



**AFTER ACTION REPORT  
WASHINGTON NAVY YARD  
SEPTEMBER 16, 2013**

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**INTERNAL REVIEW OF THE  
METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT  
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

**JULY 2014**



**METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT  
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

*The Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) is the primary law enforcement agency for the District of Columbia. The MPD has over 4,000 sworn and 500 civilian members serving the city.*

***MISSION OF THE METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT***

*It is the mission of the Metropolitan Police Department to safeguard the District of Columbia and protect its residents and visitors by providing the highest quality of police service with integrity, compassion, and a commitment to innovation that integrates people, technology and progressive business systems.*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On the morning of Monday, September 16, 2013, Aaron Alexis entered Building 197 at the Washington Navy Yard, where he served as an independent contractor, and carried out the most deadly workplace mass shooting in the Nation's Capital in recent memory.

Over the course of 69 minutes, Alexis terrorized thousands of employees of Naval Sea Systems Command, firing indiscriminately from a shotgun he had legally purchased two days earlier and a handgun he had taken from a security guard after mortally wounding the guard. He would also get into multiple shooting engagements with responding law enforcement officers, seriously injuring a Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) officer. In his final confrontation with police, Alexis ambushed and fired upon another MPD officer. Fortunately, the officer was saved by his protective vest and was able to return fire, killing Alexis and ending his rampage. When it was over, Alexis had shot and killed twelve people and injured several others.

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In the aftermath of the incident, the members of MPD first and foremost want to remember and honor the twelve people who lost their lives. Twelve people went to work that Monday, but did not return home to their loved ones. It is truly a senseless tragedy beyond comprehension, and there are no words adequate enough to express our condolences. Our thoughts remain with the victims' families and friends.

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Over the years, the members of MPD, along with other area law enforcement agencies and emergency responders, have trained extensively for the possibility of an "active shooter" incident. The Department did so with the hope of never having to respond to such a tragedy, but in the wake of Columbine, Virginia Tech, Aurora, Fort Hood, and Sandy Hook, among other similar tragedies, MPD recognized the importance and necessity of those preparations. As the primary law enforcement agency for the Nation's Capital, the members of MPD are acutely aware of the many potential targets that exist within the city and the need to remain prepared and vigilant.

On September 16, 2013, hundreds of police, fire, and emergency medical personnel from several different agencies responded to the Navy Yard after receiving news of the shooting. Officers relied upon their training, experience, and instincts to run into an unfamiliar and massive building, towards the gunshots and certain danger, in order to stop the gunman from taking more lives.

MPD would like to thank all of the first responders and especially commend the brave and heroic actions of the law enforcement officers who first entered the building. The arrival and swift entry of police officers was critical. While he exchanged gunfire with responding law



enforcement officers on multiple occasions, Alexis did not fatally wound any additional victims over the course of the last 47 minutes he was moving throughout the building.

In the wake of the incident, it is the Department's responsibility to objectively review and assess the police response to the shooting. An internal review team was assembled and tasked with conducting a comprehensive and detailed assessment.

In composing the report, the team attempted to delicately balance the need to provide extensive details with discretion and sensitivity for the victims, survivors, and witnesses. The team's objective was to provide other law enforcement agencies and emergency responders with MPD's thoughts and self-assessment as to the strengths and weaknesses of the police and emergency response; from the first 911 call through the subsequent investigation. The team also considered that there may be different perceptions or interpretations of the actions as they unfolded that day, depending on the perspective of those involved in the response. The team went to great lengths to critically analyze all the diverse observations and their potential impacts. In the end, the views and statements expressed within this report are from the perspective of the Metropolitan Police Department and its members.

The following report provides a narrative of the multi-agency response and culminates in a summary of MPD's overall observations and recommendations. The Department hopes it may provide other agencies with insight into the police response that day and help us all to be better prepared in the event of a future incident.

Cathy L. Lanier  
*Chief of Police*

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**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:** This report would not have been possible without the extensive work and substantial contributions of the following members of the Metropolitan Police Department:

*Mr. Matthew Bromeland*  
*Ms. Brandy Cramer*  
*Ms. Kelly Branthover*  
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*Assistant Chief Alfred Durham*

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*A special thanks to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington Field Office*  
*and the U.S. Park Police*

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*If you have any questions related to the contents of this report, you may contact Cathy L. Lanier, Chief of Police, at [Cathy.Lanier@dc.gov](mailto:Cathy.Lanier@dc.gov) and Mr. Matthew Bromeland at [Matthew.Bromeland@dc.gov](mailto:Matthew.Bromeland@dc.gov).*



## PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

The purpose of this report is to describe the events related to the law enforcement response, constructively evaluate and assess the tactical and operational actions, and identify the unique issues and challenges faced by the responding law enforcement officers on September 16, 2013. In the end, we hope that this report provides law enforcement and other stakeholders with practical recommendations should they be called upon to respond to a similar event.

It is not the intent of this report to convey every detail or element related to Alexis or speculate on the possible motive for his actions. While it is human nature to desire to know the specific reasons why Alexis may have carried out this tragedy, his motive is beyond the scope of our review.

It is also not our intention to second guess any of the actions or decisions of the officials and officers at the scene that day. The actions and decisions of that day were made, often in a split second, in a dynamic and extraordinary environment under extreme duress, facing a multitude of unforeseen challenges and dangers, without the benefit of hindsight. That the police response was effective in ending the threat, without the further loss of life, and overall operations continued without substantial issues, is a testament to the professionalism, training, and bravery of the officers who responded to the scene that day.

Our hope is that this reflective analysis and the lessons learned by the Metropolitan Police Department and our partners may provide other law enforcement agencies and related stakeholders with an understanding of the challenges and thoughtful recommendations for possible improvements to the law enforcement response to active shooter situations or other incidents that may require a large-scale, multi-agency response.

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*After-action reports are important tools as they provide  
“the dynamic link between task performance and execution to standard”<sup>1</sup>.*

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<sup>1</sup> Leader’s Guide to After-Action Review, U.S. Army, 2011, p. 14.



## SCOPE OF REVIEW

The scope of this review is mainly limited to the operational actions and tactical response of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) and other law enforcement agencies on the day of the shooting. It will focus primarily on the law enforcement actions; however, it will also examine the overlapping actions of other agencies or functions, where appropriate, and when those actions intersect with or impact police operations.

The Department of Defense, the Department of the Navy, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the District of Columbia Government have all commissioned other review or investigative teams to conduct separate assessments of many of the events leading up to and on the day of the shooting. For instance, while there has been an ongoing national discussion regarding how the perpetrator may have been cleared to work as a contract employee assigned to the Washington Navy Yard, MPD's review does not cover that particular topic since it relates to employment suitability. The appropriate Federal agencies are conducting a review of that important issue.

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For this report, the MPD Internal Review Team reviewed and assessed the following main areas of the law enforcement and emergency response:

- I. Emergency 911 Services and Initial Notification
- II. Police Response to the Scene
- III. Tactical Operations: Search for the Gunman
- IV. Operational Coordination
- V. Scene Management and Security
- VI. Medical, Reunification, and Victim Services
- VII. Operational Communications
- VIII. Public Information
- IX. Resource Management
- X. Citywide Operations



## METHODOLOGY

To conduct the assessment of the law enforcement response to the shooting at the Navy Yard, the Review Team examined a myriad of documents and materials. This included several hundred statements and interviews of witnesses, responding law enforcement officers, and various personnel from a myriad of agencies and organizations. The team also reviewed hundreds of hours of radio communications, 911 calls, and available video footage to construct a comprehensive timeline of events, actions, and communications.

Much of what is included within this report is based on the feedback and materials provided by our partners. The Review Team carefully examined the materials provided by other agencies, including running resumes, incident notes and reports, and assorted communications. The team also held several “hot wash” review meetings with multiple department units and partner agencies, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Park Police, Naval District of Washington, Naval Criminal Investigative Service, U.S. Marshals Service, DC Fire and Emergency Medical Services, DC Office of Unified Communications, and several other Federal and District agencies. We are grateful for their assistance.

The Review Team endeavored to fairly and accurately articulate the observations and went to great lengths to ensure the objectivity and integrity of the overall evaluation. The report is based on the information available to us, and where appropriate, the various perspectives of those involved that day. This report would not be possible without their cooperation and frank insight.

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## BACKGROUND

### The Perpetrator: Aaron Alexis



In the week prior to perpetrating one of the most shocking mass shootings at a workplace and the second mass shooting on a domestic U.S. military installation in four years<sup>2</sup>, Aaron Alexis was employed by Experts, Inc., a subcontractor of Hewlett-Packard, as an independent contractor who provided information technology (IT) support services for the U.S. Navy installation at the Washington Navy Yard. While it was later reported that he may have been suffering from insomnia, pronounced bouts of anger, and possible psychological disturbances, it does not appear that Alexis gave those who knew or worked with him any prior warning or specific indication of the horrific actions he would soon carry out at the Navy Yard on the morning of September 16, 2013. While we will likely never know the specific reasons why Alexis would kill 12 individuals and injure several others, his uneven behavior and deteriorating psychological state provide at least a partial look into his background.

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Aaron Alexis was born May 9, 1979, in Queens, New York, and attended high school in the Bronx. In May of 2007, Alexis joined the Navy and served as an aviation electrician before being honorably discharged in January 2011, and he was subsequently transferred to reserve status.

Both prior to and following his military service, Alexis lived a rather transient life that included several moves throughout the country, contract employment overseas, and various periods of unemployment, temporary work as a waiter, and studies at technical schools. In late 2012, Experts, Inc., employed Alexis to provide IT support services for several months in Japan, followed by similar work at installations in several states on the East Coast.

Before arriving in Washington, D.C., Alexis had at least three encounters with law enforcement. He had been arrested twice, first in 2004 and later in 2010, for discharging a firearm. In the first incident, Alexis shot out the tires of a vehicle following an angry confrontation with a construction worker in Seattle, Washington. The police report indicated Alexis did not recall his actions since he allegedly suffered from black-outs caused by pronounced anger. His father reported that Alexis suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a result of assisting with rescue efforts in New York on September 11, 2001. In the second incident, Alexis discharged his firearm into the ceiling of his apartment in Fort Worth, Texas, allegedly an accidental discharge while cleaning his firearm. Alexis was also arrested in DeKalb County, Georgia, in 2008 on charges of disorderly conduct.

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<sup>2</sup> On November 5, 2009, an Army psychiatrist opened fire at Fort Hood in Texas. The gunman, who killed 13 victims and injured 30 others, was injured during the attack and later arrested.



Despite these confrontations and displays of anger, there were no known reports that supervisors or co-workers had any issues or problems working with Alexis. There was also no indication that Alexis harbored any specific ideological differences with the Navy or had any negative interactions with other workers at the Navy Yard.

In the month prior to the shooting, Alexis had reportedly sought treatment at two different Veteran's Affairs hospitals in Providence, Rhode Island, and Bethesda, Maryland, for trouble sleeping, but denied having any psychological issues. It was later reported that Alexis had told police in Rhode Island that he believed voices were harassing him and that the government was doing a microwave project on him.

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Two days prior to the shooting, Alexis went to Sharpshooters, a firearms dealer in Lorton, Virginia, with the intent of purchasing an AR-15 assault rifle. He was not allowed to purchase the rifle at that time since he was not a resident of Virginia. Alexis chose to instead purchase a Remington 870 tactical, pump-action shotgun. About an hour later, Alexis purchased a hacksaw from Home Depot in Annandale, Virginia. He likely used the saw to cut down both the barrel and stock of the shotgun he had purchased. Alexis also inscribed several messages on the shotgun, "Better off this way", "My ELF weapon", and "Not what you say".

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### **Monday, September 16**

On the morning of Monday, September 16, Alexis left his hotel and traveled to the Navy Yard in a rental car. He had only been in Washington, D.C., for a short time, and it was not known if he had made any arrangements for long-term residence quarters. After showing his identification to the military police officer at the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Gate of the Navy Yard, Alexis parked his rental vehicle in the parking garage in Building 28 and walked to Building 197, carrying a backpack and a clipboard. He had been working at the Navy Yard for about one week, and he had entered Building 197 several times during that time period.

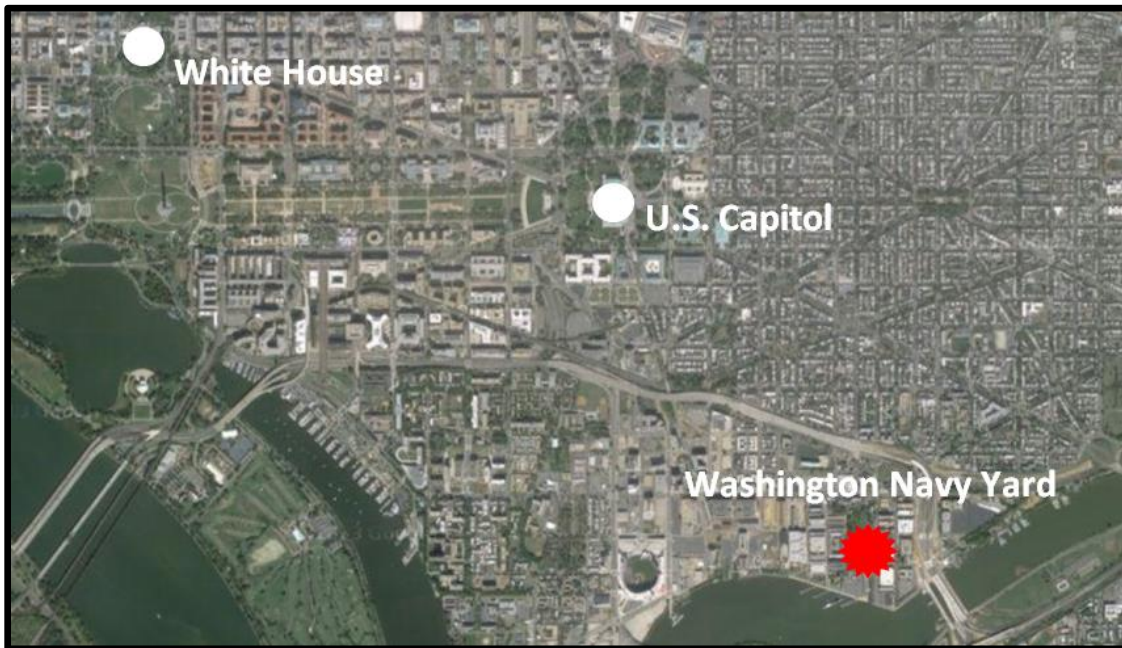
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### **The Washington Navy Yard and Building 197:**

The Washington Navy Yard is the former shipyard and ordnance plant of the U.S. Navy in Southeast Washington, D.C. It was established on October 2, 1799. It now serves as the administrative center for the U.S. Navy and home to the Chief of Naval Operations and headquarters of the Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA), as well as several other Navy departments and facilities. It is a gated facility that serves as the home to several classified departments and approximately 14,000 employees.

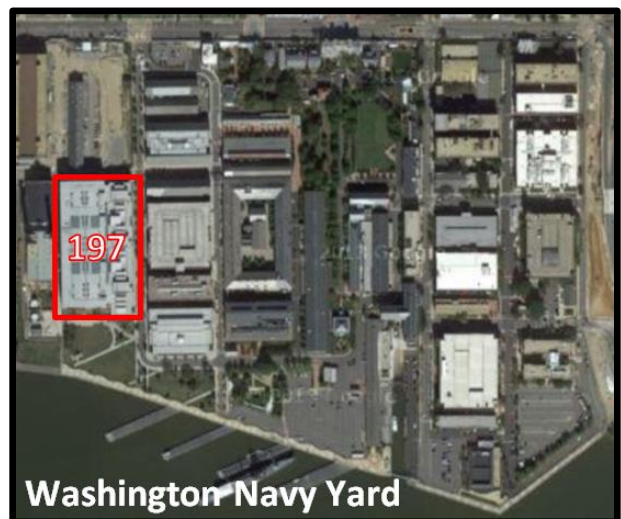


The Navy Yard is located in Washington’s First Police District of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD). MPD officers do not regularly patrol the grounds of the Navy Yard since it is a gated military base. The Navy Yard installation is patrolled by its own police personnel, the Naval District of Washington (NDW) Police. The Navy Yard also has a handful of armed Military Police (MP) personnel, contract security officers (both armed and unarmed), and its own fire department and emergency medical services.



Building 197 is located on the west side of the Navy Yard on Isaac Hull Avenue, directly south of the 6<sup>th</sup> Street entrance to the installation. Building 197 is the home to the headquarters of NAVSEA and is the largest building on the grounds of the Navy Yard. Comprised of five floors, Building 197 houses nearly 3,000 employees and contractors who carry out naval engineering operations and the NAVSEA mission to “engineer, build, buy and maintain ships, submarines and combat systems that meet the Fleet’s current and future operational requirements.”

The building, consisting of more than 600,000 square feet of office space, contains thousands of cubicles and offices arranged in a dense, complex layout, described by many as a “maze-like” interior. Each cubicle and office is designated by the floor and directional location, followed by a unique four-digit identifier. For example, 3W 2345 would be located on the third floor, west section of the building, cubicle or office number 2345. The building also houses several SCIFs (Sensitive Compartmented



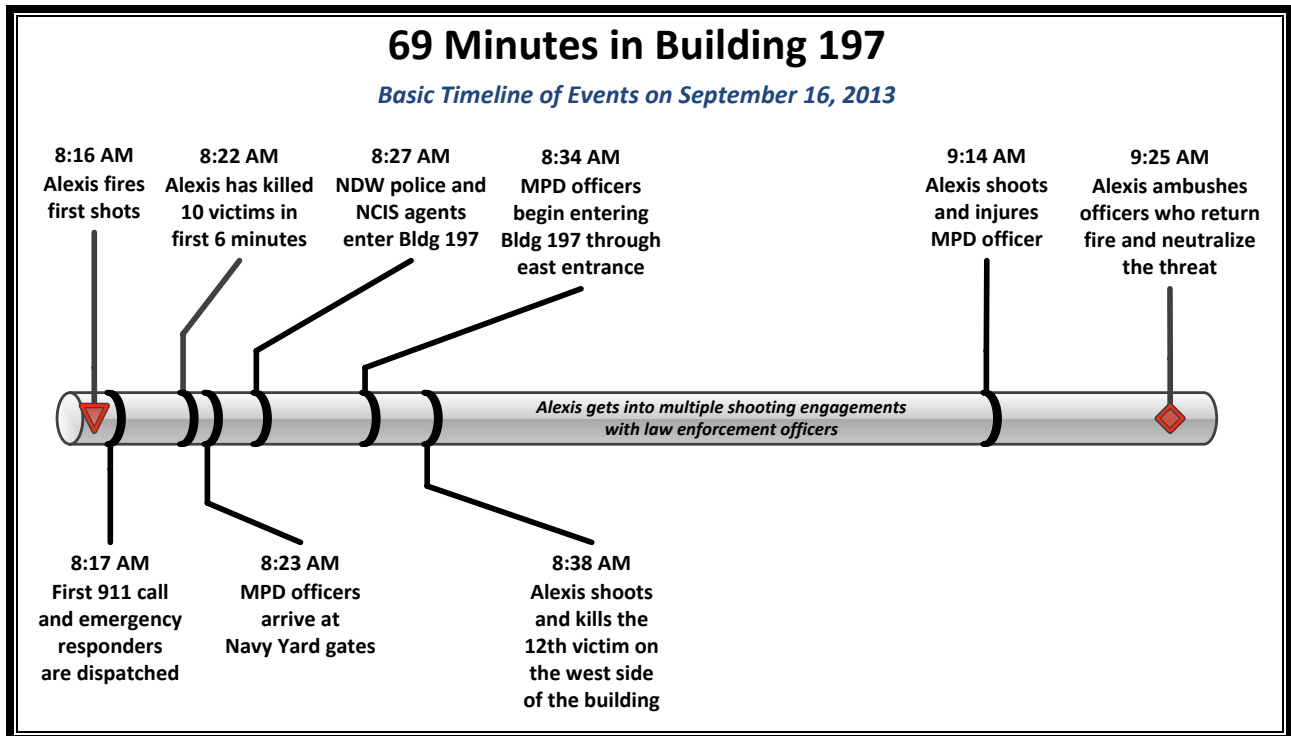
Information Facility) for classified operations. Due to the classified nature of much of the work taking place in Building 197, many employees were required to store their mobile phones in lockers in the lobby entrance of the building.

