Workplace Violence

Where does workplace violence come from?

- **Internal**
  - Managers
  - Employees
  - Suppliers, etc.

- **External**
  - Robberies
  - Clients
  - Customers, etc.

- **Combination**
  - Domestic Violence
  - Sexual Assault
  - Harassment
  - Stalking, etc.
Value of Threat Assessment-Management

• **Guides the use of limited resources to maximize benefit.**
  - **Time**
  - **Money**
  - **Personnel**

• **Benefits to the workplace.**
  - **Reduce costs due to injuries or deaths, including liability for claims of negligence.**
  - **Reduce absenteeism and turnover.**
  - **Increase productivity and morale.**
THREAT

AN EXPRESSION OF INTENTION TO HURT, DESTROY, PUNISH, ETC., AS IN RETALIATION OR INTIMIDATION; AN INDICATION OF IMMINENT DANGER, HARM, EVIL, ETC.

Webster’s New World Dictionary
THREAT

• Any “written or oral communication that implicitly or explicitly states a wish or intent to damage, injure, or kill the target” (Meloy, 2001).
WHAT IS A THREAT?

A COMMUNICATION MADE TO MANIPULATE, DOMINATE, CONTROL AND OR INTIMIDATE.

TO CAUSE A CHANGE IN THE VICTIM’S BEHAVIOR.
THREAT ASSESSMENT

- Threat assessment is the process of assessing risks to a particular target; an individual, group or establishment, and designing and implementing intervention and management strategies to *reduce* the risk.

*Present or future risk—not the past!!!*
How are Threats Communicated?

- Letters (Home or Work)
- Emails (Personal or Work)
- Telephone (Home or Work)
- Social Media (Personal or Group/Organization)
- Third Party Disclosure
- Site Visits (Home, Work or Event)
What to look for in letters

• No return address
• Excessive postage
• Bulky envelopes
• Incomplete title and/or name
• Wrong address
• Unexpected packages
• Misspelled words
• Bad handwriting
• High profiles issues/cases
What to look for in letters

- The envelope is important
- Previous communications
- Is the post mark is different than the return address
- Spelling
- Something just doesn’t seem right
LETTERS
Letters

FAO: Gareth Stack

What lies within?
ONLY you can find out!
Letters

09-11-01
You can not stop us.
We have this anthrax.
You die now.
Are you afraid?
Death to America.
Death to Israel.
Allah is great.

09-11-01
This is next.
Take Penicillin now.
Death to America.
Death to Israel.
Allah is great.

09-11-01
This is next.
Take Penicillin now.
Death to America.
Death to Israel.
Allah is great.

Source: FBI/AP
Packages

- All packages need to be investigated!
Electronic Threats

- Email
- Facebook
- Twitter
- My Space
- Political Blogs
- Etc.
Electronic Threats

If Austin or Travis Co. try to ban gun shows they better be ready for a double-barreled lawsuit. shar.es/4cO0y
1/8/13, 7:46 PM
Third Party Disclosure
Third Party Disclosure

• Family Members
• Friends
• Mental Health Professionals
• Neighbors
Site Visit
Site Visit

- Can be the most dangerous
- Check advisory sheets
- Public spaces
- Events
- Mental health issues
- Hand delivered communications
Site Visit
Threat Recognition

What to do with potential and actual threats?

1. Keep file on all suspicious activity that could be threat related.
2. If the threat is a phone call - keep offender on the line and gather as much intelligence as possible.
3. Keep all envelopes of letters.
4. Be forensically aware.
THREAT MANAGEMENT

• RISK OF VIOLENCE IS MINIMIZED IF PERSONS WITH THE INTEREST, CAPACITY AND WILLINGNESS TO MAKE AN ATTACK CAN BE IDENTIFIED AND RENDERED HARMLESS BEFORE THEY APPROACH A PROTECTED PERSON OR LOCATION.
WHY ARE THREATS MADE?

• EXTORTION ($)
• POLITICAL CAUSE or SOCIAL CAUSE
  Disrupt events
• PERSONAL CAUSE
  Taunt
  Harass & Intimidate
  Revenge
• WARNING
WHY IS THERE VIOLENCE?

