

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
OFFICE OF COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING SERVICES

LAS VEGAS AFTER-ACTION ASSESSMENT

Lessons Learned from the Las Vegas
Metropolitan Police Department's
Ambush Incident



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ZOË THORKILDSEN

ASHLEY SHULTZ

THOMAS WOODMANSEE

DREW TRACY

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The Internet references cited in this publication were valid as of the date of publication. Given that URLs and websites are in constant flux, neither the author(s) nor the COPS Office can vouch for their current validity.

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear colleagues,

On June 8, 2014, two Las Vegas (Nevada) police officers were shot and killed in the line of duty while eating lunch in a local restaurant. Also killed in this cowardly ambush was a Good Samaritan civilian.

The murder of a police officer in the line of duty is not only a loss to the police department and the law enforcement profession; it is a loss to the community as well. However, the targeted murder of a police officer simply because he or she wears a uniform is a threat to our very democracy and compromises both public safety and national security.

When such tragedies do occur, we must take every step necessary to learn from them and see what steps can be taken to enhance officer safety and wellness. The President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing recognized this in making officer safety and wellness a pillar of its report, stressing that the well-being of our law enforcement officers is vital to public safety.

I applaud former Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (LVMPD) Sheriff Douglas Gillespie for requesting this after-action report and commend the entire LVMPD for supporting an effort that will benefit the profession but required many to relive an unthinkable tragedy.

We also commend CNA for their excellent work in preparing this detailed comprehensive analysis. Though we hope that no more tragedies like this occur in the future, we must do all we can to prepare for any possibility and work to reduce risk to the brave men and women who serve in law enforcement.

It is my hope that it this report will remind those not in law enforcement of the risk these brave men and women take every day in their service. We owe them our gratitude, support, and respect.

Sincerely,



Ronald L. Davis

Director

Office of Community Oriented Policing Services

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The after-action review team would like to express their appreciation for the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department's (LVMPD) participation in the development of this report. The LVMPD opened their doors to our team for an extremely productive and informative site visit, as well as freely sharing documentation and policies and procedures relevant to the ambush incident. We appreciate the LVMPD's willingness to share this information to support the development of lessons learned for the greater law enforcement community.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Las Vegas, Nevada, community and the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (LVMPD) experienced a tragic loss on June 8, 2014, when two officers were ambushed and killed by two assailants. The assailants went on to instigate an active shooter situation, killing a Good Samaritan civilian who attempted to intervene. LVMPD officers and supervisors responded to the active shooter threat, which evolved into a barricaded subject scenario. Ultimately, both assailants died: one by an officer-involved shooting and the other from a self-inflicted gunshot.

This report, sponsored by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) summarizes key findings developed during an after-action analysis of the ambush and subsequent police engagement with the assailants. CNA analyzed the event precursors, incident response, and aftermath to document lessons learned. These findings and lessons learned can be used by the larger law enforcement community to conduct self-evaluation and better prepare for critical incidents such as ambushes and active shooter situations.

This after-action report builds on other analysis of violence against law enforcement, including the 2015 COPS Office publication *Ambushes of Police: Environment, Incident Dynamics, and the Aftermath of Surprise Attacks Against Law Enforcement*.¹ Between the time of the ambush incident in Las Vegas and the publication of this report, other high-profile ambushes of officers have occurred in such cities as Philadelphia;² Blooming Grove Township, Pennsylvania;³ and New York City.⁴ As described in the 2015 COPS Office publication, there are numerous gaps in our understanding about ambushes of law enforcement officers. This report is intended to help provide lessons learned about responding to violence targeting law enforcement occurring in agencies across the country and help officers remain reasonably vigilant in the face of these constant threats. This report also serves as an essential foundation for future studies and best practices in understanding ambush incident preparation and response.

1. George Fachner and Zoë Thorkildsen, *Ambushes of Police: Environment, Incident Dynamics, and the Aftermath of Surprise Attacks Against Law Enforcement* (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2015), <http://ric-zai-inc.com/ric.php?page=detail&id=COPS-P340>.

2. Ray Sanchez, Jason Hanna, and Shimon Prokupecz, "Police: Suspect in Officer's Shooting Claims Allegiance to ISIS," CNN, last modified January 8, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/01/08/us/philadelphia-police-officer-shot/>.

3. Emma G. Fitzsimmons, "State Police Officer Dies in Pennsylvania Ambush," *New York Times*, September 13, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/14/us/state-police-officer-dies-in-pennsylvania-ambush.html>.

4. Melanie Eversley, Katharine Lackey, and Trevor Hughes, "2 NYPD Officers Killed in Ambush-Style Shooting," *USA Today*, December 21, 2014, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/12/20/new-york-city-police-officers-shot/20698679/>.

Summary of findings

The after-action report findings are organized in three sections: response findings, immediate aftermath findings, and post-incident response and recovery findings. We list the individual findings here in the order in which they appear in the report. Each of these findings is discussed in detail in the remainder of the report.

Response findings

Chapter 2 describes findings from analysis of the incident response, including findings related to the tactical response and response coordination. This section specifically focuses on the LVMPD's preparation prior to the incident and response during the incident.

FINDING: *The LVMPD's training programs, specifically its use of reality-based training, enabled officers to mount an effective tactical response to the incident at Walmart.*

FINDING: *The activation of Multi-Assault Counter-Terrorism Action Capabilities (MACTAC) was appropriate during this incident; however, MACTAC rally point practices were not fully executed, resulting in overconvergence of self-reporting officers at the scene.*

FINDING: *The use of "crisis dress" by responding special weapons and tactics (SWAT) team members made it difficult to differentiate them from potential suspects in the Walmart, though this challenge was mitigated by good tactical communication among the officers already in the store.*

FINDING: *The LVMPD communications center (which includes dispatch and the 911 call center) was burdened with repeated requests for updated information about the incident from LVMPD personnel.*

FINDING: *Because of procedural issues in the LVMPD dispatch center, not all information was communicated accurately and in a timely manner. The notification distribution list for an officer-involved shooting (OIS) did not include the SWAT commander, which delayed SWAT response. Also, the ambush incident was initially miscoded by a call taker in the dispatch center.*

FINDING: *The LVMPD did not properly establish command as outlined in the incident command system (ICS) approach, which resulted in confusion and miscommunication. Specifically, the incident commander role was not appropriately filled and a staging area was not established, which hindered the coordination of the response at the incident site.*

FINDING: *During the initial phase of the response at Walmart, interior tactical response radio communications were conducted on the same channel as exterior perimeter radio communications, leading to excessive traffic on the radio and confusion when the channels were separated.*

FINDING: *Issues with garbled transmissions and inability to transmit over radios during the response hampered information sharing.*

FINDING: *The rear entry team's use of earpieces rather than shoulder-mounted radios helped during the conceal-and-cover tactical response by reducing the possibility that noise from radios would give away the tactical team's position to the assailants.*

FINDING: *Some responding officers chose to make tactical entry without full tactical equipment (e.g., tactical helmets) because of real or perceived issues with ease of access.*

Immediate aftermath findings

Chapter 3 includes findings related to the short-term aftermath of the incident, including analysis of the incident investigation and support to officers.

FINDING: *Because this incident involved both homicides by assailants and officer-involved shootings, both the LVMPD's recently created Force Investigation Team (FIT) and also its homicide unit were involved in the performance of a criminal investigation, and at that time, a clear strategy for joint investigations had not been developed. This resulted in initial difficulty establishing relative roles and responsibilities and led to the development of new policies for investigation of these types of incidents.*

FINDING: *The Southern Nevada Counter-Terrorism Center's (SNCTC) release of a homeland security advisory (HSA) helped to keep the LVMPD and the broader law enforcement community informed and prepared should the incident have inspired copycat attacks.*

FINDING: *The LVMPD's public information strategy was successful in keeping the media and community informed about the incident.*

FINDING: *The LVMPD's decision to temporarily run two-person patrols contributed to officers' feelings of safety and well-being in the immediate aftermath of the incident by providing a greater sense of safety and peer support.*

FINDING: *The Police Employee Assistance Program (PEAP) and volunteer chaplain program both helped provide officers with access to support.*

FINDING: *Support and outreach efforts in the Northeast Area Command (NEAC) were primarily focused on organizational lines specifically targeting personnel currently assigned to the same unit as the ambushed officers. Focusing outreach along organizational lines overlooks the importance of social dynamics such as friendships developed in previously assigned units.*

FINDING: *Leadership support to the NEAC in the aftermath of the incident, particularly the physical visits made by LVMPD command staff, led to NEAC officers feeling that their concerns and well-being were important to LVMPD leadership.*

Post-incident response and recovery findings

Chapter 4 focuses on the long-term aftermath of the incident, including analysis of training and policy.

FINDING: *The LVMPD's Critical Incident Review Team (CIRT) contributed to organizational learning through their use of a well-documented, predictable administrative investigation resulting in a coherent and actionable analysis.*

FINDING: *The LVMPD has continued to use temporary two-person patrol assignments as a method of supporting officer safety after critical incidents.*

FINDING: *The LVMPD's development of ICS training materials focused on law enforcement-specific needs and concerns is a good practice for building officer readiness for responding to critical incidents; however, expanding this training to additional ranks and developing more support materials is necessary to ensure all officers can enact ICS coordination principles during an incident.*

FINDING: *The LVMPD's strategy of public information dissemination through regular press conferences, public releases of information on its website, and media engagement illustrated the benefits of information sharing with the community through timely releases of information. It also underscored the importance of using multiple methods to release information, which resulted in accurate coverage of the event by the media based on facts rather than speculation and an outpouring of community support for the department and impacted area command.*

OVERVIEW

On June 8, 2014, at 11:21 a.m. Pacific Daylight Time, the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (LVMPD) and the greater Las Vegas, Nevada, community experienced a tragic loss when two patrol officers—Officer Alyn Beck and Officer Igor Soldo—were ambushed and killed in the line of duty. The assailants fled on foot following the shooting, entering a nearby large retail store, which created an active shooter situation that resulted in the death of a Good Samaritan civilian. LVMPD officers and supervisors responded to the scene and engaged with the assailants. During this engagement, one assailant was shot and killed by a responding officer and the other died of a self-inflicted gunshot to the head. The special weapons and tactics (SWAT) team, in coordination with the responding patrol officers, apprehended both assailants at 11:59 a.m., with one declared dead on the scene and the other pronounced dead after transport to a medical facility.

The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office), at the request of the LVMPD, asked that CNA analyze this event with a focus on lessons learned from before, during, and after the ambush. This analysis is intended to serve as a resource for all local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies that experience critical incidents and acts of extreme violence against officers. After-action analyses conducted by independent observers, with documented lessons learned, enable law enforcement agencies to objectively assess their strategies, policies, and procedures, which can enhance officer safety and reduce harm.

This report is organized in several major sections. We continue this overview by describing the methodology and approach we used to develop this after-action report and the background leading up to the ambush incident. Chapter 1 presents a detailed chronology of the ambush incident. We next present lessons learned in three chapters

focusing on the ambush and active shooter response (chapter 2), the immediate aftermath of the incident (chapter 3), and the future operations of the LVMPD as they relate to the ambush incident (chapter 4). We close with a conclusion summarizing our findings and placing them in the broader context of violence against the police and community policing.

Approach

CNA used several methods to analyze the LVMPD ambush incident and collected data from multiple sources.

Document review. CNA reviewed and cataloged documents provided by the LVMPD. These documents fell into several categories: records of the incident (logs and other time-stamped documentation, described further in **Incident reconstruction**); intelligence and other information related to the assailants; relevant policies and procedures; media

releases; and post-incident documentation (interviews, interview transcripts and statements, and internal briefing documents). CNA reviewed these documents to develop the incident chronology, collate information about the assailants, place the incident in the context of LVMPD's policies and procedures, and analyze the response.

Incident reconstruction. Among the documents provided by the LVMPD were computer aided dispatch logs, 911 call logs, radio communications logs, video surveillance feeds, witness and officer statements, investigative records, and other data sources. CNA used these sources to create the incident reconstruction. This reconstruction presents a timeline of events leading up to, during, and after the ambush incident and documents the source of the information. The process used to create this reconstruction included a review of more than 600 documents provided by the LVMPD that were then logged onto a spreadsheet. We gave each document an identification number for tracking purposes and entered it into the reconstruction database. CNA coded each file or event (some files included multiple codeable events, which were each entered on a separate line) with a general description of the file or event, the time and location (if applicable), chronology codes (pre-ambush, ambush response, post-ambush), and thematic codes (e.g., policy, training, equipment). We highlight the key events in the incident chronology presented in chapter 1.

Interviews, briefings, and direct observation. The CNA team conducted phone interviews with command staff at the LVMPD, including Sheriff Joseph Lombardo. These calls helped CNA define the scope for a site visit to the LVMPD to conduct further interviews and observe training relevant to the incident. During this site visit, CNA interviewed LVMPD personnel at various levels of command who were directly or indirectly involved in the response. All interviews were semi-structured in nature, in that CNA developed a list of key questions ahead of the interview but allowed the interview to proceed naturally, circling back to the key questions as they came up in conversation. CNA also participated in a Federal Bureau of Investigation Behavioral Analysis Unit intelligence briefing

about the assailants and observed a Multi-Assault Counter-Terrorism Action Capabilities (MACTAC) training session.⁵ CNA also received briefing materials from the Critical Incident Review Board (CIRB) and a copy of the Critical Incident Review Team (CIRT) administrative report and observed the public fact-finding review session for this incident.