The narrow hallways extend the length of the building, running both north-south and east-west. The pathways between cubicle partitions and offices are, in many areas, only a few feet wide. The building is generally composed of drywall over a large, steel internal beam structure, some of which reportedly dates back to the original construction of the building. In many areas, the large steel beams are exposed and run from the floor to ceiling and continue upward through the entire building. Additionally, there are two, large open atriums located towards the center of the building that rise through all five floors.

The complex layout, unique structure, large atriums, and sheer vastness of the building would all have an impact on the tactical response of law enforcement officers. Over the course of 69 minutes, Aaron Alexis would make Building 197 one of the largest crime scenes ever processed in Washington, D.C.

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## BASIC TIMELINE OF EVENTS



## **NARRATIVE OF INCIDENT EVENTS:**

*Please note that while this is a chronological narrative of events, many of the events occurred concurrently, rather than sequentially. The times, when noted, are based on information, communications, and records provided by several agencies.*

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### **8:08 – 8:16**

At 8:08 a.m., Alexis enters Building 197 through the main entrance on the eastside of the building, scans his access identification card at the employee entrance turnstile, and proceeds to the bay of elevators. Alexis takes the elevator to the 4<sup>th</sup> floor, where he conducted work during the prior week, exits the elevator and casually walks directly to the men's restroom. Alexis carries with him the concealed Remington 870 shotgun and a supply of shotgun shells.

After spending several minutes in the men's restroom on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor, Alexis leaves his backpack and clipboard in one of the bathroom stalls. He exits the restroom carrying the loaded shotgun and has several additional shotgun shells in his pockets. He walks across the hall into a cubicle area located near the atrium.

### **8:16 – 8:20**

At 8:16 a.m., Alexis fires his first shots, shooting and killing the first three victims. He also fires upon and injures a young woman in the head and hand. Approximately one minute and 30 seconds after the first shots, the first 911 call is received in the city's emergency call center at the D.C. Office of Unified Communications (OUC). This is an important distinction to note as the Navy Yard operated its own emergency services on base. If an individual called the Navy Yard's internal emergency number (a four-digit number), the call would be routed to the NDW emergency operations center on base. Several workers reportedly called the internal emergency number rather than dialing 911, which would have been routed to the city's 911 operators at OUC.

The first 911 caller works on the fourth floor in a bank of cubicles adjacent to the first victims. When he hears the first shots, he believes the sounds resemble the noise of a large safe being dropped. He stands up and looks over the cubicle partition and observes Alexis point the shotgun and fire at a young woman sitting at a cubicle. He immediately ducks down, gets under his desk, and uses a metal filing cabinet to conceal his location. He uses his mobile phone to call 911.

Within seconds of receiving this first call, OUC personnel dispatch Metropolitan Police Department officers from the First District. Following a confusing exchange with the 911 operator regarding the address of Building 197, the first caller is also able to provide a detailed description of the shooter.



A city dispatcher subsequently announces the description of the suspect over the air to responding MPD officers. The city's 911 services receive several additional calls reporting sounds of gunshots at the Navy Yard, and additional officers are dispatched to the scene.

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It should be noted that the initial call for service was dispatched as "sounds of gunshots", and after quickly learning there was one victim, the MPD Command Information Center (CIC), the 24-hour operations center at MPD headquarters, began notifying the Chief of Police and other Command Staff members that officers in the First District were working a homicide. While it may have initially appeared to be a serious, yet standard type of incident that officers are used to working, the radio communications (*"All active shooter trained officers please respond to the Navy Yard."*) soon began to indicate that the incident was much larger and more complex than the initial notifications.

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The city's OUC call center received 62 calls to 911 between 8:17 and 11:00 a.m. During subsequent conversations with Navy personnel, it was learned that as a change implemented following the Fort Hood shooting in 2009, many military facilities established their own internal emergency call-taking and dispatch centers.

The Navy Yard's independent emergency call centers resulted in several emergency calls, which may have contained vital or helpful information, not being relayed to city dispatchers at OUC and responding MPD officers. At the very least, this process created the potential for a significant gap in communications and situational awareness between responding NDW personnel (NDW communications, police, and fire) and OUC dispatchers, MPD officers, and DC Fire and Emergency Medical Services personnel.

This communication gap may have also been compounded by the mobile phone policy for many employees working in Building 197. Depending on their work assignment, many employees were not allowed to take their mobile phones into the building. There were several large lockers at the entrance of the building in which employees were to lock their mobile phones prior to entering the building through the turnstiles. Several employees either disregarded the policy, or it did not apply to their position, as they were able to make 911 calls from their mobile phones which were received by the city's OUC call center rather than the Navy Yard.

In the end, employers with similar cell phone policies for their employees may want to review and reconsider those policies. Does the rationale for prohibiting cell phones truly outweigh an employee's ability to receive emergency alerts and notifications or to contact emergency services? Understandably, this may not be applicable to those operating in highly-classified environments.



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At approximately 8:18, an evacuating worker or security officer pulls the fire alarm in an attempt to alert the others in the building. The alarm, however, will prove to be an ongoing distraction for the responding officers searching for the shooter.

Within the first four minutes of firing his first shots, Alexis shot and killed eight victims on the fourth floor. He then makes his way to the third floor.

### **8:20 – 8:23**

Within the first two minutes on the third floor, Alexis fatally shoots two more victims. He has now shot and killed 10 people within the first six minutes. After emerging from one of the victim's office into the hallway, he fires down the hallway at a group of employees standing by the stairwell at the other end of the hallway. He does not hit anyone. He turns and walks away and sees a young woman hiding between a metal beam and filing cabinet. He stands directly over her and attempts to fire twice, but the shotgun does not fire. It appears that it is not loaded. He disappears down the hallway, reaching in his pocket for more shells. The young woman crawls around the corner and is later evacuated by police officers.

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As he enters one of the stairwells on the third floor, he encounters several people coming down the stairs from the fourth floor. Before they can all safely make their way back up the stairs and away from the shooter, Alexis fires once, striking a woman in the shoulder. Alexis does not follow them, but instead continues down the stairwell. The injured woman, who would survive, is led by her colleagues to the roof, where one of them writes a note requesting medical assistance and drops it off the roof. The note is recovered by an MPD officer who is manning one of the exits to the building. The officer quickly notifies other emergency responders, and the injured woman and her colleagues are later evacuated from the roof by Eagle, the U.S. Park Police helicopter unit.



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In at least three other known incidents on the third and fourth floors, Alexis fires at multiple individuals, some from extremely close range. Those individuals are fortunate to escape



without physical injury. It appears that Alexis is firing indiscriminately, and many survivors later recount that he never uttered a word and has a serious or “mean” facial expression.

### 8:23 – 8:30

The first MPD officers begin arriving at the Navy Yard installation in less than five minutes of the call being dispatched. There are several gated entrances to the installation. Officers arriving at one gate encountered a locked gate with no personnel to allow them to gain entrance. In accordance with the installation’s longstanding emergency protocols, the base personnel working at the entrances had locked the gates and responded to the incident. Several officers are able to enter through another entrance.

Officers begin making their way to Building 197; however, there are many buildings on the base and it is difficult to discern the exact location of the building. Officers begin asking the people they encounter for the location of Building 197; however, many of those individuals are not sure. Those officers eventually make their way to the building by going towards the location from which many people appear to be evacuating.

**At least 117 officers entered the building during the initial search for the shooter. This included officers and agents from:**

- D.C. Metropolitan Police Department (MPD)
- U.S. Park Police (USPP)
- Naval District of Washington (NDW) Police
- Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS)
- Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority
- U.S. Marshals Service (USMS)
- Navy Contract Security Guards
- U.S. Navy, Department of Defense (DOD)

As the officers are making their way to Building 197, dispatchers have received multiple calls for a shooting at the Navy Yard and begin requesting multiple units to respond to the area. Within minutes, hundreds of officers from multiple agencies begin responding to the incident. Emergency vehicles will soon flood the streets around the Navy Yard.

Upon reaching Building 197, officers begin receiving multiple communications that the incident may be occurring in Building 58. One of the earlier injured victims had been evacuated from Building 197 and taken to an area near Building 58. The subsequent call for medical services caused momentary confusion over the location of the actual shooting.

Meanwhile, within the building, Alexis has made his way to the first floor.

On the first floor, at the employee entrance on the northeast side of the building, a security officer manning the entrance teams up with two NDW police personnel who have responded to the building. A Navy MP and Naval Criminal Investigative Services (NCIS) agent soon join them, and all five begin to search the first floor.

### 8:27 – 8:34

The commanding officer of the NDW Police is near the building when he is notified that there are shots being fired. He immediately responds and enters the building through the front





entrance on the east side of the building and is soon joined by his deputy. Both officials speak to the security guard at the entrance, telling him to ensure the shooter does not leave the building if he should come this way. All three men hear gunshots and the two NDW police officials make their way to the second floor since it sounds as though the gunshots are coming from an upper floor. The security guard remains at his post.

Alexis moves around the first floor, entering various stairwells on at least two occasions, but turns around and returns to the first floor both times. He eventually makes his way through the south side of the first floor and around to the front entrance of the building where he encounters the security guard. Before the guard can react, Alexis fires at him, hitting the guard and shattering the glass windows of the front entrance. Alexis then retrieves the sidearm of the mortally wounded guard and proceeds north down the hallway.

As Alexis makes his way down the hallway past the second atrium, he encounters another security guard and a Navy MP who had responded earlier through the northeast entrance. He turns and fires his shotgun towards them, missing both. The security guard returns fire, but misses Alexis, who disappears down the hallway. The guard and MP call to the two NDW police officials and NCIS agent, who had begun searching the cafeteria adjacent to the atrium. The NDW officers and NCIS agent make their way back to the east side of the atrium and renew their search for the shooter. The three men soon encounter Alexis in a hallway. Alexis fires at the three men, who return fire; however, no one is struck. Alexis again disappears in the maze-like hallways of the first floor.

#### **8:34 – 8:40**

Alexis soon makes his way back to a stairwell on the west side of the building. He looks out the door to the alley, and seeing two men standing at the corner of the building, he raises his shotgun, but lowers it after it either would not fire or he decides to instead use the handgun he had taken from the security guard. He raises the handgun, points it out the door, and fires toward the men. One of the men is struck and killed, becoming the 12<sup>th</sup> and final victim. Seeing the victim fall, the other man immediately flees the area. This particular course of events, coupled with the limited video that was available to Unified Command, gave rise to the possibility of a second suspect (see page 42). Alexis closes the door and casually walks back into the first floor. At some point while walking around the cubicles and offices on the first floor, he discards the shotgun. Alexis will continue to move about the building for another 47 minutes and get into multiple shooting engagements with law enforcement officers, but he will not fatally shoot another person.

While Alexis is making his way through the west side of the building on the first floor, the first MPD officers have begun entering Building 197 through the east entrance. The team consists of several MPD officers. They are also joined by a Navy MP and NDW police sergeant.



As they make their way through the front lobby, they hear gunshots, but it is difficult to determine from which floor the shots are emanating. The gunshots echo through the atrium and because it sounds as though they are coming from an upper floor, the team heads up the stairs to the second floor. Alexis, however, is still on the first floor on the other side of the building. Two MPD officers position themselves at the edge of the atrium and provide cover for both the team ascending the stairs and the additional officers who will be entering the building.

**Officers moved the large lockers that house employees' cell phones from the wall near the entrance and positioned them in an area facing the atrium to utilize them as cover. Additionally, an MPD officer had the presence of mind to take the building access card from the deceased security guard and provide it to one of the teams entering the building. The card allowed the team to access secured areas of the building.**

*Photo from Security Video: MPD officers and Navy personnel entering Building 197 through the main entrance on the east side of the building.*



At 8:39 a.m., an MPD Commander arrives at the scene outside Building 197. He had made his way on foot from the base entry gate at 11<sup>th</sup> and O Streets Southwest. He and a handful of other officers, using vehicles as cover, set up outside the east entrance of the building. He requests that all communications go through him. The Commander assembles active shooter teams comprised of officers from both MPD and other responding law enforcement agencies and sends them into the building. He also begins ensuring the perimeter is secured and all entrances to the building are covered by officers. He remains in radio contact with the first



team that had entered the building and informs them each time a new team enters the building.

A few seconds after the Commander arrives at the building, the MPD Chief of Police and the Special Operation Division Commander arrive at one of the north gates to the Navy Yard. After speaking briefly with responding officers, the Chief heads to the Incident Command Post, which has been established at 11<sup>th</sup> and O Streets.

Officials from U.S. Park Police and DC Fire and Emergency Medical Services (FEMS) join the MPD officials in Unified Command. Agents from the U.S. Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) also respond to Unified Command.

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While there are a few NCIS agents who are assigned to the Navy Yard, it is important to note that NCIS is not in charge of the base. Although the other law enforcement representatives in Unified Command assumed NCIS was the representative for the Navy and the facility, this was a mistaken assumption. NCIS was essentially a tenant of one of the many buildings at the Navy Yard. The Base Commander would have been the appropriate representative; however, he was operating from an internal operations center inside the facility and was not aware of Unified Command. Neither the Navy nor the facility had regular and consistent representation in Unified Command (*see Observation 11*). The impact of their absence was felt early on when Unified Command requested from NCIS access to CCTV cameras and video recordings. Officials were unable to obtain video from the facility's CCTV cameras for an extended period of time, and when some video recordings were obtained shortly before the first press conference, it was from outside the building and limited in context, which resulted in the belief there could be a second suspect (*see Observations 17 and 23*).

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#### **8:40 – 8:55**

Alexis walks around the first floor of Building 197. His demeanor has visibly changed. He has gone from hunter, to hunted. He makes his way around the south hallway of the building, but soon retraces his steps back the way he came after seeing or hearing law enforcement officers making their way through the building. It appears that he is waiting for an opportunity to again ambush or confront law enforcement.

Since the beginning of the incident, Alexis has had several opportunities to leave the building. He has looked out several entrances on the west side of the building that open into an alley, but on each occasion he returned inside the building. At approximately 8:55, he makes his way up a stairwell to the second floor.



### **8:55 – 9:12**

The first MPD team in the building, consisting of five MPD officers, a Navy MP, and a NDW Police sergeant, are moving through the west hallway on the second floor searching for the shooter. As they move through the hallway, they pass an open stairwell. They each look into the stairwell as they pass, and continue down the hallway.

Approximately 20 seconds after the last officer in the group passes the open door to the stairwell, Alexis has made his way up from the first floor and slowly peers into the second floor hallway, first to the left and then to the right. He apparently sees the group of officers and retreats back into the stairwell. He then decides to instead make his way to the third floor. The officers never see Alexis.

At 8:55, MPD's Joint Operations Command Center (JOCC) is made operational, headed by an MPD Assistant Chief, who requests representatives from other agencies to assist with coordination and oversight of operations. The FBI, U.S. Park Police, Metro Transit Police, Military District of Washington, D.C. Office of Unified Communications, U.S. Attorney's Office, D.C. Protective Services, D.C. Department of Transportation, and the D.C. Department of Youth Rehabilitative Services are all represented in the JOCC. The MPD Assistant Chief relays any vital information over the radio to the forward operating commander and Unified Command. Various MPD personnel, including officers, investigators, and analysts, arrive in the JOCC and begin assisting with the flow and coordination of information and intelligence.

Alexis exits the stairwell onto the third floor. He walks down the hallway and into a cubicle area towards the center of the building. He eventually makes his way back to another area on the west side of the third floor that houses several banks of cubicles and five offices. There are two points of entry to this area from the main hallway, one on the southern end of the area and another on the northern end. At least one of the offices has five employees who have sheltered in place. They have pushed furniture up against the door and are hiding under the desk. Alexis conceals himself somewhere in the bank of cubicles.

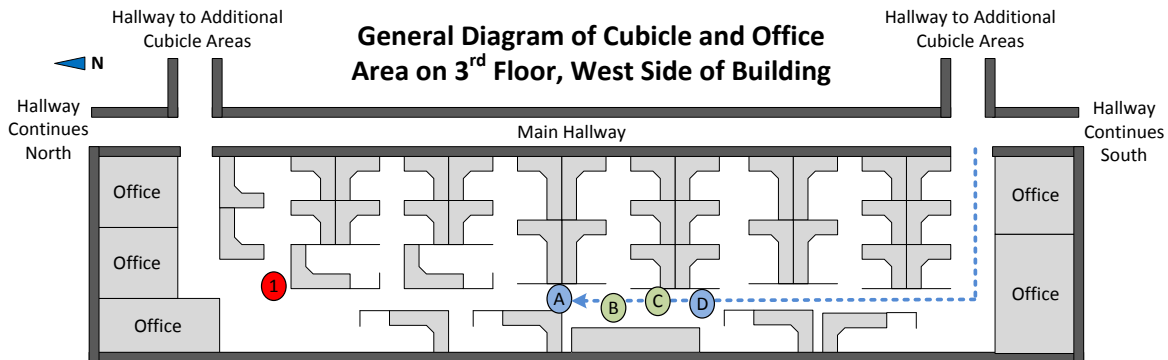
### **9:12 – 9:15**

At 9:12, a team consisting of two MPD officers and two NCIS agents are on the third floor clearing rooms and searching for the shooter. They look into several areas and attempt to enter several doors that appear to be locked. At approximately 9:15, one of the MPD officers leads the team into the cubicle area in which Alexis is hiding, entering from the southern side. As the officers make their way down the narrow pathway running along the bank of cubicles, Alexis fires at least one shot from a handgun. The MPD officer who is leading the team down the pathway is struck in both legs. The other MPD officer and two NCIS agents drag the injured officer back out of the area into the main hallway and request the assistance of additional officers.



Once in the hallway, the officers and agents speak briefly to two U.S. Park Police (USPP) officers who have made their way down the hallway. An MPD officer and two NCIS agents then drag the injured officer to the entrance to the stairwell and proceed to carry the injured officer down the stairs to seek medical attention.

**Diagram I:** (1) Alexis has concealed himself in a bank of cubicles. (A)(D) MPD officers, along with (B)(C) two NCIS agents, make their way through the cubicle area. Alexis fires at the officers, striking the first MPD officer in both legs. *Location and positions are approximate.*



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### 9:15 – 9:25

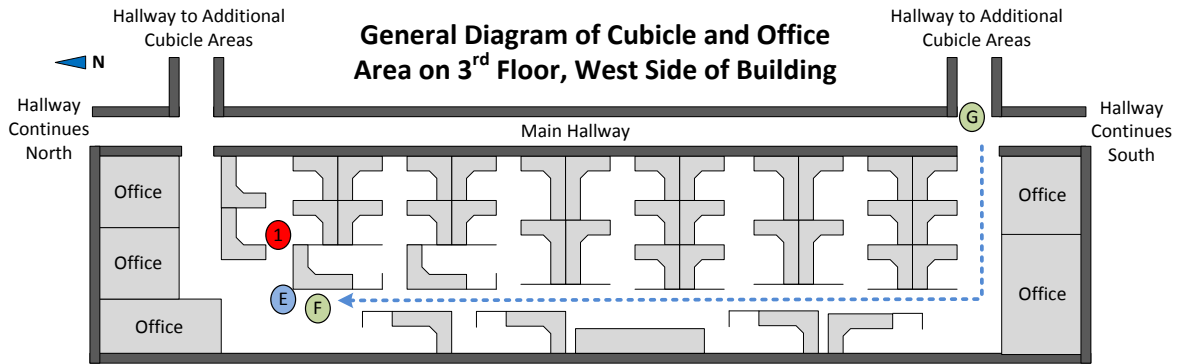
Within seconds, an MPD tactical officer joins the two USPP officers in the hallway near the southern entrance to the area in which Alexis is concealed. The MPD officer asks the two officers if they are active shooter trained, and both respond in the affirmative. With one of the USPP officers covering the intersecting hallways, the MPD officer and USPP officer enter the cubicle area to continue the search for the shooter. The two officers search each bank of cubicles. As they round the partition to the last bank of cubicles, Alexis jumps out from under one of the desks and fires upon the MPD officer, who has just rounded the cubicle partition. Alexis is approximately five feet from the officer when he fires. Seeing the suspect fire, the MPD officer returns fire while attempting to move back and laterally away from the shooter. The USPP officer also returns fire. The MPD officer is hit by one round fired by Alexis, but the round hits his vest. While he initially felt as though he may have been hit, the MPD officer does not confirm until much later when he finds the round lodged in his protective vest.

