

Connecting. The. Dots.

The Behavioral Threat Assessment Unit's Law Enforcement Educational Resource Guidebook



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The Behavioral Threat Assessment Unit
Law Enforcement
Educational Resource Guidebook

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NC State Bureau of Investigation
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What is the North Carolina Behavioral Threat Assessment Unit?

The North Carolina Behavioral Threat Assessment (BeTA) Unit was developed by the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation in 2018 to take a **proactive** approach to **prevent violence** in our communities.

Staffed by law enforcement officers, intelligence analysts and mental health professionals, the primary objective of a BeTA Unit investigation is to gather and evaluate information about persons who exhibit concerning behaviors associated with the pathway to violence. Behavioral Threat Assessment (BeTA) Unit investigations receive high priority and begin immediately upon receipt of information of any threat or unusual behavior directed toward an individual associated with an educational property, place of worship, or other mass gathering of the public.

MISSION

The mission of the Behavioral Threat Assessment Unit (BeTA Unit) is to identify, investigate, evaluate, and manage person(s) of concern within North Carolina who are recognized as having motive and means to develop, or act on an opportunity to commit, a targeted attack.

The BeTA Unit is intended to serve North Carolina law enforcement by assisting in the evaluation of persons of concern through an evidence-based threat assessment process.

This process is intended to determine if a person of concern is exhibiting behaviors consistent with the pathway to violence and identify appropriate management and mitigation recommendations for the individual.

The BeTA Unit provides trained personnel to work in conjunction with a requesting law enforcement agency throughout the assessment process.

Information gathered during the BeTA Unit threat assessment process is analyzed by a multidisciplinary team to determine level of threat concern and to develop potential mitigation strategies.

PURPOSE

Between 2016 and 2017, there have been 50 shootings characterized by the FBI as active shooter incidents. These 50 incidents resulted in 943 casualties (Active Shooter Incidents in the United States in 2016 and 2017, the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT) Center at Texas State University and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, DC 2018). After the February 14, 2018 attack at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, the SBI, in consultation with the University of North Carolina System, decided that the traditional reactive approach of law enforcement to attacks is not sufficient to address this issue. Partnering with University Police, and state and federal law enforcement agencies, the SBI formed the Behavioral Threat Assessment (BeTA) Unit to take a proactive approach focusing on threat assessment and management to address threats of mass violence.

The BeTA Unit is a statewide threat assessment and management program meant to follow persons of concern throughout the state and to ensure information about persons of concern is shared with other states should the person of concern move outside of North Carolina.

PREVENTION IS POSSIBLE

Findings of the Safe School Initiative conducted by the U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Department of Education suggest that some future attacks may be preventable. “The fact that most attackers engaged in pre-incident planning behavior and shared their intentions and plans with others, suggests that those conducting threat assessment inquiries or investigations could uncover these types of information.” (Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates, Washington, DC, May 2002, p. 30). The primary purpose of threat assessment is the prevention of targeted violence. The threat assessment and management process involves the proactive work of a trained multi-disciplinary threat management team charged with the responsibility to seek out and thwart potential attackers before they strike. As such, threat management is integral to the work of the BeTA Unit. Threat assessment is the process of gathering and assessing information about persons who may have the interest, motive, intention, and capability of mounting attacks against identified targets. The BeTA Unit uses this methodology but also incorporates key investigative principles and relies on relationships with other entities to gather information critical to informing the threat assessment process and formulating viable mitigation plans. Threat assessment is one component in the overall strategy to reduce violence.

THIS RESOURCE GUIDE

The Behavioral Threat Assessment (BeTA) Unit has compiled this resource guide to support Law Enforcement Agencies across North Carolina that might be new to behavioral threat assessments and would like to have a better understanding of their role in preventing targeted violence.

In the pages to follow, you will find literature from nationwide leading experts in behavioral threat assessments, landmark studies and publications that have shaped the world of behavioral threat assessment and some additional resources to explore.

While this guide is certainly not an all-encompassing or all-answering publication, we hope it serves as a strong sounding board for educating you, your agency, your administrators and policy makers on the importance of behavioral threat assessment.

The BeTA Unit is not intended to replace or duplicate the threat assessment duties of school threat assessment teams, other state and local law enforcement agencies, the Federal Bureau of Investigation Behavioral Analysis Unit, the United States Secret Service Protective Intelligence Division, or any other threat assessment group or agency.



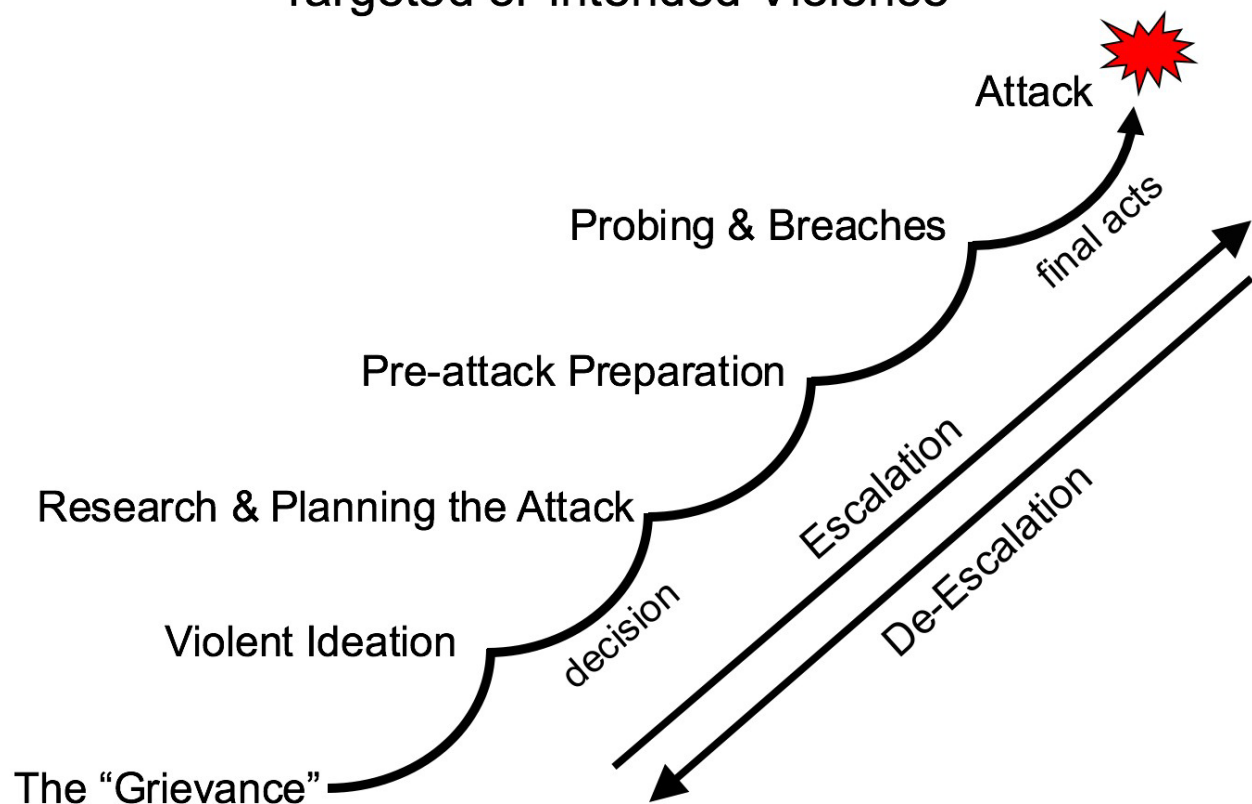
Targeted Violence

“The **conscious decision** to kill or physically harm **specific or symbolic** victims in a workplace or on a campus is now categorized as targeted or intended violence. In contrast to affective or impulsive violence, targeted violence is by definition **planned**, emotionless, and predatory.” *WAVR-21*

“Targeted violence” is defined as an incident of violence where a known or knowable attacker selects a particular target prior to their violent attack.

Perpetrators
don't "snap"
...they *decide*

Pathway to Workplace and Campus Targeted or Intended Violence

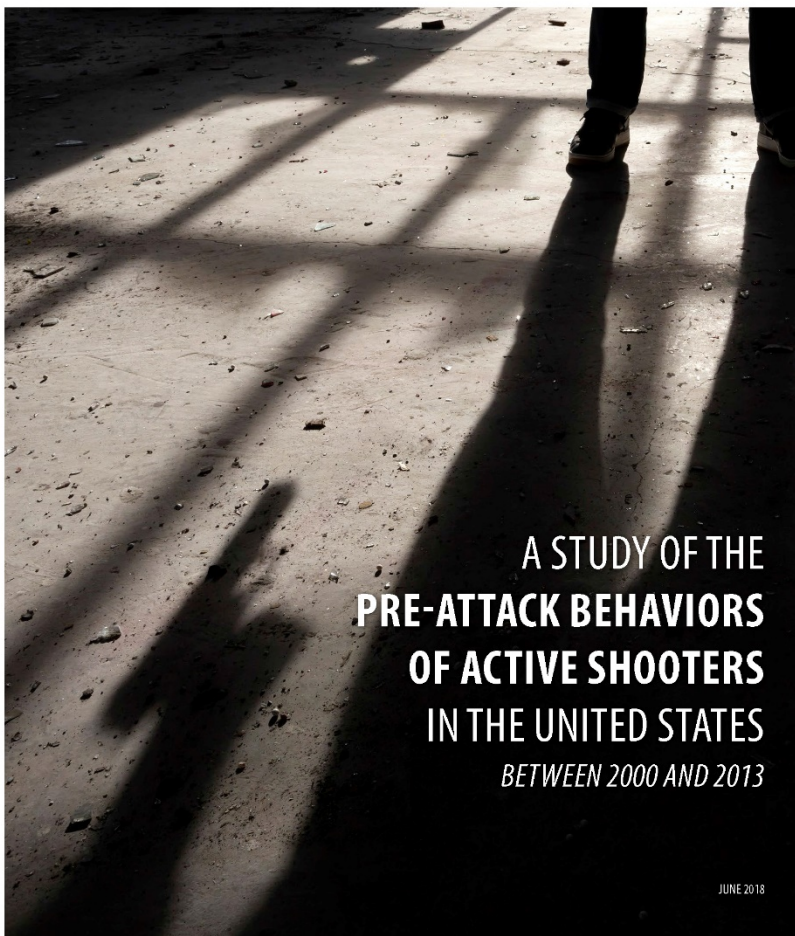


Adapted with permission from F.S. Calhoun and S.W. Weston (2003). *Contemporary threat management: A practical guide for identifying, assessing and managing individuals of violent intent.*
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A Study of Pre-Attack Behaviors of Active Shooters in the United States Between 2000 and 2013; USDOJ, FBI, Published July 2018: 77% spent a week or longer **planning**; 46% spent a week or longer actually **preparing**; In 64% of cases, at least one of the victims was **specifically targeted**

A Study of Pre-Attack Behaviors of Active Shooters in the United States Between 2000 and 2013; USDOJ, FBI, Published July 2018

U.S. Department of Justice
Federal Bureau of Investigation



A STUDY OF THE
**PRE-ATTACK BEHAVIORS
OF ACTIVE SHOOTERS**
IN THE UNITED STATES
BETWEEN 2000 AND 2013

JUNE 2018

- 56% had a first instance of concerning behavior **25 months or more** before the incident
- On average, each shooter displayed **4 to 5** observable concerning behaviors over time

Behavioral Threat Assessment

Identifies individuals who
pose a threat of targeted violence

1

Fact-based

Mitigate/manage those individuals
before they strike

PREVENTION vs. RESPONSE
PROACTIVE vs. REACTIVE

2

Behaviorally
driven

3

Pathway to
violence model

4

Only one part of
**comprehensive
law enforcement
approach**



WARNING

CONCERNING BEHAVIORS

Potential Warning Signs:

- Target Fixation: Focuses obsessively on an identified target
- Talks about harming others or carrying out an attack
- Withdrawal from friends, family, social activities or a loss of one or more major relationships
- History of abusing animals or setting fires
- Cessation Behavior: engages in behavior that signals his or her death is near
- Grievance Collector: collects multiple “wrongs” or “grievances” to justify his or her continued hatred of violent response
- Preoccupation with mass shootings, violent attacks or those who commit them
- Preoccupation with weapons or an expressed intent to use them for violent behavior
- Sudden change in behavior or appearance
- Violent thoughts or fantasies observed in art, writing assignments, online activities or in statements to friends, family, teachers, etc.

How You Can Help

Be aware of potential warning signs

Document changes in behavior

If you think an individual is exhibiting one or more of the potential warning signs, the BeTA Unit may be able to help



BeTA

The Behavioral Threat Assessment Unit MISSION

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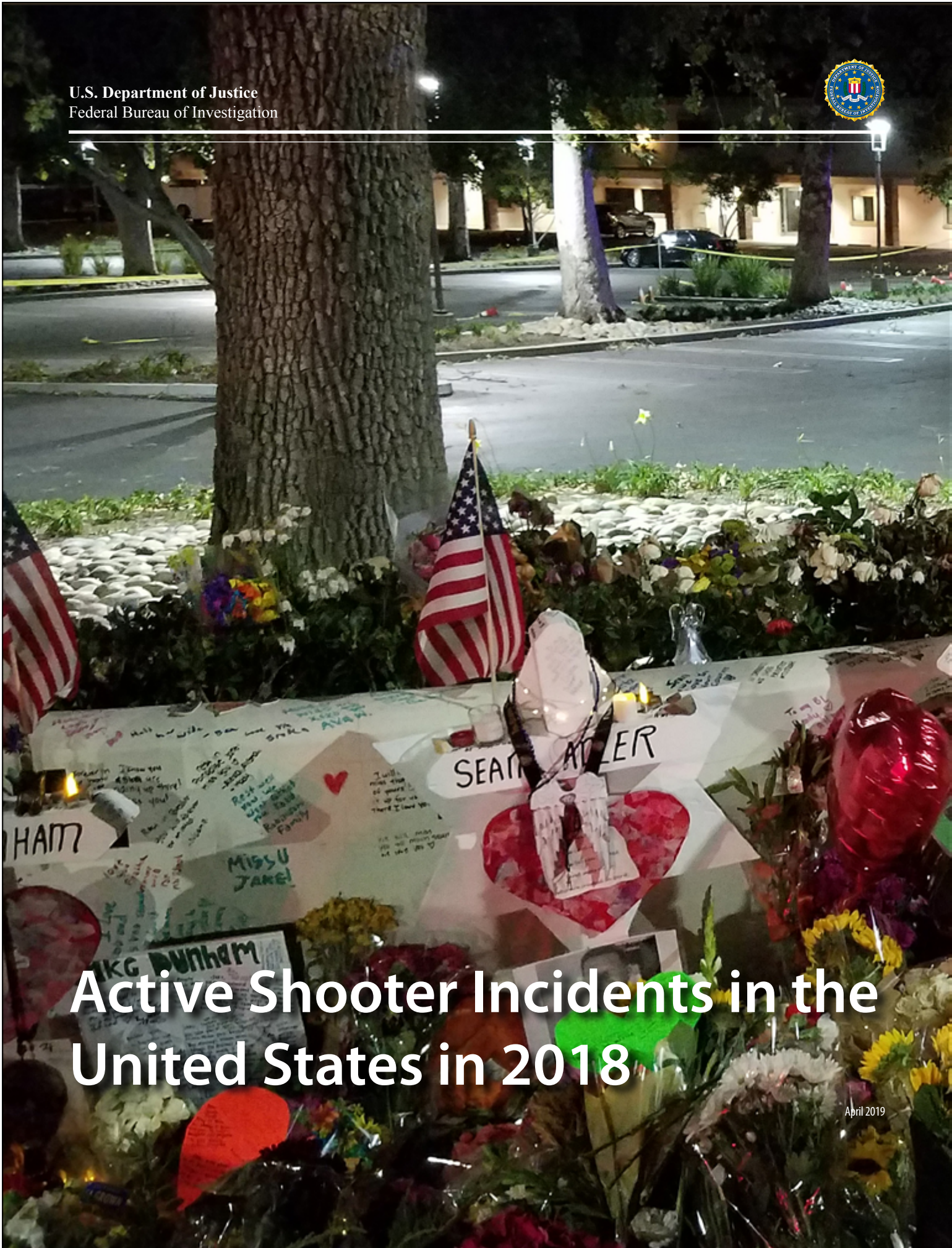
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**THE CURRENT CLIMATE
OF TARGETED ATTACKS:
ACTIVE SHOOTER
INCIDENTS IN THE
UNITED STATES IN 2018
USDOJ & FBI**





Active Shooter Incidents in the United States in 2018

Introduction

The FBI has designated 27 shootings in 2018 as active shooter incidents.

As with past FBI active shooter-related publications, this report does not encompass all gun-related situations. Rather, it focuses on a specific type of shooting situation. The FBI defines an active shooter as one or more individuals actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a populated area.¹ Implicit in this definition is the shooter's use of one or more firearms. The *active* aspect of the definition inherently implies that both law enforcement personnel and citizens have the potential to affect the outcome of the event based upon their responses to the situation.

This report supplements three previous publications: *A Study of Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Between 2000 and 2013*,² *Active Shooter Incidents in the United States in 2014 and 2015*,³ and *Active Shooter Incidents in the United States in 2016 and 2017*.⁴ The methodology articulated in the 2000-2013 study was applied to the 2018 incidents to ensure consistency. Excluded from this report are gang- and drug-related shootings and gun-related incidents that appeared not to have put other people in peril (e.g., the accidental discharge of a firearm in a bar).

The findings in this report are based on publicly available resources, FBI reporting and, when available, official law enforcement investigative data. Though limited in scope, this report was undertaken to provide clarity and data of value to federal, state, tribal, and campus law enforcement as well as other first responders, corporations, educators, and the general public as they seek to neutralize threats posed by active shooters and save lives during such incidents.



This report was written by the FBI's Office of Partner Engagement in collaboration with the FBI's Criminal Investigative Division and the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT) Center at Texas State University.

This report is in the public domain. Authorization to reproduce this publication in whole or in part is granted. The accompanying citation is as follows: *Active Shooter Incidents in the United States in 2018*, the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT) Center at Texas State University and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, D.C. 2018.

On the cover: A makeshift memorial honoring the victims of the November 7, 2018 shooting at the Borderline Bar and Grill in Thousand Oaks, California.

¹ U.S. federal government agencies define an active shooter as "an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area." The FBI expands this definition to include more than one individual in an incident and omits the word confined as the term excludes incidents that occurred outside buildings.

² Blair, J. Pete, and Schweit, Katherine W. (2014). *A Study of Active Shooter Incidents 2000-2013*. Texas State University and Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, D.C. 2014.

³ *Active Shooter Incidents in the United States in 2014 and 2015*, Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, D.C. 2016.

⁴ *Active Shooter Incidents in the United States in 2016 and 2017*, Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, D.C. 2018.

By the Numbers

27 incidents in **16** states

213 casualties – excluding the shooters

85 killed

2 law enforcement officers

1 unarmed security officer

128 wounded⁵

6 law enforcement officers

27 shooters – **23** male, **3** female, **1** at large⁶

10 committed suicide

11 apprehended by police

4 killed by police

1 killed by citizens

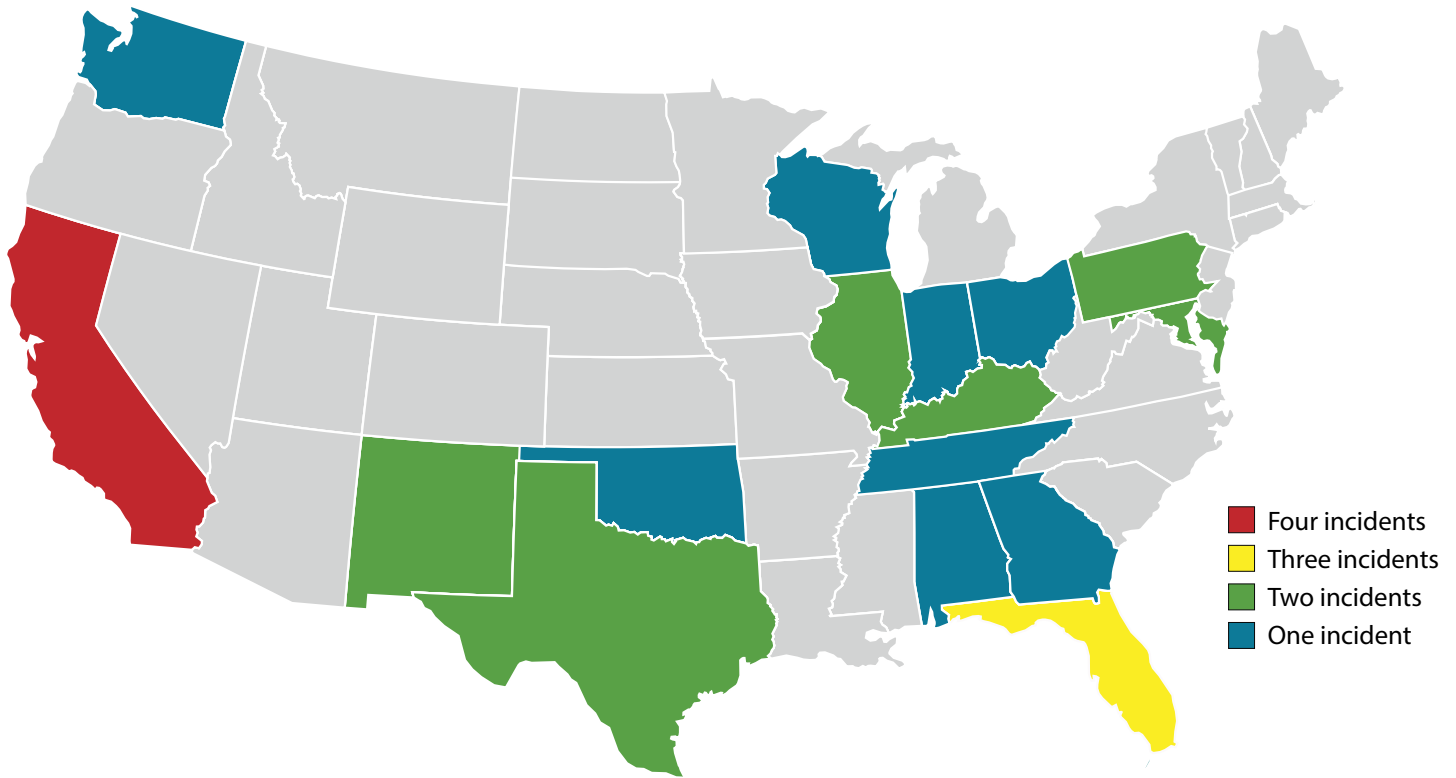
1 at large

9 incidents ended with the exchange of gunfire between the shooters and law enforcement

⁵ A number of those identified as wounded were not injured by gunfire but rather suffered injuries incidental to the shooting, such as being hit by flying objects/shattered glass or falling while running. For purposes of this study, the FBI sought to isolate the exact number of individuals that fell into this category when research permitted.

