

SUNY Orange

Pulse Nightclub Shooting

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On June 12th, 2016, a man by the name of Omar Mateen committed a terrible crime. Omar Mateen carried out a mass shooting at the Pulse Nightclub, which was a gay nightclub located in Orlando, Florida. The shooting began at 2:00 AM, and was not over till 5:00 AM when Omar Mateen was shot and killed by Orlando Police. This mass shooting is considered to be the worst mass shooting in modern America at that time (Alexander et al). Through the three hours of pure terror, Omar Mateen killed a total of 49 people and injured over 50 more. However, even though the shooting is over, the effects of this night can still be felt all over the world.

Omar Mateen's full name was Omar Mir Seddique (Alexander et al). Mateen was born in New York on November 16th, 1986 (Peralta). Mateen was of Afghan descent (Alexander et al) and his parents moved to New York from Afghanistan during the early 1980's (Peralta). At the time of the attack, however, Mateen lived in Port Saint Lucie, Florida, with his second wife since August 30th, 2013 (Alexander et al). Mateen was a college graduate from Indian River Community College in Florida. He graduated in 2006 with a degree in Criminal Justice Technology (Alexander et al). In 2006 Mateen also changed his name to Omar Mir Seddique Mateen for no known reason. This is according to the Saint Lucie County Civil Court Records. Mateen was a licensed Security Guard (Peralta) and worked at a company called G4S since 2007. Since the company provides security to many federal buildings and foreign countries like Afghanistan and Iraq, two security checks were ordered in 2007 and 2013. As a result of these checks, Mateen was permitted to carry a gun for his job. Mateen was also allowed to conceal weapons while he carried them (Alexander et al).

Mateen was known to hate gay people, especially the sight of two men kissing. He also pledged allegiance to the Islamic State (Alexander et al). He had always wanted to be a part of the NYPD, and regularly wore their shirts. The NYPD made it clear that he was not part of the department because these unofficial shirts he was wearing could be purchased anywhere (Orlando gay nightclub shooting: Who was Omar Mateen).

In the years leading up to the mass shooting, Mateen's life was not perfect. His first wife, Sitora Yusufiy, called him "mentally unstable and mentally ill" (Alexander et al). Mateen cut off his wife from her family and regularly beat her. She was only able to escape him when Sitora's

family intervened and “literally pulled her out of his arms” (Alexander et al). In addition to the problems in his personal life, he also had two altercations involving the FBI. The first altercation occurred in 2013 while he was working at a local courthouse. While working at this courthouse, he told coworkers that he had ties to groups like Al-Qaeda and Hezbollah. He also told coworkers that he hoped that the police would kill both his wife and children (Peralta). When the FBI investigated him he claimed that these comments were made out of anger because of his coworkers teasing him for being a Muslim. After a total of ten months, the FBI closed their investigation into Omar Mateen. However, one year later in 2014, the FBI reopened an investigation of Mateen. They were looking for evidence to support a possible connection between him and Moner Mohammad Abu-Salha, a citizen of the United States who committed a suicide bombing in Syria that same year. Eventually, it was deemed that these two men were not connected (Peralta).

There were many events that lead up to this terrible mass shooting that occurred on the early morning hours of June 12, 2016. Planning for this shooting began many months before June 12th. Preparations for the shooting first began when Mateen added his wife, Noor Salman, to his life insurance policy. Mateen also made sure that Noor had access to all of his bank accounts and bought her an expensive piece of jewelry. He even sold his share of his sister and brother-in-laws’ house to them for only ten dollars (Berlinger, Yan). After this he then proceeded to gather materials and scout out locations to carry out his attack. On April 26th, 2016 Mateen visited one of these possible locations for this purpose. One of these locations was in Disney World, specifically Epcot (Orjoux). Other places that he surveyed for possible attacks were Disney Springs, a shopping area outside of Orlando and several nightclubs, like Pulse or Eve in Orlando (Orjoux). It is believed that Mateen chose Pulse to carry out his mass shooting because Pulse had very little security, compared to all the other locations that he scouted (Orjoux). While scouting out locations, Mateen gathered the necessary supplies for his planned attack. Either in April or May Mateen visited a store in Jensen Beach Florida called Lotus Gunworks. At Lotus Gunworks Mateen was looking for body armor and one thousand rounds of ammunition. He was unsuccessful, at this store, because Lotus Gunworks didn’t carry the type of bulk ammo or the type of body armor that Mateen was seeking (Berlinger, Yan). Then in early June Mateen legally purchased a Sig Sauer MCX assault-style rifle and a Glock 9mm semiautomatic pistol, “after clearing a background check.” (Berlinger, Yan).

