

## Using a Systems Approach for Threat Assessment Investigations

Dr. Lina Alathari

Chief, National Threat Assessment Center

United States Secret Service



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## Overview

- National Threat Assessment Center
- Congressional Attackers
  - Attack on U.S. Representative Gabrielle Giffords by Jared Lee Loughner
  - Attack on a Republican Congressional Baseball Practice by James Hodgkinson
- Community Systems Contacts
- Shared vs. Unique Investigative Themes



## National Threat Assessment Center

- Research, training, and consultation
- Targeted violence directed at:
  - Public officials and prominent public figures
  - K-12 schools
  - Colleges and universities
  - Federal government
  - Public Spaces
  - Prominent public attractions (Report in draft)
  - State government (Report in progress)
  - Local government (Report in progress)



## Attacks on Federal Government 2001 – 2013: Threat Assessment Considerations



<http://www.secretservice.gov/protection/ntac/>



## Six Congressional Attacks Since 2001

- October 2001 - Anthrax letters sent to two U.S. senators
- August 2002 - Cyanide-laced soda sent to a U.S. senator
- January 2011 - Firearm attack against U.S. representative
- April 2013 - Ricin letters sent to county judge, U.S. senator, and the president
- September 2014 - Molotov cocktails thrown into the office of a U.S. representative
- June 2017 - Firearm attack against members of congress



## Representative Gabrielle Giffords

Tucson, AZ

January 8, 2011



Gabriel Zimmerman  
Congressional Staffer



Gabrielle Giffords  
Representative (D-Ariz.)



John M. Roll  
U.S. District Judge



Dorothy Morris



Christina-Taylor Green



Phyllis Scheck



Dorwin Stoddard



## Congressional Baseball Practice

Alexandria, VA

June 14, 2017



Steven Scalise  
Representative (R-La.)



Zachary Barth  
Congressional Aide



Matthew Mika  
Lobbyist, Tyson Foods



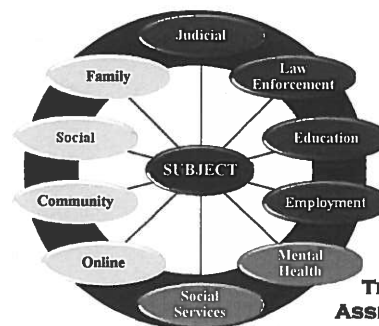
Crystal Griner  
U.S. Capitol Police



David Bailey  
U.S. Capitol Police



## Community System Contacts



**THREAT  
ASSESSMENT  
INVESTIGATION**

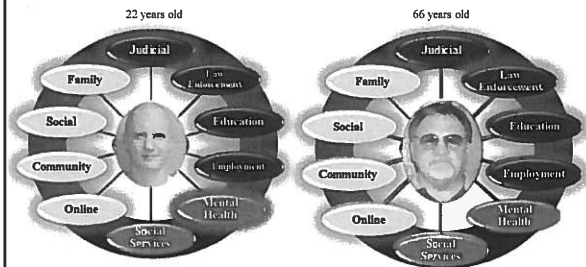


## Key Investigative Themes

- Motive
- Communications
- Interest in violence/weapons
- Harassment
- Attack related behavior - Planning
- Mental illness
- Desperation/suicidal
- Concerned others
- Stressors
- Capacity to organize
- Consistency
- Other types of concerning behavior:
  - Behavior changes
  - Interpersonal difficulties
  - Final acts



## Community System Contacts



## Representative Gabrielle Giffords

Tucson, AZ

January 8, 2011



22 years old

- Unemployed college student, living with his parents
- Recently suspended and placed on behavioral contract
- Limited criminal history
- History of mental illness and obsession with government conspiracies



## Loughner: Mental Health

- May 2006 - Diagnosed with depression following drinking episode, did not take the prescribed medication
- About 2007 - Received drug counseling as part of diversion program related to drug paraphernalia charge
- Early 2008 - Signs of mental illness (bizarre comments, hearing voices, fascination with lucid dreaming), no evaluation or treatment



## Loughner: Within the Community

- Neighbors saw him talking and yelling to himself
- YMCA workers
  - Asked strange questions
  - Sat in locker room for 30 minutes, asked about the year
- Local bank
  - Heated argument
  - Employees kept their fingers near the alarm buttons