⁶ In one incident, one or more individuals began shooting at moving vehicles along a highway. As of the March 2019 publication date, no one had not been apprehended. For purposes of this report, one shooter was attributed to the incident.

Details



The 27 active shooter incidents occurred in 16 states.

- Four incidents occurred in California.
- Three incidents occurred in Florida.
- Two incidents occurred in each of the following states: Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, and Texas.
- One incident occurred in each of the following states: Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Washington, and Wisconsin.

Ten of the 27 incidents met the criteria cited in the federal definition of “mass killings,”⁷ that is, “three or more killings in a single incident.”⁸

⁷ Investigative Assistance for Violent Crimes Act USC 530C(b)(1)(M(i)).

⁸ The statute does not address the inclusion or exclusion of the shooter. The FBI does not include the shooter in its mass killing statistics.

Casualties

The 27 incidents resulted in 213 casualties (85 people killed and 128 people wounded, excluding the shooters). The highest number of casualties (17 killed and 17 wounded) occurred at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. The second highest number of casualties (12 killed and 16 wounded) occurred at the Borderline Bar and Grill in Thousand Oaks, California.

Law Enforcement/Security Personnel Engagement and Casualties

Law enforcement suffered casualties in five of the nine incidents where they engaged the shooter to end the threat.

- In two incidents,⁹ two law enforcement officers were killed (one from friendly fire) during an exchange of gunfire with the shooter.
- In two incidents,¹⁰ five law enforcement officers were wounded during an exchange of gunfire with the shooter. (In one incident, three officers were wounded from gunfire, and one officer was wounded from injuries incidental to the shooting.)
- In one incident,¹¹ a school resource officer was wounded as he was about to engage the shooter; two other officers engaged the shooter.

One unarmed security officer was killed in 2018.¹²

Citizen Engagement and Casualties

In five incidents, citizens confronted the shooter.

In three incidents, unarmed citizens confronted the shooter, thereby ending the shooting.

- In one incident,¹³ a citizen wrestled the gun away from the shooter. The shooter fled the scene and was apprehended approximately 34 hours later at another location.
- In one incident,¹⁴ citizens confronted the shooter (including one who was pistol-whipped by the shooter), allowing others to flee the scene. The shooter committed suicide at the scene before law enforcement arrived.
- In one incident,¹⁵ a teacher wrestled the shooter to the ground and restrained him until law enforcement arrived and apprehended him.

In two incidents,¹⁶ armed citizens possessing valid firearms permits exchanged gunfire with the shooter.

- In one incident, two citizens retrieved their guns from their respective vehicles, then shot and killed the shooter.
- In one incident, a citizen armed with a gun confronted the shooter, but no gunfire was exchanged. A second citizen exchanged gunfire with the shooter, but neither was struck. The shooter fled the scene and was apprehended by law enforcement a short time later at another location.

⁹ Borderline Bar and Grill and Mercy Hospital & Medical Center

¹⁰ Masontown Borough Municipal Center and Tree of Life Synagogue

¹¹ Santa Fe High School

¹² Borderline Bar and Grill

¹³ Waffle House

¹⁴ Hot Yoga Tallahassee

¹⁵ Noblesville West Middle School

¹⁶ Louie's Lakeside eatery and Kroger grocery store

The Shooters

Twenty-three shooters were male; three shooters were female; the gender of one shooter is unknown. Twenty-six shooters acted alone; one shooter may have acted alone.

The shooters ranged in age from 13 years to 64 years. Five shooters were in their teens, seven were in their 20s, seven were in their 30s, three were in their 40s, two were in their 50s, and two were in their 60s. The age of one shooter is unknown.

Eleven shooters¹⁷ were apprehended by law enforcement, six at the scene, and five at another location. Two of the 11 shooters initially fled the scene after being confronted by citizens, and one was restrained by a citizen.

Five shooters¹⁸ were killed. Four were killed by law enforcement at the scene, and one shooter was killed by citizens possessing valid firearms permits at the scene.

Ten shooters¹⁹ committed suicide: four at the scene before law enforcement arrived, three at the scene after law enforcement arrived, and three at another location. One of the shooters committed suicide after being confronted by citizens.

One shooter²⁰ is at large.

Locations²¹

Sixteen of the 27 incidents occurred in areas of **commerce**, resulting in 41 killed and 61 wounded (22 from injuries incidental to the shooting).

- Nine incidents²² occurred in business environments generally open to the public, resulting in 27 killed (including one business owner) and 44 wounded (21 from injuries incidental to the shooting—15 in one incident). In one incident, one unarmed security officer was killed from gunfire, and one law enforcement officer was killed from friendly fire. None of the shooters were known to be employees of the businesses. One shooter deployed smoke grenades; another shooter had smoke grenades in his backpack, but did not deploy them. Armed and unarmed citizens neutralized the shooter in four incidents. Three shooters were apprehended at other locations, two after being confronted by citizens; three shooters were killed at the scene, two by law enforcement and one by citizens; and three shooters committed suicide at the scene, one after being confronted by citizens.
- Seven incidents²³ occurred in **business environments** generally closed to pedestrian traffic, resulting in 14 killed (including one manager and the ex-wife of one of the shooters) and 17 wounded (one from injuries incidental to the shooting). Four shooters were current employees and two shooters, though not employees, had grievances against the businesses. One shooter was apprehended at the scene, one shooter was killed by law enforcement at the scene, and five shooters committed suicide, two before police arrived at the scene, two after police arrived, and one at another location.

Five of the 27 incidents occurred in **education environments**, resulting in 29 killed and 52 wounded.

- Four incidents²⁴ occurred in high schools, resulting in 29 (24 students, three teachers, and two coaches) killed and 50 (47 students, two teachers, and one school resource officer) wounded. Two shooters were current students; two were former students. One student deployed improvised explosive devices and Molotov Cocktails; they did not detonate or combust, however. One student shot and wounded a school resource officer as he was about to engage the shooter. Another student was wounded during an exchange of gunfire with a school resource officer. Three shooters were apprehended by law enforcement at the scene. One shooter was apprehended by law enforcement approximately 75 minutes after fleeing the scene.
- One incident²⁵ occurred in a middle school, resulting in no one killed and two (a student and a teacher) wounded. The shooter, a current student, was restrained by the wounded teacher. The shooter was apprehended by law enforcement at the scene.

Two of the 27 incidents occurred in **open space** locations, resulting in none killed and three wounded.

- Both shooters²⁶ shot at motorists along major highways. One shooter struck seven moving vehicles from a concealed position, while the other shooter, likely on foot, struck four vehicles. One shooter shot himself while being pursued by law enforcement; he died en route to the hospital. The other shooter remains at large.

Two of the 27 incidents occurred in **health care facilities**, resulting in four (three employees [including the ex-fiancé of one of the shooters] and one law enforcement officer) killed and two (one employee and the girlfriend of one of the shooters) wounded.

- Neither shooter²⁷ was an employee, but both had connections to the facilities due to current or former romantic relationships. One shooter was apprehended by law enforcement during an unrelated vehicle pursuit. The other shooter committed suicide at the scene after being shot during an exchange of gunfire with law enforcement.

One of the 27 incidents occurred on **government property**, resulting in none killed and four wounded (including the shooter's wife and one law enforcement officer).

- The shooter²⁸ was killed at the scene during an exchange of gunfire with law enforcement.

One of the 27 incidents occurred in a **house of worship**, resulting in 11 killed and six wounded (including four law enforcement officers, one from injuries incidental to the shooting).

- The shooter²⁹ was apprehended at the scene after an exchange of gunfire with law enforcement.

¹⁷ Marshall County High School, Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, City Grill café, Waffle House, Dixon High School, Santa Fe High School, Noblesville West Middle School, Capital Gazette, Kroger grocery store, Tree of Life Synagogue, and Helen Vine Recovery Center

¹⁸ Louie's Lakeside eatery, Fifth Third Center, WTS Paradigm, Masontown Borough Municipal Center, and Motel 6

¹⁹ YouTube Headquarters; Highway 365 Near Whitehall Road in Gainesville, Georgia; Ben E. Keith Gulf Coast; GLHF Game Bar; T&T Trucking, Inc. and a Residence; Rite Aid Perryman Distribution Center's Liberty Support Center; Hot Yoga Tallahassee; Borderline Bar and Grill; Ben E. Keith Albuquerque; and Mercy Hospital & Medical Center

²⁰ Highway 509 near Seattle-Tacoma International Airport

²¹ In A Study of Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Between 2000 and 2013, the FBI identified 11 locations where the public was most at risk during an incident. These location categories include commercial areas (divided into businesses open to pedestrian traffic, businesses closed to pedestrian traffic, and malls), education environments (divided into schools [pre-kindergarten through 12th grade] and institutions of higher learning), open spaces, government properties (divided into military and other government properties), residences, houses of worship, and health care facilities. In 2018, the FBI identified an additional location category (other location) to capture incidents that occurred in venues other than the 11 previously identified locations.

²² City Grill café, Waffle House, Louie's Lakeside eatery, GLHF Game Bar, Fifth Third Center, Kroger grocery store, Hot Yoga Tallahassee, Borderline Bar and Grill, and Motel 6

²³ YouTube Headquarters, Capital Gazette, Ben E. Keith Gulf Coast, T&T Trucking, Inc. and a Residence, WTS Paradigm, Rite Aid Perryman Distribution Center's Liberty Support Center, and Ben E. Keith Albuquerque

²⁴ Marshall County High School, Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, Dixon High School, Santa Fe High School

²⁵ Noblesville West Middle School

²⁶ Highway 365 Near Whitehall Road in Gainesville, Florida, and Highway 509 near Seattle-Tacoma International Airport

²⁷ Helen Vine Recovery Center and Mercy Hospital & Medical Center

²⁸ Masontown Borough Municipal Center

²⁹ Tree of Life Synagogue

Conclusion

The FBI designated 27 shootings in 2018 as active shooter incidents. Eighty-five people were killed and 128 people were wounded, excluding the shooters. Two law enforcement officers were killed (one from friendly fire) and six were wounded (one from an injury incidental to the shooting.) Twenty-three incidents were conducted by male shooters; three incidents were conducted by female shooters; one incident was conducted by an unidentified shooter. Twenty-six shooters, possibly 27, acted alone.

The shooters' ages continued to span the decades. The youngest was 13; the oldest was 64. Eleven shooters were apprehended by law enforcement, four shooters were killed by law enforcement, one shooter was killed by citizens, ten shooters committed suicide, and one shooter is at large.

Almost 60 percent of the active shooter incidents in 2018 occurred in commerce-related environments. Four of the 16 shooters were current employees. Two non-employee shooters had grievances against the businesses. In one incident, one unarmed security officer was killed by gunfire and one law enforcement officer was killed by friendly fire. Nineteen percent of the incidents occurred in educational environments (middle and high schools). Three of the shooters were current students; two were former students. One shooter shot and wounded a school resource officer. Another shooter was shot and wounded by a school resource officer.

One shooter—a student—deployed improvised explosive devices and Molotov cocktails, but they did not detonate or combust. Two shooters were armed with smoke grenades. One shooter deployed them; the other shooter did not.

As in past years, citizens were faced with split-second, life-and-death decisions. In 2018, citizens risked their lives to safely and successfully end the shootings in five of the 27 active shooter incidents. They saved many lives. Given this reality, it is vital that citizens be afforded training so they understand the risks they face and the options they have available when active shooter incidents are unfolding.

Likewise, law enforcement must remain vigilant regarding prevention efforts and aggressively train to better respond to—and help communities recover from—active shooter incidents. The FBI remains committed to assisting state, local, tribal, and campus law enforcement in its active shooter prevention, response, and recovery efforts.

Active Shooter Incidents in the United States in 2018

Marshall County High School (Education)*

On January 23, 2018, at 7:57 a.m., Gabriel Ross Parker, 15, armed with a handgun, began shooting classmates at Marshall County High School in Benton, Kentucky. Two students were killed; 21 students were wounded (seven from injuries incidental to the shooting). The shooter was apprehended by law enforcement at the scene.

Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School (Education)

On February 14, 2018, at 2:30 p.m., Nikolas Jacob Cruz, 19, armed with a rifle, began shooting students and teachers at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. Seventeen people (14 students, two coaches, and one teacher) were killed; 17 (16 students and one teacher) were wounded. The shooter, a former student who had been expelled from the school in 2017 for disciplinary reasons, fled the scene, blending in with students evacuating the building. He was apprehended approximately 75 minutes later by law enforcement at another location.

City Grill Café (Commerce)

On March 7, 2018, at 6:30 a.m., Walter Frank Thomas, 64, armed with a rifle, began shooting in the City Grill café in Hurtsboro, Alabama. Two people (including the owner) were killed; two were wounded. The shooter was apprehended by law enforcement at another location.

YouTube Headquarters (Commerce)

On April 3, 2018, at 12:45 p.m., Nasim Najafi Aghdam (female), 39, armed with a handgun, began shooting outside the YouTube headquarters in San Bruno, California. No one was killed; four were wounded (one from injuries incidental to the shooting). The shooter committed suicide at the scene before law enforcement arrived.

Waffle House (Commerce)

On April 22, 2018, at 3:30 a.m., Travis Jeffrey Reinking, 29, armed with a rifle, began shooting outside a Waffle House restaurant in Nashville, Tennessee. He fatally shot two people, then continued shooting inside the restaurant. When the shooter paused (presumably to reload or because the gun jammed), a citizen wrestled the gun away from him and tossed it over the counter. Four people (one employee and three customers) were killed; four were wounded (two from injuries incidental to the shooting). The shooter fled the scene. He was apprehended by law enforcement approximately 34 hours later at another location.

Highway 365 Near Whitehall Road in Gainesville, Georgia (Open Space)

On May 4, 2018, at 11:58 a.m., Rex Whitmire Harbour, 26, armed with a handgun, began shooting at moving vehicles from a concealed position along Highway 365 near Whitehall Road in Gainesville, Georgia. After hitting seven vehicles, the shooter returned to his vehicle, which was located nearby, and sped away. No one was killed; three were wounded (one from injuries incidental to the shooting). The shooter shot himself while being pursued by law enforcement; he died en route to the hospital.

Dixon High School (Education)

On May 16, 2018, at 8:00 a.m., Matthew A. Milby Jr., 19, armed with a rifle, began shooting inside Dixon High School in Dixon, Illinois. The shooter, a former student, then exchanged gunfire with the school resource officer. No one was killed; no one was wounded. The school resource officer shot and wounded the shooter, then apprehended him.

* In *A Study of Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Between 2000 and 2013*, the FBI identified 11 locations where the public was most at risk during an incident. These location categories include commercial areas (divided into business open to pedestrian traffic, businesses closed to pedestrian traffic, and malls), education environments (divided into schools [pre-kindergarten through 12th grade] and institutions of higher learning), open spaces, government properties (divided into military and other government properties), residences, houses of worship, and health care facilities. In 2018, the FBI added a new location category, Other Location, to capture incidents that occurred in venues not included in the 11 previously identified locations.

Santa Fe High School (Education)

On May 18, 2018, at 7:30 a.m., Dimitrios Pagourtzis, 17, armed with a shotgun and handgun, began shooting classmates and teachers at Santa Fe High School in Santa Fe, Texas. The shooter also deployed improvised explosive devices and Molotov Cocktails; however, they failed to detonate or combust. The shooter shot and wounded a school resource officer as he was about to engage the shooter. Ten people (eight students and two substitute teachers) were killed; 12 (ten students, one substitute teacher, and one school resource officer) were wounded. The shooter was apprehended by law enforcement after surrendering at the scene.

Louie's Lakeside Eatery (Commerce)

On May 24, 2018, at 6:30 p.m., Alexander C. Tilghman, 28, armed with a handgun, began shooting at Louie's Lakeside eatery and pub in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. No one was killed; four people were wounded (one from injuries incidental to the shooting). After retrieving their guns from their respective vehicles, two citizens possessing valid firearm permits shot and killed the shooter.

Noblesville West Middle School (Education)

On May 25, 2018, at 9:06 a.m., a male student (unnamed by authorities due to age), 13, armed with two handguns and a knife, began shooting a classmate and teacher in Noblesville West Middle School in Noblesville, Indiana. A teacher wrestled the shooter to the ground. No one was killed; two (a student and the teacher who restrained the shooter) were wounded. The shooter was apprehended by law enforcement at the scene.

Highway 509 Near Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (Open Space)

On June 13, 2018, at 1:42 p.m., an unidentified person(s), (age[s] unknown), armed with a gun (type unknown), began shooting at moving vehicles alongside Highway 509 near the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport in Seattle, Washington. Four vehicles were struck. No one was killed; no one was wounded. The shooter(s) was at large as of March 1, 2019.

Capital Gazette (Commerce)

On June 29, 2018, at 2:34 p.m., Jarrod Warren Ramos, 38, armed with a shotgun, began shooting in the *Capital Gazette* news offices in Annapolis, Maryland. Although the shooter had smoke grenades in his backpack, he did not deploy them. Five people were killed; two were wounded. The shooter was apprehended by law enforcement at the scene.

Ben E. Keith Gulf Coast (Commerce)

On August 20, 2018, at 2:00 a.m., Kristine Peralez (female), 38, armed with a handgun, began shooting coworkers at the Ben E. Keith Gulf Coast food and beverage distributor in Missouri City, Texas. One person (the overnight manager) was killed; one was wounded. The shooter, who was off-duty at the time of the shooting, shot herself when confronted by law enforcement; she died a short time later at a nearby hospital.

GLHF Game Bar (Commerce)

On August 26, 2018, at 1:34 p.m., David Bennett Katz, 24, armed with two handguns, began shooting inside the GLHF Game Bar in the Chicago Pizza and Sports Grill in Jacksonville, Florida, during a video game tournament. After losing a game earlier in the day, the shooter retrieved the guns from his car. He re-entered the game bar and began shooting. Two were killed; 11 were wounded (two from injuries incidental to the shooting). The shooter committed suicide at the scene before law enforcement arrived.

Fifth Third Center (Commerce)

On September 6, 2018, at 9:10 a.m., Omar Enrique Santa Perez, 29, armed with a handgun, began shooting inside the lobby of a high-rise office building containing the headquarters of the Fifth Third Bank in Cincinnati, Ohio. Three people were killed; two were wounded. The shooter was killed by law enforcement during an exchange of gunfire at the scene.

T & T Trucking, Inc. and a Residence (Commerce)

On September 12, 2018, at 5:20 p.m., Javier Casarez, 54, armed with a handgun, began shooting at T & T Trucking, Inc. in Bakersfield, California. He had driven to the facility with his ex-wife. Upon arrival, he shot two men and his ex-wife. Next, he drove to a nearby residence and shot two more people. He then carjacked a woman and child; he let them go, but fled in their vehicle. Five people (including his ex-wife) were killed; no one was wounded. The shooter committed suicide at another location when confronted by law enforcement.

WTS Paradigm (Commerce)

On September 19, 2018, at 10:30 a.m., Anthony Yente Tong, 43, armed with a handgun, began shooting at coworkers inside WTS Paradigm, a software company in Middleton, Wisconsin. No one was killed; four were wounded. The shooter was killed by law enforcement at the scene.

Masontown Borough Municipal Center (Government)

On September 19, 2018, at 2:00 p.m., Patrick Shaun Dowdell, 61, armed with a handgun, began shooting in the lobby of Masontown Borough Municipal Center in Masontown, Pennsylvania. No one was killed; four (including the shooter's wife and one law enforcement officer) were wounded. The shooter was killed at the scene during an exchange of gunfire with law enforcement.

Rite Aid Perryman Distribution Center's Liberty Support Center (Commerce)

On September 20, 2018, at 9:06 a.m., Snochia Moseley (female), 26, armed with a handgun, began shooting at coworkers during her shift at the Rite Aid Perryman Distribution Center's Liberty support center in Aberdeen, Maryland. The shooter was a temporary employee at the facility. Three were killed; three were wounded. The shooter committed suicide at the scene before law enforcement arrived.

Kroger Grocery Store (Commerce)

On October 24, 2018, at 3:00 p.m., Gregory Alan Bush, 51, armed with a handgun, began shooting inside a Kroger grocery store in Jeffersontown, Kentucky. After fatally shooting a man inside the store, the shooter exited and fatally shot a woman in the parking lot. A citizen possessing a valid firearms permit confronted the shooter, but no gunfire was exchanged. A second citizen possessing a valid firearms permit exchanged gunfire with the shooter, but neither was struck. Two people were killed; none were wounded. The shooter fled the scene and was apprehended by law enforcement a short time later at another location.

Tree of Life Synagogue (House of Worship)

On October 27, 2018, at 9:45 a.m., Robert Gregory Bowers, 46, armed with a rifle and three handguns, began shooting inside the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Eleven people were killed; six were wounded (including four law enforcement officers, one from injuries incidental to the shooting). The shooter was apprehended at the scene after an exchange of gunfire with law enforcement.

Hot Yoga Tallahassee (Commerce)

On November 2, 2018, at 5:37 p.m., Scott Paul Beierle, 40, armed with a handgun, began shooting inside the Hot Yoga Tallahassee studio in Tallahassee, Florida. Citizens confronted the shooter, allowing others to flee. Two people were killed; five were wounded (one was pistol-whipped by the shooter). The shooter committed suicide at the scene before law enforcement arrived.

Helen Vine Recovery Center (Health Care)

On November 5, 2018, at 1:30 a.m., Davance Lamar Reed, 37, armed with a handgun, began shooting in the Helen Vine Recovery Center in San Rafael, California. He then fled the scene. One person (an employee) was killed; two (an employee and the shooter's girlfriend) were wounded. The shooter was apprehended by law enforcement during an unrelated vehicle pursuit in a nearby county.

Borderline Bar and Grill (Commerce)

On November 7, 2018, at 11:20 p.m., Ian David Long, 28, armed with a handgun, began shooting at the Borderline Bar and Grill in Thousand Oaks, California. The shooter shot an unarmed security guard standing outside. He then opened fire inside the nightclub and deployed smoke grenades. Twelve people were killed (11 from gunfire, including one unarmed security officer, and one law enforcement officer from friendly fire); 16 were wounded (15 from injuries incidental to the shooting). The shooter committed suicide at the scene after an exchange of gunfire with law enforcement.

Ben E. Keith Albuquerque (Commerce)

On November 12, 2018, at 6:56 p.m., Waid Anthony Melton, 30, armed with a handgun, began shooting coworkers inside the Ben E. Keith Albuquerque food and beverage distributor in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Before entering the building, the shooter, who was off-duty at the time, had blocked an exit door with a forklift to prohibit people from leaving. No one was killed; three were wounded. The shooter committed suicide at another location.

Mercy Hospital & Medical Center (Health Care)

On November 19, 2018, at 3:20 p.m., Juan Lopez, 32, armed with a handgun, began shooting at the Mercy Hospital & Medical Center in Chicago, Illinois. The shooter shot his former fiancée, an emergency room doctor, in the parking lot, then shot two people inside the hospital. Three people (including one law enforcement officer) were killed; no one was wounded. The shooter committed suicide after being shot by law enforcement during an exchange of gunfire.