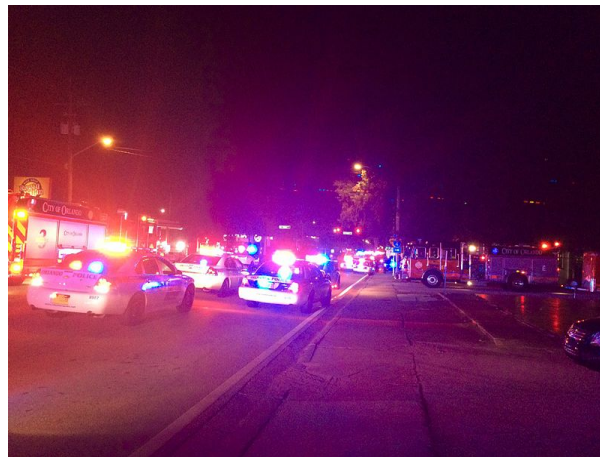
Two days before the attack Mateen “[bought] plane tickets for himself, his wife and his son to travel to San Francisco in July,” as reported by law enforcement sources. (Berlinger, Yan). On the day before the attack Mateen completed his shift at PGA Village as a security guard in the mid-afternoon. After storming out of his house with a bag of guns, he left the house for an unknown reason to visit Disney Springs (Berlinger, Yan). From Disney Springs he traveled to Pulse nightclub (Berlinger, Yan), and then back to Disney Springs, Epcot in Disney World, and EVE Orlando before returning to Pulse nightclub at 2:00 AM to begin his attack.

Below is a brief description of the events which followed:

- > From 2:00 to 5:00 a.m. Omar Mateen attacked Pulse Nightclub killing 49 people, wounding 53 out of the 320 people that were inside the club. He Entered the club through a side door.
- > 2:02 a.m. he started firing into the crowd, killing the bouncer and dozens of patrons. While he was firing his weapon, people were trying to escape or hiding in the restrooms (USA Today YouTube video). The scene was horrific with dead bodies everywhere. People jumping and even hiding under dead bodies.
- > 2:03 a.m. Mateen shot and killed an Orlando police officer in an exchange of fire outside of the club.
- > 2:05 a.m. the Orlando police began to arrive. Mateen ran into the restroom of the club. People began to flee the club.
- > 2:08 a.m. Pulse Nightclub posed on its Facebook page the following: “everyone get out of Pulse and keep running.” (1st ABC News YouTube video).
- > 2:08 a.m. Omer started shooting into the stalls in the restroom looking for people. If found, he would ask them about their racial background and about ISIS.
- > 2:22 a.m. Mateen called 911 where he pledged his allegiance to the Islamic State and ISIS. At this time he had explosives in his possession. (USA Today YouTube video).
- > 3:00 a.m. SWAT arrived at Pulse.
- > 5:00 a.m. The SWAT teams use explosives to breach the restroom walls. Armored vehicles are then used to punch hole in the walls.