At 9:25, Alexis is hit by the return fire and is killed instantly, ending the threat 69 minutes after he fired the first shots. The USPP officer states over the Park Police radio channel that the suspect is down. Officials in Unified Command hear this transmission, but it will take several additional minutes for confirmation from other officers that the gunman is down. These communications on multiple channels by officers inside Building 197, which is discussed in Observation 8, serve as an important reminder that, for safety reasons and clear communications, all of the officers conducting the tactical search for the gunman should be



operating on the same radio channel. Many of the officers were on the designated tactical channel; however, some members of ERT were operating on their own ERT channel and Park Police officers were communicating on their own Park Police channel. This can create the potential for large gaps in communication, which in turn increases the risk to fellow officers.

**Diagram II:** (1) Alexis remains concealed in a bank of cubicles. An (E) MPD officer and (F) U.S. Park Police officer enter the cubicle area to continue searching for the shooter after the injured MPD officer has been evacuated from the area. (G) Another U.S. Park Police officer remains at the intersecting hallways to provide cover. As the MPD officer rounds the partition to the last bank of cubicles, Alexis springs out from under a desk and fires at the officer, who returns fire, killing Alexis. *Location and positions are approximate.*



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## 9:25 and later

Although Alexis has been neutralized, police have not yet confirmed whether he acted alone or if there were additional shooters. Several witnesses report conflicting descriptions of the gunman. As result, officers continue their search for possible additional shooters.

Unified Command continues to direct and manage the ongoing response. The incident occurred during the morning traffic rush and resulted in the closure of several streets, including M Street and the 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge. Officials are tasked to manage traffic, clearing congested areas and ensuring emergency routes remain open.

Unified Command also requests that plans to stand up a Family Reunification Center begin and tasks an MPD official with coordinating efforts. MPD initiated family reunification efforts out of necessity; based upon the sheer number of people impacted by the incident (*14,000 workers at the Navy Yard and their understandably worried loved ones*). Unified Command believed that the family reunification efforts would eventually transition to the Navy; however, the FBI, MPD, and the Office of Victim Services remained responsible for family assistance efforts throughout the incident and the subsequent days. It was apparent that agencies were not familiar with the city's formal Family Assistance Center plan (see Observation 20) and the specific responsibilities outlined therein.



It will take several more hours before investigators are able to exhaust all leads related to the possible additional suspects or persons of interest. Identification of the victims and notification of their next of kin will go well into the evening. The evidence collection and overall investigation will continue for many more days.

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## **OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- I. EMERGENCY 911 SERVICES AND INITIAL NOTIFICATION**
- II. POLICE RESPONSE TO SCENE**
- III. TACTICAL OPERATIONS: SEARCH FOR THE GUNMAN**
- IV. OPERATIONAL COORDINATION**
- V. SCENE MANAGEMENT AND SECURITY**
- VI. MEDICAL SERVICES, REUNIFICATION, AND VICTIM SERVICES**
- VII. OPERATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS**
- VIII. PUBLIC INFORMATION**
- IX. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**
- X. CITYWIDE OPERATIONS**

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### **I. EMERGENCY 911 CALLS AND INITIAL NOTIFICATION**

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**OBSERVATION 1:** *Emergency calls were received by two separate emergency call centers depending on which emergency number workers dialed. Calls made to the Navy Yard's internal emergency number were routed to the Naval District of Washington (NDW) communications center. Other callers who dialed 911 were routed to the city's 911 call center at the Office of Unified Communications.*

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The Emergency 911 (E911) responsibilities for the District of Columbia are handled by the D.C. Office of Unified Communications (OUC). In general, callers who dial 911 from a telephone within the city will be routed to an operator at the OUC 911 Call Center, who will then dispatch emergency services. In the case of the Navy Yard, however, callers could dial an internal four-digit number from a desk telephone and be routed to the emergency communications center on the base and not the city's 911 Call Center. This was the result of a recommendation made by the U.S. Army's Internal Review Team following the 2009 shooting at Fort Hood in Texas. In their after-action report of the Fort Hood shooting, the Army's Review Team recommended that each military installation equip their operations centers with emergency call-taking



capabilities, which would allow operators to automatically identify the address of the caller, as well as the location of the closest first responder, to decrease the emergency response time.

Since the Navy Yard has its own police, fire, and emergency medical services on base, this practice is prudent in the event of an individual or small-scale incident, such as a worker suffering a health or medical emergency. It is also prudent if the military installation is located a substantial distance from local emergency services. In the case of a large-scale incident, however, such as an ongoing active shooter, the installation's operators and first responders may be quickly overwhelmed.

The NDW operator called the OUC Call Center on at least two separate occasions in the early moments of the incident. Her first call was made two minutes after the first shots had been fired, and her second call was placed eight minutes later. During her first call she relayed to the OUC operator that there had been reports of shots fired in Building 197 by a "black male with a rifle"; however, she had not received any reports of injuries, but stated she could hear gunshots in the background of the calls she received. She requested that police and medical services respond to 8<sup>th</sup> and M Streets SE.

During her second call to OUC, the NDW operator requested the radio channel that the city's first responders were using in order to pass that information on to NDW first responders. She also informed OUC that there were injured victims at Building 197 and Building 28. During both calls, the NDW communications operator was simultaneously fielding incoming emergency calls or communicating with NDW personnel while speaking to the OUC operator.

**The NDW operator should be commended for remaining calm and composed in an extremely difficult situation. The sheer volume of emergency calls and radio transmissions was likely overwhelming.**

**SUMMARY:** The practice of independent emergency call-taking services may have created a gap, or at least the potential for a gap, in emergency (911) communications during the day of the shooting. The impact of this practice, at least relative to the Navy Yard, is that each call center may only receive a limited perspective of the totality of information provided by callers, depending on which number the caller dialed; some of the information could prove to be critical, real-time details of the dynamic and rapidly-evolving event. To date, MPD has not been provided with the recordings of the emergency calls received by the NDW emergency operations center.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS for OBSERVATION 1:**

**[1.1]** *It may be prudent for military installations, especially those located in or near a largely populated area, to review their emergency call-taking procedures and policies to ensure they include guidelines for actions in the event of a large-scale incident that will inevitably result in multiple agencies responding to the scene.*





**[1.2]** *The installation's emergency call-takers and dispatchers should establish strong relationships with their local jurisdiction's 911 services agency. Both parties should be familiar with the other's emergency procedures. They may also consider developing a process and protocol for ensuring vital information from callers is quickly relayed between call centers during an incident.*

**[1.3]** *Emergency call-takers and dispatchers from the military installation's communications center should train with the local jurisdiction's emergency communications personnel. Both parties should also be included in the scenario-based training exercises that are regularly conducted by emergency medical and law enforcement agencies (See related Recommendation [2.3]).*

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**OBSERVATION 2:** *In some limited cases, the script followed by OUC operators caused substantial frustration in 911 callers, who interpreted the adherence to scripted procedures as the operators lacking the necessary sense of urgency.*

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The OUC 911 operators who were taking calls during the incident were in most cases highly professional and extremely compassionate. There was, however, at least one instance in which both the procedures and the call taker's initial skepticism may have exacerbated the caller's frustration and anxiety.

When the shooting begins, the first 911 call is received approximately one minute and thirty seconds after Alexis fires his first shots. The operator's adherence to the scripted procedures and initial confusion over the address causes noticeable frustration in the voices of both the caller and operator. The caller, who witnessed some of the first shots, is able to provide the 911 operator with the address of the building and states that the gunman is killing people.

**SUMMARY:** The 911 call taker is following the proper scripted procedures; however, the caller becomes increasingly exasperated with the operator, who is demonstrably skeptical of the information provided by the caller. Moreover, there is some confusion over the street names and addresses within the Navy Yard complex. The operator interrupts the caller when she is unable to determine the actual location of the address provided by the caller. There is a lengthy exchange regarding the existence of such a street name in the District. From the caller's perspective, the process by which the operator took the information was excruciating and lacked urgency, especially in light of the active and ongoing threat.

**As calls continued to come in, the 911 operators capably handled many difficult calls, including one from a woman trapped in an office with her supervisor, who had been shot and killed by the gunman. The operator kept the traumatized woman on the line as long as possible, reassuring her that police would be arriving soon and providing tips and instructions.**



## RECOMMENDATIONS for OBSERVATION 2:

**[2.1]** *Conduct a review of the scripted call-taking procedures and policies. Determine if there should be prudent best-practice or innovative approaches (“tactical dispatching”) implemented for exigent circumstances, such as an ongoing active shooter. Even if the reported details may be difficult to believe, call takers should exhibit the proper demeanor at all times and should avoid conveying their doubt or skepticism over the line as it may undermine the caller’s confidence in the operator.*

**[2.2]** *Ensure that all street names and addresses of internal or gated complexes are included in the city’s computer aided dispatch (CAD) system. Review and update on a regularly scheduled basis.*

**[2.3]** *Whether the emergency call center is part of a jurisdiction’s law enforcement agency or it is part of a separate agency, it is the police department’s responsibility to engage them in training and work with them to jointly develop applicable policies and procedures. Law enforcement should ensure 911 call takers and dispatchers are included in training exercises along with the emergency medical and police personnel. Exercise and test “tactical dispatching” procedures in an active shooter scenario. Training for active shooter and other large-scale incidents should not end at the tactical level and should include all stakeholders. 911 call takers and emergency dispatchers are heavily involved in the incident from the first notification through the subsequent operational actions and should therefore be included in multi-agency drills and exercises. Police departments should also work with the emergency operators and dispatchers to jointly develop applicable policies and procedures.*

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### **OBSERVATION 3: *Some of the later callers were not fully questioned by city call takers for potentially valuable information.***

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A few seconds after the first 911 call is received, the initial call for service is dispatched as “sounds of gunshots” at the Navy Yard, and an MPD officer near the area begins making his way to the location. While the first caller is speaking with one of the city’s 911 operators, several more calls reporting a shooting at the Navy Yard are received by 911 operators, and city dispatchers quickly requested additional MPD and FEMS units to respond to the Navy Yard. During subsequent calls, however, there were some limited instances in which operators told callers that “*we have the call*” and no follow-up questions were asked or information requested.

There is, however, a difficult balance that must be struck if minimal staffing does not allow the time for full questioning of all callers during an ongoing incident. Many jurisdictions have very few operators and dispatchers on duty at any given time, and in situations with multiple callers, their main goal is to simply obtain the most vital information and inform emergency responders



before moving on to the next caller. In active shooter scenarios, operators should, at a minimum, attempt to ascertain if subsequent callers are aware of the gunman's position or last known location in order to relay that vital information to police officers.

**SUMMARY:** During a large-scale, rapidly-evolving incident, it is important for operators to get as much information as possible from callers. Subsequent callers may have potentially valuable information as to what they may have witnessed or they may be able to provide the last known location of the suspected gunman.

Again, as noted in Recommendation [2.3], whether the emergency call center personnel are part of a jurisdiction's law enforcement agency or they are a separate agency, it is the police department's responsibility to engage them in training and work with them to jointly develop applicable policies and procedures. While the call center personnel had routinely been included in some drills and exercises, they had not been included in active shooter training, which created .The shortcomings of the emergency call center in the case of the Navy Yard incident ultimately stem from the police department's practice of not consistently including call center personnel in collaborative critical incident exercises and training and joint policy development.

#### **RECOMMENDATION for OBSERVATION 3:**

**[3.1]** *Review and update policies and procedures to ensure that 911 operators follow-up with all callers in order to obtain any potentially valuable information. Callers may be able to provide first responders with additional real-time intelligence or details of the incident. Information provided by callers may also be pertinent to the subsequent investigation of the incident.* Ultimately, as mentioned in Recommendation [2.3], call takers and dispatchers must be active participants in active shooter training.

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## **II. POLICE RESPONSE TO THE SCENE**

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**OBSERVATION 4:** *When first notified of the incident, the Navy personnel assigned to the installation's entry points locked the gates and responded to Building 197 pursuant to longstanding emergency lock-down protocols.*

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When the first MPD officers arrived at the Navy Yard, the north gates to the installation were closed and locked, and the Navy personnel manning those gates had responded to Building 197. Some of the initial responding MPD officers had to enter the base through the visitor entrance on the east side of the installation and make their way on foot to Building 197 on the opposite side of the base. After a brief moment during which officers requested equipment to force open the locked gates, Navy personnel arrived to reopen them and allow the officers to enter. By this time, several officers had already begun to make their way to an alternative entrance, the east gates at 11<sup>th</sup> and O Streets.



**SUMMARY:** In subsequent discussions with NDW police officials, it was reported that the lockdown procedures are a longstanding military practice. While locking down the facility during most types of emergency incidents is a sound practice, especially since the installation has its own police, fire, and emergency services personnel, the application of the practice on the day of the shooting temporarily impeded the responding MPD officers since no base personnel remained at the gate.

**RECOMMENDATION for OBSERVATION 4:**

**[4.1]** *NDW is now reviewing their lockdown protocols. Consideration should be given to prudent modifications of protocol that will ensure local emergency responders are able to access the base in the event of a future incident.*

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**OBSERVATION 5:** *Officers were unfamiliar with the layout of the Navy Yard and had a difficult time determining the location of Building 197. Officers encountered individuals who apparently worked at the facility, but did not know where Building 197 was located on the base.*

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An MPD Commander was one of the first police officials to arrive at the Navy Yard. After first attempting to enter through the gate at 6<sup>th</sup> and M Streets, he and several other officers were told that the entrance at 11<sup>th</sup> and O Streets was currently accessible. Upon arriving at 11<sup>th</sup> and O Streets, the Commander and several other officers were forced to leave their vehicles and make their way west through the complex on foot since the entrance gate was not open wide enough for vehicles to pass. As they made their way through the Navy Yard, the officers tried to determine the location of Building 197. They encountered several people who appeared to work on base, but they did not know where the building was located. One of the persons they encountered mistakenly relayed that the incident was occurring in the food court at the center of the complex. The officers quickly continued in that direction.

**SUMMARY:** Unfortunately, the officers were unaware that Building 197 was in fact located just a short distance directly south of their initial arrival point, the entrance at 6<sup>th</sup> and M Streets. In contrast, the entrance at 11<sup>th</sup> and O Streets was located on the extreme opposite side of the Navy Yard from the location of Building 197. As they ran through the complex, the officers eventually located Building 197 based on the large number of people evacuating from that area. When they arrived on scene in front of Building 197, they learned that a team of officers, who had entered the base through the closer entrance at 6<sup>th</sup> and M Streets, had already entered Building 197 to search for the shooter.



**RECOMMENDATIONS for OBSERVATION 5:**

**[5.1]** *MPD commanders and officers should be familiar with the military installations and other gated complexes located within their police districts. District Commanders should obtain at least basic information regarding military installations, to include the commanding officer of the installation, security structure, emergency contact information, emergency protocols, capabilities, and installation maps/building locations, security camera locations, video control room location, and building floor plans. Conversely, the commanders of military installations should be familiar with the local police response protocols and capabilities. Additionally, security and facility managers of large campuses, facilities, or office buildings may want to consider having a “go-bag” at entry points that can be quickly provided to first responders in the event of a major incident like an active shooter. This bag would contain maps of the facility, floor plans, access keys/cards, contact phone numbers, radio communication information, and other pertinent items or information.*

**[5.2]** *Military installations (and other gated facilities or complexes) should ensure that their street names and addresses are included in the computer aided dispatch (CAD) system of the jurisdiction in which they are located. This will assist officers in locating the proper location in an efficient and timely manner. The information should be reviewed and updated on a regularly scheduled basis. This recommendation mirrors Recommendation [2.2]. Additionally, Navy Yard officials may want to explore the possibility of utilizing more conspicuous visual markers for building and streets within their installation.*

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**III. TACTICAL OPERATIONS: SEARCH FOR THE GUNMAN**


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**OBSERVATION 6:** *The officers quickly formed active shooter teams and immediately went to work to search for the gunman and neutralize the threat. In general, all of the responding law enforcement officers worked well together.*

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There were 117 law enforcement officers from various agencies who entered the building during the initial search for Alexis. Many of the search teams consisted of officers or agents from a variety of different agencies. Despite the mixed composition of the teams, the team members quickly went to work searching for the shooter.

The harsh lessons of Columbine, when the initial responding officers awaited the arrival of the SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics) team, have forced law enforcement to adapt its response protocols and enter as quickly as possible in order to search for the shooter. Waiting for the specially-trained SWAT teams or ERT (Emergency Response Team) officers to arrive and lead the tactical response is no longer considered an option during active shooter incidents.

The first officers on scene must form active shooter teams, make entry, and immediately begin searching for the shooter, moving as quickly, but prudently, as possible. Active shooter teams



have been trained to potentially bypass downed victims, when the gunman is still active, in order to find and neutralize the threat as quickly as possible. Those first officers may be all that stands between the gunman and even more victims. (*See related Observation 19 and Recommendation [19.2]*).

Similar to the tragic shootings in Aurora, Colorado, and Newtown, Connecticut, the rapid entry of the first officers on the scene proved critical in stopping the gunman from taking the lives of even more people in the building. Unlike the shooters in those two tragedies, Alexis did not take his own life when the first officers entered, but rather seemed determined to first evade and then engage law enforcement officers. The sheer size and maze-like layout of Building 197 may have allowed Alexis to evade and then ambush officers; however, officers were able to neutralize the threat without the further loss of life.

After reviewing our prior training scenarios, it was noted that law enforcement has conducted extensive active shooter training exercises and scenario-based drills in many types of locations (*such as schools, hotels, hospitals, universities, transportation hubs, government buildings, and more*), but military bases were often excluded from the training even after the 2009 shooting at Fort Hood. Police departments may hold the mistaken belief that the personnel working within gated military installations in the United States, such as the Navy Yard, are heavily armed and capable of defending against threats. The truth, however, is that the majority of the individuals working on military bases are not armed. Out of the 14,000 workers at the Navy Yard, an extremely small number either possessed or had access to a firearm. In terms of an armed presence, the Navy Yard was really no different than other civilian government agencies or private facilities that employ armed security at entrances. (*See related Observation 8 and Recommendation [8.2]*).

**SUMMARY:** During our review meetings with internal units and agency partners, there were two constructive ideas that were raised related to the officers who entered the building.

First, some participants in the discussion shared that the use of ballistic shields may assist in increasing the speed of officer's movements. Under the current training standard, officers are instructed to move as quickly and safely as possible to neutralize the threat. Officers' perception or judgment as to the proper balance of speed and safety in those circumstances will likely differ; however, it is an important consideration for future tactical training. Police departments should consider procuring ballistic shields as they provide officers with additional protection, which may increase their speed of movement. There are, however, practical considerations and, for some departments, financial considerations that may make outfitting every officer in the Department with certain equipment unfeasible. For example, many patrol officers are not in vehicles, but rather patrol on foot, bike, motorcycle or other mode that does not allow for carrying large pieces or large amounts of equipment. The procurement of additional ballistic shields for officers is included as Recommendation [8.5] and a proposed solution for the practical considerations of extra equipment is outlined in Recommendation [8.7] under Observation 8 later in this report.



The second issue was that some personnel from other law enforcement agencies did not appear to take instructions or commands from the MPD forward operating commander, who was coordinating the entry of the active shooter teams. These law enforcement officers responded into the building on their own. It was reported that at least one law enforcement officer indicated that he and his colleagues were federal officers and the Navy Yard was a federal facility; therefore, they did not need “permission” to respond to the incident and enter the scene. Despite the truth of that statement, the officer is ignoring the much greater implications and increased risk created by an uncoordinated response. Furthermore, it was clear that Incident Command was operating and that MPD was the lead agency. This issue can ultimately be addressed through proper training and communication.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS for OBSERVATION 6:**

**[6.1]** *Neighboring law enforcement agencies, both Federal and local, should conduct collaborative, inter-agency training exercises. By training together, officers from different agencies are able to develop trust and mutual understanding prior to responding together to an incident that may require a multi-agency response. The tactical teams for the various regional agencies train together on a regular basis. MPD’s Emergency Response Team (ERT) and the other area agencies’ tactical operators are extremely familiar with one another’s teams, tactics, and response plans. This familiarity should exist on additional levels throughout the agency – including patrol officers, field agents, and deputies – since these will often be the first personnel to arrive on the scene of an active shooter. Active shooter training should include different types of locations, including military bases. This point is also included in Recommendation [8.2]. It is also important to note that even if a closed campus or gated facility has its own plans and protocols to respond to and manage a crisis, it is vital that the facility’s personnel plan for the unexpected and include larger-scale response.*

**[6.2]** *The personnel from different agencies should receive standardized training, which results in a consistent understanding of tactics, communication, and approach. Collaborative training is also an opportunity to highlight the importance of a coordinated response by all involved. Ultimately, all personnel who arrive on scene should report to and be deployed by the incident commander.*

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#### **OBSERVATION 7: *The forward operating commander provided strong leadership at the scene and coordination of the active shooter teams.***

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When the MPD Commander arrived outside the east entrance to Building 197, he immediately went over the air and requested that all communications go through him. He also established contact with members of the first MPD team that had already entered the building. The Commander quickly assembled active shooter teams from the officers and agents who had responded to the scene. As each subsequent team prepared to enter the building, the



Commander would notify the first team over the radio that another team was entering the building and where they would be conducting their search. He also ensured all subsequent team members were wearing the appropriate protective gear and were clearly identifiable as law enforcement officers.