Motel 6 (Commerce)

On December 24, 2018, at 11:00 a.m., Abdias Ucdiel Flores-Corado, 35, armed with a rifle, began shooting from inside his room at a Motel 6 in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Several bullets went through the wall and traveled into an adjacent room. He then fired from the doorway of his room at motel guests and employees and at the motel main office. No one was killed; no one was wounded. The shooter was killed by law enforcement during an exchange of gunfire.

**OBSERVING THE SIGNS
A STUDY OF PRE-ATTACK
BEHAVIORS OF ACTIVE
SHOOTERS IN THE
UNITED STATES
BETWEEN 2000 AND 2013
USDOJ & FBI**





A STUDY OF THE PRE-ATTACK BEHAVIORS OF ACTIVE SHOOTERS IN THE UNITED STATES BETWEEN 2000 AND 2013

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE – FBI BEHAVIORAL ANALYSIS UNIT (BAU)

REMINDERS

- There is no one “profile” of an active shooter.
- There is no single warning sign, checklist, or algorithm for assessing behaviors that identifies a prospective active shooter.
- While impossible to predict violent behavior, it is possible to prevent some attacks via effective threat assessment and management strategies.

ACTIVE SHOOTER DEMOGRAPHICS

The **63** active shooters in the sample did not appear to be readily identifiable prior to the attack *based on demographics alone*.

The youngest active shooter was 12 yoa and the oldest was 88 yoa with an average age of **37.8** years.

94% were male and only **6%** were female.

Among active shooters age 18 and older, **44%** were employed and **38%** were unemployed.

24% had at least some military experience.

57% were single at the time of the offense.

13% were married; **13%** were divorced; **11%** were partnered but not married; **6%** were separated.

35% had adult criminal convictions prior to the event.

62% had a history of acting in an abusive, harassing or oppressive way (e.g., bullying).

16% had engaged in intimate partner violence.

11% had engaged in stalking-related conduct.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

73% of active shooters had a known connection with the attack site.

35% of active shooters age 18 and older targeted their workplace or former workplace.

88% of active shooters age 17 and younger targeted their school or former school.

Active shooters with no known connection to the site were more likely to conduct pre-attack site surveillance as compared to those with a connection to the targeted site.

21% of active shooters researched or studied past attacks by others.

In cases where the amount of time spent *planning* could be determined (n=34), **77%** (n=26) of the active shooters spent a week or longer planning their attack.

In cases where the amount of time spent *preparing* could be determined (n=46), **46%** (n=21) of the active shooters spent a week or longer preparing (procuring the means) for the attack.

In the four cases where active shooters took less than 24 hours to plan and prepare, all had at least one concerning behavior and three had an identifiable grievance.

FIREARMS ACQUISITION

40% of active shooters purchased a firearm legally and specifically for the purpose of the attack.

35% of active shooters already possessed a firearm and did not obtain it for the express purpose of the attack.

11% of active shooters borrowed or took a firearm from a person known to them.

6% of active shooters stole a firearm.

2% of active shooters purchased a firearm illegally.

STRESSORS

Active shooters experienced multiple stressors (with an average of **3.6** separate stressors) in the year prior to the attack. The stressors reported included:

62% Mental health

49% Financial strain

35% Job-related stressors

29% Conflict with friends/peers

27% Marital problems

22% Abuse of illicit drugs/alcohol

22% Other (e.g., caregiving responsibilities)

22% Conflict at school

21% Physical injury

18% Conflict with parents

16% Conflict with other family members

13% Sexual stress/frustration

11% Criminal problems

10% Civil problems

6% Death of friend/relative

2% No stressors

MENTAL HEALTH

25% of active shooters had a diagnosed mental illness prior to the offense.

Of the 25% (n=16), **12** had a mood disorder, **4** had an anxiety disorder, **3** had a psychotic disorder, and **2** had a personality disorder. One active shooter was diagnosed with Autism spectrum disorder, one with a developmental disorder, and one described as “other.”

It could not be determined if a diagnosis had been given in **37%** (n=23) of the cases in this study.

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

All active shooters either: a) lived with someone or b) had significant in-person or online social interactions.

68% of all active shooters lived with someone else.

- **64%** of active shooters 18 yoa or older lived with someone else.

86% of active shooters had significant in-person social interactions with at least one person in the year prior to the attack.

27% of active shooters had significant online interactions with another person within a year of the attack.

For this study, the FBI used data that has been verified to the greatest possible extent, relying almost exclusively on information contained in official law enforcement investigative files. Active shooting events which appeared to be spontaneous reactions to situational factors were excluded. The final sample of 63 active shooting incidents was included in this study.

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE (CONT'D)

CONCERNING BEHAVIORS

Concerning behaviors are *observable* behaviors, with an average of 4.7 concerning behaviors displayed by the active shooters in this sample. The concerning behaviors observed by others included:

- 62% Mental health
- 57% Interpersonal interactions
- 56% Leakage
- 54% Quality of thinking or communication
- 46% Work performance
- 42% School performance
- 35% Threats/confrontations
- 33% Anger
- 33% Physical aggression
- 21% Risk-taking
- 21% Firearm behavior
- 19% Violent media usage
- 13% Weight/eating
- 13% Drug abuse
- 11% Impulsivity
- 10% Alcohol abuse
- 10% Physical health
- 8% Other (e.g., idolizing criminals)
- 6% Sexual behavior
- 5% Quality of sleep
- 3% Hygiene/appearance

HOW WERE THE CONCERNING BEHAVIORS NOTICED

- 95% Verbal communication
- 86% Physical actions
- 27% Written communication
- 16% Online behavior
- 89% Demonstrated concerning behaviors that were observed in multiple ways

WHO NOTICED THE CONCERNING BEHAVIORS

- 92% Schoolmate (*if a student*)
- 87% Spouse/domestic partner (*if in a relationship*)
- 75% Teacher/school staff (*if a student*)
- 68% Family member
- 51% Friend
- 40% Co-worker
- 37% Other (e.g., neighbors)
- 25% Law enforcement
- 10% Online individual
- 5% Religious mentor

COMMON RESPONSES TO OBSERVED CONCERNING BEHAVIORS

- 83% Communicated directly to the active shooter
- 54% Did nothing
- 51% Reported the active shooter to a non-law enforcement authority
- 49% Discussed the behavior with a friend or family member
- 41% Reported the active shooter to a law enforcement authority

CONCERNING COMMUNICATIONS

55% of 40 active shooters who had a specific target made threats or had a prior confrontation.

When threats or confrontations occurred, 95% were in person and only infrequently in writing or electronically (14%).

88% of active shooters age 17 and younger leaked an intent to commit violence.

51% of active shooters leaked an intent to commit violence.

No instances of observed leakage were reported to law enforcement.

30% of active shooters created a legacy token prior to the attack.

PRIMARY GRIEVANCE

The majority of active shooters (79%) appeared to be acting in accord with a grievance of some kind, including:

- 33% Adverse interpersonal action against the active shooter
- 16% Adverse employment action against the active shooter
- 10% Other (e.g., general hatred of others)
- 5% Adverse governmental action against the active shooter
- 3% Adverse academic action against the active shooter
- 3% Adverse financial action against the active shooter
- 3% Domestic
- 3% Hate crime
- 3% Ideology/extremism
- 21% Unknown/no grievance identified

Even the active shooters with no identifiable grievance demonstrated at least two concerning behaviors (with an average of 5.4 behaviors) that were observed by others.

PRECIPITATING EVENT

Of the 50 active shooters who had an identifiable grievance, nearly half of them (44%) experienced a precipitating or triggering event related to the grievance.

TARGETING

While approximately one-third of active shooters in this sample victimized only random members of the public, most active shooters arrived at a targeted site with a specific person or persons in mind.

SUICIDE: IDEATION AND ATTEMPTS

48% (n=30) of active shooters had suicidal ideation or engaged in suicide-related behaviors at some point prior to the attack.

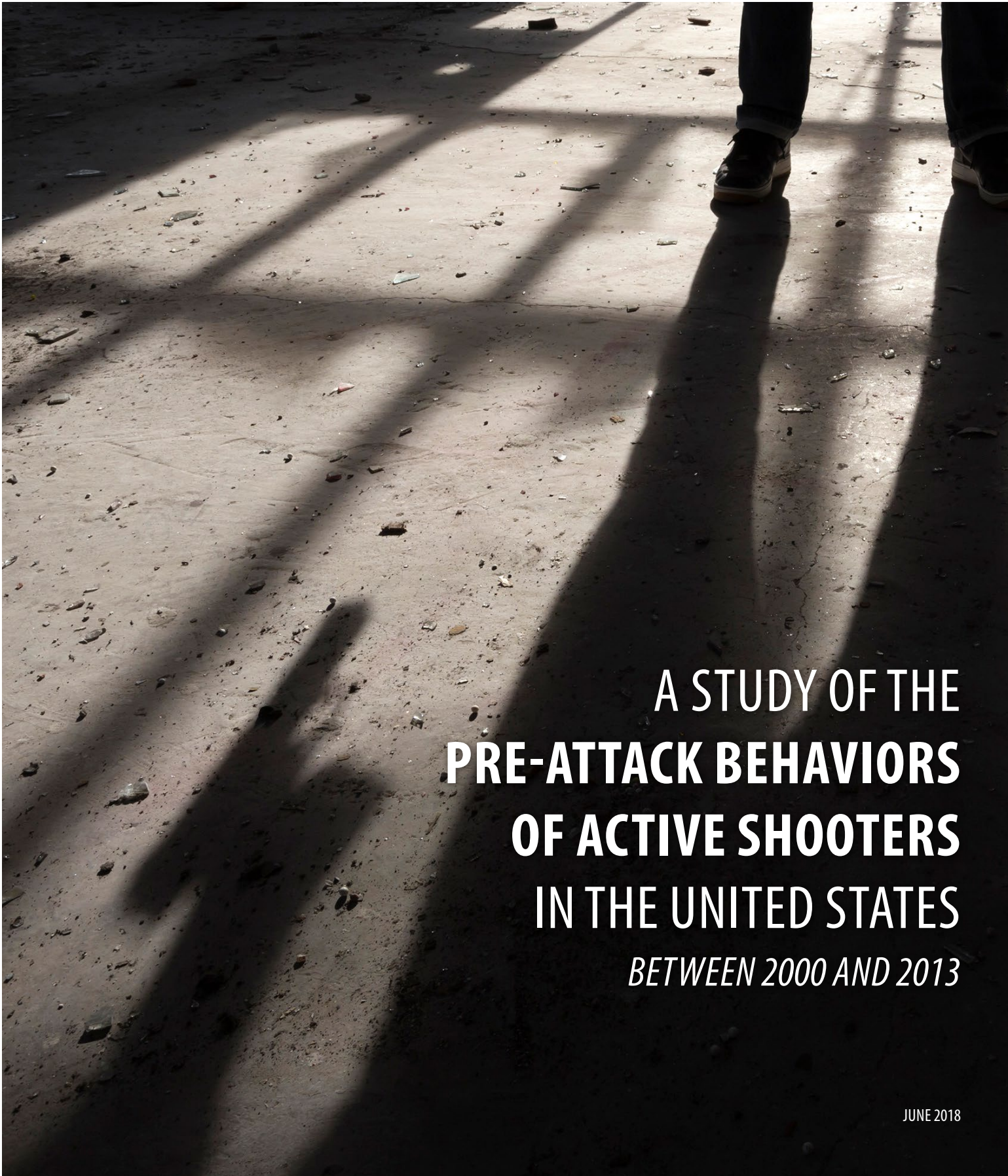
- Of the 30 suicidal active shooters, 90% showed signs of suicidal ideation and 23% made actual suicide attempts.
- 70% of these behaviors occurred within one year of the shooting.

RESOURCES

Persons suspected of planning an active shooting should be immediately reported to local law enforcement or to a threat assessment team.

The BAU's Behavioral Threat Assessment Center (BTAC) is the only multi-agency behavioral threat assessment and threat management team in the U.S. Government. Requests for BTAC assistance can be made via the BAU Coordinator in your local FBI Field Office.

A Study of the Pre-Attack Behaviors of Active Shooters in the United States is available for download at www.fbi.gov/file-repository/pre-attack-behaviors-of-active-shooters-in-us-2000-2013.pdf/view

A photograph of a crime scene floor. The floor is light-colored and covered with small pieces of debris. Long, dark shadows are cast across the floor, suggesting a window or doorway is nearby. The lower legs and feet of two people are visible in the upper right corner, standing on the floor.

**A STUDY OF THE
PRE-ATTACK BEHAVIORS
OF ACTIVE SHOOTERS
IN THE UNITED STATES**
BETWEEN 2000 AND 2013

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A Study of the Pre-Attack Behaviors of Active Shooters in the United States

Between 2000 and 2013

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The authors are exceptionally grateful to our many threat assessment colleagues who have partnered with and supported the BAU over several years. These professionals quietly and tirelessly work each day to prevent active shootings in our schools, universities, houses of worship, and businesses.





The authors and researchers from the FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit involved in preparing this report are aware of the horrific impact these shootings have had on victims, survivors, families, and communities. We extend our deepest sympathies to those who have suffered the unimaginable tragedy of an active shooting, either personally or as a family member. We know that behind the statistics and numbers presented here are thousands of individuals with personal stories of grief, bravery, and resilience. In partnership with other law enforcement and threat assessment professionals, we remain committed to doing everything possible to prevent future attacks. Although much work remains, we present this report as a step towards disrupting those who would seek to inflict catastrophic harm.

Introduction

In 2017 there were 30 separate active shootings in the United States, the largest number ever recorded by the FBI during a one-year period.¹ With so many attacks occurring, it can become easy to believe that nothing can stop an active shooter determined to commit violence. “The offender just snapped” and “There’s no way that anyone could have seen this coming” are common reactions that can fuel a collective sense of a “new normal,” one punctuated by a sense of hopelessness and helplessness. Faced with so many tragedies, society routinely wrestles with a fundamental question: can *anything* be done to prevent attacks on our loved ones, our children, our schools, our churches, concerts, and communities?

There is cause for hope because there *is* something that can be done. In the weeks and months before an attack, many active shooters engage in behaviors that may signal impending violence. While some of these behaviors are intentionally concealed, others are observable and — if recognized and reported — may lead to a disruption prior to an attack. Unfortunately, well-meaning bystanders (often friends and family members of the active shooter) may struggle to appropriately categorize the observed behavior as malevolent. They may even resist taking action to report for fear of erroneously labeling a friend or family member as a potential killer. Once reported to law enforcement, those in authority may also struggle to decide how best to assess and intervene, particularly if no crime has yet been committed.

By articulating the concrete, observable pre-attack behaviors of many active shooters, the FBI hopes to make these warning signs more visible and easily identifiable. This information is intended to be used not only by law enforcement officials, mental health care practitioners, and threat assessment professionals, but also by parents, friends, teachers, employers and anyone who suspects that a person is moving towards violence.

In 2014, the FBI published a report titled *A Study of Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Between 2000 and 2013*.² One hundred and sixty active shooter incidents in the United States occurring between 2000 and 2013 were included in the sample. In this first report, the FBI focused on the circumstances of the active shooting events (e.g., location, duration, and resolution) but did not attempt to identify the motive driving the offender, nor did it highlight observable pre-attack behaviors demonstrated by the offender. The 2014 report will be referred to as the “Phase I” study.

The present study (“Phase II”) is the natural second phase of that initiative, moving from an examination of the parameters of the shooting events to assessing the pre-attack behaviors of the shooters themselves. This second phase, then, turns from the vitally important inquiry of “what happened during and after the shooting” to the pressing questions of “how do the active shooters behave *before* the attack?” and, if it can be determined, “why did they attack?” The FBI’s objective here was to examine specific behaviors that may precede an attack and which might be useful in identifying, assessing, and managing those who may be on a pathway to deadly violence.

1 <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/active-shooter-incidents-us-2016-2017.pdf/view>

2 <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/active-shooter-study-2000-2013-1.pdf/view>

Key Findings of the Phase II Study

1. The **63** active shooters examined in this study did not appear to be uniform in any way such that they could be readily identified prior to attacking *based on demographics alone*.
2. Active shooters take time to plan and prepare for the attack, with **77%** of the subjects spending a week or longer planning their attack and **46%** spending a week or longer actually preparing (procuring the means) for the attack.
3. A majority of active shooters obtained their firearms legally, with only very small percentages obtaining a firearm illegally.
4. The FBI could only verify that **25%** of active shooters in the study had ever been diagnosed with a mental illness. Of those diagnosed, only three had been diagnosed with a psychotic disorder.
5. Active shooters were typically experiencing multiple stressors (an average of **3.6** separate stressors) in the year before they attacked.
6. On average, each active shooter displayed **4 to 5** concerning behaviors over time that were observable to others around the shooter. The most frequently occurring concerning behaviors were related to the active shooter's mental health, problematic interpersonal interactions, and leakage of violent intent.
7. For active shooters under age 18, school peers and teachers were more likely to observe concerning behaviors than family members. For active shooters 18 years old and over, spouses/domestic partners were the most likely to observe concerning behaviors.
8. When concerning behavior was observed by others, the most common response was to communicate directly to the active shooter (**83%**) or do nothing (**54%**). In **41%** of the cases the concerning behavior was reported to law enforcement. Therefore, just because concerning behavior was *recognized* does not necessarily mean that it was *reported* to law enforcement.
9. In those cases where the active shooter's primary grievance could be identified, the most common grievances were related to an adverse interpersonal or employment action against the shooter (**49%**).
10. In the majority of cases (**64%**) at least one of the victims was specifically targeted by the active shooter.

*All percentages in this report are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Methodology

With the goal of carefully reviewing the pre-attack lives and behaviors of the active shooters, the FBI developed a unique protocol of 104 variables covering, among other things:

- Demographics
- Planning and preparation
- Acquisition of firearms in relation to the attack
- Stressors
- Grievance formation
- Concerning pre-attack behaviors and communications
- Targeting decisions
- Mental health

Whereas Phase I analyzed event circumstances that are typically well documented both in law enforcement incident reports and reliable open sources³, this second phase is substantially based on observations of what are often nuanced behavioral indicators demonstrated by the active shooter prior to the attack. Given the subtle nature of many of the factors relevant to the inquiry, the FBI decided to use data that have been verified to the greatest possible extent, relying almost exclusively on information contained in official law enforcement investigative files.⁴ For this reason, Phase II includes only those cases where the FBI obtained law enforcement investigative files that contained “background” materials (e.g., interviews with family members, acquaintances, neighbors; school or employment records; writings generated by the subject) adequate to answer the protocol questions.⁵ In addition, as Phase II focused on identifying pre-attack behaviors of those on a trajectory to violence, active shooting events which appeared to be spontaneous reactions to situational factors (e.g., fights that escalated) were excluded. This resulted in a final sample of 63 active shooting incidents included in the Phase II study.

The use of law enforcement investigative case files as the primary source of data makes this study unique in comparison to other reports that typically rely upon unverified data derived from open sources. The comprehensive evaluation of law enforcement case files for suitability and completeness also contributed to the substantial time it has taken to prepare and publish this study.

The FBI examined whether the 63 cases included in Phase II are representative of the entire Phase I sample ($N = 160$). To identify the differences in the samples between Phase I and Phase II ($N = 160$ versus $N = 63$), the FBI compared those cases that were *only* in Phase I ($n = 97$) to those cases included in Phase II ($N = 63$), assessing potential differences between the active shooters (e.g., race, gender, age, and whether the offender committed suicide subsequent to the attack), as well as potential differences in the characteristics of the incidents (number of victims killed, number of law enforcement officers killed, location of the incident, active shooter movement during the event, and if the event concluded prior to the arrival of law enforcement).

3 Incident overview (e.g., date, location), incident specifics (weapon(s) used, duration of event), and incident outcome (deaths, injuries, resolution).

4 For one incident, the study relied on publicly available official reports which were based on the complete law enforcement investigative files.

5 The investigative files did not contain uniform amounts of subject-related behavioral information, as the depth and breadth of investigations varied based on several factors, including available resources, the prospect or not of trial, and the complexity of the event.

As compared to the 97 cases that were only in Phase I, the 63 cases in Phase II had the following characteristics:

- Had a higher number of victims killed on average during each shooting;
- Were more likely to end before law enforcement arrived;
- Were more likely to include offenders who identified with Asian and Caucasian ethnicity, with active shooters identified with African American and Hispanic ethnicity generally underrepresented as compared to Phase I;
- Were more likely to occur in an educational facility or a house of worship; and
- Were more likely to end with the active shooter committing suicide.

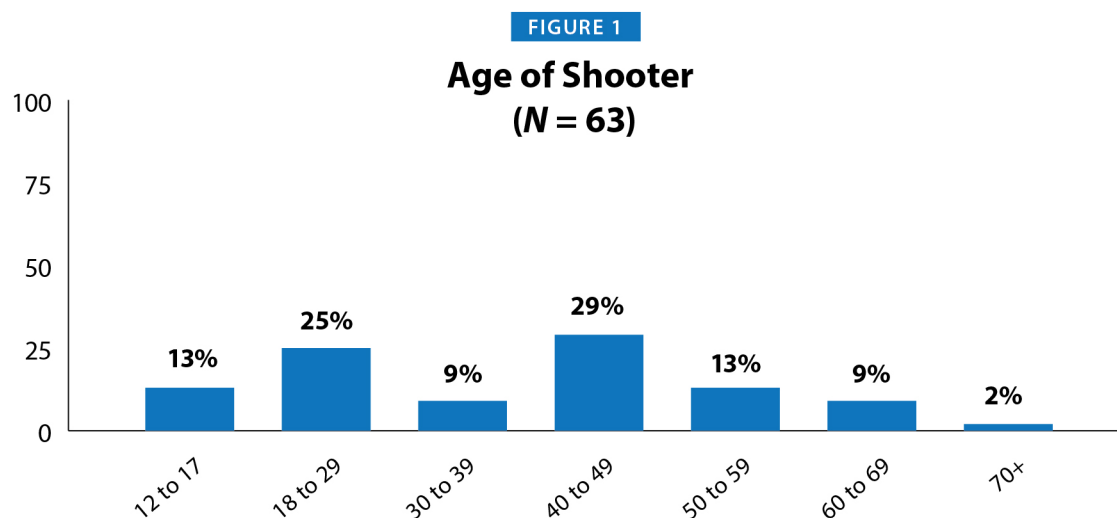
After cases were identified, a three-stage coding process was utilized. First, two researchers read all case materials and independently coded each of the cases across all protocol variables. The researchers took a conservative approach to coding, declining to definitively answer any question that was not supported by record evidence. Second, another experienced coder (the “reviewer”) also read each investigative file. In the final stage, the coders and the reviewer met for each of the 63 cases, compared answers, discussed disagreements, and produced a single reconciled set of data.

