

**FORT LAUDERDALE-HOLLYWOOD INTERNATIONAL  
AIRPORT (FLL) ACTIVE SHOOTER/MASS EVACUATION  
CRITICAL INCIDENT**

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**Critical Incident Report**

**Date of Incident: January 6, 2017**  
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**100 Terminal Drive**  
**Fort Lauderdale, FL 33315**

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## **PREFACE:**

### **Definition and Purpose of this Critical Incident Report**

A Critical Incident Report (CIR) is a professional discussion of an event that enables the leadership of the Broward Sheriff's Office (BSO) to identify what happened, why it happened and how to sustain strengths and recognize opportunities for improvement. It is a tool leaders can use to get maximum benefit from every mission or call for service. This CIR is modeled after the United States Army's "A Leader's Guide to After-Action Reviews."<sup>1</sup> It provides:

- Candid insights into specific deputy, supervisor, commander and unit strengths and weaknesses from various perspectives
- Feedback and insight critical to response and tactical-focused training
- Details that are often lacking in evaluation reports alone.

Evaluation is the basis for the incident manager's assessment of a critical incident. No incident managers, regardless of how skilled, will see as much as the responders and supervisors who were involved in a critical incident and responded as trained in real time.

By focusing on individual tasks and by describing specific observations, responders, supervisors and incident managers identify strengths and opportunities for improvement and together decide how to improve their performances. This shared learning improves task proficiency, promotes esprit de corps and improves upon public safety.

BSO critical incident managers will use this information to organize input for unit training plans. Of course, CIRs are not cure-alls for unit training issues. Incident managers must still make on-the-spot corrections and take responsibility for training their deputies and supervisors. However, CIRs are a key part of the training process. The ultimate goal is to improve agency performance and capitalize on our successes during this critical incident.

Preceding this CIR, BSO conducted numerous interviews of participants, conducted numerous internal discussions with all involved units, examined video and audio evidence, reviewed televised, print, and social media broadcasts, examined internal infrastructure performance, examined external infrastructure performance, reviewed BSO's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP), reviewed the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and reviewed reports from several agencies that experienced critical emergencies at airports. This CIR includes and analyzes all information collected.

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<sup>1</sup> A Leader's Guide to After-Action Reviews TC 25-20, 1993

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On Friday, January 6, 2017, Esteban Santiago boarded a Delta Airlines flight in Anchorage, Alaska, bound for Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Santiago checked one item as checked luggage – a semi-automatic handgun that was stored in an FAA-approved container. Santiago did not carry on or check any other luggage for this flight. Upon arrival at 1215 hours (12:15 p.m.) at the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport (FLL), Santiago reclaimed his checked handgun, went into a bathroom, loaded the handgun and then proceeded to shoot and kill five people and wound six others in the Terminal 2 baggage claim area.

A BSO deputy sheriff assigned to a secure area of the upper floor of Terminal 2 heard the gunshots, called for backup, and within seconds, engaged Santiago. Santiago dropped his firearm and surrendered to the deputy. Santiago was arrested, and this senseless tragedy was over within 85 seconds from the moment Santiago shot his first victim.

In the immediate aftermath, deputies were now faced with the understandable general panic among travelers, visitors and airline employees that followed this mass shooting. Hundreds of people, including potential witnesses to the shooting, scattered and sought shelter – even into the Security Identification Display Area (SIDA) – including baggage carousel ports and other restricted areas. These actions immediately compromised the security of Terminal 2 at FLL.

Immediately upon arriving at the incident location responding deputies and BSO Fire Rescue and Emergency Services (BSO FRES) began triaging and treating the injured. A large crime scene that contained the victims and evidence needed to be secured. Concurrently, BSO deputies needed to locate and secure witnesses to the shooting while still remaining hypervigilant to the possibility of additional shooters or attacks.

While this scene was chaotic as expected, at this point, it was manageable from a law enforcement perspective. Active Shooter/Mass Casualty protocols were activated, appropriate local, state and federal notifications were made and additional resources were summoned to the scene. The BSO Mobile Command Post was set up, and overall command and control of the incident was established.

Subsequently, almost 90 minutes into this event, a customs and border protection officer heard what he thought were two gunshots coming from an upper roadway at FLL. The officer then asked a fire rescue captain if he heard the gunshots. The fire rescue captain then made a radio transmission to Broward County's Regional Communications (RC) that a law enforcement officer is reporting possible shots fired in the area of Terminal 2. The radio transmission of possible shots fired was repeated by dispatch as efforts were made to confirm the report. Although the report of gunshots was quickly dispelled, the repeated radio transmissions of "shots fired" were overheard and reiterated by law enforcement, civilians and airline personnel.

The words "shots fired" spread throughout the airport and triggered pandemonium as thousands of travelers, airline and airport employees began to escape from the concourses, gates, baggage claim areas, curbside loading areas and parking garages of all four terminals at FLL. Subsequently, there were repeated police radio transmissions and 911 calls into RC reporting shots fired at various locations throughout the airport prompting

multiple, rapid and very visible responses of heavily-armed law enforcement officers running to various airport locations. The sight of this law enforcement response only confirmed to civilians that the reports of shots fired must be accurate and increased the pandemonium, ultimately causing officials to shut down the entire airport.

All of the additional reports of shots fired were investigated and determined to be unfounded. At no point were any additional shell casings or damage by gunfire found anywhere except in the lower baggage claim area of Terminal 2. Also, a careful review of airport closed circuit television (CCTV) did not show any additional shootings or shooters. After many hours of assisting and evacuating over 10,000 people from the airport, with the exception of the lower baggage claim area of Terminal 2, FLL was reopened and operational again by 0500 hours (5 a.m.) the following morning.

In the wake of this tragic loss of life at FLL, it is the responsibility of BSO to objectively review and assess our response to the events. It is our goal that this effort is also of value to other law enforcement agencies and emergency responders, especially to those who are responsible to provide law enforcement services to airports. The following report provides a narrative of the multi-agency response and concludes with a summary of the observations and recommendations of BSO. In the end, the views and perspectives expressed in this report are from BSO and its members.

I would also like to acknowledge and express my sincere appreciation to all of our local, state and federal partners – both law enforcement and civilians – for their tireless efforts and assistance on January 6, 2017.

I especially want to recognize the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) and Special Agent in Charge (SAC) of the Miami Field Division, George Piro. SAC Piro responded with his team, was on scene at FLL soon after this critical incident and demonstrated outstanding collaborative leadership as the response, support, assistance and cooperation of the FBI was nothing less than stellar.

In closing, let us remember and honor the five people who tragically lost their lives and the six seriously wounded on January 6, 2017. Words can never be adequate enough to convey our heartfelt condolences. The victims and their families remain in our thoughts and prayers.

Sheriff Scott J. Israel

## **SPECIALIZED UNIT RESPONSE: BSO FLL Airport District**

The BSO Airport District works with the Broward County Aviation Department (BCAD), the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), the Airline Managers Association, airport tenants and ancillary federal agencies to provide law enforcement and fire rescue protection for the 1,380-acre airport site and its 12,500 employees. BSO provides law enforcement and fire rescue services for FLL and handles security measures related to parking and general airport security. The district has an annual operating budget of approximately \$18 million, which provides for 122 positions consisting of one district captain, one lieutenant, nine sergeants, 87 deputies, 22 civilian airport security officers, one crime analyst and one administrative specialist II.