Incident overview

In this section, to provide context for the remainder of the report, we describe the assailants' backgrounds, including key events they experienced leading up to the day of the ambush and their activity the morning of the ambush itself. We include a detailed chronology in the next section that expands on the high-level overview presented here. We close the chapter by reflecting on preventability of incidents of extreme violence against police, both in this specific event and more generally.

The assailants

At the time of the ambush, Jerad Miller (the male assailant) was 31 years old and Amanda Miller (the female assailant) was 22 years old. Both espoused extremist antigovernment and anti-law enforcement views, though the male assailant had held these views for much of his life while the female assailant only seemed to have held them since meeting him. The male assailant grew up in Washington State and came from a very strict home. His parents divorced and he moved with his mother to Indiana. He was a high school dropout who had never had steady employment and had a history of escalating criminal behavior and drug abuse. The female assailant was a high school graduate who held a steady job and had no history of criminal behavior or drug use.

The assailants met in Indiana in December of 2010 and moved in together a month later. They married in Indiana in September 2012, despite opposition from the female assailant's family. After their marriage, she became increasingly isolated from friends and family while becoming more vocally antigovernment. Both the assailants were

5. The LVMPD was an early adopter of MACTAC training methods, which are a training and response mechanism developed after the Mumbai, India, terrorist attacks in November 2008. The LVMPD established a MACTAC division in January of 2009. The implementation of MACTAC strategy in this response will be discussed in more detail in chapter 2.



Example of the male assailant's social media posts

Source: People Against the NDAA, "We are streaming a LIVE presentation explaining the NDAA right NOW!," Facebook post, shared by Jerad Miller, May 28, 2014, 8:02 a.m., <https://www.facebook.com/jerad.miller.1/posts/710564168982423>.

proponents of the legalization of marijuana and decriminalization of drug use in general. They felt the government had overstepped its constitutional bounds. They viewed the police as an extension of the "tyrannical" government, guilty of enforcing corrupt laws. Both assailants wanted to effect change within the government and believed they could inspire others to join their revolution. The male assailant was particularly outspoken on social media, posting dozens of antigovernment messages on his Facebook account and regularly commenting on videos on YouTube.⁶ The illustration is an example of the type of social media posts the male assailant made regularly.

The assailants lived in Indiana until they moved to Las Vegas in January of 2014. Their relationship with the male assailant's family and friends had become increasingly strained because of his legal problems. On their way to Las Vegas, they were stopped at the Nevada border by

6. The male assailant's social media accounts are still active and publicly accessible: <https://www.facebook.com/jerad.miller.1> (Facebook), <https://plus.google.com/105018730678362042721/about> (Google+), and <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjtj9PHJv4NSOzO2J1gC2zw/feed> (YouTube). The female assailant's Facebook account is also still active: <https://www.facebook.com/amanda.woodruff.9>.

police because of a suspended registration, marking the first time they had an encounter with law enforcement in Nevada. After arriving in Las Vegas, the assailants worked as street performers, and the female assailant obtained a job working a retail position for the same company she had worked for in Indiana. Over the course of the six months they lived in Las Vegas, they had regular contact with law enforcement, though primarily as witnesses or reporters of crime through 911 calls. In one notable incident, however, the male assailant called the Indiana Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) regarding his suspended license and threatened violence against DMV personnel. Counterterrorism detectives interviewed the male assailant regarding this incident but ultimately determined there was no cause for arrest and closed the case.

Ambush precursors

The Bundy ranch

In April 2014, the assailants resided briefly at the ranch owned by cattle rancher Cliven "Clive" Bundy, located approximately 75 miles northeast of Las Vegas. Bundy has been engaged in a dispute with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) over cattle grazing since 1993. Bundy espouses sovereign citizen views and has publicly stated that he does not acknowledge the United States Federal Government. On April 5, 2014, the BLM and law enforcement rangers began rounding up livestock grazing on federal land without a permit. Bundy and other individuals associated with the Bundy ranch made public statements rallying sovereign citizen proponents, and in early April, armed citizens and private militia members converged on the Bundy ranch to oppose the BLM's cattle roundups. It was during this time period that the assailants traveled to the Bundy ranch; the male assailant was identified as a member of the ranch by Al-Jazeera in their coverage of the dispute on April 22, 2014 and was quoted as promising retaliation if federal law enforcement "bring violence to us."⁷

In the aftermath of the ambush on June 8, members of the Bundy ranch—specifically Clive Bundy's son, Ammon Bundy—repudiated the assailants. The Bundys explained that the assailants had stayed at the ranch for only a few

7. Inside Story Team, "Nevada Rancher Versus the Federal Government: Who's In the Right?" Al-Jazeera America, last modified April 22, 2014, <http://america.aljazeera.com/watch/shows/inside-story/articles/2014/4/22/nevada-rancher-vthefederalgovernmentwhosintheright.html>.

days and that they had been asked to leave. Ammon Bundy is quoted as saying that the couple was “very radical” and that their views did not align with those of the protests against the BLM.⁸ Ammon Bundy went on to note that very few individuals had ever been asked to leave the ranch. The male assailant’s account of their departure from the Bundy ranch differs. He posted a comment on a YouTube video related to the Bundy ranch stating that he and the female assailant had been asked to leave because of his felon status (he had a previous conviction for felony auto theft) and criticizing the Bundys for rejecting their assistance.⁹ In this same thread of conversation, the male assailant advocates his sovereign citizen views by stating, “As far as I am concerned, my government is a fascist enemy. Unlike all those loyal Nazis, I will not tolerate despotic rule over me and my family.”¹⁰

The lead-up

The day before their attack on the officers at CiCi’s Pizza, the female assailant wrote in her journal that she and the male assailant were officially homeless; investigation after the fact revealed that they did not have the money necessary to pay their rent and that their apartment had become unlivable because of accumulation of trash and other debris. On the evening of June 7, the assailants went out to dinner at a restaurant close to the CiCi’s Pizza location, leaving behind a cash tip with sovereign citizen views written in pen on a \$5 bill. The male assailant posted to his Facebook account, stating “The dawn of a new day. May all of our coming sacrifices be worth it.”¹¹ Their neighbor and friend (with whom they had reportedly been staying) said that on the morning of the 8th, the assailants left the apartment with shopping carts filled with supplies and ammunition, stating that they were planning to “go kill cops.” However, the neighbor did not report this to the authorities.

8. Michelle Rindels and Martin Griffith, “Cliven Bundy’s Son: Las Vegas Shooters Kicked Off Ranch,” *Las Vegas Sun*, last modified June 9, 2014, <http://lasvegassun.com/news/2014/jun/09/cliven-bundys-son-las-vegas-shooters-kicked-ranch/>.

9. Jerad Miller, 2014, “I was out there but . . .,” comment on The Next News Network, “#OccupyTheRanch: Rotating Shifts Have Commenced at Bundy Ranch,” YouTube, April 17, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z1agQK6g4q0&lc=z12ygxirpx3vct3zb04cdbkrjqr4fvkye20>.

10. Jerad Miller, 2014, “They are going around . . .,” comment on The Next News Network, “#OccupyTheRanch: Rotating Shifts Have Commenced at Bundy Ranch,” YouTube, April 17, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z1agQK6g4q0&lc=z12ygxirpx3vct3zb04cdbkrjqr4fvkye20>.

11. Jerad Miller, “The dawn of a new day,” Facebook post, June 7, 2014, 4:00 a.m., <https://www.facebook.com/jerad.miller.1/posts/720142201357953>.

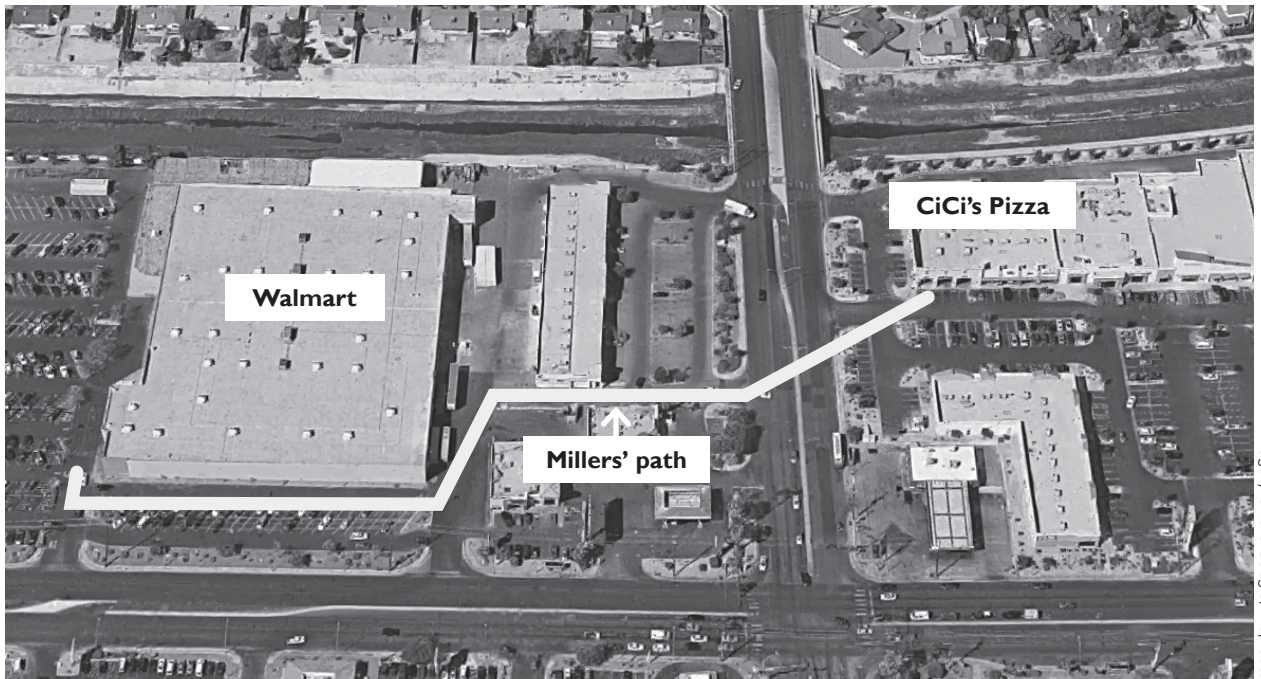
It is important to note that while certain elements of the assailants’ attack appeared to have been planned in advance (most notably, their actions in the Walmart, during which they proceeded without hesitation to key areas within the store, at times taking separate paths through the store), no evidence suggests that they specifically targeted Officer Beck and Officer Soldo. The officers had not had any known contact with the assailants before the day of the ambush. The officers’ assignment to patrol together in a two-person unit and take their lunch together was not something that could have been predicted by the assailants, and all evidence points to the ambush in CiCi’s Pizza as a crime of opportunity perpetrated when the assailants noticed the patrol vehicle outside the restaurant. Their marked patrol vehicle and the law enforcement uniforms they wore made them a target to the assailants.

Ambush incident overview

On Sunday, June 8, 2014, at 11:04 a.m., Officer Beck and Officer Soldo checked out for lunch at the North Nellis/Stewart Ave intersection and proceeded to the CiCi’s Pizza located at 309 North Nellis Boulevard. The two officers were on normal patrol duties, operating as a two-person patrol team in the Northeast Area Command (NEAC). The male assailant entered the CiCi’s Pizza at 11:19 a.m., interacted with an employee, then exited and re-entered with his wife, the female assailant, at 11:21 a.m. The assailants proceeded to the officers eating lunch and, within less than a minute of entering the business, ambushed and shot both officers. They left a Gadsden flag (a historical flag depicting a rattlesnake with the phrase “Don’t tread on me” printed on it), a handwritten statement expressing anti-law enforcement attitudes, and a swastika pin at the site of the ambush and took the officers’ weapons and ammunition with them as they left.

The assailants proceeded on foot to the Walmart located at 201 North Nellis Boulevard, less than one block away from the CiCi’s Pizza. Figure 1 shows an aerial view of the area, including the assailants’ approximate path between the two businesses.

The assailants entered the Walmart through the front entrance at approximately 11:25 a.m.; upon entering, the male assailant fired into the air and began shouting. A civilian, Joseph Wilcox, who held a concealed carry permit



Imagery ©2015 Google, Map data

Figure 1. Overview of incident location

and was armed with a handgun, followed the male assailant into the store, not realizing the female assailant was with him. Mr. Wilcox drew his weapon and pointed it at the male assailant; however, the female assailant witnessed this action from her position a few feet away and shot him in the side of the chest, killing him before he could take further action. The assailants continued to advance further into the store, taking separate paths and then reconvening in the sporting goods section, where they acquired additional ammunition.

While these events took place, the first responding officers arrived at the CiCi's Pizza at 11:26 a.m. One of these responding officers, Officer Brett Brosnahan, was contacted by multiple witnesses who provided him with the assailants' direction of travel. As Officer Brosnahan proceeded along this path, he came upon citizens¹² fleeing from the Walmart through the rear employee doors. These citizens informed Officer Brosnahan that there was an active shooter situation inside the Walmart. Brosnahan stopped an employee, who showed him to the rear employee doors. Brosnahan entered through those

doors and proceeded through the employee back room area and into the back of the store, where he encountered the assailants. Brosnahan exchanged gunfire with them. The female assailant was injured during this exchange of gunfire. Upon realizing that there were two suspects in the Walmart, Brosnahan exited the store using the same path he had used to enter and got on his radio to communicate the situation inside the store to Dispatch.

Numerous patrol vehicles responded to both locations, and at 11:31 a.m. and 11:32 a.m., respectively, an entry team entered the front entrance and a second entry team entered the rear entrance of the Walmart. The front entry team accessed the surveillance camera room at 11:39 a.m., while the rear entry team deployed to contain and engage the assailants. At 11:49 a.m., two officers from the rear entry team exchanged gunfire with the male assailant, one of them striking him in the chest. Less than a minute later, the female assailant shot herself in the head. A SWAT unit entered the store and, at 11:59 a.m., took both assailants into custody. The female assailant was transported to a hospital, where she was pronounced dead.