With each new team of officers entering the building, the risk of a “friendly fire” or “blue-on-blue” incident also increased. That particular risk was amplified by the large number of officers and agents in plain-clothes who had responded to the scene. With the rapidly growing number of responding officers, decisive leadership and coordination of the response was vital.

**SUMMARY:** While he was occasionally forced to utilize a non-uniformed or plain-clothes officer or agent to supplement one of the initial teams, the Commander had the presence of mind to later replace that officer with a uniformed member when it was prudent to do so. For instance, the Commander had assigned an officer in plain-clothes (but was wearing a protective vest with police markings) to one of the initial contact teams that made entry. That officer later exited the building as the team was assisting with the evacuation of several workers. The officer was prepared to re-enter the building with the original team; however, the Commander replaced the officer on the team with a uniformed officer. It was likely an extremely difficult decision since no officer wants to be ordered to step back during an ongoing incident, but it was a thoughtful and safety-conscious order given the circumstances.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS for OBSERVATION 7:**

**[7.1]** *Equipping personnel with strong leadership skills and the ability to make difficult decisions in the midst of a crisis requires a long-term effort. The Commander on scene was a veteran police official with over 35 years of service. Strong leadership skills are honed through exposure to a myriad of experiences, comprehensive training, and police leadership opportunities. One consistent theme in the after action reports published by other agencies following similar mass shooting incidents is the recognized need for strong, composed, and decisive leadership during the initial response. A well-coordinated and effective response often hinges on the leadership of the police official managing the on-scene efforts. The leadership of the initial tactical response at the Navy Yard serves as another example of that important element.*

**[7.2]** *Provide position-specific training for Incident Command System (ICS) and Incident Management Team (IMT). While all police personnel should be familiar with ICS and IMT roles and principles, most mid- to upper-level police officials will likely serve in a specific management role during an incident response; especially in larger agencies. For these larger agencies, having all sworn officers, regardless of rank, train tactically may not provide the most benefit since most command officials and managers will not be required to respond in a tactical role. They will, however, be needed to manage personnel and the overall response to an incident. There are many good mid- to upper-level police officials who should be trained to take leadership of a portion of the operational responsibilities, rather than merely waiting for an assignment.*





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**OBSERVATION 8: *The structure, layout, and environment of Building 197 posed a substantial tactical challenge for the responding officers.***

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In his comments following the theater shooting in Aurora, Colorado, the Aurora Chief of Police stated that the responding officers can experience “sensory overload” when they enter the location of the shooting. Between the chaos of the incident, deafening alarms, constant torrent of radio communications, and other challenges, the officers’ senses are bombarded, making it difficult to process all that is taking place around them.

The first officers who entered Building 197 through the main entrance and began assessing the situation, faced a multitude of these challenges. Officers are trained to go towards the sounds of gunshots and neutralize the threat; however, the structure and environment of Building 197, along with the blaring fire alarm, made it nearly impossible to accurately determine from which area the shots were being fired. As officers were making their way through the main lobby facing the cafeteria atrium, past the shattered glass and the area in which the security guard had been killed, Alexis fired shots on the first floor on the other side of the building. The shots echoed through the building, and many officers were unable to accurately assess from which location the shots were originating.



The building, consisting of more than 600,000 square feet of office space, contains thousands of cubicles and offices arranged in a dense, complex layout, described by many as a “maze-like” interior. The building also houses several SCIFs (Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility) for classified operations. Even with the fire alarm activated, officers encountered several doors that remained secured and accessible only with the appropriate access card or key.

The narrow hallways extend the length of the building, running both north-south and east-west. The diamond formation that officers train in and utilize for proceeding down a wide hallway during an active shooter scenario would not be effective in Building 197, and would, in fact, place them in an unsafe position. The pathways between cubicle partitions and offices are, in many areas, only a few feet wide, which barely allowed for one fully-outfitted officer to move through the cubicle areas.



The noise, in particular the blaring fire alarm, also impacted radio communications as several requests for information went unanswered by officers inside the building. When the decision was made to switch the main response and tactical operations to a separate radio channel (“1D” channel to “MPD1”), several officers were unable to hear or note the request to change channels. Additionally, several of the officers stated they were unable to broadcast information due to the high volume of radio traffic on the channel.

It is also important for all officers operating in the hot zone, no matter the agency or unit, to be communicating on the same designated tactical channel. Many of the officers in searching for the shooter in Building 197 were on the designated tactical channel; however, some members of ERT were operating on their own ERT channel and some Park Police officers were communicating on their own Park Police channel. This can create the potential for large gaps in communication, which in turn increases the risk to fellow officers.

**SUMMARY:** The environment created several tactical disadvantages. When Alexis shot and injured the MPD officer, Alexis was hiding in a dense cubicle area with narrow pathways. The officer was making his way down the pathway, clearing cubicles as he passed, and believes that his radio, which was not attached to an earpiece, may have given away his location.

Ultimately, the Navy Yard shooting serves as an important reminder that patrol officers are the “specialized units” when it comes to active shooter incidents. They are the first to arrive, often well before ERT or SWAT arrives on scene. The officers must take training seriously and also be provided with the necessary tools and equipment. While it may be practically or financially impossible to provide certain equipment (*rifles, shotguns, shields, breaching tools, etc.*) to every officer in the Department (*for example, many patrol officers are not in vehicles, but rather patrol on foot, bike, motorcycle or other mode that does not allow for carrying large amounts of equipment*), agencies should explore ways to ensure vital resources are readily available in the event of an incident in which they may be needed. The training must consider the unique and challenging environments and allow officers to adapt their tactics as necessary.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS for OBSERVATION 8:**

**[8.1]** *Review active shooter formations and train officers to adapt their tactics to fit the environment. For instance, the current standard of training instructs active shooter teams to move in a diamond formation. While this formation may work well for scenarios involving large hallways, in schools for example, it may not be effective in narrow hallways and walkways of offices and cubicles. In narrower environments, the diamond formation may allow a hidden gunman to more easily target officers.*

**[8.2]** *Active shooter training should include different types of locations, buildings, and structures in the scenarios, including modern buildings with various levels of security, access card entry, motion sensors, cypher locks, alarms, and narrow hallways and complex layouts. These security features are becoming more common in both private and public sector buildings.*



*As stated earlier in Observation 6, law enforcement has conducted extensive active shooter training exercises and scenario-based drills in many types of locations (such as schools, hotels, hospitals, universities, transportation hubs, government buildings, and more); however, military bases were often excluded from the training even after the 2009 shooting at Fort Hood. Police departments may hold the mistaken belief that the personnel working within gated military installations in the United States, such as the Navy Yard, are heavily armed and capable of defending against threats. The truth, however, is that the majority of the individuals working on military bases are not armed. Out of the many thousands of people at the Navy Yard, an extremely small number either possessed or had access to a firearm. In terms of an armed presence, the Navy Yard was really no different than other civilian government agencies or private facilities that employ armed security at entrances.*

**[8.3]** *Police departments should conduct pre-incident evaluations of buildings and facilities located within their area of responsibility. The evaluations should be stored in an accessible, central location (e.g. operations center).*

**[8.4]** *MPD is in the process of obtaining and distributing earpieces to all of its members. The extensive noise and sensory overload may result in officers not being able to hear all radio communications. The fire alarm in Building 197 complicated communications, especially for officers searching for the shooter. Earpieces will allow officers to better hear communications in loud environments and also keep radio communications from potentially giving away the officers' position to a shooter.*

**[8.5]** *Review and update the policies regarding when officers should switch to an alternate radio channel during a large scale, critical incident. The current policy governing when officers should switch channels is based on the more common scenarios of pursuits or barricades, but it does not take into account the unique dangers of a critical incident like an active shooter. At the Navy Yard, the initial responding officers, the ones who entered the building to search for the shooter, were on the First District (or "1D") radio channel, but they were asked to switch to an alternate channel during the search. In critical incidents, such as an active shooter, the responding officers should remain on the original channel. Due to the nature of the ongoing threat and sensory overload, officers involved in the search for an active shooter will often not hear requests to switch channels. That switch could potentially be life-threatening. The tactical response operations should remain on the original channel, and all other support activities and communications can be moved to an alternate channel. Additionally, all of the officers inside the "hot zone" should be communicating on the same designated tactical channel. There are obvious safety risks if, for example, some of the officers are operating on one channel and other officers, such as ERT, are operating on their own ERT tactical channel.*

**[8.6]** *MPD is procuring shorter barrel rifles and additional ballistic shields. Many years ago, police departments across the country, MPD included, began to acquire semi-automatic rifles, such as the AR-15, in the event of an active shooter or other incident in which responding police officers may find themselves out-gunned by suspects (see the 1997 Bank of America Shoot-out in North Hollywood, California). Many of the MPD officers who responded to the Navy Yard*



were armed with a rifle. The narrow hallways and cubicle environment of Building 197, which are common in many office buildings, posed some challenges for responding officers to maneuver throughout the building with the long rifles. They were, however, able to proceed through the building and continue their search for the gunman. In an effort to provide officers with rifles that better accommodate movement through narrow or confined environments, MPD is procuring shorter-barrel rifles. Training will also include tactics in close-quarter maneuvers and approaches. Additionally, ballistic shields provide officers with additional protection, which may increase the officers' speed of movement toward an ongoing threat (as previously mentioned in the summary of Observation 6).

**[8.7]** MPD is exploring the procurement and deployment of an equipment truck that is manned and ready for rapid deployment to any location in the city in the event of a critical incident. The truck would hold various tools and equipment – such as additional breaching equipment, rifles, shotguns, Level III vests and helmets, compact shields, lights, batteries, etc. MPD has long had this equipment deployed to various officers throughout the department; however, the deployment of an equipment truck, standing by 24-7, is a practical approach that allows the equipment to be ready and available for responding officers. As stated earlier, many patrol officers are not in vehicles, but rather patrol on foot, bike, motorcycle, or other mode that does not allow for carrying large pieces or large amounts of this type of equipment.

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**OBSERVATION 9: Almost every agency and installation/facility has its own emergency plans; however, not all of the necessary stakeholders (area first responders in particular) are familiar with those plans.**

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Building 197 had an emergency action and evacuation plan. At some point during the ongoing incident, the Navy Yard sent out alerts to workers with instructions to shelter in place according to their emergency plan. Knowing when to shelter in place and when to evacuate is a difficult challenge. In the early moments, at least some of the workers attempted to evacuate from the building according to their emergency evacuation plan. One of the “floor captains” donned his visibility vest and grabbed his megaphone before helping colleagues evacuate the building. While encouraging his colleagues to move more swiftly down the stairwell, the floor captain came face-to-face with Alexis. The floor captain attempted to throw the megaphone at Alexis just as the gunman fired his shotgun at him. Both the megaphone and shotgun blast missed, and the floor captain and his colleagues escaped without physical injury.

**SUMMARY:** Most agencies and organizations have emergency response plans for their facilities, and nearly every structure or building has an emergency action or evacuation plan that informs workers what to do in the event of an emergency. While the plan may not be specifically tailored for an active shooter incident, most plans generally provide occupants of the building and first responders with the general framework of an emergency response, building information, shelter-in-place protocols, and evacuation routes and procedures. Many of the facilities and buildings will hold occasional exercises or drills for their employees and



occupants. More and more organizations and companies, throughout both the public and private sectors, are distributing emergency response plans and conducting drills for their employees. Local law enforcement agencies and emergency dispatchers should be familiar with those response plans – or if possible, involved in the crafting of the plan – prior to having to respond to an incident at the facility.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS for OBSERVATION 9:**

**[9.1]** *There are two critical pieces to ensuring that good emergency plans are more than just another book on a shelf. Even the best crafted and most comprehensive plans rely on the awareness and understanding of the workers and the first responders. Facilities should conduct regular awareness training and drills for their employees and building occupants so everyone will know what to do in the event of an emergency. Additionally, the local first responders should be aware of the emergency plan. In this particular instance, MPD and FEMS should be intimately familiar with NDW's emergency plans.*

**[9.2]** *It may also be prudent for the local agencies to train with the first responders on military installations, in this case NDW Police, Fire, and Emergency Medical Services. D.C. Fire and Emergency Medical Services have trained with NDW personnel, but prior inter-agency training between MPD and NDW was minimal. Again, as stated in Recommendation [6.1], even if a facility has its own plans and protocols to respond to and manage a crisis, it is vital that the facility's personnel plan for the unexpected and include larger-scale response. Additionally, the agencies may consider entering into Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) to formalize the roles and relationships. Following the Fort Hood shooting, the U.S. Army Internal Review Team identified a best practice related to the Holston Army Ammunition Plant and its formal memoranda of understanding with local agencies. The Holston facility entered into four Memoranda of Understanding with primary city and county law enforcement, fire, rescue services and the National Nuclear Security Administration. The memoranda are reviewed annually and updated when signatories change. In addition, they have consistent community cooperation with other agencies (i.e., park service, schools, hospitals, the FBI, the United States Army Reserve, and the Tennessee Army National Guard).<sup>3</sup>*

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**OBSERVATION 10:** *Some of the scenario-based training exercises for active shooter and other large-scale incidents should go beyond solely testing the tactical response and should include the other important functions of an emergency response. Additionally, managers and supervisors should be actively involved in exercises and drills and should train to their most likely role in a response.*

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Generally speaking, scenario-based active shooter training is often an exercise in the tactical response, after which police departments evaluate the performance of the officers and then

<sup>3</sup> Secretary of the Army, *Fort Hood, Army Internal Review Team: Final Report*, August 4, 2010.



pack up and go home. Very rarely are other portions of the overall police response exercised, tested, or examined through a comprehensive, scenario-based training exercise.

The SWAT or ERT units from the area law enforcement agencies operate and exercise together on a regular basis. The members of the different tactical units know one another well and have built the trust necessary to work together on high-stress, high-danger incidents. The fact is, the front-line patrol officers, field agents, and armed security guards will often be the first responders to arrive on the scene of an incident such as the shooting at the Navy Yard. Furthermore, the dispatchers, 911 call takers, and other non-tactical personnel will be heavily involved throughout the duration of the emergency response. They, like the tactical officers, must be trained and adequately prepared for their roles.

**SUMMARY:** What we learned is that all relevant units and stakeholders should be included in training; even if it is just for the purposes of awareness and understanding of what to do in the event of an actual incident. If a particular agency, unit, or personnel would be involved in the response to an actual incident, it is imperative that those agencies and its personnel are included in the training or exercise. All involved stakeholders, including dispatchers, security guards, and even the employees or occupants of the building should be involved, at a minimum, in some sort of awareness training.

Furthermore, managers and supervisors should be active participants in the training exercises and drills. Given their rank and typical role in operations, supervisors should train to their most likely role in the response. *(See related Observation 7 and Recommendation [7.2]).*

**RECOMMENDATION for OBSERVATION 10:**

**[10.1]** *Consider extending the training and exercises that are conducted by emergency responders beyond merely testing and assessing the tactical response. Training should also include portions on what must occur during or following a large-scale, multi-agency tactical response, such as witness management, investigations, crime scene management, medical response, coroner/medical examiner, victim services, family reunification, and the other major components. Managers should train to their most likely role in the response (See related Observation 7 and Recommendation [7.2]). Having a written plan for the aforementioned portions of a response is of course vital, but full understanding and adequate preparation requires hands-on training and simulated exercises.*

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#### IV. OPERATIONAL COORDINATION:

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**OBSERVATION 11:** *During the initial response, while the crisis was evolving and the gunman was still clearly active, full Incident Command was not clearly established; however, the vital ICS objectives were in place and Unified Command was soon formed. Unfortunately, not all agencies and critical functions had representation in Unified Command.*

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A large-scale response during an ongoing and rapidly-evolving incident will often result in some confusion during the initial establishment of Incident Command. For instance, the officials who responded to the recent mass shootings in Newtown and Aurora all stated that establishing a clear and strong Incident Command was a significant challenge in the early stage of the response. At the Navy Yard, during the first hour while the crisis was still evolving and the gunman was still moving through the building, the primary objective was to neutralize the threat and save lives. Once the threat was neutralized and the initial crisis was over, the overall priorities shifted to the subsequent investigation, witness processing, clearing the building, crime scene management, reunification, etc.

Many of the first responders arrived at the 6<sup>th</sup> and M Street gate and set up an initial command post just inside the gate. This initial post would remain an operations and staging area for the tactical, medical, and investigative personnel and resources for the rest of the day.

Early in the response, the decision was made to set up Incident Command, and later Unified Command, just outside the 11<sup>th</sup> and O Street gate to the Navy Yard due to the other area's (6<sup>th</sup> and M Street) proximity to Building 197 and the substantial emergency vehicle traffic. The location of the command post was first voiced over the radio at 8:30 a.m.; however, several agencies were not adequately represented in the Unified Command Post during the duration of the incident. Additionally, the public information function (Joint Information Center), the Navy, and some other agencies involved in the law enforcement response did not have regular and consistent representation in Unified Command.

**SUMMARY:** Although the Incident Command was established, there are a number of ways it could have been more clearly developed. While most of the critical roles were established early in the response, there were various branches and functions that were not clearly or effectively established and not all responding agencies reported to Unified Command.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS for OBSERVATION 11:

**[11.1]** *Regularly voice the location of Unified Command over the radio and make the location as visible as possible. Utilize a beacon or other visible marker to conspicuously indicate the location and distribute vests to identify personnel and their particular roles.*



**[11.2]** *Additionally, all of the responding agencies should have policies and training that direct the first responding member of an agency to check in with the IC to become the IC liaison so critical directions and information can be effectively shared with that agency.*

**[11.3]** *As mentioned in Recommendation 7.2, provide position-specific training for Incident Command System (ICS) and Incident Management Team (IMT). While all personnel should be familiar with ICS and IMT roles and principles, most mid- to upper-level police officials will likely serve in a specific role during a large response and a full understanding of that particular role and its responsibilities is imperative.*

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**OBSERVATION 12: *The standard ICS Incident Action Plan may not be appropriate for an initial tactical response to an active shooter situation.***

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An initial operational Incident Action Plan (IAP) was formulated by the Incident Commander following the initial briefing with units on the scene.

On the scene of most any incident, there will initially be five main objectives: (1.) mitigate or neutralize the threat; (2.) life safety; (3.) scene containment; (4.) staging; and (5.) traffic management. As we have learned from previous large-scale incidents, the response must cover those five areas. It is imperative that responders contain the threat and ensure that they do not lose the emergency route, as those two prospective problems will lead to even greater safety concerns and the potential for further injury or loss of life.

**SUMMARY:** In follow-up discussions with the other responding agencies, many agencies noted that the IAP template may be unsuitable for law enforcement conducting a rapid tactical response. A checklist or other format similar to the military's tactical format was recommended.

**RECOMMENDATION for OBSERVATION 12:**

**[12.1]** *The IAP and planning process is important and should be completed properly, but the focus on completing all portions of the IAP during an initial tactical response may be unnecessarily burdensome or even counter-productive. A tactical checklist that includes all of the immediate goals and objectives may be a more appropriate format for an immediate tactical response in active shooter scenarios.*

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**OBSERVATION 13:** *There were numerous command buses and many command centers operating during the incident, which led to some confusion and inadequate or lack of representation.*

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In Washington, D.C., nearly every law enforcement and emergency management agency has a command bus, outfitted with the latest technology, which they utilize at various incidents and events. While the command bus can be a valuable resource, there are scenarios in which the number of command buses on a scene may cause significant challenges. Following the active shooter incident at the Sikh Temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, the city's police chief stated that the large number of command buses that arrived on scene congested the area around the scene and hampered the management and control of operations. The same challenge occurred at the Navy Yard.