## Loughner: Law Enforcement/Judicial

- September 2004 - Reported he was poked with a needle
- May 2006 - Charged with minor in possession of alcohol
- September 2007 - Charged with misdemeanor possession of paraphernalia, dismissed after a diversion program
- October 2008 - Reported his identity was stolen
- October 2008 - Charged with vandalism, dismissed after a diversion program
- September 2010 - Petitioned to have drug charge expunged



## Loughner: Employment and Education

- Employment
  - Difficulty finding and maintaining employment
- Education (High School)
  - Known to be disruptive in high school, talked about conspiracy theories, dropped out Junior year
  - Socially, talked about government conspiracies; told a friend that if he were to kill anyone, it would be his own parents; known to use drugs
  - After high school, distanced from his friends, but suddenly became demanding of them from 2009-10



Tucson Festival of Books  
March 2010



## Loughner: Recent Education Contacts

- 2009 - Talked about government using grammar and currency to control citizens
- Early 2010 - Strange behavior, laughing to himself, nonsensical comments, outbursts
- Concerned classmates, instructors, campus law enforcement, and administrators
- Five contacts with campus law enforcement



## Poetry Student

From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: Thursday, February 04, 2010 6:58 PM  
To: Salmon, Steve  
Subject: Last Tuesday, Some Concerns

Hey Mr. Salmon,

I feel like the semester is going really well! I am enjoying the class very much!! I do have some concerns, though, about the guy in the white shirt and blue jeans (I am sorry, I don't know his name). Do you know anything about him? I can't be sure, but I thought the object he put on his desk was a pocket knife inside a protective cover. It was just a little alarming, especially since I have been observing the way he carries himself. I am not wanting to file a complaint or anything but I thought you should be aware since I don't know what the weapons policy is at Pima and I don't know him very well. Again, please don't involve anyone at this point and maybe together we can see that the situation is secure. If you know anything about him that could be reassuring to me, I would appreciate that information. See you Tuesday! Thanks!



## Poetry Instructor

From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: Thursday, February 04, 2010 9:11 PM  
To: Conover, Aubrey  
Cc: Houston, Patricia; Desjardins, Suzanne  
Subject: FW: Last Tuesday, Some Concerns

Hi Aubrey. I thought that perhaps we were out of the woods regarding Jared Loughner's situation, given that class last Tuesday seemed to go relatively smoothly, without any noticeable malbehaviors. However, I just received the following email from another one of the students in the class - one who was not, in fact, among those who voiced their concerns the first time around. As you'll see below, this student believes that she saw Jared place a small knife on his desk during the class.

I do have to confess that I did not notice anything like this. My eyesight, on the other hand, is notoriously bad. I actually dislike teaching in the oblong shaped A316 because, even with my glasses on, I really can't clearly see the way to the rear of the room.

I think we ought to have another conversation with Jared to try to get to the bottom of this, and really at this point, I'd like to do everything that we can to have him removed from the class. I think his presence alone is interfering with the kind of environment that I'm trying to foster in this course.

I'll do so tomorrow for a few hours in the afternoon, and perhaps we can meet for a bit to talk further.

yrs,  
Steven



## Math Class

From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: Saturday, June 05, 2010 11:07 AM  
To: Siddall, Delia  
Subject: RE: disruptive student

Hey Delia, how are you? I talked with Pat Houston on Friday. It looks like the police is not going to follow up with Jared. [REDACTED]

Ren  
520-404-0801



## Other Campus Police Contacts

- April 6, 2010 – Director of the library contacted campus police, officers spoke with him
- May 17, 2010 - Pilates instructor asked campus police to come to the classroom to ensure safety
- September 23, 2010 - Biology professor contacted campus police, officers interviewed him and noted odd behavior



## Loughner: Online Contacts

"I bet your hungry....Because i know how to cut a body open and eat you for more then a week. :-)." (May 20, 2010)

"I keep hearing VOICES IN MY HEAD!" (July 11, 2010)

*"I think you're frankly schizophrenic, and no that's not an amateur opinion and not intended as an uninformed or insulting remark. I really do care. Seek help before you hurt yourself or others or start taking your medications again, please."*

"I thought about attempting suicide again..... notice the again..." (September 15, 2010)



September 23, 2010



October 2, 2010



## Loughner: Online Contacts

"I have a new tattoo on my back: 2 9mm bullets," adding "There are important figures in my dreams that accomplished political aspirations: Hitler, Hilary Clinton [sic] and Giffords to name a few." (November 2010)

"I don't feel good: I'm ready to kill a police officer! I can say it." (December 13, 2010)

