

Stymied police seek public's help in uncovering Las Vegas gunman's motive

LAS VEGAS (AP) — After five days of scouring the life of Las Vegas gunman Stephen Paddock and chasing 1,000 leads, investigators confessed Friday they still don't know what drove him to mass murder, and they announced plans to put up billboards appealing for the public's help.

In their effort to find any hint of his motive, investigators were looking into whether he was with a prostitute days before the shooting, scrutinizing cruises he took and trying to make sense of a cryptic note with numbers jotted on it found in his hotel room, a federal official said.

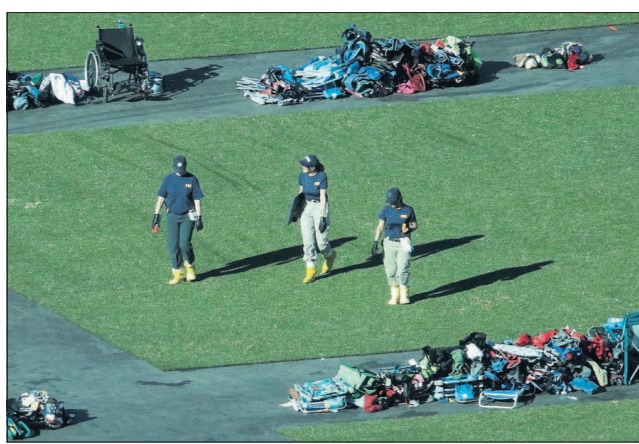
So far, examinations of Paddock's politics, finances, any possible radicalization and his social behavior — typical investigative avenues that have helped uncover the motive in past shootings — have turned up little.

"We still do not have a clear motive or reason why," Clark County Undersheriff Kevin McMahon said. "We have looked at literally everything."

The FBI announced that billboards would go up around the city asking anyone with information to phone 800-CALL-FBI.

"If you know something, say something," said Aaron Rouse, agent in charge of the Las Vegas FBI office. "We will not stop until we have the truth."

Paddock, a reclusive



Members of the FBI walk among piles of personal items at the scene of a mass shooting Friday in Las Vegas. Stephen Paddock opened fire on an outdoor music concert on Sunday killing dozens and injuring hundreds.

64-year-old high-stakes gambler, rained bullets on the crowd at a country music festival Sunday night from his 32nd-floor hotel suite, killing 58 and wounding hundreds before taking his own life.

McMahon said investigators had reviewed voluminous video from the casino and don't think Paddock had an accomplice in the shooting, but they want to know if anyone knew about his plot beforehand.

Investigators believe Paddock hired a prostitute in the days leading up to the shooting and were interviewing other call girls for information, a U.S. official briefed by federal law enforcement officials said. The official wasn't authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on

condition of anonymity. The official also disclosed that Paddock took at least a dozen cruises abroad in the last few years, most of them with his girlfriend, Marilou Danley. At least one sailed to the Middle East.

It is unusual to have so few hints of a motive five days after a mass shooting. In previous mass killings or terrorist attacks, killers left notes, social media postings and information on a computer — or even phoned police.

"The lack of a social media footprint is likely intentional," said Erroll Souther, director of homegrown violent extremism studies at the University of Southern California. "We're so used to, in the first 24 to 48 hours, being able to review social media posts. If they don't leave us

a note behind or a manifesto behind, and we're not seeing that, that's what's making this longer."

What officers have found is that Paddock planned his attack meticulously.

He requested an upper-floor room overlooking the festival, stockpiled 23 guns, a dozen of them modified to fire continuously like an automatic weapon, and set up cameras inside and outside his room to watch for approaching officers.

In a possible sign he was contemplating massacres at other sites, he also booked rooms overlooking the Lollapalooza festival in Chicago in August and the Life Is Beautiful show near the Vegas Strip in late September, according to authorities reconstructing his movements leading up to the deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history.

His arsenal also included tracer rounds that can improve a shooter's firing accuracy in the dark, a law enforcement official told AP. It wasn't clear whether Paddock fired any of the illuminated bullets during the high-rise massacre.

Paddock bought 1,000 rounds of the .308-caliber and .223-caliber tracer ammunition from a private buyer he met at a Phoenix gun show, a law enforcement official not authorized to comment on the investigation said on condition of anonymity.

Supreme Court justice has an elk as an office mate

WASHINGTON (AP) — When Justice Neil Gorsuch joined the Supreme Court earlier this year he got Justice Antonin Scalia's seat, his office and his elk, Leroy.

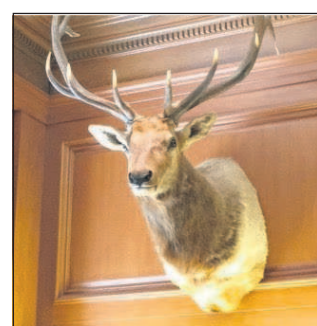
In recent appearances, Gorsuch has been telling the story of how the elk — actually just its mounted head — came to be his office mate.