> 5:03 a.m. the Swat teams and the police rescue the remaining 30 patrons who were held hostage at the club. Mateen emerges from the club with his weapons, and is killed. (2nd ABC News YouTube video)

> Throughout this ordeal there were some cases of heroism. Janet McCoy had her life saved by her friend, Angle. Angle stopped a bullet which entered his back, and thus saved Janet.'s life. Angel also sustained injuries when he fell and was trampled by the people leaving. He was also shot again when Mateen began shooting into the piles of dead bodies. (2nd ABC YouTube video)



Above: Pulse Nightclub on June 12, 2016

Because of all deaths and injuries, a mass panic occurred at Orlando Regional Medical Center (Miller). According to Dr. Michael Cheatham, chief surgical quality officer for ORMC “‘many of the gunshot wounds were fairly severe,’ especially ‘trunk, abdomen and extreme gunshot wounds. Our operating room has been quite busy all day long with those injuries’” (Miller). There were also rumors that there was another gunman in the hospital emergency room but this was deemed to be incorrect (Miller). During the first few hours after the shooting, families were not allowed to see their loved ones, which caused many people to worried. However, people like Rev. Nancy Oliver of The Cathedral Church of Saint Luke tried to comfort families: “‘I ordered an urn of coffee and some cases of water to come out here for people who are standing here. I’ve prayed with a few people,” Oliver said. “I’ve listened to stories. That’s all you can do right now. Just be here’” (Miller).

After the attack, many people made threats against Mateen's religion, Islam. In the early morning hours of September 11, 2016, the Islamic Center of Fort Pierce Florida, where Omar Mateen practiced religion, was torched (Arson fire destroys mosque attended by Orlando nightclub shooter: authorities). Threats of torching the mosque started coming right after the attack in June. The mosque stepped up security in response to this. In February 2017, a man named Joseph Schreiber was found guilty of setting the mosque ablaze and was sentenced to 30 years in prison. Schreiber is an ex-convict who "was previously sentenced twice to state prison for theft, according to the Florida Department of Corrections' records. These records show he served his first sentence from March 2008 to July 2009 and his second from June 2010 to August 2014" (Associated Press). Schreiber was known to post anti-Islamic rants online and "he believed Muslims 'are trying to infiltrate our government' and that 'the teaching of Islam should be completely, completely illegal'" (Associated Press). Schreiber pleaded no contest in court and stated "in a written statement read to the court said that the fire was not caused by hate but by his anxiety. He feared that there could be another 9-11, Boston Marathon bombing or Pulse nightclub shooting, he said" (Associated Press).



Above: Images of the Islamic Center of Fort Pierce Florida after the fire on 9/11/16. Photos taken by Joseph Villano.

The Pulse Nightclub shooting committed by Omar Mateen had an immediate effect on everyone involved, even law enforcement. Omar Delgado was a cop at the Eatonville Police Department located outside of Orlando. When he heard about the shooting over the radio, he decided to go to Pulse and provide support. When he arrived on the scene he was overwhelmed.

Omar Delgado remembers “‘there were a bunch of bodies lying down ... I began yelling 'Get up! Get up! Get up! The police are here. Follow my voice and come this way. They didn't get up.’ With gunfire all around him, Delgado said he was trapped inside for a long time” (Hastings). He also remembers that “his mind and body were on overdrive. The smells were nauseating. ‘You can start smelling the gun powder, you can start smelling the blood, you can start smelling the liquor. You can smell death in there. That just kept coming and coming’” (Hastings). The most that officer Delgado could do was to help people out of the nightclub (Hastings). To this day Omar Delgado still has nightmares. After the shooting he was forced to go on desk duty because he was not ready for patrol (Hastings). Once he returned to patrol, his situation became worse. He was eventually fired from the Eatonville Police Department in December 2017 because he told a woman that he was “‘emotionally disturbed’” during a traffic stop (Hastings). Delgado still does not know how long it will take for him to recover from the shooting (Hastings). Cell phone ringtones bring back memories of the hundreds of cell phones ringing that were going unanswered because their owners were either dead or seriously injured (Hastings). Omar Delgado does have one way to cope with the tragedy though. His way of coping is through photography which he says is “‘something that I can control,’ the 45-year-old former cop said. ‘What I see in the viewfinder is what I can capture’” (Hastings).