SHOOTER DEMOGRAPHICS

The sample comprised individuals who varied widely along a range of demographic factors making it impossible to create a demographic profile of an active shooter. Indeed, the findings and conclusions of this study should be considered in light of the reality that these 63 active shooters did not appear to be uniform in any way such that they could be readily identified prior to attacking *based on demographics alone*.

Age:

The youngest active shooter was 12 years old and the oldest was 88 years old with an average age of 37.8 years. Grouping the active shooters by age revealed the following:

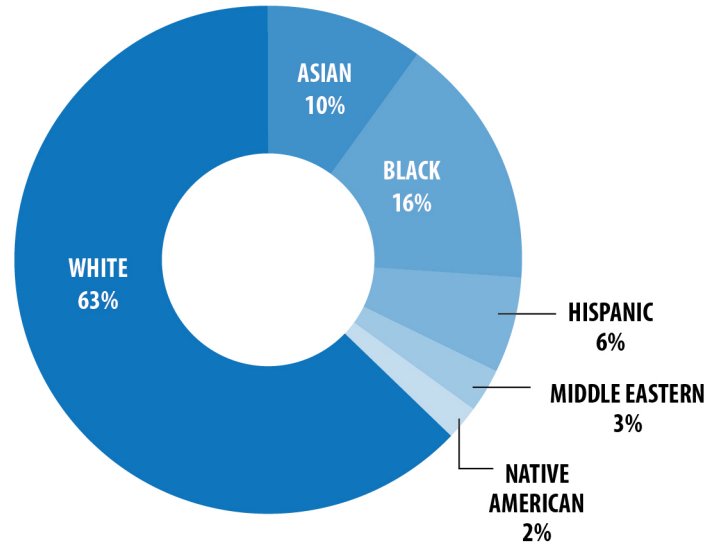


Gender and Race:

The sample was overwhelmingly male (94%, $n = 59$), with only four females in the data set (6%, $n = 4$), and varied by race as shown in Figure 2:⁶

FIGURE 2

Race ($N = 63$)

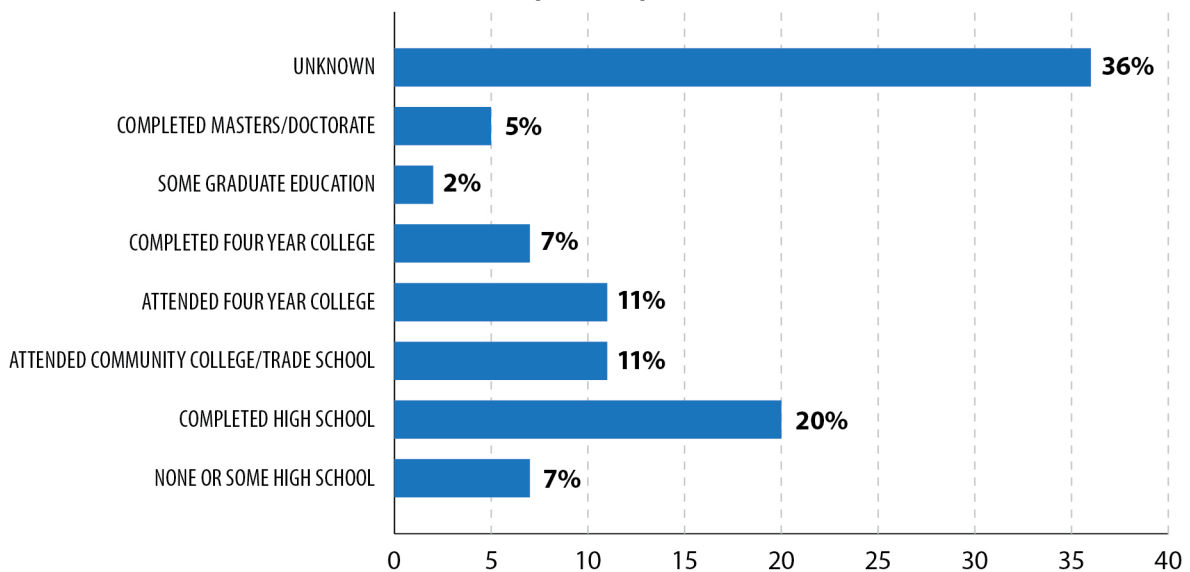


Highest Level of Education⁷:

None of the active shooters under the age of 18 had successfully completed high school, and one (age 12) had not yet entered high school. When known, the highest level of education of adults varied considerably, as shown in Figure 3:

FIGURE 3

Highest Level of Education Completed – 18 Years and Older ($n = 55$)



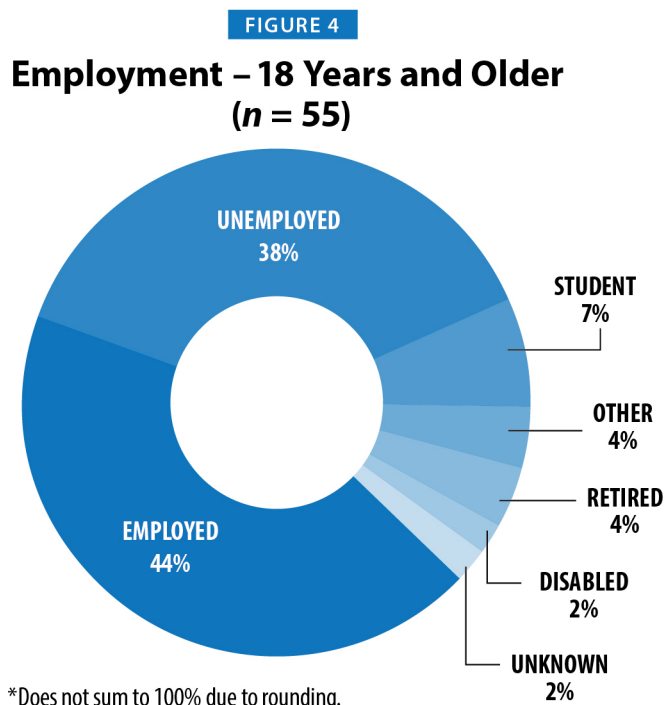
*Does not sum to 100% due to rounding.

6 Descriptors of active shooters' races were obtained from law enforcement records.

7 Active shooters under the age of 18 ($n=8$) were excluded in analyses for those variables not typically pertaining to juveniles (e.g., marital status, higher education).

Employment:

The active shooters who were under 18 years old were all students. As featured in Figure 4, nearly equal percentages of the adult active shooters 18 years or older were employed as were unemployed, and 7% ($n = 4$) were primarily students. The rest of the adults were categorized as retired, disabled/receiving benefits, or other/unknown.



Military:

Of the active shooters 18 and older, 24% ($n = 13$) had at least some military experience, with six having served in the Army, three in the Marines, two in the Navy, and one each in the Air Force and the Coast Guard.

Relationship Status:

The active shooters included in the Phase II study were mostly single at the time of the offense (57%, $n = 36$). Thirteen percent ($n = 8$) were married, while another 13% were divorced. The remaining 11% were either partnered but not married ($n = 7$) or separated (6%, $n = 4$).

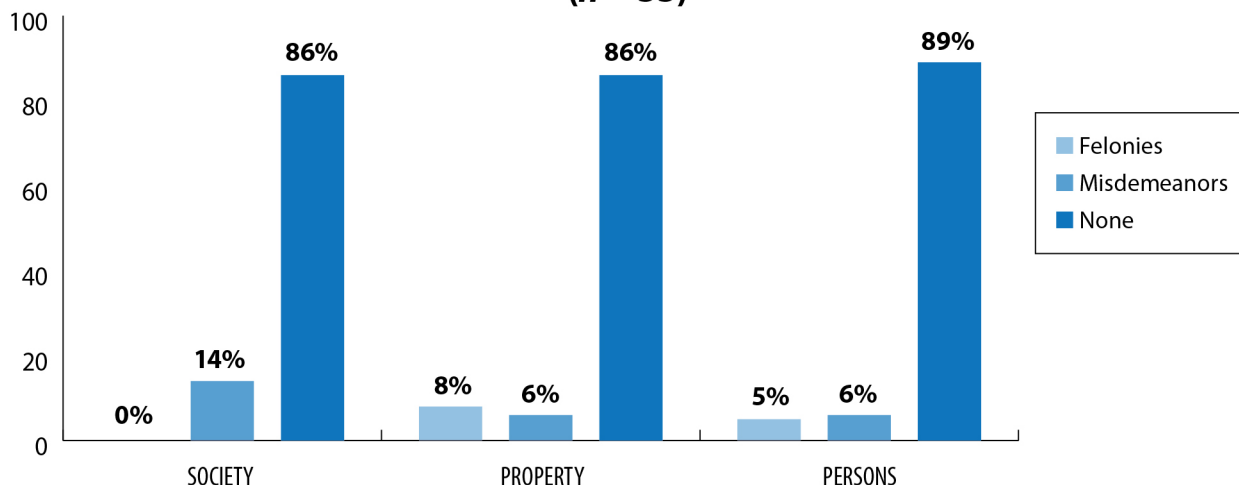
Criminal Convictions and Anti-Social Behavior⁸:

Nineteen of the active shooters aged 18 and over (35%) had adult convictions prior to the active shooting event. As visualized in Figure 5, the convictions can be categorized as crimes against society, property, or persons. The category of “crimes against society” included offenses such as driving under the influence, disorderly conduct and the possession of drug paraphernalia. Both the misdemeanor and felony “crimes against property” involved non-violent offenses, such as conspiracy to commit theft, theft, possession of stolen property, and criminal mischief. The misdemeanor “crimes against persons” were not inherently dangerous, but the felony “crimes against persons” involved convictions for criminal sexual assault of a family member, aggravated stalking, and endangering a person (although no active shooter was convicted of more than one crime against a person).

8 The study does not include juvenile adjudications; therefore, we did not run the analyses on those aged 17 and younger.

FIGURE 5

Adult Criminal Convictions – 18 Years and Older (n = 55)



*There was only one case where an active shooter had both a felony and a misdemeanor conviction in a single category (under "Property").

In sum, the active shooters had a limited history of adult convictions for violent crime and a limited history of adult convictions for crime of any kind.

Because formal criminal proceedings may not capture the full range of anti-social behaviors in a person’s background, the FBI also looked for evidence of behaviors that were abusive and/or violent, but which did not result in a criminal charge. For some active shooters, no evidence of these behaviors was found, but given that these actions by definition did not involve the formal criminal justice system, it is possible that more violent incidents occurred than are reported here.

We found evidence that 62% (n = 39) of the active shooters had a history of acting in an abusive, harassing, or oppressive way (e.g., excessive bullying, workplace intimidation); 16% (n = 10) had engaged in intimate partner violence; and 11% (n = 7) had engaged in stalking-related conduct.⁹

Considerations

There were very few demographic patterns or trends (aside from gender) that could be identified, reinforcing the concept that there is no one “profile” of an active shooter. Perhaps most noteworthy is the absence of a pronounced violent criminal history in an overwhelming majority of the adult active shooters. Law enforcement and threat management professionals assessing a potentially violent person may therefore wish to avoid any reliance on demographic characteristics or on evidence (or lack thereof) of prior criminal behavior in conducting their assessments.

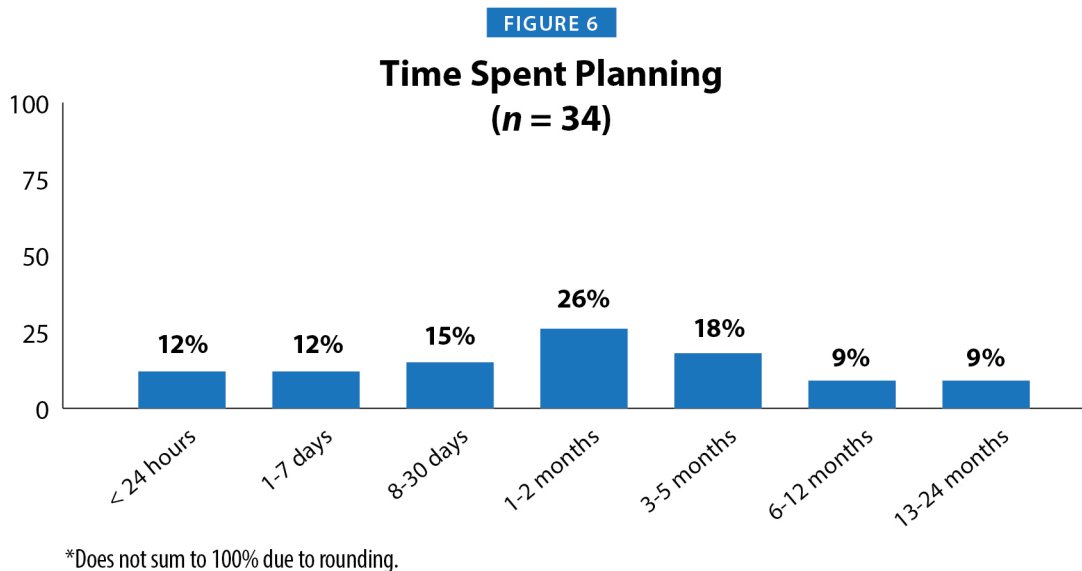
⁹ This number may be underrepresented given the high percentage of unknown responses as related to stalking behaviors (68%).

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

This study examined two related but separate temporal aspects of the active shooters' pre-attack lives — total time spent *planning* the attack and total time spent *preparing* for the attack.^{10,11,12} The purpose in analyzing these chronologies was to establish the broad parameters during which active shooters were moving toward the attack and to identify behaviors that may have been common during these time periods.

In this context, planning means the full range of considerations involved in carrying out a shooting attack. This includes the decision to engage in violence, selecting specific or random targets, conducting surveillance, and addressing all ancillary practical issues such as victim schedules, transportation, and site access. Planning is more specific than a general intent to act violently and involves the thought processes necessary to bring about an intended outcome. Since planning may primarily be an internal thought process, it was often difficult to find objective, observable indications of an active shooter's planning. In nearly half of the cases, the total time spent planning is unknown. However, this is different than declaring that there was no evidence of planning at all, because in every case there was at least some evidence that the active shooter planned the attack; the challenge was ascertaining when the planning began.

In establishing the total duration of planning, the FBI looked for evidence of behaviors that were observable (e.g., conversations, conducting surveillance) as well as in materials that were private to the active shooter (e.g., journals, computer hard drives) and likely unknowable to others until after the attack. As demonstrated in Figure 6, there was a wide range of planning duration in the 34 cases where the time spent planning could reasonably be determined.



With regard to specific planning activities, care should be taken in the interpretation of the data. For instance, our study indicates that few active shooters overall approached or conducted surveillance on their target (14%, $n = 9$), and fewer still researched or studied the target site where the attack occurred (10%, $n = 6$). While this could indicate that the active shooters were uninterested in knowing about their targets or attack sites in advance or engaged in little tactical planning, this is inconsistent with the operational experience of the FBI. The likely reason for this finding is that the active shooters often attacked people and places with which they were already familiar. There was

10 Calhoun, T., & Weston, S., (2003). Contemporary threat management. San Diego: Specialized Training Services;

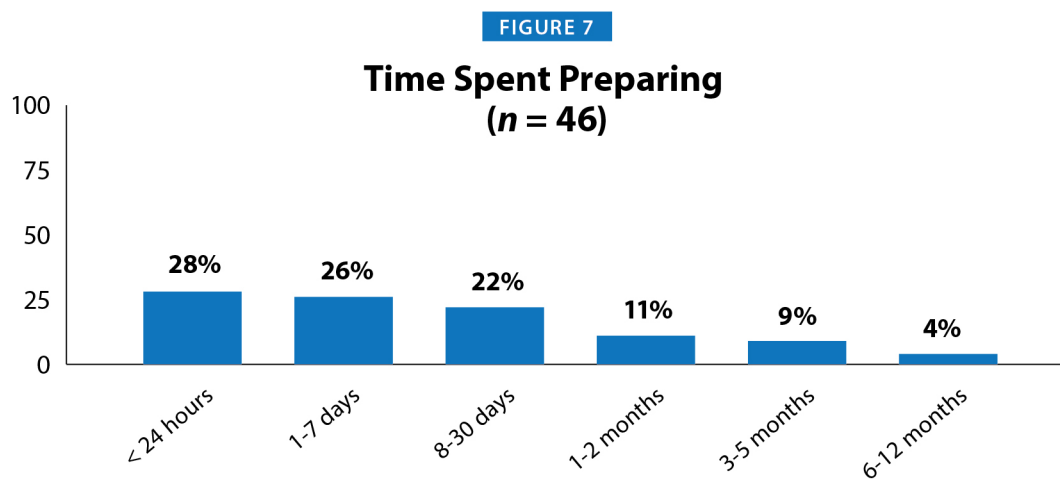
11 Fein, R. & Vossekuil, B. (1999). Assassination in the United States: an operational study of recent assassins, attackers, and near-lethal approachers. *Journal of Forensic Sciences*.

12 Vossekuil, B., Fein, R., Reddy, M., Borum, R., & Modzeleski, W. (2004). *The final report and findings of the safe school initiative: Implications for the prevention of school attacks in the United States*. Washington, DC: U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Department of Education.

a known connection between the active shooters and the attack site in the majority of cases (73%, $n = 46$), often a workplace or former workplace for those 18 and older (35%, $n = 19$), and almost always a school or former school for those younger than 18 (88%, $n = 7$), indicating that in most cases the active shooter was already familiar with both the attack site as well as the persons located at the site. Conversely, those active shooters with no affiliation to the targeted site behaved differently. Active shooters with no known connection to the site of their attack were more likely to conduct surveillance ($p < .05$) and research the site ($p < .01$). With routine contact, pre-attack surveillance could presumably be conducted concurrent to normalized activity and eliminate the need for a more formalized or detectable reconnaissance of a chosen target.

The investigative files also demonstrated that only some active shooters researched or studied past attacks by others (21%, $n = 13$). This is not to say that other active shooters were unaware of past attacks — it is difficult to imagine that they did not have at least some basic knowledge of prior infamous shootings that received national media coverage. The FBI again suspects that this behavior may be underrepresented in the study sample, especially as we could not determine if active shooters researched past attacks in 46% of the cases.

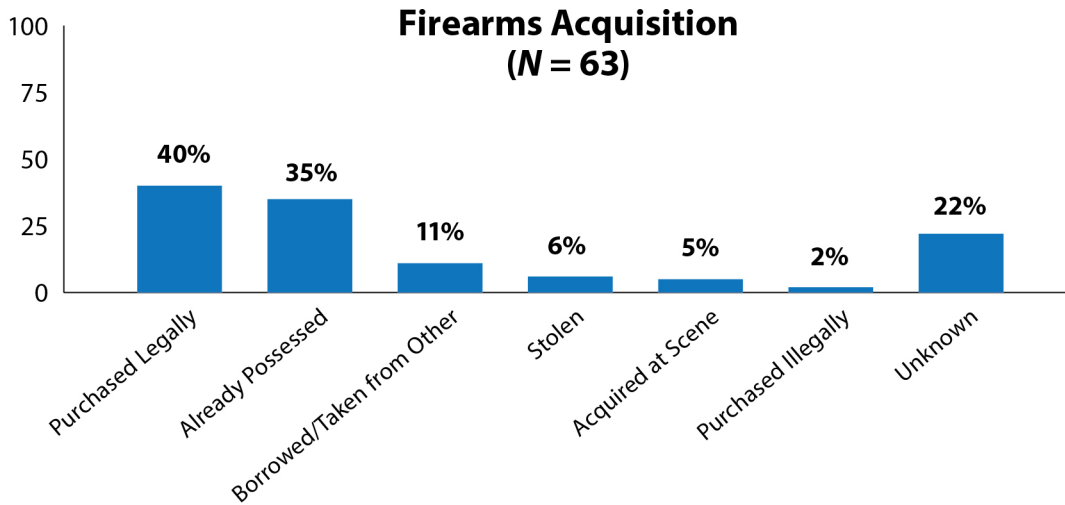
Preparing was narrowly defined for this story as actions taken to procure the means for the attack, typically items such as a handgun or rifle, ammunition, special clothing and/or body armor. The focus was on activities that could have been noticed by others (e.g., a visit to a gun store, the delivery of ammunition) and which were essential to the execution of the plan. The FBI was able to find evidence of time spent preparing in more cases than for time spent planning (likely reflecting the overt nature of procuring materials as opposed to the presumably largely internal thought process of planning). As Figure 7 demonstrates, in more than half of the cases where the time spent preparing was known, active shooters spent one week or less preparing for the attack.



FIREARMS ACQUISITION

As part of the review of the active shooter’s preparations, the FBI explored investigative records and attempted to identify how each active shooter obtained the firearm(s) used during the attack. Most commonly (40%, $n = 25$), the active shooter purchased a firearm or firearms legally and specifically for the purpose of perpetrating the attack. A very small percentage purchased firearms illegally (2%, $n = 1$) or stole the firearm (6%, $n = 4$). Some (11%, $n = 7$) borrowed or took the firearm from a person known to them. A significant number of active shooters (35%, $n = 22$) already possessed a firearm and did not appear (based on longevity of possession) to have obtained it for the express purpose of committing the shooting.

FIGURE 8



*Data percentages detailed above add to greater than 100% as active shooters could have obtained multiple firearms in different ways.

Considerations

Active shooters generally take some time to plan and carry out the attack. However, retrospectively determining the exact moment when an active shooter decided to engage in violence is a challenging and imprecise process. In reviewing indicators of planning and preparing, the FBI notes that most active shooters (who demonstrated evidence of these processes in an observable manner) spent days, weeks, and sometimes months getting ready to attack. In fact, in those cases where it could be determined, 77% of the active shooters ($n = 26$) spent a week or longer planning their attack, and 46% ($n = 21$) spent a week or longer preparing. Readers are cautioned that simply because some active shooters spent less than 24 hours planning and preparing, this should not suggest that potential warning signs or evidence of an escalating grievance did not exist before the initiation of these behaviors. In the four cases where active shooters took less than 24 hours to plan and prepare for their attacks, all had at least one concerning behavior and three had an identifiable grievance.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, active shooters tended to attack places already familiar to them, likely as a result of a personal grievance which motivated the attack and/or as a result of operational comfort and access. A unique challenge for safety, threat assessment, and security professionals will be to identify “outside” active shooters who are not already operating within the target environment. Pre-attack site surveillance by an outsider may be one observable behavior in physical or online worlds indicative of planning and preparation activities.

STRESSORS

Stressors are physical, psychological, or social forces that place real or perceived demands/pressures on an individual and which may cause psychological and/or physical distress. Stress is considered to be a well-established correlate of criminal behavior.¹³ For this study, a wide variety of potential stressors were assessed, including financial pressures, physical health concerns, interpersonal conflicts with family, friends, and colleagues (work and/or school), mental health issues, criminal and civil law issues, and substance abuse.¹⁴

13 Felson, R.B., Osgood, D.W., Horney, J. & Wiernik, C. (2012). Having a bad month: General versus specific effects of stress on crime. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 28, 347-363 for a discussion of various theories describing the relationship between stress and crime.