**SUMMARY:** In addition to MPD's and the FBI's command buses, several other agencies brought their command buses to the scene. This not only further congested the already crowded area in and around the scene, but it also caused significant challenges in ensuring all agencies had representation in Unified Command. The more command buses on scene, the more agency officials are likely to remain within the familiar confines of their agency's command bus; thereby diluting representation throughout the command structure.

The same issues and challenges apply to command centers. There were multiple emergency operations centers that were activated during the Navy Yard shooting. MPD's Joint Operations Command Center (JOCC) was responsible for providing vital support to and coordinating communications with Unified Command. In order to do this properly, representatives from the various agencies must be present in the JOCC. The more operations centers that are activated, the more difficult it becomes to provide adequate representation and coordinate communications and support. For instance the Navy Yard had its two operations centers on the base. While MPD sent a representative to their Regional Operations Center, the Navy did not provide a representative to Unified Command or the JOCC, which created significant challenges for coordinating and communicating with Navy officials.

**RECOMMENDATION for OBSERVATION 13:**

**[13.1]** *To avoid confusion and congestion, it may be prudent to designate a primary command bus and operations center for Unified Command. This will ensure there is adequate representation from all agencies for the duration of the incident. If other agencies wish to transport their command bus to the scene of an incident or activate their operations center, they should ensure that neither impacts the functions of the primary designated bus and center.*

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## V. SCENE MANAGEMENT AND SECURITY

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### **OBSERVATION 14: *Incident Command established site security and began preparations for citywide security in the event of a secondary incident.***

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Incident Command directed several actions to ensure site security and force protection in and around the Navy Yard. Officials directed the MPD Explosive Ordinance Disposal (EOD) officers to regularly sweep the command post beginning at 8:50 a.m. MPD officials established force protection for the command post with one squad of ERT trainees. MPD Harbor Branch maintained the perimeter on the water bordering the southern side of the Navy Yard.

MPD officials assigned additional officers to perimeter security upon the report of a second possible shooter. MPD deployed its K9 bloodhound, and he and his handler were assigned to the perimeter. Fairfax County Police Department's K9 Unit also deployed hounds in the event a second shooter had fled the area on foot. Meanwhile, in the neighborhoods near the Navy Yard, MPD School Resource Officers notified all schools in the area to go on lockdown with 100 percent identification check. Officers also notified businesses in the immediate area.

Officials released a shelter-in-place order and information on the possible additional suspects through press releases, alert systems, and the MPD Twitter page. With the possibility of a second shooter, officers also responded to the hospital to provide protection to victims until the additional suspects were ruled out and the threat was over (*see related Observation 29*).

In the event of an additional incident, Prince George's County Police Department's SWAT Team offered their assistance. They were placed in stand-by mode and staged at the D.C. and Prince George's County border in the event that additional calls in the city required their deployment. When additional sounds of gunshots were reported at Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling, the PGCPD SWAT Team began to respond to the location; however, the call was cleared prior to their arrival and they were placed back on stand-by.

**SUMMARY:** On-scene and site security was also impacted by the sheer volume of law enforcement personnel who arrived on scene. There were some personnel who did not have their credentials or badge conspicuously displayed. On at least one occasion, an MPD official tasked with outer perimeter security challenged an individual who was in plain-clothes, wearing a tactical vest that was not well-marked, and carrying a camera. When confronted, he stated that he was a photographer for one of the Federal law enforcement agencies and subsequently showed his identification.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS for OBSERVATION 14:**

**[14.1]** *Ensure comprehensive actions are taken to establish site security.*

**[14.2]** *Have personnel prepared and standing by to respond rapidly to a secondary or additional incident.*



**[14.3]** *Ensure all personnel understand the importance of proper site security. All personnel should be wearing the appropriate identification and it should be conspicuously displayed.*

**Photo:** *Officers and agents from multiple law enforcement agencies respond to the scene. Many are in plain clothes.*



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**OBSERVATION 15:** *Officers who self-dispatched to the incident may have caused congestion in and around the scene and made the already difficult task of personnel tracking even more challenging.*

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As details of the shooting spread through the area, hundreds of law enforcement officers from across the National Capital Region (NCR) descended on the Washington Navy Yard. A rapid response is the most critical objective during an active shooter incident; however, it is also vital that the response be as orderly and coordinated as possible.

**SUMMARY:** Officers who self-dispatch to a scene, especially a large, rapidly evolving incident, create concerns of officer safety, cause additional congestion in and around the scene, and may neglect the need to maintain critical citywide operation and weaken the department's ability to respond to a potential secondary or additional incident.

There were hundreds of officers who arrived on scene with a desire to enter the building and assist with tactical operations. Fortunately, the Forward Commander on the inner perimeter was able to coordinate the formation of the contact teams entering the building. This coordination mitigated the officer safety issues raised by self-dispatching officers involved in the inner, tactical response; however, self-dispatching still caused issues of congestion around the outer perimeter and near the command and staging areas.

MPD has clear policies directing members to not self-dispatch to the scene. The issue on the day of the Navy Yard shooting was senior managers and command officials did not take the initiative to enforce the policy and send self-dispatching officers back to their regular assignments (*when it was clear there was more than sufficient personnel already on scene*). This is a challenging issue that is rarely, if ever, trained or exercised, but should certainly be included.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS for OBSERVATION 15:**

**[15.1]** *If not already in existence, agencies should establish clear policies regarding self-dispatching. MPD has reiterated its policy regarding members not self-dispatching. Officers should instead follow established protocols (Example: report to the appropriate patrol district or nearest police facility) and if required to report to the scene of the incident, do so at a designated location or staging area. Training should test the officers' understanding of self-dispatching policies.*

**[15.2]** *Training and exercises should also test the supervisors' and managers' ability to manage an incident in which there are many self-dispatching officers.*

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**OBSERVATION 16:** *There was no practical or efficient method or process for actively tracking the officers who entered the building. This issue subsequently impacted our ability to properly and efficiently demobilize.*

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Tracking the specific officers responding to a large-scale incident is inherently difficult. Without a solid written plan, which includes demobilization; a plan that is trained on and exercised through to the end, the determination of which officers entered the hot zone during a large-scale incident will be extremely challenging.

Through officer interviews and information provided by partner agencies, investigators were able to determine that 117 law enforcement officers entered the building during the initial search for the gunman. Eight officers from five different agencies had discharged their weapons during several confrontations with Alexis. With the number of shots fired, had there been an incident of blue-on-blue fire or had a civilian been hit by an officer's round, it would be difficult to initially determine responsibility and the officers who fired their weapons would not know if they were responsible.

**SUMMARY:** The methodology used to make these determinations is inherently inefficient and subject to errors and omissions since it relies heavily on the officers' recollection after the incident is over. It was suggested that officers who enter the building voice their name or ID number over the radio; however, this is unable to account for officers who may not hear the request or officers on a different channel. Any method that requires an affirmative act by the



officer will likely be insufficient. It is important to be able to track the officers who entered the hot zone for safety reasons, investigative purposes, accountability, and proper demobilization (See related Observation 33).

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS for OBSERVATION 16:**

**[16.1]** *Explore technology to track officers when entering a hot zone in order to account for those who entered the area, especially in the event of a secondary incident.*

**[16.2]** *As an alternative, have an official quickly record the ID number of officers as teams are formed and deployed into the hot zone.*

**[16.3]** *For a possible use-of-force investigation, officials must track and debrief officers and inspect weapons prior to the officer departing the scene (See Observation 33, Demobilization) to determine which officers may have used force or deadly force.*

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#### **OBSERVATION 17: *Police investigated the possibility of multiple shooters or additional threats and exhaustively investigated all potential suspects.***

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During the initial response to the theater shooting in Aurora, Colorado, and the school shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, police officers faced the distinct possibility that there was more than one shooter. Conflicting descriptions of the suspect, initial statements from witnesses, and the use of multiple weapons lead officers to presume there may be multiple perpetrators. It is undoubtedly a prudent, safe, and proper assumption learned from past tragedies. The school shootings in Jonesboro, Arkansas, and Littleton, Colorado, were both carried out by more than one shooter, as was the recent Boston bombings. Ignoring even the slightest possibility of multiple suspects or additional threats may lead to a myopic investigative approach with potentially disastrous consequences. The commission that reviewed the Virginia Tech shooting sharply criticized law enforcement's apparent singular assumption that the probable suspect in the first shootings in the dormitory was likely the female victim's boyfriend, without further considering – and preparing for – the possibility that an unknown shooter and ongoing threat existed on campus.

Within the first few minutes of the incident in Building 197 at the Navy Yard, the 911 operator had received a very good description of the shooter from the first 911 caller who had witnessed some of the first shots fired by Alexis. The dispatcher aired the description (*black male, dark blue clothing, 6 feet tall, slender build, on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor*) over the First District police radio channel. In the end, that initial description fit the lone suspect who was shot and killed by law enforcement officers over an hour later.



In the chaos of the unfolding events, witnesses and callers provided conflicting descriptions of suspects and some details from limited video surfaced that suggested the possibility of additional suspects. The lack of access to all of the CCTV cameras certainly contributed to the problems and challenges of investigating the possibility of additional suspects. As a result of the information from the witnesses and limited video, the shelter-in-place and lock-down recommendations remained in place for both the immediate and surrounding areas, which included the Washington Nationals Ballpark, for several more hours. The game that was scheduled for later in the evening would eventually be postponed until the following day.

During one of the early press conferences, officials announced two additional descriptions for persons of interest:

*White male, carrying a handgun, wearing a Navy-style khaki uniform and wearing a beret-style hat.*

*Black male, approximately 50 years old, carrying a long gun, and wearing a drab olive military style uniform.*

The first description for the white male person of interest arose when investigators viewed security camera recording that looked as though it captured a white male in a khaki uniform, carrying what looked like a handgun, and running from an area in which a victim was shot and killed. When the description was announced over the radio, an MPD Commander looked at many of the workers who had been evacuated from Building 197 and moved to an adjacent area. His first thought was that there were likely hundreds of people in the area who fit that description. After investigators viewed additional video footage from other cameras that provided full context and eventually speaking with the person of interest, the look-out was canceled by police.

The second description for the older black male in a military style uniform came from a witness during the early moments of the incident. Investigators interviewed several witnesses who had just been evacuated from Building 197. One of the witnesses gave investigators an extremely detailed description of the possible shooter. The witness stated that he saw a black male, approximately 50 years old, carrying a long gun and wearing a drab olive, military style uniform. He further stated that he saw the man yelling and shooting from the hip. The description was forwarded to investigative officials and Unified Command. Investigators would work throughout the day to exhaust all possible leads and rule out the possibility of an additional suspect.

**SUMMARY:** It is not known why the witness provided such a detailed, yet fictional accounting. It was clear from the subsequent follow-up that no such suspect existed, and Alexis was the sole person responsible for the shooting. The MPD Police Chief would later announce at the day's final press conference that all leads had been exhausted and that police were confident that the shooter had acted alone. While it took many hours to exhaust all of the investigative leads, the cloud of an ongoing threat to the community had lifted.



**RECOMMENDATION for OBSERVATION 17:**

**[17.1]** *Police should be prepared to investigate multiple leads and should consider the possibility of multiple suspects. Focusing on one lead or suspect and ignoring the possibility of multiple shooters may distract police from pursuing a threat that continues to expose the community and first responders to further danger.*

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**OBSERVATION 18:** *While the sheer number of responding vehicles and traffic around the scene initially caused congestion, officers were able to establish order and ensure emergency vehicles had access to the scene. The management of citywide traffic proved challenging given the size of the scene and the number of impacted streets, which in turn caused area traffic, especially during rush hour, to be negatively impacted.*

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With numerous personnel from multiple agencies responding to the Navy Yard, many emergency vehicles surrounded the area, covering much of M Street from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> Streets and 11<sup>th</sup> Street from M to O Streets. Although a few responding vehicles were forced to drive over the median on M Street in order to move to other locations, order was quickly established and at least one lane on M Street and two lanes on 11<sup>th</sup> Street remained dedicated for ingress/egress in order to maintain access to the scene. While the exact count is unknown, there were hundreds of police and emergency vehicles in and around the scene.

**SUMMARY:** There were three challenges related to vehicles and traffic: managing emergency vehicles, managing the citywide traffic, and ensuring members of the community were kept informed of street closures.

The outer traffic perimeter was established, which extended across several intersections on the streets surrounding the Navy Yard and included the 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge. One of the main considerations was to maintain an emergency route on M Street. Traffic units were eventually moved to a separate radio zone for coordination. An MPD official coordinated the necessary traffic closures with D.C. Department of Transportation, who assisted by deploying several of their Traffic Control Officers. Additionally, regular updates as to the impacted streets and roadways were provided to the media and community.

**RECOMMENDATIONS for OBSERVATION 18:**

**[18.1]** *Ensure an official is tasked with maintaining a route for emergency vehicles to quickly access and depart the scene.*



**[18.2]** Remain mindful of the impact the incident may have on citywide traffic. Street and road closures are inevitable; however, ensure an official is tasked with monitoring citywide traffic and mitigating the potential negative impacts.

**[18.3]** Provide the public and media with regular updates, such as the example that follows, as to the street and road closures resulting from the emergency response.

**Graphic:** Road closures on the afternoon and evening of the incident.  
This map was one of many updates distributed to media outlets.



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## VI. MEDICAL SERVICES, REUNIFICATION, AND VICTIM SERVICES

**OBSERVATION 19:** *First responders provided medical attention to each injured victim and evacuated non-emergency personnel when it was safe to do so.*

While the officers' initial objective was to search for the shooter and neutralize the threat, many of the responding teams of officers encountered workers in the building who were either in the process of evacuating the building or sheltering in place. Several officers had to guide workers out of the building, as the workers would either request assistance or follow officers since they believed they were safer in the presence of law enforcement. Some of the officers





would escort the workers out of the building while their respective teams continued searching for the shooter.

During the height of the incident, there were at least three injured individuals with gunshot wounds who would be evacuated from the building. All three received medical attention once they were evacuated from the building, and all three would survive.

1. One of the first injured persons taken from the building was a young woman who had been struck by at least one shotgun pellet in her head and hand. She was evacuated out of the building and triaged by medical personnel near the parking garage before being taken to the hospital for treatment. Neither the wound to her head or hand were life-threatening.
2. Another female worker who had encountered Alexis in the stairwell as she was attempting to evacuate the building was struck by a shotgun blast in her shoulder. Since they had encountered Alexis while travelling down the stairwell, the injured victim and her colleagues fled to the roof of the building. After dropping a note off the roof to officers on the ground, the U.S. Park Police Air Unit, Eagle 1, eventually evacuated the injured woman and her colleagues off the roof of the building. She was then taken to the hospital for treatment and would survive.
3. An MPD officer was shot in both legs by Alexis while searching for the shooter. He was evacuated from the third floor of the building by two NCIS agents and another MPD officer. Upon exiting the building, the injured officer was placed in a police cruiser and driven by an MPD officer to an awaiting ambulance. He was then transferred to the ambulance, which transported him to the hospital for treatment.

In addition to the gunshot wounds suffered by these individuals, there were a handful of additional stress-related or non-life threatening injuries to those present in the building, such as cuts or abrasions caused by broken glass. The bodies of two of the victims would be evacuated by colleagues or other base personnel from the building – one was carried to a parking garage adjacent to Building 197 and the other was carried out of the Navy Yard to New Jersey Avenue – however, both victims had suffered fatal wounds.

**SUMMARY:** The safety of the workers and fellow officers was at the forefront of all responding officers. When prudent and possible, officers helped individuals evacuate from the building. After Alexis was killed, officers conducted a coordinated search of the building, methodically clearing each room and office, and evacuating workers who had been sheltering in place. It would take until well into the evening before the last surviving workers were escorted out of the building.

The one issue that was raised during the subsequent review of the incident was the transport of the injured MPD officer from the building to the ambulance at the outer perimeter. For safety reasons, the governing policies of the D.C. Fire and Emergency Medical Services indicate that



ambulance personnel are not allowed to enter the inner perimeter or “hot zone” during an active incident.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS for OBSERVATION 19:**

**[19.1]** *As a result of this incident, MPD and D.C. Fire and Emergency Medical Services (FEMS) are exploring collaborative training to ensure there is no delay in the provision of medical services, even in the instances of an active incident. Additionally, the U.S. Park Police utilizes a Federal combat or tactical medic program, through the Department of Health and Human Services, in which two of their members are highly-trained medical personnel, cross-trained in tactical law enforcement response. These tactical medics are trained to provide immediate medical treatment on-site prior to the arrival of EMS personnel. Both of these tactical medics had responded to Building 197 and were assisting rescue efforts. There was also a Navy surgeon who happened to be at the Navy Yard that day. All three had set up to conduct triage on the first floor.*

**[19.2]** *MPD is procuring and will be distributing tactical emergency casualty care (TECC) kits to its officers that include such items as tourniquets, trauma gauze, and quick-clot, and training officers in TECC methods. This would allow officers to provide medical attention in those first critical moments to those who may have suffered serious, life-threatening injuries. While this approach may be interpreted as conflicting with the accepted active shooter training principles that instruct officers to bypass injured victims to find and neutralize the threat, a sensible balance can be struck. If life-saving measures can be provided to a seriously-injured victim or officer without delaying the search for the suspect or shooter, it would be reasonable to do so. The objectives – neutralizing the threat and saving injured victims – may not always be mutually exclusive and unnecessarily sacrificing one to achieve the other is not necessary.*

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**OBSERVATION 20:** *The family reunification function was initially handled by MPD; however, many agencies lacked awareness and understanding of the city’s existing family reunification plan prior to the shooting, which may have contributed to inadequate coordination and unclear roles and responsibilities.*

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At approximately 9:38 a.m., Unified Command requested that officials begin establishing a family reunification center. There were thousands of employees at the Navy Yard that day and as they were evacuated and cleared from the scene, there needed to be a process to allow them to return home. Many of them did not have their wallets, keys, cell phones, and other personal items, and most were not allowed to retrieve their vehicles.

It is vital that the family reunification operations, along with the public information function (Joint Information Center), be established during the early stages of the incident. These two functions ensure that information and instructions are provided to the public and the families



of the many people who may have been present at the incident. This is an important lesson learned during previous incidents, when family members have responded to the scene, causing further scene congestion and safety concerns. By establishing the public information and family reunification functions early on, families can be provided with instructions on where they may go to be reunited with loved ones.

MPD officials began the initial coordination to identify an appropriate location, get the information out to all those involved, and procure transportation options. The family reunification center was established at the Washington Nationals (Major League Baseball team) parking garage, which is located a short distance from the Navy Yard grounds. MPD Victim Services personnel were the first to arrive at the location and quickly began setting up the necessary items. Additional personnel from the FBI, D.C. Office of Victim Services (OVS), and several crisis counseling service providers were also involved in the operations of the family reunification center. The American Red Cross and the Washington Nationals generously provided food and water to the Navy Yard employees when they arrived at the reunification center. Metro Transit provided buses to move the numerous workers from the Navy Yard to the reunification center.

**SUMMARY:** While MPD personnel initially handled the family reunification process, the appropriate agency or organization never assumed leadership to ensure the process was strongly managed throughout the rest of the day. According to MPD personnel, the FBI, MPD, and the Office of Victim Services worked together throughout the day and most activities went smoothly. MPD Victim Services staff provided support throughout the entire operational period of the family reunification center.

During a subsequent review meeting held by several city agencies, participants indicated that there is a formal District of Columbia Family Assistance Center (FAC) Plan. It establishes the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders and provides background information and a checklist of actions to be taken. The plan indicates that in the event of a public health emergency or mass casualty event, the multi-agency actions will be coordinated by the D.C. Department of Human Services. It goes on, however, to vaguely indicate that there may be incidents such as an airline accident or act of terrorism in which the coordinating agency may then be a Federal agency. The American Red Cross may also be the coordinating agency. The ambiguity as to the responsible lead agency is a critical flaw in the plan. Furthermore, the involved agencies were not familiar with the city's formal plan, and to our knowledge, MPD was not involved in the original drafting of the plan.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS for OBSERVATION 20:**

**[20.1]** *Begin preparing for and implementing the family reunification operations early on during the incident in order to provide family members with information and instructions.*

**[20.2]** *The Family Assistance Center Plan should be reviewed, updated, and clarified. All pertinent agencies should be involved in the review. Modifications should be made that clearly*



*denote the agency responsible for initiating and leading the family assistance and reunification efforts.*

**[20.3]** *Conduct training and exercises to ensure all stakeholders fully understand their role and responsibilities with regard to the family reunification efforts.*

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**OBSERVATION 21:** *The death notifications to the victims' next of kin should be led and handled by the local agency that has the experience in conducting these types of notifications, in this case the MPD Homicide Unit, with support from other agencies.*

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Some of the victims' family members arrived at the family reunification center that had been established at the Washington Nationals Ballpark parking garage seeking information on the status of their family member.

