisors should constantly evaluate security risks of command post, victim and witness triage, and personnel locations and make appropriate adjustments as required.

Lesson learned 3.6.3. Responders and responding agencies should continually plan and evaluate ingress and egress routes during critical incidents to ensure that routes are clear for ambulances and other emergency vehicles.

The OPD did keep South Orange Avenue open for emergency medical and specialized response vehicles.

Observation 4.1. The OPD and the OCSO gained tactical advantages and maintained officer safety because of their access to specialized equipment.

Prior to the suspect being neutralized, the OPD Avatar III tactical robot was deployed and provided images from parts of the Adonis Room that contributed to the determination that an assault down the hallway would be too dangerous and the results too unpredictable. After the suspect was neutralized, the OCSO and the Orlando Fire Department (OFD) were able to use their robots as well to aid in the clearing of the nightclub and the suspect’s vehicle.

Lesson learned 4.1.1. Departments should consider the purchase of tactical robots on an individual basis or as a regional asset to increase their ability to gain intelligence to inform tactical decisions in highly volatile operating environments.

Observation 4.2. Many of the law enforcement first responders were ill-equipped to protect themselves from the threat posed by the suspect.

Specifically, the body armor issued to patrol officers and others who were not assigned to specialized units did not provide sufficient protection against the .223 caliber rounds fired by the suspect. Some of the other officers who had been issued higher level ballistic vests and helmets nevertheless failed to don the equipment before entering the Pulse nightclub during the initial assault.

Lesson learned 4.2.1. Agencies should ensure that adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) is issued to and used by first responders.

PPE should include active shooter armor kits (ballistic helmets and ballistic vests with ceramic plates) that afford greater protection from semi- and fully automatic weapons and .223 caliber and other ammunition.

Lesson learned 4.2.2. The balance between “militarizing” the police and ensuring they have the necessary equipment such as armored personnel carriers to protect themselves and the community during incidents of mass public violence and terrorism needs continued discussion and analysis.

Observation 4.3. The ability of the OPD communications center staff to patch the radio channels from all four of OPD’s geographic sectors facilitated information sharing amongst all OPD personnel.

Lesson learned 4.3.1. Interoperability and the ability to patch together responding agency radios facilitated the sharing of information which greatly enhances response coordination when necessary.

Observation 4.4. Because of the medical equipment in the Orlando Regional Medical Center (ORMC) and some signal dead zones, OPD officers responsible for clearing the hospital during the report of an active shooter in the facility experienced challenges in communicating with command staff.

Although the hospital was cleared in approximately one hour, OPD had to have an officer stand outside the ORMC and relay information to and from the command center to ensure they stayed informed about the presence of a secondary attack or additional suspects.

Lesson learned 4.4.1. Agencies should identify facilities within their communities that pose radio and cell phone transmission and reception difficulties. These facilities can be used to train personnel and identify ways to mitigate poor communication.

Observation 4.5. The OFD chief was not notified about the Pulse attack in a timely manner because the fire department’s outdated paging system failed.

Lesson learned 4.5.1. Agencies should build redundancy into command notification protocols to ensure all appropriate notifications of a critical incident occur in an organized and timely manner.

Lesson learned 4.5.2. Public safety communication centers should be designed to create situational awareness among dispatchers so that even if police, fire, and emergency medical services (EMS) operate on different systems—radio or paging—all public safety agencies are aware of activities in other disciplines and can act to support those activities if needed.

Observation 4.6. Almost all OPD officers, OCSO deputies, and civilian support staff interviewed by the assessment team agreed that training in their respective areas of responsibility took over and informed the decisions they made and actions they took in response to the Pulse attack.

Lesson learned 4.6.1. The OPD and other law enforcement agencies should continue to develop and implement reality-based training that develops situational awareness, critical thinking, and the ability to execute tactics under high levels of stress.

Lesson learned 4.6.2. Agencies should continue to regularly plan, train, and exercise using tabletop and practical exercises that incorporate recognized practices and lessons learned from critical incident reviews and after action reports.

Needs evaluations, planning, training, and practical exercises should be ongoing activities.

Observation 4.7. Law enforcement counterterrorism training must recognize the evolution of the tactics used during terrorist attacks in the United States or abroad and be updated accordingly.

Federal, state, and local training must recognize the changing threat environment and prepare law enforcement personnel, especially those who are not assigned to specialized units, to respond to incidents where high capacity weapons, IEDs, and other devices may be employed by well-trained and -equipped assailants.

Lesson learned 4.7.1. Improved counterterrorism training is necessary to strengthen both community and officer safety.

In general, counterterrorism training for law enforcement personnel, especially those who are not assigned to specialized units, has not progressed significantly since 9/11.

Lesson learned 4.7.2. Increased attention should be paid to policies, procedures, and training regarding the law enforcement response to suicide bombers, secondary devices, and multisite attacks.

Observation 4.8. Training should prepare responders, particularly patrol officers, for situations they may experience when responding to terrorist attacks.

OPD active shooter training prior to the Pulse attack included sensory deprivation and stimuli that officers experienced during the incident. Going forward, OPD and national training must recognize and prepare law enforcement personnel to make decisions in overwhelming, novel, complex, and rapidly evolving environments.

Lesson learned 4.8.1. Training should consider transitions, phases, and additional risks posed by terrorists including those that extend beyond the arrest or neutralization of the suspect(s).

Training should include transitioning from a dynamic active shooter situation (a situation that is evolving very rapidly consistent with the suspect's actions) to a static situation (a situation that is not evolving or in motion because the suspect is contained, has escaped, or is incapacitated) and potentially back to dynamic or mass casualty situations, requiring transitions back and forth over the course of the response. It is important to account for all the challenges, considerations, and roles and responsibilities that arose in this response.

Lesson learned 4.8.2. Training should attempt to create as much sensory deprivation or stimuli as possible to simulate real-world scenarios. The ability to understand and apply response strategies in a high stress environment improves performance.

First responders entering the nightclub encountered a barrage of sensory stimuli: They saw deceased victims and injured persons, heard screaming and moaning from victims, smelled the odor of gunpowder, felt water and blood, experienced movement as injured and uninjured victims ran from the building, the club was relatively dark except for the rotating strobe lights, and experienced a heightened level of fear because of the potential presence of IEDs. This level of chaos can cause a high stress situation that affects officers' abilities to apply response strategies learned during training. Therefore, this level of chaos should be considered and even simulated during training.

Observation 4.9. Many of the OPD civilian staff, other city personnel, and volunteers who provided support in the emergency operations center, the family reunification center, and the family assistance center had not been trained to handle high stress situations such as mass casualty incidents.

Although City staff members regularly attend FEMA-related training to work as volunteers at the emergency operations center, the family assistance center, and other post-disaster centers, this training is traditionally focused on weather-related catastrophes. Some of the people who answered hotline calls, Spanish-speaking City employees, and City finance personnel were not prepared for some of the things they heard and saw, but their support was integral to the success of the overall response. By the second and third day, properly trained personnel from the Red Cross, United Way, and other victim-oriented organizations were in place answering hotline calls.

Lesson learned 4.9.1. Provide mass casualty and emergency response training to those in nontraditional roles who may be needed in an emergency situation to ensure they are prepared to deal with difficult and emotional calls and information.

Lesson learned 4.9.2. Post-event responder welfare should be included in agency planning, training, and exercises so responders are better prepared to operate in high stress environments.

Observation 4.10. OCSO HDT and OPD SWAT have trained together numerous times since 2007, which was demonstrated by the two teams’ familiarity with one another’s tactics during the Pulse response. However, with the increasing threat of mass casualty and terrorist attacks, the OCSO HDT and OPD SWAT will focus more on breaching techniques and rapid response tactics to combat situations similar to Pulse. Similarly, fire, EMS, and other government stakeholder agencies have participated in crisis response training with OPD.

Previous training events and Orlando-area joint operations built a level of familiarity between the teams’ overall tactics, demonstrated throughout the Pulse response. However, challenges followed the partial breach.

Lesson learned 4.10.1. Specialized law enforcement units should regularly train together to ensure familiarity with each unit’s policies, procedures, and tactics.

Lesson learned 4.10.2. Law enforcement agencies should engage regional first responder agencies—including other law enforcement, fire, EMS, emergency management, and government and nongovernment stakeholders—in crisis response training.

Lesson learned 4.10.3. Training exercises should continue past the point where the threat no longer exists and extend to the coordination of the medical response, the notification of victims’ families, establishing reunification and assistance center(s), and providing resources to vigils and funerals and prolonged impact on the immediate community.

Too often, training events stop after the shooters are located and the threat eliminated. This leaves first responders with a lack of knowledge and appreciation for how the entire response system functions and how their actions influence other steps of the process. In this instance, the OPD had not fully accounted for family reunification and notification, survivor and witness interviews, and staging areas that provided privacy from the media and were able to hold the number of people expected.

Observation 5.1. Because of the emergency medical care provided by Orlando first responders, the overwhelming majority of the injured extricated from Pulse survived.

The OPD and supporting agencies responding to Pulse made victim rescue a priority. Within 40 minutes, all critically injured victims except the hostages in the restrooms were rescued. Officers and deputies used patrol and other vehicles to transport the most critically injured victims to the nearby trauma center. Because of this quick action on the part of law enforcement in addition to the Orlando Fire Department (OFD) transporting patients from the triage area, 58 injured survivors (53 who had been shot and five with other injuries) were treated at local hospitals and survived. Only 11 individuals who were shot inside of the club and extricated alive did not survive. This is a testament to the importance of the “golden hour” and a key lesson learned to preserve life.

Lesson learned 5.1.1. Law enforcement agencies should equip and train officers in the use of personal tactical emergency medical kits that include tourniquets, “quick clot” occlusive dressings, and Israeli bandages.

The OPD trained all officers in IFAK tactical medical solutions, which proved essential to saving a significant number of critically injured victims, particularly from the Jewel Box and patio areas of the Pulse nightclub.

Lesson learned 5.1.2. Law enforcement personnel should be prepared to improvise to save critically injured persons.

For example, the OPD and partner organizations used police vehicles to transport critically injured victims to the level one trauma center close to the incident location, saving numerous lives.

Observation 5.2. The OPD should continue to build relationships, train, and develop protocols with medical personnel from area hospitals, especially the regional level 1 trauma center, to improve the law enforcement response to mass casualty incidents.

Most of the injured victims from Pulse were brought to ORMC even before the hospital received notification from its alert system. While ORMC acknowledged that the OPD saved numerous lives by rapidly transporting victims to the trauma center, the emergency room was quickly overwhelmed. In addition, ORMC personnel said that had they been aware of the need for a decontamination facility for officers and deputies, they would have made outdoor showers at the hospital available.

Lesson learned 5.2.1. Create relationships with and include hospital and medical personnel in regional mass casualty or terrorist training.

Lesson learned 5.2.2. Identify medical protocols and practices that can be adapted and administered in life-threatening situations.

While emergency medical care and tactical medical training can be cost-prohibitive for some agencies, partnering with hospitals and local medical professionals can provide law enforcement with practical training and can foster or enhance partnerships with critical stakeholders. In Orlando, ORMC staff commended officers and deputies for rescuing and saving the lives of so many victims and offered to engage in planning and training exercises to enhance the public safety and hospital response to mass casualty events.

Lesson learned 5.2.3. Law enforcement personnel should be assigned to medical facilities receiving patients from critical incidents to provide security and assist medical staff with situational awareness and communication.

During the Pulse incident response, emergency room staff members were not aware of why the hospital was locked down for approximately one hour. An OPD officer informed them so that they could safely continue their life-saving work. At the same time, emergency room staff members were able to provide OPD officers with information about the severity—and types—of the victims’ injuries.

Observation 5.3. Prior to the Pulse attack, the OPD incorporated the OFD rescue task force to serve as a casualty rescue component in the “warm zone.”

The intent in establishing the rescue task force was to provide faster access to life-saving emergency medical care for victims by integrating fire department and EMS personnel into contact teams. While in this incident the OFD personnel of the rescue task force did not enter the club with the OPD, this approach to tactical medical response is one example of possible collaborative options.

Lesson learned 5.3.1. Public safety agencies should consider, train, and exercise how they will deploy emergency medical responders in active shooter or other hostile events to ensure victim extraction, triage, and treatment.

Law enforcement agencies must ensure they are prepared for incidents that require medical responses like the ones required in San Bernardino and the Pulse terrorist attacks. They should determine whether to incorporate fire department or EMS personnel, have a tactical medic trained, train all personnel in emergency medicine, or implement a combination of these options.

Observation 5.4. The OPD had trained more than 700 officers in IFAK tactical medical solutions at the time of the shooting.

Lesson learned 5.4.1. To reduce the amount of time necessary for victims to receive emergency trauma care, law enforcement officers should be trained in IFAK or similar emergency medical care methods.