Figure 2 on page 7 shows the key incident events in a timeline.

12. This report uses "citizen" to refer to all individuals in a city or town who are not sworn law enforcement officers or government officials. It should not be understood to refer only to U.S. citizens. (The phrase "sovereign citizen" has a particular meaning referring to a specific antigovernment movement described in the text of the report.)

Summary

The assailants were outspoken in their political beliefs and their negative feelings towards the government. They were particularly antagonistic towards the police when expressing their extreme views relating to the sovereign citizen movement. Shortly after the ambush incident in Las Vegas, the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism published a study based on a survey of law enforcement officers finding that sovereign citizen extremists were perceived as the greatest threat to their communities.¹³ However, adherence to sovereign citizen views warrants additional research given the fact that although many adherents to sovereign citizen views mainly choose to fight the government by administrative means (e.g., in courts and by filing nuisance paperwork), there have been some instances of extreme violence.¹⁴ Based on information collected by law enforcement after this incident, the assailants' activities and views taken together

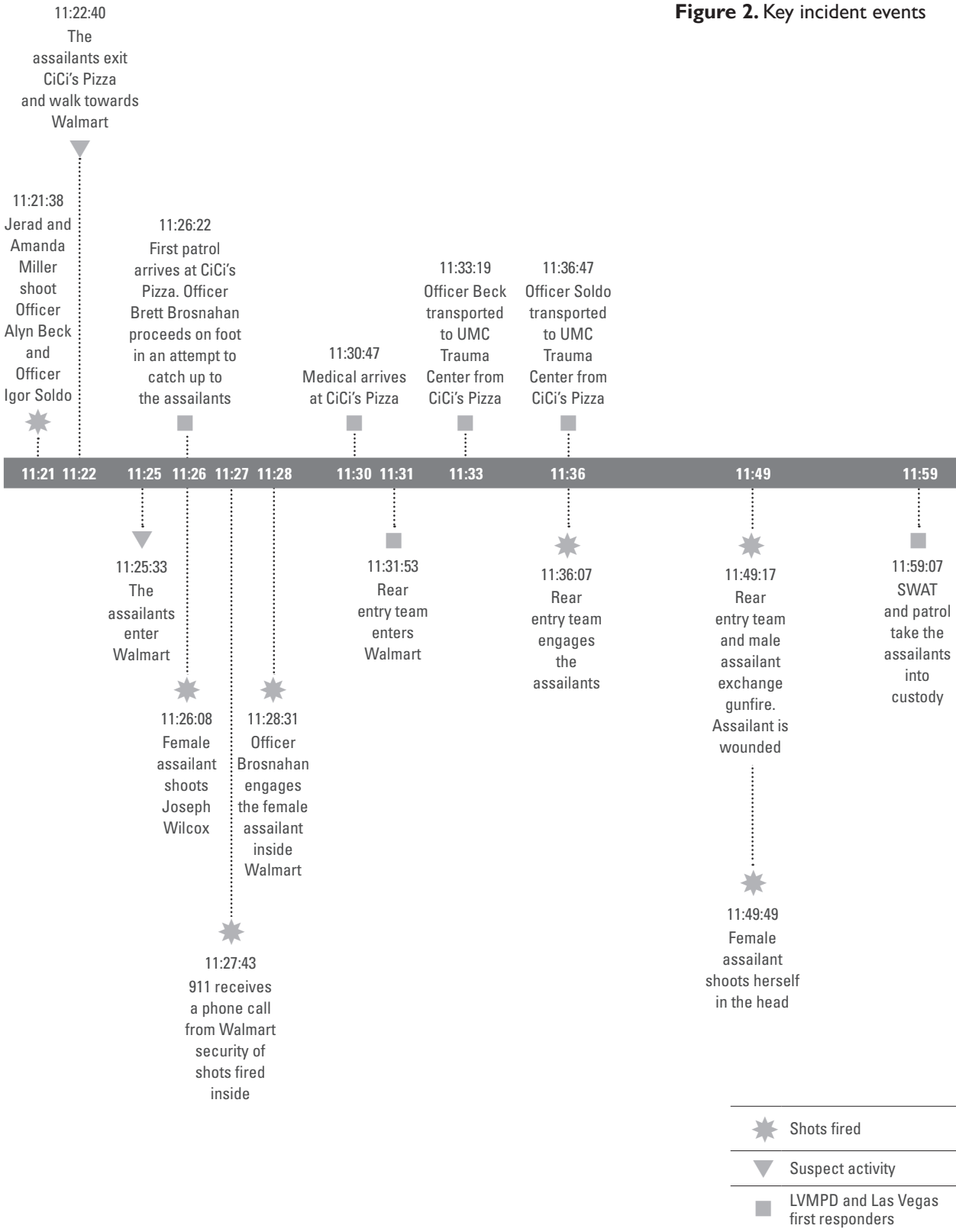
suggest a pattern that might result in violent behavior, but most of this information had not been compiled prior to the incident. Indeed, the only concrete warning of their plans came on the morning of the incident as they left their neighbor, who dismissed their claimed plans as an exaggeration.

Identifying and predicting acts of violence against the police is difficult—especially in the case of ambush attacks, which by their nature are particularly rare and unpredictable. As we discuss in the remainder of this after-action report, preparation for, response to, and follow-up after such events remain the main aspects of these critical incidents that law enforcement can learn from. Specifically, the assessment team found no tactical errors that could have prevented the ambush. This tragedy highlights the risks that officers face and their need to be vigilant and alert even if not engaged in patrol activities.

13. David Carter, Steve Chermak, Jeremy Carter, and Jack Drew, *Understanding Law Enforcement Intelligence Processes* (College Park, MD: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, 2014), https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START_UnderstandingLawEnforcementIntelligenceProcesses_July2014.pdf.

14. "Sovereign Citizens Movement," Southern Poverty Law Center, accessed February 18, 2016, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/sovereign-citizens-movement>.

Figure 2. Key incident events



CHAPTER I

INCIDENT CHRONOLOGY

Pre-ambush

January 6, 2014

The assailants enter Nevada on their way to move to Las Vegas. They are stopped at the border by local police—not the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (LVMPD)—because of a suspended registration but ultimately are allowed to continue into the state.

April 2014

The assailants reside at the Bundy ranch (located approximately 75 miles northwest of Las Vegas, Nevada) for a brief period in April of 2014, during the Bundy ranch confrontation with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). We discuss this precursor in more detail in chapter 2.

Saturday, June 7, 2014

The female assailant writes a journal entry stating that she and her husband (the male assailant) are officially homeless.

Ambush—Sunday, June 8, 2014

08:02 a.m.

Officer Alyn Beck and Officer Igor Soldo of the LVMPD begin their patrol shift, operating as a two-person marked patrol unit assigned to the Northeast Area Command (NEAC).

09:00 a.m. to 11:12 a.m.

The assailants are pictured on various surveillance cameras loitering in the vicinity of the businesses near the CiCi's Pizza and the Walmart.

11:05:54 a.m.

Officer Beck and Officer Soldo use the mobile data terminal inside their patrol vehicle to check out for lunch. The location given was Stewart/Nellis. It is worth noting that this information was not transmitted via radio, so it could not have been easily intercepted had the assailants been monitoring radio communications to identify the location of police officers.

11:06:28 a.m.

Officer Beck and Officer Soldo enter CiCi's Pizza restaurant on 309 North Nellis Boulevard in Las Vegas, Nevada. They park the patrol vehicle in a parking space near the business.

The restaurant is laid out with six rows of tables positioned north to south. The third row of tables is adjacent to an aisle that runs to the far west side of the business nearest the restrooms. The other side of this third row is a partial wall that extends up about 16 inches above the tables.

The two officers seat themselves toward the west end of the business across from the fountain soda machine. They choose the third row of tables almost to the far west side

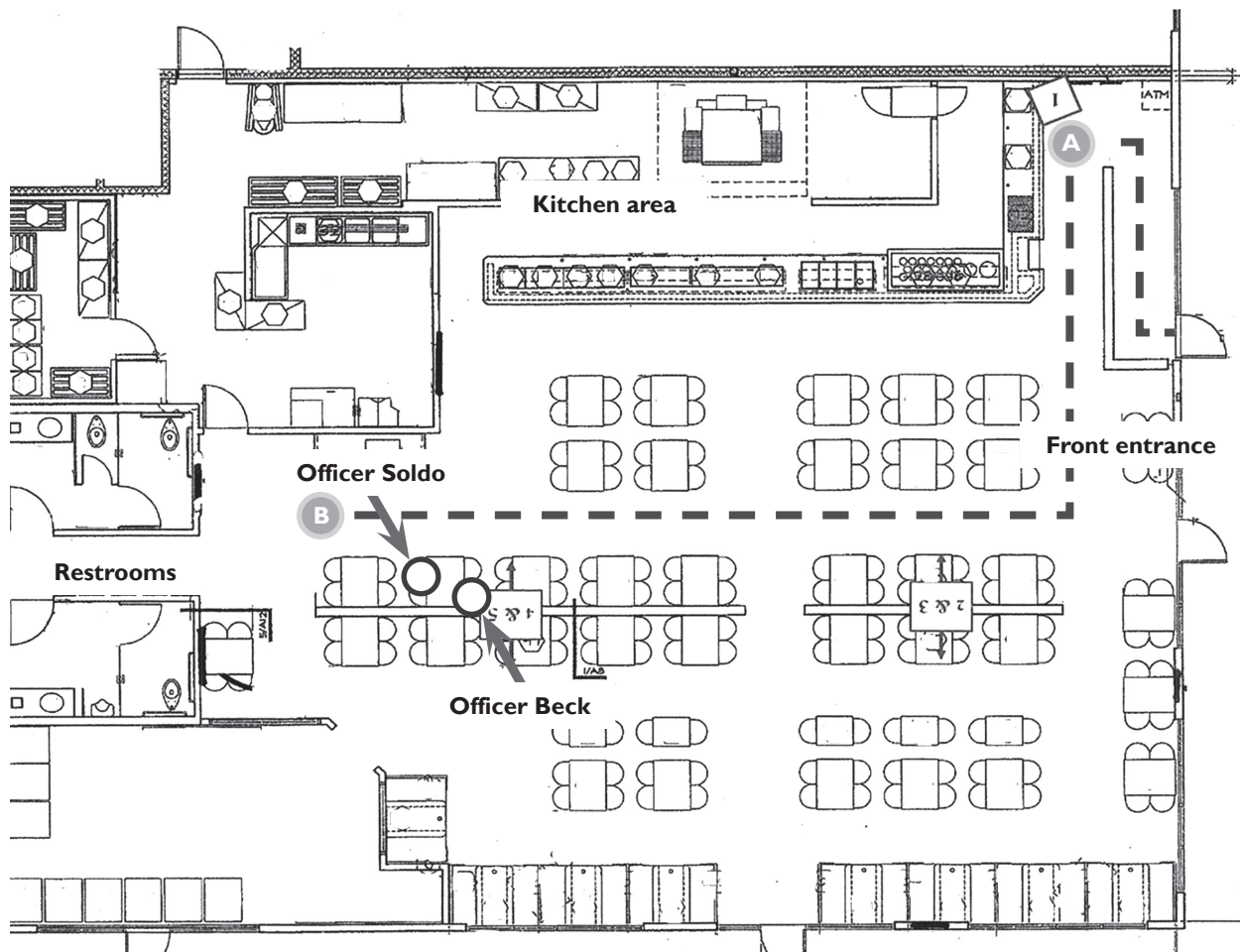


Figure 3. CiCi's Pizza

of the business near the restrooms. Officer Soldo faces east sitting nearest the aisle, while Officer Beck sits facing west furthest from the aisle next to the partial wall. Figure 3 illustrates the layout of CiCi's pizza and the officers' positions.

11:19:44 a.m.

The male assailant enters CiCi's Pizza through the front entrance. He asks a CiCi's employee where the restroom is located. The employee points to the far west side of the business, behind Officer Beck and Officer Soldo. The male assailant then exits the business.

11:21:22 a.m.

The assailants enter CiCi's Pizza. The female assailant carries a canvas-style shoulder bag on her right shoulder. They walk past the registers and, in a calm demeanor, proceed up the aisle toward the officers (path marked by dashed line in figure 3).

They are carrying an unregistered Winchester 1300 Defender/Pistol Grip shotgun, an unregistered Smith & Wesson M&P/9mm handgun, and an unregistered Ruger LCR/Hammerless/.38 Special.

11:21:38 a.m.

The assailants fire on Officer Beck and Officer Soldo without warning from a few feet away. They shoot Officer Beck six times and Officer Soldo three times during the assault lasting less than four seconds. Customers immediately begin to run out of the business. Officer Soldo and Officer Beck will be declared deceased at the University Medical Center's (UMC) Trauma Center at 11:58 a.m. and 1:31 p.m., respectively.

11:22:14 a.m.

The LVMPD dispatch center receives the first 911 call from a civilian who was a customer at CiCi's Pizza reporting shots fired inside CiCi's Pizza located at 309 North Nellis Boulevard.