There were reported instances of family members receiving incorrect information as to the condition of their family member. There was also at least one instance in which a deceased victim's family was first informed by colleagues who had worked with the victim and witnessed the victim's death. Given the unique circumstances, these issues may unfortunately be unavoidable; however, they certainly highlight the care, coordination, and swift, but accurate work that must be conducted in order to properly and compassionately notify family members.

The identification of victims is extremely challenging under these types of circumstances; however, law enforcement should consider making it a priority in order to quickly notify the victims' next-of-kin.

**SUMMARY:** Not all death notifications were conducted in standard MPD fashion due to confusion over who would lead the notifications. After confirming the identity of the victims and determining the victims' family members, the FBI, MPD, and OVS began notifying the family members. The different teams of FBI agents and MPD detectives were not always clear on who would assume the lead in notifying the particular family to whom they were assigned. The transfer of command from MPD to the FBI and the lack of full understanding over the subsequent roles and responsibilities was the source of much of the confusion.

**RECOMMENDATIONS for OBSERVATION 21:**

**[21.1]** *In the District of Columbia, the MPD Homicide Unit conducts all family or next-of-kin death notifications. It is an extremely difficult and emotional task that requires understanding, compassion, candor, and strength. In future incidents, it is prudent that the death notifications be led and conducted by the local agency that is familiar with and experienced in carrying out such a difficult task.*



**[21.2]** *The identification of victims is extremely challenging under these types of circumstances; however, law enforcement should attempt to identify victims as quickly as possible.*

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## VII. OPERATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS

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**OBSERVATION 22:** *There were some issues with radio communications. Some agencies' radios would not work inside the building due to the unique construction of the building; some officers could not access the main channel utilized for the tactical response; and the substantial amount of radio traffic interfered with some officers' ability to communicate vital information.*

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All of MPD's radios reportedly worked on scene and within the building; however, some other agencies' law enforcement officers experienced issues with their radio communications at various times. For instance, NDW Police personnel reportedly lost radio communications when they entered Building 197. There were a handful of other officers who reported they lost radio communications at least temporarily while traveling through certain areas of the building. Not all radios worked within Building 197 due to the steel and cement structure of the building. Some buildings, especially those dealing in classified operations, are constructed to purposefully restrict communications.

It should be noted that MPD's radio channels are encrypted. In order to access those channels, other agencies' radios must be programmed with the proper access codes. The majority of partner agencies have at least a portion of their officers' radios programmed to allow them to communicate on MPD's encrypted channels. While we identified some additional officers from other agencies who should have access to MPD's channels, one major issue with radio transmissions that day actually stemmed from too many individuals having access to the channel.

With the prevalence of applications that allow members of the public, press, and potentially even suspects to monitor radio transmissions, the use of the encrypted channels ensured that sensitive information, such as police movements and tactics in the building, was not widely disseminated. The safety and security benefits of encrypted channels are clear. This was highlighted by the media's active monitoring of other agencies' unencrypted emergency channels during the shooting and their subsequent premature and inaccurate reporting.

**SUMMARY:** At the height of the police response that day, over 1,000 radios were tuned to the channel used by responding officers. We realize that a large number of those individuals were merely listening to the transmissions; however, continual radio transmissions by personnel stationed outside of the building created substantial congestion. On several occasions, personnel who had entered the building and the forward commander coordinating the contact teams were unable to transmit vital information to one another due to the heavy radio traffic.



**RECOMMENDATIONS for OBSERVATION 22:**

**[22.1]** *When responding to a major incident, officers may find that radio communications and cell phone service are not available. First responders should be prepared for the possibility of having to relay information through non-traditional modes of communication, such as utilizing runners or hand signals.*

**[22.2]** *MPD is exploring the establishment of a secure multi-jurisdictional tactical channel and separate support channel and developing the appropriate policies and ensure officers know how and when to utilize those channels. These policies must be consistent with Recommendation 8.5, which outlines the updates to the policies related to switching channels during large, tactical response operations, such as an active shooter. Again, the initial tactical operations should remain on the original radio channel. The communications for all other activities and functions should be moved to another channel. Due to the nature of the incident and sensory overload, officers involved in the search for an active shooter will often not hear requests to switch channels. That switch could potentially be life-threatening. Additionally, during recent training, MPD has emphasized officers' radio discipline in order to reduce unnecessary transmissions and ensure the channel is available for the most critical communications.*

**[22.3]** *Agencies should consider investing in encrypted radio channels. There are clear safety benefits of utilizing encrypted channels during a tactical response to an ongoing threat. MPD is spearheading an initiative that is evaluating shared encrypted tactical channels that would be available to many of the responding agencies.*

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**OBSERVATION 23: *Responding law enforcement did not get timely access to the CCTV cameras in and around Building 197, and the initial limited access to some video contributed to difficulties during the subsequent investigation.***

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Early on during the emergency response, Unified Command requested access to the CCTV cameras both in and around Building 197. Security video serves as an invaluable resource to first responders. Security camera footage would allow responders to review and confirm various details and events as they unfolded and the investigation progressed. The footage may have also allowed police to quickly identify the shooter, ascertain his movements, and help in determining whether others may have been involved.

Officials later learned that the locations to monitor and access video from the external and internal cameras were separate and distinct. Additionally, there were different entities responsible for the cameras depending on the camera location, and the units reportedly did not coordinate with one another.



The external cameras could be viewed and controlled in the Regional Operations Center (ROC) at the Navy Yard. Personnel in the ROC; however, were not able to access the cameras inside Building 197. The internal cameras were controlled by NAVSEA and were only accessible from a video control room inside Building 197 on the northeast corner of the first floor. In an unfortunate development, the contract security guard assigned to the control room locked the door to the room and did not contact law enforcement. Additionally, law enforcement officials familiar with the location of the control room did not send an officer to the room to monitor the internal security cameras during the initial police response.

Investigators were able to eventually view some critical external video footage; however, it was viewed without the full context and additional perspective of the other internal cameras. As a result, the video, along with witness statements, left authorities with the impression that an additional shooter could possibly be involved. As a precautionary measure, police informed the media and public of the potential ongoing threat and released a description of the person of interest, which later proved to be unfounded.

**SUMMARY:** The external cameras were accessible from a control room located in a separate building on the Navy Yard. There was a significant delay in obtaining access to review even the external video footage, due in large part to the lack of Navy representation in Unified Command. While NCIS officials were present, Unified Command did not have a representative with intimate knowledge of the Navy Yard facilities.

As stated in Recommendation [5.1], local police should be familiar with the command structure of the military facilities within their jurisdictions. As was the case at the Navy Yard, the base commander, who possesses the most knowledge about the facility, is not always the highest ranking military officer on-site.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS for OBSERVATION 23:**

**[23.1]** *Incident Command should ensure that a representative with knowledge of the incident location – including buildings, security measures, and protocols – is identified early on and made available to provide background information. Police and other emergency response agencies should develop pre-incident relationships with the security directors and facility directors of large complexes, both public and private, that are located within their jurisdiction.*

**[23.2]** *The various units or entities responsible for CCTV cameras and security personnel at given locations (military installations, government facilities, transportation hubs, etc.) should regularly coordinate and train with one another to ensure all personnel are aware of camera locations, access protocols, and information sharing procedures in the event of an incident. This is especially important for locations that may have multiple or different units responsible for various portions or sections of a large facility or installation.*

**[23.3]** *As noted in prior recommendations, training must include the most likely involved personnel. It is not enough to train solely with other law enforcement agencies. Training and*



*exercises should also include both the armed and unarmed security guards, who should be familiar with the emergency plans of the facilities to which they are assigned. It is critical that they be included in training and exercises to ensure they fully understand their roles and responsibilities in the event of an emergency.*

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**OBSERVATION 24:** *Unified Command requested copies of floor plans for the building, but did not receive them. While some responding agencies received or had access to floor plans, others did not.*

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Given the large size of the building, law enforcement requested floor plans in order to coordinate the response and conduct an informed and orderly clearing of the building. The fire and emergency medical services personnel, located at the initial operations area near 6<sup>th</sup> and M Street, reportedly received floor plans relatively early in the incident. The tactical officers, with the assistance of a facilities manager, were able to retrieve a set of floor plans just as they were preparing to conduct a coordinated clearing of the building after the suspect had been neutralized. DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA) reportedly had floor plans up and viewable in their command bus.

**SUMMARY:** None of this information was relayed to Unified Command, and none of the entities knew the others were seeking access to the floor plans. Each of these entities acted independently to obtain the floor plans. While this gap in communication did not negatively impact the overall emergency response, the failure to share or offer the information to other responding agencies could have potentially delayed operations or created unnecessary risk to first responders taking action inside the building.

**RECOMMENDATION for OBSERVATION 24:**

**[24.1]** *Unified Command must hold regular briefings with the appropriate branches of Incident Command to ensure vital information is shared with all personnel. Additionally, a connection must be made with HSEMA to ensure that floor plans and other important information related to the location are relayed to Unified Command and all necessary tactical units.*

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**OBSERVATION 25:** *The investigative units handled their responsibilities very well; however, there were some challenges related to communication and the efficient management of thousands of potential witnesses.*

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The Washington Navy Yard is home to approximately 14,000 employees; 3,000 of which were located in Building 197. Transporting, processing, and interviewing such a large number of witnesses was a massive undertaking, involving hundreds of personnel.





The MPD detectives, from multiple investigative units, and the many FBI agents worked extremely well together to complete their work as carefully and efficiently as possible. Thousands of witnesses were transported to safe locations and quickly triaged. Many of the witnesses were then interviewed in more detail in order to ascertain their first-hand knowledge of the suspect, actions, and events that day. Investigators stated that while overall operations and witness management went well, there were a few challenges that arose during the investigative response.

**SUMMARY:** Detectives were unsure which dedicated radio channel should be used to coordinate their activities. The use of a dedicated channel for detectives would ensure that communication and coordination of investigative activities could be conducted without contributing to further radio congestion on the main channel.

The detectives initially processed thousands of potential witnesses and conducted hundreds of more detailed interviews. The sheer number of witnesses posed a significant challenge for detectives as they tried to quickly, but carefully process thousands of people. This important task may have been better supported with an exercised and pre-established process for triaging a large number of witnesses, including the use of a checklist or form document to allow investigators to record vital information.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS for OBSERVATION 25:**

**[25.1]** *Develop the appropriate policies and conduct comprehensive training related to communication protocols for investigative response to large incidents. Detectives/investigators should receive and be well-versed in ICS, especially their position-specific IMT role. When an incident occurs and the initial tactical objectives have been achieved (and the threat has been neutralized), an initial briefing should be conducted with all investigators to ensure awareness, accountability, and understanding of responsibilities. The investigative chief should be the only one providing directions and instructions from Unified Command. A dedicated radio channel should be available and known by all investigative personnel in order to coordinate and communicate actions.*

**[25.2]** *Develop a mass witness management plan or operating procedure, outlining the process by which a large number of witnesses can be quickly evacuated, triaged, and interviewed. The plan would also include an appropriate checklist or form document that can be used by detectives to quickly process large numbers of potential witnesses. Ensure all members are trained in executing the plan.*

**[25.3]** *At least some training exercises should go beyond merely testing the tactical response and also include the investigative functions. All of the above investigative recommendations and actions should be exercised and tested. This aligns with Observation 10 and its accompanying recommendations.*



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**OBSERVATION 26: *The transition of the initial response from the military to MPD and the subsequent transition from MPD to the Federal Bureau of Investigation went smoothly; however, the roles and responsibilities during the subsequent investigation should have been made much clearer for all personnel on scene.***

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The agencies responding to and investigating the shooting at the Navy Yard followed the principles of the National Response Framework, (1.) engaged partnership; (2.) tiered response; (3.) scalable, flexible, and adaptable operational capabilities; (4.) unity of effort through unified command; and (5.) readiness to act.

The lead agency transitioned smoothly from a federal entity (Navy) to a local entity (MPD) and then later back to a federal entity (FBI) based on operational capabilities and by mutual agreement.

As a military installation, the on-site Naval District of Washington (NDW) Police, Navy military police (MP), and contract security guards were the first to respond to the reports of the shooting in Building 197. The small group of officers quickly realized that the ongoing incident was much greater than their available resources, and the NDW Police Chief requested MPD assistance. *(MPD officers had already been dispatched based on the first call received by the city's 911 services.)*

*Depending on the size, scope, and magnitude of an incident, local, state, tribal, territorial, and insular area governments, and, in some cases, the Federal Government, may be called to action.*

National Response Framework  
Second Edition, May 2013

MPD then served as the lead agency during the large-scale tactical response and investigation of the shooting. At 1:27 p.m., as the incident response transitioned from crisis to consequence management, the FBI assumed the lead role for processing the crime scene. The officials at Unified Command determined that given the size and scale of the scene and vast amount of evidence, the FBI was better equipped to handle the scene and evidence collection.

Furthermore, it was still unknown whether the shooting was an act of domestic terrorism, and it would take several days to make that determination.

The transition was clear and distinct and did not significantly change the operations already underway on scene. The personnel from both agencies continued to work together on clearing the massive building, handling the thousands of potential witnesses, following up on countless leads, and making preparations for processing the crime scene. There was, however, some confusion and uncertainty for some personnel with regard to who was responsible for certain roles and tasks.

During the transition, it would have been beneficial for officials to clarify the specific roles, responsibilities, and expectations for all involved personnel. For instance, while the crime scene and evidence collection was transferred to the FBI, there is a statutory requirement that



the investigation of all unintended deaths in the District of Columbia is to be conducted by MPD (*unless the deaths are the result of an act of terrorism*). Thus, even though the FBI was leading the crime scene processing, the death investigations were to remain the responsibility of MPD. Moreover, the responsibility for investigating the police-involved shooting and officers' use-of-force would also remain with MPD. While these responsibilities are known and understood by the ranking officials of each agency, it would have been prudent to make the specific roles clear for all of the officers and personnel working that day.

**SUMMARY:** While the transition may have been clear from the perspective of Unified Command, the transition may have caused confusion and uncertainty for some key personnel on scene. As one example, the Chief Medical Examiner and her staff waited for several hours before they could begin processing the deceased victims (*See related Observation 27*). While the delay itself may have been unavoidable due to a variety of factors, she reportedly sought updates as to when they could begin their work; however, neither the FBI agents nor MPD detectives were able to provide her with the necessary status updates. There was also some uncertainty over who was responsible for leading different aspects of the investigation, and who was responsible for keeping all of the different agencies regularly informed of the current status and progress. Additionally, the lack of a clear Navy representative in Unified Command continued to significantly impact communications and operations both before and after the transition.

MPD collaborates regularly with the FBI, as well as many other Federal and local agencies, and as a result, many of the personnel from the various agencies know each other well, understand one another's approach, and trust each other to get the job done. This long-standing professional relationship proved to be extremely beneficial on the day of the incident, and highlights the importance of holding extensive inter-agency training and exercises in preparation for a real-world incident. The prior experience with one another allowed for a relatively smooth transition of the investigation from MPD to the FBI.

**RECOMMENDATION for OBSERVATION 26:**

**[26.1]** *By clarifying the specific roles of each agency early on, much of the subsequent confusion and uncertainty may have been avoided. While the FBI took the lead role of processing the crime scene, MPD remained responsible for the death investigations by virtue of the applicable D.C. laws. MPD also remained responsible for the investigations of the use-of-force by police officers. With the clear delineation of the roles and expectations, the necessary coordination and communication with the various involved agencies would have flowed much more naturally.*

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**OBSERVATION 27: *There were some instances of communication challenges for local agencies that were supporting operations or may have been impacted by the incident.***

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During the “hot washes” and review meetings with other local agencies, some personnel commented that information and updates were not making it to all those who needed it.

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) for the District of Columbia stated that the agency was notified of the shooting by an FEMS official. When OCME staff subsequently arrived on scene, the staff waited for hours before the FBI provided access to the scene (*Also discussed in Observation 26*). The commanding officer of the MPD Homicide Unit had contacted OCME early on and informed them to be prepared, but not to come down to the scene at that time. The conflicting information resulted in an uncertain response and a prolonged wait at the scene. Had MPD remained the investigative lead, some of the access and communication issues experienced on scene may have been avoided since MPD and the OCME are intimately familiar with the other agency’s procedures and work together on a daily basis.

As the incident was unfolding, MPD officers notified the schools in the area near the Navy Yard and requested that they lockdown and conduct 100 percent identification checks. They also notified and advised the area businesses to shelter-in-place. However, several District government agencies throughout the city, some with offices near the Navy Yard, were not sure what actions to take; but out of an abundance of caution, several of the agencies made independent decisions to go on lockdown. The city’s Protective Services Division, the agency responsible for providing security around many DC government buildings and structures, should have been formally notified as well. The Mayor’s Office, D.C. Department of Transportation, D.C. Department of Public Works, D.C. Department of Human Services, the Mayor’s Office of Victims Services, and several other local agencies were involved in the response or provided valuable resources in support of operations.

**SUMMARY:** By coordinating communications with all local agency directors, the potential for confusion, misinformation, or uncertainty in how to proceed can be avoided or mitigated. The Logistics Branch Chief or Liaison Officer should ensure this communication and coordination is conducted on a regular basis or as needed during an incident.

**RECOMMENDATIONS for OBSERVATION 27:**

**[27.1]** *Conduct a conference call early on (after the initial crisis is over) with representatives from all local agencies in order to provide information/instructions and answer any questions. Hold additional briefings as necessary. Craft a pre-incident checklist, which lists all agencies, protocols, and tasks and can be included in the city’s overall response plan.*

**[27.2]** *Agencies should adhere to the notification and information sharing protocols that are outlined in the city’s response plan. Review and update the plan to ensure that the notification protocols clearly outline the proper procedures for both requesting agency assistance and*



*responding to the scene. May want to consider that in the event of a large-scale incident with multiple homicides, the request for the presence of the Medical Examiner should come from the local homicide unit (regardless of which agency is serving as the lead) since the local unit is familiar with and works with the Medical Examiner on a regular basis.*

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## VIII. PUBLIC INFORMATION

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**OBSERVATION 28:** *The Joint Information Center (JIC) was established early during the response; however, it was established in an area without access to computers and they did not have a representative in Unified Command or the JOCC.*

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When the media began learning of the incident occurring at the Navy Yard, various media outlets began assembling at several locations around the base. The MPD Communications Director responded to the Navy Yard by 9:00 a.m. and began working with her counterparts from other agencies. The public affairs personnel of local elected officials were also present. Together they established the JIC and gathered the members of the press at one location at the intersection of 3<sup>rd</sup> and M Streets.

While the location was beneficial since it kept the growing mass of media away from Unified Command, the drawback was it did not provide the JIC with access to computers or televisions to monitor the ongoing reporting. By mid-afternoon, the location for the press conferences was moved inside to a nearby D.C. government building. The JIC then utilized the command bus of D.C. Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA), where they had access to computers and televisions to monitor the media reports. While the MPD PIO had at least one officer in their headquarters office, the JIC lacked representation in both Unified Command and the JOCC.

**SUMMARY:** The JIC's lack of access to computers, combined with their lack of direct representation in Unified Command, resulted in the lead officials not receiving vital support from their respective public affairs staffs when preparing for the first few press conferences. In turn, the public affairs personnel were not aware of what the officials would be stating at the press conferences. Additionally, without a representative in the JOCC, the JIC was unaware of the overall operations and community messaging. With the many PIO personnel on scene, it was difficult to discern who was serving as the lead of the JIC.

### RECOMMENDATIONS for OBSERVATION 28:

**[28.1]** *Conduct training and exercises and include all Public Information and Affairs personnel from all relevant agencies to ensure they are aware of the roles and responsibilities of the JIC.*

**[28.2]** *Ensure the appropriate public information and affairs personnel are ICS/IMT trained. The lead of the JIC should be identified early on during the establishment of the JIC. It is prudent*



*that the individual serving as lead should possess prior ICS/IMT training in order to ensure all JIC responsibilities are properly managed.*

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**OBSERVATION 29: *Neither the Navy nor the hospital had a representative in the JIC, which may have contributed to the release of both erroneous and sensitive information.***

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The Navy issued multiple statements and tweeted information throughout the day. In one statement to the press, the Navy indicated the specific hospital at which the injured officer and victims were being treated. This information was provided during the time in which law enforcement officials were still attempting to identify two possible subjects or persons of interest, who may have fled the area. Law enforcement will not release the name or location of victims in these types of circumstances, because the victims are witnesses to a violent crime, and the perpetrator, additional suspects or accomplices may attempt to influence or further harm them. As a result, MPD sent police officers to the hospital to guard and protect the injured victims after their location was released to the media and public.