14 See Appendix A.

The FBI recognizes that most (if not all) people in some way confront similar issues on a regular basis in their daily lives, and that most possess adequate personal resources, psychological resiliency, and coping skills to successfully navigate such challenges without resorting to violence. Therefore, the FBI focused on identifying stressors that appeared to have more than a minimal amount of adverse impact on that individual, and which were sufficiently significant to have been memorialized, shared, or otherwise noted in some way (e.g., in the active shooter’s own writings, in conversation with family or friends, work files, court records). Given the fluid nature of some (although not all) of the stressors, the analysis was limited to the year preceding the attack.

The variables were treated as binary, that is, either the stressor was present or not, without regard for the number of separate circumstances giving rise to the stressor. So, an active shooter who had conflict with *one* family member and a shooter who had conflicts with *several* family members were both coded as “yes” for “conflict with other family members.”

Overall, the data reflects that active shooters were typically experiencing multiple stressors (an average of 3.6 separate stressors) in the year before they attacked. For example, in the year before his attack, one active shooter was facing disciplinary action at school for abuse of a teacher, was himself abused and neglected at home, and had significant conflict with his peers. Another active shooter was under six separate stressors, including a recent arrest for drunk driving, accumulating significant debt, facing eviction, showing signs of both depression and anxiety, and experiencing both the criminal and civil law repercussions of an incident three months before the attack where he barricaded himself in a hotel room and the police were called.

The only stressor that applied to more than half the sample was mental health (62%, $n = 39$). Other stressors that were present in at least 20% of the sample were related to financial strain, employment, conflicts with friends and peers, marital problems, drug and alcohol abuse, other, conflict at school, and physical injury.

TABLE 1: STRESSORS

Stressors	Number	%
Mental health	39	62
Financial strain	31	49
Job related	22	35
Conflicts with friends/peers	18	29
Marital problems	17	27
Abuse of illicit drugs/alcohol	14	22
Other (e.g. caregiving responsibilities)	14	22
Conflict at school	14	22
Physical injury	13	21
Conflict with parents	11	18
Conflict with other family members	10	16
Sexual stress/frustration	8	13
Criminal problems	7	11
Civil problems	6	10
Death of friend/relative	4	6
None	1	2

MENTAL HEALTH

There are important and complex considerations regarding mental health, both because it is the most prevalent stressor and because of the common but erroneous inclination to assume that anyone who commits an active shooting must de facto be mentally ill. First, the *stressor* “mental health” is not synonymous with a *diagnosis* of mental illness. The stressor “mental health” indicates that the active shooter appeared to be struggling with (most commonly) depression, anxiety, paranoia, etc. in their daily life in the year before the attack. There may be complex interactions with other stressors that give rise to what may ultimately be transient manifestations of behaviors and moods that would not be sufficient to warrant a formal diagnosis of mental illness. In this context, it is exceedingly important to highlight that the FBI could only verify that 25% ($n = 16$) of the active shooters in Phase II were known to have been diagnosed by a mental health professional with a mental illness of *any kind* prior to the offense.¹⁵ The FBI could not determine if a diagnosis had been given in 37% ($n = 23$) of cases.

Of the 16 cases where a diagnosis prior to the incident could be ascertained, 12 active shooters had a mood disorder; four were diagnosed with an anxiety disorder; three were diagnosed with a psychotic disorder; and two were diagnosed with a personality disorder. Finally, one active shooter was diagnosed with Autism spectrum disorder; one with a developmental disorder; and one was described as “other.” Having a diagnosed mental illness was unsurprisingly related to a higher incidence of concurrent mental health stressors among active shooters.

Considerations

It is clear that a majority of active shooters experienced multiple stressors in their lives before the attack. While the active shooters’ reactions to stressors were not measured by the FBI, what appears to be noteworthy and of importance to threat assessment professionals is the active shooters’ ability to navigate conflict and resiliency (or lack thereof) in the face of challenges. Given the high prevalence of financial and job-related stressors as well as conflict with peers and partners, those in contact with a person of concern at his/her place of employment may have unique insights to inform a threat assessment.

In light of the very high lifetime prevalence of the symptoms of mental illness among the U.S. population, formally diagnosed mental illness is not a very specific predictor of violence of any type, let alone targeted violence.^{16,17,18} Some studies indicate that nearly half of the U.S. population experiences symptoms of mental illness over their lifetime, with population estimates of the lifetime prevalence of diagnosable mental illness among U.S. adults at 46%, with 9% meeting the criteria for a personality disorder.^{19,20} Therefore, absent specific evidence, careful consideration should be given to social and contextual factors that might interact with any mental health issue before concluding that an active shooting was “caused” by mental illness. In short, declarations that all active shooters must simply be mentally ill are misleading and unhelpful.

CONCERNING BEHAVIORS

Concerning behaviors are *observable* behaviors exhibited by the active shooter. For this study, a wide variety of concerning behaviors were considered, including those related to potential symptoms of a mental health disorder, interpersonal interactions, quality of the active shooter’s thinking or communication, recklessness, violent media usage, changes in hygiene and weight, impulsivity, firearm behavior, and physical aggression.²¹ Although these may be related to stressors in the active shooter’s life, the focus here was not on the internal, subjective experience of

15 The number of documented, diagnosed mental illness may be the result of a number of factors, including those related to situational factors (access to health care) as well as those related to the study factors (access to mental health records).

16 Elbogen, E.B., & Johnson, S.C. (2009). The intricate link between violence and mental disorder. *Arch Gen Psychiatry*, 66(2), 152-161.

17 Glied, S.A., and Frank, R.G. (2014). Mental illness and violence: Lessons from the evidence. *American Journal of Public Health*, 104, e5-e6 doi:10.2015/AJPH.2013.301710

18 Monahan, J., Steadman, H. J., Silver, E., Applebaum, P.S., Clark Robbins, P., Mulvey, E. P., & Banks, S. (2001). Rethinking Risk Assessment: The MacArthur Study of Mental Disorder and Violence. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press

19 Kessler, R.C., Berglund, P., Demler, O., Jin, R., Merikangas, K.R., Walters, E.E. Lifetime prevalence and age-of-onset distributions of DSM-IV disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. *Arch Gen Psychiatry*. 2005;62(6): 593-602.

20 Lenzeweger, M.F., Lane, M.C., Loranger, A.W., Kessler, R.C., DSM-IV personality disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. *Biol Psychiatry*. 2007;62(6): 553-564.

21 See Appendix B.

the active shooter, but rather on what was *objectively knowable* to others. So, while the assessment of stressors is meant to provide insight into the active shooter’s inner turmoil, the examination of concerning behaviors addresses a related but separate issue — the possibility of identifying active shooters before they attack by being alert for observable, concerning behaviors. The FBI looked for documented confirmation that someone noticed a facet of the shooter’s behavior causing the person to feel a “more than minimal” degree of unease about the well-being and safety of those around the active shooter.

Before examining what behaviors were observable by others, it is useful to address the widespread perception that active shooters tend to be cut off from those around them. In general, the active shooters in Phase II were not completely isolated and had at least some social connection to another person. While most of the active shooters age 18 and older were single/never married (51%, $n = 28$) or separated/divorced (22%, $n = 12$) at the time of the attack, the majority did live with someone else (68%, $n = 43$). This percentage was slightly less (64%, $n = 35$) for only those active shooters who were 18 years or older. Most had significant in-person social interactions with at least one other person in the year before the attack (86%, $n = 54$), and more than a quarter of them had significant online interactions with another person within a year of the attack (27%, $n = 17$). All active shooters either: a) lived with someone, or b) had significant in-person or online social interactions.

Since the observation of concerning behaviors offers the opportunity for intervention prior to the attack, this study examines not only what was observed, but when the observations were made, who made them, and what if anything the person(s) did with regard to these observations. To better serve threat assessment teams, mental health professionals, community resources, and law enforcement officials, the FBI expanded the inquiry to capture behaviors that may have been observed at any point (in many cases beyond one year) before the attack.

Overall, active shooters showed concerning behaviors in multiple ways, with an average of 4.7 concerning behaviors per active shooter. Behaviors observed in more than half of the sample were related to the shooter’s mental health²², interpersonal interactions, leakage (the communication to a third-party of an intent to harm someone, discussed with threats in a separate section), and the quality of the active shooter’s thinking or communication.

Of note was that contextually inappropriate firearms behavior was noted in approximately one fifth of the active shooters, while drug and alcohol abuse figured even less prominently in the sample (for the purposes of the study, contextually inappropriate firearms behavior was defined as interest in or use of firearms that appeared unusual given the active shooter’s background and experience with firearms).

TABLE 2: CONCERNING BEHAVIORS

Concerning Behavior	Number	%
Mental health	39	62
Interpersonal interactions	36	57
Leakage	35	56
Quality of thinking or communication	34	54
Work performance*	11	46
School performance**	5	42
Threats/confrontations	22	35
Anger	21	33
Physical aggression	21	33

Continues on next page

22 Thirty-nine active shooters were experiencing a mental health stressor, and 39 active shooters showed concerning behaviors related to mental health, but the same 39 active shooters did not appear in each category; there were five active shooters who had a mental health stressor but who did not show a concerning behavior, and five other active shooters who showed a mental health-related concerning behavior but for whom there was no evidence of mental health stress.

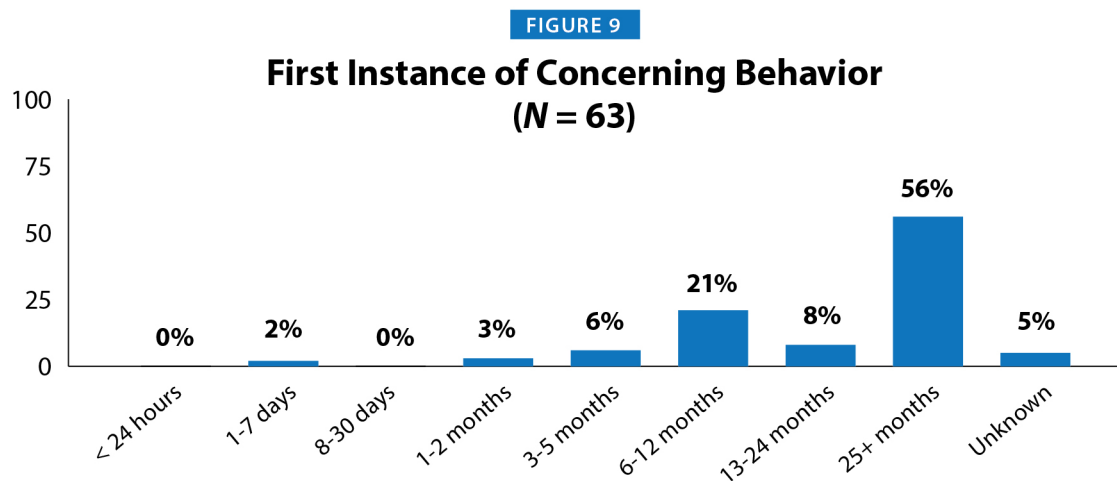
Risk-taking	13	21
Firearm behavior	13	21
Violent media usage	12	19
Weight/eating	8	13
Drug abuse	8	13
Impulsivity	7	11
Alcohol abuse	6	10
Physical health	6	10
Other (e.g. idolizing criminals)	5	8
Sexual behavior	4	6
Quality of sleep	3	5
Hygiene/appearance	2	3

* Based on the 24 active shooters who were employed at the time of the offense

** Based on the 12 active shooters who were students at the time of the offense

When Were the Concerning Behaviors Noticed?

Since the overwhelming majority of active shooters (all but three) displayed at least two concerning behaviors, there are a number of different ways to assess the data. One way is to examine the data by active shooter and to observe the first instance that any concerning behavior was noticed (this could not be determined for three active shooters). Figure 9 shows this data and helps frame the longest time before a shooting during which others were concerned about the active shooter's behavior.



*Does not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Again, this chart shows the first instance of *any* concerning behavior, and it should be kept in mind that this behavior might not have been the type that by *itself* would cause a reasonable person to be alarmed or to report it to others. For example, a co-worker who noticed that an active shooter had more than the normal amount of conflict with a supervisor might be unlikely to take any action. Perhaps only after an attack and with the benefit of hindsight would this singular behavior be considered to be — in and of itself — troubling or concerning. Yet, on average, each active shooter displayed *four to five* concerning behaviors over time. While it may only be the interaction and cumulative effect of these behaviors that would cause alarm, early recognition and detection of growing or interrelated problems may help to mitigate the potential for violence.

In What Way Were the Concerning Behaviors Noticed?

Concerning behaviors came to the attention to others in a variety of ways, with some far more common than others. The most prevalent way in which concerning behaviors were noticed was verbal communication by the active shooter (95%, $n = 60$), followed by observing the physical actions of the active shooter (86%, $n = 54$), written communication (27%, $n = 17$), and finally instances where concerning behavior was displayed online (16%, $n = 10$). A large majority of active shooters (89%, $n = 56$) demonstrated concerning behaviors that were noticed in multiple ways.

Who Noticed the Concerning Behaviors?

At least one person noticed a concerning behavior in *every* active shooter's life, and on average, people from three different groups noticed concerning behaviors for each active shooter. As shown below, classmates (for those who were students), partners (for those in relationships), family members and friends most frequently noticed concerning behavior, followed by co-workers, other, and law enforcement:

TABLE 3: WHO NOTICED CONCERNING BEHAVIORS

Who Noticed	Number	%
Schoolmate*	11	92
Spouse/domestic partner**	13	87
Teacher/school staff*	9	75
Family member	43	68
Friend	32	51
Co-worker	25	40
Other (e.g. neighbors)	23	37
Law enforcement	16	25
Online individual	6	10
Religious mentor	3	5

* Percentage calculated only with those active shooters who were students at the time of the offense

** Percentage calculated only with those active shooters who were in a relationship at the time of the offense

What, If Anything, Did the Concerned Party Do?

If the person recognizes behaviors as problematic but takes no action, the opportunity for intervention is missed. Whether and how a person responds to an active shooter's concerning behavior is likely influenced by a host of personal and situational factors (e.g., whether the behavior is threatening to the observer or others, the relationship of the observer and active shooter, avenues for anonymous reporting, and/or confidence in authorities or others to address the behavior).

In this study, even in cases where an active shooter displayed a variety of concerning behaviors that might indicate an intent to act violently, the observer(s) of that information did not necessarily pass it along to anyone else. As shown above, the people most likely to notice concerning behaviors were those who knew the active shooter best — family, friends and classmates. For the very reason they are the people most likely to take note of concerning behaviors, they are also people who may feel constrained from acting on these concerns because of loyalty, disbelief, and/or fear of the consequences.²³

23 Borum, R. (2013). Informing Lone-Offender Investigations. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 12(1), 103-112.

Again, keeping in mind that active shooters displayed multiple concerning behaviors and those who observed these behaviors might have responded in different ways to each, the most common response was to communicate directly to the active shooter (83%, $n = 52$) or do nothing (54%, $n = 34$). Thus, in many instances, the concern stayed between the person who noticed the behavior and the active shooter.

The next most common responses were: report the active shooter to a non-law enforcement authority (51%, $n = 32$); discuss the concerning behavior with a friend or family member (49%, $n = 31$); and, report the active shooter to law enforcement authority (41%, $n = 26$).

Considerations

The analysis above is not intended to, nor could it, encompass the innumerable ways in which the observer of a concerning behavior might react. Nor does it suggest that every concerning behavior warrants assertive intervention; many of the concerning behaviors that registered with others likely would not have presaged deadly violence to a reasonable person. The FBI is aware that in retrospect certain facts may take on a heightened degree of significance that may not have been clear at the time.

Nevertheless, understanding that there are often opportunities before a shooting to recognize concerning behaviors that may suggest progression toward violence, the FBI is highlighting the most common behaviors displayed in the sample. There is no single warning sign, checklist, or algorithm for assessing behaviors that identifies a prospective active shooter. Rather, there appears to be a complex combination of behaviors and interactions with bystanders that may often occur in the days, weeks, and months leading up to an attack. Early recognition *and* reporting of concerning behaviors to law enforcement or threat assessment professionals may initiate important opportunities for mitigation.

PRIMARY GRIEVANCE

A grievance is defined for this study as the cause of the active shooter's distress or resentment; a perception — not necessarily based in reality — of having been wronged or treated unfairly or inappropriately.^{24,25,26} More than a typical feeling of resentment or passing anger, a grievance often results in a grossly distorted preoccupation with a sense of injustice, like an injury that fails to heal. These thoughts can saturate a person's thinking and foster a pervasive sense of imbalance between self-image and the (real or perceived) humiliation. This nagging sense of unfairness can spark an overwhelming desire to “right the wrong” and achieve a measure of satisfaction and/or revenge. In some cases, an active shooter might have what appeared to be multiple grievances but, where possible, the FBI sought to determine the primary grievance. Based on a review of the academic literature and the facts of the cases themselves, the FBI identified eight categories of grievances, with an additional category of “other” for grievances that were entirely idiosyncratic.

As shown in the following table, the FBI could not identify a primary grievance for 13 (21%) of the active shooters, either because they did not have one or because there was insufficient evidence to determine whether one existed. While it may be particularly difficult to understand the motivation(s) for attacks that do not appear to be based on identifiable grievances, these active shooters still displayed concerning behaviors, were under identifiable stressors, and engaged in planning and preparation activities. For example, for the active shooters where no grievance could be identified, all had at least two behaviors (with an average of 5.4 behaviors) that were noted to be concerning by others.

24 Calhoun, T., & Weston, S., (2003).

25 Fein, R., & Vossekuil, B. (1999).

26 Vossekuil, B., Fein, R., Reddy, M., Borum, R., & Modzeleski, W. (2004).

The majority (79%, $n = 50$) of the active shooters did appear to be acting in accord with a grievance of some kind. Of course, the grievance itself may not have been reasonable or even grounded in reality, but it appeared to serve as the rationale for the eventual attack, giving a sense of purpose to the shooter. Most of these grievances seem to have originated in response to some specific action taken regarding the active shooter. Whether interpersonal, employment, governmental, academic, or financial, these actions were (or were perceived to be) directed against the active shooter personally. In contrast, grievances driven by more global or broad considerations — such as ideology or hatred of a group — account for less than 7% of the overall cases. In general then, active shooters harbored grievances that were distinctly personal to them and the circumstances of their daily lives.

TABLE 4: PRIMARY GRIEVANCE

Primary Grievance	Number	%
Adverse interpersonal action against the shooter	21	33
Adverse employment action against the shooter	10	16
Other (e.g. general hatred of others)	6	10
Adverse governmental action against the shooter	3	5
Adverse academic action against the shooter	2	3
Adverse financial action against the shooter	2	3
Domestic	2	3
Hate crime	2	3
Ideology/extremism	2	3
Unknown	13	21

Precipitating Events

Of the 50 active shooters who had an identifiable grievance, nearly half of them experienced a precipitating or triggering event related to the grievance (44%, $n = 22$). Seven active shooters (14%) did not experience a precipitating event, and the FBI could not determine whether the remaining 21 (42%) did. Precipitating events generally occurred close in time to the shooting and included circumstances such as an adverse ruling in a legal matter, romantic rejection, and the loss of a job.

These precipitating events were of more consequence in the timing of the attack, and while they appear to have accelerated the active shooter’s movement on the trajectory to violence, they did not by themselves appear to set the course.

Considerations

Of course, many people have grievances and never act violently. What caused the active shooters in this study to act the way they did cannot be explained simply by the presence of a grievance. There was likely the interaction of a variety of operational considerations and psychological stressors that eventually crystallized in the decision to ignore non-violent options and choose to attack. However, the types of grievances most commonly experienced by the active shooters in this study may be important considerations for the many threat assessment teams and law enforcement professionals who work each day to assess a subject’s progression along the pathway to violence.

TARGETING

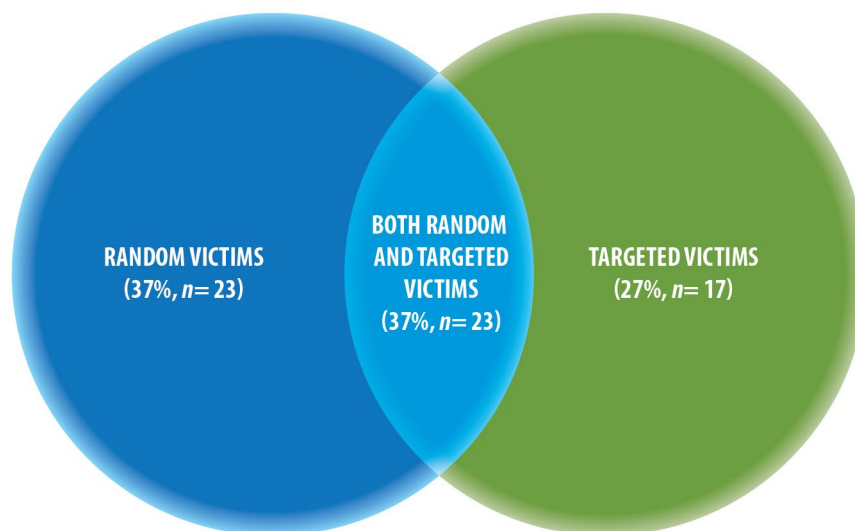
For this study, a target is defined as a person or group of people who were *identifiable before the shooting occurred* and whom the active shooter intended to attack. It was not necessary that the active shooter knew the target by name; intending to attack a person holding a position at or affiliated with a business, educational facility, or in a governmental agency sufficed. The target could be a group, so long as members of that group could have been identified prior to the attack.

In cases where the victims could not reasonably have been identified prior to the shooting, the active shooter was deemed to have selected the victims at random. While there is *some* element of selection in any attack where there is more than one potential victim (unless the active shooter literally does not aim at all), the FBI considered victims to be random where there was: 1) no known connection between the active shooter and the victims, and 2) the victims were not specifically linked to the active shooter's grievance.

In many cases, there was a mix of targeted and random victims in the same shooting. The typical circumstance occurred when an active shooter went to a location with targets in mind and also shot others who were at the same location, either because they presented some obstacle in the attack or for reasons that could not be identified.

The overall numbers for targeted and random victims are listed below:

FIGURE 10



*Does not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Considerations

While approximately one-third of active shooters in this sample victimized only random members of the public, most active shooters arrive at a targeted site with a specific person or persons in mind. Awareness of targeting behaviors can provide valuable insight for threat assessment professionals. Relatedly, the FBI has observed that when an active shooter's grievance generalizes — that is, expands beyond a desire to punish a specific individual to a desire to punish an institution or community — this should be considered to be progression along a trajectory towards violence and ultimately a threat-enhancing characteristic.

SUICIDE: IDEATION AND ATTEMPTS

For this study, “suicidal ideation” was defined as thinking about or planning suicide, while “suicide attempt” was defined as a non-fatal, self-directed behavior with the intent to die, regardless of whether the behavior ultimately results in an injury of any kind. Although these definitions are broad, the FBI concluded that an active shooter had suicidal ideation or engaged in a suicide attempt only when based on specific, non-trivial evidence.

