



**Orlando Nightclub Shooter Originally Targeted Disney** – Surveillance tapes and other evidence indicates that Pulse Nightclub shooter Omar Mateen considered [Disney Springs](#) shopping, dining, and entertainment district as his primary target on the night that he later killed 49 and wounded 58 in an ISIS-inspired attack, according to prosecutors in the trial of his wife. Video shows Mateen walking near the House of Blues in Disney Springs, hours before the attack, where he pushed a stroller containing a doll, both of which he bought the day before. After observing several sheriff's deputies in the area, he left, stopping next at Eve Orlando, a downtown nightclub (according to cell phone data), and then finally to the Pulse. His wife testified in her trial that she believed he was at Disney that night. Authorities believe the stroller and doll would have been used to hide guns.



Mateen with wife and child

**Assessment:** Mateen visited Disney Springs numerous times in the weeks prior to the shooting, both with, and without, his family. Though not gated like the theme parks, the district's [webpage](#) reads: "We have a comprehensive approach to security that includes measures that are visible, and others that are not, including the presence of uniformed officers." Clearly the presence of Orlando Sheriff's deputies, dozens of which were instrumental in the response to the Pulse shooting, averted a tragedy at the American icon. As rational actors, terrorists want their attacks to be successful, which is why target hardening works.

**Seattle-area Man Sent Suspicious Packages to Capital Region** – Packages containing very crude explosive devices were intercepted at mail facilities outside of eleven military bases and intelligence agencies in the National Capital Region earlier week, leading to the arrest of a 43-year-old man from Everett in Washington state. Thanh Cong Phan was already known to laws enforcement and many of the package recipients after sending incoherent letters and emails for years prior to his arrest on Monday. In addition to a glass vial containing black powder, a fuse and GPS device, each package contained a letter with "[ramblings](#) about neuropsychology, mind control, and other subjects including terrorism."

**Assessment:** Though the mailed devices were not considered potentially lethal, the incidents obviously created quite a stir, particularly on the heels of the Austin package bombings. It is possible that this individual was inspired by those events, given the changeover from letter/emails. The saturation of these packages across several government agencies highlights the importance of both inter- and intra-agency (real-time) information sharing.

**Truck Ramming Plotter Netted in Italy Anti-Terror Raids** – Anti-terrorism police in Italy conducted raids in several cities on Wednesday which, among others, brought in a Moroccan immigrant who was planning truck ramming and knife attacks. The 23-year-old, who was also active in recruiting, had been previously convicted of "[instigating terrorism](#)," running a website in Italian which praised ISIS, but was given a two-year suspended sentence. In another raid, [police arrested five people](#) in connection with the Tunisian ISIS militant who killed 12 people in the Berlin Christmas market truck ramming in 2016. Earlier in the week, police arrested an Egyptian-born man accused of attempting to indoctrinate hundreds of children in his care at a cultural center into violence on behalf of Islamic State, and on March 15<sup>th</sup>, a man of Latvian origin was arrested for making pipe bombs which may have been intended for use in an [attack on a kindergarten](#).

**Assessment:** Ramming attacks continue to feed off one another among those inspired to terrorism and even beyond. It is noted that the Italian immigrant seeking to "kill the children in the kindergarten" came to the attention of the FBI due to social media posts praising the 2017 NYC ramming perpetrator. In an incident in France (mentioned below), it would appear that the [ramming attempt on jogging soldiers](#) may have been opportunistic. For these, and other non-farious reasons, responders should exercise great caution when operating in or along roadways.



**ISIS Gunman Takes Hostages in French Supermarket** – A small town in southwestern France was the scene of a dramatic and deadly hostage situation on Friday when a 25-year-old of Moroccan origin first killed one person in a carjacking, then shot four police officers who were jogging, before storming a supermarket five miles away. With some 50 people in the market, the gunman claimed to be a soldier of Islamic State and demanded the liberation of "brothers," including specifically the prime surviving suspect in the 2015 attack on Paris in which 130 were killed. After he had killed three and injured 16, a 45-year-old police Lieutenant Colonel traded places for the hostages. He was later shot and police stormed the store, killing the gunman. The hero officer died of his wounds. On the same day, about 330 miles to the northeast, a driver shouted in Arabic at ten soldiers out jogging and attempted to [run them down](#) with his car.

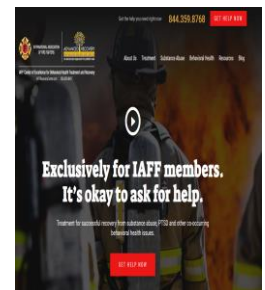
**Assessment:** Often in the case of ISIS hostage-takers, as in the Bataclan Theatre in Paris, "hostages" are really doomed captives, as the militants' ambition goes no further than a suicide-mission terror attack. In this case, the demand for release of other terrorists may have drawn out the event, but the end result would likely have been the killing of as many hostages as possible prior to the gunman's own demise. The sacrifice of Lt. Col. Arnaud Beltrame almost certainly saved many lives.

**Fire Crews Held Back at Manchester Arena Bombing** – Firefighters from Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) were held back for two hours from entering the scene of the Manchester Arena bombing in May 2017, which left 23 dead and over 500 wounded, according to the recently released [Kerslake Report](#). One area of interest was the confusion that the incident was an active shooter attack (designated as "Operation PLATO"), and not a bombing, which has different response and risk protocols for the Manchester fire service. A deputy mayor in Manchester stressed that the findings were directed at the organizational level, and "it should not tarnish the reputation of firefighters on the front line."

**Assessment:** The 226-page report lists recommendations throughout the document, though they are consolidated from pages 214-223. Areas of improvement include better awareness of partner agency's SOPs, early exchange of information and size-ups, clarification of joint protocols and command posts and mustering sites, need for redundant forms of communication and "encrypted" social media for internal agency use, revised active shooter and explosives procedures, the need for realistic interagency exercises, and coordination with those providing mental health services.

**Survey Highlights Emotional Toll of Firefighting** – A survey of 7,000 firefighters across North America, led by the IAFF, has [revealed](#) that a high percentage of those surveyed experience flashbacks from work-related traumatic experiences, which can lead to persistent memories, sleep issues, substance abuse and even thoughts of suicide. Essentially all professional firefighters (95%) experience "critical stress" in the workplace and three-quarters feel that they have unresolved emotional issues and have trouble sleeping. About a quarter listed substance abuse problems and 19 percent have had thoughts of suicide.

**Assessment:** The results of the survey will help break down the stigma around behavioral support in the fire service. More of 80 percent of responders worry that by seeking help they will be perceived as weak, which does affect their decision to not reach out, and many also worry that it will affect their promotion prospects. Encouragingly, 77 percent of firefighters look favorably on peer counselors, which is something the FDNY Counseling Service Unit (CSU) has used for many years. For those outside the response community, it may be a surprise that day-to-day responses, especially those involving body recovery or injury to children, would affect them so much, but similar survey results would likely be found in pre-hospital care and law enforcement. The IAFF has set a "[recovery center](#)" website for any member seeking support, and many departments have their own counseling groups.



IAFF Website on Mental Health Support

**Notable:** In a week where FDNY buried five members (one [LODD](#), two of 9/11 illness, and two while serving in USAF in Afghanistan), the [video](#) created by a NYPD Highway Patrolman in the funeral escort for FF Michael Davidson (5-5-5-5), who gave the ultimate sacrifice at a fire in Harlem on March 22, is greatly appreciated.

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