"Dear Reader ... I'm searching. Today! With every concern, my shot is now ready for aim. The hunt, a mighty thought of mine." (December 30, 2010)

"Goodbye... Dear friends... Please don't be mad at me." (4:12 am, on the morning of the attack)



## Loughner: Family

- 2008 - Ran away for a week
- Late 2009 - Concerned about his behavior, difficult to communicate with him, aware of his drug use
- 2010 - Talk to himself, angry at the government
- After suspension, became distraught, told parents that he was being harassed by campus police
- Hid shotgun in trunk of family car, disabled car at night, took his video camera



## Loughner: Actions in the Weeks Prior

- November 2010 - Got two tattoos of bullets
- November 30, 2010 - Bought a Glock 19 semiautomatic 9mm gun and ammunition
- December 24, 2010 - Bought knife and holster
- Late December 2010 - Visited friends and showed them gun and bullets, causing concern
- January 2011 - Target practice, researched political assassins, lethal injection, and solitary confinement



## Loughner: The Day of the Attack

- 12:30 a.m. - Checked into a Motel 6
- 2:00 a.m. - Left a voicemail for a high school friend
- 2:19 a.m. - Picked up photos and bought earplugs
- 4:12 a.m. - Posted "Goodbye" message on MySpace
- 7:04 a.m. - Turned away from purchasing ammunition
- 7:27 - Bought ammunition and a bag at another location
- 7:30 - Stopped by law enforcement for running a red light
- 8:00 - Returned home, left after being asked about his bag



## Loughner: The Shooting

- 9:04 - Asked a clerk at a convenience store to call a taxi
- 9:54 - Arrived at the "Congress on Your Corner" event
- 10:00 - Rep. Giffords arrived, asked to speak with her, directed to the end of the line
- 10:10 - Initiated his attack
- 10:11 - Tackled by bystanders



## Congressional Baseball Practice Alexandria, VA

June 14, 2017

- Unemployed home inspector
- Married over 30 years
- Described as antisocial and pushy by some, and "nice guy" by others
- History of aggressive and intimidating acts
- Openly shared anti-Republican views, online and offline



66 years old



## Hodgkinson: Law enforcement/Judicial

- Had contact with the courts for civil cases, fostered children, adopted two
- 1990s-2010 - Various traffic violations and charges for fleeing police, DUI, resisting or obstructing police, and failure to obtain work permit/license
- 2006 - Most significant charge was an arrest for domestic battery
- 2006-17 - Other contacts included complaints between him and neighbors
  - Last one on March 24, 2017 of shots fired



## Hodgkinson: Employment

- 1976 - Started his first business after leaving college
- At different times, held licenses as a real estate appraiser, home inspector, and roofing contractor
- 1990-2003 - Received some money as foster parents
- Late 2016 - Stopped working
- January 2017 - Shut down his business, told a neighbor he was planning to retire
  - Wife noted he was upset he reached retirement age and had no means to retire, causing him to rely on her



## Hodgkinson: Within the Community

- Neighbors: Described him as a loner, unfriendly, and reclusive, even during social or family events
- Wife spoke of aggressive outburst while in public
- 2002 - After confrontation at county offices, he was banned from working as a contractor with the county
- Known to voice his political opinions, writing letters, making calls to his congressional representative, and participating in protests



## Hodgkinson: Online Community

James T. Hodgkinson likes a comic on GoComics.  
May 16, 2015 at 12:06pm GoComics

Congressional Republicans Hate Americans & Should All be Voted Out of Office.....



Mike Luckovich by Mike Luckovich, May 15, 201...  
One of the many great comi...  
GoComics

"Every issue that we were working on, he was not in support of...never with any threats, only anger...this one never crossed the line"

-Hodgkinson's Congressional Representative



## Hodgkinson: Online Community

James T. Hodgkinson likes a comic on GoComics  
January 5, 2015 6:00pm via

Here's a Republican that should Lose His Job, but they Gave Him a Raise.

Stuart Carlson by Stuart Carlson, January 05, 2015 Via @GoComics

One of the many great comics you can read for free at GoComics.com! Follow us for giveaways & guppies.



## Hodgkinson: Online Community

James T. Hodgkinson

March 22, 2017, Change.org

Trump is a Traitor. Trump Has Destroyed Our Democracy. It's Time to Destroy Trump & Co.



The US Senate: The legal removal of The President & Vice President, et al., for Misprision of Treason - Sign the Petition!

JAMES T. HODGKINSON SIGNED THIS PETITION ONLINE.