Observation 6.1. The OPD did not assign an incident safety officer on scene during the response.

Many officers and deputies responded to the signal 43 by self-deploying, rushing into and around Pulse nightclub. Without an incident safety officer, special weapons and tactics (SWAT) team members rushed into the club before donning the entirety of their ballistic equipment, the 1,000-foot hazardous device team (HDT) perimeter was not communicated to all responders, and there was no decontamination process for responders as they were relieved of duty.

Lesson learned 6.1.1. An incident safety officer should be designated as quickly as possible during response to a mass casualty or emergency incident, especially a terrorist incident.

This officer is responsible for identifying, communicating, and mitigating (to the extent possible) all responder safety risks including adhering to perimeters when explosive devices are mentioned or found and there is the possibility of secondary devices and HDT perimeters.

Lesson learned 6.1.2. The incident safety officer should oversee decontamination protocols for decontamination of all responding personnel and their vehicles.

Observation 6.2. The OPD does not have decontamination protocols in place for first responding officers following large-scale critical incidents.

OPD Policy and Procedure 1301.8 (Significant Exposure and Control Plan) includes officer safety and wellness evaluations, testing, and follow-up procedures for individuals and vehicles, and OPD Policy and Procedure 1308.3 (Major Incidents) includes checklists for various major incidents. Neither of these

policies and procedures addresses officer and vehicle decontamination processes for large-scale critical incidents. For many of the first responders, the individual decontamination that officers and deputies had to do themselves was one of the more traumatizing parts of the response.

Lesson learned 6.2.1. Decontamination protocols should be established before a critical incident occurs.

Observation 6.3. OPD leadership prioritized the mental health of all OPD personnel following the response to Pulse.

All OPD personnel and OCSO deputies the assessment team interviewed said that they were offered—and in some cases required to use—a variety of mental health resources. From the mandatory CISM debriefs less than 72 hours after the incident and six months later to the availability of EAP sessions to the willingness of Chief Mina to allow employees to use external resources, the OPD ensured that mental well-being was a primary focus following the response to Pulse.

Lesson learned 6.3.1. Organizational leadership should ensure that all involved in the response feel valued and are provided access to the physical and mental health resources they may need after a critical incident.

Lesson learned 6.3.2. Agencies should create a post-event wellness strategy that accommodates everyone, including on-scene responders, support personnel, and other agency employees.

As much as possible, create a responder mental health strategy that accommodates employees who respond better to immediate debriefs and counseling, those who prefer time before debriefs and counseling, and those who prefer a combination, and determine what level of participation will be compelled versus suggested and who will be included. During assessment team interviews and focus groups with OPD and OCSO personnel, some individuals expressed appreciation for the immediate CISM debrief because it helped them put their emotions in perspective, provided opportunities to hear some positive outcomes of the response, and almost immediately addressed some issues and concerns they had. Other employees remarked that the mandatory debrief immediately after the incident was unhelpful because they had not recuperated from the physical stimulation caused by the response, much less fully processed their own emotions. In addition, while some individuals appreciated being randomly assigned to the facilitated discussion groups, others felt the debriefs would have been more useful and comfortable with members of their own team. Likewise, some felt that being compelled to talk was beneficial while others said it was hard

to identify emotions that soon after the attack. However, everyone interviewed agreed that they were provided a significant number of resources and opportunities to ensure their mental health and well-being.

Observation 6.4. While the OPD did provide various opportunities for healing following the incident, including debriefs and counseling through EAP, some employees felt that given the extraordinary circumstances of a critical incident the EAP system did not meet their personal needs.

Lesson learned 6.4.1. Jurisdictions and individual agencies should consider whether their traditional EAP and mental health structure will suffice in the aftermath of a critical incident or if adjustments should be made for employees in need of other outside services.

Observation 6.5. The OPD assigned a designated mental health incident commander.

The primary role of the mental health incident commander is to monitor agency personnel in the aftermath of the event, to coordinate debriefings, to connect individuals to peer support or mental health professionals, to connect families of those involved in the incident response to support services if needed, and to ensure a continuum of care in the aftermath of the event. This position is also necessary to advise agency leadership regarding operational decisions that impact personnel mental health (including work and shift assignments) and to vet and manage self-deployed mental health providers.

Lesson learned 6.5.1. To further focus and prioritize the mental health in the aftermath of the Pulse incident, OPD and other law enforcement agencies should assign a mental health incident commander.

The OPD assigned a captain of the CISM team as a mental health incident commander. The captain's role was to monitor agency personnel, coordinate the CISM debriefs, and provide and guide employees to special services.

Observation 7.1. Activating the EOC and declaring a state of emergency allowed the City of Orlando to create a central location from which to direct and allocate resources both to support the OPD response to the Pulse incident and to provide critical information, resources, and services to victims and the community.

Lesson learned 7.1.1. Activating the EOC and declaring a state of emergency early in the process can help secure additional resources, relieving pressure and responsibility on the police department so that they can focus on other important law enforcement aspects of the response.

Observation 7.2. The OPD and the City of Orlando had a pre-existing plan for reunifying families in the aftermath of a critical incident.

Because of multiple large-scale critical incident exercises, the emergency preparedness manager for the Orlando Regional Medical Center (ORMC) knew the waiting room of the hospital would quickly be overwhelmed and determined that the Hampton Inn & Suites would have more room and resources to accommodate family notifications and reunification. The hospital and the hotel had a pre-existing understanding, and as soon as the waiting room became overcrowded with

family members and friends of Pulse victims, the transition was made smoothly to the FRC. The City of Orlando, the OPD, and Orlando Health did have plans in place for reunification, but those plans were not designed to respond to incidents of this magnitude. The City and Orlando Health implemented changes on the move to scale up and work within their existing plans.

Lesson learned 7.2.1. Identify the location for an FRC near primary hospitals prior to a critical incident. The FRC should be a scalable, safe, stable, and comfortable facility that provides access to amenities such as restrooms and outlets to charge cell phones.

Lesson learned 7.2.2. In mass casualty events, the next-of-kin notification process should account for logistical issues, and notifications should be made in a timely manner to lessen the stress on family members and significant others as they wait to hear about loved ones involved in the incident.

Whenever possible, notifications should be made in person. The Orange County Medical Examiner's Office, the FDLE, and the FBI identified 48 of the 49 decedents in less than 24 hours, and most of the next-of-kin notifications were made as soon as the decedents were identified. This kept families from having to wait to get closure and begin the process of moving forward.

Lesson learned 7.2.3. Police departments challenged by the need to identify and interview large numbers of victims and witnesses should consider staffing to expedite the interview process and request assistance from other agencies, if appropriate.

Some of the victims and witnesses of the Pulse terrorist attack expressed frustration about having to wait to be interviewed before they were released and not having the ability to contact their loved ones.

Observation 7.3. The OPD provided safe, comfortable provisions for victim and witness care while they awaited interview and notification.

OPD command staff said they learned from the after action report of the San Bernardino attack, which highlighted that "victims expressed concern regarding the amount of time spent on the golf course (approximately three hours)," and "victims expressed concern and frustration with the inability to contact family members, lack of counseling services, and the lengthy interview and photographing process." Having the FRC at a hotel allowed for victims to have access to restrooms and electricity. Similarly, uninjured witnesses who were placed on buses and transported to OPD headquarters were afforded the opportunity to wait inside with water and facilities available and electricity to charge their devices, as well as phones for those who had left theirs in the club.

Lesson learned 7.3.1. Consider provisions for victim and witness care while they are awaiting interviews and being notified.

These may include making cell phone charging stations and other forms of communication available, providing food and beverages, and providing access to counselors and clergy.

Lesson learned 7.3.2. Designate a special area where clergy and counselors can assemble within the FRC and be made available to those who request them.

Some OPD chaplains and additional self-deployed religious leaders from throughout the Orlando community arrived at the FRC to offer their assistance to victims and families. However, the clergy did not have a room in which to provide counseling, so they had to do it in the middle of the room with other victims and family members nearby. This created situations where individuals who needed counseling were unable to receive it in a timely or private manner and chaplains were mistakenly included with victims in some instances.

Observation 7.4. Victims, witnesses, and their families could have been provided better cover from media access as they entered the FRC.

The scale of this incident resulted in an overwhelming amount of media on the scene, near the hospitals, and throughout the Orlando area. Victims, witnesses, and their families expressed frustration to OPD officers and University of Central Florida Police Department (UCFPD) victim advocates about having to walk through a media gauntlet on the way in and out of the FRC. Once the aggression of the national

media was observed, additional security was put in place and attempts by PIOs to control the media were implemented. OPD officers began acting as valet parkers so that the families could go straight into the hotel, avoiding exposure to the media. Local media were cooperative.

Lesson learned 7.4.1. Ensure security and privacy for families of victims going to and from the FRC as members of the media or other unscrupulous individuals may go to great lengths to access or harass them.

Lesson learned 7.4.2. Designate one or more areas near but not immediately surrounding or adjacent to the FRC where the public and the media can gather without interfering.

Observation 7.5. The scale of this incident far exceeded the natural disasters that most EOCs and their respective hotlines traditionally deal with, and the EOC was not fully prepared for the level and type of calls that came in to the hotline. However, within 36 hours, trained call takers were in place.

Beginning with the first press conference, Mayor Buddy Dyer provided the phone number for the public hotline that the EOC had established to provide information about the FAC. Originally, the hotline was linked to 12 phones, but it quickly expanded to 23 phones and answered approximately 6,800 calls. With the phone bank quickly growing, support staff members were untrained and unprepared for the emotional impact of the calls they were required to answer, which contributed to mental health and wellness concerns after the EOC was deactivated.

Lesson learned 7.5.1. When establishing any type of public hotline to provide information on a critical incident, the infrastructure, staffing, and ability of the staff to handle the calls, including call takers trained in crisis response, should be in place prior to public announcement being made.

Observation 7.6. The Orlando FAC provided immense support and assistance to the survivors and families of victims of the Pulse nightclub terrorist attack.

Whether the responsibility of the police department, the City, or the EOC, this resource was extremely helpful to the Orlando community.

Lesson learned 7.6.1. Establish an FAC that provides a one-stop location for victims and their families to access any products and services necessary in the aftermath of the incident. Publicize the availability of victim services at all press conferences, through fliers, and on social media.

The FAC was opened at Camping World Stadium based on the stadium’s ability to accommodate the 956 individuals and 298 families that ended up coming, in addition to the 50 to 60 government, community, and business organizations that sent representatives to provide support. The location also provided the logistical and technological capacity necessary for the City IT department to set up a phone bank and computer support; many of the logistical details—including parking, food vendors, security staff, offices, etc.—were already established; and public safety personnel were familiar with the layout, which allowed for additional security measures and protection of individuals and families from the media.

Lesson learned 7.6.2. Partner with nontraditional jurisdiction agencies and stakeholders—including IT, public transportation, financial services, airlines and hotels, etc.—when creating an FAC to expedite the setup process and ensure the availability of various resources.

OEM had learned from previous critical incident reports that the FAC should provide a myriad of services and information to victims’ families. Through practice and other exercises, OEM fostered partnerships with private and public businesses, associations, and other stakeholders so that when needed, their resources would be available. As soon as the FAC was established, OEM was able to rely on airlines, LGBTQ and Hispanic community groups, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the Muslim population, and other organizations to provide a host of services to families of decedents and survivors.

Observation 8.1. Local, state, and federal agencies responding to the Pulse incident, including the OPD, delineated roles and responsibilities, coordinated efforts, shared information and evidence, and collaborated throughout the incident and its aftermath.

Rapid and effective decision-making, clear division of work and responsibilities, frequent sharing of information and resources, pre-existing relationships among the executives of the agencies, and constant collaboration in the UCC—led by the OPD—allowed multiple investigations to progress simultaneously.

Lesson learned 8.1.1. The ability to immediately determine specific agency investigative roles and responsibilities is crucial to effective incident and investigation management.

Orlando area federal, state, and local responding agencies were quickly able to determine investigative roles.

Lesson learned 8.1.2. Critical incident training and exercises should continue through all aspects of survivor and witness identification, interviewing, and reunification.

The OPD did not initially have victim advocates or a strategy for handling identification, interviewing, and reunification of the number of victims and witnesses who were affected at the Pulse nightclub. OPD command staff acknowledged the difficulties in interviewing all of the patrons at the club on June 12, because many patrons fled when the shooting began and did not return to the area or go to OPD headquarters. The OPD had not developed protocols for interviewing large numbers of witnesses and victims during a mass casualty event.

Observation 9.1. Prior to the attack at the Pulse nightclub, the PIOs of all Orlando city agencies established a process for communication during events of varying types. The process included protocols regarding which entity would take the lead, what the other agencies would do, and what the overall tone of the messages would be.

Lesson learned 9.1.1. A media and public relations strategy that ensures the coordination of all jurisdiction-department public information officers (PIOs) and all information being released through various platforms and accounts is integral to effectively handling the media during a critical incident.