The story starts more than a decade ago when Scalia shot the elk on a hunting trip and had its head mounted and hung in his Supreme Court office.

Gorsuch explained at an event in Washington last week that after Scalia died in 2016 it seemed that the elk was destined "to become homeless." That's because the elk head, part of an animal estimated to have weighed around 900 pounds, is "much too much for anyone's living room wall," Gorsuch said.

"And then someone got the idea that Leroy might make, well, a sort of unusual welcome-to-the-neighborhood gift for the new guy. What a gift," Gorsuch said.

Christopher Scalia, one of the late justice's nine children and the co-editor of a collection of his father's speeches published this week, said in a telephone interview that his father shot the Rocky Mountain elk on a hunting trip in Colorado in 2003. Though the justice had other hunting trophies displayed in his home including white tail deer, an antelope or two and a boar's head, the elk was



Leroy the elk

"way too big for our house," Christopher Scalia said. So Leroy took up residence at the Supreme Court facing the justice's desk.

"He was proud of it and he enjoyed showing it off," Christopher Scalia said.

After Scalia died, Leroy was crated up and sent to Summers in Colorado, he said. And when Gorsuch was nominated to the court, Summers asked what others were also thinking, he said: Would Gorsuch, a fellow conservative and outdoorsman, take Leroy back to Washington? Gorsuch "graciously accepted," Summers said. So back across the country Leroy went. Gorsuch joked last week that he is actually "delighted to share space with Leroy" and that they "share a few things in common."

"Turns out, we're both native Coloradans. We both received a rather shocking summons to Washington," he said. "Neither of us is ever going to forget Justice Scalia."

BRIEFLY

U.S. states declare emergency ahead of Tropical Storm Nate

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Tropical Storm Nate gained force as it sped toward Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula Friday after drenching Central America in rain that was blamed for at least 21 deaths. Forecasters said it was likely to reach the U.S. Gulf Coast as a hurricane over the weekend.

Louisiana and Mississippi officials declared states of state of emergency and Louisiana ordered some people to evacuate coastal areas and barrier islands ahead of its expected landfall Saturday night or early Sunday. Evacuations began at some offshore oil platforms in the Gulf.

Mississippi's government said it would open 11 evacuation shelters in areas away from the immediate coast, with buses available for people who can't drive.

The U.S. National Hurricane Center warned that Nate could raise sea levels by 4 to 7 feet from Morgan City, Louisiana, to the Alabama-Florida border. It had already had caused deadly flooding in much of Central America.

The center added metropolitan New Orleans and Lake Pontchartrain to its latest hurricane warning.

The storm had maximum sustained winds of 60 mph by Friday afternoon and was likely to strengthen over the northwestern Caribbean Sea on Friday before brushing by the Cancun region at the tip of Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula. It could hit the U.S. Gulf coast near New Orleans.

AP Poll: Just 24 percent say U.S. going in right direction

WASHINGTON (AP) — Just 24 percent of Americans believe the country is heading in the right direction after a tumultuous stretch for President Donald Trump that included the threat of war with North Korea, stormy complaints about hurricane relief and Trump's equivocating about white supremacists. That's a 10-point drop since June, according to a poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

The decline in optimism about the nation's trajectory is particularly pronounced among Republicans. In June, 60 percent of Republicans said the country was headed in the right direction; now it's just 44 percent.

The broader picture for the president is grim, too. Nearly 70 percent of Americans say Trump isn't level-headed, and majorities say he's not honest or a strong leader. More than 60 percent disapprove of how he is handling race relations, foreign policy and immigration, among other issues.

Overall, 67 percent of Americans disapprove of the job Trump is doing in office, including about one-third of Republicans.

Tracy Huelsman, a 40-year-old from Louisville, Kentucky, is among them. A self-described moderate Republican, Huelsman said she's particularly concerned about the "divisiveness" she feels the president promotes on social media.

"It's scary in 2017 that we are in what seems like a worse place in terms of division," said Huelsman, who did not vote for Trump in last year's election.

The assessments come after a turbulent summer for Trump that included a major White House shake-up, bringing the departure of his chief of staff, top strategist and press secretary. While the installment of retired Marine Gen. John Kelly as chief of staff has ushered in more day-to-day order in the West Wing, the president has still



A San Francisco treat

In advance of Fleet Week performances, the U.S. Navy Blue Angels and Team Oracle aerobatics pilot Sean D. Tucker fly over the San Francisco Bay during a photo flight on Thursday.

stirred up numerous controversies, including when he blamed "both sides" for the clashes between white supremacists and counter-protesters in Charlottesville, Virginia.

U.S. Chamber sounds alarm about a NAFTA pullout

WASHINGTON (AP) — America's biggest business group is warning the Trump administration that a withdrawal from the North American Free Trade Agreement would be a "political and economic debacle" that would cost hundreds of thousands of U.S. jobs.

Talking with reporters Friday, John Murphy, a senior official with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, said the chamber would work to rally support for the trade deal and against the administration's hardline demand for concessions from Canada and Mexico. The comments were unusually blunt for America's biggest business group.

