

## Case 80: Orlando

John Mueller

December 12, 2016

A third grade teacher remembers Afghan-American Omar Mateen as being “verbally abusive, rude, aggressive” and a coworker of the adult Mateen calls him “unhinged and unstable.” Nevertheless, he was able at the age of 21 to get a job at a private security firm where he was trained on the use of firearms. He had a state-issued security guard license as well as a firearms license.

After being on this job for nearly nine years, Mateen calmly and legally purchased a Sig Sauer MCX rifle and a Glock 17 handgun for himself and used these a week later, on June 12, 2016, to murder 49 people in a raid on a gay Latino nightclub in Orlando, Florida. It was the deadliest shooting by a single gunman in American history.

The attack also more than doubled the number of people who have been killed in Islamist terrorist attacks in the United States since 9/11. Two were killed in 2002 (Case 4), 13 in 2009 (Cases 26 and 32), three in 2013 (Case 54), three in 2014 (Case 57), and 19 in 2015 (Cases 72 and 76), for a total of 40.

As Alex Rhodes stresses, Mateen’s motives for carrying out this massacre are murky. He was likely mentally unstable, had a history of committing violent acts against the two women he had married, had something of a steroid abuse problem, was quick to anger, and seems to have been strongly homophobic.

In addition, he often seemed, in the words of one official, “to be looking for any opportunity to associate with the terrorist group du jour.” At various points Mateen claimed to be the nephew of Osama bin Laden, to have friends and family members in al-Qaeda and Hezbollah, and to have connections with the Boston Marathon bombers and the Fort Hood shooter.

He had been investigated by the FBI a few years earlier about such ravings. It found that Mateen’s claims had no substance and concluded that he had no connection to any terrorist group. The investigation was dropped as it seemed, in the words of the Special Agent in charge, that Mateen was unlikely to “go postal or anything like that.” In all, concludes Rhodes “there was no reason to believe that Mateen would attempt to carry out a terrorist attack,” and this suggests that “at least some terrorist attacks, regardless of how large a threat they may pose, cannot be stopped by increasing surveillance.”

During the three-hour siege at the nightclub, Mateen told a hostage negotiator over the telephone on a recorded line that he wanted “America to stop bombing” because “a lot of innocent women and children are getting killed in Syria and Iraq and Afghanistan.” He also said that his actions were “done in the name of the Islamic State, even though it’s not fucking air strikes, it’s fucking strikes here, okay?” He proclaimed one of the Boston Marathon bombers to be his “homeboy” who “did his thing, okay, so now it’s my turn, okay?” He wanted to

be called “Islamic soldier” or “Mujahideen,” or “Soldier of the God,” and complained, “Look, you're annoying me with a lot of your phone calls.”<sup>1</sup>

Shortly after he was shot to death by police, Mateen was finally admitted to the terrorist group du jour when Islamic State media proclaimed him to be “one of the soldiers of the caliphate in America.”<sup>2</sup>

Paul Pillar has observed that “groups such as ISIS are less prime movers of terrorism and more of a name and a cause to which radicals attach themselves to believe that they are acting on behalf of something larger than themselves and their own demons and grievances.”<sup>3</sup> This observation may well fit a number of cases in this book, particularly some of the ones related to ISIS that began in 2014. In the case of the Orlando massacre, it seems strikingly appropriate.

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<sup>1</sup> “FL-OmarMateenTranscripts,” [publicintelligence.net](http://publicintelligence.net), June 12, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Adam Taylor, “Omar Mateen may not have understood the difference between ISIS, al-Qaeda and Hezbollah,” [washingtonpost.com](http://washingtonpost.com), June 13, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Pillar, “Felling ISIS and Racing Reality About Terrorism,” [nationalinterest.org](http://nationalinterest.org), November 1, 2016.

## Case 80: Orlando

Alex Rhodes

December 12, 2016

### 1. Overview

On June 12, 2016, at around 2:00 am, Omar Mateen, a 29 years old US citizen and a trained gunman, entered the Pulse gay bar and nightclub in Orlando, Florida, with an assault rifle and pistol.<sup>1</sup> He opened fire on the crowd, killing 49 people and wounding 53 more.<sup>2</sup> Later that night, after a nearly three-hour long hostage situation, Mateen was killed by law enforcement officers during an exchange of gunfire immediately outside of the club's walls.<sup>3</sup> Mateen's attack is the deadliest shooting by a single gunman in US history, the deadliest attack on gay people in US history, and the deadliest case of terrorism in America since the attacks on September 11, 2001.<sup>4</sup> Evidence strongly suggests Mateen had no significant connections to ISIS or any terrorist organization.<sup>5</sup> He had been under investigation by the FBI from May 2013 to March 2014 after he claimed to have connections to terrorist organizations, but suspicions were quelled when no evidence was found of any significant connection.<sup>6</sup>

While it is not entirely clear what motivated Mateen, there are several possible influences. It is clear that the internet played a role in his attack.<sup>7</sup> It was suggested by someone who attended the same mosque as Mateen that he was inspired by "listening to the lectures of Anwar al-Awlaki, the charismatic Yemen-based imam who helped radicalize several Muslims, including the Fort Hood shooter."<sup>8</sup> It is also likely that the attack was motivated in part by anti-gay beliefs that Mateen held.<sup>9</sup> Mateen also claimed during a discussion with negotiators during the attack that he was triggered by airstrikes in Syria and Iraq, more specifically "the air strike that killed Abu Wahid."<sup>10</sup> Mateen was mentally

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<sup>1</sup> Lizette Alvarez, "Orlando Gunman Attacks Gay Nightclub, Leaving 50 Dead," nytimes.com, June 12, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Alvarez, "Orlando Gunman Attacks."

<sup>3</sup> Gal Tziperman Lotan, "Orlando mass shooting: Timeline of events," orlandosentinel.com, June 13, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Tziperman Lotan, "Orlando mass shooting."

<sup>5</sup> Spencer Ackerman, "CIA has not found any link between Orlando killer and Isis, says agency chief," theguardian.com, June 16, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Kevin Sullivan, "Troubled. Quiet. Macho. Angry. The volatile life of the Orlando shooter," washingtonpost.com, June 17, 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Ed Pilkington and Dan Roberts, "FBI and Obama confirm Omar Mateen was radicalized on the internet," theguardian.com, June 13, 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Mohammed A. Malik, "I reported Omar Mateen to the FBI. Trump is wrong that Muslims don't do our part," washingtonpost.com, June 20, 2016.

