

Comments of ASIS Security Professionals on the Pulse Nightclub Attack

What the Pulse Nightclub Attack Means for soft Target Security

14 June 2016 by [Megan Gates](#)



Kevin Doss, CPP, PSP

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After news broke of the [shooting at Pulse nightclub in Orlando](#) in the early hours of Sunday morning, many were left wondering what could have been done to prevent the attack that left 50 people dead—including the gunman—and wounded 53 others.

To find out and to discuss what this latest attack on a soft target means for the security industry, *Security Management* Assistant Editor Megan Gates spoke with subject matter expert Kevin Doss, CPP, PSP.

Doss is president and CEO of Level 4 Security, a security consultancy, and author of [Active Shooter: Preparing for and Responding to a Growing Threat](#). Below is a transcript of their conversation, which has been lightly edited for clarity.

Gates: When you first heard about what was happening in Orlando, what was your initial reaction?

Doss: I certainly was not surprised. I worked in nightclub security in my early 20s, and you just don't think about venues like that being attacked by active shooters.

So my first thought was, 'Wow, someone decided to hit a nightclub, which changes the game.' It changes the game for all the different businesses out there that are soft targets, that are open to the public.

In the case of a nightclub, security typically does not carry a firearm, even if they're off-duty police officers, because of the environment and fights. You wouldn't want someone to take your weapon during a fight or if you're breaking up a fight.

So you typically have no firearms at a nightclub or a bar. Also, concealed weapons permits usually do not allow you to conceal carry into an establishment that sells alcohol, or sells more alcohol than it does food.

So it was a venue that I thought, from an attacker's point of view, is a target-rich environment with very little protection.

(Editor's note: The off-duty police officer who was hired as security for Pulse nightclub was carrying a firearm.)

Gates: As more details about the attack emerged, what did you as a security consultant begin thinking about?

Doss: I started thinking about what should a nightclub do? If I'm the consultant coming in, how am I going to put a security program in place that would mitigate—maybe not stop, but mitigate—the risk of an active shooter or any act of violence, whether it's a gun, whether it's a knife.

The first step in any security program is you need a plan. You have to have and develop a plan, and I think every nightclub in America and the world today is probably going out and looking at their security and going, 'Wow, we need to do something. We need to make sure we have a better plan in place.' Because I can assure you, many of them have probably never thought about security to that level.

But you can't just throw in a simple emergency action plan. You have to plan for specific threats. Pulse was a gay club, an alternative lifestyle club. We know there are threats from certain individuals who hate that lifestyle. They hate people based on their sexual orientations, so if you're doing a threat assessment—which is part of a risk assessment—you already know that there's a potential for violence.

Your local neighborhood bar may not have that same threat, versus a nightclub that caters to the alternative lifestyle. That's going to have additional threats. That's going to determine what type of security measures you need. You can't go out to one club and go, 'OK, every club should do this.' That's just not realistic and it's not going to work.

What you need to do is look at the club, look at the social environment, look at the economic environment, and look at the geographic area around it. What are the threats? What are the things that could possibly happen? And then you start building your plan to mitigate those risks.

Gates: With that said, what are some plans a nightclub could put in place to mitigate the risk of an active shooter?

Doss: In this case, with an active shooter, did they compartmentalize? Oscar Newman in his book called it defensible space. What that is, is taking the environment and breaking it down into more manageable areas so you can secure those areas and not focus on the macro environment where you're trying to secure the entire facility at one time. You break it down into more manageable zones.

In this case, maybe they could have put a vestibule in and had it secured so that when you go through the checkpoint, you don't get into the main hall until you've been let in through a secondary checkpoint. You create a lobby or vestibule area, so you don't have full access from the street to run right in and start shooting.

Also, you have loud music, you have flashing lights, and you have a lot of darkness in a nightclub. It was evident from seeing some of the TV and reports that came out that people [inside Pulse] heard the gunshots, but thought they were part of the show. Until they saw bodies falling, they were under the impression that those gunshots were just part of the party.

So that's something that needs to be addressed—an awareness of if this happens, how do we turn the lights on? How do we cut the music? How do we have a public announcement to everybody that 'Hey, you need to take cover'? There has to be a way to communicate with everybody in that facility, very rapidly, because that's going to save lives.

Gates: That's a good point, and is something I've heard and seen in coverage of the Orlando attack over and over again—that when the gunman started shooting, people didn't know what was happening. Those were crucial moments for some people to respond, or not to respond.

Doss: Absolutely. You also wonder how many medical supplies [Pulse] had. So if they have a normal group of 300 people, do they have just standard Band Aids? Or do they have tourniquets? Do they have bandages? Do they have things that could be used in a medical emergency where you have a high number of casualties?