In a statement to the press, a representative from the MedStar Washington Hospital Center speculated that the weapon used by the gunman “had to be a semi-automatic, because they’re talking about gunshots that they [the victims] heard in rapid succession.” Engaging in this type of speculation (which in the end was incorrect) with the press is not appropriate and is best left to investigators to determine. Additionally, at one point during the day, a hospital representative contacted the MPD PIO and asked if they could release the names of the victims. The MPD PIO advised the hospital that it was premature and should not be done.

**SUMMARY:** These examples highlight the importance of having a representative from all agencies and involved stakeholders in order to coordinate accurate information sharing to the press and community.

Having adequate representation from all agencies or organizations in the command structure and critical functions posed significant challenges throughout the day. With regard to the public information responsibilities, there were no representatives from the Navy or MedStar in the JIC. As a result, both entities inadvertently released sensitive or incorrect information.

**RECOMMENDATIONS for OBSERVATION 29:**

**[29.1]** *Establish formal protocols for ensuring the appropriate representatives from the hospitals are integrated into the JIC.*



**[29.2]** *Conduct training that involves the relevant personnel from the area hospitals and the D.C. agencies that coordinate with medical facilities, including HSEMA and Department of Health.*

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**OBSERVATION 30:** *The JIC and JOCC provided regular information to the media and community; however, the overall messaging lacked coordination.*

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One of the objectives during any incident is to provide coordinated, prompt, reliable, and actionable information to the entire community regarding any threat or hazard, the response actions being taken, and assistance being made available. During the Navy Yard incident, MPD provided information to the community via multiple approaches that included press conferences, listserv messages, and tweets.

Press conferences were coordinated on scene between Unified Command and JIC, while the messages sent through the MPD community listservs and Twitter feed were handled through the JOCC. The JOCC messaging was coordinated with Unified Command. At one point, however, it was discovered that an MPD member in one of the police districts had begun sending messages to the community through his district's listserv group; however, those messages were stopped immediately so as to maintain the accuracy and consistency of information.

**SUMMARY:** Although Unified Command, JIC, and the JOCC worked closely to ensure important information was communicated to the media and community, the overall messaging strategies lacked coordination. Because the JIC did not have direct representation in Unified Command or the JOCC, it was difficult for them to conduct overall coordination of communications.

**RECOMMENDATIONS for OBSERVATION 30:**

**[30.1]** *Craft an action plan for communication strategies, outlining roles and responsibilities, that can be activated when an incident occurs.*

**[30.2]** *Conduct comprehensive training for all members involved in the JIC and other public communication functions.*

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**OBSERVATION 31: *The media provided the public with important information; however, in their rush to break the news, some members of the media made serious errors in judgment.***

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Law enforcement and the media have historically had an interesting, and occasionally tenuous, relationship. It is a relationship that can be, at the same time, problematic and essential. The two parties often rely on the other in order to conduct their service to the public. Because of that co-dependent relationship, it is important that the actions of the media on September 16<sup>th</sup> also be assessed insofar as those actions may have had an impact on the law enforcement response.

On the day of the shooting, law enforcement officials recognized the need to keep the public informed and held five press conferences throughout the day. Each time, law enforcement and city officials provided the media and the public with the latest information that had been learned as the investigation progressed.

**SUMMARY:** A major incident requiring a multi-agency response will be rife with the potential for mistaken communications or false reporting, simply due to the inherent nature of a large-scale investigation. A multitude of facts and details, derived in fragments from a rapidly-evolving environment, are communicated through a myriad of channels to be analyzed, interpreted, assessed, reviewed, and confirmed or discredited. This process takes time, and early in an investigation, a particular detail or fragment of information will quite often evolve or change significantly throughout the necessary process of investigative due diligence. There are also serious safety considerations when disseminating information during an incident with an ongoing threat.

As the incident was unfolding, several journalists were listening to emergency radio channels on publicly-available scanners and sending out information via social media. The actions of these journalists drew a swift rebuke from one of their own. Recognizing the clear danger of journalists providing essentially real-time information on the emergency response during an ongoing threat (the possibility of multiple shooters), an author and reporter with the Associated Press, tried to reign in his fellow members of the press:



At a time when investigators were following up on multiple leads, the media began to report that they had obtained the name of a former Navy Yard employee who was the suspected





shooter (citing “reliable law enforcement sources”). The media quickly named the alleged suspect. Investigators were in fact following up on information related to that individual that had surfaced early in the investigation; however, for the media to name a specific individual as a suspect prior to the completion of the proper investigative due diligence is at best injudicious, and at worst reckless, especially given the serious implications of such an error.

Realizing their mistake, the media soon retracted their initial reports, but the damage was done. When this occurs, the media’s credibility suffers, and worse, the named individual must live with the ignominy of having been, as the individual himself stated, “vilified” before the media properly “verified” the reports.



It should be noted that the “law enforcement sources” cited by the media are equally culpable for having aided in the dissemination of unconfirmed or erroneous information during an ongoing incident. During one of the press conferences, the MPD Chief of Police offered clear advice to the press and their sources: Do not perpetuate erroneous information. If the information you receive is not from this group of officials (Unified Command), it is neither official nor reliable.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS for OBSERVATION 31:**

**[31.1]** *Law enforcement officials should put the press on notice – early on and in a public forum – clearly indicating that all official information regarding the incident will come from Incident or Unified Command or through the formal public information channels.*

**[31.2]** *Monitor media outlets and social media in order to quickly correct mistaken or inaccurate information that is reported. There may also be investigative benefits, such as identifying potential witnesses (Navy Yard workers were posting information on their Twitter accounts).*

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## IX. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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**OBSERVATION 32:** *A single, overarching staging area was not effectively implemented. Multiple staging areas and substantial numbers of personnel and assets made it difficult to track and manage all resources.*

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Various staging areas were established by the responding agencies. The official medical triage area was established near 11<sup>th</sup> and O Street with medevac assets landing on the 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge. A second medical staging area was established at 9<sup>th</sup> and M Street. A number of responding agencies staged at 6<sup>th</sup> and M Street. MPD had an official representative at all three areas.

Arriving tactical assets were being coordinated by an MPD Commander at 11<sup>th</sup> and O Street. The personnel checked in and were then directed to the interior tactical staging, which was coordinated by two MPD officials in a secure parking garage near Building 197. The personnel were given assignments and deployed. Due to the fact that many tactical assets from some agencies had self-dispatched, responded to different locations, and did not have a representative at Incident Command, officials faced a difficult challenge in managing and tracking all personnel and assets.

**SUMMARY:** A single staging area would have provided better accountability and tracking of the myriad of resources of the multi-agencies. It should be noted, however, that the critical and immediate need for entry teams and tactical assets required the immediate response and availability of those resources at the scene. A better method of tracking the deployment of contact and rescue teams entering the “hot zone” should be considered in future incidents.

### RECOMMENDATIONS for OBSERVATION 32:

**[32.1]** *Incident Command should establish a resource staging location and share this location with responding agencies so they can check in and be appropriately tracked. The location should be well-marked and clearly visible to all responding agencies.*

**[32.2]** *All law enforcement and emergency response agencies should have clear policies and training that directs responding personnel to seek out and check in at the designated staging location.*



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**OBSERVATION 33: *There were a variety of challenges that impacted the detailed, orderly, and efficient demobilization of personnel and resources.***

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Under ICS principles, the proper demobilization of personnel and resources will always rely on the quality and diligence of the initial resource tracking and mobilization. Officials should begin planning for demobilization when the mobilization of resources begins in order to facilitate accountability of the resources. This accountability helps ensure the safety of personnel and efficient and effective use of resources.

As first mentioned in Observation 16, there are a variety of factors made it difficult to track and manage the orderly and efficient demobilization of all personnel and resources during the response to the Navy Yard. The rapid response of hundreds of personnel to the shooting scene, the large number of personnel involved in the initial tactical response, the amount of time to achieve the first objective of neutralizing the threat, the existence of multiple staging areas, and the failure of many responding personnel and resources to properly check in at the appropriate location all contributed to the subsequent challenges during demobilization.

**SUMMARY:** With regard to the Navy Yard, the demobilization of most non-personnel resources did not experience any major issues. The main considerations and concerns regarding demobilization were related to the impact on confirming the safe return of all officers, investigative follow-up, debriefing of personnel, and subsequent use-of-force investigations.

Hundreds of law enforcement officers from several agencies responded to the scene, and after the threat was neutralized and the building was cleared, it was noted that some officers from other agencies who had entered the building simply departed the scene prior to a debriefing. As a result, it was difficult to track and record the safe return of each officer or conduct a debriefing with all of the involved personnel. The lack of a clear and tested demobilization plan created extra challenges for investigators as they confirmed which officers entered the building during the search for the gunman (*117 officers*), which officers fired their weapons (*8 officers from 5 agencies*), and which officers carried out certain actions that day.

**RECOMMENDATIONS for OBSERVATION 33:**

**[33.1]** *Conduct training to exercise and test demobilization plans and preparations pursuant to ICS roles and principles.*

**[33.2]** *All law enforcement and emergency response agencies should have clear policies and training that directs responding personnel to follow the appropriate demobilization procedures prior to departing the incident location.*



**[33.3]** *Debriefing of personnel, especially those entering the “hot zone”, is a vital aspect of demobilization as it also allows officials to get critical witness information, assess the well-being of the officers, and offer EAP (Employee Assistance Program) support services once the crisis is over. We cannot ignore the fact that incidents with shocking, mass casualties can be troubling to even a hardened, veteran police officer.*

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**OBSERVATION 34:** *MPD utilized an Alpha/Bravo schedule to ensure adequate personnel were available for a prolonged police response.*

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Given the substantial size and scale of the incident, it was abundantly clear that a lengthy police response would be necessary. The MPD Chief of Police activated the alpha/bravo schedule to ensure personnel would be prepared to carry out and maintain operations throughout the night and subsequent days. Early in the day, the Chief’s Executive Officer was sent home to rest, but he would return later in the evening to continue to oversee operations.

**SUMMARY:** The activation of the alpha/bravo schedule ensured that there would be an adequate number of rested personnel available to maintain a protracted response. While no dedicated officer wants to leave in the midst of operations, the long-term objectives must be considered. The evidence collection alone continued on for many days.

**RECOMMENDATION for OBSERVATION 34:**

**[34.1]** *Officials must consider the long-term objectives and ensure there will be an adequate number of personnel to carry out prolonged response operations. This consideration is not only critical to ensuring there is no lapse in police operations, but is also vital for the health and well-being of personnel. A scheduling system, such as alpha/bravo, should be prepared well in advance of an incident requiring its activation.*

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**X. CITYWIDE OPERATIONS**

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**OBSERVATION 35:** *Police maintained regular, citywide police operations and functions.*

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Two MPD Commanders were assigned with the task of ensuring the necessary police operations continued throughout the city. They monitored the pending runs and any priority assignments throughout the city. The pending runs and assignments for the First District (in which the Navy Yard is located) began to amass. One of the Commanders contacted MPD’s Command Information Center and directed each Police District to send two officers to the First District to assist with calls for service and specifically clarified that they were not to respond to the Navy Yard.



At approximately 11:00 a.m., both Commanders began checking on the officers working the perimeter of the scene. Since the Seventh District was experiencing a high number of pending runs and assignments, several of the Seventh District officers stationed at the perimeter were directed back to their patrol district to attend to the calls for service.

**SUMMARY:** With the influx of MPD officers from adjacent police districts and high demand the incident placed on police personnel and resources, MPD officials remained cognizant of the need to maintain police operations and basic police functions throughout the city.

**RECOMMENDATION for OBSERVATION 35:**

**[35.1]** *Ensure there is an official tasked with monitoring and managing the citywide operations and functions. Calls for police service and other assignments will continue in spite of the larger incident. Regularly review personnel needs at both the incident location and throughout the city to ensure there is adequate staffing. Many of the officers working the incident were from the First Police District. Officials ensured that officers were brought in from other districts in order to cover regular police operations in the First District.*

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## CLOSING

On the morning of September 16, 2013, thousands of employees reported to work at the Navy Yard like any other regular Monday morning. This particular day, however, would begin with a tragedy that would end with the death of twelve people – mothers, fathers, wives, husbands, co-workers, and friends – senselessly gunned down by Aaron Alexis. Alexis would shoot and injure several others, including an MPD officer.

While this report does not provide every precise detail or an answer to every possible question, we hope that the information contained herein will provide other law enforcement agencies and emergency responders with insight into the myriad of challenges faced by officers that difficult day.

During the course of our review and assessment, we identified several lessons from our experience and outlined all of our observations and subsequent recommendations. Although we hope that the need to utilize them never again arises, we will use these lessons to improve our preparations, collaboration, policies, training, and resources should they be needed.

We would like to thank all of our partners for their response, support, and assistance. Law enforcement officers and emergency responders from a myriad of federal and local agencies worked alongside MPD throughout that tragic day and the days that followed. We thank all of the first responders and especially commend the brave and heroic actions of the first law enforcement officers who, without hesitation, entered the building to search for the gunman and prevent the further loss of life.

Again, our hope is that this reflective analysis and the lessons learned by the Metropolitan Police Department and our partners may provide other law enforcement agencies and related stakeholders with an understanding of the challenges and thoughtful recommendations for possible improvements to the law enforcement response to active shooter situations or other incidents that may require a large-scale, multi-agency response.

*If you have any questions related to the contents of this report, you may contact Cathy L. Lanier, Chief of Police, at [Cathy.Lanier@dc.gov](mailto:Cathy.Lanier@dc.gov) and Matthew J. Bromeland at [Matthew.Bromeland@dc.gov](mailto:Matthew.Bromeland@dc.gov).*



**APPENDIX**

The following is a list of the 76 recommendations contained within this report. They are listed here for quick reference and coded under one or more of the following categories:

**P** = Policy

**T** = Training

**E/S** = Equipment/Systems

**I. EMERGENCY 911 CALLS AND INITIAL NOTIFICATION****RECOMMENDATIONS for OBSERVATION 1:**

- P** [1.1] *It may be prudent for military installations, especially those located in or near a largely populated area, to review their emergency call-taking procedures and policies to ensure they include guidelines for actions in the event of a large-scale incident that will inevitably result in multiple agencies responding to the scene.*
- P** [1.2] *The installation's emergency call-takers and dispatchers should establish strong relationships with their local jurisdiction's 911 services agency. Both parties should be familiar with the other's emergency procedures. They may also consider developing a process and protocol for ensuring vital information from callers is quickly relayed between call centers during an incident. This relationship may be formalized in a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that is reviewed and updated on an annual basis.*
- T** [1.3] *Emergency call-takers and dispatchers from the military installation's communications center should train with the local jurisdiction's emergency communications personnel. Both parties should also be included in the scenario-based training exercises that are regularly conducted by emergency medical and law enforcement agencies (See related Recommendation [2.3]).*
- P, T** [2.1] *Conduct a review of the scripted call-taking procedures and policies. Determine if there should be prudent best-practice or innovative approaches ("tactical dispatching") implemented for exigent circumstances, such as an ongoing active shooter. Even if the reported details may be difficult to believe, call takers should exhibit the proper demeanor at all times and should avoid conveying their doubt or skepticism over the line as it may undermine the caller's confidence in the operator.*
- E/S** [2.2] *Ensure that all street names and addresses of internal or gated complexes are included in the city's computer aided dispatch (CAD) system. Review and update on a regularly scheduled basis.*
- P, T** [2.3] *Whether the emergency call center is part of a jurisdiction's law enforcement agency or it is part of a separate agency, it is the police department's responsibility to*



*engage them in training and work with them to jointly develop applicable policies and procedures. Law enforcement should ensure 911 call takers and dispatchers are included in training exercises along with the emergency medical and police personnel. Exercise and test “tactical dispatching” procedures in an active shooter scenario. Training for active shooter and other large-scale incidents should not end at the tactical level and should include all stakeholders. 911 call takers and emergency dispatchers are heavily involved in the incident from the first notification through the subsequent operational actions and should therefore be included in multi-agency drills and exercises. Police departments should also work with the emergency operators and dispatchers to jointly develop applicable policies and procedures.*

**P, T** **[3.1]** *Review and update policies and procedures to ensure that 911 operators follow-up with all callers in order to obtain any potentially valuable information. Callers may be able to provide first responders with additional real-time intelligence or details of the incident. Information provided by callers may also be pertinent to the subsequent investigation of the incident. Ultimately, as mentioned in Recommendation [2.3], call takers and dispatchers must be active participants in active shooter training.*

## **II. POLICE RESPONSE TO THE SCENE**

**P** **[4.1]** *NDW is now reviewing their lockdown protocols. Consideration should be given to prudent modifications of protocol that will ensure local emergency responders are able to access the base in the event of a future incident.*

**P** **[5.1]** *MPD commanders and officers should be familiar with the military installations and other gated complexes located within their police districts. District Commanders should obtain at least basic information regarding military installations, to include the commanding officer of the installation, security structure, emergency contact information, emergency protocols, capabilities, and installation maps/building locations, security camera locations, video control room location, and building floor plans. Conversely, the commanders of military installations should be familiar with the local police response protocols and capabilities. Additionally, security and facility managers of large campuses, facilities, or office buildings may want to consider having a “go-bag” at entry points that can be quickly provided to first responders in the event of a major incident like an active shooter. This bag would contain maps of the facility, floor plans, access keys/cards, contact phone numbers, radio communication information, and other pertinent items or information.*

**E/S** **[5.2]** *Military installations (and other gated facilities or complexes) should ensure that their street names and addresses are included in the computer aided dispatch (CAD) system of the jurisdiction in which they are located. This will assist officers in locating the proper location in an efficient and timely manner. The information should be reviewed and updated on a regularly scheduled basis. This recommendation mirrors Recommendation [2.2]. Additionally, military installations (and other large*





*complexes/campuses) may want to explore the possibility of utilizing more conspicuous visual markers for building and streets within their installation.*

### III. TACTICAL OPERATIONS: SEARCH FOR THE GUNMAN

- T [6.1]** *Neighboring law enforcement agencies, both Federal and local, should conduct collaborative, inter-agency training exercises. By training together, officers from different agencies are able to develop trust and mutual understanding prior to responding together to an incident that may require a multi-agency response. The tactical teams for the various regional agencies train together on a regular basis. MPD's Emergency Response Team (ERT) and the other area agencies' tactical operators are extremely familiar with one another's teams, tactics, and response plans. This familiarity should exist on additional levels throughout the agency – including patrol officers, field agents, and deputies – since these will often be the first personnel to arrive on the scene of an active shooter. Active shooter training should include different types of locations, including military bases. This point is also included in Recommendation [8.2]. It is also important to note that even if a closed campus or gated facility has its own plans and protocols to respond to and manage a crisis, it is vital that the facility's personnel plan for the unexpected and include larger-scale response.*
- T [6.2]** *The personnel from different agencies should receive standardized training, which results in a consistent understanding of tactics, communication, and approach. Collaborative training is also an opportunity to highlight the importance of a coordinated response by all involved. Ultimately, all personnel who arrive on scene should report to and be deployed by the incident commander.*
- T [7.1]** *Equipping personnel with strong leadership skills and the ability to make difficult decisions in the midst of a crisis requires a long-term effort. The Commander on scene was a veteran police official with over 35 years of service. Strong leadership skills are honed through exposure to a myriad of experiences, comprehensive training, and police leadership opportunities. One consistent theme in the after action reports published by other agencies following similar mass shooting incidents is the recognized need for strong, composed, and decisive leadership during the initial response. A well-coordinated and effective response often hinges on the leadership of the police official managing the on-scene efforts. The leadership of the initial tactical response at the Navy Yard serves as another example of that important element.*
- T [7.2]** *Provide position-specific training for Incident Command System (ICS) and Incident Management Team (IMT). While all police personnel should be familiar with ICS and IMT roles and principles, most mid- to upper-level police officials will likely serve in a specific management role during an incident response; especially in larger agencies. For these larger agencies, having all sworn officers, regardless of rank, train tactically may not provide the most benefit since most command officials and managers will not be*