<sup>9</sup> Pete Williams, "Gunman Omar Mateen Described as Belligerent, Racist and 'Toxic'," nbcnews.com, June 13, 2016.

<sup>10</sup> "FL-OmarMateenTranscripts," publicintelligence.net, June 12, 2016.

unstable, and had a history of committing violent acts against his wife and ex-wife.<sup>11</sup> It is also likely that he was on steroids for a substantial amount of time before the attack, although no substances were found in his system during the autopsy following the shooting.<sup>12</sup> Mateen's attack continues to raise fear surrounding the true threat of ISIS and other terrorist organizations across the United States.

## 2. Nature of the adversary

Omar Mateen (originally named Omar Mir Seddique) was born on November 16, 1986 in New Hyde Park, New York.<sup>13</sup> Both of his parents are Afghan. Mateen had a very troubled childhood; he attended elementary school and middle school in St. Lucie, Florida, where he was described by a third grade teacher at his school as being "very active... constantly moving, verbally abusive, rude, aggressive."<sup>14</sup> The teacher remarked that Mateen would often "talk about violence & sex," and that he would often put his "hands all over the place—on other children, in his mouth."<sup>15</sup> He was involved in "many instances of behavioral problems,"<sup>16</sup> and was disciplined 31 times between 1992 and 1999 for disrespectful or violent behavior. Mateen eventually withdrew from St. Lucie County schools in 1999 after struggling in his classes.<sup>17</sup> He ended up transferring school districts.

In tenth grade, on September 13, 2001, Mateen was suspended for five days after cheering for the terrorists who had carried out the attack on 9/11.<sup>18</sup> Mateen's class had been watching the attacks on a television set in their classrooms. Robert Zirkle, a freshman at Martin County High School, the school Mateen attended, claimed that Mateen was excited that America was under attack. He recalls that on a day following the attack, Mateen "was making plane noises on the bus, acting like he was running into a building."<sup>19</sup> At a later time, Mateen claimed to be the nephew of Osama bin Laden, which started a fight resulting in Mateen being escorted from the school. School personnel recall that despite all of

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<sup>11</sup> Adam Goldman, Joby Warrick, and Max Bearak, "‘He was not a stable person’: Orlando shooter showed signs of emotional trouble," [washingtonpost.com](http://washingtonpost.com), June 12, 2016.

<sup>12</sup> Del Quentin Wilber, "Orlando gunman was HIV-negative, and probably a long-term steroid user, autopsy shows," [latimes.com](http://latimes.com), July 15, 2016.

<sup>13</sup> Kate Lyons, "Orlando shooting – as it happened," [theguardian.com](http://theguardian.com), June 13, 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Mitch Weiss and Russ Bynum, "Records: Orlando gunman talked about violence in 3rd grade," [seattletimes.com](http://seattletimes.com), June 17, 2016.

<sup>15</sup> Weiss and Bynum, "Records: Orlando gunman."

<sup>16</sup> Weiss and Bynum, "Records: Orlando gunman."

<sup>17</sup> Kerry Burke, "Pulse nightclub shooter Omar Mateen was spurned by boyfriends, 'did it for revenge,' alleged ex-lover claims," [nydailynews.com](http://nydailynews.com), June 22, 2016.

<sup>18</sup> William Wan, "On 9/11, the Orlando shooter's classmates mourned. Some say he celebrated," [washingtonpost.com](http://washingtonpost.com), June 13, 2016.

<sup>19</sup> Wan, "On 9/11, the Orlando."

the disciplinary measures carried out by the school and the letters home warning of Mateen's behavior, Seddique Mir Mateen, Omar's father, always chose the side of his son.<sup>20</sup>

It is possible that Seddique had an impact on Mateen's ideological perspectives regarding the Taliban, ISIS, and violent means of resolving conflict. A financial broker, Seddique is said to be an ideological supporter of the Afghan Taliban.<sup>21</sup> In 2010 he began a group known as Durand Jirga, Inc, named in reference to the Durand line, the historically disputed border dividing Afghanistan and Pakistan.<sup>22</sup> He also posted long videos to social media delving into Afghan politics. There is no clear consensus regarding the purpose and content of these videos; while a former Afghan official identified them as pro-Taliban, another colleague argued that the videos were fairly pro-American in nature. Seddique went as far as to post military photos of himself in uniform, claiming to be a candidate for the president of Afghanistan.<sup>23</sup> Regardless of his apparent interest in Afghan politics and Taliban ideology, Mateen's father claims to have had little influence on his son's radicalization or violence, stating that he never raised him to be a terrorist and that his turn to the darker side of extremism was unexpected.<sup>24</sup>

After working several retail jobs following his graduation from high school in 2003, Mateen began work as a corrections officer in the Martin Correctional Institute in 2006.<sup>25</sup> After only seven months, in April of 2007, Mateen was "administratively dismissed" from the program. He was reportedly caught sleeping in class and during firearm training. He also asked a classmate at the corrections officer training if he would tell anyone if Mateen were to bring a gun to school.<sup>26</sup> After being dismissed, Mateen obtained a state-issued security guard license and an associated firearms license.<sup>27</sup> Since he did not have a criminal record and was not on any terrorist watch list at the time, he did not face any barrier to obtaining the licenses. He was soon hired by Wackenhut, a company that later turned into the security company G4S. For his role in G4S, Mateen underwent a series of background checks and tests, including a psychometric test called the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory

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<sup>20</sup> Weiss and Bynum, "Records: Orlando gunman."

<sup>21</sup> Dan Barry, "'Always Agitated. Always Mad': Omar Mateen, According to Those Who Knew Him," [nytimes.com](http://nytimes.com), June 18, 2016.

<sup>22</sup> Tucker Reals, "What has the Orlando gunman's father said?" [cbsnews.com](http://cbsnews.com), June 13, 2016.

<sup>23</sup> Reals, "What has the Orlando?"

<sup>24</sup> CBS/AP, "What we know about Orlando nightclub shooter Omar Mateen," [cbsnews.com](http://cbsnews.com), June 13, 2016.