For each phase of the response in Orlando, a thoughtful and coordinated media and public relations strategy that included traditional and social media was developed. During the incident, the OPD relied primarily on its Twitter account to provide breaking news and images from the scene and used its other social media channels to point interested followers to Twitter. As the response shifted, the City's Facebook page was used for messages about the city response and city messages, and Periscope was used for live-streaming press conferences.

Lesson learned 9.1.2. The depth of the department's media and public relations team and strategy is extremely important to consider before a critical incident.

Major incidents place a significant amount of strain on media and public relations teams and PIOs throughout the jurisdiction, and it is imperative that communications teams have the depth to handle the workload. Ensure that the team is able to communicate with significant segments of the community, including non-English speakers. Personnel should also be available to address media

outlets in different time zones and countries. Be aware that after a critical incident, business as usual will continue for the rest of the jurisdiction, but the public information needs related to the incident will continue for weeks, months, and years.

Observation 9.2. With the OPD's coordinated media and public information strategy, the numerous individuals and agencies involved successfully kept the public informed.

With 27 agencies involved in the response to the terrorist attack at the Pulse nightclub, discrepancies could have existed in what information was released, by whom, and when. However, with a coordinated public information strategy, the numerous individuals and

agencies involved were able to successfully keep the public informed. Deferring to the OPD and having all city and county social media accounts, email addresses, and phone messages direct news media to the OPD ensured that all media and public relations were handled consistently.

Lesson learned 9.2.1. Unity of message and communications that focus on resilience are imperative to the overall success of the response.

Observation 9.3. The OPD leveraged resources such as their pre-existing social media followings and held press conferences to control their story.

Despite the chaos caused by intensive media coverage, OPD PIOs put standardized voicemail greeting messages on their desk phones and cell phones and an automatic reply on their general email address directing everyone to the OPD Twitter account and instructed them to leave their information and interview requests in a message. This allowed for department personnel to focus on managing the initial flood of questions and requests and the tasks at hand during the event. Essentially, through its PIOs, the OPD became its own news agency, using social media to correct rumors, share information and images, and frame the narrative. To help sort through the many hundreds of emails, the communications group at Orlando City Hall tracked all media requests and added them to a single Excel spreadsheet. This was accomplished by directing all emails to the dedicated PIO email address.

Lesson learned 9.3.1. Police departments should leverage pre-existing social media followings to act as a single primary source of information and communication with the public during a critical incident.

Agencies that regularly use social media to communicate with the public will have an established audience for distribution of information in a critical incident. However, during a critical incident is not the time to attempt to establish a social media following.

Observation 9.4. In some instances, OPD PIOs did not have access to the resources they needed to keep the public informed but instead adapted work-arounds.

OPD PIOs were deployed on scene and were responsible for keeping the public informed about the safety of area around Pulse, incident outcomes and status, available resources for victims, locations for vigils, and other important information. At times, however, they did not have the resources available to them to facilitate that work. For example, there was no room in the UCC for the PIOs to sit in on briefings. Instead, PIOs received updates from Chief Mina and senior staff via text or in person right after the briefings in the UCC. In addition, they often did not have the equipment they needed to work on scene.

Lesson learned 9.4.1. PIOs should be involved and included in the UCC to directly participate in and observe decisions made related to press conferences and social media posts. Receiving information secondhand can eliminate important context behind statements.

Because there was no room in the UCC for the PIOs, they received information following briefings. This was especially challenging for the PIOs prior to press conferences, when Chief Mina had to handwrite his statements and send images of them by text message to the PIOs so that they could prepare to post them as he made his statements during the press conferences.

Lesson learned 9.4.2. PIOs should be provided with mobile resources necessary to undertake their duties over a long period of time and in any location (laptops with necessary software and smart phones).

Observation 9.5. OPD PIOs acknowledged that—particularly with the limited characters of social media—it is important to be thoughtful and cautious in communications so that they are sensitive to decedents’ family members, victims, witnesses, and the larger community.

Lesson learned 9.5.1. Ensure that public statements—including during press conferences and interviews and on social media—properly balance law enforcement terminology with the perceptions and impacts on victims, their families, survivors, and the larger community.

Observation 9.6. The decision to have Mayor Dyer and Chief Mina speak at the first press conference before federal officials was made strategically to set the tone that the response would be driven by the community, not by federal investigators.

Furthermore, having Mayor Dyer speak before Chief Mina allowed the mayor to shape how the public viewed the response, including using clear and comforting language in his press conference statements, acknowledging the LGBTQ and Hispanic communities and the Muslim population, and assuaging the community’s fears instead of focusing on investigating a crime.

Lesson learned 9.6.1. Having a recognizable local leader speak first at first press conferences portrayed a sense that the response was and would continue to be a local community-driven response led by trust and unity, not a federal response driven by terrorism.

Observation 9.7. To enhance relationships with local media outlets, the OPD provided them exclusive interviews before the national and international media.

Local media outlets do not have the resources to be as aggressive and persistent as national and international outlets, but they will be the outlets that remain when the major incident and the initial response are over and the national and international media leave. The OPD recognized the importance of maintaining its positive relationships with their local media outlets by offering exclusive interviews and stories before going to the national and international channels.

Lesson learned 9.7.1. Prioritize the needs and requests of the local media before that of national and international media outlets.

The OPD purposefully responded to and provided local media outlets with exclusive interviews and information first as a way to build trust and relationships with them.

According to the OPD PIO, “They [local media outlets] are going to be here long after the national media has gone home.”

Lesson learned 9.7.2. Establish a JIC or other location where PIOs or other personnel from stakeholder agencies can coordinate the incident media response and can monitor media and social media to keep abreast of erroneous information being reported and quell rumors.

The JIC was established as part of the EOC, but prior to the establishment of the EOC, the PIOs from the responding law enforcement agencies and the City worked out of the OCSO PIO truck that came to provide support. OPD PIOs acknowledged that it would have helped

to have the ability to follow media reporting so that they could quickly correct erroneous information and be more proactive in addressing rumors as they did following the posts of a potential bomb that was really the explosive breach.

Lesson learned 9.7.3. Prepare for negative questions and shifts in the news cycle from being on your side to looking for an exclusive story and trying to generate contention.

OPD PIOs acknowledged that one of the biggest lessons they learned was to balance between transparency and the implications on the officers and family members. Prior to releasing the names and information of officers involved in this incident, they should have better considered the implications of media outlets becoming aggressive in tracking down officers, calling and showing up at their houses, and potentially tracking down relatives.

Observation 9.8. Because Mayor Dyer and representatives from his office had been involved in critical incident response exercises, he was aware that his role was to focus on unifying the community and setting the tone for the city.

As soon as Mayor Dyer was made aware of the ongoing incident, he responded to the UCC. When he arrived, instead of interjecting himself and politics into the decision-making process, he focused on collecting information and determining the tone and message of the response he would provide to his community. Other local elected officials followed suit and focused on calming and unifying the community as well as demonstrating resiliency instead of getting involved in the investigation and tactical response.

Lesson learned 9.8.1. Include elected officials' roles and responsibilities in planning and managing critical incidents, and include them in training and exercises. After a critical incident, be prepared to handle elected officials of all levels and political affiliations, providing them with constructive roles when possible.

Personnel from both the OPD and the mayor's office were allocated to assist the local, state, and federal officials who traveled to Orlando to visit the scene, pay their respects, and offer their support and gratitude to the responders. Some officials wanted to offer their condolences to the victims and survivors and show their support for first responders, while others wanted to be more involved. In addition, with the Republican and Democratic National Conventions both less than two months later, candidates vying for their party's nominations arrived in Orlando. In some cases, the officials were not received warmly by the community and their visits caused additional strain for already taxed agencies.

Observation 10.1. Pre-existing Orlando police-community relationships, fostered and sustained over time, enhanced the resilience of the community in the aftermath of the Pulse terrorist incident.

The OPD and other Orlando officials were able to leverage the strong relationships that had been fostered and sustained prior to the attack at Pulse nightclub to enhance the resilience of the Orlando community during and in the aftermath of the incident. Community members and organization representatives, law enforcement personnel, and City and County officials

interviewed by the assessment team and providing information through the media said that the strength of the pre-existing community-police relationships significantly enhanced the resilience of the community and the ability to quickly come together and support one another.

Lesson learned 10.1.1. Building strong community-police relationships can assist in the response and resilience of a community following a terrorist or mass casualty incident.

Observation 10.2. The OPD, the OCSO, and other Orlando-area public safety agencies were sensitive to the needs of particular groups most affected by the incident, including the LGBTQ, Hispanic, and Muslim communities.

Even as the OPD and its supporting agencies were still engaged in the initial response at Pulse nightclub, law enforcement personnel were deployed across the city and the county to provide security and protection to other LGBTQ commercial establishments and to mosques and Muslim institutions. The OPD dispatched K-9 units to LGBTQ bars and clubs in the city and county to conduct external and internal building sweeps, provided security at numerous LGBTQ and Hispanic community gatherings and vigils, and heightened security for the Muslim community and showed their support at mosques. In the hours and days following the incident, the OPD continued to be sensitive to the special needs of affected groups and provided protection during vigils and other commemorative events while also having an imam stand with city officials during press conferences.

Lesson learned 10.2.1. In the aftermath of a terrorist attack or other mass casualty incident, it is important for law enforcement to be sensitive to the needs of the particular group(s) most affected by the attack, including those victimized and those likely to face retribution.

Observation 10.3. The OPD and the City of Orlando have continued to support the victims of the attack and the community as a whole and have come together to support opportunities for individuals and groups to mourn and commemorate the victims of the Pulse tragedy.

While the days and weeks immediately following a critical incident are generally when the most attention is paid and the most support is raised for various charities and organizations, it is imperative to also prepare for anniversaries and other important times beyond the short term. Months before the first anniversary, the OPD and the City of Orlando began planning for it, declaring it “Orlando United Day” and preparing for vigils and remembrance ceremonies. It is also important to be prepared to address the event when similar incidents occur.

Lesson learned 10.3.1. Prepare for the long haul.

Both for the purposes of providing security and to support the community, the OPD continues to provide resources and to support events remembering the incident and commemorating the victims.

Observation 10.4. The City of Orlando, the state of Florida, and federal responding partners could have better coordinated and communicated with businesses near Pulse to address their needs and long-term impact of the response and investigation.

The City of Orlando leveraged direct visits, daily newsletters, and social media updates; numerous partnerships and liaison programs; and a temporary Small Business Administration office to communicate with business owners in the area. However, according to a liaison of the

business community around the Pulse nightclub, approximately 60 businesses were financially impacted by the investigative perimeter. The liaison was not a City employee and had no direct City points-of-contact, which made it difficult to relay information regarding the reopening of the area to local business owners and likewise to share the concerns of the business owners with the City. This issue also arose when funding was being distributed to victims and local business owners did not qualify or have someone to advocate on their behalf. While federal partners report providing services to assist impacted businesses, many of the businesses were not aware of the services or were not able to leverage them.

Lesson learned 10.4.1. Consider the needs of local businesses and have a city or law enforcement liaison who can provide information to and advocate for impacted local businesses during a critical incident that requires them to be closed.

Appendix B. Email from Chief John W. Mina to Orlando Police Department Staff

Sun 6/12/2016, 7:00 p.m.

OPD Dept

On the darkest day of my 25 years at the Orlando Police Department, I wanted to take a moment to tell all of you how proud I am of the work you have done today and will do over the next days and weeks.

We have trained again and again for this type of situation. It's unfortunate that we had to put those skills to use today. But because of that training and your professionalism, we saved dozens of lives this morning.

Even before the first patrol units arrived on the scene, an OPD officer working extra duty at the club engaged the gunman as he opened fire. Our first responders and SWAT team faced a hail of gunfire as they rescued the hostages, and we are blessed beyond words that none of them were gravely injured or killed.

We've received an enormous amount of tactical Law Enforcement support from local, state and Federal agencies. The outpouring we have received from our Central Florida community and Law Enforcement across the nation and the world, has overwhelmed me with gratitude.

I know that you have all been affected today by the tragic actions of a lone terrorist who cut short the lives of so many. Our community, our City, and our Department will be grieving in the days, weeks and months to come.

But on a day like today—and every day—I couldn't be more proud to be your chief.

Please hug your families tonight. And be safe out there.