In 2016, FLL ranked 21<sup>st</sup> in the United States for passenger traffic and 13<sup>th</sup> in domestic origin and destination passengers. FLL accommodates approximately 290,239 total aircraft movements a year, which accounts for departure and arrival flights, while hosting approximately 29.2 million passengers a year – up 8.4 percent from 2015. FLL is an immense economic engine for Broward County, which employs 12,500 airport badged employees, 139,920 total jobs (direct, indirect, induced multiplier effect) with an overall payroll of \$3.5 billion and a total output of \$13.2 billion. FLL is Broward County's largest employer. FLL is monetarily self-supporting, with no tax revenues expended in support of airport operations, maintenance or capital improvements. FLL, through BCAD, generates its funding via user fees, rentals and other applicable airport charges.

## **PRIMARY EVENT: Terminal 2 Shooting – Baggage Claim Area**

On January 6, 2017, Santiago flew to the FLL on Delta Airlines Flight DL2182 that originated in Anchorage, Alaska with one connection (DL1088) in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota. Santiago departed the aircraft in FLL at 1215 hours (12:15 p.m.) and proceeded to the Terminal 2 baggage claim area, which is located on the ground level of the airport.

After waiting at Carousel 3 for several minutes, Santiago is paged by Delta Airlines staff via the overhead paging system to come to the Delta Baggage Service Office, which is located at the southeast end of the baggage claim area. Delta had paged Santiago so he could collect the firearm he had checked in a secured gun case at the Ted Stevens International Airport (ANC). Santiago checked no other luggage for his flight.

After claiming the checked firearm, Santiago walked through the entire baggage area to the west end of the baggage claim area where he entered a men's restroom and loaded the firearm. Santiago then concealed his firearm in his waistband and abandoned the firearm case in the bathroom. Santiago then exited the bathroom, walked east to the approximate center of the baggage claim area before pulling out the firearm and immediately began shooting random people in his vicinity. Panicked civilians fled the gunfire by any means available – including into access-restricted SIDA areas (i.e. baggage carousel ports, restricted areas, etc.). At this time, Terminal 2 SIDA integrity was compromised.

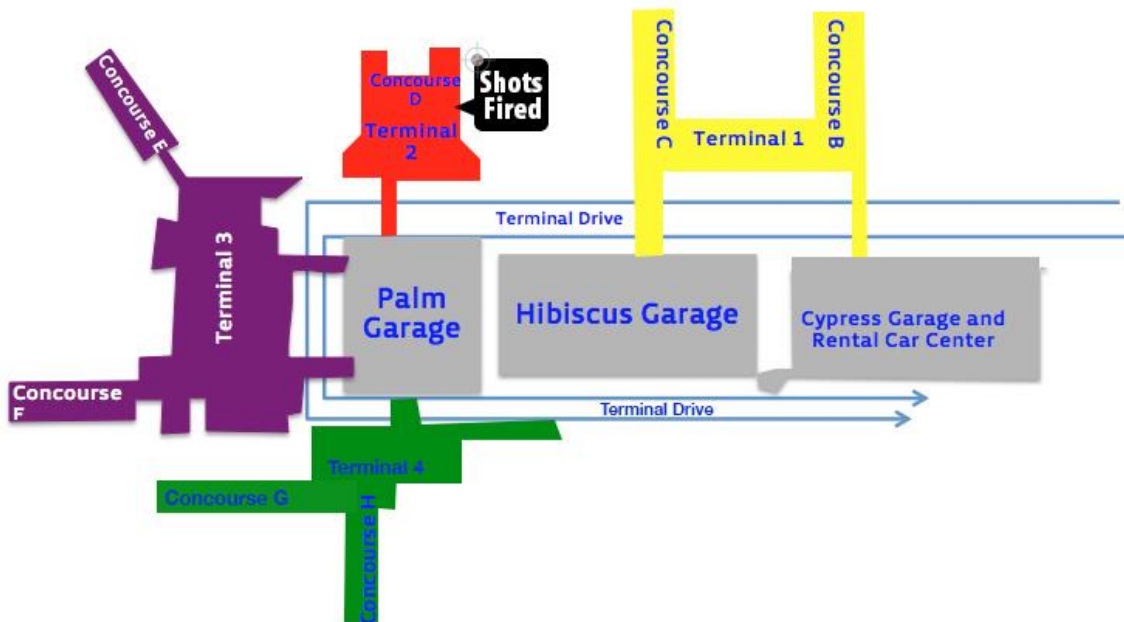
BSO deputies responded to the sound and radio calls of shots fired and had Santiago at gunpoint 85 seconds after the first shot was fired. Santiago immediately dropped the firearm

and surrendered to deputies. Within those 85 seconds, Santiago had fired 14 rounds, murdering five people and shooting six more.

Six deputies responded to the lower-level baggage claim area (via multiple doors) where they encountered hundreds of screaming and panicked travelers. BSO deputies assessed the existing threat while attempting to calm and control the travelers and employees. At the same time, deputies began establishing a perimeter and identifying and assisting victims.

From the time the witnesses were being secured until 1420 hours (2:20 p.m.), the events taking place were consistent for any homicide scene. Responding BSO resources (including BSO FRES personnel) and additional outside agencies established a crime scene and began the task of treating victims and securing witnesses and evidence. BSO's Explosive Detection Canine Handler (EDCH) teams were used to sweep the immediate vicinity for potential explosive devices while BSO Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) assisted to locate and secure SIDA areas of Terminal 2 that had been flooded by the initial fleeing of panicked passengers and airport employees.

During this time, an Incident Command Post (ICP) was established, along with a media staging area and the BCAD Airport Emergency Operations Center (AEOC). A plan was being enacted that would have made the SIDA of Terminal 2 beyond the TSA checkpoint "sterile" again. This would have allowed operations in Terminal 2 to recommence within a short time frame (with the exception of the homicide scene in baggage claim). Up to this point, the decision had been made to keep the remainder of the airport open excluding the lower-level roadway and Terminal 2.





## Timeline of the Primary Event

- 12:15:32 Santiago exits D-5 jet bridge and makes his way to the lower level of Terminal 2 to the Delta baggage claim area. He retrieves his checked handgun.
- 12:46:22 Santiago enters men's restroom located at the west end of Terminal 2 baggage claim area.
- 12:52:40 Santiago exits the restroom and proceeds east through the baggage claim area.
- 12:53:20 Santiago pulls a handgun from waistband and fires his first shot.
- 12:53:29 Delta Airlines checkpoint ticket employees at the upper level of Terminal 2 begin to hear the sounds of gunshots and start moving toward the central TSA checkpoint.
- 12:54:45 A deputy responding from his assigned area at the upper level of Terminal 2 TSA checkpoint sees the commotion, hears the gunshots and runs to engage Santiago, who immediately surrenders. Santiago is placed into custody and immediately removed from the crime scene to a secure area.
- 12:55:28 Six deputies enter the lower-level baggage claim area (via multiple doors) where they assess the existing threat, control hundreds of panicked civilians, begin establishing a perimeter and identify and assist victims.
- 12:58:54 Fire rescue personnel enter area to begin triage assessment.
- 13:05:44 Fire rescue begins treatment of victims.
- 13:06:52 Deputies begin securing the crime scene.
- 13:08:20 Lower-level airport roadway is shut down for emergency responders only.
- 13:11:24 Witnesses are moved to west end of lower-level baggage claim area in Terminal 2 with the intent of gathering their information and getting them onto an airport transport bus. (This process was being coordinated when the secondary event took place, rendering the plan no longer feasible).
- 13:35:18 Last victim is brought to Trauma Center.
- 14:20:00 Primary event ends.