*required to respond in a tactical role. They will, however, be needed to manage personnel and the overall response to an incident. There are many good mid- to upper-level police officials who should be trained to take leadership of a portion of the operational responsibilities, rather than merely waiting for an assignment.*

**T** **[8.1]** *Review active shooter formations and train officers to adapt their tactics to fit the environment. For instance, the current standard of training instructs active shooter teams to move in a diamond formation. While this formation may work well for scenarios involving large hallways, in schools for example, it may not be effective in narrow hallways and walkways of offices and cubicles. In narrower environments, the diamond formation may allow a hidden gunman to more easily target officers.*

**T** **[8.2]** *Active shooter training should include different types of locations, buildings, and structures in the scenarios, including modern buildings with various levels of security, access card entry, motion sensors, cypher locks, alarms, and narrow hallways and complex layouts. These security features are becoming more common in both private and public sector buildings. As stated earlier in Observation 6, law enforcement has conducted extensive active shooter training exercises and scenario-based drills in many types of locations (such as schools, hotels, hospitals, universities, transportation hubs, government buildings, and more); however, military bases were often excluded from the training even after the 2009 shooting at Fort Hood. Police departments may hold the mistaken belief that the personnel working within gated military installations in the United States, such as the Navy Yard, are heavily armed and capable of defending against threats. The truth, however, is that the majority of the individuals working on military bases are not armed. Out of the many thousands of people at the Navy Yard, an extremely small number either possessed or had access to a firearm. In terms of an armed presence, the Navy Yard was really no different than other civilian government agencies or private facilities that employ armed security at entrances.*

**P, E/S** **[8.3]** *Police departments should conduct pre-incident evaluations of buildings and facilities located within their area of responsibility. The evaluations should be stored in an accessible, central location (e.g. operations center).*

**E/S** **[8.4]** *MPD is in the process of obtaining and distributing earpieces to all of its members. The extensive noise and sensory overload may result in officers not being able to hear all radio communications. The fire alarm in Building 197 complicated communications, especially for officers searching for the shooter. Earpieces will allow officers to better hear communications in loud environments and also keep radio communications from giving away the officers' position to a shooter.*

**P, T** **[8.5]** *Review and update the policies regarding when officers should switch to an alternate radio channel during a large scale, critical incident. The current policy governing when officers should switch channels is based on the more common scenarios of pursuits or barricades, but it does not take into account the unique dangers of a*



*critical incident like an active shooter. At the Navy Yard, the initial responding officers, the ones who entered the building to search for the shooter, were on the First District (or “1D”) radio channel, but they were asked to switch to an alternate channel during the search. In critical incidents, such as an active shooter, the responding officers should remain on the original channel. Due to the nature of the ongoing threat and sensory overload, officers involved in the search for an active shooter will often not hear requests to switch channels. That switch could potentially be life-threatening. The tactical response operations should remain on the original channel, and all other support activities and communications can be moved to an alternate channel. Additionally, all of the officers inside the “hot zone” should be communicating on the same designated tactical channel. There are obvious safety risks if, for example, some of the officers are operating on one channel and other officers, such as ERT, are operating on their own ERT tactical channel.*

**E/S** **[8.6]** *MPD is procuring shorter barrel rifles and additional ballistic shields. Many years ago, police departments across the country, MPD included, began to acquire semi-automatic rifles, such as the AR-15, in the event of an active shooter or other incident in which responding police officers may find themselves out-gunned by suspects (see the 1997 Bank of America Shoot-out in North Hollywood, California). Many of the MPD officers who responded to the Navy Yard were armed with a rifle. The narrow hallways and cubicle environment of Building 197, which are common in many office buildings, posed some challenges for responding officers to maneuver throughout the building with the long rifles. They were, however, able to proceed through the building and continue their search for the gunman. In an effort to provide officers with rifles that better accommodate movement through narrow or confined environments, MPD is procuring shorter-barrel rifles. Training will also include tactics in close-quarter maneuvers and approaches. Additionally, ballistic shields provide officers with additional protection, which may increase the officers’ speed of movement toward an ongoing threat (as previously mentioned in the summary of Observation 6).*

**P, E/S** **[8.7]** *MPD is exploring the procurement and deployment of an equipment truck that is manned and ready for rapid deployment to any location in the city in the event of a critical incident. The truck would hold various tools and equipment – such as additional breaching equipment, rifles, shotguns, Level III vests and helmets, compact shields, lights, batteries, etc. MPD has long had this equipment deployed to various officers throughout the department; however, the deployment of an equipment truck, standing by 24-7, is a practical approach that allows the equipment to be ready and available for responding officers. As stated earlier, many patrol officers are not in vehicles, but rather patrol on foot, bike, motorcycle, or other mode that does not allow for carrying large pieces or large amounts of this type of equipment.*

**P, T** **[9.1]** *There are two critical pieces to ensuring that good emergency plans are more than just another book on a shelf. Even the best crafted and most comprehensive plans rely on the awareness and understanding of the workers and the first responders. Facilities*



*should conduct regular awareness training and drills for their employees and building occupants so everyone will know what to do in the event of an emergency. Additionally, the local first responders should be aware of the emergency plan. In this particular instance, MPD and FEMS should be intimately familiar with NDW's emergency plans.*

**P, T** **[9.2]** *It may also be prudent for the local agencies to train with the first responders on military installations, in this case NDW Police, Fire, and Emergency Medical Services. D.C. Fire and Emergency Medical Services have trained with NDW personnel, but prior inter-agency training between MPD and NDW was minimal. Again, as stated in Recommendation [6.1], even if a facility has its own plans and protocols to respond to and manage a crisis, it is vital that the facility's personnel plan for the unexpected and include larger-scale response. Additionally, the agencies may consider entering into Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) to formalize the roles and relationships. Following the Fort Hood shooting, the U.S. Army Internal Review Team identified a best practice related to the Holston Army Ammunition Plant and its formal memoranda of understanding with local agencies. The Holston facility entered into four Memoranda of Understanding with primary city and county law enforcement, fire, rescue services and the National Nuclear Security Administration. The memoranda are reviewed annually and updated when signatories change. In addition, they have consistent community cooperation with other agencies (i.e., park service, schools, hospitals, the FBI, the United States Army Reserve, and the Tennessee Army National Guard).*

**P, T** **[10.1]** *Consider extending the training and exercises that are conducted by emergency responders beyond merely testing and assessing the tactical response. Training should also include portions on what must occur during or following a large-scale, multi-agency tactical response, such as witness management, investigations, crime scene management, medical response, coroner/medical examiner, victim services, family reunification, and the other major components. Managers should train to their most likely role in the response (See related Observation 7 and Recommendation [7.2]). Having a written plan for the aforementioned portions of a response is of course vital, but full understanding and adequate preparation requires hands-on training and simulated exercises.*

#### **IV. OPERATIONAL COORDINATION:**

**P, E/S** **[11.1]** *Regularly voice the location of Unified Command over the radio and make the location as visible as possible. Utilize a beacon or other visible marker to conspicuously indicate the location and distribute vests to identify personnel and their particular roles.*

**P, T** **[11.2]** *Additionally, all of the responding agencies should have policies and training that direct the first responding member of an agency to check in with the IC to become the IC liaison so critical directions and information can be effectively shared with that agency.*



**T** [11.3] *As mentioned in Recommendation 7.2, provide position-specific training for Incident Command System (ICS) and Incident Management Team (IMT). While all personnel should be familiar with ICS and IMT roles and principles, most mid- to upper-level police officials will likely serve in a specific role during a large response and a full understanding of that particular role and its responsibilities is imperative.*

**P, E/S** [12.1] *The IAP and planning process is important and should be completed properly, but the focus on completing all portions of the IAP during an initial tactical response may be unnecessarily burdensome or even counter-productive. A tactical checklist that includes all of the immediate goals and objectives may be a more appropriate format for an immediate tactical response in active shooter scenarios.*

**P** [13.1] *To avoid confusion and congestion, it may be prudent to designate a primary command bus and operations center for Unified Command. This will ensure there is adequate representation from all agencies for the duration of the incident. If other agencies wish to transport their command bus to the scene of an incident or activate their operations center, they should ensure that neither impacts the functions of the primary designated bus and center.*

## **V. SCENE MANAGEMENT AND SECURITY**

**P, T** [14.1] *Ensure comprehensive actions are taken to establish site security.*

**P, T** [14.2] *Have personnel prepared and standing by to respond rapidly to a secondary or additional incident.*

**P, T** [14.3] *Ensure all personnel understand the importance of proper site security. All personnel should be wearing the appropriate identification and it should be conspicuously displayed.*

**P, T** [15.1] *If not already in existence, agencies should establish clear policies regarding self-dispatching. MPD has reiterated its policy regarding members not self-dispatching. Officers should instead follow established protocols (Example: report to the appropriate patrol district or nearest police facility) and if required to report to the scene of the incident, do so at a designated location or staging area. Training should test the officers' understanding of self-dispatching policies.*

**P, T** [15.2] *Training and exercises should also test the supervisors' and managers' ability to manage an incident in which there are many self-dispatching officers.*

**E/S** [16.1] *Explore technology to track officers when entering a hot zone in order to account for those who entered the area, especially in the event of a secondary incident.*



- P, T** [16.2] *As an alternative, have an official quickly record the ID number of officers as teams are formed and deployed into the hot zone.*
- P, T** [16.3] *For a possible use-of-force investigation, officials must track and debrief officers and inspect weapons prior to the officer departing the scene (See Observation 33, Demobilization) to determine which officers may have used force or deadly force.*
- P** [17.1] *Police should be prepared to investigate multiple leads and should consider the possibility of multiple suspects. Focusing on one lead or suspect and ignoring the possibility of multiple shooters may distract police from pursuing a threat that continues to expose the community and first responders to further danger.*
- P, T** [18.1] *Ensure an official is tasked with maintaining a route for emergency vehicles to quickly access and depart the scene.*
- P, T** [18.2] *Remain mindful of the impact the incident may have on citywide traffic. Street and road closures are inevitable; however, ensure an official is tasked with monitoring citywide traffic and mitigating the potential negative impacts.*
- P, T** [18.3] *Provide the public and media with regular updates as to the street and road closures resulting from the emergency response*

## **VI. MEDICAL SERVICES, REUNIFICATION, AND VICTIM SERVICES**

- T, E/S** [19.1] *As a result of this incident, MPD and D.C. Fire and Emergency Medical Services (FEMS) are exploring collaborative training to ensure there is no delay in the provision of medical services, even in the instances of an active incident. Additionally, the U.S. Park Police utilizes a Federal combat or tactical medic program, through the Department of Health and Human Services, in which two of their members are both armed police officers and highly-trained medical personnel. These tactical medics are trained to provide immediate medical treatment on-site prior to the arrival of EMS personnel. Both of these tactical medics had responded to Building 197 and were assisting rescue efforts. There was also a Navy surgeon who happened to be at the Navy Yard that day. All three had set up to conduct triage on the first floor.*
- T, E/S** [19.2] *MPD is procuring and will be distributing tactical emergency casualty care (TECC) kits to its officers that include such items as tourniquets, trauma gauze, and quick-clot, and training officers in TECC methods. This would allow officers to provide medical attention in those first critical moments to those who may have suffered serious, life-threatening injuries. While this approach may be interpreted as conflicting with the accepted active shooter training principles that instruct officers to bypass injured victims to find and neutralize the threat, a sensible balance can be struck. If life-saving measures can be provided to a seriously-injured victim or officer without delaying the search for the suspect or shooter, it would be reasonable to do so. The objectives –*



*neutralizing the threat and saving injured victims – may not always be mutually exclusive and unnecessarily sacrificing one to achieve the other is not necessary.*

**P** [20.1] *Begin preparing for and implementing the family reunification operations early on during the incident in order to provide family members with information and instructions.*

**P** [20.2] *The Family Assistance Center Plan should be reviewed, updated, and clarified. All pertinent agencies should be involved in the review. Modifications should be made that clearly denote the agency responsible for initiating and leading the family assistance and reunification efforts.*

**T** [20.3] *Conduct training and exercises to ensure all stakeholders fully understand their role and responsibilities with regard to the family reunification efforts.*

**P** [21.1] *In the District of Columbia, the MPD Homicide Unit conducts all family or next-of-kin death notifications. It is an extremely difficult and emotional task that requires understanding, compassion, candor, and strength. In future incidents, it is prudent that the death notifications be led and conducted by the local agency that is familiar with and experienced in carrying out such a difficult task.*

**P, T** [21.2] *The identification of victims is extremely challenging under these types of circumstances; however, law enforcement should attempt to identify victims as quickly as possible.*

## **VII. OPERATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS**

**P, T** [22.1] *When responding to a major incident, officers may find that radio communications and cell phone service are not available. First responders should be prepared for the possibility of having to relay information through non-traditional modes of communication, such as utilizing runners or hand signals.*

**P, T, E/S** [22.2] *MPD is exploring the establishment of a secure multi-jurisdictional tactical channel and separate support channel and developing the appropriate policies and ensure officers know how and when to utilize those channels. These policies must be consistent with Recommendation 8.5, which outlines the updates to the policies related to switching channels during large, tactical response operations, such as an active shooter. Again, the initial tactical operations should remain on the original radio channel. The communications for all other activities and functions should be moved to another channel. Due to the nature of the incident and sensory overload, officers involved in the search for an active shooter will often not hear requests to switch channels. That switch could potentially be life-threatening. Additionally, during recent training, MPD has emphasized officers' radio discipline in order to reduce unnecessary transmissions and ensure the channel is available for the most critical communications.*



**E/S** [22.3] *Agencies should consider investing in encrypted radio channels. There are clear safety benefits of utilizing encrypted channels during a tactical response to an ongoing threat. MPD is spearheading an initiative that is evaluating shared encrypted tactical channels that would be available to many of the responding agencies.*

**P, T** [23.1] *Incident Command should ensure that a representative with knowledge of the incident location – including buildings, security measures, and protocols – is identified early on and made available to provide background information. Police and other emergency response agencies should develop pre-incident relationships with the security directors and facility directors of large complexes, both public and private, that are located within their jurisdiction.*

**T** [23.2] *The various units or entities responsible for CCTV cameras and security personnel at given locations (military installations, government facilities, transportation hubs, etc.) should regularly coordinate and train with one another to ensure all personnel are aware of camera locations, access protocols, and information sharing procedures in the event of an incident. This is especially important for locations that may have multiple or different units responsible for various portions or sections of a large facility or installation.*

**T** [23.3] *As noted in prior recommendations, training must include the most likely involved personnel. It is not enough to train solely with other law enforcement agencies. Training and exercises should also include both the armed and unarmed security guards, who should be familiar with the emergency plans of the facilities to which they are assigned. It is critical that they be included in training and exercises to ensure they fully understand their roles and responsibilities in the event of an emergency.*

**P, E/S** [24.1] *Unified Command must hold regular briefings with the appropriate branches of Incident Command to ensure vital information is shared with all personnel. Additionally, a connection must be made with HSEMA to ensure that floor plans and other important information related to the location are relayed to Unified Command and all necessary tactical units.*

**P, T** [25.1] *Develop the appropriate policies and conduct comprehensive training related to communication protocols for investigative response to large incidents. Detectives/investigators should receive and be well-versed in ICS, especially their position-specific IMT role. When an incident occurs and the initial tactical objectives have been achieved (and the threat has been neutralized), an initial briefing should be conducted with all investigators to ensure awareness, accountability, and understanding of responsibilities. The investigative chief should be the only one providing directions and instructions from Unified Command. A dedicated radio channel should be available and known by all investigative personnel in order to coordinate and communicate actions.*





**P, T** [25.2] *Develop a mass witness management plan or operating procedure, outlining the process by which a large number of witnesses can be quickly evacuated, triaged, and interviewed. The plan would also include an appropriate checklist or form document that can be used by detectives to quickly process large numbers of potential witnesses. Ensure all members are trained in executing the plan.*

**T** [25.3] *At least some training exercises should go beyond merely testing the tactical response and also include the investigative functions. All of the above investigative recommendations and actions should be exercised and tested. This aligns with Observation 10 and its accompanying recommendations.*

**P, T** [26.1] *By clarifying the specific roles of each agency early on, much of the subsequent confusion and uncertainty may have been avoided. While the FBI took the lead role of processing the crime scene, MPD remained responsible for the death investigations by virtue of the applicable D.C. laws. MPD also remained responsible for the investigations of the use-of-force by police officers. With the clear delineation of the roles and expectations, the necessary coordination and communication with the various involved agencies would have flowed much more naturally.*

**P** [27.1] *Conduct a conference call early on (after the initial crisis is over) with representatives from all local agencies in order to provide information/instructions and answer any questions. Hold additional briefings as necessary. Craft a pre-incident checklist, which lists all agencies, protocols, and tasks and can be included in the city's overall response plan.*

**P** [27.2] *Agencies should adhere to the notification and information sharing protocols that are outlined in the city's response plan. Review and update the plan to ensure that the notification protocols clearly outline the proper procedures for both requesting agency assistance and responding to the scene. May want to consider that in the event of a large-scale incident with multiple homicides, the request for the presence of the Medical Examiner should come from the local homicide unit (regardless of which agency is serving as the lead) since the local unit is familiar with and works with the Medical Examiner on a regular basis.*

## **VIII. PUBLIC INFORMATION**

**T** [28.1] *Conduct training and exercises and include all Public Information and Affairs personnel from all relevant agencies to ensure they are aware of the roles and responsibilities of the JIC.*

**T** [28.2] *Ensure the appropriate public information and affairs personnel are ICS/IMT trained. The lead of the JIC should be identified early on during the establishment of the*



*JIC. It is prudent that the individual serving as lead should possess prior ICS/IMT training in order to ensure all JIC responsibilities are properly managed.*

**P** [29.1] *Establish formal protocols for ensuring the appropriate representatives from the hospitals are integrated into the JIC.*

**T** [29.2] *Conduct training that involves the relevant personnel from the area hospitals and the D.C. agencies that coordinate with medical facilities, including HSEMA and Department of Health.*

**P** [30.1] *Craft an action plan for communication strategies, outlining roles and responsibilities, that can be activated when an incident occurs.*

**T** [30.2] *Conduct comprehensive training for all members involved in the JIC and other public communication functions.*

**P** [31.1] *Law enforcement officials should put the press on notice – early on and in a public forum – clearly indicating that all official information regarding the incident will come from Incident or Unified Command or through the formal public information channels.*

**P** [31.2] *Monitor media outlets and social media in order to quickly correct mistaken or inaccurate information that is reported. There may also be investigative benefits, such as identifying potential witnesses (Navy Yard workers were posting information on their Twitter accounts).*

## **IX. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

**P, T, E/S** [32.1] *Incident Command should establish a resource staging location and share this location with responding agencies so they can check in and be appropriately tracked. The location should be well-marked and clearly visible to all responding agencies.*

**P, T** [32.2] *All law enforcement and emergency response agencies should have clear policies and training that directs responding personnel to seek out and check in at the designated staging location.*

**T** [33.1] *Conduct training to exercise and test demobilization plans and preparations pursuant to ICS roles and principles.*

**P, T** [33.2] *All law enforcement and emergency response agencies should have clear policies and training that directs responding personnel to follow the appropriate demobilization procedures prior to departing the incident location.*



- P** [33.3] *Debriefing of personnel, especially those entering the “hot zone”, is a vital aspect of demobilization as it also allows officials to get critical witness information, assess the well-being of the officers, and offer EAP (Employee Assistance Program) support services once the crisis is over. We cannot ignore the fact that incidents with shocking, mass casualties can be troubling to even a hardened, veteran police officer.*
- P** [34.1] *Officials must consider the long-term objectives and ensure there will be an adequate number of personnel to carry out prolonged response operations. This consideration is not only critical to ensuring there is no lapse in police operations, but is also vital for the health and well-being of personnel. A scheduling system, such as alpha/bravo, should be prepared well in advance of an incident requiring its activation.*

## **X. CITYWIDE OPERATIONS**

- P** [35.1] *Ensure there is an official tasked with monitoring and managing the citywide operations and functions. Calls for police service and other assignments will continue in spite of the larger incident. Regularly review personnel needs at both the incident location and throughout the city to ensure there is adequate staffing. Many of the officers working the incident were from the First Police District. Officials ensured that officers were brought in from other districts in order to cover regular police operations in the First District.*

CLL:MJB



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