Nearly half of the active shooters had suicidal ideation or engaged in suicide-related behaviors at some time prior to the attack (48%, $n = 30$), while five active shooters (8%) displayed no such behaviors (the status of the remaining 28 active shooters was unknown due to a lack of sufficient evidence to make a reasonable determination).

An overwhelming majority of the 30 suicidal active shooters showed signs of suicidal ideation (90%, $n = 27$), and seven made actual suicide attempts (23%). Nearly three-quarters (70%, $n = 21$) of these behaviors occurred within one year of the shooting.

Considerations

The high levels²⁷ of pre-attack suicidal ideation — with many appearing within 12 months of the attack — are noteworthy as they represent an opportunity for intervention. If suicidal ideation or attempts in particular are observed by others, reframing bystander awareness within the context of a mass casualty event may help to emphasize the importance of telling an authority figure and getting help for the suicidal person. Without stigmatizing those who struggle with thoughts of self-harm, researchers and practitioners must continue to explore those active shooters who combined suicide with externalized aggression (including homicidal violence) and identify the concurrent behaviors that reflect this shift.

CONCERNING COMMUNICATIONS

One useful way to analyze concerning communications is to divide them into two categories: *threats/confrontations* and *leakage of intent*.

Threats/Confrontations

Threats are *direct communications to a target* of intent to harm and may be delivered in person or by other means (e.g., text, email, telephone). For this study, threats need not be verbalized or written; the FBI considered in-person confrontations that were intended to intimidate or cause safety concerns for the target as falling under the category of threats as well.

More than half of the 40 active shooters who had a target made threats or had a prior confrontation (55%, $n = 22$). When threats or confrontations occurred, they were almost always in person (95%, $n = 21$) and only infrequently in writing or electronically (14%, $n = 3$). Two active shooters made threats both in person and in writing/electronically.

Leakage

Leakage occurs when a person intentionally or unintentionally reveals clues to a *third-party* about feelings, thoughts, fantasies, attitudes or intentions that may signal the intent to commit a violent act.²⁸ Indirect threats of harm are included as leakage, but so are less obvious, subtle threats, innuendo about a desire to commit a violent attack, or boasts about the ability to harm others. Leakage can be found not only in verbal communications, but

27 The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (2015) shows that in 2015: 4% of adults had serious thoughts of suicide, 1.1% made serious plans, and 0.6% attempted suicide (<https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUH-DR-FFR3-2015/NSDUH-DR-FFR3-2015.htm>)

28 Meloy, J. R. & O’Toole, M. E. (2011). The concept of leakage in threat assessment. *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*, 29, 513-527

also in writings (e.g., journals, school assignments, artwork, poetry) and in online interactions (e.g., blogs, tweets, texts, video postings). Prior research has shown that leakage of intent to commit violence is common before attacks perpetrated by both adolescents and adults, but is more common among adolescents.^{29,30,31}

Here, too, leakage was prevalent, with over half of the active shooters leaking intent to commit violence (56%, $n = 35$). In the Phase II sample, 88% ($n = 7$) of those active shooters age 17 and younger leaked intent to commit violence, while 51% ($n = 28$) of adult active shooters leaked their intent. The leaked intent to commit violence was not always directed at the eventual victims of the shootings; in some cases what was communicated was a more general goal of doing harm to others, apparently without a particular person or group in mind. For example, one active shooter talked to a clerk at a gas station about killing “a family” and another expressed interest in becoming a sniper like a character featured in *The Turner Diaries*. In 16 of the 40 cases (40%) where the active shooter had a target, however, the leaked intent to act violently was directly pertaining to that target. In these cases, the leakage was generally a statement to a third-party of the intent to specifically harm the target.

Legacy Tokens

Finally, the FBI considered whether or not an active shooter had constructed a “legacy token” which has been defined as a communication prepared by the offender to claim credit for the attack and articulate the motives underlying the shooting.³² Examples of legacy tokens include manifestos, videos, social media postings, or other communications deliberately created by the shooter and delivered or staged for discovery by others, usually near in time to the shooting. In 30% ($n = 19$) of the cases included in this study, the active shooter created a legacy token prior to the attack.

Considerations

Although more than half of the active shooters with pre-attack targets made threats ($n = 22$), in the majority (65%) of the overall cases no threats were made to a target, and the FBI cautions that the absence of a direct threat should not be falsely reassuring to those assessing the potential for violence raised by other circumstances and factors. Nor should the presence of a threat be considered conclusive. There is a significant amount of research and experience to demonstrate that direct threats are not correlated to a subsequent act of targeted violence.^{33,34,35,36,37,38}

It is important to highlight that in this Phase II study the overwhelming majority of direct threats were verbally delivered by the offender to a future victim. Only a very small percentage of threats were communicated via writing or electronically. In many ways this is not surprising. Written, directly communicated threats against a target (e.g., “I’m going to shoot and kill everyone here on Tuesday”) often spark a predictable response that includes a heightened law enforcement presence and the enhancement of security barriers. These responses are highly undesirable to an offender planning an active shooting.³⁹ Verbal threats issued directly to another person appear to be far more common among the active shooters included in the Phase II study.

29 Hemple, A., Meloy, J.R., & Richards, T. (1999). Offender and offense characteristics of a nonrandom sample of mass murderers. *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*, 27, 213-225. Meloy, J.R., Hoffman, J., Guldimmann, A., & James, D. (2011). The role of warning behaviors in threat assessment: An exploration and suggested typology. *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*, 30, 256-279.

30 Meloy, J. R. & O’Toole, M. E. (2011).

31 Meloy, J.R., Hoffman, J., Guldimmann, A., & James, D. (2011). The role of warning behaviors in threat assessment: An exploration and suggested typology. *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*, 30, 256-279.

32 Simons, A., & Tunkel, R. (2014). The assessment of anonymous threatening communications. In J.R. Meloy & J. Hoffman (Eds.), *International handbook of threat assessment* (pp. 195-213). New York: Oxford University Press.

33 Borum, R., Fein, R. Vossekuil, B., & Berglund, J. (1999). Threat assessment: Defining an approach for evaluating risk of targeted violence. *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*, 17, 323-337.

34 Calhoun, F. (1998). *Hunters and howlers: Threats and violence against federal judicial officials in the United States, 1789-1993*. Arlington, VA: US Marshals Service.

35 Calhoun T. & Weston, S. (2003).

36 Dietz, P., Matthews, D., Martell, D., Stewart, T., Hrouda, D., & Warren, J. (1991a). Threatening and otherwise inappropriate letters to members of the United States Congress. *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, 36, 1445-1468.

37 Dietz, P., Matthews, D., Van Duyn, C., Martell, D., Parry, C., Stewart, T., et al. (1991b). Threatening and otherwise inappropriate letters to Hollywood celebrities. *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, 36, 185-209.

38 Meloy, J.R. (2000). *Violence risk and threat assessment*. San Diego: Specialized Training Services.

39 Simons A. & Tunkel, R. (2014)

Whether verbal or written, concerning communications are challenging as those on the receiving end must assess sometimes ominously vague or nebulous verbiage. Such confusion can create doubt in the listener's mind as to the communicator's true intent toward violence.⁴⁰ As law enforcement agencies continue to remind bystanders if they "see something, say something" it becomes relevant to use this data (particularly regarding leakage behaviors) to lower the internal threshold for reporting, even in the face of ambiguous language. It is troubling to note that no bystanders reported instances of leakage to law enforcement, perhaps out of a fear of overreacting or perhaps due to a lack of understanding as to what law enforcement's response would be. This suggests that more robust efforts need to be made to educate bystanders (especially students and adolescents) on the nature of leakage and its potential significance.

Limitations

The findings presented in this report reflect a thorough and careful review of the data derived almost exclusively from law enforcement records. Nevertheless, there are limitations to the study which should be kept in mind before drawing any conclusions based on the findings.

First, the Phase I study on which the present analysis is based included only a specific type of event. Shootings must have been (a) in progress in a public place and (b) law enforcement personnel and/or citizens had the potential to affect the outcome of the event based on their responses. The FBI acknowledges there is an inherent element of subjectivity in deciding whether a case meets the study criteria. Moreover, while every effort was made to find all cases between 2000 and 2013 which met the definition, it is possible that cases which should have been included in the study were not identified. Overall, as with the Phase I study, the incidents included in the Phase II study were not intended to and did not comprise all gun-related violence or mass or public shootings occurring between 2000 and 2013.

Second, although the FBI took a cautious approach in answering protocol questions and limited speculation by relying on identifiable data, there was some degree of subjectivity in evaluating which of the original 160 cases had sufficient data to warrant inclusion in the study.

Third, while reliance on official law enforcement investigative files was reasonable based on the study's objectives, the level of detail contained in these files was not uniform throughout and the FBI was not able to definitively answer all protocol questions for all subjects.

This is a purely descriptive study. With the exception of mental health and suicidal behaviors, the FBI did not make any comparisons to the general population or to criminals who were not active shooters. Therefore, we cannot postulate on the probability as to whether some of the behaviors and characteristics seen here would also have been seen in other populations. Furthermore, the FBI cautions readers to not treat the observed behaviors as having predictive value in determining if a person will become violent or not, as the findings and observations presented herein are not a "checklist" but instead are offered to promote awareness among potential bystanders and for consideration in the context of a thorough, holistic threat assessment by trained professionals. Future research may benefit from comparisons between those who completed active shooting attacks and those who planned to attack but were disrupted prior to the offense, and/or in comparison to those individuals who may have displayed concerning behaviors but had no true intent to commit an act of targeted violence.

⁴⁰ The FBI noted that there were four cases where threats were made and someone notified law enforcement (out of 22 cases where a threat was made, or 14%)

Conclusion

The ability to utilize case files (as compared to open-source documents) allowed the FBI to carefully examine both the internal issues experienced and the behaviors demonstrated by active shooters in the weeks and months preceding their attacks. What emerges is a complex and troubling picture of individuals who fail to successfully navigate multiple stressors in their lives while concurrently displaying four to five observable, concerning behaviors, engaging in planning and preparation, and frequently communicating threats or leaking indications of an intent to attack. As an active shooter progresses on a trajectory towards violence, these observable behaviors may represent critical opportunities for detection and disruption.

The information contained in this Phase II report can be utilized by myriad safety stakeholders. The successful prevention of an active shooting frequently depends on the collective and collaborative engagement of varied community members: law enforcement officials, teachers, mental health care professionals, family members, threat assessment professionals, friends, social workers, school resource officers...and many others. A shared awareness of the common observable behaviors demonstrated by the active shooters in this study may help to prompt inquiries and focus assessments at every level of contact and every stage of intervention.

While many dedicated professionals work to thwart active shootings, the FBI suspects that future active shooters themselves are looking for ways to avoid detection and maximize damage as they plan and prepare for their acts of violence. The prevention of these future attacks will depend on our ability to remain agile and recognize evolving pre-attack behaviors. To that end, the FBI continues to study active shooters to better inform all safety stakeholders and to support the development of sound threat mitigation strategies.

As tragically seen from current events, active shootings continue to impact our nation. The FBI hopes that the information contained in this Phase II study will help in efforts to promote safety across all communities.

Appendix A:

STRESSORS

Abuse of illicit drugs or alcohol: difficulties caused by the effects of drugs/alcohol and/or frustrations related to obtaining these substances.

Civil legal problems: being party to a non-trivial lawsuit or administrative action.

Conflict with friends/peers: general tension in the relationship beyond what is typical for the active shooter's age or specific instances of serious and ongoing disagreement.

Conflict with other family members: general tension in the relationship beyond what is typical for the active shooter's age, or specific instances of serious and ongoing disagreement.

Conflict with parents: general tension in the relationship beyond what is typical for the active shooter's age, or specific instances of serious and ongoing disagreement.

Criminal legal problems: arrests, convictions, probation, parole.

Death of friend/relative: death that caused emotional or psychological distress.

Financial strain: related to job loss, debt collection, potential or actual eviction, inability to pay normal and usual daily bills.

Job-related problems: ongoing conflicts with co-workers or management, pervasive poor performance evaluations, or disputes over pay or leave.

Marital problems/conflict with intimate partner(s)/divorce or separation: difficulties in the relationship that were a consistent source of psychological distress and/or which did or were likely to lead to the end of the relationship or the desire to end the relationship.

Mental health problems: symptoms of anxiety, depression, paranoia, or other mental health concerns that have a negative effect on daily functioning and/or relationships.

Other: any other circumstance causing physical, psychological, or emotional difficulties that interfere in a non-trivial way with normal functioning in daily life.

Physical injury: physical condition/injury that significantly interfered with or restricted normal and usual activities.

School-related problems: conflicts with teachers and staff that go beyond single instances of minor discipline; pervasive frustration with academic work; inability to follow school rules.

Sexual stress/frustration: pronounced and ongoing inability to establish a desired sexual relationship.

Appendix B:

CONCERNING BEHAVIORS

Amount or quality of sleep: unusual sleep patterns or noticeable changes in sleep patterns.

Anger: inappropriate displays of aggressive attitude/temper.

Change, escalation, or contextually inappropriate firearms behavior: interest in or use of firearms that appears unusual given the active shooter's background and experience with firearms.

Changes in weight or eating habits: significant weight loss or gain related to eating habits.

Hygiene or personal appearance: noticeable and/or surprising changes in appearance or hygiene practices.

Impulsivity: actions that in context appear to have been taken without usual care or forethought.

Interpersonal interactions: more than the usual amount of discord in ongoing relationships with family, friends, or colleagues.

Leakage: communication to a third-party of the intent to harm another person.

Mental health: indications of depression, anxiety, paranoia or other mental health concerns.

Other: any behavior not otherwise captured in above categories that causes more than a minimal amount of worry in the observer.

Physical aggression: inappropriate use of force; use of force beyond what was usual in the circumstances.

Physical health: significant changes in physical well-being beyond minor injuries and ailments.

Quality of thinking or communication: indications of confused or irrational thought processes.

Risk-taking: actions that show more than a usual disregard for significant negative consequences.

School performance: appreciable decrease in academic performance; unexplained or unusual absences.

Sexual behavior: pronounced increases or decreases in sexual interest or practices.

Threats/Confrontations: direct communications to a target of intent to harm. May be delivered in person or by other means (e.g., text, email, telephone).

Use of illicit drugs or illicit use of prescription drugs: sudden and/ recent use or change in use of drugs; use beyond social norms that interferes with the activities of daily life.

Use or abuse of alcohol: sudden and/or recent use or changes in use of alcohol; use beyond social norms that interferes with the activities of daily life.

Violent media usage: more than a usual age-appropriate interest in visual or aural depictions of violence.

Work performance: appreciable decrease in job performance; unexplained or unusual absences.



U.S. Department of Justice
Federal Bureau of Investigation

**THE APPROACH
USING A SYSTEMS APPROACH
FOR THREAT ASSESSMENT
INVESTIGATIONS:
A CASE STUDY ON
JARED LEE LOUGHNER
DHS, USSS & NTAC**





USING A SYSTEMS APPROACH FOR THREAT ASSESSMENT INVESTIGATIONS

A CASE STUDY ON JARED LEE LOUGHNER¹

When someone comes to the attention of law enforcement for engaging in threatening or concerning behavior, a threat assessment investigation may be initiated to assess the individual's risk for engaging in targeted violence. When conducting a comprehensive assessment of the risk a person may pose, it is essential to gather detailed information from multiple sources to enhance your understanding of the individual's life circumstances and why the individual engaged in the behavior that brought him or her to the attention of law enforcement. This investigative process is supported through the use of a *systems approach*, which serves as a vital tool for law enforcement to uncover information that may prevent an act of violence from occurring. Using examples from the case of Jared Lee Loughner, who opened fire at a "Congress on Your Corner" event in January 2011, this document offers some key considerations in applying a systems approach to threat assessment investigations and management. A case summary about Loughner's life also follows.

On January 8, 2011, Jared Lee Loughner, 22, shot and injured U.S. Representative Gabrielle Dee Giffords at a "Congress on Your Corner" event in a shopping center parking lot in Tucson, AZ. Loughner killed six people in the attack, and in addition to Rep. Giffords, he injured 12 others. Loughner had been exhibiting symptoms of mental illness and engaging in bizarre behavior in the year leading up to the incident. He made numerous delusional and anti-government statements online, and reportedly disliked Rep. Giffords because he felt she had snubbed him at a prior event. Communications discovered after the attack indicated that Loughner may also have been seeking fame as an assassin.

The Systems Approach to Threat Assessment Investigations: Who Has Information and What Do They Know?

One of the first steps in assessing an individual's risk for violence is to identify sources that may have information on the individual's actions, stressors or recent changes in his or her life, and behaviors that may have concerned others. An effective way to accomplish this step is to identify the systems, that is, *persons* with whom the individual has a relationship or frequently comes into contact, and *organizations* that may be familiar with or have information on the individual. Some examples of systems that may hold key information for an investigation include family members, social networks, employers, teachers, spiritual advisors, mental health professionals, social services, law enforcement, and the court system.

A recent U.S. Secret Service study that examined attacks on federal government targets found that all of the perpetrators of these attacks had contact with, or had come to the attention of, one or more community systems (or community-level resources) in the years prior to their attacks.² The systems examined in the report included the judicial system, educational institutions, employers, law enforcement, mental health professionals, social services, and spiritual centers.

¹ While permission to reprint is not necessary, when quoting, paraphrasing, or otherwise referring to this case study, the citation should be: National Threat Assessment Center. (2015). *Using a systems approach for threat assessment investigations. A case study on Jared Lee Loughner*. Washington, DC: U.S. Secret Service, Department of Homeland Security.

² National Threat Assessment Center. (2015). *Attacks on federal government 2001-2013: Threat assessment considerations*. Washington, DC: U.S. Secret Service, Department of Homeland Security.



Approximately three-quarters or more of the offenders had contact with at least one of the following systems:

- ★ the judicial system for actions related to the adjudication of criminal charges the perpetrators faced and/or civil actions filed by or against them;
- ★ an educational institution, specifically secondary schools and/or colleges and universities;
- ★ one or more employers, including when seeking employment;
- ★ law enforcement for a variety of reasons, ranging from rather minor infractions (e.g., traffic or fishing citations) to arrests for violent crimes.

While these are examples of the most prevalent systems with which the offenders came in contact, all of the systems may hold key information for investigators in identifying and assessing those who may engage in targeted violence. As part of your investigation, focus on:

★ ***Being creative in identifying other sources of information***

At times, an individual who comes to the attention of law enforcement may not appear to have any relationships or contacts with a system. This requires an investigator to consider other, possibly less traditional, investigative avenues from which information can be gathered, such as identifying places in the community that the individual frequents. For example, the person may have a membership at a local gym which he attends often. While the individual might not have established close friendships within these venues, staff or other patrons who have observed, or had interactions with, this individual may notice if he or she exhibits any concerning or unusual behavior. They may also notice changes in the individual over time, which can allow an investigator to assess the individual's state of mind and his or her risk for violence.

★ ***Identifying contradictions and gaps in the sources and information***

In addition to identifying any concerning behavior, the investigator can also compare the person's behavior across the various systems looking for themes and contradictions. We know that people do not always act the same in every setting. For example, an individual may engage in violent rhetoric or discuss grievances about the government with coworkers, but not in the presence of family members. If only the family members are interviewed during the investigation, this information regarding the individual's behavior will be missed. In addition, touching base with these various systems often provides an investigator with leads for further investigation and other sources of information that may not have been identified at the outset of an investigation.

★ ***Considering risk management options***

Each system has a piece of the puzzle that can be put together to create a complete picture of the individual and allow an investigator to make an informed assessment of the person's risk for engaging in violence. If that individual is deemed a risk, then the systems approach can be used as an effective tool for managing this risk. For example, an investigator can establish rapport with the individual's family, coworkers, or friends, and encourage them to contact the investigator if there are any changes in the individual's life that may increase the risk for violence, such as acquiring a weapon or being fired from a job. Other identifiable changes in the individual's life may decrease the risk for violence, such as acquiring stable employment or entering into a supportive relationship. In addition, investigators can explore other resources that can assist with managing the risk an individual poses, for example, requesting a mental health hold or evaluation or obtaining a stay way order from a judge.



Applying the Systems Approach to the Case of Jared Lee Loughner

The systems approach is illustrated in this section using information related to Loughner's actions and life circumstances that are described in greater detail in the case summary that follows. All of the information provided in the case summary was derived from open source materials.³ The content contained in this overview is designed to provide considerations for future threat assessment investigations. It is not an evaluation of any investigation or actions that occurred prior to the events of January 8, 2011.

Loughner had contact with multiple systems, and within each system, there were indications of erratic behavior, threatening communications, and mental instability. Here we identify the types of information held by those who had varying levels of contact with Loughner.

- ★ **Education:** Loughner's erratic behavior concerned faculty and students at the community college where he was enrolled. He often acted in an odd manner by laughing to himself or making comments that were unrelated to the class discussions. Administrators, faculty, and students voiced concern about him. One instructor feared that Loughner would become physically aggressive following an argument about his grade. Meanwhile, a classmate wrote an email to a friend saying that Loughner scared her and she was worried he would bring a weapon to class. He was seen by an academic counselor for his classroom behavior and performance, and came to the attention of campus police on at least five occasions for disruptive behavior. Loughner ultimately was suspended from the college after school administrators became aware of a disturbing video he made while on campus. He was informed that he could not return to the college unless a mental health professional deemed him not to be a danger to himself or others.
- ★ **Employment:** Loughner worked at a series of entry-level jobs in restaurants and retail stores. He walked out on one job after telling coworkers that he could not take it anymore, later describing that he had a nervous breakdown. Loughner also tried to enlist in the military, and felt dejected when he was deemed unqualified due to his habitual use of marijuana. He was fired from a retail store and let go as a volunteer dog walker at an animal shelter. Although he submitted numerous job applications in the year before the incident, he was unsuccessful in gaining employment.
- ★ **Law Enforcement:** Loughner had several encounters with law enforcement and was arrested on three occasions. His arrests stemmed from misdemeanor charges related to drinking alcohol as a minor, possession of drug paraphernalia, and vandalism. He also came to law enforcement attention after reporting that his identity had been stolen. In addition, a detective with the community college public safety department emailed an agent with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) and asked for any information about Loughner.
- ★ **Community:** Loughner's odd behavior was noticed by others in the community. At the YMCA, where he was a member, he asked strange questions, and during one visit, sat in the men's locker room for 30 minutes. When he eventually left the locker room, he asked the front desk staff what year it was. Employees at a local bank were also disturbed by his behavior. They felt uneasy with him, and kept their fingers close to the alarm button when they saw him arrive.
- ★ **Online Community:** Loughner participated in online games, forums, and chat rooms. He posted bizarre and disturbing statements on these sites in written as well as video format. For instance, he posted a video on YouTube related to grammar and education, creating his own currency, and discussing his distrust of the U.S. government. His posts grew more disorganized, and at times

³ Open source materials used in the preparation of this case summary included court records, investigative interviews, news media accounts, emails from the community college Loughner attended, and personal communications by Loughner.



included violent undertones. Some of his online peers voiced concern for him, with one suggesting that he seek mental health treatment before he hurt himself or others.