## **SECONDARY EVENT:** **Reports of “Shots Fired” and Other Factors**

At 1420 hours (2:20 p.m.), a U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer was walking with several other CBP officers in the lower-level roadway between terminals 2 and 3 when he heard what he thought was possibly two gunshots (it is theorized that the noises heard were most likely cars on the upper roadway driving across an expansion joint in the road). The CBP officer questioned his fellow officers as to what he allegedly heard but he was immediately informed that they did not hear anything. In an effort to dispel any further fears, the officer ran back to Terminal 2 to determine if there was a secondary active shooter threat. CCTV shows the CBP officer running from the lower-level Ground Transportation Area (GTA) Terminal 3 toward the west end crosswalk at Terminal 2 where he met up with several BSO FRES personnel. A BSO FRES captain recalls a CBP officer running toward him with his firearm out and asking if he heard shots fired at Terminal 2. The fire rescue captain then reports this information over his designated radio channel to BSO FRES communications. Approximately 45 seconds later, this information is relayed across the primary Department of Law Enforcement (DLE) radio channel as, “Border Patrol reporting shots fired in Terminal 2.”

Simultaneously, throughout the airport, CCTV shows deputies appearing to go on alert, while numerous requests via radio transmissions for confirmation of the shooting or location are made. In the AEOC, a group comprised of airport department heads and individual legacy airlines, heard the initial radio call via the fire rescue radio and subsequently the same radio traffic from a police radio reporting similar information. According to JetBlue representatives, a civilian had also stated on a hard line phone that “they are shooting in two again” – referring to Terminal 2.

Upon hearing the phone call and two radio calls, a JetBlue supervisor made a decision to keep their employees safe by sending an employee from the AEOC to the JetBlue ticket counters to begin clearing employees from the area.

The JetBlue ticket counters are located in the southern half of Terminal 3 with the passenger exit lane from surrounding concourses separating the northern and southern sides of the terminal. CCTV show the JetBlue employees clear the counter area and run toward the southernmost terminal access door. In the process of the employees running, passengers became alarmed and joined in the escape with the employees.

Three subsequent actions took place in a very short time frame once the JetBlue employee ticket counter began to evacuate:

- The TSA officers in Terminal 3 F Concourse Checkpoint observed the airline employees running, and they also ran west down the concourse.
- Some employees and passengers fleeing from the ticket counter evacuated east to the Palm Garage.
- Other employees and passengers fleeing from the ticket counter evacuated toward Terminal 4.

These actions created a cascading effect upon the rest of the airport in a very short period of time. The TSA officers running from F Concourse Checkpoint caused most of the F Concourse passengers, concession workers, and airline employees, to panic, and flee the concourse area onto the adjacent ramp. During an evacuation, the ramp workers would normally gather evacuating employees and contain them to a general area. In this case, and in all successive concourse evacuations that day, ramp workers had no prior notice of the impending evacuations and began to flee themselves as the panicked passengers and other employees were yelling that they were being shot at or that shots were being fired.

The airport employees and passengers fleeing toward Terminal 4 caused two deputies already on the curb, who were still trying to confirm the shots fired in the Terminal 2 incident, to un-holster their firearms and direct their attention to Terminal 3.

The airport employees and passengers fleeing to the garage appear to have created unidentified loud sounds that caused one of the deputies in front of Terminal 4 to make a radio transmission of “shots fired” coming from the Palm Garage. It is at this point, the radio system first went into “fail-soft” mode and all bridged talk-group connections to responding resources were lost. RC dispatchers attempted to reconnect talk-groups several times but were unsuccessful due to the number of transmissions the system was encountering. RC dispatchers advised all units to stop transmitting until the radio bridges could be restored. The bridges were restored within four minutes; however, the radio system began to “site trunk” and “throttle” transmissions, which resulted in partial transmissions from deputies and BSO FRES personnel.

As the “shots fired” call was being reported, the passengers who ran past Terminal 4 curbside deputies entered Terminal 4. Passengers and airport employees ran toward the checkpoint causing the TSA officers at the G Concourse Checkpoint and exit lane to flee down the H and G concourses. This resulted in passengers in both concourses to escaping toward the ramp and taxiways located on the west side of Terminal 4.

Once the call of “shots fired” in the Palm Garage occurred, law enforcement officers (LEOs) ran out of the terminals and from the curbsides toward the Palm Garage. These actions resulted in the following incidents:

- A 911 call is received from Terminal 3 of “shots fired.”
- Passengers reacted to LEOs in Terminal 2, both upper and lower levels, and ran toward the Palm Garage resulting in passengers on upper-level Terminal 2 to flee toward Terminal 3.
- Many of these passengers ran into the northernmost door of Terminal 3, which also caused passengers at the ticket counters in that area to flee and also caused the TSA officers at E Checkpoint to run down the E Concourse.
- E Concourse passengers, concession workers and airline employees began to flee the concourse toward the ramp areas. TSA officers reacting to the LEOs running toward the perceived threat out of Terminal 2 resulted in the TSA officers at the Delta Checkpoint to escape for the second time that day into the D Concourse.

- This action resulted in passengers, who had returned to the concourse after they had fled the first incident, to begin evacuating to the ramp area. The ramp was still occupied in two locations by groups of passengers, concession workers and airline employees who had not yet returned to the D Concourse after the first evacuation.
- Upon hearing and seeing the new evacuation, the groups already on the ramp fled to new locations closer to the Terminal 1 and Terminal 3 ramp areas.
- Fleeing Terminal 4 passengers reported that a suspicious male was being detained at gunpoint, which was solely based on them overhearing a transmitted police radio communication of a “suspect at gunpoint.” These communications were ultimately unfounded.
- The sudden response from LEOs responding from all locations and running toward a perceived threat, specifically in the Palm Garage, resulted in passengers moving eastward toward the Hibiscus and Cypress garages. CCTV shows the running, tension and confusion among the airport employees and passengers across the airport led to the knocking over of signs, stanchions and garbage cans. Consequently, people ran into doors, knocked them off their tracks, dropped luggage and tripped over strollers. All of these noises in such a short period of time appeared to have added to the confusion and seemed to account for various LEO reports of “shots fired” throughout the garages and in Terminal 1.

The increased LEO activity, coupled with passenger behavior, led to confusion in the C Concourse Checkpoint area which resulted in the TSA officers running into the C Concourse. As with the other terminals, such action led to the escape of passengers, concession workers and airline employees onto the airport tarmacs. Simultaneously, with TSA officers running from the C Concourse Checkpoint, the passengers in the west end of the Terminal 1 lower-level baggage claim area began running in various directions, primarily toward the east.

The BSO B Concourse Checkpoint deputy, who had been listening to radio transmissions of shots fired in various locations, and a radio call of a potential suspect in a white shirt running in the garages toward Terminal 1, posted himself at the mezzanine level at the B Concourse Checkpoint to observe all of the baggage claim area. As the passengers at the west end began to run toward his location on the east end, he heard what he perceived to be shots fired coming from that general area. The deputy relayed the information over the radio informing of “shots fired in Terminal 4,” but corrected himself a few seconds later stating “shots fired Terminal 1.” One minute after correcting himself, other LEOs reported “shots fired” in Terminal 1 and at Alamo Rent a Car located at the rental car center.

The sound and confusion of several dozen people running toward the direction of the B Concourse Checkpoint (via CCTV) caught the attention of the TSA officers at that location. As passengers ran up to the mezzanine level, the TSA officers ran from their checkpoint into the concourse. This action resulted in the near-complete evacuation of passengers, concession workers and airline employees to the ramp.

Terminal 1 is the only airport terminal with three levels. The upper level is ticketing, the mezzanine has the B Concourse located on the east side, and the C Concourse located on the west side. Both mezzanines connect directly to either the Cypress Garage B Security Checkpoint or the Hibiscus Garage C Security Checkpoint via an enclosed bridge over the lower-level roadway. The lower level is primarily the baggage claim area for all of Terminal 1 airlines. Interviews with ear-witnesses to the sounds of gunshots, and a review of CCTV, reveal that the entire upper level appears to hear gunshots coming from the eastern mezzanine level. Subsequent interviews with those on the eastern mezzanine level, and review of the CCTV, clearly indicated that there were no shots fired at that location. The people interviewed in the eastern and mid-terminal location of the baggage claim area stated that the gunshot sounds they heard were coming from the western end of baggage claim.