<sup>25</sup> Sullivan, "Troubled. Quiet. Macho."

<sup>26</sup> CBS/AP, "What we know." Sullivan, "Troubled. Quiet. Macho."

<sup>27</sup> Sullivan, "Troubled. Quiet. Macho."

[MMPI]. He scored “above average.”<sup>28</sup> Mateen worked for G4S from 2007 until the attack on June 12, 2016. Daniel Gilroy, a former coworker of Omar Mateen at G4S, described him as “unhinged and unstable.” Gilroy claims that he “complained multiple times,” presumably to G4S authorities, that Mateen “was dangerous, that he didn’t like blacks, women, lesbians and Jews.”<sup>29</sup>

The FBI opened an investigation on Omar Mateen in May of 2013 after Mateen, in a conversation with coworkers, claimed to have friends and family members in al-Qaeda and Hezbollah, and to have connections with the Boston Marathon bombers.<sup>30</sup> Mateen was questioned by agents about these claims twice. The first time, Mateen didn’t admit to making the claims, and agents found that he “didn’t have a full understanding of the terrorist groups.”<sup>31</sup> The second time, Mateen admitted to telling his coworkers he had ties to terrorist organizations. Roland Hopper, an FBI official in Orlando, reported that the FBI “thoroughly investigated the matter, including interviews of witnesses, physical surveillance, and records checks,” and ultimately “were unable to verify the substance of his comments and the investigation was closed.” An unnamed US official is on record saying that Mateen “seems to be looking for any opportunity to associate with the terrorist group du jour.”<sup>32</sup> Mateen was thus dismissed as not posing a significant threat to the United States.<sup>33</sup> After this investigation, there is no evidence to suggest that the FBI and law enforcement kept a close watch on Mateen.<sup>34</sup> He was able to purchase firearms with no obstacles.<sup>35</sup> FBI Special Agent in Charge Rand Glass remarked during Mateen’s investigation that it’s not likely he “would go postal or anything like that.”<sup>36</sup>

On May 25, 2014, Moner Mohammad Abu-Salha, an individual who attended the same mosque as Omar Mateen, travelled to Syria and committed a suicide truck-bombing attack. Mateen was investigated by FBI officials about his relationship to Abu-Salha.<sup>37</sup> Regarding the relationship, Roland Hopper went on record stating that the FBI “determined that contact was minimal and did not

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<sup>28</sup> Oliver Laughland, “G4S did not psychologically re-evaluate Omar Mateen after FBI questioning,” *theguardian.com*, June 14, 2016.

<sup>29</sup> Del Quentin Wilber, “Orlando terror attack updates: Obama meets with victims’ families in Orlando,” *latimes.com*, June 16, 2016.

<sup>30</sup> Devlin Barrett, Adam Entous, and Alan Cullison, “FBI Twice Probed Orlando Gunman,” *wsj.com*, June 13, 2016.

<sup>31</sup> Barrett et al., “FBI Twice Probed.”

<sup>32</sup> Barrett et al., “FBI Twice Probed.”

<sup>33</sup> Mazzetti, “Omar Mateen, Twice”

<sup>34</sup> Mazzetti, “Omar Mateen, Twice.”

<sup>35</sup> FOX News Insider, “Officials: Orlando Terrorist.”

<sup>36</sup> “Judicial Watch Obtains Documents”

<sup>37</sup> Cassandra Vinograd, “Omar Mateen, U.S. Suicide Bomber Tied to Fort Pierce, Florida,” *nbcnews.com*, June 13, 2016.

constitute a substantive relationship or a threat at that time.”<sup>38</sup> The investigation of Omar Mateen concluded in March of 2014.

Mateen is likely to have been a long-time steroid abuser.<sup>39</sup> His autopsy revealed “evidence of physical changes to Mateen’s body that were consistent with long-term steroid use.”<sup>40</sup> Though no steroids were found in Mateen’s system after the attack, steroid use is known to increase irritability and aggression among some of its users. It is not clear whether steroid use played a significant role in Mateen’s desire to commit terrorist acts.

Mateen displayed notably violent tendencies in his personal life. He married his first wife, Sitora Yusufiy, in April of 2009, after meeting online.<sup>41</sup> After only four months, the couple separated. Yusufiy cites Mateen’s physically and emotionally abusive behavior as the reason for the split. She said that after about six weeks, Mateen began abusing her. He stopped her from calling her parents, he only allowed her to leave the house to attend her job, and he made Yusufiy give him her paychecks.<sup>42</sup> Yusufiy told a reporter “He beat me. He would just come home and start beating me up because the laundry wasn’t finished or something like that.”<sup>43</sup> They were divorced by July 2011.

Mateen’s second wife, Noor Salman, described Mateen as easily angered. They had met in 2011 in an online dating site called Arab Lounge, and were married soon after meeting. The couple moved into a two-bedroom condominium in Fort Pierce, and Salman was soon pregnant with Mateen’s child. Although the beginning of the relationship looked promising, about six months into the relationship, while Salman was pregnant, Mateen began manifesting some of the same physically and mentally abusive tendencies that he did with his first wife. Salman recalls Mateen punching her and bruising her arm after going shopping for baby clothes one day. Later that same day, when going to meet Salman’s parents, Mateen told her not let the abuse be known. He said: “Wipe your eyes. This stays between us, or it’s going to get worse.” Salman recalls that Mateen would often maliciously pull her hair, choke her, and threaten to kill her. “He had no remorse,” she claimed.<sup>44</sup> They were still married at the time of the Pulse attack, and their son was three years old.

Following the Pulse nightclub shooting, numerous allegations emerged that Omar Mateen was homosexual. Kevin West, a frequent patron of Pulse,

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<sup>38</sup> Barrett et al., “FBI Twice Probed.”

<sup>39</sup> Wilber, “Orlando gunman was HIV-negative.”

<sup>40</sup> Wilber, “Orlando gunman was HIV-negative.”

<sup>41</sup> Goldman et al., “‘He was not a stable person’.”

<sup>42</sup> Jack Healy, “Sitora Yusufiy, Ex-Wife of Orlando Suspect, Describes Abusive Marriage,” *nytimes.com*, June 13, 2016.

<sup>43</sup> Goldman et al., “‘He was not a stable person’.”