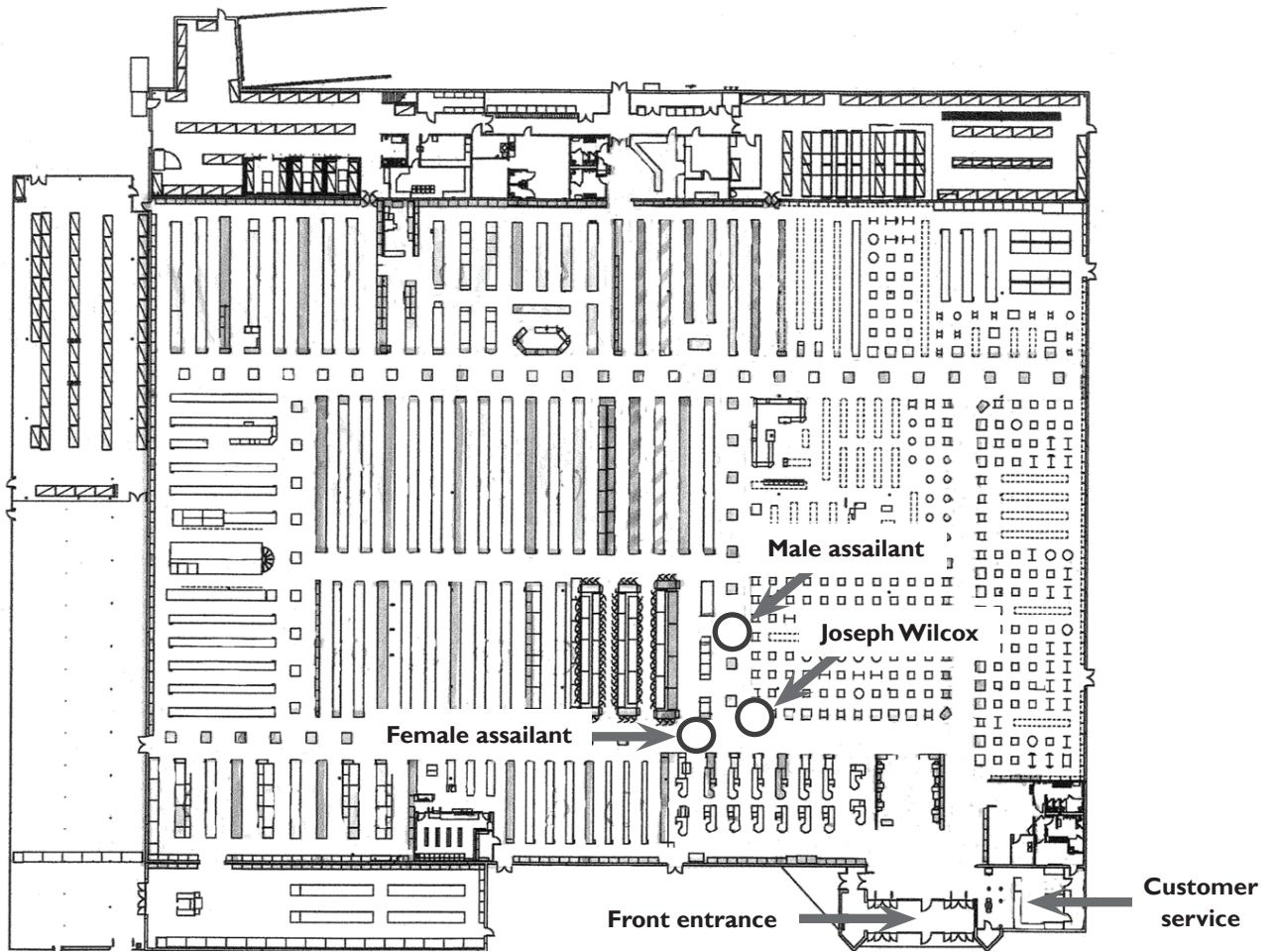


Figure 4. Walmart interior. The female assailant shoots Joseph Wilcox

11:22:40 a.m.

The assailants exit CiCi's Pizza and begin walking toward Walmart. (See figure 1 on page 5.)

11:22:55 a.m.

LVMPD Dispatch generates a 415A ("assault/battery with a gun"). Although 911 callers had identified the victims as police officers, the incident is not initially coded as a 444 ("officer needs help—emergency").

11:25:11 a.m.

LVMPD Dispatch identifies that Officer Beck and Officer Soldo are listed as 482 ("checked out for lunch") at the intersection of Nellis Boulevard and Stewart Avenue, the intersection directly east of the CiCi's Pizza.

11:25:33 a.m.

The assailants enter the Walmart holding handguns, and the male assailant begins yelling about a revolution. The female assailant lags several steps behind him, stopping to acquire a shopping cart on the way into the store.

The male assailant fires one round from a handgun into the ceiling of the store and yells for people to leave. Joseph Wilcox, a Good Samaritan civilian with a concealed carry weapons permit, is in the customer service area to the right of the front entrance and is armed with a semi-automatic handgun. Upon hearing the male assailant's shot, Mr. Wilcox moves to follow him into the store. Mr. Wilcox does not appear to realize that the female assailant is involved, as she is following several steps behind the male assailant with the shopping cart.



Patrol vehicles at the CiCi's Pizza scene

11:25:54 a.m.

Civilians begin to take cover in the pharmacy; employees lock down the pharmacy at 11:26 with customers inside.

11:26:07 a.m.

As the male assailant nears the grocery section with Mr. Wilcox following him, the female assailant notices Mr. Wilcox. The male assailant makes a northbound turn into the grocery section as the female assailant continues west. Mr. Wilcox draws his firearm, rounds the corner, and turns north to face the male assailant. As Mr. Wilcox points his firearm toward the male assailant, the female assailant fires a round at Mr. Wilcox, striking him in the side and killing him.¹⁵ Figure 4 on page 11 illustrates their positions in the store at this point.

The assailants next move directly to the rear of the store. They smash a case in the sporting goods section and retrieve several boxes of ammunition.

11:26:22 a.m.

First patrol arrives at CiCi's Pizza.

Witnesses tell Officer Brett Brosnahan, one of the first patrol officers to arrive, that the two assailants were last seen headed towards the rear of the Walmart. Brosnahan pursues on foot in an attempt to catch up to the assailants.

15. In surveillance videos, Mr. Wilcox drops to the floor instantly upon being shot and remains motionless from that point forward. The autopsy report does not specify why the gunshot wound was so immediately incapacitating, but does note that the path of the bullet resulted in injury to the aorta.

11:27:17 a.m.

Three patrol officers (Officers Ana Briggs, Richard Thomas, and Brian Steelsmith) enter CiCi's Pizza; the responding officers confirm a 444 ("officer needs help—emergency").

11:27:43 a.m.

911 receives a phone call from Walmart security reporting shots fired inside.

11:27:52 a.m.

Officer Brosnahan (on foot) arrives at the rear of Walmart.

11:27:58 a.m.

Walmart employees who had escaped out of the rear doors direct Officer Brosnahan to the assailants' location.

11:28:26 a.m.

First responding officers arrive at the front of the Walmart and post on the southeast corner of the store.

11:28:29 a.m.

Officer Brosnahan observes the male assailant inside the store and attempts to parallel his movements.

11:28:31 a.m.

Officer Brosnahan turns the corner of the further western aisle (labeled with circle A in figure 5) expecting to see the male assailant, but encounters the female assailant. Brosnahan assesses her demeanor as that of someone who "was there for a reason" and upon scanning her posture notices that she is holding a gun. The female assailant raises the gun, and she and Brosnahan exchange fire. Brosnahan strikes her once in the upper right shoulder. The male assailant, who is further down the far western aisle, runs up behind the female assailant during this exchange.

11:28:48 a.m.

Officer Briggs at the CiCi's Pizza scene requests medical assistance for two officers shot inside the store.

11:28:52 a.m.

Realizing there are two armed assailants inside, Officer Brosnahan retreats from the Walmart.

11:30:06 a.m.

Dispatch advises there is an active shooter inside the Walmart.

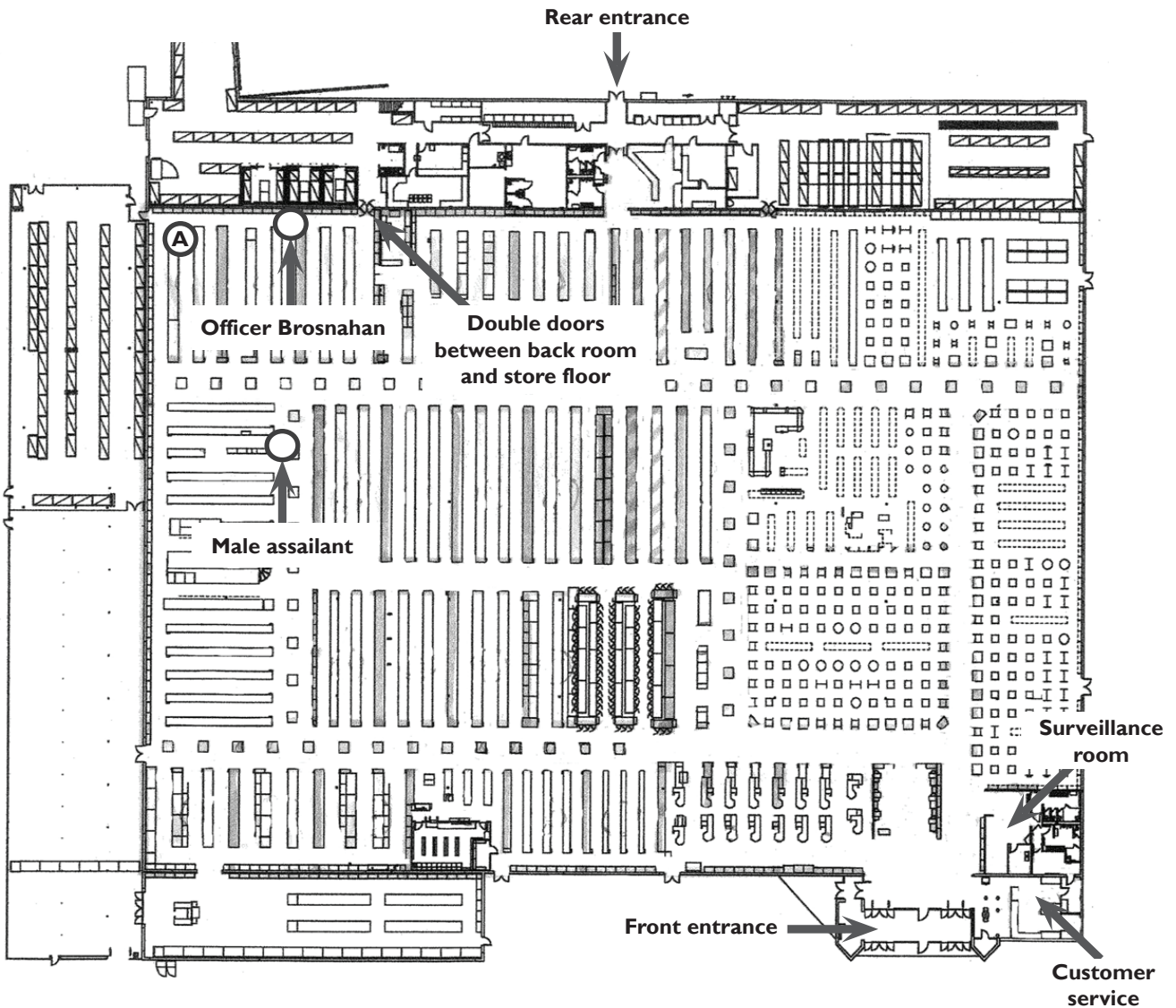


Figure 5. Walmart interior. Officer Brosnahan observes the male assailant upon entering the rear of the store. Note that the female assailant's exact location is unknown at the time illustrated in figure 5; she is in transit along the far west wall towards circle A.

11:30:39 a.m.

Additional officers continue to arrive at the front and rear of the Walmart.

11:30:43 a.m.

Sergeant Kurt McKenzie requests that arriving units go to the Walmart surveillance camera room (located just past the customer service area).

11:30:45 a.m.

Officer Brosnahan advises that he was involved in an officer-involved shooting in the Walmart.

11:30:47 a.m.

Medical arrives at CiCi's Pizza.

11:31:53 a.m.

The front entry team enters through the front doors of the Walmart and stages near the customer service area.

Sergeant McKenzie leads the rear entry team using the LVMPD's active shooter response tactics, and they deploy through the rear doors on the north side of the Walmart.

11:32:25 a.m.

The assailants take up defensive positions in the northwest corner of the store.

11:33:19 a.m.

Emergency Medical Services transports Officer Beck from CiCi's Pizza to UMC Trauma Center.



Patrol vehicles at the Walmart scene

11:34:31 a.m.

A supervisor in LVMPD Dispatch activates multiple-assault counter-terrorism action capabilities (MACTAC) protocols. Officers assigned to MACTAC squads are instructed to report to rally points. (We provide a more detailed description of the LVMPD's MACTAC procedures in chapter 2.)

11:35:22 a.m.

The rear entry team moves from the storeroom into the main portion of the store through the double doors labeled in figure 5.

11:36:07 a.m.

The assailants fire upon the rear entry team. Officer Zackery Beal exchanges gunfire with them. At this point, the male assailant is lying on the floor facing towards the double doors at the back of the store, while the female assailant is lying on the floor (injured) and facing down the north-south aisle at the west of the store.

11:36:33 a.m.

Officer Timothy Gross joins Officer Beal, holding position at the rear double doors. The rest of the rear entry team moves further into the store, deploying a “Tactical L” strategy. Gross and Beal continue to exchange gunfire intermittently with the male assailant until 11:49. Sergeant McKenzie engages verbally with the male assailant and attempts to de-escalate the situation. While McKenzie is

successful in engaging him in dialogue, the male assailant remains uncooperative, shouting about the “start of the revolution” and refusing to comply or surrender. During this period, Officers Dave Corbin and Jason Bethard move down the main aisle of the store and then proceed to the west wall but are unable to find sufficient cover along this section and ultimately retreat to a secure position of cover.