## Hodgkinson: Family

- 1990s - Diagnosed with diabetes, and when not properly managed, appeared quick to anger
- Had explosive temper in public, verbally and emotionally abusive at home
- Caring at times - Left the hospital to attend his adopted daughter's wedding
- Years later, described as disinterested in other adopted daughter's engagement and did not attend wedding in 2014
- Marital problems - Wife mentioned divorce to a friend



## Hodgkinson: In the Months Prior

- Became more unhappy and angry during and after the 2016 presidential election
  - Began making statements about not being around much longer
- Daughter and toddler moved in, causing additional strain
- Began selling prized items, including his motorcycle
- Late March - Left for Alexandria, VA, telling family and others that he planned to protest and work on tax reform
- Mid April - Living out of his van, showered at the YMCA, rented a storage locker he visited often



## Hodgkinson: Once in the DC Area

- April: Congressional baseball practice started and he was seen at least once at the field
- June 10: Seen walking around the baseball field
- June 12: Posted anti-Trump content on Facebook
- June 13:
  - Seen at congressional baseball practices
  - Told his wife he was coming home
  - Took his van for new tires and engaged in a sudden rant
  - Searched for directions from Alexandria, VA to his home in Illinois



## Hodgkinson: The Shooting

- 6:15: Congressional baseball practice begins
- 6:23: Entered his storage unit for 12 minutes
- 7:02: Parked at the YMCA and walked across the street to the field. Approached two representatives and asked if democrats or republicans were playing
- 7:09: After retrieving his rifle and two clips of 80 rounds, opened fire
- 7:10: 9-11 call placed
- 7:14: Shot by law enforcement



## Shared Themes



- Concerning communications, online and offline
  - Social media and online communities – government grievances
  - Did not threaten targets, but made negative/derogatory statements
- Multiple components to their motives
- Various stressors in different areas of their lives
- Behavioral changes
- Elicited concern in others in different contexts
- Final act behaviors



## Divergent Themes



### Loughner

- Psychotic symptoms
- No history of physical violence
- Beliefs - Conspiracy theories
- Multiple contacts with campus police due to irrational behavior

### Hodgkinson

- Symptoms of depression
- History of violence, explosive angry outbursts
- Beliefs – Political, taxes, economic inequality
- Multiple contacts with local law enforcement for conflicts with others



## Loughner:

Getting the full picture of select themes

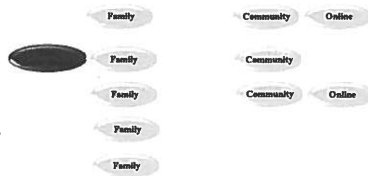
- Mental State
- Concerned others
- Communications
- Behavior changes
- Final Acts



## Hodgkinson:

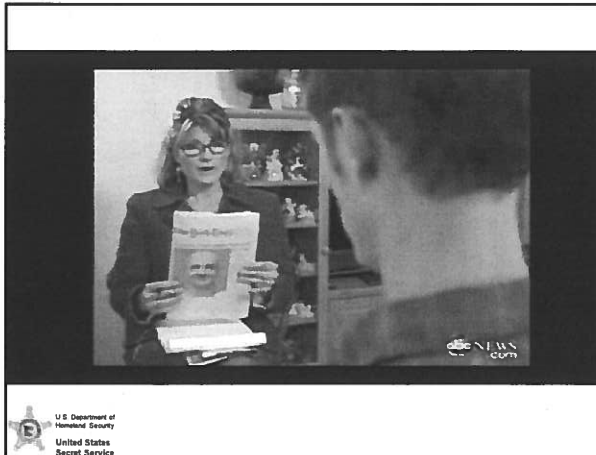
Getting the full picture of select themes

- Mental State
- Concerned others
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- Behavior changes
- Final Acts



## Early, Broad Intervention Is Key

- Encourage development of effective threat and/or behavioral assessment programs in your communities
- These programs:
  - Identify what behaviors are of concern – set a low threshold (e.g., truancy, declining performance);
  - Encourage the reporting of certain behaviors to law enforcement or others with authority (e.g., threats, weapons in the building, suicidal language, financial stressors);
  - Gather information about the behaviors and the factors influencing them; and
  - Identify appropriate interventions (e.g., arrest, commitment, employee assistance, mental health or financial counseling).



## Contact information

Dr. Lina Alathari

202-406-5486

Lina.Alathari@usss.dhs.gov

NTAC main line

202-406-5470

<http://www.secretservice.gov/protection/ntac/>

