TARGETED VIOLENCE, THREAT ASSESSMENTS & THREAT MANAGEMENT

PARMA/PASMA Annual Joint Meeting
March 10, 2016 • La Palma, CA

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Agenda

I. Targeted Violence
II. Warning Signs of a Threat Potential
III. Preliminary Threat Assessment of Targeted Violence
IV. Threat Management Considerations

U.S. DOJ, FBI: September 16, 2014

A Study of Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Between 2000 and 2013
"An average of 6.4 incidents occurred in the first 7 years studied, and an average of 16.4 occurred in the last 7 years."

Convergence of Targeted Violence Arenas

- Arenas have overlapped; boundaries blurred
- Triggering events do not cause violence
  - It destabilizes a person who may already be unstable
- Targeted violence is not event, it is a process
  - Process $\rightarrow$ leakage $\rightarrow$ pathway

Threat Assessments

Bark vs. Bite: Troubling vs. Troubled

- Troubling times
  - Episodic difficulties
  - Ability to mature & evolve

- Troubled person
  - Deeply disturbed
  - Escalating hostile – aggressive behaviors
  - Chaotic, divisive, toxic, pathological
**Bark vs. Bite: When is a Threat a Threat?**

- Past incidences of hostile aggressive or violent behaviors
- Narrowing of focus
  - Threat made or intimated
- Ramping up behaviors
  - Research & planning
- Leakage of intent
  - Obsessions & fixations

**Warning Signs of a Threat Potential**

October 12, 2011 1:21pm
- Salon Meritage in Seal Beach, CA
- Scott Dekraai shot 9 people, killing 8
- Ex-wife Michelle Fournier was primary target
- A month earlier, Fournier had told a friend that Dekraai had come to the salon and had threatened to kill her

- “Narrowing of focus”
- “Ramping up” behaviors
- “Leakage” of intent

**Targeted violence is not an event, it is a process.**

- “Narrowing of focus”
- “Ramping up” behaviors
- “Leakage” of intent
Preliminary Threat Assessment for Targeted Violence

- Threat posturing
  - narrowing of focus

- Preparatory behaviors
  - ramping up

- Rehearsal fantasies
  - leakage

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Threat Posturing (narrowing of focus)

- Threat communicated
  - Direct, indirect, conditional; implausible
  - Verbal, written, text messages, social media postings
  - Specificity of target & methodology

- Hostile aggressive behaviors upon a person
  - Verbal, physical
  - Personal space intrusions, malicious glaring "mad-dogging"

- Hostile aggressive behaviors upon objects
  - Vandalism, destruction of property, throwing/breaking objects
  - Punching walls, pounding tables, slamming doors

- Is there a history of violent behaviors?
  - Have recent behaviors escalated in intensity, frequency and/or duration?

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Preparatory Behaviors (ramping up)

- Investing time & resources towards a malicious act
- Researching & planning
  - Checklists, recipes & “how-to’s”
- Procurements
  - Weapons, “clandestine excitement”
  - Ammo, equipment, supplies
- Predatory behaviors
  - Open source data searches of targets
  - Surveillance, exploitable patterns
- Probing & breaches
  - Testing security & responses
  - Timings & trial runs
Rehearsal Fantasies (leakage)

- Obsessions & fixations with malicious themes
- Recurring scripting of malicious acts
- Repeated communications of what will transpire
  - Leakage to a third party
- Romanticizing past incidences of violence
  - Active shooters & body counts
- Costuming
  - Omnipotent character
  - Tactical gear, “mall ninja”
- Legacy token
  - Manifesto, video
- Emotional/psychological investment into fantasies
  - Increased risk of impelling oneself into action

Preliminary Threat Assessment

- Threat posturing
- Preparatory behaviors
- Rehearsal fantasies

- The presence of any one of the above raises concern
  - “Leakage” or “ramping up” behaviors?
  - Consult with someone: HR, Security, Law Enforcement, TA Professional
- The presence of any two or more raises a significant concern of a threat potential
  - A comprehensive threat assessment is highly indicated
  - Active threat mitigation & threat management strategies developed, implemented & revised as situations evolve