Following the mass shooting at Pulse Nightclub there were multiple lawsuits filed. One lawsuit was filed in against Google, Facebook, and Twitter. This lawsuit claimed that these social media companies allowed the Islamic State to spread their propaganda on their platforms. This propaganda lead Omar Mateen to commit the Pulse Nightclub Shooting (Lotan). This lawsuit was eventually dismissed. “U.S. District Judge David M. Lawson wrote in his dismissal that there is no definitive evidence suggesting that the material Mateen saw online directly led to the attack, ‘other than that the principles espoused in them motivated Mateen to carry out the dreadful act’” (Ocasio).

Another lawsuit was filed on June 7th against the City of Orlando, one of the security officers at the club, and the Orlando police department. The lawsuit was filed by the family members of 6 of the victims, 20 people who were injured, and by Eatonville Police officer Omar Delgado (Schallhorn). The lawsuit was filed because “the defendants violated federal civil rights laws because they did not immediately enter the building when the gunman was in the midst of his

attack” (Schallhorn). The attorney for the victims, Wayne Pollack, stated that ““the city of Orlando demonstrated deliberate indifference to these people by not training their officers”” (Schallhorn). This lawsuit is trying to prove that the police did not act in an appropriate manner which may have allowed the total amount of victims to have been as high as 49. The people who are following the lawsuit believe that the amount of lives lost could have been lower if the police, security guard, and City of Orlando acted appropriately ““What if the Orlando police officers who responded to the shooting were aggressive with their plan to rescue victims and hostages and kill the shooter?’ he [Wigberto Capo, brother to victim Luis Omar Ocasio-Capo] told reporters Thursday. ‘Would my brother still be alive?’” (Chavez). The lawsuit states that the defendants didn’t act appropriately to the shooting because the ““defendants chose to allow the patrons of the club to be massacred while these defendants ensured only that they themselves were safe”” (Schallhorn). Even the uninjured were mistreated “according to the lawsuit, those who were uninjured in the shooting were ‘rounded up and taken to a law enforcement facility’ and prohibited from using the restroom, getting food or water or contacting their families” (Schallhorn). Currently “survivors are asking for compensatory and punitive damages, but the lawsuit didn’t specify an exact amount” (Chavez). At this point “legal action may take years to make its way through the court system” (Speck).

A third lawsuit was filed against Barbara and Rosario Pama, the owners of the Pulse Nightclub. The lawsuit was filed on June 8th, 2018, just four days before the two year anniversary of the mass shooting, by 39 survivors and family members of the victims. The lawsuit claims that the owners of Pulse did not provide adequate security on June 12, 2016 (Lotan). According to Keith Altman, the attorney for this lawsuit ““They contracted out security to the Orlando Police Department’... ‘It just seems like they were trying to put the club beyond the reach for liabilities and I don’t know that that’s OK’” (Lotan). At the time of the attack there was only one security guard, Adam Gruler, who “had left his post at the front door to find someone who tried to get in with a fake ID” and one bouncer, Kimberly “KJ” Morris, who “was among the 49 killed” on duty (Lotan). There currently is no information on the verdict of this case.

In addition to all the lawsuits filed after the mass shooting at Pulse Nightclub, there was also a trial against Noor Salman. Noor Salman was Omar Mateen’s wife and she was charged in 2018 “with aiding and abetting Mateen’s provision and attempted provision of material support for

terrorism, as well as obstruction of justice” (Moore). Salman was “indicted on the charges on Jan. 12 [2018] by a grand jury sitting in Orlando. She was arrested days later in San Francisco and extradited in April” (Moore). The trial started on March 1st. The jury selection was planned to take a week and the actual trial was planned to take three weeks (Moore). She was tried in an “Orlando courtroom of Middle District of Florida Judge Paul G. Byron in the George C. Young U.S. Courthouse & Federal Building” (Moore). If Salman was found guilty on all charges she would face life in prison. She would have also been forced to forfeit \$30,500 in cash along with the jewelry Omar Mateen bought for her before the mass shooting (Moore). However, on March 30th, 2018, Noor Salman was acquitted by an Orlando jury and all charges were dropped (Mazzei). This came as a shock at it “handed federal prosecutors on Friday [March 30th, 2018] the rarest of defeats: a loss in a terrorism case” (Mazzei). This was the only trail related to the attack on the Pulse Nightclub mass shooting as Omar Mateen was shot and killed during the attack (Moore).