John W. Mina, Chief of Police
Orlando Police Department

Appendix C. Orlando Police Department Pulse Award Ceremony Recipients

Pulse Incident Individual Awards

Award of Valor

Patrol

- Sergeant Jeff Backhaus
- Officer Graham Cage
- Officer Ben Chisari
- Officer Doug Cote
- Officer Matthew Davis
- Lieutenant Brian Donohue
- Officer Richard Fink
- Officer Manny Florin
- Detective Adam Gruler
- Officer James Hyland
- Officer Joseph Imburgio
- Officer Kyle Medvetz
- Officer Ann Mislant
- Officer Felix Monroig-Santiago
- Sergeant Ira Morris
- Officer Mike Napolitano, recipient of the OPD Purple Heart
- Officer Tyler Olson
- Officer Michael Ragsdale
- Officer Daniel Robertson
- Lieutenant Scott Smith
- Officer Brandon Tabaczynski

SWAT

- Lieutenant Jonathan Bigelow
- Officer Andrew Bishop
- Officer Jonathan Cute
- Officer Ricardo Duenas
- Officer Kevin Easterling
- Sergeant James Parker
- Officer Michael Perales
- Master Police Officer Tim Stanley
- Officer Raul Rivas

Award of Merit

Patrol

- Officer Patrick Aeropagita
- Officer Matthew Andrews
- Officer Luke Austin
- Officer Elizabeth Bethea
- Lieutenant Dan Brady
- Lieutenant Roger Brennan
- Officer Craig Broder
- Sergeant Joe Capece
- Officer Neal Chase
- Sergeant Phil Clough
- Officer Tino Cruz

- Officer Michael Denton
- Officer David Evangelista
- Officer James Falbo
- Officer Brian Figueroa
- Officer Myron Hanson
- Officer Willbie Houghton
- Officer Gerald Hutto
- Officer Donald Lacentra
- Corporal Justin Lovett
- Officer Andrew Mamone
- Detective Michael Mastrangelo
- Officer Michael Mislant
- Officer Sean O'Grady
- Officer Francis Pallo
- Officer Jonathan Railey
- Officer Luis Rigual
- Officer Jeff Rine
- Officer Russell Sayer
- Sergeant Sammy Stites
- Officer Justin Wood

SWAT

- Officer Robert Woodyard
- Officer Christopher Bigelow
- Officer Mitchell Bowhay
- Officer Peter DiCenso
- Officer Paul Foster
- Officer Cedrick Hinkles
- Officer Charles Holmes
- Officer Edward Michael
- Sergeant Anthony Mongelluzzo
- Officer Justin Mount
- Sergeant Matthew Ochiuzzo
- Officer Michael Pollock
- Officer Daniel Whalen
- Officer Hank Wong

Award of Commendation

Patrol

- Officer Neal Arnold
- Officer Kevin Barnes
- Sergeant Kevin Beers
- Officer Tyshone Bolden
- Sergeant Andy Brennan
- Detective April Bruner
- Officer Alison Clarke
- Officer Nicholas Collins
- Officer Amy Columbo
- Officer Jamie DeMarco
- Corporal Paul Doan
- Officer Amanda Dowson

- Officer Todd Funke
- Officer Benjamin Gauntlett
- Officer Stephen Hurt
- Officer John James
- Officer Gladys Justiniano
- Officer Chris McCreless
- Officer Chris Parente
- Officer Alyce Payne
- Officer Denise Perez
- Sergeant Noelia Pina
- Officer Connary Reynolds
- Detective Kristine Rosado
- Officer Brandon Rush
- Officer Bradley Smith
- Officer Jeffrey Staudenmaier
- Sergeant Diego Toruno
- Officer Mitchell Ulmer
- Officer Hector Vadi-Perez
- Officer Florence Vicil-Anaya
- Officer Kelvin Vidro
- Corporal Bradley Vilmer
- Officer Barnell Warren
- Sergeant Lonzie Wellon
- Officer Justin Wilkins
- Officer Takela Young

Snipers

- Officer Robert Andrews
- Officer William Arocho
- Officer Paul Evancoe
- Sergeant David Haddock
- Officer Terrance Sanford
- Officer Michael Zambit

Pulse Incident Team Awards—Chief's Special Award

- Sheriff Jerry Demings, Orange County
- Sheriff Don Eslinger, Seminole County
- Danny Banks, FDLE
- Ron Hopper, FBI
- Mr. Michael Belvedere
- **Hazardous Materials Team**
 - Lieutenant Frank Nunez
 - Corporal Frank Sikos
 - MPO Juan Gonzalez
 - Officer Mark Levy
 - Officer Gerry Realin
 - Officer Matt Rogers
 - Officer Rudy Wilson
 - Detective Mike Moreschi

- **Community Service Officers**
 - Roland Clee
 - John Escobedo
 - Kyle Olson
 - Sharon Castlen
 - Lyndy Moore
 - Robert Everett
 - Carolyn Akins
 - Michelle Carithers
 - Matt Day
 - Rhonda Glisson
 - Lee Ann Cervenka
 - Maria Lopez
 - Marcus Davila
 - April Yochelson
 - Josh Jackson
 - Supervisor Leslie DeFerrari
 - Supervisor Ron D'Amico
- **Crisis Negotiation Team**
 - Captain Sheri Saez
 - Lieutenant James Young
 - Sergeant Andy Brennan
 - Sergeant Joe Capece
 - Sergeant David Baker
 - Sergeant Eduardo Bernal
 - Sergeant Charles Crosby
 - Officer Jamie DeMarco
 - Officer Ann Mislant
 - Officer Ana Coughlan
 - Officer Teresa Sprague
- Officer Marie Hatcher
- Officer Brian Ferrara
- Officer Pablo Quinones
- Officer Amir Paymayesh
- Officer Rick Salcedo
- Officer James Garner
- Officer Natasha Marra
- Officer Anthony Maldonado
- Officer Ivan Cabrer
- Officer Noah Pruitt
- Officer Chris Seggi
- Officer Michael Mastrangelo
- Officer Joseph Catanzaro
- **Public Information Office**
 - Sergeant Wanda Miglio
 - Ms. Michelle Guido
 - Sergeant Frank Chisari
- **Emergency Services Unit**
 - Captain Dean Deschryver
 - Lieutenant Daniel Schad
 - Lieutenant Scott Boos
 - Lieutenant Darron Esan
 - Sergeant Paul Sanderlin
 - Sergeant Billy Walsh
 - Sergeant Jeff Blye
 - Sergeant Kelly Lowe
 - Officer Brad Smith
 - Officer Chris Chaplin
 - Officer Chris Bowlin
 - Officer Robert Baxter

- Officer Shawn Shaouni
- Officer Lionel Santiago
- Officer David Evangelista
- Officer Seth James
- Officer Joe Lundy
- Officer Jerome Kenon
- Officer Tyesa Spidell
- Officer Ryan McConnell
- Officer Jake Silverman
- Officer Thomas Ross
- Officer Gary Walkley
- Officer Ben Stanaland
- Officer Shawn Dunlap
- Officer Marvin Allison
- Officer Wendell Reeve
- Officer Leroy Alfred
- Officer Jeremy Lotridge
- Supervisor Danielle Campbell
- Community Service Officer
Josh Bradshaw
- Community Service Supervisor
Rachel Boos
- Mr. Dan Niederman
- **Crime Scene Investigators (CSI)**
 - CSI Supervisor Carlos Nieves
 - CSI Marissa Kuzma
 - CSI Casandra Baumgaertner
 - CSI Doug Thomas
 - CSI Chantal Steyr
 - CSI/Forensic Photographer
Stacy Munro
- CSI Kayla Wright
- CSI Gary Crosby
- CSI James Walsh
- CSI Karen Livengood
- Mr. Frank Hahnel
(Leica Geosystems)
- **Communications Division**
 - Joseph Dellova
 - William Hammer
 - Ernesta McDonald
 - Tabitha Maldonado
 - Linda Walker
 - Jessica Brooks
 - Tia Duncan
 - Dalton Hammer
 - Kathleen Lewin
 - Luis Perez
 - Justin Kraper
 - Tiara Simmons
 - Lorymar Vazquez-Perez
 - Yolanda Henry
 - Kimberly Jones
 - Ratonya Bell
 - MaryLouise Sturgill
 - Samantha Maddy
 - Byron English
 - Supervisor Marcela Galarza
 - Supervisor Lorynn Winburn
 - Supervisor LaTasha Stephens
 - Supervisor Berta Hall

- **Critical Incident Stress Management**

- Sergeant Dave Allmond
- Jason Engelhardt
- Steve Head
- Sergeant Andrew Gillespie
- Sergeant Mark Hinson
- Sharon Edgecombe
- Latashia Stephens
- Doug Andreacchi
- Chaplain Mike Vidal
- Officer Larry Grice
- Sergeant Bill Cail
- Joe Gribble
- Anthony Buffkin
- Lori Fiorino
- Wendy-Ann Maillard
- Sergeant Eric Goebelbecker
- Juan Pomales
- Sergeant Tami Edwards
- Chaplain Mike Meyer
- Sergeant Bill Cail
- Sergeant Patrick Guckian
- Ann-Marie Esan
- M.D. White
- Vicki Reynolds
- Sergeant Jean Gabriel
- Justin Wood
- Sergeant Tanisha White
- Chaplain Jamie Faberlle

Unit Citation

- Orlando Regional Medical Center
- Florida Hospital South
- Dr. P. Phillips Hospital
- Orange County Medical Examiner
- **Assisting agencies**
 - Apopka Police Department
 - Belle Isle Police Department
 - City of Port St. Lucie Police Department
 - Eatonville Police Department
 - Edgewood Police Department
 - Florida Department of Law Enforcement
 - Florida Highway Patrol
 - Maitland Police Department
 - Ocoee Police Department
 - Orange County Fire Rescue
 - Orange County Sheriff's Office
 - Orlando Fire Department
 - Osceola County Sheriff's Office
 - Oviedo Police Department
 - Seminole County Sheriff's Office
 - St. Cloud Police Department

- University of Central Florida Police Department
- Winter Garden Police Department
- Winter Park Police Department
- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives
- US Department of Homeland Security, Immigrations and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations, Enforcement and Removal Operations, and Customs and Border Protection
- US Department of State
- Drug Enforcement Administration
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Internal Revenue Service
- Office of the US Attorney for the Middle District of Florida

Good Citizenship Awards for community support

- A-Reachback Support
- 7 Eleven
- 911 of Charleston County
- ABC Learning Center
- American Red Cross
- Amway Center
- Amway Center
- Amway Center
- AO & A
- Bistro Sensations—Mall Millennia
- Buca Di Beppo
- Burger Phi
- California Kitchen—Mall Millennia
- Carpenters Caroline Gift Baskets
- Celebration Restaurant Group
- Central Christen Church
- Channing Bete Company
- Chick-Fil-A
- Christ Church of Orlando
- Church on the Drive, College Park
- Citizen: Amy Moon
- Citizen: Holley McCallion
- Citizen: Charles Shuck
- Citizen: Arianna Nichols
- Clermont Ocoee Peds
- Consolidated (911) Center
- Counseling Professionals of Orlando
- Covenant Presbyterian Church
- Darden
- Darline’s Bakery
- Disney Catering
- Domino’s Pizza

- Edgewater High School
- First Baptist of Orlando
- First Baptist of Windermere
- Forest City Church Seventh-Day Adventist
- Freshpoint of Central Florida
- From HAWAII with LOVE
- Full Sail University
- Greater Orlando Aviation Authority K-9
- Harry and David
- Holland and Knight LLP
- Hope & Help
- Huey Magoo Chicken Tenders
- Jackson Therapy Partners
- Kelly's Homemade Ice Cream
- King Size Bows
- KMG Fence
- Lake Hills Church
- The LGBT Center of Central Florida
- Lowes
- Lucas County Sheriff's Office
- McDonald's
- Millennia Mall Security
- Mirage Talent LLC
- New York Life Insurance Co.
- Olive Garden
- Ollies Restaurant
- Orlando Magic
- Panda Express
- Pennsylvania General Store
- Pepsi
- Pig Floyd's
- Pizza at Lake Eola
- Planet Hollywood Inc.
- Porkie's Original BBQ
- Publix
- Random Acts
- Reddy Ice
- Regal Meeting and Events
- Rio Canas
- Salvation Army
- Shake Shack
- Sonny's BBQ Company
- Sprinkles at Disney Springs
- Stars of Hope
- State Attorney Victim Advocates
- TEK Systems Global
- Tijuana Flats Burrito Co
- United Against Poverty/Community Food & Outreach
- Uncle Maddio's Pizza
- Unity World Headquarters
- Universal Studios
- VP Business Development
- Watson Title Services, Inc.
- WaWa
- Walt Disney World Corporate, TEAM Disney
- Winter Park Memorial Hospital Team

Appendix D. Orlando-Area First Responder Training Exercises

Orlando-Area law enforcement joint training exercises

2008

August 26 Joint training with Orlando Police Department (OPD) and Orange County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) special weapons and tactics (SWAT) teams covered sniper, grenadier, and assault training as well as dynamic vehicle takedown, hostage rescue, and bus assaults.

2009

January 21 Anti-terrorism SWAT training for region V (comprising SWAT teams from five counties and cities in central Florida) covered hostage rescue, explosive breaching, and mass casualty situations.