Risk Factors

- Significant risk factors
- Psychological risk factors
- Sociological risk factors
- Organizational risk factors
- Stability factors
Targeted violence is not an event, it is a process
Making threats vs. posing to be a threat
Look at pathways of ideas & behaviors towards targeted violence

Pathway to Targeted Violence

Threat Management Considerations

Source: Adapted from F.S. Calhoun & S.W. Weston (2003)
Threat Management

- Threat management rather than prediction of violence
- Making a threat vs. posing a threat
- Multidisciplinary team approach
  - Threat Management Team
  - Internal & external resources utilized
- Secure the threatscape
  - Catching up to vs. on top of vs. being ahead of
  - Disengage the threat

Threat Management Goals

1. **Mitigate**
   - A pending or immediate threat
   - Disrupt pathway to targeted violence
2. **Contain**
   - The situation with all personnel involved
   - Expect/prepare for sabotage
3. **Manage**
   - The subject during & after the threat
   - Monitor for re-emerging pathway to targeted violence
   - Case navigator with multi-disciplinary team

- These are dynamic states, repeat as necessary

When To Refer to a Threat Assessment Professional

- “Trusted partner” consultations
- Nature or severity of the behaviors
  - Disturbing, bizarre, predatory, emerging credible threat
- Interfacing with law enforcement and/or security professionals
- Threat assessment as opposed to a Fitness For Duty Eval
- Workplace Violence Restraining Orders
  - Threat assessment report
  - Consultations with legal counsel
  - Expert testimony
- High risk employee terminations
Threat Assessments vs. Fitness for Duty Evaluations

- **Fitness for Duty Evaluation for threatening behaviors**
  - Very limited scope
  - "Can perform essential job functions with or without special accommodations?"
  - Very limited or no information from FFD evaluator regarding threat potential level, behavioral profile or behavioral trajectory
  - Essential for mitigating, containing & managing the problematic employee
  - FFD evaluator often not an expert in threat assessments
  - FFD evaluator unable to actively interface with HR, law enforcement or security professionals for threat mitigation & containment
  - FFD evaluator often unable to provide competent & comprehensive expert testimony on threat potential of targeted violence
    - Restraining order hearings, civil litigation, Labor/Union actions

- **Professional threat assessment for threatening behaviors**
  - Consultant to organization as opposed to a limited scope examiner
  - Provides comprehensive information for mitigating, containing & managing problematic employee
  - Able to interface & case manage when needed
    - Subject’s primary care physician or psychotherapist
    - FFD evaluator
      - Before eval – case information, any observed psychiatric symptoms or suspected psych Dx
      - After eval – findings, subsequent referral to a psychiatrist/psychologist, contacts with referral
  - Able to provide expert testimony
    - Restraining order hearings, civil litigation, Labor/Union actions
  - A FFD evaluation may be a component of a threat assessment, but should not be in place of one

Managing a Threat: Restraining Orders

- **Strategic use**
  - If and when
  - Dealing with temporary & permanent RO’s
  - Continued “engagement” with a permanent RO
  - May be counterproductive to subject’s “moving on” and future orientation

- **Professional support**
  - An attorney should be used
  - Use of a threat assessment professional is highly recommended
    - Threat assessment report, declaration, expert testimony
    - Consultations with legal counsel
    - Access to private security resources – surveillance, executive protection, measures, countermeasures, computer forensics
    - Ongoing/updated threat assessments
9 Different Types of Restraining Orders

Source: http://occourts.org/self-help/restrainingorders

Workplace Violence Restraining Order

CAL CODE OF CIVIL PROCEDURE § 527.8

“(a) Any employer, whose employee has suffered unlawful violence or a credible threat of violence from any individual, that can reasonably be construed to be carried out or to have been carried out at the workplace, may seek a temporary restraining order and an injunction on behalf of the employee and, at the discretion of the court, any number of other employees at the workplace, and, if appropriate, other employees at other workplaces of the employer.”

“See something, say something” so we can DO something

- See something, say something culture
  - “Putting the pieces together”
  - Activate collaborative resources

- “Aggressive caretaking”
  - Reframe from an automatic punitive response to a proactive framework of getting the person the help they need
Agenda Review

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