It should be noted that Terminal 1 has been the source of most witness reporting of gunshots. Depending on the interviewee, they range from two to five shots with the succession of the shots fluctuating per interview. Though the terminal is under major construction, all of those interviewed reported having worked in that terminal for some time, and all stated they had never heard construction noise that sounded anything like the noise they reported hearing as a gunshot.

It should also be noted that all of the people interviewed stated the sound of gunshots was the reason they fled. An Interview was conducted with a TSA employee in the C Concourse Security Checkpoint, a Starbucks manager standing in front of a down escalator and a civilian BSO employee who was in front of the checkpoint standing in the western mezzanine area of the terminal. All three stated they never heard a gunshot, despite being situated just above the location where others interviewed believe the gunshot sound had originated. They stated they ran only because they saw others acting afraid and heard someone yell “run” or something similar to “they’re shooting.”

As of this writing, there has been no CCTV evidence or actual eyewitness to any type of intentional or unintentional shots being fired in Terminal 1. There have been no shell casings collected, despite reports otherwise, and no cleaning crews or airline employees have reported discovering any damage in Terminal 1 consistent with a gunshot. Attempted recreations of that sound by normal items found in those areas have been unsuccessful in identifying the sound. Interviews with Federal Air Marshal Service (FAMS) agents located in the western end of the baggage claim area also revealed that they never heard shots fired. The FAMS agents had proceeded out of that location after they observed a deputy move at a quick pace from the west end mezzanine level down to the baggage claim level and out the western exit door to the curb. After the three FAMS agents ran outside following the deputy, the alleged sound of shots fired occurred. The three FAMS agents deny having heard any shots, and CCTV of the entire lower-level curb area reveals no apparent concerned passengers or LEOs outside or any reaction to a loud noise or incident at that moment.

The total elapsed time from the moment employees and passengers began running from the JetBlue ticket counters in Terminal 3, which began the domino effect of escapes, to the point of passenger reactions in lower-level Terminal 1 baggage claim

took 2 minutes and 53 seconds. 4 seconds later, TSA officers at the B Concourse Checkpoint began to flee. By the 3 minute 20 second mark, the majority of the airport passengers and employees had escaped to various locations in the airport.

Additionally, CCTV further shows a clearly-marked BSO patrol canine vehicle driving to Terminal 1 in response to a “shots fired” call. The deputy was forced to park his vehicle in the middle of the lower-level roadway as a result of the large number of civilians fleeing the baggage claim area and running across the roadway toward the garages. Once stopped, the deputy immediately jumped out of the driver’s seat and began running toward the perceived danger in the baggage claim area. Simultaneously, one of the airport patrons ran toward the BSO vehicle and opened the rear passenger door with the intent of hiding in the vehicle. Upon opening the vehicle door, the patron encountered the patrol canine that proceeded to jump out of the vehicle and engage the patron. A nearby Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) agent observed what had happened and was able to restrain the canine. The civilian was provided medical assistance and transported to a local hospital with minor injuries.

Through the confusion of this canine incident, LEOs responding to the location reported the incident on the radio as a “gunshot victim”; or, in an attempt to clarify the incident, a “canine bite, not a gunshot.” It appears that these transmissions were possibly only partially successful and the word “victim” became “gunshot victim.” Either way, it seems to have added to the possibility to those listening on the radio that there was an additional shooter on the airport property. Shortly after this report of a gunshot victim, there was a new report of an additional shooter on the east side of the airport property near the A Concourse.

During the majority of the 3 minutes described above, there was a large number of LEOs responding to all three airport garages in an effort to locate a possible shooter. Multiple teams of LEOs are seen on CCTV throughout the garages and on every level tracking down a persistent report of a male in a white T-shirt. It appears this person or people, turned out to be civilian airport employees who had been running through the garages out of fear of the perceived threat. They had made their way to the Hibiscus Garage rooftop where they were intermingled with airport “plane-spotters.”

### **Shots Fired Timeline**

The following table identifies a timeline of “shots fired” calls (911 calls and police-initiated calls) and firearm-related calls heard over the primary radio channels and their respective locations related to the secondary event.

<b>Time</b>	<b>Message Received</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Received From</b>
1422 Hours (2:22 p.m.)	Shots Fired	Palm Garage	LEO
1424 Hours (2:24 p.m.)	Shots Fired	Terminal 3	911 Call
1424 Hours (2:24 p.m.)	Suspect at Gunpoint	Terminal 4	LEO
1424 Hours (2:24 p.m.)	Shots Fired	Terminal 4	LEO

1424 Hours (2:24 p.m.)	Shots Fired	Terminal 1	LEO
1425 Hours (2:25 p.m.)	Shots Fired	Terminal 1	LEO
1426 Hours (2:26 p.m.)	Shots Fired	Rental Car Center	LEO
1426 Hours (2:26 p.m.)	Gunshot Victim	Terminal 1	LEO
1436 Hours (2:36 p.m.)	Additional Shooter	Train Tracks Adjacent to Airport	LEO
1454 Hours (2:54 p.m.)	Shots Fired	Huizenga Hangar	LEO
1519 Hours (3:19 p.m.)	Three Firearms Recovered	Palm Garage	LEO
1522 Hours (3:22 p.m.)	Shots Fired	Terminal 3	911 Call
1524 Hours (3:24 p.m.)	Shots Fired	Huizenga Hangar	Fire Rescue
1636 Hours (4:36 p.m.)	Rendered Safe	Railroad Tracks	LEO

## Ramp Issues

The normal operating procedure for airport evacuations (from the concourse to a ramp) is for ramp employees of the various airlines to collect the passengers as they evacuate down the concourse stairwells. The employees form a loose “bubble” or “perimeter” around the passengers to contain them and keep them away from the various hazards found on an airport ramp. With multiple reports of gunshots, ramp employees suddenly and unexpectedly found themselves becoming part of the fleeing crowds joining in the escape until they eventually stopped, oftentimes at other concourses or terminals.

CCTV shows extremely large groups gathering near the G-14 ramp area of Terminal 4. A similarly large number were located on the ramp between E and F concourses of Terminal 3. Terminal 2 had several large groups around the concourse, and the majority of Terminal 1 evacuees made it from the concourse to the taxiways and onto the runway located on the north side of the airport.

Many patrons within these groups still had possession of their tablets or cellular phones and were monitoring social media or spoke with friends and family who informed them of what the various news channels had reported. This added to, and heightened, group anxiety as those with social media access would then relay this information to others near them. One specific incident illustrates how such communication led to approximately 400 people fleeing the ramp locations and attempting to seek shelter at alternate airport runways.

An employee of an airline had evacuated a concourse to the ramp and was embedded with a group of approximately 200 people. The group was startled at one point and fled to another location, joining a similar-sized group. The initial employee stated that there was a lot of anxiety in the group, and people were relaying to one another the state of their situation through phone conversations between friends, family and social media. The same employee stated someone shouted for everyone to move away from the building they were adjacent to because there were reports of additional shooters. At the same time, this employee was standing next to his friend who was on the phone with a relative. The friend stated something to the effect of “...we should get down...” The employee’s uneasiness and his reaction to such statements made ultimately led to the

employee shouting, "We should run!" With that, CCTV shows the crowd of approximately 400 people running toward the airport's northern runway. Those who lagged behind were directed toward the runway by employees who, according to interviews, felt that it was the safest place for people to be. Others interviewed stated they had just run with the group because they heard people shouting that shots were being fired. Alternatively, others stated they did not know why they were running.