2010

April 8–9 Joint OPD/OCSO SWAT team training covered firearms training, explosive breaching, hostage rescue, and tactical debriefs.

May 7 OPD SWAT hostage rescue training included SWAT team observers, role players, and evaluators.

December 15 Joint OPD/OCSO SWAT team training covered target threat assessments.

2011

January 27 Joint OPD/OCSO/Orlando Fire Department (OFD) SWAT team training covered hostage rescue, armored vehicle operations, hazardous materials, and explosive breaching.

April 7 Joint OPD/OCSO SWAT team training covered firearms, rappelling, and defensive tactics.

December 6–7 Joint OPD/OCSO/OFD/Lake County Sheriff's Office training at the old Amway Arena covered explosive breaching, low light movement, and entry training.

2012

- April 17 Joint OPD/OCSO SWAT team training covered terrorism briefing and an interactive scenario discussion.
- October 17 Joint OPD/Seminole County Sheriff's Office SWAT team training covered tactical shield training.
- November 7 Joint OPD/Volusia County Sheriff's Office SWAT team training covered tactical debriefs.

2013

- February 15 Joint OPD/ OCSO/OFD/Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)/Orange County Fire Department SWAT team training covered active shooter situations, hostage rescue, mass casualty events, explosive detection, and active school environments.

2014

- January 10 Joint OPD/Kissimmee Police Department SWAT team training covered tactical firearms and tactical debriefs.
- September 25 Joint OPD/OCSO SWAT team training at the Orange County Courthouse covered rappelling, entry, movement, joint movement, and hostage rescue.

2015

- March 20 A multiagency OPD/OCSO/OFD/FBI/Osceola Sheriff's Office/Kissimmee Police Department/Orange County Fire Department tabletop training covered explosives, active shooter situations, mass casualty events, and hostage rescue.
- April 12 A multiagency OPD/OCSO/OFD/FBI/Osceola Sheriff's Office/Kissimmee Police Department/Orange County Fire Department exercise at a mall covered explosives, active shooter situations, mass casualty events, and hostage rescue.
- July 10 Joint OPD/OFD training at Valencia Community College covered mass casualty events, active shooter situations, movement, hostage rescue, and explosives.

2016

October 11

A joint OPD/OFD/Homeland Security Investigations SWAT team training exercise covered explosive breaching, entry, movement, armored vehicle operations, and school environments.

Orlando Police Department and Orlando Fire Department joint training exercises

2005

The OFD, OPD, FBI, and OCSO held a mass casualty/active shooter/explosive device training at the Citrus Bowl Stadium. This training has been recognized by the National Tactical Officers Association as a trendsetter in embedding fire personnel in rescue and explosive device training while working in a hot environment.

2009

The OPD and Lynx simulated a hostage situation on a bus, which involved OFD on a minor level for casualty training.

2010

The OFD and OPD held the largest scale exercise to date in downtown Orlando (in the round building across from City Hall); it was the most extensive casualty active shooter–style training taken on by both agencies, involving more than 300 participants from the OFD and OPD. Like the joint training held at the Citrus Bowl in 2005, this event was nationally recognized and held long before the current private training that is now being offered to agencies. It was very well covered by the media.

2011

The OFD, OPD, OCSO, and Orange County Fire Department held a large scale exercise at Amway Arena covering hostages, haz mat incidents, and active shooter and mass casualty incidents with more than 200 victim/hostage role players and more than 150 participants from the four agencies. This was the second stadium/arena–style training in six years.

2013

Two joint exercises were held in 2013. The most recognizable was the active shooter training held at St. James School; more than 350 teachers and administrators from five counties and the city of Orlando attended this training. The OFD and OPD demonstrated rescue of victims of an active shooter. More than 250 participants from the OFD, OPD, FBI, Orange County Sheriff's Office, and Orange County Fire Department participated in this training. It was very well covered by the media. The other training was a Lynx training similar to the one in 2009.

2014

More than 100 participants from the OFD, OPD, Winter Park Police Department, Kissimmee Police Department, and Orange County Sheriff's Office held a training at Edgewater High School. The focus was on an active shooter in a high school environment and coordinated efforts from multiple agencies. This event was well documented by the media.

2015

More than 100 participants from the OFD and OPD joined the Valencia Community College security team to hold an exercise at Valencia Community College's West Campus – to simulate an active shooter on a college campus. There was minor media coverage.

The FBI was the lead agency on an active shooter/terrorist/explosive device training exercise held at the Mall at Mellinia. The OFD was embedded inside of OPD patrol units with rescue training of victims at the beginning of the scenario and explosive device mitigation throughout the exercise. The OCSO, OPD, OFD, Orange County Fire Department, St. Cloud Police Department, Kissimmee Police Department, Osceola Sheriff's Office, and Seminole County Sheriff's Office all participated.

Appendix E. Methodology

In July 2016, at the request of the chief of the Orlando Police Department (OPD), the Police Foundation created a critical incident review assessment team under the direction of the US Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office). The assessment team, comprising subject matter experts in public safety and critical incident response, developed and executed a comprehensive methodology to thoroughly review and assess the public safety response to the Pulse nightclub terrorist attack that occurred on June 12, 2016. The assessment approach involved four means of information gathering and collection: (1) open source media review, (2) on-site data collection, (3) resource material review, and (4) off-site data collection and research. Each method is described in more detail in the sections that follow.

Open source media review

Throughout the life of the review, Police Foundation staff have collected, reviewed, and referenced open source media. The team has read dozens of newspaper and magazine articles, watched videos, reviewed social media posts, and more. This research has provided context for the interviews and other research conducted in relation to the Pulse incident.

On-site data collection

The assessment team conducted four site visits: September 29–30, 2016; December 15–16, 2016; January 23–27, 2017; and, February 20–24, 2017. During these site visits, the assessment team conducted semi-structured individual interviews and focus groups with local, state, and federal law enforcement and first responder including dispatchers, officers and deputies, and public safety executives and managers; city, state, and federal officials; medical responders; a survivor; and community and faith leaders. The assessment team also visited the Pulse nightclub area. More than 75 individuals were interviewed during these site visits and subsequent phone interviews, including the following:

Local law enforcement agencies

- Orlando Police Department
 - Chief
 - Deputy chiefs
 - Captains
 - Lieutenants
 - Sergeants
 - Officers
 - Detectives
 - Agents
 - Special weapons and tactics (SWAT) team members
 - Public information officers (PIO)
 - Dispatchers and 911 operators

- Orange County Sheriff's Office (OCSO)
 - Sheriff
 - Chief deputy
 - Captain
 - Lieutenants
 - Sergeants
 - Deputies
 - Hazardous device team (HDT) members
 - Shift commanders
 - First responders
 - University of Central Florida Police Department
 - Victim advocates
 - K-9 officer
-

Other agencies

- State law enforcement: Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FLDE)
 - Special agent in charge
 - Federal law enforcement
 - Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)
 - Assistant special agent in charge
 - Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
 - Assistant special agent in charge
 - Orlando Fire Department (OFD)
 - Chief
 - PIO
 - Orange County Fire Rescue
 - Chief
 - Medical professionals (Orlando Regional Medical Center and responding hospitals)
 - Emergency preparedness manager
 - Medical director
 - Medical examiner
 - Responding doctor
 - City of Orlando
 - Mayor Buddy Dyer and staff
 - Communications staff members
 - Orlando Office of Emergency Management executive
 - Orange County State Attorney
 - Chief investigator
 - US Attorney's Office
 - State Attorney's Office
-

Orlando community leaders

- Main Street Initiative manager
- Executive director, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Community Center of Central Florida
- Regional coordinator, Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) Florida
- Former president of Muslim Student Association at the University of Central Florida
- Executive director, Orlando Chamber of Commerce

The team also interviewed a survivor of the Pulse nightclub attack.

Resource review

The assessment team collected and reviewed OPD policies, procedures, training curricula, reports, data, incident command system procedures, and other documents provided by the OPD chief of police and command staff. In addition, the FDLE, the OCSO, and the OFD provided presentations, after action reviews, and lessons learned to the assessment team. The assessment team also reviewed documents provided by the mayor's office. Each resource was reviewed to better understand the department's response to the incident. Materials reviewed included the following:

- OPD investigative reports, including witness and officer statements
- OPD PowerPoint presentation
- FDLE use of force investigation
- OCSO after action report
- OFD PowerPoint presentation
- OPD policies and procedures
- OPD training outlines
- OPD and OCSO timelines
- OPD social media content and statistics
- OPD communications and computer-aided dispatch records
- OFD communications

The team also reviewed hours of records—including 911 calls and transcripts, transcripts of calls with the suspect, OPD communications, police body-worn camera videos, and other records made public by the City of Orlando—and open source media articles, video footage, and social media articles; read articles; watched news clips; and watched and listened to relevant video and audio regarding the incident.

Off-site data collection

In addition to the information collected from Orlando and to ground the incident review in national standards, model policies, and recognized promising practices, the assessment team researched and reviewed scholarship on active shooter scenarios and hostage situations with an emphasis on explosive devices. The team also conducted research in other areas, such as the National Incident Management System (NIMS), the incident command system (ICS), and other relevant topics published by researchers from academia and from organizations including the following:

- US Department of Homeland Security
- US Department of Justice
- Federal Emergency Management Agency
- International Association of Chiefs of Police
- Police Executive Research Forum
- Police Foundation
- National Tactical Officers' Association

Analysis and application of observations and lessons learned

The assessment team used the totality of the information collected to conduct a gap analysis, which focused on identifying key areas to develop a set of lessons learned for the OPD and the larger public safety field. The team began by reviewing policies, procedures, protocols, and training for active shooter and hostage scenarios in Orlando. Having these documents as the foundation, the team identified promising practices and challenges in the response to the shooting through interviews and other data collection methodologies. Based on this information as well as on recognized promising practices, model policies, and evidence-based protocols, the team produced a series of observations and lessons learned for responding to future critical incidents. The observations and lessons learned are also applicable to law enforcement agencies and communities across the nation faced with responding to similar scenarios.

Appendix F. Orlando Background Information and Responding Agency Profiles

Orlando background information

The history of the area that would become the city of Orlando began in 1838 at the height of the Seminole Wars, when the US Army built Fort Gatlin to protect settlers from attacks by the Native Americans. By 1840, a small community—named Jernigan, after the family that had established the first permanent settlement in the area—had developed in the shadows of the fort. In 1856, as the settlement expanded to the north, the community officially changed its name to Orlando. One year later the US Post Office adopted the new name, and in 1875 the Town of Orlando was officially incorporated.³⁰²

Since its early days, Orlando has expanded significantly in both size and population. It now covers 110 square miles and is the seat of Orange County—which is in the central region of the state—and borders Polk, Osceola, Seminole, Brevard, and Lake counties.³⁰³ Orlando is home to approximately 270,934 people, making it the fourth-most populous city in Florida and the 77th-most populous city in the United States.³⁰⁴ Meanwhile Orange County has a population of approximately 1,288,126.³⁰⁵ According to the US Census, 57.6 percent of Orlando residents identified as “White alone,” 28.1 percent as “Black or African American alone,” 25.4 percent as “Hispanic or Latino,” 3.8 percent as “Asian alone,” and 3.4 percent as “two or more races.” A contributing factor to Orlando’s racial diversity is the fact that from 2011 to 2015, 18.3 percent of the city’s residents were foreign born.³⁰⁶ Another sign of the area’s diversity and acceptance is that approximately 4.1 percent of the population of the Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford area identify as LGBTQ, ranking the area in the top 20 of the 50 largest US metro areas in terms of LGBTQ population.³⁰⁷

³⁰² “Orlando History,” City of Orlando, accessed June 2, 2017, <http://www.cityoforlando.net/about/>.

³⁰³ “Map of Florida Counties,” Inside Florida, accessed July 7, 2017, <http://www.insideflorida.com/map/florida-counties-map/>.

³⁰⁴ “Quick Facts: Orange County and Orlando City, Florida (see note 6).

³⁰⁵ “Quick Facts: Orange County and Orlando City, Florida (see note 6).

³⁰⁶ “Quick Facts: Orange County and Orlando City, Florida (see note 6).

³⁰⁷ Frank Newport and Gary J. Gates, “San Francisco Metro Area Ranks Highest in LGBT Percentage,” Gallup, last modified March 20, 2015, http://www.gallup.com/poll/182051/san-francisco-metro-area-ranks-highest-lgbt-percentage.aspx?utm_source=Social%20Issues&utm_medium=newsfeed&utm_campaign=tiles.