- ★ **Social Network:** Although Loughner appeared to have drifted away from his close friends, at some point, he tried to connect with a few of them by calling them frequently and showing up uninvited at their homes. A few weeks prior to the attack, Loughner visited two friends and showed them a gun and a 32-round clip. One of the friends was so disturbed by him bringing a gun that he asked Loughner to leave.
- ★ **Family:** Loughner's parents were concerned about their son's well-being based on some of the behaviors he exhibited, such as talking or laughing to himself, and the problems he was having at the community college he attended. Following his suspension from the college, Loughner's parents hid a shotgun that he owned and disabled his car at night so that he would not be able to drive it without their permission.



CASE SUMMARY

Early Signs of Concerning Behavior: 2005 - 2008

Jared Lee Loughner attended high school in Tucson, AZ. A friend described him as intense and intelligent, and very good at math. Loughner was interested in literature and hoped to become a writer. While in high school, he became involved in his first romantic relationship. In the summer of 2005, however, his girlfriend ended the relationship, and Loughner reportedly became despondent and began to drink and use drugs. His grades fell and he became distant, isolating himself from his friends.

In addition to his substance use, Loughner reportedly exhibited some odd behavior while in high school. He disrupted class, was rude to the teachers, and often became argumentative with those who disagreed with him. He frequently spoke about his dislike of the government and his belief that government officials were trying to cover up an unspecified conspiracy. On May 12, 2006, during his junior year, he was taken to the hospital for alcohol poisoning after Pima County Sheriff's Department personnel responded to his high school. Loughner reported that between 1:30 a.m. and 9:00 a.m., he drank approximately eight shots (350 milliliters) of vodka, which he took from his father's liquor cabinet. The deputies arrested him on a charge of a minor in possession of alcohol. Loughner was evaluated and diagnosed with depression following this episode; however, he never took the prescribed medication.

Shortly after his arrest, Loughner dropped out of high school following the end of his junior year. He took classes at Aztec Middle College, a program through the Tucson Unified School District that allows students who drop out of high school to earn their diplomas and transition to Pima Community College (PCC).⁴ The Aztec Middle College program was located on PCC's Northwest Campus. Around this time, a friend from school, who worked with Loughner at a local restaurant, was surprised to hear him talk about his use of marijuana, mushrooms, and a hallucinogenic herb, *Salvia divinorum*. The friend thought the drug use was a dramatic change in his behavior. Loughner subsequently switched jobs several times in the latter half of the year, and in November 2006, he began working at a Red Robin restaurant as a busboy.

In August 2007, Loughner attended a "Congress on Your Corner" event hosted by Rep. Giffords at the Foothills Mall in Tucson, AZ.⁵ During the event, he submitted a question for the congresswoman similar to, "What is government if words have no meaning?"⁶ Others reported that he asked his question to Rep. Giffords aloud saying, "If words could not be understood, then what does government mean?"⁷ Sources differ as to how Rep. Giffords responded; some state that she did not answer, while others report that Loughner stated that she answered his question in Spanish. Regardless of her response, Loughner believed her reply was unsatisfactory and came to dislike her. He referred to her as fake and unintelligent to friends. Following the event, he received a form letter on Rep. Giffords' congressional stationary thanking him for his attendance at the event.

On September 10, 2007, a Pima County sheriff's deputy pulled over a van in which Loughner was a passenger. The deputy searched the van and its occupants, finding a burnt marijuana cigarette in the vehicle and a marijuana pipe in Loughner's pants pocket. Loughner was arrested and charged with misdemeanor possession of drug paraphernalia. The charge was dismissed in November 2007 after he completed a diversion program that included drug counseling.

⁴ Records from PCC indicate that Loughner began taking classes at the college as early as the summer of 2005. It is unclear, however, whether he began attending courses at PCC before leaving high school.

⁵ One of Loughner's high school friends reported that this event occurred at their high school while they were students, and not at the Foothills Mall. Serrano (2014, July 27).

⁶ Pritchard (2011, January 10).

⁷ Serrano (2014, July 27).



According to sources, Loughner started to show signs of mental illness in early 2008. He began acting strangely and reportedly started hearing voices. He told friends that the world as they saw it did not exist. He further claimed that words had no meaning unless one was sleeping, and he developed a fascination with dreams and lucid dreaming, which is the idea that one can consciously control his or her sleeping world. Around this time, Loughner also appeared to shun or drift away from his close friends from middle and high school. In February 2008, he quit his job at Red Robin and found another position at a Quiznos in April 2008. He was fired from that job, however, in September 2008. In an online posting two years later, Loughner implied that he had a mental breakdown at the time he left the Red Robin job.

On September 7, 2008, Loughner bought a Heckler & Koch 12-gauge shotgun from Sportsman's Warehouse, a hunting and fishing supply store in Tucson, AZ.

In the fall of 2008, Loughner had some additional interactions with law enforcement. On October 3, 2008, he walked into the Pima County Sheriff Department's Foothills District Office and reported that his identity had been stolen. He claimed that his name and photo were being used on the Internet without his permission and was concerned that this would affect his ability to find employment. Although he stated that this may be a practical joke being played on him by a former friend, he asked for a police report so he could give it to potential employers who might see his name and photo on the Internet. Then, on October 13, 2008, Loughner was arrested by an officer with the Marana Police Department on a vandalism charge for defacing a stop sign with graffiti. He told the officer that he wrote the letters "c" and "x" and both meant Christian. The vandalism case was ultimately dismissed on December 9, 2008, after he completed a diversion program and paid a \$500 fine.

Throughout 2008, Loughner also experienced problems with obtaining meaningful employment. Although he attained a position at an Eddie Bauer clothing store in late 2008, he decided that joining the military would help him learn important job skills. Loughner started working out and stopped smoking, drinking, and using drugs. He told a friend that he was working to improve his health and physical fitness so that he would be able to join the U.S. Army. He also tried to improve his image by cutting his hair and dressing more conservatively. In December 2008, Loughner tried to enlist in the Army through a recruiting station in Tucson, AZ. He passed the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery and was sent to the Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) in Phoenix, AZ for a test and a physical to determine whether he qualified for service. During his interview, however, he was disqualified when, as part of the questions on medical history, he admitted to being a habitual marijuana user. This rejection reportedly was a devastating blow for Loughner.

Other Reports of Concerning Behavior: 2009 - 2010

Throughout 2009, Loughner was taking several classes at PCC. Around this time, he began to verbalize beliefs about persecution by the government. He believed the government was using grammar and currency to control its citizens. He also went through a "tagging" phase, where he would paint graffiti using phrases from literature. Then in November 2009, he was fired from Eddie Bauer. His parents noticed that his condition deteriorated after being fired and they found it increasingly difficult to communicate with him. According to Loughner's mother, he acted in an odd manner, often talking or laughing to himself, and exhibited anger towards the government. Because Loughner had previously admitted to his parents that he tried several drugs in the past, including marijuana and cocaine, they had him take a drug test, which came back negative. In addition, although Loughner had lost touch with many of his friends from middle and high school, in 2009 and 2010, those he maintained contact with reported that he seemed desperate to be around people. He called his friends frequently, showed up at their homes uninvited, and offered to pay when they went out so that he could spend time with them.

In January 2010, Loughner began volunteering to walk dogs at a local animal shelter. While volunteering, staff at the shelter asked him to keep the dogs away from a restricted area that was being disinfected, but Loughner was unable or unwilling to follow their directions and repeatedly walked the dogs near the restricted area. In March 2010, the staff asked Loughner to leave the shelter because he was not



following instructions. Also in March, Loughner voiced an interest in weapons and learning how to shoot when a friend told him he was going for target practice. He went with this friend to the desert and practiced shooting with a firearm. Further, although the date is unknown, a man later reported seeing Loughner near a shooting range driving dangerously and at a high rate of speed, then stopping quickly, and appearing odd while sitting in his car.

During the spring of 2010, Loughner continued to engage in bizarre behavior. At the YMCA where he was a member, Loughner asked strange questions, such as, how often the doors were disinfected and how a staff member would feel about the government taking over. During another visit, he spent a half hour sitting in the men's locker room. When he eventually left the locker room, he asked the staff at the front desk what year it was.

Throughout 2010, Loughner's behavior and performance at PCC also declined and he came to the attention of the PCC Department of Public Safety on several occasions. In January 2010, classmates in his advanced poetry class noticed that he exhibited odd behaviors, such as laughing to himself, grinning at inappropriate times, and making comments that were not related to class discussions. In February 2010, Loughner made an inappropriate remark regarding a classmate's poem about abortion, saying something similar to "strapping a bomb to the fetus and making a baby bomb."⁸ The instructor was disturbed by the comment and reported him to campus police. After the incident, Loughner and his mother attended a meeting with a school administrator, during which Loughner stated that he would stop speaking in class in order to stay enrolled. His behavior, however, continued to concern the instructor and other students.

During the spring semester, Loughner also was enrolled in a logic class. Although he had an excellent attendance rate, he often spoke out of turn with comments that were unrelated to the class discussion and asked questions that did not make sense to his classmates. On one of the tests, he drew geometric scribbles rather than write answers to the questions. The instructor spoke to the department chair about Loughner, but they were unable to intervene because the college required that students disclose that they were having problems in order to receive assistance.

On April 6, 2010, Loughner was working at a computer in the PCC library, listening to music through ear phones, and making loud noises. The director of the library called campus police, and an officer arrived and informed Loughner that his behavior was not appropriate for a public setting. Loughner replied that he would not engage in that behavior again. Another report noted that one individual observed Loughner regularly at the library "repeatedly talk[ing] loudly to the computer."⁹ This individual also noticed that Loughner appeared to be watching Rep. Giffords's speeches online.

On May 17, 2010, Loughner was again reported to campus police after he became upset over a grade he received. His instructor told him he received a "B" and Loughner became agitated, threw his work on the ground, and told the instructor that the grade was unacceptable. The instructor feared that Loughner would become physically aggressive so she called campus police and asked them to come to the class. Campus police monitored her evening class in case Loughner returned.

About two weeks later, on June 1, 2010, Loughner caused another disturbance when he repeatedly disrupted a math class that he was taking for the second time, having failed on his previous try. He called the class a "scam" and referred to the instructor as a "fraud."¹⁰ When the instructor asked a math question, Loughner blurted out a random number then asked, "How can you deny math instead of accept it?"¹¹ The instructor asked Loughner to stop disrupting the class and when he did not, the instructor asked him to leave the classroom. Loughner refused and the instructor notified school administrators. Loughner was seen by an educational support faculty counselor the next day. The counselor told

⁸ Quinones, Hennessy-Fiske, & Powers (2011, January 11).

⁹ Serrano (2014, July 27).

¹⁰ Gardner, Fahrenthold, & Fisher (2011, January 13).

¹¹ Gardner et al. (2011, January 13).



Loughner that other students were complaining that he was negatively impacting their educational experience. Loughner stated that he wanted to continue taking the class and that he would not ask any further questions; however, he voiced his fears that his freedom of speech was being stifled. Following the meeting, the counselor wrote a report in which she noted that Loughner had extreme opinions and had trouble focusing and staying on one topic. She also noted that he had problems with understanding how his behavior affected others, but was aware that his way of thinking was not common. Since Loughner said that he would not disrupt the class anymore, he was allowed to return. The counselor did recommend, however, that he be instructed on proper classroom conduct.

Despite Loughner's conversation with the counselor, students and the math instructor were still concerned about his behavior. On June 3, 2010, Loughner scribbled the words "MAYHEM FEST!!!" and the word "Imagination" on a math quiz.¹² He also continued to laugh at inappropriate times and stare at his classmates and his instructor in an intimidating manner. The instructor contacted the counselor who had met with Loughner the previous day, and requested that Loughner not return to the class again. Loughner was allowed to return to class, however, because he had not made a threat and had complied with the counselor's directive not to cause disruptions. Campus police were notified and took a report on the incident.

On June 5, 2010, the math instructor sent an email to the counselor urging that someone assess Loughner's behaviors and stated that he was concerned about the safety of the class. The next day, campus police sent the Vice President for Student Development an email providing information she requested regarding their contact with Loughner. They also informed the administrator that Loughner had come to their attention as a suspicious person, but was never reported for threatening behavior.

Loughner's disruptive and bizarre behavior continued for several weeks. On another math test, he reportedly wrote down odd equations like, "Eat + Sleep + Brush Teeth = Math."¹³ Others in the class were concerned about Loughner and were worried that he might bring a weapon to class. In an email to a friend on June 14, 2010, one of his classmates wrote that he scared her. She described him as the type of person whose picture you see on the news. She wrote, "Hopefully he will be out of class very soon, and not come back with an automatic weapon."¹⁴ Loughner's behavior eventually led to his removal from the class after he accused the instructor of violating his First Amendment rights.

During the summer of 2010, Loughner's online friends also voiced their concern for him. A fellow participant in an online forum responded to one of Loughner's bizarre posts suggesting that he seek mental health treatment, "I think you're frankly schizophrenic, and no that's not an amateur opinion and not intended as an uninformed or insulting remark. I really do care. Seek help before you hurt yourself or others or start taking your medications again, please."¹⁵ Loughner wrote back, "Thank you for the concern."¹⁶

On September 23, 2010, Loughner turned in an assignment for his biology class late and was told he would earn half-credit for it. He reacted aggressively and told the instructor his "freedom of speech was being taken away."¹⁷ The instructor was so concerned with Loughner's reaction that he called campus police. Loughner left the class, but officers found him and asked him about the incident. Loughner tried to explain to the officers that his freedom of speech also extended to his freedom of thought, which meant that his instructor should acknowledge his written thoughts with a passing grade.

That night, September 23, 2010, Loughner returned to the campus to make a video about PCC titled *Jared Lee Loughner Pima Community College – School Genocide Scam Free Education Broken United*

¹² Quinones et al. (2011, January 11).

¹³ Quinones et al. (2011, January 11).

¹⁴ Johnson, Kovaleski, Frosch, & Lipton (2011).

¹⁵ Gardner et al. (2011, January 13).

¹⁶ Gardner et al. (2011, January 13).

¹⁷ Abcarian, Reston, & Hennessy-Fiske (2011, January 16).



States Constitution. He uploaded the video to YouTube later that night. In the video, Loughner walks around filming the college campus. At one point, he complains to an unknown person he passed about a grade he received. He also stated, “We’re examining the torture of students.”¹⁸ Speaking about the school, Loughner said, “I’m in a terrible place. This is the school that I go to. This is my genocide school where I’m gonna be homeless because of this school.”¹⁹ He also claimed that the school was “illegal according to the U.S. Constitution,” and “one of the biggest scams in America.”²⁰ During the video, Loughner panned the camera to a campus police sign and said, “This is the police station. This is where the whole shabuuzie goes down with illegal activity.”²¹ He ended the video with “All the teachers you have are being paid illegally. And have illegal authority over the Constitution of the United States under the 1st Amendment, this is genocide in America, thank you this is Jared from Pima College.”²²

A few days later, on September 27, 2010, Loughner met with a college administrator about his recent behaviors. During the meeting, he stated that he had paid for his classes illegally because he did not pay with gold and silver. He told the administrator that his parents told him not to say anymore, and he abruptly stopped talking. The administrator set up a meeting with Loughner and his parents for the following day to create a behavioral contract that would guide his behavior on campus.

The next evening, September 28, 2010, Loughner and his mother met with the college administrator and the counselor to discuss his behavior. Loughner did not speak much during the meeting, but he did give some rote responses to the administrator’s questions such as, “I know I have to follow Pima processes and write what the teacher wants.”²³ In her notes about the meeting, the administrator remarked that Loughner “held himself very rigidly and smiled overtly at inappropriate times.”²⁴ They agreed that Loughner would meet with her again the following week to sign the agreed-upon behavioral contract.

On September 29, 2010, the day after his meeting with the college administrator and school counselor, Loughner went to the Pima County OneStop employment center. He had been to the center on five previous occasions in August and September 2010 to obtain assistance in finding employment. During this visit, however, Loughner took a video camera with him and attempted to record the facility and staff inside. He was asked twice to stop videotaping, but refused and then pulled a copy of the U.S. Constitution from his pocket and ranted about his rights. Staff at the employment center tried to calm him down, but he eventually was asked to leave.

That same day, PCC campus police and other college administrators became aware of Loughner’s YouTube video that referred to PCC as a “genocide school.” After reviewing the video, administrators decided to suspend Loughner. Campus police notified him later that day that he was suspended for numerous Code of Conduct violations. The college also cited the video as a reason for his suspension. Campus police read the letter of suspension to Loughner and his father in their home and then briefly spoke to his father. The letter of suspension instructed Loughner to contact the school and set up a meeting to discuss his suspension and the process he would need to follow to re-enroll. The letter also informed him that he was barred from the campus except for an appointment to discuss his suspension. Loughner stared at the officers during the reading of the letter, and then said that the whole situation was a scam.

That afternoon, a student services analyst wrote an email summarizing Loughner’s campus police contacts and behavioral problems. The email included a section that recommended that the school suspend Loughner immediately, conduct a welfare check, and refer his case to the Behavior Assessment Committee to provide conditions for his return to school. As a result, the committee determined that

¹⁸ Loughner (2010, September 23).

¹⁹ Loughner (2010, September 23).

²⁰ Loughner (2010, September 23).

²¹ Loughner (2010, September 23).

²² Loughner (2010, September 23).

²³ Abcarian et al. (2011, January 16).

²⁴ Abcarian et al. (2011, January 16).



Loughner would not be allowed back at the school unless he received a mental health evaluation that showed he was not a danger to himself or others.

Also on September 29, 2010, a detective with the PCC Department of Public Safety emailed an agent with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) and provided Loughner's name and other identifiers and requested any information or lack thereof related to Loughner. The ATF agent responded with an email stating "I did not come up with any gun info on this guy. Let me know if you need anything else."²⁵ The following day, September 30, 2010, the college distributed a flyer to some of the school staff. The flyer included a photo of Loughner, noted that he was not allowed on campus, and stated that staff were to contact campus police if he was seen on PCC property.

After receiving the suspension letter from campus police, Loughner and his parents met with PCC administrators on October 4, 2010. At the meeting, Loughner told administrators that he would voluntarily withdraw from the college. On October 7, 2010, PCC sent Loughner a second letter explaining that to re-enroll in the college, he would have to settle his conduct violations and receive clearance from a mental health professional indicating that he was not a danger to himself or others.

Following his suspension from school, Loughner became distraught and told his parents that he felt that he was being harassed by campus police. Loughner's parents grew more concerned, and based on a recommendation from PCC administrators to remove any firearms in the home, hid Loughner's 12-gauge shotgun that Loughner owned in the trunk of the family car along with another family-owned firearm. They disabled his car every night so that he would not be able to drive it without their permission, and took away his video camera to prevent him from making videos. He was permitted to drive during the day as he continued to seek employment. Despite their son's apparent mental health issues, however, they were unable to persuade Loughner to see a mental health professional.

About a month later, on November 14, 2010, Loughner went to a tattoo parlor with a 9mm bullet and had a picture of the bullet tattooed on his right shoulder blade. He expressed his enjoyment for shooting and target practice to the tattoo artist. The next week, on or about November 21, 2010, Loughner returned to the tattoo parlor and asked for another tattoo of a bullet. The artist asked Loughner about the significance of his tattoos, but Loughner only smiled in response to his question.

On November 30, 2010, a little more than a week after getting his tattoos, Loughner bought a Glock 19 semiautomatic 9mm gun at Sportsman's Warehouse, the same store where he bought the shotgun that his parents confiscated. While there, he told the employee who waited on him that he wanted to deal with a younger staff member. A younger employee assisted him with the purchase, but thought that this was a strange request. Loughner bought the gun, a 15-round magazine, and a box of ammunition. About a month later, on December 24, 2010, he purchased a 6-inch bladed knife and a holster.

Loughner continued to exhibit concerning behaviors in the community. Employees at a local bank branch were disturbed by his bizarre behavior. They felt uneasy when he was there, and kept their fingers close to the alarm button when they saw him arrive. During one visit, Loughner became involved in a heated argument with a female employee when she could not accommodate one of his requests because it was against the bank's policy. In the course of their argument, he told her that she should not have any power. After the bank installed bulletproof glass, Loughner tried to put his finger through a small space on the top of the glass and laughed to himself.

Concerns in Loughner's Online Activity Mirrored Those in Other Areas of His Life: 2010

Loughner's interest in online gaming began in middle school. In 2010, he began reaching out to others who participated in the online games, forums, and chat rooms that he frequented, discussing various issues and asking questions. He discussed his unemployment issues and asked for advice on employment and relationships. His posts also contained recurrent themes involving grammar, education,

²⁵ Stellar (2011, May 19).



his distrust of the U.S. government, creating his own currency, lucid dreaming, and the idea that he was being persecuted. These posts concerned many of the other individuals who participated in these online forums.

Throughout the spring of 2010, the anger in Loughner's online postings escalated as he vented his disappointment at not being able to obtain and maintain employment. On May 14, 2010, he began a discussion about employment and asked his online community what they considered to be a large number of job applications. The post included a list of 21 retail places to which he had applied, but failed to acquire a job. He wondered if his work history and previous criminal charges impacted his ability to gain employment. In another post, he wrote that he had been fired from five jobs and had not received a paycheck for six months. A few days later, someone responded to his post by stating that he thought Loughner may be drunk or high.

On June 3, 2010, Loughner posted about the argument he had earlier that day with his math instructor at PCC. He wrote that he asked the instructor, "Are you just getting a pay check for brainwashing?"²⁶ He also wrote that he told the instructor that the class was a scam, and asked "how to Deny math?"²⁷ On this same date, Loughner also commented in an online post about his meeting with the school counselor, writing that he "told her about a logical argument, but didn't mention attending the logic class, that the logical argument was relevant. Told her about brainwashing a child and how that can change the view of mathematics."²⁸

Loughner also had a MySpace account that he created on January 13, 2010, on which he made numerous concerning, threatening, and unusual statements. For example, in the early morning hours of July 11, 2010, he posted "I keep hearing VOICES IN MY HEAD!"²⁹ He also made numerous posts about contemplating suicide. On September 15, 2010, he posted "I thought about attempting suicide again.....notice the again..."³⁰

Loughner's online postings and videos became more disorganized and disturbing. On October 2, 2010, he posted a video on YouTube titled, *America: Your Last Memory In A Terrorist Country!* The video showed someone dressed as the Grim Reaper with a smiley-face mask setting fire to an American flag. Some sources note the person in the video is Loughner. He also posted other videos that contained themes of persecution and demonstrated his belief that the government was controlling him. In one video he posted text that stated, "I know who's listening: Government Officials, and the People. Nearly all the people, who don't know this accurate information of a new currency, aren't aware of mind control and brainwash methods."³¹

Loughner also made videos and postings about literacy. One of these postings may have alluded to Rep. Giffords's congressional district: "My hope – is for you to be literate! If you're literate in English grammar, then you comprehend English grammar. The majority of people, who reside in District 8 are illiterate – hilarious."³² Rep. Giffords represented Arizona's 8th Congressional District.