<sup>44</sup> Goldman et al., “‘He was not a stable person’.”

claimed that Mateen often messaged him on Jack'd, a gay dating app.<sup>45</sup> Four Pulse patrons claimed that they had previously seen Mateen in the club before the night of the shooting. Ty Smith, one of the patrons, stated that Mateen “would go over in the corner and sit and drink by himself, and other times he would get so drunk he was loud and belligerent.”<sup>46</sup> Individuals also claimed that Mateen used the gay dating apps Adam4Adam and Grindr.<sup>47</sup> An unnamed classmate of Mateen from his time in the police academy in 2006 claimed to have been asked out to gay bars by Mateen.<sup>48</sup> Mateen’s ex-wife is also on record stating that Mateen exhibited “gay tendencies.” Despite the significant number of witnesses that seem to be sure of Mateen’s homosexuality, the FBI has claimed to have found no evidence that Omar Mateen had ever used a gay dating app or had frequented Pulse with the exception of casing it out before the attack.<sup>49</sup> It may be possible that this information was purposefully not released, as Cord Ceden, another Pulse frequenter who claims to have seen Mateen, has argued.<sup>50</sup> Mateen’s ex-wife has claimed that investigators asked her not to share her thoughts on her ex-husband’s gay tendencies with news outlets.<sup>51</sup>

### 3. Motivation

There is no consensus on what motivated Omar Mateen to plan and execute the shooting. It is likely that both Mateen’s radicalization and his hatred toward homosexuals were large motivators in attacking Pulse nightclub. His supposed repressed homosexuality may have driven him to lash out toward those in the gay bar, but it is not even clear that he had homosexual tendencies. Though several Pulse patrons recall seeing and communicating with Mateen at the bar and on the gay dating apps Adam4Adam and Grindr, there is no evidence that Mateen had an account on any gay dating apps.<sup>52</sup>

It is likely Mateen had learned and harbored extreme anti-gay beliefs, and given some kind of trigger, he may have been compelled to strike out against the gay community. It is possible that even though Mateen may have felt hatred for the gay community for quite some time, he was triggered to commit the Pulse

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<sup>45</sup> Molly Hennessey-Fiske, “Orlando gunman had used gay dating app and visited LGBT nightclub on other occasions, witnesses say,” *latimes.com*, June 13, 2016.

<sup>46</sup> Hennessey-Fiske, “Orlando gunman had used.”

<sup>47</sup> Hennessey-Fiske, “Orlando gunman had used.”

<sup>48</sup> Lawrence Mower, “Orlando shooter Omar Mateen was gay, former classmate says,” *palmbeachpost.com*, June 14, 2016.

<sup>49</sup> Molly Hennessey-Fiske, “FBI investigators say they have found no evidence that Orlando shooter had gay lovers,” *latimes.com*, June 23, 2016.

<sup>50</sup> Hennessey-Fiske, “FBI investigators say they.”

<sup>51</sup> WITW Staff, “Ex-wife of Orlando gunman Omar Mateen suggests he was gay,” *nytimes.com*, June 14, 2016.

<sup>52</sup> Hennessey-Fiske, “FBI investigators say they.”



attack, possibly when he became “enraged after recently seeing a same-sex couple kissing in front of his family”<sup>53</sup> in downtown Miami.

Regarding his radicalization, Mateen’s conversations with authorities while with hostages in the Pulse nightclub bathroom emphasized that his attack was motivated by and committed for ISIS. During his first 911 call, when asked who he was, Mateen responded with: “My name is I pledge of allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi of the Islamic State.”<sup>54</sup> He was motivated to commit the terrorist attack, he said during a discussion with a hostage negotiator, because of US airstrikes in Syria and Iraq, as well as “the air strike that killed Abu Wahid,”<sup>55</sup> an ISIS leader. If Mateen was radicalized and had been following the happenings in the Middle East, he may have become upset by attacks against ISIS.<sup>56</sup>

#### **4. Goals**

The goals of Omar Mateen in carrying out the Pulse nightclub shooting are not fully known. There is no evidence that he arrived at the nightclub with an escape plan, and it is likely that he knew he would either be killed or incarcerated following the event. Judging from the demands he had for the police negotiator on the line with him for a significant portion of his time trapped in the Pulse bathroom, Mateen wanted to bring an end to American bombings in the Middle East.<sup>57</sup> Mateen told a police negotiator to get “America to stop bombing Syria and Iraq.” He believed America is “killing a lot of innocent people,”<sup>58</sup> and Mateen may have taken it upon himself to change the actions of the American military by committing a large attack on American soil. It is also possible that Mateen’s sole purpose was to cause as much damage and panic to the American public, particularly the gay community, as possible. If so, Mateen succeeded. Although there is no evidence supporting the idea that Mateen’s violence stemmed from any negative feelings towards the Latino community in Orlando, “Pulse, which calls itself ‘Orlando’s Latin Hotspot,’ was holding its weekly ‘Upscale Latin Saturdays’ party” on June 12, the day of Mateen’s attack.<sup>59</sup>

#### **5. Plans for violence**

Though Mateen had been on the radar of authorities since mid-2013, there was no indication to the public that he was planning to commit a terrorist attack

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<sup>53</sup> Williams, “Gunman Omar Mateen Described.”

<sup>54</sup> Office of Public Affairs, “Joint Statement From Justice Department and FBI Regarding Transcript Related to the Orlando Terror Attack,” justice.gov, June 20, 2016.

<sup>55</sup> “FL-OmarMateenTranscripts.”

<sup>56</sup> Ralph Ellis, “Orlando shooting: 49 killed, shooter pledged ISIS allegiance,” cnn.com, June 13, 2016.

<sup>57</sup> Katie Zezima, “Orlando gunman said he carried out attack to get ‘Americans to stop bombing his country,’ witness says,” washingtonpost.com, June 13, 2016.

<sup>58</sup> “FL-OmarMateenTranscripts.”