11:36:47 a.m.

Emergency Medical Services transports Officer Soldo from Cici's Pizza to UMC Trauma Center.

11:36:49 a.m.

LVMPD Dispatch notifies the special weapons and tactics (SWAT) team leader of the ongoing incident and requests that they respond to the Walmart scene.

11:38:47 a.m.

Sergeant Chris O'Brien enters the front doors of the Walmart and takes leadership of the front entry team. The team moves from the entryway further into Walmart.

11:39:45 a.m.

An LVMPD officer gains access to the surveillance room.

11:42 a.m.

An officer from the SWAT unit signs on to the NEAC patrol radio channel while en route to the Walmart response. Dispatch informs him that the scene is still classified as an active shooter situation, and Sergeant McKenzie then advises that it is a barricaded subject scene.

11:44:09 a.m.

The front entry team brings a Walmart security officer in to help with the cameras. Members of the front entry team stay with the security officer in the surveillance room to relay information over the radio channels. They observe the male assailant moving items off the shelves and placing them in front of the female assailant (possibly as cover). Shortly before 11:49, they observe the male assailant stand and move to the rear aisle to move a shopping cart located there and apparently attempt to remove something from the shelves or manipulate the emergency door at the end of the aisle.

11:49:17 a.m.

When the male assailant appears in the rear aisle of the store, Officer Beal exchanges gunfire with him. The last of the gunfire is exchanged between the male assailant and

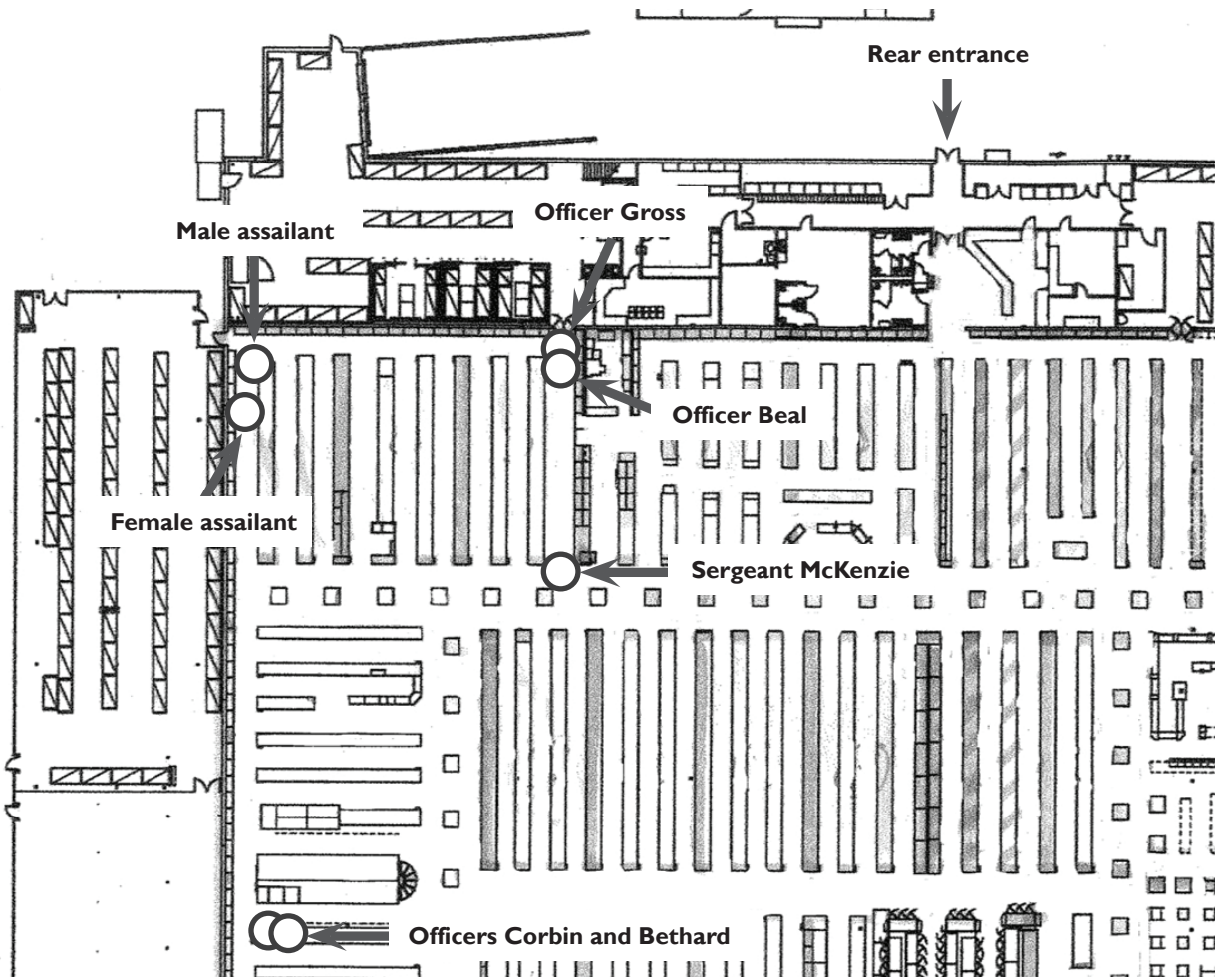


Figure 6. Walmart interior. Position of rear entry team in Tactical L

Officer Beal as the male assailant falls down and appears to be wounded. The front entry team officer monitoring the surveillance cameras states over the radio that the male assailant is down.

11:49:49 a.m.

After adjusting her position to face him, the female assailant appears to converse with the male assailant and then gestures between herself and him with her weapon. One of the front entry team officers in the surveillance room reports (mistakenly) that the female assailant shot the male assailant while he was prone on the floor. (In fact, she did not fire on him.) Immediately following that report, the female assailant shoots herself in the head. Sergeant McKenzie directs all officers on the rear entry team to maintain their positions.

11:50 a.m.

While the rear entry team engages with the assailants, the front entry team (which has broken into three strike teams) begins clearing the remaining unsecured areas of the store.

11:52:53 a.m.

Members of the front entry team make contact with Sergeant McKenzie outside the photo lab. McKenzie directs them to enter the photo lab section where they find citizens that have taken shelter behind the counters. They escort the civilians out of the store.

11:53:51 a.m.

Another strike team from the front entry team makes contact with the group of civilians sheltering in the pharmacy and escorts them from the building.

11:56:33 a.m.

The SWAT team enters the front door.

11:57:29 a.m.

The SWAT team enters the rear door.

11:59:07 a.m.

The SWAT team takes the assailants into custody.

12:10:06 p.m.

Medical arrives, discovers the female assailant is still alive, and transports her to UMC Trauma Center, where she is later pronounced dead.

4:00 p.m.

Sheriff Douglas C. Gillespie briefs the media.

Post-ambush

Monday, June 9, 2014

The Southern Nevada Counter-Terrorism Center (SNCTC) releases a homeland security advisory.

The LVMPD holds a press conference in the morning and afternoon.

Wednesday, June 11, 2014

The LVMPD releases additional details about the ambush and subsequent incident at Walmart, including information from the coroner's report on the male assailant's cause of death.

Monday, June 23, 2014

Sheriff Gillespie discusses details of the incident in a media briefing. He outlines what happened during the incident and presents preliminary findings from the investigation. He discusses the planned internal investigation process at the LVMPD, including the Force Investigation Team inquiry into the officer-involved shooting and the CIRT inquiry into policy, tactics, and procedures related to the incident. He notes that the findings from the officer-involved shooting investigation will be forwarded to the district attorney for review.

CHAPTER 2

RESPONSE FINDINGS

In this chapter, we discuss findings from a few key aspects of the response to the ambush and ongoing incident. We relate the findings specific to this incident to broader aspects of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department's (LVMPD) policies, practices, and training.

Tactical response

FINDING. *The LVMPD's training programs, specifically its use of reality-based training, enabled officers to mount an effective tactical response to the incident at Walmart.*

DISCUSSION. The LVMPD has a robust training program that incorporates modern training methods and best practices such as reality-based training. Reality-based training (RBT) is a term that encompasses a variety of training techniques, but typically it involves¹⁶

- scripted scenarios;
- actors and role players;
- equipment (for example, simulated service weapons, often with simulated ammunition pellets, i.e., simunitions);
- specific learning objectives;
- performance evaluations by training staff.

The LVMPD has used sophisticated training methods like RBT since 2011. In 2012, the department focused its training specifically on ambush and officer-down

scenarios. Each year, the training division chooses scenarios based on trends in response operations and officer safety, as well as notable critical incidents both within Las Vegas and nationally. In addition to requiring officers to receive RBT, the LVMPD trains civilians from the communications center (which includes 911 and dispatch) on an ad hoc basis. Information gathered in our interviews of LVMPD personnel suggests that the inclusion of nonsworn personnel was very valuable, as it allowed those personnel to benefit from the advanced RBT methods. We suggest that the LVMPD continue this practice and that other agencies may benefit from expanding training programs beyond sworn personnel.

The LVMPD was also an early adopter of multiple-assault counter-terrorism action capabilities (MACTAC) training methods, which is a training and response mechanism developed after the Mumbai, India, terrorist attacks in November 2008. The LVMPD established a MACTAC division in January of 2009. The LVMPD's MACTAC training manual is revised on an as-needed basis based on emerging best practices and incorporation of new tactical strategies;

16. Kenneth R. Murray, *Training at the Speed of Life, Volume One: The Definitive Textbook for Military and Law Enforcement Reality Based Training* (Gotha, FL: Armiger Publications, 2004).

MULTI-ASSAULT COUNTER-TERRORISM

In November 2008, members of an Islamist militant organization carried out a series of coordinated bombing and shooting attacks in Mumbai, India, over the course of four days. The coordinated, multi-pronged nature of these attacks prompted the development of operational plans and training to respond to these types of incidents. Multi-assault Counter-Terrorism Action Capabilities (MACTAC) is a counterterrorism response strategy for responding to Mumbai-like incidents that require specialized response tactics and potentially involve multiple coordinated attacks.

As noted in the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department's MACTAC manual, MACTAC training and planning is intended to prepare officers to rapidly identify and respond to critical incidents and to prepare the department to seamlessly coordinate response and effectively deal with simultaneous incidents. The most critical objective is to minimize loss of life during a deadly force incident. MACTAC specifically addresses the importance of avoiding overconvergence of resources in order to be prepared in the event of multi-pronged Mumbai-like attacks.

the manual as of the date of this incident was revised in 2012. Per the 2012 manual, the LVMPD's MACTAC training focuses on six key elements and goals:

- **Mindset.** Training officers to switch between a crime-prevention and a threat-engagement mindset when faced with threats to community and officer safety¹⁷
- **Response procedures.** Using rally points to avoid over-convergence on the scene of the incident
- **Squad and team-level response tactics.** Training officers on tactical response strategies as well as scenario-specific responses such as active shooters and officer rescue
- **Coordinated tactical response.** Training officers to coordinate response to threats both inside a tactical team and collaboratively across multiple squads
- **Response resources.** Providing the incident commander with multiple response resource options, particularly in multi-site incidents
- **Regional response.** Coordinating among local, state, and federal responders, when applicable

17. Note that the LVMPD released their current MACTAC manual prior to the onset of the national conversation about "warrior" and "guardian" mindsets and does not use that specific terminology; however, the description is conceptually the same. More information about the "warrior" and "guardian" mindset philosophy can be found in President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, *Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing* (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2015), http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/taskforce/TaskForce_FinalReport.pdf; see also Sue Rahr and Stephen K. Rice, "From Warriors to Guardians: Recommitting American Police Culture to Democratic Ideals," *New Perspectives in Policing*, April 20, 2015, <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/programs/criminaljustice/research-publications/executive-sessions/executive-session-on-policing-and-public-safety-2008-2014/publications/from-warriors-to-guardians-recommitting-american-police-culture-to-democratic-ideals>.

In this incident, items 1 through 4 played a particularly important role. The tactical elements of MACTAC training were significant in the success of the response at the Walmart, particularly the actions of the rear and front entry teams. Part of the purpose of MACTAC training is to ensure consistency in tactical response strategies so that officers from different units and area commands can work smoothly together. The entry team officers at Walmart exhibited strong tactical response strategies, including good coordination amongst squads and good decision making by individual officers. During the site visit conducted as part of this after-action review process, CNA observed a MACTAC training drill held in coordination with Clark County (Nevada) Fire and Rescue. This drill exemplified training and exercise principles, being focused on promoting a no-fault learning environment in which officers and rescue personnel were able to revisit the scenario multiple times. The drill closed with a combined hotwash¹⁸ that allowed participants to express constructive feedback and to voice concerns.

The positive impacts of the LVMPD's training programs were noted by responding officers during their debriefing interviews. Officers made statements like "this is what we train for" and "I could fall back on my training." During our interviews and in the administrative interview transcripts, numerous officers discussed the rifle training program at the LVMPD and particularly noted that it helped them during their response to this incident, as many of the officers deployed with rifles in response to the

18. A "hotwash" is a facilitated discussion typically held immediately following an exercise. It is intended to solicit feedback from the exercise participants about strengths and lessons learned during the conduct of the exercise.

Walmart scene. Some officers also noted that most of the officers in the rear entry team did not regularly work or train together, but all had the same tactical training, which helped them easily work together in a squad. Based on our review of various officer statements and administrative records, we found that this training, though conceptually effective, requires ongoing reinforcement through regular training exercises involving all elements of the MACTAC response protocol, as discussed further in the next finding.