- **To establish or reestablish control.**
  - Loss of control = **Fear**
  - **Fear** leads to **Shame**
  - **Shame** leads to **Anger**
  - **Anger** leads to **Violence**
  - **Violence** is an attempt to regain control
Targeted Violence

- Targeted violence is a situation in which a certain individual poses or can pose a threat of violence to a specific individual or group.
THE MYTHS OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

There is a “profile” for people who commit workplace violence. So if they don’t “fit”, no problem = no report.

People who commit violence (mass murder) are mentally ill (psychotic).

People just “snap” or “go off” = no way to know when.

Terminating, disciplining will “set them off” so ignore the behavior and hope they calm down.
ECSP Study

- Ages ranged between 16-73
- \( \frac{1}{2} \) had attended college or graduate school
- Many had histories of transience
- Few had histories of arrests for violent crimes
- Few had been incarcerated in Federal or State prisons
- Most had histories of weapons practice/ few had formal weapons training
- Many had histories of harassing other persons
- Most had histories of explosive, angry behavior (Fein & Vosskuil, 1998)
Posing vs. Making a Threat

• ECSP study:
  - **None** of the 43 attackers or assassins who carried out their attack communicated any form of a direct threat to the target prior to their attack
  - Less than a tenth of the total 83 attackers or near attackers communicated a direct threat to the target or law enforcement
Posing vs. Making a Threat

• **Research shows:**
  - Most individuals who directly communicate a threat will **not** be violent
  - Most individuals who do not directly communicate a threat, will be violent

• **Regardless..**
  - The risk presented by threats should **not** be diminished!
THOSE WHO MAKE DIRECT THREATS ARE THE MOST DANGEROUS?

- Some who make threats ultimately pose a threat
- Many who make threats do not pose a threat
- Some who pose a threat never make a threat
WHAT KIND OF THREAT?

DIRECT THREAT
No conditions, exemptions or options
“I’m going to kill the Governor”

INDIRECT - IMPLIED THREAT
Vague, circuitous
“Something bad is going to happen”
“You better be careful now”
“I want you dead”

CONDITIONAL THREAT
If, unless, or, until, or else
“If I don’t hear from you Monday - you’ll be dead on Tuesday”

NON SPECIFIC THREAT
Does not name a specific individual, generally a group
“Declaration of War”
“All judges beware”
Motivation

• **Expressive threat:**
  - ‘Venting’
  - Used to control their own feelings
  - Makes the person feel better
Hunters vs Howlers
Howlers

- Like to frighten and threaten with words
- Goal is to cause fear or get attention
- Often communicate with their target repeatedly, proving themselves to be more of an annoyance than a true threat
- Cause mental and emotional distress
- The communication is the end game for Howlers
Hunters

• Act on their intent to use violence to avenge some perceived injustice (grievance)

• Engage in attack-related behaviors (Pathway to Violence)

• Planned, purposeful behavior
  ○ mainly seen in research and planning stage (i.e. asking suspicious, personal, or detailed questions; drawing maps or diagrams, making up a schedule, keeping a diary)
Hunters

- Represent serious physical risk
- Often engage in “final-act” behaviors
  - Ex: Mark Barton 1999
  - Killed his wife on Wednesday, his 2 children on Thursday, and shot up 2 day-trading places where he had lost his life savings on Friday.
- Hunters compose a very small percentage of problem individuals, HOWEVER, present a serious threat!

Hunters rarely howl; howlers rarely hunt...
MOTIVE AND TARGET ARE DIRECTLY CONNECTED

- Notoriety or fame
- Attention to a personal or public problem
- Avenge a perceived wrong
- End a personal pain
  - Removed from society, to die
- To save the county or world, to develop a special relationship with the target
- To make money
- To bring about political, social or religious change
THEY WON’T, THEY SHOULDN’T, THEY WOULDN’T BECAUSE.....