<sup>59</sup> Alvarez, “Orlando Gunman Attacks.”

until the night of the shooting. About five weeks before the shooting, Mateen went to Lotus Gunworks, a local Florida gun shop, and he asked the employee of the shop about “high-end body armor.”<sup>60</sup> After being told that the shop did not carry body armor, Mateen made a call, and then asked about bulk ammunition. Feeling uncomfortable, the store clerk turned Mateen away. On June 4, 2016, Mateen purchased a Sig Sauer MCX rifle, and on June 5 he purchased a Glock 17 handgun. There is no information on when Omar Mateen purchased ammunition for his weapons, but there is video evidence confirming that Mateen’s wife, Noor Salman, was present for the transaction.<sup>61</sup> Between June 1 and June 6, 2016, Mateen and his wife made trips to both the Pulse nightclub and to a Disney shopping complex. During the week Mateen visited them, both locations were hosting an event called Gay Days 2016.<sup>62</sup> Mateen and his wife reportedly went to these events to scope them out, presumably in preparation for an attack. Speaking of Mateen’s wife’s role in the attack, Senator Angus King, a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, claimed that “It appears she has some knowledge of what was going on, visiting some of the other sites.”<sup>63</sup> While it was reported that Noor Salman, Mateen’s wife, told the FBI that she knew that Mateen planned to commit some sort of jihadist attack,<sup>64</sup> she later claimed to be “unaware of everything.”<sup>65</sup> She has not been charged by law enforcement.

Strangely, two months before the attack, on April 5, 2016, Omar “‘quit-claimed’ the deed to his home in Port St. Lucie, Fla. ... giving it to his sister Sabrina Abasin and her husband, Mustafa.”<sup>66</sup> Although it is likely Mateen traded over his property with the knowledge he would be dead or in jail soon after, there is no concrete evidence that this is the case. There is also no reason to believe the family members in the trade knew about the attack Mateen was to commit on June 12. Mateen also purchased tickets for his family to go to southern California to visit his wife’s ill mother two days after the shooting.

The day before the morning of the attack, Mateen reportedly took a trip to Disney Springs after getting off work.<sup>67</sup> He also visited Pulse; he drove to the

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<sup>60</sup> Kelly Riddell, “Florida gun shop denied Orlando shooter ammo and reported him to FBI; media yawns,” [washingtontimes.com](http://washingtontimes.com), June 17, 2016.

<sup>61</sup> FOX News Insider, “Officials: Orlando Terrorist Used Sig Sauer MCX Rifle, Not an AR-15,” [insider.foxnews.com](http://insider.foxnews.com), June 15, 2016.

<sup>62</sup> Evan Perez, Shimon Prokupez and Holly Yan, “Omar Mateen scouted Disney complex, Pulse, official says,” [cnn.com](http://cnn.com), June 15, 2016.

<sup>63</sup> Evan Perez and Pamela Brown, “Source: Orlando gunman told wife of interest in a terror attack,” [cnn.com](http://cnn.com), June 14, 2016.

<sup>64</sup> Perez and Brown, “Source: Orlando gunman told wife.”

<sup>65</sup> Adam Goldman, “Orlando Gunman’s Wife Breaks Silence: ‘I Was Unaware,’” [nytimes.com](http://nytimes.com), November 1, 2016.

<sup>66</sup> Danika Fears, “Orlando killer gave sister his house 2 months before shooting,” [nypost.com](http://nypost.com), June 17, 2016

<sup>67</sup> Perez, Prokupez and Yan, “Omar Mateen scouted.”

club, “paid the entry fee, obtained a wrist band, and entered the club.”<sup>68</sup> It is believed that he was checking the club’s security before he carried out his attack. Mateen’s wife told investigators that he left their Fort Pierce home angry while carrying a bag of guns. “She said she pleaded with him to not leave, grabbing him by the arm, she told investigators in an interview. She didn't know he was planning the attack, she said.”<sup>69</sup>

The timeline of events during the night of the Orlando, Florida, Pulse nightclub shooting are as follows:

- On June 12, 2016, at approximately 2:02 am, the Orlando Police Department receives a call claiming multiple shots fired at Pulse nightclub. An off-duty police officer in the parking lot of Pulse hears shots and sees Mateen near the entrance of Pulse. He begins shooting at Mateen, but quickly retreats. Mateen enters pulse.<sup>70</sup> Victim Amanda Alvear catches the sound of the first shots through a snapchat video.<sup>71</sup>
- 2:04 am: Additional police officers arrive on scene.<sup>72</sup>
- 2:05 am Victims begin to be slowly removed from Pulse to a nearby triage center.<sup>73</sup>
- 2:08 am: Officers from various law enforcement agencies made entrance to Pulse and engaged the shooter.
- 2:09 am: Pulse posts on its Facebook: “Everyone get out of Pulse and keep running”<sup>74</sup>.
- 2:15 am: A 911 caller says that 10 people hiding in the bathroom in a handicapped stall.
- 2:18 am: Orlando SWAT initiated a full call-out.<sup>75</sup>
- 2:22 am: A police officer reports that Mateen is contained in the back of the club.<sup>76</sup>
- 2:35 am: Mateen calls a 911 operator from inside the club. The call lasts around 50 seconds. During this call, Mateen pledges “allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi may God protect him [Arabic], on behalf of the Islamic

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<sup>68</sup> Evan Perez and Shimon Prokupez, “Orlando gunman visited club on night of attack, left and returned,” *cnn.com*, June 21, 2016.

<sup>69</sup> Perez and Prokupez, “Orlando gunman visited.”

<sup>70</sup> Lotan, et al., “Orlando nightclub shooting timeline: Three hours of terror unfold,” *orlandosentinel.com*, July 1, 2016.

<sup>71</sup> Lotan et al., “Orlando nightclub shooting.”

<sup>72</sup> Special Agent Couvertier, Dave, “Investigative Update Regarding Pulse Nightclub Shooting,” *fbi.gov*, June 20, 2016.

<sup>73</sup> Lotan et al., “Orlando nightclub shooting.”

<sup>74</sup> Lotan et al., “Orlando nightclub shooting.”

<sup>75</sup> Couvertier, “Investigative Update.”

<sup>76</sup> Lotan et al., “Orlando nightclub shooting.”

State.”<sup>77</sup> Officer Brandon Cornwell of the Orlando Police Department is heard over the radio saying that Mateen barricaded himself in the bathroom. All survivors from the bar or dance floor of Pulse have escaped the scene.