In addition to its census-based population, Orlando attracts millions of additional people each year who come for school, business, and vacations. Approximately 41.6 million passengers travel through Orlando International Airport annually.³⁰⁸ The University of Central Florida—with more than 64,000 students—is one of the largest universities in terms of student enrollment in the nation.³⁰⁹ Similarly, Orlando is one of the most popular travel destinations in the United States,³¹⁰ with seven of the top 25 amusement and theme parks in the world located no more than 20 miles away—including Walt Disney World, Universal Studios Florida, and SeaWorld.³¹¹

In terms of industry and economy, Orlando has evolved from being the hub of Florida’s agricultural industry with its citrus groves and cotton farms to a military area to a hub of tourism to an economy driven by innovation and industry. In addition to emerging industries including digital media and technology, life sciences and modeling, and simulation and training, the business economy is anchored by the Orange County Convention Center (OCCC).³¹² The OCCC is the second-largest convention facility in the United States and attracts approximately 1.4 million attendees to more than 230 events and contributes more than \$2 billion to the area’s economy each year.³¹³

All of this, along with the city’s location in the “sun belt,” makes its nicknames —“Theme Park Capital of the World” and “The City Beautiful”—all the more appropriate.³¹⁴

Primary responding agency profiles

Orlando Police Department

The Orlando Police Department (OPD) serves the city of Orlando. The OPD has 743 sworn officers across four bureaus: (1) administrative services, (2) investigative services, (3) special services, and (4) patrol services. The Administrative Services Bureau consists of the Support Services Division, the Communications division—which includes the call takers and dispatchers for police, fire, and emergency medical services (EMS)—and the recruiting unit. The Investigative Services Bureau is divided into three sections—(1) property crimes, (2) youth services, and (3) violent crimes—and is responsible for investigating crimes of assault, robbery, stalking, domestic violence, homicide, missing persons, theft, fraud and forgery, and vehicle theft and includes the special victims unit, school resource officers, and the Super Kids unit. The OPD’s Special Services Bureau is made up of specific areas that include the Airport Division, the Downtown Community Policing Division, and the Special Operations Division. Finally, the OPD’s Patrol Services Bureau is the largest of the four bureaus and consists of the city’s first

³⁰⁸ “About Us,” Orlando International Airport MCO, accessed July 7, 2017, <https://orlandoairports.net/about-us/>.

³⁰⁹ “We Are UCF” (see note 9).

³¹⁰ Polland, “The 25 Most Popular Travel Destinations” (see note 8).

³¹¹ Rubin, *TEA/AECOM 2015 Theme Index* (see note 7).

³¹² “Orlando’s Economy,” City of Orlando, accessed June 2, 2017, <http://www.cityoforlando.net/about/>.

³¹³ “About the Orange County Convention Center,” Orange County Convention Center, accessed July 7, 2017, <https://www.occc.net/About-Us>.

³¹⁴ “Welcome to Orlando, Florida” (see note 11).

responders for all of the law enforcement aspects. The Patrol Services Bureau comprises three decentralized divisions—(1) east, (2) west, and (3) north—that respond to calls for service and attend community functions.³¹⁵

The June 12 terrorist attack at the Pulse nightclub occurred within the OPD’s jurisdiction. An OPD detective working an extra duty detail at Pulse was the first to engage the suspect, and other OPD officers were some of the first to respond to the scene and enter the nightclub. In addition to containing and negotiating with the suspect, extricating and transporting the victims, and being involved in the final shootout with the suspect, the OPD—in conjunction with the Orange County Sheriff’s Office (OCSO), the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)—maintained primary incident command throughout the response.

Orange County Sheriff’s Office

The OCSO was formed in 1845. It is currently separated into Operational Services and Administrative Services and is further broken down into six divisions—(1) uniform patrol, (2) criminal investigation, (3) special operations, (4) support services, (5) human resources, and (6) court services and communications—as well as a seventh division, the High Risk Incident Command (HRIC). The Uniform Patrol Division consists of six geographic sectors, and the HRIC includes the emergency response, hazardous device, hostage negotiation, special response, and special weapons and tactics (SWAT) teams.³¹⁶

The OCSO initially deployed approximately 144 deputies to Pulse, including some of the first law enforcement officers on scene. OCSO deputies assisted with maintaining tactical inner perimeter positions until they were relieved by the OPD SWAT team and assisted in the extrication of victims from the nightclub. The OCSO hazardous device team (HDT) determined that a 1,000-foot perimeter needed to be established around the nightclub after the suspect indicated he had vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices and explosive vests; the HDT also built and detonated the explosive breach and engaged the suspect in the final shootout before he was neutralized.

Florida Department of Law Enforcement

The FDLE was established in 1967 to merge the duties and responsibilities of several state criminal justice organizations including the Florida Sheriff’s Bureau, the State Narcotics Bureau, and the law enforcement duties of the Anti-Bookie Squad of the Attorney General’s Office. The FDLE currently employs approximately 1,700 people statewide, who provide services in five areas: (1) executive direction and business support, (2) criminal investigations and forensic science, (3) Florida capitol police,

³¹⁵ Orlando Police Department, *Courage. Pride. Commitment* (see note 12).

³¹⁶ “Welcome to the Orange County Sheriff’s Office,” Orange County Sheriff’s Office, accessed July 7, 2017, <https://www.ocso.com/>.

(4) criminal justice information, and (5) criminal justice professionalism.³¹⁷ The FDLE also has an Office of Domestic Security, which works with federal, state, and local agencies to prepare for, prevent, protect, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks that affect the state through seven regional domestic security task forces strategically located around the state.³¹⁸

After being notified about the crisis, the FDLE's special agent in charge offered assistance to the unified command center (UCC). The FDLE deployed more than 70 agents and intelligence analysts to assist in gathering evidence and follow up on several investigatory leads throughout the state. In addition, the FDLE took the lead in making next-of-kin notifications. The FDLE also conducted standard officer use of force investigations.

Federal Bureau of Investigation

The FBI leads a number of joint terrorism task forces (JTTF) that bring together representatives of local, state, and federal agencies to pursue terrorism leads, develop and investigate cases, support special events, and identify threats that may impact the area and nation. The FBI also established the State and Local Law Enforcement Executives and Elected Officials Security Clearance Initiative to provide state and local law enforcement executives and elected officials with the security clearances necessary to be able to share classified information that "would or could affect their area of jurisdiction."³¹⁹

The FBI assistant special agent in charge (ASAC) of the field office in Orlando mobilized the JTTF and all squads under his command as well as dispatching the crisis management coordinator, the SWAT team, multiple supervisors, hostage negotiators, and the evidence response team (ERT) to the scene. Upon arriving at the scene, the FBI established a mobile command post. Some agents entered the club and assisted local officers in extracting victims, while the ASAC joined the UCC to help coordinate resources and tasks. Because all of the law enforcement executives in the UCC had security clearances, the ASAC was able to share sensitive information. Once the suspect was neutralized, the FBI's SWAT team entered and cleared the building and the ERT processed the scene. The FBI also took over responsibility for investigating the terrorist attack.

In addition, the FBI's Victim Assistance Rapid Deployment Team and Florida Crisis Response Team responded to the four hospitals that received victims in the immediate aftermath of the crisis.

³¹⁷ "General Information about FDLE," Florida Department of Law Enforcement, accessed July 7, 2017, <http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/cms/About-Us/General-Information.aspx>.

³¹⁸ "About FDLE," Florida Department of Law Enforcement, accessed July 7, 2017, <http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/cms/about-us/about-us.aspx>.

³¹⁹ "Security Clearances for Law Enforcement," Federal Bureau of Investigation, accessed June 29, 2017, <https://www.fbi.gov/resources/law-enforcement/security-clearances-for-law-enforcement>.

The FBI Victim Assistance Rapid Deployment Team, composed of victim specialists, and the FBI's Office for Victim Assistance—Terrorism and Special Jurisdiction Unit worked with community agencies to establish a unified family assistance center (FAC). The FAC was opened for eight days at the Camping World Stadium, resulting in assistance to more than 950 families and more than \$450,000 in support. Efforts to provide ongoing support continued for more than one year following the incident.

Supporting local responding agency profiles

Apopka Police Department

The Apopka Police Department is a municipal police agency located in northwest Orange County. With more than 90 sworn officers and 10 civilian employees, it serves a 30-square mile area and responds to 60,000 calls for service annually.³²⁰ The Apopka Police Department is divided into six sections: (1) administrative support, (2) communications, (3) community affairs, (4) criminal investigations, (5) operational support, and (6) patrol.³²¹

An Apopka Police Department officer who was also a member of the Central Florida SWAT team was one of the officers who entered the Pulse nightclub and assisted with rescue and extrication operations. The Apopka Police Department assisted emergency medical responders in triaging victims at the triage location and transporting them to Orlando Regional Medical Center (ORMC).³²²

Belle Isle Police Department

The Belle Isle Police Department (BIPD) is a municipal police agency located southeast of Orlando in Orange County. The BIPD provides community patrol, criminal investigations, school resource, traffic and marine enforcement, concentrated neighborhood patrols, house watch, and other community services. The BIPD responded to 7,414 calls for service in 2015.³²³

A BIPD officer was one of the first to arrive on scene and joined the second contact team that entered Pulse nightclub and contained the suspect in the restroom in the Adonis Room. BIPD officers also assisted in extricating victims from the nightclub and assisted the OPD officer who was shot during the final shootout with the suspect.

³²⁰ "Orlando Police Department Communications Division," City of Orlando, accessed July 7, 2017, <http://www.cityoforlando.net/police/communications-division/>.

³²¹ "Fire Department," City of Orlando, accessed July 7, 2017, <http://www.cityoforlando.net/fire/>.

³²² Reggie Connell, "Velez-Cantres named Apopka Police Officer of the Year," *The Apopka Voice*, last modified June 10, 2017, <http://theapokkavoice.com/velez-cantres-named-apopka-police-officer-of-the-year/>.

³²³ *City of Belle Isle Police Department 2015: Achievements and Milestones* (Belle Isle, FL: Belle Isle Police Department, 2016), http://media.wix.com/ugd/b3141d_9d605547c03e4cc088e14ecd1fc3de45.pdf.

Eatonville Police Department

The Eatonville Police Department is a municipal police agency located north of Orlando in Orange County. As well as providing community policing and law enforcement services, the Eatonville Police Department leads a number of community programs to reduce crime and enhance public safety.

The Eatonville Police Department assisted in extricating victims from Pulse nightclub.

Edgewood Police Department

The Edgewood Police Department is a municipal police agency located south of Orlando. Its duties range from routine patrols to criminal investigations to vacation checks for residences and security inspections for businesses. The Edgewood Police Department also establishes and maintains neighborhood watch programs.³²⁴

Maitland Police Department

The Maitland Police Department (MPD) is a municipal police agency located north of Orlando, which serves an estimated population of 17,463.³²⁵ The MPD consists of four divisions: (1) administration, (2) community policing, (3) operations, and (4) special operations and training.³²⁶

MPD officers were dispatched and arrived 10 minutes after the incident began. Responding officers assisted in extricating victims from Pulse nightclub, provided emergency medical care to victims at the triage area, and provided first aid supplies issued by the department to other first responders.

Ocoee Police Department

The Ocoee Police Department is a municipal police agency located west of Orlando, with more than 70 sworn officers and 43 civilians spread across 10 divisions: (1) administrative services, (2) bike patrol, (3) criminal investigations, (4) K-9 unit, (5) Metropolitan Bureau of Investigation, (6) patrol, (7) recruiting, (8) traffic enforcement, (9) training, and (10) youth services.³²⁷

³²⁴ "Police," City of Edgewood Florida, accessed July 7, 2017, <http://www.edgewood-fl.gov/police/>.

³²⁵ "Quick Facts: Maitland City, Florida," United States Census Bureau, accessed July 7, 2017, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/1242575>.

³²⁶ "Maitland Police Department," Maitland Police Department, accessed July 7, 2017, <http://www.maitlandpd.org/>.

³²⁷ "Employment Sectors," City of Ocoee, accessed July 7, 2017, <http://www.ocoe.org/286/Employment-Sectors>.

Orange County Fire and Rescue

The Orange County Fire and Rescue Department (OCFRD) provides fire protection and emergency medical services to Orange County, an area of 780 square miles. With 41 stations and six battalions, the agency provides fire suppression, emergency medical services, and community risk reduction services to both citizens and visitors countywide.³²⁸

Approximately 41 dispatchers, emergency medical technicians, paramedics, and firefighters from the OCFRD assisted in the response. Many medical personnel on scene provided triage to victims and assisted in transportation to hospitals.³²⁹

Orlando Fire Department

Serving the city of Orlando, the Orlando Fire Department (OFD) provides key support to the community to keep residents safe, informed, and protected. The agency has 17 fire houses, which serve commercial buildings, residences, hospitals, schools, and gardens.³³⁰ The OFD provides care through treatment and transportation to citizens with illnesses or injuries. In 2015, the OFD responded to more than 60,000 emergency incidents ranging from fire to medical calls for service.³³¹ The department also provides special investigative services: fire investigation, bomb squad, and internal affairs. Special operation crews are also activated for hazardous materials, technical rescue, and dive-and-rescue teams.³³²

OFD communications answered 911 calls and worked to keep Pulse nightclub patrons calm while they gathered information that was relayed to responding officers. Firefighters and paramedics also assisted the OPD in a secondary role to transport victims to ORMC and in patient offload. The OFD set up a command post and staging areas for victim transport as well as providing mass casualty incident unit equipment.