I feel that this attack should never have occurred. There were many times where Omar Mateen could have been stopped. The FBI investigated Mateen two times before the attack. If the FBI had investigated deeper, or for longer, they could have discovered that Mateen was planning this attack and stopped him. Also, if there was more security at the Pulse Nightclub this attack would have been stopped. Like other clubs, everyone should have been checked before they entered the club to make sure they are not carrying any weapons. If this had occurred, Mateen would have been stopped and 49 people would still be alive today. Even if this attack could have not been prevented, it could have at least been contained better, and leading to a lower death toll. If there were more security guards working at the club, and they were armed, the security guards could have stopped Mateen within 10 minutes, saving the lives of many people. In addition, it should have not taken the police almost 3 hours to end the attack. They were ready to attack at 3:00 AM but they waited till 5:00 AM to advance. In that two hour window, people who were seriously injured died from their wounds and Mateen continued shooting more people. If the police acted more swiftly, Mateen could have been stopped sooner and more lives could have been saved. In the end though, a string of terrible events came together to form the Pulse Nightclub shooting. May the victims and the lessons learned from this travesty never be forgotten.

Below is a list of victims from the Pulse Nightclub shooting. Those victims were:

“Stanley Almodovar III, 23 years old, Amanda L. Alvear, 25 years old, Oscar A. Aracena Montero, 26 years old, Rodolfo Ayala Ayala, 33 years old, Antonio Davon Brown, 29 years old, Darryl Roman Burt II, 29 years old, Angel Candelario-Padro, 28 years old, Juan Chavez Martinez, 25 years old, Luis Daniel Conde, 39 years old, Cory James Connell, 21 years old, Tevin Eugene Crosby, 25 years old, Deonka Deidra Drayton, 32 years old, Simón Adrian Carrillo Fernández, 31 years old, Leroy Valentin Fernandez, 25 years old, Mercedes Marisol Flores, 26 years old, Peter Ommy Gonzalez Cruz, 22 years old, Juan Ramon Guerrero, 22 years old, Paul Terrell Henry, 41 years old, Frank Hernandez, 27 years old, Miguel Angel Honorato, 30 years old, Javier Jorge Reyes, 40 years old, Jason Benjamin Josaphat, 19 years old, Eddie Jamoldroy Justice, 30 years old, Anthony Luis Laureano Disla, 25 years old, Christopher Andrew Leinonen, 32 years old, Alejandro Barrios Martinez, 21 years old, Brenda Marquez McCool, 49 years old, Gilberto R. Silva Menendez, 25 years old, Kimberly Jean Morris, 37 years old, Akyra Monet Murray, 18 years old, Luis Omar Ocasio Capo, 20 years old, Geraldo A. Ortiz Jimenez, 25 years old, Eric Ivan Ortiz-Rivera, 36 years old, Joel Rayon Paniagua, 32 years old, Jean Carlos Mendez Perez, 35 years old, Enrique L. Rios, Jr., 25 years old, Jean Carlos Nieves Rodríguez, 27 years old, Xavier Emmanuel Serrano-Rosado, 35 years old, Christopher Joseph Sanfeliz, 24 years old, Yilmary Rodríguez Solivan, 24 years old, Edward Sotomayor Jr., 34 years old, Shane Evan Tomlinson, 33 years old, Martin Benitez Torres, 33 years old, Jonathan A. Camuy Vega, 24 years old, Juan Pablo Rivera Velázquez, 37 years old, Luis Sergio Vielma, 22 years old, Franky Jimmy DeJesus Velázquez, 50 years old, Luis Daniel Wilson-Leon, 37 years old, Jerald Arthur Wright, 31 years old” (Victims’ Names).

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