- 2:48 am: Mateen takes part in three conversations with police negotiators. During the first conversation, Mateen claims to be an “Islamic Soldier,” and he insists that the negotiator must “stop the U.S. air strikes.” Mateen says: “You have to tell the U.S. government to stop bombing. They are killing too many children, they are killing too many women.” Mateen claims to have a car bomb, and the threatens to blow it up law enforcement does “anything stupid.” He claims to be wearing a vest like “what they used in France.”<sup>78</sup>
- 3:03 am, 3:44 am: Mateen takes part in two more calls with a negotiator. During the 3:03 am call, Mateen claims that his attack was triggered by “the air strike that killed Abu Wahid.”
- Approx. 4:00 am: Mateen texts his wife, asking if she had heard news of the attack. She responded by saying she loved him.
- 4:05 am: Hazmat teams, bomb technicians, and bomb van arrive on scene.<sup>79</sup>
- 4:21 am: Police officers pull an air conditioner unit out of the wall of Pulse, allowing several victims to escape.<sup>80</sup>
- 4:29 am: Rescued victims tell Orlando police that Mateen said he was going strap four victims with bomb vests within the next 15 minutes.<sup>81</sup>
- 5:02 am: Orlando SWAT and OCSO Hazardous Device Team breach a wall of Pulse with explosive charges and armored vehicles in order to allow for entry.<sup>82</sup>
- 5:14 am: Shots were fired after Mateen exits Pulse through the breach.<sup>83</sup>
- 5:15 am: Mateen is reported down.<sup>84</sup>

Following the attack, several issues were raised over the Orlando police’s response and willingness to engage with Mateen. While individuals were trapped, some even bleeding out, in the bathrooms of the club where Mateen was barricaded, officers didn’t seek out and engage Mateen. Orlando Police Chief John Mina responded to these concerns, claiming that officers did react effectively to Mateen by “forcing him to retreat” and barricade himself in the

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<sup>77</sup> “FL-OmarMateenTranscripts.”

<sup>78</sup> “FL-OmarMateenTranscripts.”

<sup>79</sup> Couvertier, “Investigative Update.”

<sup>80</sup> Couvertier, “Investigative Update.”

<sup>81</sup> Lotan et al., “Orlando nightclub shooting.”

<sup>82</sup> Couvertier, “Investigative Update.”

<sup>83</sup> Lotan et al., “Orlando nightclub shooting.”

<sup>84</sup> Couvertier, “Investigative Update.”

bathroom. Once there was an increased threat of Mateen using bomb vests, law enforcement decided further action was necessary.<sup>85</sup>

## 6. Role of informants

While Mateen was entered into a terrorist screening database during the first investigation in May 2013, he was removed in March 2014 when the FBI did not find sufficient incriminating evidence. Mateen was never prevented from buying any weapons, and was never put on a no-fly/watch list because of his affiliations.<sup>86</sup> Mateen was not seen as a legitimate threat after his case was originally closed in 2014.

Informants did not play a significant role in the planning or execution of the Orlando Pulse nightclub shooting.

## 7. Connections

There is no evidence to suggest that Mateen had significant connections to any terrorist organizations like ISIS during or before the attack. He attended the same mosque as American-born suicide bomber Moner Mohammad Abu-Salha, but the FBI found no connections between the two individuals. Although Mateen claimed on several occasions to have connections to various terrorist organizations, there is no evidence that any of these claims are true.<sup>87</sup>

While working at the St. Lucie Courthouse as a guard, Mateen responded to insults about his religious affiliation by claiming he had connections with Nidal Hasan, the Fort Hood shooter, as well as with Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, the Boston marathon bombing suspects. Subsequent investigations into these alleged ties yielded nothing of significance. It is likely Mateen claimed to have connections solely to inspire fear among those he talked with. Officials say Mateen's claims were given in response to being called a "towel-head" by a coworker. As for the potential danger Mateen was believed to pose to the public, on September 26, 2013, FBI Special Agent in Charge Rand Glass said that it's not likely Mateen "would go postal or anything like that."<sup>88</sup>

## 8. Relation to the Muslim Community

Omar Mateen regularly attended the Fort Pierce Islamic Center, often with his father and son. His last time there was two days before the Pulse attack.<sup>89</sup> Despite his regular attendance, not many individuals within the Center were

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<sup>85</sup> Evan Perez, Shimon Prokupecz and Holly Yan "Source: Orlando shooter's wife under investigation," [cnn.com](http://cnn.com), June 16, 2016.

<sup>86</sup> CBS/AP, "What we know."

<sup>87</sup> Vinograd, "Omar Mateen, U.S. Suicide Bomber."

<sup>88</sup> "Judicial Watch Obtains Documents Revealing FBI Declared Mateen "NOT" to be a Terrorist," [judicialwatch.org](http://judicialwatch.org), June 18, 2016.

<sup>89</sup> Colby Itkowitz, "He would come and pray and leave'," [washingtonpost.com](http://washingtonpost.com), June 12, 2016.

familiar with him. Imam Syed Shafeeq Rahman of the Islamic Center recalled that although Mateen attended some of the late daily prayers at the Center, he never stayed for the free meal offered afterwards. Rahman could not recall ever actually having a conversation with Mateen.<sup>90</sup> Mateen was also enrolled in Fundamental Islamic Knowledge Seminary, an online site with Islamic lessons. The site is run by Abu Taubah, an individual who would “openly preach against the gay community.”<sup>91</sup> It is not believed, though, that this site played a major part in inspiring Mateen to commit the attack. The website denounced any connection with Mateen’s actions at Pulse.<sup>92</sup>

On June 8, 2016, four days before the Pulse Nightclub shooting, Mateen reportedly travelled to Kissimmee Islamic Center. Imam Helmi Elagha of the Center produced a video of an individual he claims to be Omar Mateen entering the Islamic Center, praying for approximately ten minutes, and then leaving. Mateen did not speak to anyone at the mosque, and none of his actions drew any attention.<sup>93</sup>

### **9. Depiction by the authorities**

Following the Pulse shooting, authorities were scrambling to find as much information about Mateen as they could gather. When pressed about letting Mateen go after a previous investigation into his terrorist connections, FBI Director James Comey stated that the FBI was satisfied with the robustness and quality of the previous investigations.<sup>94</sup>

President Obama characterized this attack as one of hate and terrorism. During a public speech following the attack, he stated:

For so many people here who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, the Pulse Nightclub has always been a safe haven, a place to sing and dance, and most importantly, to be who you truly are—including for so many people whose families are originally from Puerto Rico. Sunday morning, that sanctuary was violated in the worst way imaginable. So whatever the motivations of the killer, whatever influences led him down the path of violence and terror, whatever propaganda he was consuming from ISIL and al Qaeda, this was an act of terrorism but it was also an act of hate. This was an attack on the LGBT community. Americans were targeted because we’re a country that has learned to welcome everyone, no matter

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<sup>90</sup> Lindsey Bever, “Arrest made in arson at Orlando gunman’s mosque, authorities say,” [washingtonpost.com](http://washingtonpost.com), September 14, 2016.