THE RATIONALITY OR ASSUMED LACK THEREOF OF THE SUBJECT’S MOTIVE HAS NO BEARING ON WHETHER THE SUBJECT WILL TAKE ACTION

- ILLOGICAL OR RATIONAL
- FOOLISH OR REALISTIC
- SELF-DESTRUCTIVE OR IN THEIR BEST INTEREST
AREAS OF INQUIRY

Content, Context & Circumstances

- Facts that initially brought the subject to your attention
- When was the threat made?
  - When was it reported?

General information of the subj.

- Identifiers
- Background
- Current life situation and circumstances
  - Ability to approach or attack the target?
  - Immediate access to the target?

- Motivation
ESCALATION OF VIOLENCE

- Intimidation
- Harassment
- Verbal Threats
- Written Threats
- Physical Boundary Crossing
- Vandalism
- Assault
- Stalking
- Sabotage
- Battery
- Kidnapping — Hostage Taking
- Maiming
- Homicide - Suicide
Pathway to Targeted Violence

- The “Grievance”
- Violent ideation
- Research & Planning the attack
- Pre-attack Prep
- Probing and breaches
- Attack
**Pathway**

- **Grievance**
  - Motive or reason that is compelling the individual to act

- **Ideation**
  - When the individual settles upon the idea that violence is justified and necessary

- **Research & Planning**
  - Going beyond the idea and figuring out how to carry out the intended violence

- **Prep**
  - Involves obtaining necessary equipment and taking other actions required to initiate the plan

- **Breach**
  - Entails initiating the plan by circumventing the target’s security to launch the attack

- **Attack**
  - Calhoun & Weston, 2009
Warning Behaviors

• Dynamic and acute behaviors that precede an act of targeted violence

• Show an intense and accelerating effort to further a particular quest, usually some highly personal cause
  • Meloy
Warning Behaviors

- Pathway to violence
- Fixation
- Energy burst
- Novel aggression
- Identification
- Emotional leakage
Fixation

• “An intense preoccupation with an individual, activity, or idea” (Meloy et al., 2008).
  o Typically causes deterioration of social and occupational functioning

• Often focuses around a person or cause
  o The cause is typically an intense personal grievance or quest for justice that impedes effective social functioning and alienates others (Meloy, 2014).
Energy Burst

- Increase in the frequency, duration, or variety of any warning behavior prior to an attack
- Usually ranging from 24 hours to 1 year
Novel Aggression

- Acts of violence that are unrelated to the targeted attack
  - Often committed for the first time
**Identification**

- **Any type of behavior that suggests the individual may identify with previous attackers**
  - Interest in or study of previous assassins or public figure attackers
- **May identify themselves as an ‘agent’ to advance a particular cause or belief system**
- **Psychological desire to be “pseudocommando”**
Leakage

- Communication to a third party of an intent to do harm to a target through an attack

- ECSP study reports:
  - Two-thirds of the attackers were known to have written in a journal or diary about their attack or have spoken about their intentions to family, friends or work colleagues (Fein & Vossekuil, 1998).
The Two Modes of Violence

- Affective
- Predatory
Affective Violence

- Intense Autonomic Nervous system arousal
- Reactive & immediate violence
- Goal is threat reduction
- Time-limited behavior
- Primarily emotional
- Heightened awareness
Predatory Violence

- Minimal or no ANS arousal
- No conscious emotion
- Planned and purposeful
- No or minimal amount of threat
- No time limit to behavior
- Focused awareness
REPORT THEM ALL

_report all threats of harm to any government official, employee, family member, or any other person received by written communication (letter, postcard, email, etc.) or personal or telephone conversations to the appropriate law enforcement or threat assessment unit.