FINDING. *The activation of MACTAC was appropriate during this incident; however, MACTAC rally point practices were not fully executed, resulting in overconvergence of self-reporting officers on the scene.*

DISCUSSION. An LVMPD dispatch supervisor activated MACTAC protocols at 11:34 a.m. in response to the developing situation involving the CiCi's Pizza and Walmart scenes. Per the LVMPD MACTAC Manual, MACTAC is intended for use when "single/multiple deadly force incident(s) occur simultaneously or concurrently" as well as during terrorist incidents meeting similar criteria. Dispatch became aware of the second incident scene at Walmart at 11:27 a.m. and activated MACTAC seven minutes later. Had MACTAC been activated faster, it might have prevented some of the overconvergence on the scene caused by officers who self-reported to the incident scene after hearing the 444 incident broadcast over the radios. Overconvergence to the scene of an incident has two main negative impacts. First, excessive deployment to the scene can result in chaos and confusion, particularly during the early stages of response. Second, in the event that additional incidents occur, resources may not be readily available to respond to multiple scenes. While our review found that the confusion at the scene was largely due to difficulty establishing incident command (discussed further in the next section of this chapter), the importance of maintaining resource coverage is critical in all incidents of this nature when threats are still being identified.

The LVMPD's MACTAC manual designates response procedures for individual patrol units based on "In the Box" and "Stay at Home" squads. These squads are pre-identified, and each patrol unit is assigned daily as In the Box or Stay at Home. In the Box squads are assigned to respond to MACTAC incidents that occur in any area command. In the Box squads report to rally points upon MACTAC activation and are directed to the incident scene from that point. Stay at Home squads remain in their area command

to ensure continuous coverage of other critical calls and to avoid overconvergence on the site of the incident.

During this incident, many patrol officers self-reported to the scenes at CiCi's Pizza and Walmart both before and after the MACTAC activation notice was broadcast. Some of these officers came from outside the Northeast Area Command (NEAC). During a critical incident, MACTAC protocols help to avoid both types of resource problems by ensuring sufficient resources are available to respond (through In the Box squads waiting at rally points) and discouraging overconvergence on the incident scene (through requiring other squads to Stay at Home). During a response involving an attack on officers, it is understandable that officers want to self-report to the incident scene to provide assistance, but strong supervisory direction and incident command can reinforce dispatch protocols. Issues with incident command are discussed further in the "Response Coordination and Communications" section of this chapter.

FINDING. *The use of "crisis dress" by responding special weapons and tactics (SWAT) team members made it difficult to differentiate them from potential suspects in the Walmart, though this challenge was mitigated by good tactical communication among the officers already in the store.*

DISCUSSION. When SWAT team members arrived on the scene, they believed that the situation inside Walmart had not yet stabilized, because of miscommunication explained in more detail in the "Response Coordination and Communications" section of this chapter. Because they thought there was a pressing need for immediate response, the SWAT team entered Walmart in "crisis dress," consisting of their street clothes with tactical gear on top. In this particular incident, that form of dress closely resembled that of the male assailant, who was wearing a tactical vest. Sergeant McKenzie, upon seeing SWAT team members inside the Walmart, radioed to all officers on the entry teams to expect SWAT in plain clothes, as he was concerned about the possibility of mistaken identity given that responding officers had not yet ruled out the possibility of additional suspects. The LVMPD has since revised the SWAT Section Manual to remove the "crisis dress" option; all SWAT members must wear LVMPD issued or approved uniforms when responding to allow both other law enforcement personnel and the public to clearly identify SWAT team members. In deference to

the need to respond quickly in a crisis, all SWAT members are now issued “flight suits” which can be donned swiftly during a response.

Response coordination and communications

FINDING. *The LVMPD communications center (which includes dispatch and the 911 call center) was burdened with repeated requests for updated information about the incident from LVMPD personnel.*

DISCUSSION. The communications center has a standard notification procedure in place for all officer-involved shooting (OIS) incidents, involving a distribution list referred to as the OIS communicator. This distribution list includes key personnel and units in the LVMPD, and the communications center uses it to send out all available information to key personnel when an incident of this nature occurs. During any critical incident, the communications center handles a high volume of calls from both internal and external sources, and repeated requests for updates and further details contribute to the burden on call takers and dispatchers during chaotic incidents. The OIS communicator is meant in part to address this issue but has been only partially successful in reducing requests for information coming in to the communications center. During this incident, LVMPD personnel understandably wanted to ensure that they had the most up-to-date information as the incident unfolded, but routing these information requests through the dispatch center was not an effective practice. Law enforcement agencies should develop internal information-sharing procedures for critical incidents that balance the need for accurate and timely information sharing with the level of burden placed on key personnel.

FINDING. *Because of procedural issues in the LVMPD dispatch center, not all information was communicated accurately and in a timely manner. The notification distribution list for an OIS did not include the SWAT commander, which delayed SWAT response. Also, the ambush incident was initially miscoded by a call taker in the dispatch center.*

DISCUSSION. Two key communications issues arose because of procedural problems in the LVMPD dispatch center. At the time of this incident, the SWAT team leader was not included on the OIS communicator distribution list. Because of the high volume of calls inundating LVMPD dispatch as well as the fact that two dispatch supervisors were on lunch break at the time of the ambush, the SWAT team leader was not notified of the incident and asked to respond until 11:36 a.m. This notification came nearly ten minutes after the first 911 call was received from the Walmart scene and nearly 15 minutes after the ambush of Officer Beck and Officer Soldo. The LVMPD has since added the SWAT team leader to the OIS communicator distribution list to ensure a more timely notification process during future critical incidents.

In addition, as noted in the incident chronology, the ambush incident in CiCi’s Pizza was originally coded as a 415A (“assault/battery with a gun”)—although the 911 transcripts include a clear description from the witness that the victims were police officers, necessitating the use of 444 (“officer needs help—emergency”). The LVMPD communications center is staffed by both dispatch specialists and call takers, with the former requiring more training and experience. The initial call from CiCi’s Pizza was taken by a call taker. The LVMPD does not use call-taking software that prompts the call taker with questions based on incident type, nor does it provide physical checklists or flip charts (although some call takers create these on an ad hoc basis for their reference). These aids would help ensure accurate information is recorded during emotionally stressful incidents such as attacks against officers.

FINDING. *The LVMPD did not properly establish incident command as outlined in the incident command system (ICS) approach, which resulted in confusion and miscommunication. Specifically, the incident commander role was not appropriately filled and a staging area was not established, which hindered the coordination of the response at the incident site.*

DISCUSSION. The LVMPD adheres to ICS principles for critical incidents; in addition to typical ICS training provided through emergency management sources, the LVMPD also offers a four-hour course on managing

emergencies, specifically geared towards lieutenants. This course focuses specifically on the more common, small-scale critical incidents that police regularly deal with, such as hostage situations, barricaded subjects, and active shooters. The course reiterates ICS strategies and principles in the context of law enforcement response. The LVMPD's training division held a series of focus groups and interviews to identify key challenges experienced by officers when implementing ICS in a law enforcement environment. The results from these inquiries informed the development of the specialized ICS training module.

During the June 8 response at Walmart, incident command did not function optimally.¹⁹ The lieutenant assigned as watch commander arrived on the scene in the first wave of responders after the entry teams. LVMPD policy indicates that the lieutenant serving as watch commander in this situation would establish himself or herself as incident commander (IC), with another lieutenant taking on IC duties if the watch commander is unavailable. However, the lieutenant assigned as watch commander assessed the situation and elected to insert himself into the perimeter team. The next arriving supervisor, a detective sergeant, immediately met with the watch commander, and the watch commander asked him to take on the IC role. Neither ICS nor the LVMPD strictly mandates that the IC role must lie with the highest ranking officer on the scene. However, due to the complex and evolving nature of this incident, it would have been most appropriate for the lieutenant to take charge of the scene as the IC and the detective sergeant to replace him as the perimeter team supervisor. Our review found that the detective sergeant performed admirably under difficult circumstances during the initial phase of the response. However, radio communication procedures were not followed, and a staging area was not established, which hindered the coordination of the response at the incident site.

LVMPD policy states that the IC will clearly identify himself over the radio and add "IC" to his call sign for the duration of the incident. This policy was not followed during this response.

19. Another example of the importance of incident command during law enforcement response to a critical incident is described in James K. Stewart, Denise Rodriguez King, and Ron Lafond, *Tampa Bay Manhunt After-Action Report* (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2011), <http://ric-zai-inc.com/ric.php?page=detail&id=COPS-P219>.

In addition, because of his rank, the watch commander continued to receive inquiries and requests for direction from other officers and teams on the scene, making it unclear which officer was nominally IC and which was actually directing the scene. This caused difficulty when integrating unified command with the fire department and resulted in miscommunication to the SWAT team leader, who received a briefing on the status inside Walmart from the watch commander instead of from the established IC. The ICS elements of the response did not come together until an off-duty lieutenant arrived on the scene and took over as IC from the sergeant. While the sergeant had done

INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM

The incident command system (ICS) was developed in the 1970s as a management system for coordinating response to emergencies. ICS is designed for use during both small and complex incidents and is intended to be flexibly scalable. It is designed to enable effective incident management through a standard organization structure. Several key concepts underpin ICS:

- The importance of establishing command and processes for transferring command
- Focus on a clear chain of command and unity of command
- Management of incidents based on commonly understood objectives
- Use of a modular organizational structure organized by function
- Maintenance of a management span of control for supervisors
- Emphasis on the use of common terminology

ICS also provides guidance about staffing and command structure for organizing incidents involving multi-agency responses under a unified command. It also includes guidance about planning processes during incidents that occur over multiple operational periods.

More information about ICS can be found at FEMA, "Incident Command System Resources," U.S. Department of Homeland Security, accessed February 19, 2016, <https://www.fema.gov/incident-command-system-resources>.

a laudable job stabilizing the scene, a fully organized command structure did not exist until after the SWAT team apprehended the assailants. The off-duty lieutenant and a Las Vegas Fire Department battalion chief coordinated to formally establish the IC structure.

The lack of a clearly identified, single IC both contributed to and was compounded by the lack of an established staging area for arriving personnel. An on-scene sergeant approached the watch commander about arriving fire department personnel, and the watch commander directed her to set up the on-scene staging area rather than referring her to the IC. The sergeant further misunderstood the direction and simply staged the fire department personnel without establishing a formal staging area for other arriving units. The absence of a formal staging area was at least partly responsible for the SWAT team leader not connecting with the IC and obtaining a clear understanding of the overall tactical situation before entering Walmart.

Other response organizations, including emergency management and fire, have successfully equipped responding personnel with ICS templates, checklists, and reference sheets to ensure that ICS is successfully and efficiently established during response to emergencies and critical incidents. This practice could benefit law enforcement agencies.

FINDING. *During the initial phase of the response at Walmart, interior tactical response radio communications were occurring on the same channel as exterior perimeter radio communications, leading to excessive traffic on the radio and confusion when the channels were separated.*

DISCUSSION. After Sergeant McKenzie led the rear entry team into the Walmart, the sergeant requested that the radio channel be held clear for use solely by the tactical response. However, there was still active communication on the channel from perimeter activities while the rear entry team was attempting to locate and engage the assailants. Sergeant McKenzie had to repeatedly request that personnel outside Walmart clear the channel to allow his team to communicate effectively

inside the Walmart. While the perimeter radio communications and incident command exterior communications were moved to other channels partway through the response, not all officers made the transition to the new channel, leading to further confusion.

CIRT recommended that upon identifying the incident as an active shooter situation, all radio traffic other than that of officers engaging or preparing to engage the shooter(s) be moved to another channel, keeping the main channel accessible for tactical response and coordination. The tactical review board modified the recommendation to read “current policies relating to the splitting of radio channels in these types of incidents are to be reviewed to ensure consistency and effectiveness.” Upon review of these recommendations, the LVMPD opted not to make a formal policy change related to radio traffic during active shooter incidents. Agencies should regularly review established practices for these types of events to ensure policies facilitate effective communication and coordination with other responding units (such as SWAT) in knowing which channels to monitor for up-to-date information.

Equipment

FINDING. *Issues with garbled transmissions and inability to transmit over radios during the response hampered information sharing.*

DISCUSSION. As in any event of this nature, clear and consistent radio communications are critical for effective information sharing, incident command, and tactical operations. During the response in the Walmart, multiple officers reported difficulties with the radio communications system. At the time of this incident, the LVMPD was using the DesertSky radio system, which had been plagued with problems since it became operational in 2010.²⁰ These difficulties included garbled and incomprehensible transmissions as well as times when officers inside the Walmart were unable to transmit over the radio system. Particularly in the heightened atmosphere of a response involving the death of officers and an active

20. For one example of a news story about the failures of the DesertSky radio system, see Mike Blasky and Francis McCabe, “Radio Problems Cause Las Vegas Patrol Officers to Double Up,” *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, last modified July 3, 2014, <http://www.reviewjournal.com/news/las-vegas/radio-problems-cause-las-vegas-patrol-officers-double>.

shooter, clear radio communications are paramount. The inability of officers within the Walmart to accurately report their activities both hampered incident command and information sharing and potentially created a dangerous situation during tactical deployment coordination. The LVMPD had already been in the process of searching for a new radio communications provider when this incident took place, and the system was replaced before the end of 2014.

FINDING. *The rear entry team's use of earpieces rather than shoulder-mounted radios helped during the conceal-and-cover tactical response by reducing the possibility that noise from radios would give away the tactical team's position to the assailants.*

DISCUSSION. The majority of officers on the rear entry team were using earpieces for radio communications. The use of earpieces rather than shoulder-mounted radio units allowed officers to protect themselves from the possibility of noise being transmitted over the radios and revealing their positions to the assailants. While the choice of radio technology (i.e., earpieces versus shoulder-mounted radios) is ultimately an individual and situationally driven decision, agencies should disseminate best practices related to technology use during tactical responses.