<sup>91</sup> CBS/AP, “What we know.”

<sup>92</sup> CBS/AP, “What we know.”

<sup>93</sup> Bethany Rodgers, “Imam: Omar Mateen prayed at Kissimmee mosque days before attack,” [orlandosentinel.com](http://orlandosentinel.com), September 28, 2016.

<sup>94</sup> Louis Nelson, “Comey: FBI began investigating Orlando shooter in May 2013,” [politico.com](http://politico.com), June 13, 2016.

who you are or who you love. And hatred towards people because of sexual orientation, regardless of where it comes from, is a betrayal of what's best in us.

President Obama also said that the attack serves as an example for the “need for us to implement smarter policies to prevent mass shootings.”<sup>95</sup> Numerous media outlets published stories questioning the job done by the FBI during the original investigation into Mateen.

## **10. Coverage by the media**

The Pulse nightclub shooting on June 12, 2016, was the deadliest mass shooting by a single shooter in American history. Due to the scale of Mateen's actions and the devastating impact his attack had on the gay, Latino, and greater Orlando community, it is difficult to claim that media reports were overly alarmist in communicating the magnitude of Mateen's violence. Nearly every news outlet ran several stories about the shooting within the few days following the attack. Media coverage both during and after the attack was predictable. Many major news outlets tried to research and publish a detailed background on Mateen, or attempted to call for unity among communities damaged by the Pulse shooting.<sup>96</sup> Most major headlines, as well as a host of local Florida newspapers, followed the story of the Pulse shooting and of Omar Mateen closely as new information arose. In addition to reporting the events that played out the night of the attack, news outlets across the nation consistently took the approach of condemning Mateen's violent behavior. Reports often varied in Mateen's speculated motives or ties to ISIS; as more evidence was released in the days following the attack, more developed stories were published.

After the Pulse shooting, numerous reports were published based on accusations that Mateen was gay, alluding to a potential motive behind his attack on the nightclub. News sources such as Univision aired seemingly unsupported stories like that of “Miguel,” a Pulse club-goer who claimed “he had sex with Mateen after meeting him on the gay dating app, Grindr. He said Mateen had sex with other men too, including a threesome with a Puerto Rican who allegedly told Mateen, after having had unprotected sex with him, that he was HIV positive.”<sup>97</sup> FBI sources dismissed these accounts. Mateen's autopsy revealed that he was not HIV positive.<sup>98</sup>

## **11. Policing costs**

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<sup>95</sup> Melanie Garunay, “President Obama on the Tragic Shooting in Orlando,” whitehouse.gov, June 16, 2016.

<sup>96</sup> Wilber, “Orlando terror attack.”

<sup>97</sup> Hennessy-Fiske, “FBI investigators say.”

<sup>98</sup> Wilber, “Orlando gunman was HIV-negative.”

Before the shooting, law enforcement and FBI had invested a significant amount of time and resources into investigating Omar Mateen. He was under investigation from May 2013 to March 2014, during which time two undercover informants frequently met with him to gather information. Mateen's personal and financial records were sorted through, and many of his conversations were recorded, among other things.

The largest costs of policing may have come during the night of the Pulse shooting. Though no calculated damages or costs to either the Pulse nightclub or law enforcement officials are available, the cost to the state for proper medical treatment of the individuals injured during the shooting may have been substantial. The cost to the state for paying for the presence of a massive amount of law enforcement officers during the night of the shooting may also be significant. Costs of the attack were large enough that U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch awarded the city of Orlando \$1 million in order to help cover some expenses.<sup>99</sup>

## 12. Relevance of the internet

Omar Mateen, like many other homegrown terrorists, was believed to be radicalized by content found on the internet. FBI Director James Comey went on record stating, "We're highly confident that this killer was radicalized, and at least in some part through the Internet."<sup>100</sup> President Barack Obama reiterated this point during a press conference following the attack.<sup>101</sup> Though there is no evidence to suggest which videos Mateen watched, FBI Director Comey confirmed that Mateen used his personal laptop computer to watch extremist videos, "including grisly beheadings."<sup>102</sup>

Mohammed A. Malik, an individual who attended the same mosque as Mateen, claimed that Mateen was radicalized by "listening to the lectures of Anwar al-Awlaki, the charismatic Yemen-based imam who helped radicalize several Muslims, including the Fort Hood shooter."<sup>103</sup> Anwar al-Awlaki is a "radical cleric in Yemen known for his incendiary anti-American teachings."<sup>104</sup> He was also a leader at the mosque Nadal Hasan, the Fort Hood shooter, attended.<sup>105</sup> Though Mateen may have been influenced in some way by al-

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<sup>99</sup> Monivette Cordeiro, "Lynch: DOJ will give \$1 million to help pay first responders in Orlando mass shooting," *orlandoweekly.com*, June 21, 2016.

<sup>100</sup> Matt Zaptosky, "Orlando gunman who pledged loyalty to ISIS was 'homegrown' extremist radicalized online, Obama says," *washingtonpost.com*, June 13, 2016.

<sup>101</sup> Zaptosky, "Orlando gunman who pledged."

<sup>102</sup> Wilber, "The FBI investigated."

<sup>103</sup> Malik, "I reported Omar Mateen."

<sup>104</sup> David Johnston and Scott Shane, "U.S. Knew of Suspect's Tie to Radical Cleric," *nytimes.com*, November 9, 2009

<sup>105</sup> Johnston and Shane, "U.S. Knew of Suspect's."



Awlaki, it is unclear how large of a role al-Awlaki's website played in Mateen's attacks.