In addition to his concerning posts and videos, Loughner's MySpace page contained disturbing photos and comments in the days and weeks leading up to the incident. One concerning photo was of a Glock firearm lying on top of a U.S. history textbook with an image that portrayed the White House in the center, and pictures of U.S. presidents around the edge. In addition, on an unknown date, most likely following his tattoo parlor visit in November 2010, Loughner posted a comment online, writing "I have a new tattoo

²⁶ Berzon, Emshwiller, & Guth (2011, January 12).

²⁷ Berzon et al. (2011, January 12).

²⁸ Myers (2011, March 22).

²⁹ FBI files on the Jared Lee Loughner investigation (2014, April 10).

³⁰ FBI files on the Jared Lee Loughner investigation (2014, April 10).

³¹ Steller (2011, January 8).

³² Karni (2011, January 9).



on my back: 2 9mm bullets,” following that with “There are important figures in my dreams that accomplished political aspirations: Hitler, Hilary Clinton [sic] and Giffords to name a few.”³³

On December 13, 2010, Loughner made threatening statements towards law enforcement on his MySpace page writing, “I don’t feel good: I’m ready to kill a police officer! I can say it.”³⁴ Later that same day, Loughner posted a comment to his MySpace page that suggested he may have been contemplating suicide: “WOW! I’m glad i didn’t kill myself. I’ll see you on National T.v.! This is foreshadow why doesn’t anyone talk to me?”³⁵

On December 15, 2010, Loughner uploaded a video to YouTube titled, *Introduction: Jared Loughner*. The video contained only written words that appeared on the screen. In the video, he made reference to his attempt to join the military and his visit to the Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) in Phoenix. Loughner wrote that, “Every United States military recruit at MEPS in Phoenix is receiving one mini bible before the tests. Jared Loughner is a United States military recruit at MEPS in Phoenix. Therefore, Jared Loughner is receiving one mini bible before the tests. Loughner is in need of sleep.”³⁶ He went on to discuss terrorism in this video, saying “If I define terrorist then a terrorist is a person who employs terror or terrorism, especially as a political weapon. I define terrorist. If you call me a terrorist then the argument to call me a terrorist is ad hominem. You call me a terrorist.”³⁷ Loughner closed this video with a concluding statement in which he summed up his thoughts: “In conclusion, my ambition – is for informing literate dreamers about a new currency; in a few days, you know I’m conscience dreaming!”³⁸

Final Preparations in the Days Leading up to the Incident

At the end of December 2010, Loughner went to visit two friends. While at their home, he took out the Glock handgun and a 32-round clip and showed them to one friend, who was taken aback. The friend asked Loughner several times why he had the weapon. Loughner answered that he purchased it for “home protection.”³⁹ The friend handled the gun for a bit, took the bullets out, and then gave the gun and bullets back to Loughner. Loughner gave him one of the bullets to keep. Loughner then showed another friend at the home the handgun and his tattoo of the two bullets. The friend was disturbed by the gun and asked him to leave.

Around this same time, Loughner was reportedly practicing with his handgun. A witness stated that at some point after Christmas 2010, he encountered Loughner in an area of the Arizona desert that was often used for target practice. Loughner told the unnamed witness that he was trying out a recently purchased 9 mm handgun.

In January 2011, Loughner researched political assassins as well as information on the likely punishment for committing such an act. He researched solitary confinement and lethal injection in an effort to understand what lethal injection would feel like. In addition, Loughner built a shrine inside a camouflage tent in the family’s backyard. The shrine included a replica of a skull placed on top of a pot filled with shriveled oranges, which were placed next to several candles.

On January 7, 2011, at 11:35 p.m., Loughner visited the Walgreens next to the Safeway where Rep. Giffords’s “Congress on Your Corner” event was slated to occur the following morning. While at the Walgreens, Loughner submitted a roll of film to be developed. The pictures included images of Loughner

³³ FBI files on the Jared Lee Loughner investigation (2014, April 10); Serrano (2014, July 27).

³⁴ Steller (2011, January 8).

³⁵ Steller (2011, January 8).

³⁶ Steller (2011, January 8).

³⁷ Karni (2011, January 9).

³⁸ Steller (2011, January 8).

³⁹ Serrano (2014, July 27).



posing with his Glock firearm, some with him holding the weapon in front of him, while others show him holding the weapon next to his backside.

On January 8, 2011, just after midnight, Loughner made a purchase at a convenience store and then checked into a Motel 6 a few miles from his home. According to the motel's records, it did not appear as if he spent much time sleeping because the door repeatedly opened and closed. At about 2:00 a.m., Loughner called an old friend, leaving him a voicemail saying, "Hey, it's Jared. We had some good times and peace out."⁴⁰ About 20 minutes later, Loughner picked up his developed photos and bought ear plugs from the Walgreens.

At 4:12 a.m., Loughner wrote a final message on his MySpace page that read, "Goodbye... Dear friends... Please don't be mad at me. The literacy rate is below 5%. I haven't talked to one person who is literate. I want to make it out alive. The longest war in the history of the United States. Goodbye. I'm saddened with the current currency and job employment. I had a bully at school. Thank you. P.S. Please the fifth!"⁴¹

Loughner returned to his parents' house around 6:00 a.m., and then left again. He made purchases at several stores, and just after 7:00 a.m. he returned to a Walmart to purchase ammunition. The clerk was taken aback by how rushed Loughner seemed and his erratic behavior, so he lied and told him the ammunition he wanted was out of stock. About 20 minutes later, Loughner went to a Super Walmart and inquired whether they had a limit on how much ammunition he could buy. The employee who assisted him sold him eight boxes of ammunition and a black backpack diaper bag.

Around 7:30 a.m., Loughner was stopped by an officer from the Arizona Game and Fish Department for failing to stop at a red light. He told the officer that he was just driving around. A check by the officer did not reveal any outstanding warrants, so he informed Loughner that he was only going to issue him a citation. Loughner began crying and then started laughing; finding it strange, the officer asked Loughner if he was okay. He responded that he was okay but that he had been having a hard time lately and was worried about getting a ticket. The officer inquired again if Loughner was okay. He responded yes and stated that he was going home. He then shook the officer's hand.

Later that morning around 8:00 a.m., Loughner returned home. He exited the car and took the black backpack out of the trunk. When he entered the house, his father asked him what was in the backpack. Loughner mumbled something, and ran out of the house. His father tried to follow him, but was unable to locate him.

At 9:00 a.m., Loughner went to a convenience store near his home and asked the clerk to call him a taxi. While he was waiting, he paced and repeatedly used the restroom. Around 9:25 a.m., he glanced at the clock and said that he still had some time. Then he walked to the clerk who called him the cab and shook her hand and thanked her. The taxi came and took him to the Safeway grocery store at the La Toscana Village strip mall in Tucson, AZ, where Rep. Giffords was holding her "Congress on Your Corner" event. The ride to the strip mall was mostly silent, except at one point Loughner blurted out that he drank too much. The taxi arrived at the strip mall at 9:54 a.m., and both the taxi driver and Loughner entered the Safeway so Loughner could get change to pay his taxi fare. After paying the taxi driver, Loughner went into the Safeway's restroom and put in earplugs.

The Incident

About 10:00 a.m., Rep. Giffords arrived for the "Congress on Your Corner" event and began speaking with constituents who had gathered there. A few minutes after her arrival, Loughner approached her District Director, Ron Barber, and asked, "Where is the congresswoman?...Is that the congresswoman?"⁴²

⁴⁰ Abcarian et al. (2011, January 16).

⁴¹ Leonard (2011, January 10); FBI FILES (2011, February 22).

⁴² Serrano (2014, July 27).



He was told to wait his turn and he walked to the back of the line of about 20 people. At approximately 10:12 a.m., Loughner walked quickly back to the front where Rep. Giffords was standing, and shot her. He then turned and began firing at the crowd near her and those waiting in line. People in the crowd attempted to flee the scene, and witnesses called 9-1-1. Bystanders were able to subdue Loughner when his firearm malfunctioned. The attack lasted about 15 seconds and emergency personnel and law enforcement officers arrived on the scene around 10:15 a.m. Six people were killed and 13 wounded, including Rep. Giffords.

Investigators were concerned that Loughner also planned to set off explosives in his home, or that he may have been planning to conduct a larger attack, so they executed a search warrant at the house using bomb technicians and bomb-sniffing dogs. In a small safe in Loughner's bedroom, technicians discovered batteries, a circuit board, wires, and a keyboard. While news reports described these as materials that could be used to construct an explosive device, FBI files explicitly state that these items were components of "the safe's numeric keyboard system," and that "there were no explosive hazards found in the dwelling."⁴³

In the safe, investigators also found the form letter from Rep. Giffords's office thanking Loughner for his attendance at the 2007 "Congress on Your Corner Event." On the letter, he had written "Die Cops" and "Die Bitch,"⁴⁴ which investigators determined was a reference to Rep. Giffords. Additionally, they discovered an envelope in the safe containing two shell casings, on which he had written "I planned ahead," "My assassination," and "Giffords," and words to the effect of "these are the first two shells of my gun."⁴⁵ The note on the envelope was dated December 6, 2010. The serial number for a Glock handgun was written on the outside of the envelope. The safe also contained a gun lock with a paper inside that said something similar to "you have a piece of a historic gun...2010, Jared Lee Loughner."⁴⁶ Finally, investigators found additional bullets of various caliber above the safe on a shelf. These items seem to imply that in addition to Loughner's dislike for Rep. Giffords stemming from the 2007 event, another possible motive for his attack may have been his desire to achieve fame as an assassin.

Judicial Outcome

Initially, Loughner was deemed incompetent to stand trial following a court-ordered mental health evaluation. While awaiting trial, he was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia, and at first, he refused to acknowledge that Rep. Giffords was still alive. When probed about what it meant to him if she was still alive, he replied that it would make him a failure. Loughner was forcibly medicated and restored to competency. He pleaded guilty, and on November 8, 2012, he was sentenced to 7 life sentences plus 140 years in prison.

⁴³ FBI files on the Jared Lee Loughner investigation (2014, April 10).

⁴⁴ Myers & Pritchard (2011, January 12b).

⁴⁵ Becker, Kovaleski, Luo, & Barry (2011, January 16).

⁴⁶ Tucson shooting: Last hours before rampage show Loughner unraveling (2010, March 28).



ABBREVIATED TIMELINE OF EVENTS IN THE YEARS

PRIOR TO THE INCIDENT

Summer 2005	Before the start of his junior year in high school, Loughner begins drinking and using drugs
May 12, 2006	Police called to his high school after he showed up intoxicated; he is taken to the hospital and reports drinking approximately eight shots of vodka
Summer 2006	Drops out of high school
August 2007	Attends “Congress on Your Corner” event in Tucson, AZ with Rep. Giffords
September 10, 2007	Cited for possession of drug paraphernalia; charge dismissed after he completes a drug diversion program
2008 (unknown date)	Buys a 12-gauge shotgun from Sportsman’s Warehouse in Tucson, AZ
Early 2008	Begins to exhibit signs of mental illness such as hearing voices and communicating bizarre ideas
October 3, 2008	Registers a complaint with law enforcement that someone stole his identity
October 13, 2008	Arrested on a vandalism charge for defacing a stop sign; charge dismissed after he pays a fine and completes a second diversion program
December 2008	Applies to enlist in the U.S. Army, but disqualified to serve because of drug use
November 2009	Fired from position at Eddie Bauer
January 2010	Volunteers as a dog-walker at a local animal shelter
March 2010	Asked to leave the animal shelter after failing to follow instructions; voices interest in weapons, shooting, and target practice
January - September 2010	Engages in disruptive and bizarre behaviors at Pima Community College (PCC), which led to meetings with a school counselor and five contacts with campus police



August - October 2010	Posts statements on his MySpace page that indicate he may have been contemplating suicide
September 23, 2010	Records a disturbing video about PCC while on campus, which he uploads on YouTube
September 29, 2010	Engages in disruptive behavior at the Pima County OneStop employment center and is asked to leave; PCC suspends him
October 4, 2010	He and his parents meet with campus officials to discuss his suspension; he withdraws from PCC
October 7, 2010	PCC sends him a letter indicating that he needs to obtain clearance from a mental health professional to re-enroll
November 30, 2010	Purchases 9mm Glock semiautomatic handgun from Sportsman's Warehouse in Tucson, AZ
December 13, 2010	Posts statements on his MySpace page that threatens law enforcement and suggest he may have been contemplating suicide
December 24, 2010	Purchases a 6-inch bladed knife and holster
Late December 2010	Visits friends and shows them gun and bullets
January 2011	Conducts online research on political assassins and punishment for committing such an act



ABBREVIATED TIMELINE OF EVENTS: JANUARY 7-8, 2011

January 7

11:35 p.m. Arrives at a Walgreens and drops off film to be developed

January 8

12:24 a.m. Makes a purchase at a convenience store

12:30 a.m. Checks into a Motel 6

2:00 a.m. Calls and leaves a voice message for a high school classmate

2:19 a.m. Returns to Walgreens to retrieve photos and buys ear plugs

4:12 a.m. Posts "Goodbye... Dear friends" message to his MySpace page

6:00 - 7:00 a.m. Makes purchases at several stores

7:04 a.m. Arrives at a Walmart store and attempts to purchase ammunition, but is turned away due to his erratic behavior

7:27 a.m. Purchases ammunition and a backpack style diaper bag at a Super Walmart

7:30 a.m. Stopped by an Arizona Game and Fish Department officer for running a red light

8:00 a.m. Returns home, but leaves when his father asks about the backpack he had

9:04 a.m. Enters a convenience store and asks the clerk to call him a taxi

9:39 a.m. Leaves convenience store in a taxi

9:54 a.m. Arrives by taxi at the La Toscana Village strip mall, site of "Congress on Your Corner" event with Rep. Giffords, enters the Safeway with the taxi driver to get change to pay the fare, then enters the restroom and puts in ear plugs

10:00 a.m. Rep. Giffords arrives for the event

Just after 10 a.m. Approaches a volunteer and asks to speak with Rep. Giffords and is directed to the back of the line

10:10 a.m. Walks back to the front of the line and shoots and injures Rep. Giffords, then turns and fires at the crowd around her

10:11 a.m. His gun malfunctions and bystanders tackle and hold him until law enforcement officers arrive



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**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
TO EXPLORE
PUBLICATIONS, RESEARCH &
REPORTS**



MORE ON THE SHIFITNG CLIMATE OF TARGETED ATTACKS AND BEHAVIORAL THREAT ASSESSMENTS:

A Study of Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Between 2000 and 2013 Blair, J. Pete, and Schweit, Katherine W., Texas State University and Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington D.C., (2014)

Active Shooter Incidents in the United States in 2016 and 2017 the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT) Center at Texas State University and the Federal Bureau of Investigations, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington D.C., (2018)

Making Prevention a Reality Amman, Molly, Bowlin, Matthew, Buckles, Lesley, Burton, Kevin C., Brunell, Kimberly F., Gibson, Karie A., Griffin, Sarah H., Kennedy, Kirk, and Robins, Cari J., Behavioral Threat Assessment Center, National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime, Critical Incident Response Group, and Federal Bureau of Investigation, (2017)

HOW BEHAVIORAL THREAT ASSESSMENTS RELATE TO SCHOOLS:

United States Secret Service

NTAC-National Threat Assessment Center

- The Final Report And Findings Of The Safe School Initiative: Implications For The Prevention Of School Attacks In The United States; United States Secret Service And United States Department Of Education; May 2002; https://www.secretservice.gov/data/protection/ntac/ssi_final_report.pdf
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<https://www.secretservice.gov/data/protection/ntac/ssitarget.pdf>

- Making Schools Safer: Quick Reference Guide, United States Secret Service; February 2018;

https://www.secretservice.gov/data/protection/ntac/Making_Schools_Safer_Quick_Reference_Guide_2018_Update.pdf

RESOURCES FOR SCHOOLS DEVELOPING THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAMS:

Connecting. The. Dots. The Behavioral Threat Assessment Unit's College & University School Resource Guidebook the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation Behavioral Threat Assessment Unit (April 2019)

Connecting. The. Dots. The Behavioral Threat Assessment Unit's K-12 School Resource Guidebook the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation Behavioral Threat Assessment Unit (April 2019)

Best Practices in Campus Threat Assessment: Training, Consultation, Evaluation, and Support

SIGMA Threat Management Associates

www.sigmatma.com

College Student Death: Guidance for a Caring Campus by Rosa Citron, Erin Taylor Weathers and Katherine Garlough, (2007; University Press of America)

Ending Campus Violence: New Approaches to Prevention by Brian Van Brunt (2012 Routledge Publishing)

The Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment & Management Teams

by Gene Deisinger, Ph.D.; Marisa Randazzo, Ph.D.; Dan O'Neill, and Jenna Savage, (2008; Applied Risk Management)

What Can You Do?

- ⇒ Be aware of potential warning signs
- ⇒ Document changes in behavior
- ⇒ If you think an individual is exhibiting one or more of the potential warning signs, the BeTA Unit may be able to help.

Your reports, no matter how big or small you believe the issue to be, are WANTED and NEEDED!

Thank you for all you do to promote the safety of all the citizens of North Carolina. Together, we can take steps to help protect our state and all those within it.

North Carolina Behavioral Threat Assessment Unit



NC Information Sharing and Analysis Center
NC Behavioral Threat Assessment Unit

Phone: 919-716-1111
Toll Free: 1-888-624-7222
E-mail: ncbeta@ncsbi.gov

*A global approach resource partnering with
other North Carolina law enforcement agencies
to help keep our citizens safe*



Mission

The mission of the Behavioral Threat Assessment Unit (BeTA Unit) is to identify, investigate, evaluate and manage person(s) of concern within North Carolina who are recognized as having motive and means to develop, or act on an opportunity to commit, a targeted attack.

Approach

The BeTA Unit employs an integrated systems approach to threat management interfacing with school systems, local law enforcement agencies, healthcare providers (including behavioral health), faith-based organizations and other community entities to identify persons of concern and to develop mitigation plans to strengthen protective factors and mitigate risk factors of violence for those individuals.

Who Could be a Person of Concern?

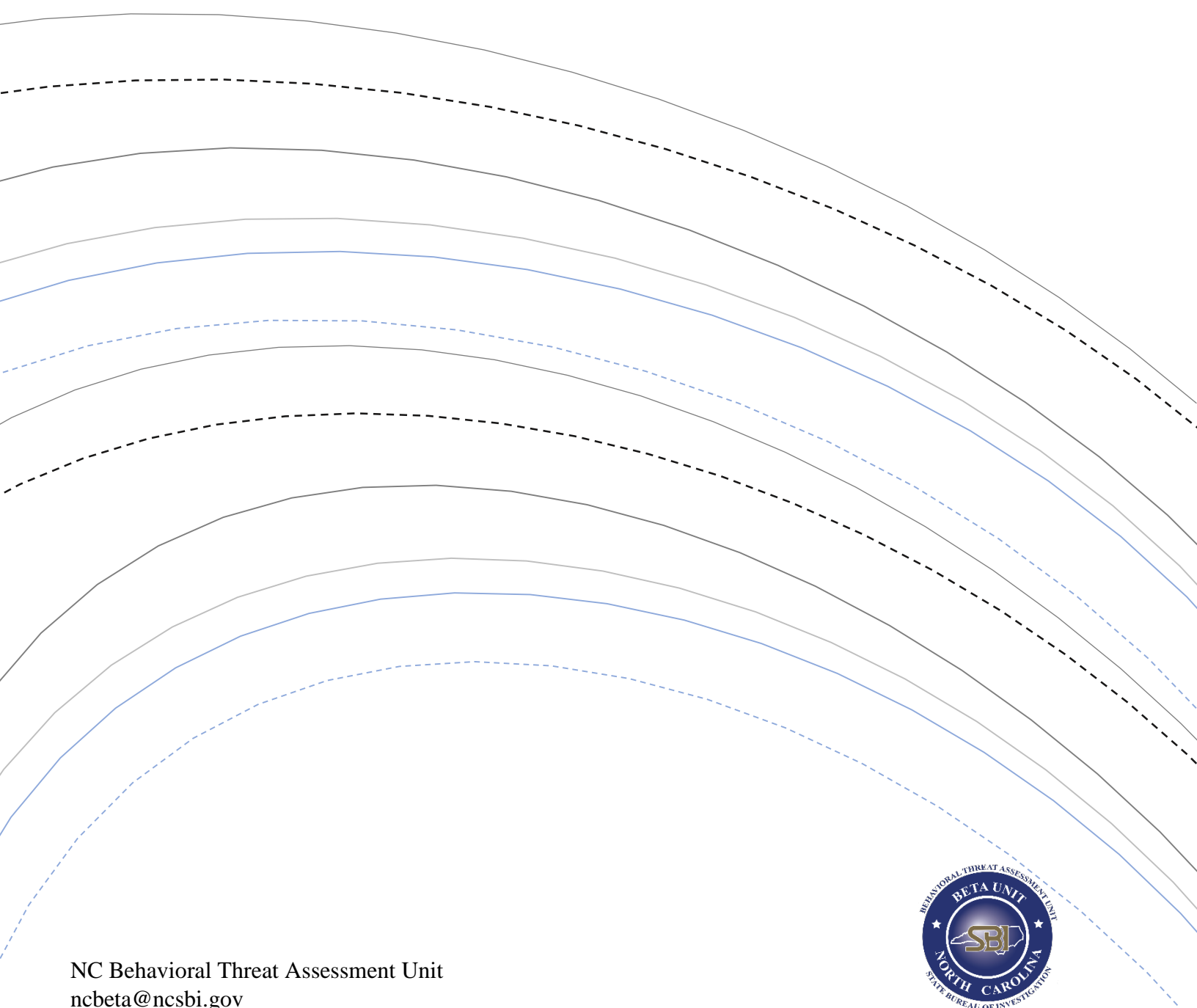
A person who is exhibiting the following behaviors of concern which are impacting their well-being and/or the well-being of others. **This is not an all-inclusive list.**

- Talks about harming others or carrying out an attack
- Makes violent threats
- Withdrawal from friends, family, social activities or a loss of one or more major relationships
- Sudden behavior and/or appearance changes
- History of abusing animals or setting fires
- Engages in end-of-life or cessation behaviors
- Grievance collection behavior with the person using violence, threats or intimidation as a response
- Preoccupation with mass shootings/violent attacks or those who commit them
- Preoccupation with weapons or an expressed intent to use them for violence or intimidation

What is a Threat Assessment?

"Threat assessment is a systematic, fact-based method of investigation and examination that blends the collection and analysis of multiple sources of information with published research and practitioner experience, focusing on an individual's patterns of thinking and behavior to determine whether, and to what extent, a person of concern is moving toward an attack."

*Federal Bureau of Investigation
Behavioral Analysis Unit, Making
Prevention a Reality, 2017*



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