FINDING. *Some responding officers chose to make tactical entry without full tactical equipment (e.g., tactical helmets) because of real or perceived issues with ease of access.*

DISCUSSION. In reviewing numerous officer statements about the tactical response at Walmart, CNA identified an ongoing theme related to equipment access. Officers who responded without certain types of equipment (e.g., tactical helmets, rifles) often cited access as the determining factor. In a critical incident where officers are responding to an active threat against citizens and their peers, additional minutes spent accessing equipment that is not immediately accessible are weighed against the necessity of fast tactical response. Officers noted patrol rifles stored in trunks being left behind in favor of making entry more quickly. Law enforcement agencies should consider ease of access and training related to equipment acquisition to ensure that officers respond using the most appropriate equipment for a given scenario.

Summary of findings

The LVMPD's training program for officers ensured an effective tactical response during a chaotic and evolving incident. The speed at which an officer can make a proper decision and the competence necessary to know the proper decision are invaluable skills in a critical incident. The department's use of RBT to prepare for various tactical scenarios provides a model for other agencies aiming to improve their preparedness for critical incidents. The LVMPD also conducts regular MACTAC exercises to familiarize officers with the process of responding to rally points (rather than overconverging on the incident site), which helped to control the size of the scene at the CiCi's Pizza and Walmart locations while also enabling other response resources to respond quickly if required.

The obstacles to successfully implementing ICS at the Walmart incident scene in part reflect the difficulty of separating rank and role during dynamic incidents. ICS principles suggest that the most suitable individual, regardless of rank, fill each role. Yet, especially during a rapid incident response, it is natural that officers will continue to rely on the hierarchical structure of command with which they are most familiar during their daily duties. The LVMPD offers specialized ICS training to lieutenants in the department which addresses the importance of considering rank versus role. This training might benefit officers of all ranks that could be involved in critical incident response.

CHAPTER 3

IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH FINDINGS

In the immediate aftermath of the ambush incidents and subsequent active shooter response at Walmart, the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (LVMPD) handled a number of (sometimes competing) priorities, including the investigation of the incident, public information and media, operational changes, and officer wellness and support. In this chapter we discuss findings related to the LVMPD's activities in each of these areas.

Investigations

FINDING. *Because this incident involved both homicides by assailants and officer-involved shootings, both the LVMPD's recently created Force Investigation Team (FIT) and also its homicide unit were involved in the performance of a criminal investigation, and at that time, a clear strategy for joint investigations had not been developed. This resulted in initial difficulty establishing relative roles and responsibilities and led to the development of new policies for investigation of these types of incidents.*

DISCUSSION. In March of 2014, the LVMPD established a FIT specifically to investigate officer-involved shootings. At the time of this incident, the FIT had not conducted an investigation that involved substantive interaction with the homicide unit. In this incident the officer-involved shootings and homicides shared scenes and evidence. Because of the lack of clarity about how these two investigative units were intended to

collaborate during criminal investigations, there was initial difficulty determining which unit would process the crime scenes, conduct officer interviews, and ultimately compile the criminal report. Production of two criminal reports could result in inadvertent discrepancies that would undermine criminal processes. In addition, FIT and homicide use different procedures for crime scene walkthroughs and interviews. Given the volume of interviews the LVMPD conducted in association with this incident (more than 275 civilian interviews and more than 40 officer interviews), avoiding duplication of effort was important. Ultimately, the investigatory process for this incident served as an opportunity for learning for the LVMPD, and the department has subsequently clarified roles and responsibilities for criminal investigation following incidents of this nature, with FIT taking lead on all investigations for incidents involving officer-involved shootings, including any preceding crimes leading up to the shooting.

FINDING. *The Southern Nevada Counter-Terrorism Center’s (SNCTC) release of a homeland security advisory (HSA) helped to keep the LVMPD and the broader law enforcement community informed and prepared should the incident have inspired copycat attacks.*

DISCUSSION. On Monday, June 9, 2014, the SNCTC released an HSA describing the ambush incident and assailants. The HSA noted that while the incident appeared to be an isolated act, the possibility existed that it might inspire copycat attacks—particularly from supporters of similar ideologies—especially once the assailants’ identities were released. The assailants’ exact motivations for these acts had not been fully determined; however, contributing factors that were noted as possibly having contributed to the assailants’ actions included recent legal events, extremist antigovernment and anti-law enforcement ideology, and disagreements with other antigovernment elements. While ultimately this attack on LVMPD officers was an isolated incident and was not followed by additional acts of violence against officers by sovereign citizens, the HSA would have assisted law enforcement in connecting related incidents should they have occurred. The development of intelligence products following critical incidents like this one is an important aspect of preparedness in the event that there are further incidents.

Public information and media

FINDING. *The LVMPD’s public information strategy was successful in keeping the media and community informed about the incident.*

DISCUSSION. The LVMPD implemented a cohesive and comprehensive outreach and public information strategy in the wake of the incident, encompassing both the ambush at CiCi’s Pizza and the subsequent engagement with the assailants in the Walmart. The LVMPD Office of Public Information announced that Sheriff Doug Gillespie would brief the media at 4:00 p.m. on June 8 within hours of the onset of the incident. In that briefing, Gillespie presented a prepared statement in which he provided an overview of the incident,

identified the two deceased officers, and informed the media that a civilian had been killed but that his identity would not be released until his family had been notified. The sheriff also took questions during this briefing, though he noted that because the investigation was ongoing, not all questions could be answered at that time. Gillespie also emphasized that the LVMPD “still had a community to protect” in the face of tragedy.²¹ Gillespie’s statement was recorded and posted to the LVMPD’s social media accounts. This briefing was accompanied by a press release summarizing the incident, which also included contact information for the LVMPD’s homicide unit and for the anonymous Crime Stoppers program for anyone with information about the incident.

The LVMPD continued to actively provide information to the media over the following days. Sheriff Gillespie, Assistant Sheriff Kevin McMahill, and Assistant Sheriff Joe Lombardo briefed the media on June 9 and identified Joseph Wilcox as well as the assailants (though their identity was classified as “tentative” at that time). This briefing was also recorded and posted to the LVMPD’s social media accounts.²² The press release accompanying that briefing included an announcement about the Injured Police Officer’s Fund, allowing individuals to donate in support of Officer Alyn Beck and Officer Igor Soldo’s families.

The LVMPD provided additional details in a June 11 press briefing, including the identification of the three officers involved in the officer-involved shooting of the assailants, and provided a detailed account of the incident in a press briefing on June 23, 2014. The LVMPD Public Information Office made both of these briefings available on the LVMPD’s social media accounts, and the recordings were accompanied by press releases summarizing the content of the briefings.

By regularly updating the media, and thus the greater Las Vegas community, the LVMPD exemplified best practices for information sharing. The LVMPD was particularly successful in providing information in a variety of formats (press briefings, press releases, and publicly available video via social media). By using its social media accounts, the LVMPD engaged with a far larger community audience

21. Las Vegas Police, “Media Briefing: Two LVMPD Officers Killed in Ambush Attack,” YouTube, June 8, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4db4SujPyRM&feature=youtu.be>.

22. Las Vegas Police, “Press Conference: Update on Officers Killed,” June 9, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OPwosrYonP4&feature=youtu.be>.

than could have been reached through traditional media alone. The LVMPD has continued to use this strategy of regular press briefings and publicly available videos. On September 6, 2015, two LVMPD officers were ambushed in their marked patrol vehicle, and the LVMPD held a press briefing that day as well as a more detailed briefing within 72 hours.²³

Operational changes

FINDING. *The LVMPD's decision to temporarily run two-person patrols contributed to officers' feelings of safety and well-being in the aftermath of the incident by providing a greater sense of safety and peer support.*

DISCUSSION. After the ambush incident, the LVMPD temporarily instituted a two-person patrol policy, rather than continuing its standard one-person patrols. While the research on the officer safety impacts of two-person versus one-person patrols is mixed,²⁴ LVMPD officers reported that this temporary policy change helped them feel secure and safe in the wake of an incident that undermined both security and safety.

Officer wellness and support

FINDING. *The Police Employee Assistance Program (PEAP) and volunteer chaplain program both helped provide officers with access to support.*

DISCUSSION. The LVMPD PEAP is a crisis intervention and counseling service that offers referral options staffed by LVMPD sworn and civilian employees. Its goal is to help support LVMPD personnel with stresses caused directly or indirectly by their work as law enforcement professionals. Information about the PEAP was widely disseminated in the wake of the ambush

on June 8, a practice that officers noted as positive. Even officers who did not opt to use PEAP services noted that they felt indirectly supported because of the clear commitment from the command staff to support the well-being of officers in the wake of the tragedy. Officers in the Northeast Area Command (NEAC) also specifically discussed the volunteer chaplain program, which the LVMPD established in December 2005 and which has grown since its inception to have at least one chaplain assigned specifically to each area command. The NEAC officers noted that one of the volunteer chaplains in their area at the time of the ambush was especially dedicated to supporting officers in general and particularly in the aftermath of the ambush, making himself available regularly at the area command headquarters and coming in during various shifts. The PEAP and volunteer chaplain programs are examples of successful officer support strategies.

FINDING. *Support and outreach efforts in the NEAC were primarily focused on organizational lines specifically targeting personnel currently assigned to the same unit as the ambushed officers. Focusing outreach along organizational lines overlooks the importance of social dynamics such as friendships developed in previously assigned units.*

DISCUSSION. Current members of the squad that Officer Soldo and Officer Beck served on in the NEAC were targeted for particular attention with respect to officer wellness after the ambush. In addition, LVMPD command staff and PEAP personnel provided assistance to other areas' commands as well as to the communications and crime scene analysis sections. However, support and outreach was primarily organized along organizational divisions and thereby overlooked the more dynamic social connections that exist within an organization. In the case of this particular incident, squad assignments had been made in May, with the incident occurring in June. Officer Soldo and Officer Beck's previous squadmates were not specifically targeted for additional outreach or support. While investigating social connections is considerably more cumbersome than using pre-existing and well-documented organizational groups, it is necessary to best support all impacted individuals in the wake of tragedy. It is equally important to maintain ongoing support and assessment for those members in the organization who have been

23. Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department Office of Public Information, "Officers Ambushed While Responding to Call for Service," press release, September 6, 2015, <http://www.lvmpd.com/Portals/0/news/2015/090615ReleasePO239.pdf>; Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department Office of Public Information, "Assistant Sheriff Kirk Primas Discusses Officer Ambush on September 6, 2015," press release, September 9, 2015, <http://www.lvmpd.com/Portals/0/news/2015/090915ReleasePO239c.pdf>.

24. For an example of research that found a positive impact, see Antony M. Pate and Lorie A. Fridell, *Police Use of Force: Official Reports, Citizen Complaints, and Legal Consequences*, volumes I and II (Washington, DC: Police Foundation, 1993); an example of research that found a negative impact is Robert J. Kaminski, *An Opportunity Model of Police Homicide Victimization* (Albany: State University of New York, 2002).

exposed to trauma. Continuous support and exposure to resources provide opportunities for coping and recovery and demonstrate a departmental commitment to health and wellness.

LVMPD leadership ensured that support efforts did not end after a predetermined period had passed; outreach and support activities continue to this day to help LVMPD officers recover from this incident.

FINDING. *Leadership support to the NEAC in the aftermath of the incident, particularly the physical visits made by LVMPD command staff, led to NEAC officers feeling that their concerns and well-being were important to LVMPD leadership.*

DISCUSSION. LVMPD leadership regularly reiterated the importance of officer wellness in the aftermath of the incident, including publicly expressing their own shock and dismay during press briefings at the ambush of LVMPD officers. LVMPD command staff made visits to the NEAC headquarters in the time following the incident, which officers and supervisors noted was an appreciated show of support. The impression given by command staff taking the time to physically visit the headquarters was a visible symbol of their commitment to the process of recovery post-incident.

Summary of findings

The LVMPD maintained open lines of communication with the media and the Las Vegas community. This dedication to information sharing helped keep the community both safe and informed and contributed to departmental goals of transparency and legitimacy.

The impact of the deaths of Officer Beck and Officer Soldo was felt by the community as well as by the LVMPD. Numerous vigils and demonstrations of support from the community occurred in the days following the incident, and local businesses rallied to support the Beck and Soldo families. Community members brought food and messages of support to the NEAC headquarters. Local businesses also acknowledged Mr. Wilcox's role in the incident and his actions as a Good Samaritan, with memorial funds and assistance to his family. The Injured Police Officers Fund collected donations in memory of Officer Beck and Officer Soldo as well. The CiCi's Pizza location in which the ambush took place was the site of a great deal of memorializing activity, and CiCi's ultimately added a permanent memorial to the fallen officers in the store.

The department also supported its own personnel through officer wellness programs such as the PEAP and the volunteer chaplain program. Officers were offered considerable support in the wake of the incident and in the weeks and months that followed. Determining which individuals to target for particular outreach efforts is a difficult process and must include social as well as organizational considerations. Law enforcement departments should consider developing strategies to ensure that wellness outreach and support reaches all officers impacted in the wake of incidents such as ambushes and other violent acts against officers, as well as other traumatic incidents.