Concurrently, several of these mass groups made it to the airport's northern runway and were eventually split into 2 groups of approximately 1,000 people each. One group ended up at a commercial hangar located on the northern side of the airport, and the other filtered out of a construction gate located on the east side of the airport. This gate was manned by private security officers.

The private security officers stationed at the construction gate had opened it for the entry of a fire rescue ambulance. At the last moment, the fire rescue personnel decided not to enter the gate because they were hearing reports of "shots fired" on the runway. While the gate remained open, and with a very large group of people walking toward the gate, a fire rescue paramedic advised the security guards to leave the gate open for the approaching group. The private security guards complied, and hundreds of people made their way out of the airport via the east construction gate. Those who exited via the gate preceded north down the Florida East Coast (FEC) railroad tracks into the City of Fort Lauderdale.

### **Suspicious Person with Suspicious Package**

One exception to this group was a 22-year-old male who chose to run east when the rest of the crowd was walking north. This individual ran toward Fort Lauderdale Police Department (FLPD) law enforcement officers who were assisting in closing the roadway at a primary entrance into the airport. Those officers had been hearing reports on their radios of the multiple active-shooter incidents, as well as reports that other shooters may be amongst the civilians. The individual running toward them was doing so with a backpack in one hand and a cellphone in the other. The individual refused to comply with several commands to stop before being ordered to the ground at gunpoint.

The subject was interviewed by FLPD and, based on his statements, a decision was made by the FLPD Bomb Squad to use a disruption device on the individual's backpack. Notifications were made over the primary radio channel that there would be an intentional disruption that might sound like an explosion. Once rendered safe, the backpack was then searched and found to be absent of any explosive materials and only contained personal items. The FBI responded to the scene to conduct a follow-up interview and ultimately released the individual without charging him.



## Ensuing Issues and Recovery

By approximately 1530 hours (3:30 p.m.), there had been no conclusive evidence to confirm another shooter was present at the airport. Though numerous law enforcement and 911 reports of “shots fired” had occurred, there had been no confirmed suspects or victims located. With a very hypersensitive civilian population of approximately 10,000 people walking or hiding randomly around the airport, concourses, offices, jet bridges, garages, ramps and terminals – or stranded on the 22 aircrafts on the tarmac – BSO was faced with establishing incident priorities to address life safety, incident stabilization and property conservation. Some of those challenges included:

- Providing for life-safety concerns for approximately 10,000 people on the airport property
- Securing the airport, to include public areas (i.e. garages, ticket counters, baggage claim areas) and SIDA locations
- Ensuring the safety of more than 20,000 pieces of abandoned belongings and valuables to achieve property conservation.

At this point, bringing the people back into the concourses was not an option for several reasons. Primarily, there remained a security concern that other shooters could be potentially amongst the airport population. Additionally, there were too many reports of shots fired, leading incident managers to believe there were additional threats.

All concourses, terminals and garages had people hiding in them, and those locations were physically cleared to ensure the safety and sterility of the post-security areas, as well as the public areas of the airport. Civilians could not be allowed back into concourses or security checkpoints, as thousands of personal items had been discarded by those fleeing. Wallets, purses, cellular phones, tablets, passports, bags and more had been dropped or abandoned as people fled. Airport restaurants and shops had also been abandoned with cash drawers left open and merchandise left unattended. There was no way to locate staff or even know if they were still on the airport property.

BSO Command, in coordination with the Sheriff's Emergency Operations Center (SEOC), determined all civilian personnel without other means of transportation would be moved to an off-site location that was deemed secure. Port Everglades was chosen, as it is less than one mile away from the airport, has fixed perimeter security, routinely handles large volumes of passengers, can accommodate transportation services, and is conducive to interviewing people.

The movement to the port would have to occur from the upper terminal roadways due to the fact the lower level would have to remain closed as a result of the Terminal 2 shooting. However, this movement could only commence once the Cypress, Hibiscus and Palm parking garages (nine floors, seven floors and four floors respectively) could be deemed secure from threats. With the plan to populate the curbs with thousands of people waiting for buses, a shooter in a garage could have had a devastating effect.

By 1530 hours (3:30 p.m.), a SWAT team leader from each of the 18 different departments was directed to the BSO SWAT command vehicle, where individual teams were tasked to specific garages. The mission was to clear every vehicle, office and stairwell in that specific garage and report suspicious activity, items or persons. A clearance meant a visual inspection of the interior and exterior of every vehicle, office or stairwell, and a pat-down of any persons found in those locations. Persons located were directed out of the garage to a temporary holding area which was being secured by LEOs. Throughout this process, several hundred civilians were found hiding under or inside of vehicles and offices. As a result of the visual inspections of parked vehicle interiors, follow-up investigations were required where firearm storage cases were observed. Additionally, fuel canisters, "jerry cans" and other suspicious items were located. By 1825 hours (6:25 p.m.), all three garages were deemed safe, and SWAT teams redirected their efforts to clearing individual terminals.

While these clearances began, BSO Command was working with Broward County representatives to obtain as many buses as possible to transport the massive civilian population to Port Everglades. The staging area for the buses was on the western side of the airport where Fixed Based Operations (FBO) were located and prepared for evacuation. Access to these FBOs had been shut down when the secondary event began and were easy to secure and maintain with minimal civilian traffic. Approximately 47 buses were utilized from various sources to include Broward County Mass Transit, BSO prisoner transport and much smaller special needs transport vans and trolleys.

While the buses were being obtained and the SWAT teams were clearing the secure side of the concourses and terminals, law enforcement began moving thousands of civilians gathered at various points around the airport to the upper-level curbside locations of the four terminals. Such action required a loose police line within the concourses to move people from the ramps, through concourses and out to the roadway. With abandoned personal property throughout the concourses and terminals, law enforcement needed to ensure nothing was removed prematurely before property could be reunited with its rightful owner.

In order to return the property to its rightful owners, BCAD contracted with a civilian company BMS CAT that specializes in the recovery and reunification of personal property in mass-casualty incidents. To oversee the collection of the abandoned items, BMS CAT began the collection once each concourse and terminal was deemed safe by the SWAT teams. All terminals and concourses were declared clear by 2200 hours (10 p.m.).

At such time, the task to evacuate all airport patrons remained. This encompassed moving thousands of civilians from the FLL Airport to the port. It is estimated that over 2,000 LEOs from the tri-county area responded to the airport to offer some type of assistance. While this response was generally manageable from a traffic standpoint after the initial event, traffic control was challenging following the secondary event.

With the potential of six or seven active shooter incidents being reported at the same time, responding LEOs were parking vehicles in any location near the terminals and

garages. Due to the nature of the incident, LEOs and their vehicles became separated. In addition, several dozen civilian vehicles had been left abandoned, without keys, along roadways into and out of the airport and in front of terminals. Several civilian vehicles ran out of gas after having been left to idle for many hours. Forty vehicles were towed to a contracted tow yard with dozens more being moved out of the roadway to allow for bus access to the terminals.

By 1930 hours (7:30 p.m.), the roadways had been made passable, and the buses began to pick up civilians for transport to Port Everglades. LEOs stationed themselves on curbs and roadways at all four terminals and assisted with the loading of passengers onto the buses. LEO vehicles conducted escorts of the buses for the trip to Port Everglades.

The SEOC terminated service at approximately 2300 hours (11 p.m.), and the airport command post ended service at 0100 hours (1 a.m.) on January 7, 2017. The Port Everglades command post closed at 0300 hours (3 a.m.). At that point, the port was empty of all civilians with the Red Cross and Broward County services finding beds and safe locations for the many passengers who had not intended on an overnight stay in Broward County.