### **13. Are we safer?**

In the context of homegrown terrorism, the question "Are we safer?" usually applies to cases where an individual attempting to commit a terrorist act is thwarted before the execution of his/her plan. In this case, however, the terrorist was incredibly successful; 49 people were murdered and 53 more were injured, many of them critically. The Pulse nightclub shooting was the largest mass public shooting by an individual in US history.

There is little reason to believe the American public is safer as a result of the June 12, 2016, Pulse nightclub shooting. Omar Mateen, even after being on FBI radar for nearly ten months for various reasons unrelated to the shooting, was declared by the FBI to be no threat to the American public.<sup>106</sup> It is not likely that more effective techniques for identifying and stopping individuals willing to commit terrorist acts will come to fruition after this attack. If anything, it may be possible that other individuals will be inspired by this attack to commit more acts of terrorism within the United States.

For the gay community, fear of attacks fueled by homophobia has only increased following the Pulse shooting. The gay communities came together in Orlando after June 12 to decorate the streets near Pulse with gay memorabilia, photos, and flowers to express their solidarity after the attacks. While these efforts were effective in raising money in donations for victims' families, it seems little progress has been made in reducing the overall fear levels of gay individuals throughout the nation. The idea of a safe space for many of the members of these gay communities is no longer a reality due to the now legitimized threat of violence.

The Muslim community, especially in Orlando, may also be worse off due to the attack. In September 2016, Fort Pierce mosque, the mosque attended by Omar Mateen, was targeted by an arsonist describing himself as a "Jew for Jesus." The arsonist, Joseph Schreiber, held the belief that all Islam is radical, and he likely committed the arson in protest or as an attack on Mateen's religion.<sup>107</sup> Cases like this are not unique. Though individuals wishing to show their disdain toward the Muslim community may not often resort to arson to communicate their thoughts, racist acts toward Muslims may increase in light of the shooting.

### **14. Conclusions**

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<sup>106</sup> Wilber, "The FBI investigated."

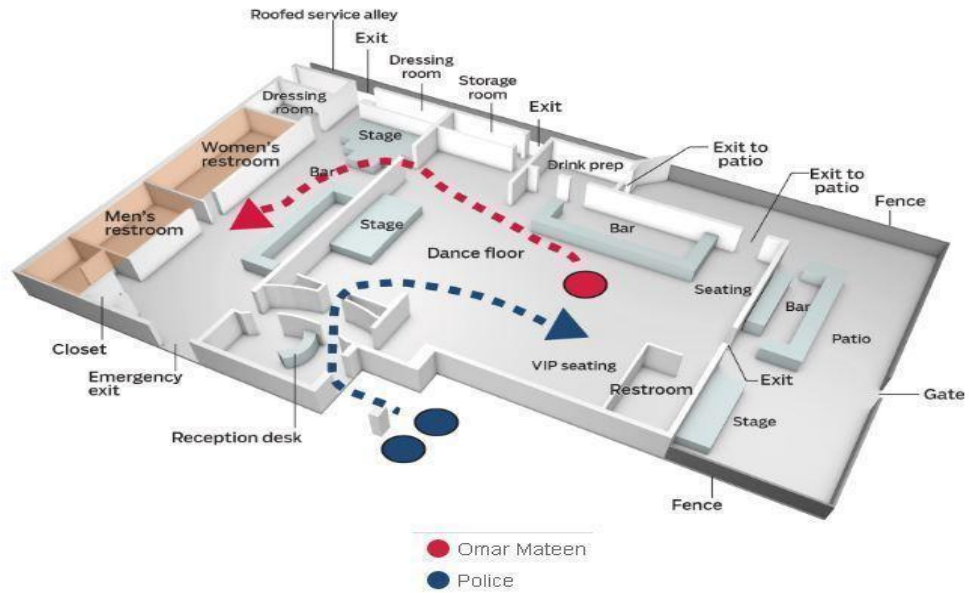
<sup>107</sup> CBS/AP, "Docs: Suspect confessed torching mosque attended by Orlando nightclub shooter," cbsnews.com, September 15, 2016.

The attack on Pulse nightclub was undoubtedly horrific, yet it was not preventable from the perspective of law enforcement. Even with an intensive FBI investigation carried out on him a few years before the attack, no one had any idea that Omar Mateen was planning to commit such a heinous act. Even Mateen's wife claimed not to know any specifics of the attack her husband carried out. If the FBI would have stepped outside of their legal bounds to expand their investigation into more facets of Mateen's life, there is a small likelihood that enough information could have been gathered to predict the Pulse attack. Then again, if the FBI significantly expanded investigations into every individual that met the level of suspicion that Omar Mateen met during his May 2013 to March 2014 run-in with the FBI, the additional time and financial costs of investigating homegrown terrorists would probably outweigh any benefits. Prior to its execution, there was no reason to believe that Mateen would attempt to carry out a terrorist attack.

If anything can be learned from the attack on the nightclub, it is that at least some terrorist attacks, regardless of how large a threat they may pose, cannot be stopped by increasing surveillance. Before attempting an act of terror, individuals who plan secretly or do not openly inform others of their intent to harm may not give off sufficient red flags to warrant intervention from law enforcement. By increasing the power of governments to surveil and intervene earlier into the lives of those suspected of terrorism, not only will there be a significant increase in the amount of false positives, or individuals with no intent to commit acts of terror who are wrongfully suspected or accused, but there will be a significant financial and logistical burden put on law enforcement to weed out potential terrorists from large groups of suspects that may not exhibit sufficient suspicious behavior to warrant in-depth searches.

As the largest terrorist attack since 9/11 in the United States, this attack is fairly unique in the amount of damage it caused. Due to this, it is likely that more Americans will overestimate the very small probability that they will be caught in an attack during their lives. Similar to what happened after 9/11, the costs expended in attempting to protect the American people from the dangers of terrorist attack may be much higher than some may deem justifiable. Though the full aftermath of Omar Mateen's attack has yet to play out, it will reach farther than just the Orlando Community. It will have a significant impact on how America copes with fear and with potential terrorist forces.

Appendix



*Eben McCue and Angelica Quintero, Los Angeles Times and Charles Minshew, Orlando Sentinel*

Graphic of Mateen's movement in Pulse after being engaged by police



*Getty Images*

Wall through which Mateen crawled out before engaging in gunfire with law enforcement