Doing nothing guarantees it won’t get better.
Inappropriate Correspondence

• Any correspondence that makes a reference to any of the following:
  ◆ A special history or destiny shared with a government official or family member.
  ◆ A belief there is a direct communication between a governmental official and the subj. when one has not, in fact, occurred.
  ◆ Religious and historical themes when the subj. admonishes the official to change their beliefs or lifestyle.
Inappropriate Correspondence

- Death, suicide, weapons.
- Extreme or obsessive admiration or affection.
- Sex.
- A debt that is owed the subj. by the official (not necessarily money).
- A promise that has been broken by an official.
- An official being someone other than himself (an impostor has replaced him).
Inappropriate Correspondence

- Persons who have been attacked in public places (Reagan, Lennon, Kennedy, et al).
- Persons who have carried out attacks (Oswald, Hinckley, Bardo, Chapman, et al).
- Mental illness (psychiatric care, medications, etc.).
- Security, bodyguards, safety, danger, etc.
- Anything disjointed, bizarre, sinister, unreasonable solicitations or demands.
Leakage:

The majority of offenders will accidently “leak” information through a variety of sources. They will tell friends, family or co-workers small bits of information of their true intentions. Some offenders will even post this information through Social Media networks. (Facebook, Twitter, etc...)
What do I do?

• **Telephone communication.**
  o **Note date, time and phone number (caller ID) when call was received.**
  o **The person who received the call should write down what was said in as much detail as possible.**
  o **Do not engage/argue with the caller.**

• **Email.**
  o **Provide header information of email.**
  o **Provide date/time ip address of recipient.**
  o **Avoid forwarding to others.**
What to do?

**Written Communications.**

- **Investigators/Assessors will require the original, including the envelope.**
  - Photocopy for your records — does not damage evidence but handle as little as possible.

- **Do not**
  - Time stamp, write on, post notes, staple or tape anything to the correspondence.
  - Write on anything with the correspondence underneath.
What does it all mean?

- It happens, but it’s a relatively rare event.
- It doesn’t “just happen” or “he just snapped” etc. It’s planned in advance.
- Time between deciding to attack to the actual attack may be short.
- There’s leakage — others know about the plan or observe behavior that concerns them.

Encourage the reporting of threats, problem behaviors and “leakage.”
Sovereign Citizens

- Takes the position that they are only answerable to common law and are not subject to any statutes or proceedings at the Federal, State or Municipal level.

- They are free of any legal constraints.
Sovereign Citizens

- Strict adherence to the Constitution
- Bill of Rights
- Anti-Tax
- Complex
- Delusional
Sovereign Citizens
Sovereign Citizens

• “Paper Terrorism”
SECTION 16-17-735. Persons impersonating officials or law enforcement officers; persons falsely asserting authority of law; offenses; punishment.

(D) It is unlawful for a person falsely to assert authority of law, in an attempt to intimidate or hinder a state or local official or employee or law enforcement officer in the discharge of official duties, by means of threats, harassment, physical abuse, or use of a sham legal process.
MENTAL ILLNESS

• **Have problems communicating legitimate issues.**

• **Due to their mental illness they can be passed around to different departments and become frustrated.**

• **Most likely have had issues with other agencies to include state and federal.**
Myths about Mental Illness

• Myth
  o Attacks are predominately committed by the mentally ill

• Fact
  o Mental illness only rarely plays a part in public official attacks or behaviors
ECSP Study

- Few attackers had a serious mental illness that was the primary cause or directly contributed to their attack or attack behaviors.

- In only a very few cases did delusional thoughts or command hallucinations lead to the behavior.
Mental Illness

- Your agency is seen by them as the only one that can help them.
- The government is to blame for their condition.
- Only “important” people can handle the issue.
- Numerous departments handle them in different ways and they get confused.
- They learn from experience that loud voices get results.
Mental Illness

- They may have filed numerous complaints on previous issues.
- May have already worn out their welcome at other agencies and have moved on to yours.
- If their complaint sounds “crazy” it may be and is most likely the result of a delusional mindset.
- The mentally ill are no more prone to violence than the rest of society...
1. Approach with an open mind
2. Not all of the mentally ill are dangerous
3. Mental Illness vs. Personality Disorders
4. Arrest vs. Detention (pick-up) order
5. SCDMH
Things to keep in mind...

- **Has the individual:**
  - Suffered a loss of a significant relationship?
    - End of intimate relationship, death of a parent, or loss of a child.
  - Had a change in financial status?
    - Loss of a job or threatened financial disaster
  - Felt humiliated or rejected, especially in public?

**If so, pay attention!**
Look for pathway and other warning behaviors!
TELL SOMEONE!
Word is the shadow of deed

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