If I had to make an assumption, my assumption would be they probably did not. So some of the wounded may have succumbed to their wounds because there were no tourniquets, there were no bandages, and they couldn't get medical care in quickly.

Coordination with law enforcement and first responders is critical. But also having medical supplies that they can immediately administer to the wounded is critical to saving lives because it doesn't take long to bleed out when you've been shot, depending on where you've been hit.

Gates: Do you think these kind of soft target attacks are going to continue in the United States—especially because we have easier access to firearms here than citizens do in other countries?

Doss: Yes, I think these shootings, these unnecessary acts of crime will continue. I think you'll see more of a focus put on how do we plan better—how do we prevent.

My focus as a consultant has changed from response programs that focus on after the shooter gets there, how do we respond. Those are important programs, because it saves lives if there is a response plan.

But my goal as a consultant is to focus on the behavior indicators and to be proactive. Let's not wait until the person shows up at the front door, because when that happens, somebody's getting injured. Somebody's going to die.

In almost every active shooter case there have been family members, friends, or coworkers who have said, 'We knew something bad was about to happen. The person was acting erratically; the person was not acting like a normal person should act.'

It's no different in the Orlando case. People are now coming out saying, 'Yes, we think he was mentally ill. Yes, he had issues and we knew something bad was going to happen.'

Usually someone is aware of the indicator, someone knows something is very wrong, and the question is, what do we do with that information? How do we get that information? Sometimes it's as simple as sitting down with the person and saying, 'Is everything OK? I know you're under stress, you're going through this, and this, and this. What can I do to help you?'

And it may just be being a friend to these individuals. I think of it from this perspective—there are victims on both sides of the shooter. You have the shooter, and the family members of the shooter that just lost a son, brother, uncle, whatever it may be. So they're mourning and they're embarrassed; they're embarrassed at a heinous act of crime that their family member just committed.

Then you have the other victims that were shot, that were innocent victims, and you have their family members. So everybody loses in an active shooter event.

That's why I think our focus should be more on preventing and finding out what the accurate indicators are. And if we can intercept and intervene prior to someone buying a gun and starting to shoot, that's when we win.

Gates: Would it have made a difference if patrons in Pulse were armed?

Doss: I'll be the first to tell you that even if everybody in that club was carrying a gun, and pulled out a concealed weapon, you'd have just as many shot and killed. You would have people missing, people shooting erratically, and when alcohol is involved, you now have people who probably can't see their sights.

I have friends that will be like, 'Hey, carry a gun and fire back. That's the answer.' And I respond, 'I'm fairly highly trained at shooting a weapon. And I would not want to have to pull my weapon out in a crowd and make that shot while people are running by me and knocking me around.'

Then, if you miss or the bullet penetrates through the person, now you've injured or killed an innocent person. It's not as simple as 'Give everyone a gun and fire back.' It's much more complicated, and very few people are capable of shooting under that type of stress accurately and effectively.

I'm not anti-gun. I'm just stating that that's not the simple answer when it comes to active shooter—that everyone should be armed. It can work in some cases, but in many cases it will probably be worse than some other options.

Gates: What are some additional areas of security at Pulse that as a security professional, you'd want to know more about following this incident?

Doss: My question will be for the security officer on duty, was he trained on active shooter? If he was trained, on what type of protocols? What did he learn?

From a security consultant perspective and a subject matter expert perspective, I'm interested in how your people are trained. And then, did they do what they were trained to do? And was that the right thing to do?

Those are the questions that I think will be bouncing around as everything is analyzed, because this is a pretty impactful event. You have 103 people that have been either wounded or killed. Out of 300 people, that's one-third of the people in the place. That's a huge percentage. So I think this is, unfortunately, a lesson that every business is going to have to start taking seriously.

And many do not. I'm out there—I wrote a book on active shooter. I'm out there preaching it, and I sit there and still see businesses that don't invest in building a plan. They still don't invest in training and awareness. They still don't invest in training their people when it comes to active shooter or any act of violence.

Kevin Doss, President and CEO of Level 4 Security, a security consultancy, and author of *Active Shooter: Preparing for and Responding to a Growing Threat*.

Active Shooter, 1st Edition

Preparing for and Responding to a Growing Threat



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- Illustrates what businesses should consider prior to, during, and after an active shooting event, including developing business continuity plan
- Demonstrates the importance of preparedness, an effective coordinated response, and planning all the way down to the frontline employee

- Addresses the private sector and public sector coordination efforts needed for an effective active shooter program
- Offers teaching and learning tools such as text boxes, end-of-chapter discussion questions, lists of key DHS, FBI and FEMA websites and resources, as well as training exercises and case studies

Description

According to Pinkerton—the leading provider of risk management services in the world—workplace violence is second only to cybersecurity as the top threat faced by organizations today. Incidents involving active shooters in the workplace are on the rise and becoming more violent and deadly. *Active Shooter* provides the tools necessary to identify potential violent individuals, along with the options and responses needed to save lives, reduce corporate liability, and recover from an active shooter event should it happen.