With the exception of Terminal 2, FLL was open for business at 0500 hours (5 a.m.) on January 7, 2017. The BCAD staff and BMS CAT managed to return over 90 percent of the abandoned items to its rightful owners within one week of the incident. BCAD staff utilized personal and work vehicles to return property to the tri-county area, while overnight shipping was utilized for property traveling farther distances. The governor's office arranged for the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to have staff on site beginning January 7, 2017 to assist with the issuance of replacement identification to Florida residents needing immediate identification for travel purposes. Several consulate offices were also available to assist those from foreign countries in obtaining emergency travel documents from their respected countries of origin.

The Terminal 2 departure level was reopened for business on January 7, 2017, while the baggage claim area was put back in service in sections over the following week. One week from the day of the shooting, Terminal 2 baggage claim area was completely reopened.

## **Broward County Regional Communications**

The RC division is contracted by Broward County and is responsible for fielding emergency and non-emergency calls for police, fire and medical services within Broward County. Managing three Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) located in Coconut Creek, Sunrise and Pembroke Pines, BSO provides 911 and non-emergency intake, teletype and dispatch services for all unincorporated areas of Broward County, 29 law enforcement municipalities, 28 fire rescue municipalities and numerous special patrol areas including FLL, Port Everglades, BSO Department of Detention (DOD) and other areas. The division is comprised of an all-civilian command staff including one

director, one assistant director, three site managers, three assistant site managers, 41 supervisors and approximately 400 fully-certified public safety telecommunicators. In 2016, the regional PSAPs fielded over 2.5 million calls including 1.2 million incoming 911 calls or 6,000 - 7,000 telephone calls per day and dispatched approximately 1.8 million calls for service.

RC processed approximately 135 total calls directly related to this event and reviewed an estimated 444 hours of audio radio transmissions from the DLE and fire rescue talk groups assigned.

### **BSO Homicide Unit (Criminal Investigations Unit)**

At approximately 1333 hours (1:33 p.m.), the BSO Homicide Unit arrived at the lower-level of Terminal 2. Contact was made with BSO Command staff and, after an initial briefing of the event was facilitated, it was initially determined BSO was the lead investigative agency on scene. The FBI arrived shortly thereafter and, after determining this was possibly a terrorist event, they assumed control of the scene.

The following information was relayed upon arrival:

- There were at least five deceased victims within the crime scene.
- There were at least six injured victims at local area hospitals being treated for their injuries.
- Hundreds of potential witnesses were waiting to be interviewed.
- Santiago was in custody in the BSO Airport District Office.
- Santiago's firearm was contained within the crime scene.
- BSO was securing the airport from further threat of violence.

### **SWAT**

A total of 18 SWAT teams from the tri-county area were staged and assigned to specific locations following an initial briefing led by BSO Command. This enabled SWAT to conduct searches, sweeps and clearing operations of the entire BSO Airport District and its surroundings.

The Tactical Command Post (TCP) was set up and established on the lower level of Terminal 1, just east of the entrance, and secured behind fortified cover. Due to the vast law enforcement response, multiple agency radio channels (14 Ops) were needed to keep search teams organized and assigned to the task at hand. As SWAT teams arrived, proper assignments and radio channels were designated in efforts to deploy within the airport garages and terminals. They are identified as the Cypress Garage (nine floors), the Hibiscus Garage (seven floors) and the Palm Garage (four floors).

Due to the fact there were three garages to clear and three BSO team leaders, each team leader was assigned a garage and served as the team leader of a specific garage.

They actively monitored the progress of the SWAT teams searching and clearing on dedicated radio channels. During the clearing of the three garages, SWAT teams came across hundreds of civilians who were still in the garages hiding. The civilians were escorted by the assigned SWAT teams to holding areas outside of Terminal 1 until the garages could be completely cleared. Once the garages were safe, the tactical command post reassigned all SWAT teams to a specific terminal, either upper or lower, to continue clearing and rendering the terminals safe. The following indicates each garage and its clearing time:

- Hibiscus Garage – seven floors – cleared at 1730 hours (5:30 p.m.)
- Cypress Garage – nine floors – cleared at 1825 hours (6:25 p.m.)
- Palm Garage – four floors – cleared at 1825 hours (6:25 p.m.)

SWAT teams cleared all of the terminals and all of the connecting pathways by 2200 hours (10 p.m.), and all SWAT teams had cleared the airport by 2300 hours (11 p.m.).

## **BSO Forensic Services Division/Crime Scene**

Immediately upon notification, the BSO Crime Scene Unit (CSU) personnel responded with the BSO Mobile Crime Lab. As additional local and federal resources arrived on scene, a command post was established, and once the situation was believed contained, supervisors began coordinating their response with federal authorities. Once the FBI was designated as the lead agency, they had control over the initial crime scene.

After reviewing all of the available assets, the FBI agreed to proceed with BSO CSU conducting the overall crime scene photography. BSO Traffic Homicide Investigators (THI) assisted by utilizing a laser scanner to map the scene. BSO CSU then processed all witnesses who had contact with the shooter or had visible blood evidence on their person. BSO CSU provided assistance to the FBI Forensics Team as they processed the interior of the scene and also coordinated the arrival of the Broward County Medical Examiner's Office. This allowed the FBI to proceed with the initial examination and identification of the victims. At the conclusion of processing, BSO CSU transferred all photos and collected evidence to the FBI Forensic Team for their investigative use.

## **OBSERVATIONS: Opportunities for Improvement**

The observations and recommendations listed below are derived from numerous inter-agency CIRs submitted from various departments and divisions within and outside BSO. Input includes information obtained during formal debriefings, follow-up discussions and roundtable sessions.

### **Observation 1: Active Shooter Response and Training**

FEMA Core Capability: Interdiction and Disruption

The initial response to an active shooter situation must be rapid and coordinated with the goal of preserving human life. Training and the execution of established protocols are necessary to an appropriate response.

## STRENGTHS

Strength 1: The response to the event was swift and decisive with Santiago being captured within 85 seconds of the first shot fired.

Strength 2: BSO mandates that all FLL district personnel attend the following courses of instruction – Response to Active Shooter (RAS) - four hours, Rescue Task Force (RTF) - four hours and complete NIMS courses Incident Command System (ICS) 100, ICS 700 and ICS 800.

Strength 3: FLL airport sworn and non-sworn credentialed staff are trained in the areas of airport security, airport operations and active shooter response protocols

Strength 4: Each TSA terminal checkpoint is staffed by a BSO deputy to assist TSA during screening operations and provide law enforcement presence during emergency situations and responses.

## Observation 2: Crime Scene

FEMA Core Capability: On-Scene Security, Protection and Law Enforcement

### STRENGTHS:

Strength 1: Rapid Incident Response – CSU personnel and equipment were at a state of readiness that allowed rapid response, including placement of the CSU Mobile Lab within close proximity to the crime scene.

Strength 2: Overall photography was captured in extremely high resolution utilizing state-of-the-art photography and mapping equipment only possessed by a handful of departments nationwide.

Strength 3: The CSU Mobile Lab allowed for the packaging and transferring of all forensic, digital and photographic evidence to the FBI while on scene.

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT (OFI)

OFI 1: Law enforcement personnel from numerous jurisdictions and bordering counties responded directly to the scene offering assistance. Although their presence and offers of assistance were welcomed, the “self-dispatching” of some other jurisdictions units created a need for staging areas to be identified early on during this incident. Once a staging area has been determined personnel can then be inserted into the mission in an organized and efficient manner.

OFI 2: Due to limitations of airport access, all CSU personnel should complete the necessary training and obtain SIDA badge access, preventing the need for additional escorts (and persons within the crime scene) during critical incidents.

OFI 3: It is recommended that witnesses be relocated to an area away from the crime scene prior to providing statements.

