

Last of the 49 bodies removed from Orlando nightclub

Worst mass shooting in U.S. history

By JASON DEAREN
Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — The last of the bodies were removed from an Orlando gay nightclub overnight as investigators dug into the background of the gunman, who called 911 to profess allegiance to the Islamic State during the attack that left 49 victims dead.

"We will not be defined by the act of a cowardly hater," Mayor Buddy Dyer vowed on Monday, a day after the deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history.

The killer, who died in a gun battle with a SWAT team early Sunday, was identified as Omar Mateen, a 29-year-old American-born Muslim who worked as a security guard in Florida. FBI officials said they had investigated him in 2013 and 2014 on suspicion of terrorist sympathies but could not make a case against him.

President Barack Obama said there is no clear evidence that Mateen was directed to conduct his attack or part of a larger plot. The president said it appears the shooter was inspired by extremist information disseminated over the internet.

Wielding an AR-15 semi-automatic rifle and a handgun, Mateen opened fire at the crowded Pulse Orlando club in such close quarters that the bullets could hardly miss. He was gunned down after police used explosives and a small armored vehicle to punch a hole in a wall and allow dozens of club-goers to escape, police said.

"I've always felt so safe here for my family, kids. And now, I don't know," said Marlon Massey, who lives across the street from the club, in the city known to tourists around the globe as the home of Walt Disney World and other theme parks.

Obama called the shooting an "act of terror" and an "act of hate" against a place of "solidar-



Submitted Photo

The Lower Columbia Q Center held a vigil Sunday evening at the Garden of Surging Waves in downtown Astoria in honor of the victims in the Orlando shooting.

ity and empowerment" for gays.

Law enforcement authorities said Mateen made his 911 call from the club. Authorities have not said whether he was directed by the Islamic State or simply acted in sympathy with the extremist group in a so-called lone wolf attack — something counterterrorism experts have been saying for years is extremely difficult to detect and thwart.

The picture became murkier, though, when Mateen's Afghan immigrant father suggested another motive: anti-gay hatred. The father said his son got angry a few months ago when he saw two men kissing in Miami. And Mateen's ex-wife attributed the violence to mental illness, saying he was bipolar.

The Islamic State's radio called Mateen "one of the soldiers of the caliphate in America." Al-Bayan Radio, a media outlet for the extremist group,

hailed the attack, saying that it targeted a gathering of Christians and gays and that it was the worst attack on U.S. soil since 9/11.

It was unclear, though, whether the group planned or knew of the attack beforehand.

Mateen's father, Seddique Mir Mateen, told reporters Monday that the massacre was "the act of a terrorist," and added: "I apologize for what my son did. I am as sad and mad as you guys are."

He wouldn't go into details about any religious or political views his son held, saying he didn't know. Asked whether he missed his son, he said: "I don't miss anything about him. What he did was against humanity."

Thirty-nine of the dead were killed at the club, and the others died at hospitals, the mayor said. By Monday morning, families of 24 of the victims had been notified, Dyer said.

Workers removed the bodies

four at a time on stretchers and loaded them into white vans. The action was repeated over and over. The covered bodies were taken to the county medical examiner's office. All were there by 11 p.m., Dyer said.

At least 53 people were hospitalized, most in critical condition, and a surgeon at Orlando Regional Medical Center said the death toll was likely to climb.

On Monday morning, officials emphasized that there was no immediate threat to the public.

The shooting started about 2 a.m., with more than 300 people inside the Pulse, where it was Latin night.

"He had an automatic rifle, so nobody stood a chance," said Jackie Smith, who saw two friends next to her get shot. "I just tried to get out of there."

Jon Alamo had been dancing for hours when he wandered into the club's main room just in time to see the gunman. "You

ever seen how Marine guys hold big weapons, shooting from left to right? That's how he was shooting at people," he said.

"My first thought was, 'Oh, my God, I'm going to die,'" Alamo said. "I was praying to God that I would live to see another day."

Pulse patron Eddie Justice texted his mother, Mina: "Mommy I love you. In club they shooting." About 30 minutes later, hiding in a bathroom, he texted her: "He's coming. I'm gonna die."

Justice's name would eventually be added to the list of the dead.

On the same day as the Orlando attack, an Indiana man armed with three assault rifles and chemicals used to make explosives was arrested in Southern California and told police he was headed to a West Hollywood gay pride parade, authorities said.

The previous deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history was the 2007 attack at Virginia Tech, where a student killed 32 people and took his own life.

Mateen was not unknown to law enforcement: In 2013, he made inflammatory comments to co-workers and was interviewed twice, according to FBI agent Ronald Hopper, who called the interviews inconclusive. In 2014, Hopper said, officials found that Mateen had ties to an American suicide bomber, but the agent described the contact as minimal, saying it did not constitute a threat at the time.