³²⁸ "Emergency and Safety," Orange County Government, Florida, accessed July 7, 2017, <http://www.ocfl.net/EmergencySafety.aspx#.WTA1P8fdui4>.

³²⁹ Caitlin Doornbos, "Orange County Fire Rescue Honors Pulse First Responders," *Orlando Sentinel*, June 8, 2017, <http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/pulse-orlando-nightclub-shooting/os-pulse-ocfr-awards-20170608-story.html>.

³³⁰ "Firehouses," City of Orlando, accessed July 7, 2017, <http://www.cityoforlando.net/fire/firehouses/>.

³³¹ "Divisions and Special Teams," City of Orlando, accessed July 7, 2017, <http://www.cityoforlando.net/fire/divisions-and-special-teams/>.

³³² "Divisions and Special Teams," City of Orlando (see note 331).

Osceola County Sheriff's Office

The Osceola County Sheriff's Office serves an area of 1,506 square miles. It has an enforcement bureau that includes a criminal investigations section, a patrol and criminal investigation division (CID), and a special operations division, along with a support services division that allows the agency to respond to incidents in the area.³³³

Oviedo Police Department

The Oviedo Police Department is a municipal agency that serves the 16 square miles of Oviedo. It comprises a patrol division and support services division, which protect the safety of community members and infrastructure within the community.³³⁴

Port St. Lucie Police Department

The Port St. Lucie Police Department (PSLPD) is a municipal police agency with 229 sworn officers, 53 civilian personnel, and 220 volunteers. In 2015, they responded to 56,012 calls for service and have seen a steady decline in crime in their jurisdiction, as noted in their 2015 annual report.³³⁵ The PSLPD has three main bureaus: (1) neighborhood policing, (2) support services, and (3) professional standards. Areas such as the marine unit, crisis negotiation, traffic homicide investigations, K-9, SWAT functions and deployments, and school resource officers are just a few of the many services the PSLPD offers to its community.³³⁶

Seminole County Sheriff's Office

The Seminole County Sheriff's Office (SCSO) was established in 1913, when the area divided from Orange County and became Seminole County. The SCSO is located approximately 21 miles northeast of Orlando and serves a population of 449,144.³³⁷ The agency provides all uniform patrol activities, conducts general investigations, is involved with safety and prevention programs, and operates the county's correctional facility and judicial support services.³³⁸

³³³ "Divisions," Osceola County Sheriff's Office, accessed July 7, 2017, <http://www.osceolasheriff.org/sheriff/113-16470-0/divisions.cfm>.

³³⁴ "Oviedo Police Department," City of Oviedo, Florida, accessed July 7, 2017, <http://cityofoviedo.net/node/172>.

³³⁵ John A. Bolduc, *Port St. Lucie Police Department 2016 Annual Report* (Port St. Lucie, FL: Port St. Lucie Police Department, 2017), <http://www.cityofpsl.com/police/pdf/pd-annual-report.pdf>.

³³⁶ Bolduc, *Port St. Lucie Police Department 2016 Annual Report* (see note 335).

³³⁷ "Quick Facts: Seminole County, Florida," United States Census Bureau, accessed July 7, 2017, <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/12117>.

³³⁸ "History," Seminole County Sheriff's Office, accessed July 7, 2017, <https://www.seminolesheriff.org/page.aspx?id=17>.

SCSO deputies assisted in extricating victims from Pulse nightclub, maintaining the perimeter around the nightclub until the OPD SWAT team arrived, providing additional security at Florida Hospital, transporting victims to ORMC, and directing traffic around the nightclub. A K-9 was also dispatched to sweep the area.³³⁹

St. Cloud Police Department

The St. Cloud Police Department currently has 84 sworn officers and is located 28 miles south of Orlando and serves approximately 45,298 residents.³⁴⁰ The agency serves and protects 18.2 square miles³⁴¹ and has four divisions in the department: (1) patrol, with 32 officers and six patrol beats; (2) investigations, with units in K-9, forensics, and street crimes; (3) special operations, with units in SWAT and traffic; and (4) support services.³⁴²

University of Central Florida Police Department

Established in 1973, the University of Central Florida Police Department (UCFPD) currently employs approximately 75 sworn law enforcement officers who serve more than 63,000 students, 11,000 employees, and visitors to the campus. The UCFPD has a patrol division, criminal investigations division, and community service officers who are committed to protecting and serving the university.³⁴³

A K-9 from the UCFPD was deployed after the suspect said he had explosives. A sweep of the surrounding parking lots was conducted. In addition, victim advocates from the Victim Services Unit responded to the four hospitals that received victims and recruited 80 additional victim advocates to assist with the crisis.

³³⁹ Criminal Justice Information Services, "CJIS Report: Seminole County Sheriff's Office—Public Version," Criminal Justice Information Services report, June 30, 2016, <http://www.trbas.com/media/media/acrobat/2016-07/23869154464740-04111523.pdf>.

³⁴⁰ "Quick Facts: St. Cloud City, Florida," United States Census Bureau, accessed July 7, 2017, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/1262625>.

³⁴¹ "St. Cloud Police Department Mission Statement," City of St. Cloud, accessed July 7, 2017, <http://www.stcloud.org/index.aspx?nid=7>.

³⁴² "St. Cloud Police Department Mission Statement," City of St. Cloud (see note 341).

³⁴³ UCF Police Department, "About Us," University of Central Florida, accessed July 7, 2017, <https://police.ucf.edu/about-us>.

Winter Garden Police Department

The Winter Garden Police Department (WGPD) is a small municipal agency 12 miles west of Orlando in western Orange County. It serves and protects a population of 37,500 in a 17–square mile area. The WGPD has eight patrol districts, a criminal investigations unit, K-9, and traffic and various support services to help with the department’s daily functions.³⁴⁴

Responding officers assisted in extricating victims from Pulse nightclub and directing traffic around the nightclub.

Winter Park Police Department

Founded in 1889, the Winter Park Police Department (WPPD) is a municipal agency located 10 miles north of Orlando. It provides services to more than 28,000 residents of the City of Winter Park, Florida. It has an administrative support section and three separate divisions that include (1) investigations, (2) operations, and (3) community services.³⁴⁵

Responding officers assisted in clearing rooms and extricating victims from Pulse nightclub, provided emergency medical care to victims at the triage area, and helped maintain the perimeter around the nightclub.

Supporting state agency profiles

Florida Highway Patrol

Created in 1939, the Florida Highway Patrol (FHP) works to keep Florida’s roads and highways safe by providing uniform traffic law enforcement throughout the state. The FHP is authorized for 1,946 sworn positions and 529 nonsworn positions.³⁴⁶

The FHP responded to calls for service in certain areas within the city limits of Orlando, participated in multiple dignitary protection escorts, provided security for memorial vigils and victims’ funerals, attended numerous press conferences, and attended command staff intelligence briefings.

³⁴⁴ “Uniform Patrol,” City of Winter Garden, accessed July 7, 2017, http://www.wgpd.com/patrol_services/uniform_patrol.

³⁴⁵ “Department Facilities,” Winter Park Police Department, accessed July 7, 2017, <https://wppd.org/about/departments-facilities/>.

³⁴⁶ “About FHP,” Florida Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, accessed July 7, 2017, <https://www.flhsmv.gov/florida-%20highway-patrol/about-fhp/>.

Supporting federal agency profiles

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives

Part of the US Department of Justice, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) works to protect communities from violent criminals, criminal organizations, the illegal use and trafficking of firearms, the illegal use and storage of explosives, acts of arson and bombings, acts of terrorism, and the illegal diversion of alcohol and tobacco products.³⁴⁷ In 2015, the ATF had 5,026 employees, including 2,618 domestic and foreign special agents and 811 industry operations investigators.³⁴⁸

The ATF assisted in the investigation of the source of the firearms seized from the suspect.

US Department of Homeland Security

Customs and Border Protection–Border Patrol

Established in 2003, US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is one of the world’s largest law enforcement organizations and is charged with keeping terrorists and their weapons out of the United States while also facilitating lawful international travel and trade. CBP takes a comprehensive approach to border management and control by combining customs, immigration, border security, and agricultural protection into one agency under the US Department of Homeland Security.³⁴⁹

Homeland Security Investigations

Formed in 2010, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) is a critical investigative component of DHS and is a vital US asset in combating criminal organizations illegally exploiting the travel, trade, financial, and immigration systems of the United States. Investigations are focused on prevention of terrorism, immigration enforcement, and investigations of illegal movement of people and goods. HSI’s workforce includes special agents, analysts, auditors, and support staff. HSI is also committed to protecting the public and ensuring the rights of victims and witnesses to obtain reliable and timely information regarding criminal aliens’ release from custody.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁷ “About,” Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, accessed July 7, 2017, <https://www.atf.gov/about>.

³⁴⁸ “Fact Sheet – ATF Staffing and Budget,” Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, last modified March 2016, <https://www.atf.gov/resource-center/fact-sheet/fact-sheet-atf-staffing-and-budget>.

³⁴⁹ “About CBP,” US Customs and Border Protection, accessed June 2, 2017, <https://www.cbp.gov/about>.

³⁵⁰ “Homeland Security Investigations,” US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, accessed May 31, 2017, <https://www.ice.gov/hsi>.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) enforces federal laws governing border control, customs, trade, and immigration to promote homeland security and public safety. ICE was created in 2003 as a result of the merger of the investigative and interior enforcement elements of the former US Customs Service and the Immigration and Naturalization Service. ICE currently employs more than 20,000 people and has both domestic and international operations, including JTTFs and criminal exploitation and counterterrorism experts.³⁵¹ Under ICE's federal agency are two operational directorates, (1) HSI and (2) Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO). The ERO works to support US immigration laws through efficient enforcement and removal operations.

US Department of State

Established by Congress in 1789, the US Department of State (DoS) is the primary US foreign affairs agency and is the lead institution for the conduct of American diplomacy. DoS advances US objectives and interests in the world through developing and implementing the foreign policy of the President of the United States and supports the foreign affairs activities of other US government entities. DoS also operates domestic offices including passport agencies, press centers, reception centers, logistic support offices for overseas operations, security offices, and financial service centers.³⁵²

Drug Enforcement Administration

Created by President Nixon in 1973, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) is the premier drug enforcement organization in the United States and the only single-mission federal agency dedicated to drug law enforcement.³⁵³ The DEA enforces the controlled substances laws of the nation; works with the civil and criminal justice systems to identify those involved in the illegal growth, manufacture, and distribution of controlled substances; and recommends and supports nonenforcement programs aimed at reducing the availability of illegal controlled substances. The DEA has 221 offices with more than 9,000 employees, including more than 4,600 special agents, 600 investigators, 800 intelligence research specialists, and 300 chemists.³⁵⁴

The DEA led the cataloging, search, and release of more than 130 vehicles to survivors and family members of decedents. The DEA also assisted FBI with witness interviews and other traditional investigative tasks.

³⁵¹ "Who We Are," US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, accessed July 7, 2017, <https://www.ice.gov/about>.

³⁵² Monika Moore, ed., *Addressing Global Challenges through Engagement and Partnership*, Fiscal Year 2016 Agency Financial Report (Washington, DC: US Department of State, 2017), <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/264495.pdf>.

³⁵³ "DEA History," US Drug Enforcement Administration, accessed July 7, 2017, <https://www.dea.gov/about/history.shtml>.

³⁵⁴ *DEA Fact Sheet* (Washington, DC: US Drug Enforcement Administration, 2016), https://www.dea.gov/docs/DEA_Factsheet_june2016.pdf.

Internal Revenue Services (IRS)

The Internal Revenue Services (IRS) is a bureau of the US Department of the Treasury. The IRS has a criminal investigations division, which investigates potential criminal violations of the US Internal Revenue Code and related financial crimes in violation of tax law.³⁵⁵

After the incident, the FBI and the IRS partnered to review the suspect's financial records and transactions.³⁵⁶

Office of the United States Attorney Middle District of Florida

The United States Attorney's Office (USAO) for the Middle District of Florida enforces the criminal laws of the United States in civil and judicial proceedings. The USAO serves 35 of the 67 counties in the center of the state of Florida, including Orange County.³⁵⁷

The USAO for the Middle District of Florida conducted the terrorism investigation along with the FBI and the JTTF.

³⁵⁵ "What Criminal Investigation Does," Internal Revenue Service, last modified April 28, 2017, <https://www.irs.gov/uac/what-criminal-investigation-does>.