### Observation 3: Cohesive Interactions and Unified Command

FEMA Core Capability: Operational Coordination

The unification of leadership and the necessity to merge respected disciplines involved in the event is paramount to obtaining mass oversight of the BSO Airport District during a disaster. The key to successful coordination is a clear, concise and unchallenged chain of command. This is an essential component if outcomes are to be met.

#### STRENGTHS

Strength 1: The BSO Airport District maintains a close working relationship with BCAD and its obligations to the private sector.

#### OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT:

OFI 1: The NIMS practices must be utilized where applicable for complex incidents involving multiple disciplines such as this tragic event.

OFI 2: BSO and BCAD must ensure Incident Command (IC) procedures are utilized and that in a law enforcement incident such as this one, BSO is clearly designated the lead agency based on the primacy of the incident.

OFI 3: Enhance the understanding of NIMS terminology, structure and process for escalating and complex incidents among participating entities (unity versus Unified Command (UC) and Operational Control of Incident Operations).

- A) Assure unity of command for all incidents to maintain NIMS compliant operational control.
- B) Employ UC at the discretion of the incident commander when there is more than one agency with incident jurisdiction. Agencies must work together through the designated members of the UC.

### Observation 4: Sheriff's Emergency Operations Center

FEMA Core Capability: Operational Coordination

The SEOC must establish full communication with the ICP and all Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs) activated during disaster events such as the Broward EOC and the FLL AEOC. The Unified Command Post (UCP) must be privy to all communications surrounding the event and exclusively maintain all decision-making processes and components that may impact the event.

#### STRENGTHS

Strength 1: The SEOC is modeled after NIMS ICS.

Strength 2: The SEOC carries out the coordination function through:

- A) Information collection and evaluation



- B) Priority setting
- C) Resource management.

Strength 3: The SEOC is well organized and has several distinct advantages during an emergency because they:

- A) Served as a conduit for information passed from the incident scene, through lower-level coordination agencies, to higher-level coordination entities
- B) Allowed the incident commander to focus on managing the incident
- C) Promoted problem resolution at a practical level
- D) Provided strategic guidance and direction to support incident management activities
- E) Were one of the facilities from which the multiple agencies or organizations involved were coordinated
- F) Played a critical role in support of the on-scene response

Strength 4: The SEOC staff is highly trained and vetted.

Strength 5: Assignments to key positions at the SEOC are clearly defined.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

OFI 1: There is an important distinction between the SEOC and the ICP. When the callout was broadcast for the FLL event, the responding personnel needed to ensure they deployed to their scheduled destination (the SEOC or the scene).

OFI 2: Acute attention to staging areas and deployment of resources is paramount. The incident commander must immediately identify the appropriate ICP location while considering potential expansions or site deteriorations. Once the ICP is operational, the SEOC must rely upon the IC for operational decisions.

OFI 3: Selection of a singular incident commander is one key to successful coordination and chain of command. During the event, different incident commanders were declared by different entities.

OFI 4: A situational awareness notification of an active shooter incident at FLL was made by BSO emergency management personnel to the Sheriff's Policy Group and Crisis Action Team (CAT) members; however, this notification process should be reviewed due to having only one person dedicated to emergency management function.

OFI 5: The IC may select to relocate command and control to the SEOC as required by the specific of need of the incident.

## ANALYSIS:

Decision-making at the SEOC affected both the incident response and the public response. The decisions made at the SEOC are not on-scene tactical decisions but are

a critical link in the emergency response chain. Tactical decisions are made by the incident commander and the upper command staff at the incident scene.

The benefits of an effective EOC such as the SEOC are:

- A) Helps establish a common operating picture
- B) Facilitates long-term operations
- C) Improves continuity
- D) Provides ready access to all available information
- E) Simplifies information analysis and verification
- F) Promotes resource identification and assignment.

## Observation 5: Public Information Addressing

FEMA Core Capability: Public Information and Warning

BSO's Public Information Office (PIO) prepares news releases, coordinates print and broadcast coverage of agency events and acts as the liaison between BSO and the local and national media at crime scenes and other activities that generate media interest.

Our best defense against misinformation is an informed public. PIO is tasked to use appropriate systems to deliver the right information to the right people at the right time. Information helps empower people to make effective decisions. Traditional broadcast news media and modern social media platforms (such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram) are outlets to convey news and instructions to the public and potential victims. Coordination of accurate information is among the core critical needs of incident management.

### STRENGTHS

Strength 1: The PIOs are highly-credible, experienced, professional and a tenured staff.

Strength 2: They had immediate access to all major branches of media and their representatives.

Strength 3: The PIOs were excellent in their response and management of high-level press conferences.

Strength 4: BSO PIO utilized social media platforms to inform the public of events.

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT (OFI)

OFI 1: PIO utilized social media platforms to confirm certain information but ceased to provide updates throughout the day. It is imperative that PIO receive accurate, timely information to ensure ongoing updates and include any changing dynamics of events.

## ANALYSIS:

The Regional Domestic Security Task Force (RDSTF) Mobile Joint Information Center (JIC) was established expeditiously and enabled PIOs to actively convey their presence to outside interests. Numerous participating agencies, and their PIOs, had established their base at the JIC, which proved inefficient due to its staging location. The staging area (predetermined) was much too close to the active scene and contributed to the wandering of media crews, their exposure to sensitive areas and the release of such images captured.

### Observation 6: Mass Exodus, Relocation and Care

FEMA Core Capability: Mass Care Services

A critical component to an emergency response is the advanced planning and training on evacuation procedures. Evacuation procedures must include every conceivable situation and must be clearly understood by airport staff. Relocation of displaced persons of this magnitude to appropriate shelters proved to be challenging to coordinate and execute.

#### STRENGTHS:

Strength 1: Port Everglades was identified immediately as the primary shelter location.

Strength 2: Local hospitals were alerted and prepared to accept victims and evacuees requiring medical attention.

#### OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT (OFI)

OFI 1: A set course of action for deploying buses and transport vehicles must be established prior to any critical incident at the airport. The delay in getting an adequate number of buses to evacuate passengers led to this incident being prolonged.

### Observation 7: Broward County Regional Communications

FEMA Core Capability: Operational Communications

RC serves as the radio traffic controller to the BSO Airport District and a majority of Broward County as a whole. The communication of an active shooter threat via radio transmission creates a high level of concern among communications personnel. Preparing, training and planning for such an event enables for the minimization of predictable impediments that can potentially disrupt the responsibilities, capabilities and expectations of the communications staff.

#### STRENGTHS:

Strength 1: RC implemented an active shooter Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and protocols that greatly assisted in the communication efforts and notification process of the event.

Strength 2: RC staff remained steadfast throughout the many obstacles they faced which could have compromised their efforts in ensuring adequate and precise communications with ground personnel.

Strength 3: RC maintains a SWAT dispatcher program as part of SOP policy and mandatory protocols. SWAT dispatchers are highly trained for tactical and critical events.

Strength 4: All RC staff is certified in NIMS ICS 100, 200, 700 and 800 training.

Strength 5: RC staff is cross-trained in call-taking and dispatch functions allowing for versatility in skill sets during critical incidents and emergency events. The training administered to all RC staff provides immediate awareness for emergency DLE and fire rescue lifesaving events.

Strength 6: The Computer Aided Dispatch System (CAD) utilized by the RC division is preprogrammed to allow interoperability to 29 of the 31 municipalities and end users in Broward County.

Strength 7: The Motorola Gold Elite Radio Consoles are preprogrammed to allow interoperability tri-county through the selection of a single channel or via the “patch” and/or “multi-select” features.

#### OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT (OFI)

OFI 1: Technological means of notification must be updated and expanded upon to ensure a wide-ranging and consistent message is delivered to all stakeholders.