The Trump administration, which has threatened to pull out of NAFTA if the three countries can't agree on far-reaching changes to favor American interests, quickly returned fire.

"The president has been clear that NAFTA has been a disaster for many Americans, and achieving his objectives requires substantial change," said Emily Davis, spokeswoman for the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative. "These changes of course will be opposed by entrenched Washington lobbyists and trade associations. We have always understood that draining the swamp would be controversial in Washington."

The fourth round of talks to overhaul NAFTA, which was enacted 23 years ago, is scheduled for next week in Washington.

Trump's one-two punch hits birth control, LGBT rights

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a one-two punch elating religious conservatives, President Donald Trump's administration is allowing more employers to opt out of no-cost birth control for workers and issuing sweeping religious-freedom directions that could override many anti-discrimination protections for LGBT people and others. At a time when Trump finds himself

embattled on many fronts, the two directives — issued almost simultaneously on Friday — demonstrated the president's eagerness to retain the loyalty of social conservatives who make up a key part of his base. Leaders of that constituency were exultant.

"President Trump is demonstrating his commitment to undoing the anti-faith policies of the previous administration and restoring true religious freedom," said Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council.

Liberal advocacy groups, including those supporting LGBT and reproductive rights, were outraged.

"The Trump administration is saying to employers, 'If you want to discriminate, we have your back,'" said Fatima Goss Graves, president of National Women's Law Center.

Her organization is among several that are planning to challenge the birth-control rollback in court. The American Civil Liberties Union filed such a lawsuit less than three hours after the rules were issued.

"The Trump administration is forcing women to pay for their boss' religious beliefs," said ACLU senior staff attorney Brigitte Amiri. "We're filing this lawsuit because the federal government cannot authorize discrimination against women in the name of religion or otherwise."

Abortion double-cross ends congressman's career

PITTSBURGH (AP) — U.S. Rep. Tim Murphy had counted on his anti-abortion record as one of many planks to help him get elected to Congress eight times, and it was his perceived personal betrayal of that record that ended his career.

For Murphy, a practicing psychologist, author and former commander in the Navy Reserves who had made mental health treatment a signature issue, everything began falling apart when his hometown newspaper revealed Tuesday that the congressman had suggested a mistress get an abortion when they thought she might be pregnant.

It was the beginning of the end for Murphy's 20-year political career.

Voters, talk show hosts, party officials and anti-abortion activists turned against Murphy. Two days later, Murphy informed House Speaker Paul Ryan and Gov. Tom

Wolf that he would resign Oct. 21.

Murphy, 65, has remained publicly silent, other than a brief statement saying he would seek help as he and his family work through their "difficulties."

He had been in the state Senate representing suburban Pittsburgh when the party carved up the shrinking population of western Pennsylvania into new congressional districts, creating a Republican-friendly district tailored for Murphy.

Bergdahl expected to plead guilty to desertion, misbehavior

WASHINGTON (AP) — Army Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, who was held captive by the Taliban for half a decade after abandoning his Afghanistan post, is expected to plead guilty to desertion and misbehavior before the enemy, two individuals with knowledge of the case said.

Bergdahl's decision to plead guilty rather than face trial marks another twist in an eight-year drama that caused the nation to wrestle with difficult questions of loyalty, negotiating with hostage takers and America's commitment not to leave its troops behind. President Donald Trump has called Bergdahl a "no-go traitor" who "should have been executed."

The decision by the 31-year-old Idaho native leaves open whether he will return to captivity for years — this time in a U.S. prison — or receive a lesser sentence that reflects the time the Taliban held him under brutal conditions. He says he had been caged, kept in darkness, beaten and chained to a bed.

Bergdahl could face up to five years on the desertion charge and a life sentence for misbehavior.

Freed three years ago, Bergdahl had been scheduled for trial in late October. He had opted to let a judge rather than a military jury decide his fate, but a guilty plea later this month will spare the need for a trial.

ICE official: Agency will arrest at California worksites

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — In another sign of escalating tensions between President Donald Trump's administration and California, the nation's top immigration official said Friday his agency will have "no choice" but to arrest immigrants who are in the country illegally in California's neighborhoods and worksites.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement will also likely have to place immigrants arrested in California in out-of-state detention centers, ICE Acting Director Thomas Homan said in a statement.

Homan's comments came a day after Gov. Jerry Brown signed bill SB54, or sanctuary state legislation.

Starting Jan. 1, police will be barred from asking people about their immigration status or participating in federal immigration enforcement activities. Jail officials only will be allowed to transfer inmates to federal immigration authorities if they have been convicted of certain crimes.

"Ultimately, SB54 helps shield removable aliens from immigration enforcement and creates another magnet for more illegal immigration, all at the expense of the safety and security of the very people it purports to protect," Homan warned.

Federal immigration officials already carry out sweeps targeting immigrants in sanctuary cities and transfer many of their detainees to out-of-state facilities.