CHAPTER 4

POST-INCIDENT RESPONSE AND RECOVERY FINDINGS

Organizational learning

FINDING. *The Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department's (LVMPD) Critical Incident Review Team (CIRT) contributed to organizational learning through their use of a well-documented, predictable administrative investigation resulting in a coherent and actionable analysis.*

DISCUSSION. The LVMPD created the CIRT in July 2010. The CIRT is housed within the Office of Internal Oversight (see figure 7). The purpose of the CIRT is to conduct administrative investigations in the wake of critical incidents (including all uses of deadly force) with the goal of improving individual and agency performance. The CIRT accomplishes this goal by examining decision making, tactics, supervision, and use of force; identifying training needs (from the individual to the agency level); and, if necessary, changing policy,

practices, or training strategies. The Critical Incident Review Process (CIRP) is well documented in the CIRT Section Manual (most recently revised in January 2014), allowing for both predictability and consistency in the analysis and outcomes. The CIRP may involve convening a Use of Force Review Board (in the case of deadly force against persons) and a Tactics Review Board. Both boards include citizen members. These review boards review the conclusions from the CIRT's investigation and validate, overturn, or modify those conclusions.

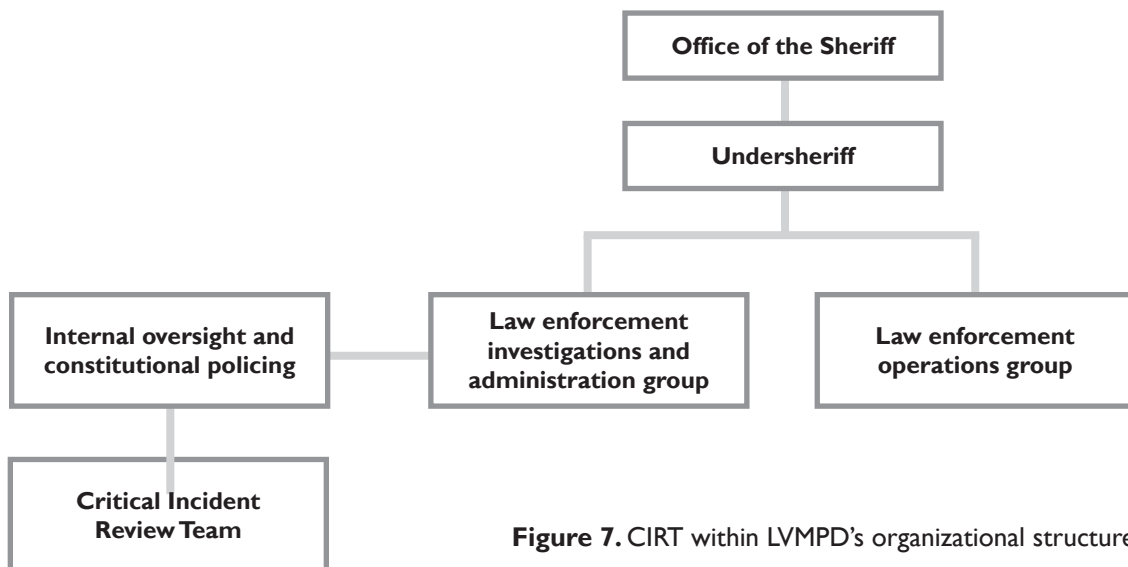


Figure 7. CIRT within LVMPD's organizational structure

The CIRT administrative report for this incident thoroughly describes the incident chronology, making particular note of the actions of individual officers and analyzing these actions in the context of their specific training and statements. The administrative analysis evaluates topics such as information sharing, actions of the 911 call center, tactical response, use of force, incident management, and equipment. The report describes corrective actions the LVMPD has already implemented and notes areas for future improvement. The CIRT administration review serves as a complete, factual record of the incident, investigation, and organizational learning process. The LVMPD's implementation of a constructively critical review process contributes to organizational learning in the wake of critical incidents such as the ambush incident on June 8, 2014.

New policies, training, and strategies

FINDING. *The LVMPD has continued to use temporary two-person patrol assignments as a method of ensuring officers' sense of safety and wellness after critical incidents.*

DISCUSSION. On September 6, 2015, two LVMPD officers were ambushed by a pedestrian while stopped at a traffic light in their patrol car. One officer was injured; the other was unharmed. While this incident did not involve a fatality, it came during a period of violence targeting law enforcement, as Sheriff Joseph Lombardo described in his remarks on the topic on September 9.²⁵ The LVMPD again issued a temporary policy change, assigning officers to two-person patrols while on duty. In 2016, following the ambush of a Philadelphia Police Department (PPD) patrol officer, the PPD also implemented a temporary two-officer patrol policy.

FINDING. *The LVMPD's development of Incident Command System (ICS) training materials focused on law enforcement-specific needs and concerns is a good practice for building officer readiness for responding to critical incidents; however, expanding this training to additional ranks and developing more support materials is necessary to ensure all officers can enact ICS coordination principles during an incident.*

DISCUSSION. Prior to this incident, the LVMPD had already implemented ICS training customized for law enforcement personnel and geared toward lieutenants

in the department who are most likely to respond to a critical incident and play a substantial role in incident command. The LVMPD's proactive approach to building on standard ICS training offerings, many of which are not specifically intended for law enforcement, is a good practice. However, successful implementation of ICS during a complex incident would be further supported by expanding ICS training beyond lieutenants and supporting the development of quick reference materials for use during an incident to ensure key ICS elements are not overlooked. The LVMPD plans to incorporate command and control training for lieutenants specifically related to ICS in the 2016 reality-based training (RBT) cycle.

FINDING. *The LVMPD's strategy of public information dissemination through regular press conferences, public releases of information on its website, and media engagement illustrated the benefits of information sharing with the community through timely releases of information. It also underscored the importance of using multiple methods to release information, which resulted in accurate coverage of the event by the media based on facts rather than speculation and an outpouring of community support for the department and impacted area command.*

DISCUSSION. The LVMPD actively engages with the media after critical incidents, such as officer-involved shootings and assaults and ambushes of officers, and with regular crime reporting. The LVMPD website includes a press release section²⁶ that includes information dating back to May of 2014, and it can be accessed via web-based subscription services, allowing the media and community to receive updates automatically. Press releases include links to related media, including press briefings, related videos, and other media, as well as information about investigative efforts, both criminal and administrative. This ongoing strategy reflects a dedication to open communication and transparency.

Summary of findings

The LVMPD's actions following the ambush and active shooter incident reflect on its departmental commitment to self-reflection, analysis, and continuous improvement. The investigative processes in place support organizational learning through critical self-assessment and regular review of policies and procedures in the wake of critical incidents.

25. Las Vegas Police, "Sheriff and District Attorney Discuss Recent Shootings," YouTube, September 9, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8u8PxvcdQhA&feature=youtu.be>.

26. "Press Releases," Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, accessed February 19, 2016, <http://www.lvmpd.com/News/PressReleases/tabid/288/Default.aspx>.

CONCLUSION

The death of two officers and one civilian in the ambush attack and subsequent active shooter incident on June 8, 2014, in Las Vegas, Nevada, was a tragic event perpetrated by assailants who specifically targeted law enforcement officers. The two assailants were dedicated to their mission and gave the officers no chance to respond or react. Given the sudden and brutal surprise attack by the assailants, Officer Alyn Beck and Officer Igor Soldo were not able to defend themselves, but the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department's (LVMPD) dedication to preparedness and training helped minimize further deaths or injuries in the subsequent Walmart confrontation. The officers responding to both incident scenes performed heroically and were a testament to their training and professionalism.

Ambushes and assaults on law enforcement officers are rarely predictable or preventable. What is predictable and identifiable are the impacts on the organization, its members, and the community at large after such traumatic incidents. Officers and community members may experience feelings of vulnerability, fear, and guilt, among other strong emotions, in the wake of unprovoked violence such as the murder at CiCi's Pizza and the violent confrontation in Walmart. How an organization reacts to and learns from these incidents and how organizations address the impacts of these incidents are pivotal for growth and healing both at the individual level and in terms of long-term welfare, morale, and healing within the entire organization.

The LVMPD's response to the ambush incident on June 8 can serve as an opportunity for organizational learning both for itself and also for the wider law enforcement community. The LVMPD's dedication to training, particularly scenario-based and reality-based training strategies, helped prepare officers for the tactical response methods

necessary to successfully secure the assailants. In addition, ongoing training for officers helped them mentally when faced with a real-world response situation by giving them standard tactics and methods to act on.

The LVMPD also had great success in sharing information with the media and broader Las Vegas community. By engaging both regularly and early in the response, the LVMPD balanced the need to wait to release certain information because of notifications or investigations with the goal of transparency and information sharing. By actively sharing information, the LVMPD kept the community informed and safe while also engendering their support, as evidenced by the numerous community-based efforts to assist the department and its personnel in a time of tragedy.

The department also showed dedication to its own personnel and organizational learning. Support programs like the Police Employee Assistance Program and the volunteer chaplain program provided multiple outlets

for officers seeking assistance or in need of support. Ensuring impacted officers are identified for support can be a difficult process, and departments should plan mechanisms for understanding both professional and social relationships when providing for officer wellness. Many, if not most, officers will experience a traumatic event at some point in their careers, and the support systems available for them at their department can play a critical role in their recovery.

Despite some process and systems improvements suggested in this after-action report, there is nothing the LVMPD could have done to prevent or predict the tragic loss of life perpetrated by the assailants. The LVMPD's preparation

for critical incidents and the department's response in the wake of the incident offer an opportunity for learning in law enforcement agencies across the country. This report describes findings from the June 8, 2014, ambush incident in Las Vegas, Nevada, in the context of more general organizational learning practices. The documentation of findings is important, particularly in the wake of a complex and traumatic critical incident. In light of the ongoing need for improved community-police relations and increased attention to violence against police, particularly in the form of ambush attacks, these after-action reviews can help to improve policies and practices and support officer safety and wellness.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BLM	Bureau of Land Management	LVMPD	Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department
CIRB	Critical Incident Review Board	MACTAC	multiple-assault counter-terrorism action capabilities
CIRT	Critical Incident Review Team	NEAC	Northeast Area Command
COPS Office	Office of Community Oriented Policing Services	OIS	officer-involved shooting
DMV	Department of Motor Vehicles	PEAP	Police Employee Assistance Program
FIT	Force Investigation Team	RBT	reality-based training
HSA	homeland security advisory	SNCTC	Southern Nevada Counter- Terrorism Center
IC	incident commander	SWAT	special weapons and tactics
ICS	incident command system		

ABOUT CNA

CNA is a not-for-profit organization based in Arlington, Virginia. The organization pioneered the field of operations research and analysis 70 years ago and today applies its efforts to a broad range of national security, defense, and public interest issues, including education, homeland security, public health, and criminal justice. CNA applies a

multidisciplinary, field-based approach to helping decision makers develop sound policies, make better-informed decisions, and lead more effectively. CNA is one of the technical assistance providers for the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services Collaborative Reform Initiative for Technical Assistance.

ABOUT THE COPS OFFICE

The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) is the component of the U.S. Department of Justice responsible for advancing the practice of community policing by the nation's state, local, territorial, and tribal law enforcement agencies through information and grant resources.

Community policing begins with a commitment to building trust and mutual respect between police and communities. It supports public safety by encouraging all stakeholders to work together to address our nation's crime challenges. When police and communities collaborate, they more effectively address underlying issues, change negative behavioral patterns, and allocate resources.

Rather than simply responding to crime, community policing focuses on preventing it through strategic problem solving approaches based on collaboration. The COPS Office awards grants to hire community police and support the development and testing of innovative policing strategies. COPS Office funding also provides training and technical assistance to community members and local government leaders, as well as all levels of law enforcement.

Another source of COPS Office assistance is the Collaborative Reform Initiative for Technical Assistance (CRI-TA). Developed to advance community policing and ensure constitutional practices, CRI-TA is an independent, objective process for organizational transformation. It provides

recommendations based on expert analysis of policies, practices, training, tactics, and accountability methods related to issues of concern.

Since 1994, the COPS Office has invested more than \$14 billion to add community policing officers to the nation's streets, enhance crime fighting technology, support crime prevention initiatives, and provide training and technical assistance to help advance community policing.

- To date, the COPS Office has funded the hiring of approximately 127,000 additional officers by more than 13,000 of the nation's 18,000 law enforcement agencies in both small and large jurisdictions.
- Nearly 700,000 law enforcement personnel, community members, and government leaders have been trained through COPS Office-funded training organizations.
- To date, the COPS Office has distributed more than eight million topic-specific publications, training curricula, white papers, and resource CDs.
- The COPS Office also sponsors conferences, roundtables, and other forums focused on issues critical to law enforcement.

The COPS Office information resources, covering a wide range of community policing topics—from school and campus safety to gang violence—can be downloaded at www.cops.usdoj.gov. This website is also the grant application portal, providing access to online application forms.

The Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (LVMPD) experienced a tragic loss on June 8, 2014, when two officers were ambushed and killed by two assailants. This report, sponsored by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office), summarizes key findings from an after-action analysis of the ambush and subsequent police engagement with the assailants. The assessment team analyzed the event precursors, response, and aftermath to document lessons learned. These findings can be used by the larger law enforcement community to conduct self-evaluation and better prepare for similar incidents. This after-action report builds upon other analysis on violence against police, including the 2015 COPS Office publication *Ambushes of Police: Environment, Incident Dynamics, and the Aftermath of Surprise Attacks Against Law Enforcement*.



COPS
Community Oriented Policing Services
U.S. Department of Justice

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services
145 N Street NE
Washington, DC 20530

To obtain details on COPS Office programs, call
the COPS Office Response Center at 800-421-6770.

Visit the COPS Office online at www.cops.usdoj.gov.



CNA
3003 Washington Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22201

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call CNA at 703-824-2000
or e-mail inquiries@cna.org.

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