#### ANALYSIS:

The enhancement of PSAPs and their design is critical to triaging monumental events. The ability to eliminate emergency call transfers and to allow countywide radio and CAD interoperability facilitates communication and eliminates gaps in timely responses to emergency needs. Attention to training, testing and the vetting of communications systems and processes, enables the continuous evolution of the PSAP’s preparedness for emergency events.

During the event, communications operations suffered degradation to both the CAD and radio systems as usage immediately inundated both systems. Radio ID usage swelled from 1800 to over 3000 users, moments after the event. As a result, the communications system experienced site-trunking interruptions and system slowdown. During critical events, the radio and CAD systems are the communications center’s primary lifeline. Any impact to both radio and CAD must be mitigated.

## LESSONS LEARNED

### Secure Checkpoints

Although they responded as directed, had the TSA checkpoint personnel not fled from the checkpoints, we may not have had a self-evacuation of the entire airport. This

caused the airport closure as taxiways and runways were compromised by civilians running out of fear and alarm. One important lesson from this event is to secure TSA checkpoints to the best of their ability. Once the initial threat is over, responding law enforcement should be directed to the open checkpoints to provide a sense of security to the TSA personnel. TSA personnel are civilians and are not under any authority to stay during a true emergency situation. However, the flight of TSA officers down a concourse can only lead to a concourse evacuation. If TSA feels they need to abandon and/or close a checkpoint under similar circumstances, law enforcement should escort them to another location which does not cause panic to the travelling public.

**BSO Response: Work with TSA and BCAD to develop clear guidelines and expectations with regard to critical incidents/active killers within the airport.**

### **Earpiece in EOC**

The EOC or equivalent, for terminal evacuations, storm events, fire alarms, etc. must ensure that personnel utilize an earpiece to prevent civilian airport partners from misinterpreting law enforcement radio communications or acting upon those communications without further consultation. This was one of the initial challenges faced as overheard radio transmissions led to misinformation being disseminated and acted upon.

**BSO Response: Work toward ensuring that all BSO personnel working the FLL Airport utilize earpieces and encourage BCAD and federal partners to do likewise.**

### **Open the Gates**

Geography might have some effect on this lesson learned, but if an airport should lose 100 percent of SIDA security (as FLL did in three minutes), consider allowing civilians to leave out of perimeter gates and self-evacuate where they can seek assistance outside the confines of the critical incident. Many of our civilians were stranded at the airport and port for up to 10 hours before being allowed the opportunity to find alternative transportation or housing.

**BSO Response: Work with BCAD and federal partners to establish a clear set of guidelines and specific parameters to assist in the decision-making process of allowing civilians to leave the property in the event a critical incident occurs.**

### **LEO Traffic Control for Open Lanes**

An issue that has been reported in many critical incidents reports prior to this one is the need to keep those first responders coming to assist from clogging the roadways in and out of an incident. Although their response is commendable, motor and highway units should respond to assist with traffic and maintain an emergency lane where applicable.

**BSO Response: Sheriff Israel has already met with the Broward chiefs, the Miami-Dade Police Department and the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office to establish protocols and guidelines for responses from their departments during critical**

**incidents. The Sheriff has also discussed the issue of “self-dispatching” with these entities.**

### **Open Portions of Terminals/Restrooms**

Consider a way to make at least one or two concourses or terminals sterile as quickly as possible to get civilians out of the external elements (heat, cold, rain, snow). Law enforcement will need to secure these areas until further decisions on the handling of civilians are made. This could require LEOs taking initial responsibility for securing and safeguarding many personal items from a particular area to ensure theft reports are minimized. Include protecting the vendor properties from theft (open cash drawers, product on the shelves, etc.) until vendors can be located and assume the responsibility. Passengers will need access to restrooms, and the airport authority will need to work with LEOs to locate the cleaning crews who stock and keep the few open bathrooms clean and serviceable.

**BSO Response: Work with BCAD and airport partners to develop a consistent plan for securing some areas of the airport during a critical incident. Having one or two sterile areas is important to maintain order and reduce confusion and anxiety.**

### **Disabled Passenger Transportation**

Wheelchair-bound passengers, or those requiring extensive assistance in boarding buses, should be identified as early as possible with a plan in place to remove them from the scene. Many buses do not have adequate equipment to assist these passengers, and thought should be given to include a significant amount of these vehicles in any staging location. The use of personnel that are able to assist these individuals should also be incorporated into any event at the earliest possible moment. This is a serious issue that should be handled well before a critical issue takes place.

**BSO Response: Ensure the airport transportation/evacuation plan includes specialized buses equipped to transport and evacuate disabled passengers.**

### **Tabletop Training**

Tabletop training of this event is vital to those responsible for securing airports. FLL lost 100 percent sterility of the entire airport in three minutes. This included passengers and airport employees running around aircraft on ramps, taxiways and runways. Future tabletop training must include specific details. For instance, it is easy to say that you are ordering buses to come and evacuate people. The details to that must include: Who is ordering them? From where are they coming? Where are they staging? Can they get to the location from where they are evacuating? Effective training must also include collaboration with TSA and other entities to maintain sterility of the SIDA where applicable.

**BSO Response: BSO has already scheduled multiple training opportunities with regard to the FLL airport and critical incidents. Included in these trainings will be BCAD along with our local, state and federal partners.**

## CLOSING

January 6, 2017 was a tragic day, challenging the bravery, resources, resiliency, dedication and professionalism of thousands of first responders and civilian personnel. Surrounded by extreme chaos, these individuals answered the call in exemplary fashion. Broward County is proud of these heroes. There was no way to prevent this tragedy or to prepare completely for the amount of unique obstacles that had to be overcome in a very short period of time. Through the leadership of Sheriff Israel, BSO personnel, the FBI, BCAD, all other law enforcement agencies, fire rescue, regional communications, and community partners, this tragic event was mitigated and investigated in an extraordinary manner. Upon the first deputy's arrival at the shooting, no additional lives were lost, the suspect was taken into custody, the scene was secured and this critical incident was handled. The goal of this CIR is to review the incident, the applicable responses and apply lessons learned as we prepare ourselves, and others, in the event an incident such as this happens again.

## Appendix A: ACRONYMS

Acronym	Definition
AEOC	Airport Emergency Operations Center
ANC	Ted Stevens International Airport
BCAD	Broward County Aviation Department
BSO	Broward Sheriff's Office
BSO FRES	BSO Fire Rescue and Emergency Services
CAD	Computer Aided Dispatch
CAT	Crisis Action Team
CBP	Customs and Border Protection
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
CEMP	Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan
CIR	Critical Incident Report
CSU	Crime Scene Unit
DLE	Department of Law Enforcement
DMV	Department of Motor Vehicles
DOD	Department of Detention
EDCH	Explosive Detection Canine Handler
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
FAM	Federal Air Marshal Service
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigations
FBO	Fixed Based Operations
FDLE	Florida Department of Law Enforcement
FEC	Florida East Coast
FLL	Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport
FLPD	Fort Lauderdale Police Department
GTA	Ground Transportation Area



IC	Incident Command
ICP	Incident Command Post
ICS	Incident Command System
JIC	Joint Information Center
LEO	Law Enforcement Office/Officer
NIMS	National Incident Management System
PIO	Public Information Office/Officer
PSAP	Public Safety Answering Points
RAS	Response to Active Shooter
RC	Regional Communications
RDSTF	Regional Domestic Security Task Force
RTF	Rescue Task Force
SAC	Special Agent in Charge
SEOC	Sheriff's Emergency Operations Center
SIDA	Security Identification Display Area
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
SWAT	Special Weapons and Tactics
TCP	Tactical Command Post
THI	Traffic Homicide Investigators
TSA	Transportation Security Administration
UC	Unified Command
UCP	Unified Command Post