Mateen bought at least two guns legally within the last week or so, according to Trevor Velinor of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

Mateen exchanged gunfire with 14 police officers at the club and took hostages at one point. In addition to the assault rifle, he had a handgun. Police Chief John Mina said officers held back for some time because Mateen indicated he had a bomb vest.

About 5 a.m., authorities sent in a SWAT team to rescue the remaining club-goers, Mina said.

Vigils were held across the nation Sunday to honor the victims. In Astoria, people gathered at the Garden of Surging Waves for a candlelight vigil organized by the Lower Columbia Q Center.

In Salem, Gov. Kate Brown ordered all flags at Oregon public institutions to be flown at half-staff until sunset on Thursday.

"Tragically, what we are waking up to in the United States today is that the growing number of mass shootings in the U.S. increases the number of Americans with a personal connection to a Roseburg, a Charleston, a Columbine, and now, an Orlando," Brown said in a statement.

Associated Press writers Eric Tucker in Washington, Terrance Harris, Mike Schneider and Tamara Lush in Orlando and photographer Alan Diaz in Fort Pierce, Florida, contributed to this report.

Housing: 'When it comes to affordable housing, nothing is easy'

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Norstedt said, adding that the company pays about \$15 an hour.

Small businesses and the Haystack Rock Awareness Program have also struggled with employee retention.

Councilors and staff recently prioritized workforce housing while creating the city's strategic plan, to be adopted in July. City Planner Mark Barnes said the task force is an important part in meeting some housing goals, such as providing 25 affordable housing units for various sizes and consistent with city architectural guidelines by 2018, then adding 25 more units by 2020.

The goals also involve increasing long-term rentals and temporarily banning vacation rental programs.

In May, the task force saw conceptual designs of what affordable housing units could look like at the RV Park on Haskell Lane and the downtown Spruce Street parking lot. The ideas will eventually be introduced at a City Council meeting.

Potential new sites, ideas

The city is considering the Tolovana Park site of the now-shuttered children's center for a third possible workforce housing location, Barnes said.

The building became city property after the children's center closed in April. A concept design showed about nine units with parking.

The 6 acres behind Sea Ranch Resort could be another potential affordable housing location, task force member Ken McQuhae said.

Incentivizing affordable housing development for property owners of vacant lots throughout town is another option, Barnes said.

Former city planner Rainmar Bartl and former mayor Mike Morgan suggested "park model homes" — factory-built homes under 400 square feet — as an

alternative concept for affordable housing at the city's RV Park.

The homes, which include architectural details, could meet the needs of individual or two-person households and would be affordable for hospitality industry employees, Bartl said.

"It's scalable. You can start with a set number and see how that works," Bartl said, adding that the homes would be about \$90 per square foot and would "pay for themselves."

Silvis said park model homes could be a "potential tool in the toolbox."

"City Council is looking for an array of possible solutions from the task force," Barnes said.

Community response

Residents responded with both ideas and opposition to the concept designs introduced in May.

Plans for affordable housing will eat up downtown parking, and homes should be placed outside the tsunami zone, resident Douglas Wood told the Cannon Beach City Council Tuesday.

"We would be able to recover as a community more effectively if we had a group of homes and residences up out of the inundation zone on stable high ground," Wood said. "I see an opportunity to encourage workforce housing in a less expensive, lower market-value area ... resulting in no change in character for the town."

A task force meeting Wednesday did not allow for public comment, unlike previous meetings. The group agreed to permit public comment at the next meeting in August.

"I don't want to stifle public comment," task force member Brandon Ogilvie said, "but I hope people understand this is a work session and we are tasked with coming up with a solution."

"There was lots of lively public comment over the last few meetings," Silvis said. "All of that is good information to gather."

Resident Ed Johnson said he objected to the denial of public comment at the task force meeting and he disagreed with the affordable housing concept being introduced "without public input."

"I think if you're going to be on a committee, you have the obligation to find out what the impact might be on those people who live adjacent to a new proposed project," Johnson said. "It seems like, if you want to build the city, you get the people on your side before you start out."

Johnson did not oppose affordable housing at other sites that would be "less impacting."

Resident Phil Massebeau said he objected to new affordable housing units in general.

"We are property owners. We've lived here all our lives," he said. "Why do we have to build affordable housing? These businesses get their employees how they get their employees. It's not up to us to build housing for them."

Johnson presented the task force with a signed list of almost 30 people, collected by Massebeau, who object to the RV Park affordable housing idea. The petition from "people of Cannon Beach, Elk Land Drive, Haskell Lane and neighboring areas to the RV Park" cited revenue generated by the RV Park, tree removal and an influx of people changing the neighborhood as reasons for opposing the concept.

More housing in the already populated neighborhood "would create more stress on infrastructure, water, sewer and a high increase of traffic, not to mention it would destroy the aesthetics of this neighborhood," the petition stated.

If units were built on the RV Park, the city could lose revenue from the RV spaces.

"When it comes to affordable housing, nothing is easy," Bartl said during his presentation. "People have to make hard choices. If you're committed to something, you have to give something else up."

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