³⁵⁶ "FBI Looks into Financial Records; Psychologist Says Shooter Had 'Internalized Homophobia,'" Cox Media Group, last modified July 1, 2016, <http://www.wftv.com/news/pulse-shooting/fbi-looks-into-financial-records-psychologist-says-shooter-had-internalized-homophobia-/341829484>.

³⁵⁷ United States Attorney's Office Middle District of Florida, "About," US Department of Justice, accessed July 7, 2017, <https://www.justice.gov/usao-mdfl/about>.

Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Initialisms

AAR	after action report
ASAC	assistant special agent in charge
ATF	Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives
BEARCAT	ballistic engineered armored response counter attack truck
BIPD	Belle Isle Police Department
CBP	Customs and Border Protection
CISM	critical incident stress management
CNT	crisis negotiation team
COPS Office	Office of Community Oriented Policing Services
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration
DoS	US Department of State
EAP	employee assistance program
EIC	emergency information center
EMS	emergency medical services
EOC	emergency operations center
ER	emergency room
ERO	Enforcement and Removal Operations
ERT	evidence response team
FAC	family assistance center
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FDLE	Florida Department of Law Enforcement
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency

FEMORS	Florida Emergency Mortuary Operations Response System
FHP	Florida Highway Patrol
FRC	family reunification center
HDT	hazardous device team
HRIC	high risk incident command
HSI	Homeland Security Investigations
ICE	Immigration and Customs Enforcement
ICS	incident command system
IDLH	imminent danger to life and health
IED	improvised explosive device
IFAK	individual first aid kit
IRS	Internal Revenue Service
IS	independent study
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
IT	information technology
JIC	joint information center
JTTF	Joint Terrorism Task Force
MCC	mobile command center
MPD	Maitland Police Department
NAMI	National Alliance on Mental Illness
NIMS	National Incident Management System
O CFRD	Orange County Fire and Rescue Department
OCSO	Orange County Sheriff's Office
OEM	Office of Emergency Management

OFD	Orlando Fire Department
OPD	Orlando Police Department
ORMC	Orlando Regional Medical Center
OUAC	Orlando united assistance center
PIO	Public Information Officer
PSLPD	Port St. Lucie Police Department
SAC	special agent in charge
SCSO	Seminole County Sheriff's Office
SWAT	special weapons and tactics
UCC	unified command center
UCFPD	University of Central Florida Police Department
USAO	US Attorney's Office
VBIED	vehicle-borne IED
WGPD	Winter Garden Police Department
WPPD	Winter Park Police Department

About the Authors

Chief Frank Straub (Ret.), PhD, provided on-site project management, coordinating the work of subject matter experts and providing law enforcement guidance and expertise to the project. He managed the document review process and worked to ensure that all on- and off-site decisions and activities met project goals. A 30-year veteran of law enforcement, Dr. Straub currently serves as the Director of Strategic Studies for the Police Foundation. He served as the chief of the Spokane (Washington) Police Department; director of public safety for the City of Indianapolis, Indiana; public safety commissioner for the City of White Plains, New York; deputy commissioner of training and assistant commissioner of counterterrorism for the New York City Police Department; and as a federal agent. During his tenure with the US State Department's Bureau of Diplomatic Security and the US Naval Investigative Service he served on the FBI-NYPD Joint Terrorist Task Force. He holds a BA in Psychology from St. John's University, an MA in Forensic Psychology from John Jay College of Criminal Justice, and a PhD in Criminal Justice from the City University of New York's Graduate Center. Dr. Straub is a Non-Resident Fellow at the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point.

Jack Cambria provided on- and off-site input and expertise on law enforcement training, policies, and procedures, particularly tactical police response and hostage negotiation response. He also served as a writer for the final report. Mr. Cambria has more than 33 years policing experience from the New York City Police Department, including 16 years in the Emergency Service Unit, where he provided Rescue, Tactical and Counterterrorism Services to the City of New York. He has both command and supervisory experience and holds certifications in all facets of these operations. Mr. Cambria has responded to many high profile assignments, such as both World Trade Center disasters, numerous plane crashes, and a variety of hostage and barricade situations. Because of these achievements, he was assigned to command the agency's elite Hostage Negotiation Team for the last 14 years of his career. He continues to provide in-service training for many federal, state, and local law enforcement and corporate agencies. Mr. Cambria holds an MA in Criminal Justice and has served as an adjunct professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and the Empire State College in New York.

Chief Jane Castor (Ret.) provided on- and off-site input and expertise in training, policies, and procedures to the project. She also served as a writer for the final report. Chief Castor joined the Tampa (Florida) Police Department (TPD) in 1983 and in 2009 became the first woman to be named chief of the department. Over the course of her career, she built a reputation for working side by side with residents, community leaders, business owners, and neighboring law enforcement agencies to reduce crime and improve the quality of life in Tampa. Those community partnerships are the foundation of the TPD's dynamic crime reduction strategy, "Focus on Four." She also testified in February 2015 on the topic of officer safety before the Task Force on 21st Century Policing established in 2014 by then President Barack Obama and serves on the board of Major City Chiefs Association and on Harvard's

Executive Session on Policing and Public Safety. She was named Woman Law Enforcement Executive of the Year in 2009 by the National Association of Women in Law Enforcement. She holds an MA in Public Administration from Troy State University and is a graduate of the FBI National Academy.

Ben Gorban, policy analyst, provided on- and off-site input project support as well as document writing, review, and editing. Mr. Gorban is a policy analyst with more than eight years of experience supporting law enforcement–related projects including the provision of technical assistance and policy analysis support on projects related to countering violent extremism, community policing, and the role of social media in law enforcement. Mr. Gorban’s areas of expertise include research, resource development, and information dissemination. He received his MS in Justice, Law, and Society from American University in 2011 and his BA in both Philosophy and Justice, Law, and Society from American University in 2009.

Dr. James “Brett” Meade provided on- and off-site input and expertise in community engagement and a variety of areas in policing. Dr. Meade is the Deputy Chief of Police for the University of Central Florida. His department provides full law enforcement services to the second-largest university in the United States with more than 75 thousand students, staff, and faculty. He has more than 33 years of policing experience in complex urban environments, including more than 24 years with the Orange County Sheriff’s Office in Orlando, Florida. He has more than 19 years of command and supervisory experience with 13 years in executive and command positions. Dr. Meade has extensive command experience in large scale operational planning through the incident command system and embraces the community policing and intelligence-led policing philosophies. He is actively engaged in leadership positions addressing local, regional, and state security and information endeavors, including intelligence, fusion centers, and the Urban Area Security Initiative. Dr. Meade holds an EdD in Organizational Leadership from Northcentral University and holds secret security clearances from the FBI and US Department of Defense.

David Waltemeyer provided law enforcement guidance and expertise to the project, assisted in managing the document review and policy analysis process, and served as a writer on the final report. Mr. Waltemeyer joined the Police Foundation as a Senior Law Enforcement Project Manager after a 25-year law enforcement career. He retired from the Anne Arundel County (Maryland) Police Department (AACOPD) as an Acting Deputy Chief of Police. During his career with the AACOPD, he commanded all three of the department’s bureaus: the Patrol Bureau, the Operations and Investigations Bureau, and the Administrative Bureau. As commander of the Patrol Bureau, he was recognized as a leader in transitioning the department to an intelligence-led policing philosophy and pioneering new and creative community-oriented policing and problem-oriented policing techniques and strategies. Mr. Waltemeyer led the department’s CompStat process and supervised the Crime Analysis Unit. As commander of the Administrative Services Bureau, he led the Training Section, overseeing the department’s use of force training and active shooter programs. As commander of the Operations and Investigations Bureau, he was responsible for all Special Operations activities including the Quick Response Team, the Aviation Section, the K-9 section, the Traffic Safety Section, and the Civil Disturbance Unit. He has extensive experience managing critical incidents, such as hostage and barricade events and deadly use of force incidents. He has been a Commission of Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) assessor since 2010 and a CALEA team leader since 2015. He is also an

adjunct professor at the University of Maryland University College, providing instruction in the areas of law enforcement leadership and administration, criminal procedure and evidence, criminal investigations, and medicolegal death investigations. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Management from the University of Maryland University College and a Master's degree in Management from the Johns Hopkins University. He is a graduate of the Johns Hopkins University Police Executive Leadership Program. He has received specialized training in all areas of law enforcement leadership and management, criminal investigations, and major incident management.

Jennifer Zeunik, director of programs, provided overall project structure and oversight. She worked with project staff in driving toward goals and deliverables and coordinated activity of on- and off-site staff and subject matter experts. She also served as a writer, editor, and quality control manager on the final report, ensuring report cohesion and clarity. Ms. Zeunik has 20 years of public sector and nonprofit project management experience, working closely with all levels of government. In her career, Ms. Zeunik has provided strategic management expertise to international, federal, state, and local criminal justice clients focused on justice policy research, business development activities, program management, strategic planning, training and technical assistance management, and development of strategic communications. She served as a lead writer on numerous published reports throughout her career, including the *IACP National Policy Summit on Community-Police Relations: Advancing a Culture of Cohesion and Trust* report as well as the COPS Office-funded Police Foundation *Collaborative Reform Initiative: An Assessment of the St. Louis County Police Department* and the San Bernardino terrorist shooting critical incident review, *Bringing Calm to Chaos*.

Police Foundation project staff

Blake Norton, VP/COO, provided high-level strategy and coordination and served as the primary liaison to the COPS Office throughout the project.

Rebecca Benson, senior policy analyst, provided project support; document writing, review, and editing; and technical and mapping support.

Siobhan Scott, project associate, provided project support and document writing, review, and editing.

Joyce Iwashita, project assistant, provided project support; document writing, review, and editing; and technical and mapping support.

About the Police Foundation

The **Police Foundation** is a national, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing innovation and science in policing. As the country's oldest police research organization, the Police Foundation has learned that police practices should be based on scientific evidence about what works best, the paradigm of evidence-based policing.

Established in 1970, the foundation has conducted seminal research in police behavior, policy, and procedure and works to transfer to local agencies the best new information about practices for dealing effectively with a range of important police operational and administrative concerns. Motivating all of the foundation's efforts is the goal of efficient, humane policing that operates within the framework of democratic principles and the highest ideals of the nation.

To learn more, visit the Police Foundation online at www.policefoundation.org.

About the COPS Office

The **Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office)** is the component of the US Department of Justice responsible for advancing the practice of community policing by the nation's state, local, territorial, and tribal law enforcement agencies through information and grant resources.

Community policing begins with a commitment to building trust and mutual respect between police and communities. It supports public safety by encouraging all stakeholders to work together to address our nation's crime challenges. When police and communities collaborate, they more effectively address underlying issues, change negative behavioral patterns, and allocate resources.

Rather than simply responding to crime, community policing focuses on preventing it through strategic problem-solving approaches based on collaboration. The COPS Office awards grants to hire community policing officers and support the development and testing of innovative policing strategies. COPS Office funding also provides training and technical assistance to community members and local government leaders, as well as all levels of law enforcement.

Since 1994, the COPS Office has invested more than \$14 billion to add community policing officers to the nation's streets, enhance crime fighting technology, support crime prevention initiatives, and provide training and technical assistance to help advance community policing. Other achievements include the following:

- To date, the COPS Office has funded the hiring of approximately 129,000 additional officers by more than 13,000 of the nation's 18,000 law enforcement agencies in both small and large jurisdictions.
- Nearly 700,000 law enforcement personnel, community members, and government leaders have been trained through COPS Office-funded training organizations.
- To date, the COPS Office has distributed more than eight million topic-specific publications, training curricula, white papers, and resource CDs and flash drives.
- The COPS Office also sponsors conferences, roundtables, and other forums focused on issues critical to law enforcement.

COPS Office information resources, covering a wide range of community policing topics such as school and campus safety, violent crime, and officer safety and wellness, can be downloaded via the COPS Office's home page, www.cops.usdoj.gov. This website is also the grant application portal, providing access to online application forms.

The shooting attack on the Pulse nightclub in June 2016 claimed the lives of 49 individuals and injured 58 more. It was an event of extreme violence, carnage, and confusion. Yet the Orlando Police Department (OPD) performed with great courage and professionalism, averting a potentially greater loss of life. Recognizing that there were many lessons to be shared and learned from this incident, the OPD asked the COPS Office to conduct a Critical Incident Review of the attack. This Police Foundation report on the incident review details multiple aspects of the attack and response, including leadership, collaboration, tactics, equipment, training, emergency medical care, officer safety, public information, and community relationships. In so doing, it identifies best practices for planning, training, and procedures in all areas of response to a similar attack or mass casualty event and can serve as a valuable guide to law enforcement or first responders seeking to prepare for similar incidents.



COPS
Community Oriented Policing Services
U.S. Department of Justice

U.S. Department of Justice
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To obtain details on COPS Office programs,
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Visit the COPS Office online at www.cops.usdoj.gov.



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