

## NEWS



# Orlando shootings: rehearsals helped surgeons respond

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Surgeons at the Orlando Regional Medical Center in Florida have said that planning, practice, and staff dedication helped the trauma team cope with the scores of wounded people who flooded into the hospital's emergency department after Sunday's mass shooting at a nearby gay nightclub.

"This was the largest disaster we could have possibly imagined," said a trauma surgeon, Michael Cheatham, at a press conference on Tuesday 14 June. "We went ahead and implemented the plan we had designed over the years and perfected through practice, and I think it worked."

The surgeons said that they each treat over 1000 gunshot victims every year, one telling the press conference that he had treated over 10 000 in his six years at the center. On a busy night the center might see six gunshot wounds, but on 12 June some 44 people were brought to the hospital in less than two hours. The three operating rooms at the center were doubled, and staff from neighboring medical centers pitched in to help treat wounded patients, surgeons said.

Police said that the gunman, Omar Mateen, a 29 year old US born citizen from Port St Lucie in Florida, entered the popular Pulse nightclub at around 2 am on Sunday morning, opening fire with a .223 SIG Sauer semiautomatic assault rifle and a 9 mm Glock 17 semiautomatic handgun he had purchased legally in the previous two weeks. Both weapons fire one round with each trigger pull and automatically reload, allowing the weapons to be fired at a rapid rate. The rifle's high velocity rounds can inflict particularly devastating wounds.

Although Mateen, a Muslim, reportedly swore his allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi—the head of Islamic State—in a call to 9-1-1 during the siege, government officials believe that he was acting alone.

President Barack Obama said after meeting with his National Security Council on 14 June that Mateen did not seem to have taken direction from any foreign terrorist group. "It is increasingly clear, however, that the killer took in extremist information and propaganda over the internet. He appears to have been an angry, disturbed, unstable young man who became radicalized," Obama said.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation has said that it is investigating reports that Mateen had visited the nightclub repeatedly, but whether he went as a patron or to scout out the club was not yet clear.

Orlando Regional Medical Center said that wounded people had arrived at the hospital in two waves: those who were able to escape from the club when the siege began, and then those who were evacuated after a police SWAT team had killed Mateen, ending the siege.

A total of 50 people were killed in the incident, including Mateen, and 53 were wounded, 44 of whom attended the medical center. As of Tuesday morning, 27 remained in hospital; of these, Cheatham said that six were in critical condition.

He said, "I would be surprised [if] we don't see the death toll rise from this. We are doing everything we possibly can to pull them through this, but they are critically ill as the result of their injuries."

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