Active Shooter begins with a brief history of active shooters and how they have changed over time. It shows why many perpetrators initiate attacks, what they often are thinking, and some of the indicators that could have been identified prior to the attack. The book shows how to develop an active shooter program in an organization, walking readers through the entire process including training exercises to test the efficiency of the program. With the uniquely private security perspective, *Active Shooter* illustrates how to communicate with law enforcement, government agencies, and the media in the event of active shooter incident. The book concludes with a discussion of how organizations can recover promptly after an incident, which is crucial for operational survival.

Readership

1) Security professionals, 2) business executives and managers responsible for the security of their organization, 3) Human resource managers, 4) law enforcement

Security experts: Mass shootings are unstoppable

By [TONY SAAVEDRA](#) / STAFF WRITER

Orange county Register

June 12, 2016

The slaughter in a Florida nightclub Sunday sparked the question that weighed heavily on venues large and small: Can we prevent it from happening here?

“The short answer is, no,” said Chris E. McGoey, a Los Angeles security consultant specializing in businesses and nightclubs. “We’re in for a long haul here. If this keeps going on, we’re going to be in trouble for a while.”

The shooting in an Orlando nightclub that claimed 50 lives and injured 53 corresponded with a reported call from the radical Islamic State to step up attacks during the holy month of Ramadan. The shooter pledged his allegiance to the group in a 911 call before he started blasting away with an AR-15 assault rifle, reports said.

McGoey said radicals with murderous intent would not be stopped from storming concert halls to neighborhood bars by conventional security measures: metal detectors, unarmed security guards, beefy bouncers. Terrorists could even get the drop on armed police officers, who are often outnumbered by massive crowds.

“This guy comes in with the intent of shooting and killing as many people as possible, they will simply bypass anyone who tries to stop them ... People with those gigantic clips before they have to reload can do a lot of damage,” McGoey said.

He added that an armed officer was at the door of Orlando’s “Pulse” nightclub.

“What’s the answer?” McGoey asked. “Two officers at the door? Moats and alligators?”

McGoey said places such as Disneyland in Anaheim, which installed metal detectors in December, come close to giving the illusion of being impenetrable.

“They’ll check you down, they’ll check bags, but it’s almost theater,” McGoey said. “If somebody wanted to get a weapon into Disneyland, they could. There’s no safe haven anymore.”

Officials at Disneyland and Staples Center, where an evacuation video is played before every event, declined comment Sunday on whether they were tightening security in the aftermath of the shooting. But McGoey assured the attack was on the mind of every large venue, if not, every business, in the United States, if not just for liability reasons.

He said the only way to come close to staving off an attack of Sunday's proportions was to adopt the same security measures as an airport, with large numbers of police officers, body scans, transportation safety agents and baggage searches. But that would disrupt customers.

"Any preventive tactic that will be palatable to society is going to be penetrable by these crazy guys," he said. "Do we have to have armed guards at daycare centers, churches, grocery stores?"

Houston security consultant J. Patrick Murphy said even if there was a way to stop a possible attack by someone "hell-bent" to kill, no one would want to pay for it.

"It's not cost-effective for a bar to create some absolutely (impenetrable) security system that will never be challenged," Murphy said.

Sometimes, however, good police work wins the day.

For instance, a man who said he was en route to the LA PRIDE parade with a cache of guns, ammunition and explosives was arrested in Santa Monica early Sunday.

Los Angeles County Sheriff's officials on Sunday continued working with their federal counterparts to determine whether he may be related to the violence in Florida.

At Angel Stadium in Anaheim, it was business as usual Sunday, with the Angels taking on the Cleveland Indians.

Angels spokesman Tim Mead said officials there were confident in the security plan put in place with the Anaheim police and Major League Baseball.

"It's reviewed daily," Mead said.

Since the San Bernardino shooting in December, which left 14 people dead and 22 seriously injured, the Council on Islamic-American Relations in Anaheim has reported an increase in threats. The group installed security cameras recently and is in the process of replacing its wooden doors with metal ones, said executive director Hussam Ayloush.

At the LGBT Center in Santa Ana, there was no plan – and no money – to increase security. Laura Kanter, a director with the group, said security wasn't just an LGBT issue but a national one.