Washington Regional Threat Analysis Center (WRTAC)
202-481-3075 | WRTAC@DC.GOV

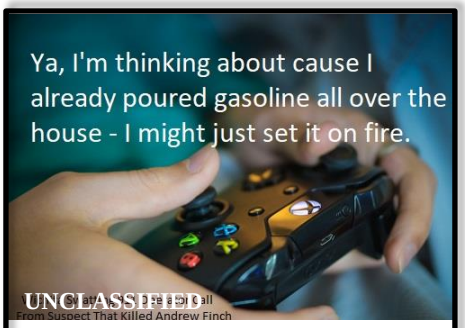
(U) Product Number: 2018-01-022
(U//FOUO) HSEC 1, HSEC 2

FIRST RESPONDER AWARENESS BULLETIN

(U) Fatal Wichita, KS Swatting Incident Demonstrates Continued Interest in Swatting Hoax Calls and Highlights Risk of Injury to First Responders during Response
12 January 2018

(U) Incident Summary

(U//FOUO) On Thursday, 28 December 2017, the Wichita Police Department (WPD) responded to a residence in reference to a call, now confirmed to be a swatting hoax call[1], about an active domestic violence situation. The initial phone call was received by an officer working at City Hall from an unknown number reporting a disturbance in progress involving a shooting and a hostage situation, with the caller threatening to cause further harm to others by setting the house on fire. When police arrived at the residence prepared for a hostage situation, a male subject (Andrew Finch[USPER]) exited the front door and was killed in an Officer Involved Shooting (OIS). Once WPD entered the residence, the officers were unable to locate any victims or signs that a crime was committed, leading officers to determine the information provided by the caller was fabricated. Initial information from the investigation suggests the swatting hoax originated as part of an online gaming feud where one player threatened to target the other with a swatting call. The intended swatting target purportedly provided the Wichita address to the suspect of the swatting hoax, falsely claiming the address as his own.[i] One of the online gamers, Tyler Barris[USPER], was arrested in connection to the swatting call. Finch, the victim of this incident, was not involved in the online gaming feud and had no ties to the players.



(U) Suspect statement to the 911 dispatcher, likely seeking to elicit a law enforcement response to the home of an online gaming rival.

(U) Swatting Tactics Similar to Nationwide Swatting Incidents, Including Calls in the District

(U//FOUO) The tactics used by the Wichita swatting hoax caller suspect are consistent with other nationwide swatting incidents ─ including incidents in the District of Columbia ─ and demonstrate a continued interest in conducting swatting calls. Several tactics were used to reinforce the legitimacy of the call.

- (U//FOUO) The suspect, located in Los Angeles, CA, likely made the initial swatting call to Wichita City Hall and requested to be connected to a dispatcher to circumvent the public safety answering points (PSAPs) routing system, which routes 911 calls to the nearest answering point based on the call's originating location. Relayed calls utilizing third parties (such as police district stations, Federal and District government facilities, or private businesses) exploit third parties to report or transfer the swatting call to a local PSAP, leading dispatchers to think the call originated in the area.[ii]
- (U) The suspect is a self-proclaimed swatter-for-hire, claiming responsibility for other swatting incidents and bomb threat hoaxes nationwide, including the targeting of a convention center in Dallas, TX; a high school in Panama City, FL; and the Federal Communications Commission in the District. The suspect was previously convicted for swatting calls in 2015.[iii]

(U//FOUO) Incident Underscores the Risk of Injury to First Responders and the Public, and Presents an Opportunity for Replication

(U//FOUO) The incident underscores the risk of injury to first responders in response to swatting hoax calls, and can easily be replicated in the future due to the difficulty in differentiating these calls from legitimate emergencies by first responders and PSAP personnel. First responders and PSAP personnel should follow their existing SOPs when responding to calls with similar characteristics.

[1] (U) Swatting is the act of reporting a false emergency to draw a law enforcement response, specifically a SWAT team response, to a location where no emergency exists.

- (U//FOUO) A majority of swatting calls involve a caller self-reporting or witnessing an in-progress violent crime involving victims and threatening to commit additional harmful acts such as shooting additional victims or setting fire to a structure; scenarios can include active shooters, hostage takings, or home invasions.
- (U) While several swatting calls nationwide have led to injury, this is the first documented death inadvertently associated with a swatting hoax call.
- (U) Individuals who engage in the act of swatting are often part of the online gaming community and seek revenge or an advantage on an opponent. According to the FBI, most individuals that engage in swatting are involved in other cyber-crimes such as identity theft and credit card fraud.[iv]
- (U) Based on open source reporting, an estimated 400 swatting cases occur each year.[v]

(U) Additional Swatting Techniques

- *(U//FOUO) Calling the PSAP directly using caller ID spoofing or social engineering*
- *(U//FOUO) Reporting the incident on social media*

[i] (U) Online Article; (U) "Police release 'swatting' call, video of man being shot to death as a result of hoax". The Wichita Eagle. http://www.kansas.com/news/local/crime/article192244734.html. 29 December 2017 (Accessed 3 January 2018).

[ii] (U) Online Article; (U) "Fatal 'Swatting' Episode in Kansas Raises Quandary: Who Is to Blame? The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/31/us/wichita-swatting-barriss.html . 31 December 2017. (Accessed 6 January 2018).

[iii] (U) Online Article; (U) "A Twitter user claims to have made the 'swatting' call that led police to kill a man". Washington Post. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2017/12/30/why-a-twitter-user-claims-to-have-made-the-swatting-call-that-led-police-to-kill-a-man/?utm_term=.8600f64e52bb . 30 December 2018 (Accessed 3 January 2018).

[iv] (U) Government Website; (U) "The Crime of 'Swatting' ". FBI News. https://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/the-crime-of-swatting-fake-9-1-1-calls-have-real-consequences1. 3 September 2013 (Accessed 3 January 2018).

[v] (U) Online Article; (U) "Police release 'swatting' call, video of man being shot to death as a result of hoax". The Wichita Eagle. http://www.kansas.com/news/local/crime/article192244734.html. 29 December 2017 (Accessed 3 January 2018).