At least one gunman opened fire on an outdoor country music concert near Mandalay Bay late Sunday, killing at least 20 people and sending the Las Vegas Strip into chaos.

Scores of victims were transported to hospitals across the valley. One off-duty police officer from Bakersfield was among the victims.

One suspect was killed by police on a high-level hotel floor at Mandalay Bay, a police source said. It was unknown if there is more than one suspect, the source said.

Mandalay Bay is on lockdown, according to reception. Guests have been told to stay in their room, and the hotel is not letting people into the building.

Roads throughout the area, including I-15 between Blue Diamond Road and Charleston Bou-
Las Vegas Boulevard, were shut down. The Metropolitan Police Department is asking people to avoid the south Strip.

At one point police were investigating reports of active shooters at other Strip properties.

The attack came during the last performances on the final night of the three-day Route 91 country music festival, which has been held for the past four years on a 15-acre lot on Las Vegas Boulevard across from Mandalay Bay.

It appeared that at least one shooter was firing down at concertgoers from upper-level rooms at Mandalay Bay.

Matt and Robyn Webb from Orange County were watching the final performance of the night at Route 91 when the shooting started and people began to run for the exits.

They said they sheltered underneath their seats as burst after burst of gunfire rained down from the direction of Mandalay Bay.

“It just kept coming,” Robyn Webb said. “It was relentless.”

They eventually evacuated toward Reno Avenue, where they said they saw as many as 20 people lying in the street bleeding.

“That’s when we knew for sure it was real,” Matt Webb said.

They ended up at Hooters Hotel Casino, but they said they had to flee from there with the panicked crowd as more shots rang out.

“We thought we were safe,” Robyn said.

They ended up sitting together on a curb next to an empty lot on Tropicana just east of Koval, trying to get news on their phones and collect themselves as wailing ambulances streamed to and from the scene.

They said they had no way to get back to their room and their two puppies, now on lockdown at the Delano.

Another concertgoer Ivetta Saldana said Jason Aldean stopped in the middle of his performance and was rushed off the stage. She was there with a friend and said the shots sounded like fireworks.

She said she hid in a sewer.

“It was a horror show,” she said standing in Town Square shopping center south of the Strip.

“People were standing around, then they hit the floor.”

A reporter on the scene at Mandalay Bay said people could be seen running from a casino entrance into the ground floor of the parking garage at the hotel.

FBI SWAT as well as SWAT units from Henderson, North Las Vegas and Las Vegas were called to the scene, according to police scanner traffic.

Scores of ambulances, a helicopter and police vehicles were on the scene, and victims were sent to University Medical Center and Sunrise Hospital Medical Center. Health care workers from around the valley were called into hospitals and to the scene.

More than 25 flights were diverted from McCarran International Airport as of midnight, according to airport spokeswoman Christine Crews. Flights were being held as the flight path was reconfigured to keep airplanes from getting shot.
The nation awoke Monday to the numbing news that the worst mass shooting in modern American history had ravaged the Las Vegas Strip.

It was a deadly ambush in a city built as an open invitation to the world.

“I just kept thinking to myself, ‘This isn’t real. This is not happening. This is not real,’” Lisa Schau, of Sacramento, told the Las Vegas Review-Journal near the scene. “I just kept thinking that over and over. And it was.” But the staggering carnage — at least 59 dead and 527 injured — brought out the best in Las Vegas Valley residents. They rushed to help the wounded; donated blood, supplies and money; and prayed en masse for victims and their families.

A Mesquite man perched on the 32nd floor of Mandalay Bay shot through his corner suite’s windows, then sprayed bullets into a crowd of thousands at an outdoor country music festival late Sunday, just east of the hotel.

It was confusion, then chaos. Some attendees thought fireworks were ringing out just as Jason
Aldean began singing the first few lines of his hit “When She Says Baby” at the Route 91 Harvest festival. But as the rapid-fire shots continued and people began falling, the crowd collectively realized the horror that was happening. And they ran.

First responders descended on the scene. Civilians did their part, too, taking truckloads of wounded to local trauma units. The injured were moved in wheelbarrows and on luggage carts, and more than 100 people were treated at University Medical Center alone.

Before the sun rose Monday, Sheriff Joe Lombardo stood in the dark parking lot of Metropolitan Police Department headquarters, steeling himself as he explained to the public and global news media that the shooter, 64-year-old Stephen Paddock, had acted alone.

Shortly after, Gov. Brian Sandoval called it a “cowardly, despicable act.”

‘We’re angry’
On Monday afternoon, Sandoval declared a state of emergency and a public health and medical disaster in Clark County.

“We’re angry. We’re grieving. Confused,” the governor said. “People are hurting.”

Las Vegas Mayor Carolyn Goodman said the city has a broken heart, “but it has bonded us so tightly.”

“We will not be tarnished by this sick, horrible human being,” Goodman said.

About an hour after shots first rang out, officers closed in on Paddock’s room, which he checked into on Thursday, Lombardo said. In seconds, Paddock shot through the door, injuring a security guard. Then he turned the gun on himself.

Inside, police found scopes and at least 23 firearms. Later, investigators found ammonium nitrate, a chemical compound that can be used in homemade bombs, inside Paddock’s car at Mandalay Bay.

On the streets below, red-and-blue lights speck-
led the Strip, drowning out its famous neon. Many who escaped the venue or ran from casinos in the confusion walked aimlessly. Some dragged luggage, others still wore blood-drenched clothing, the color drained from their faces. Broderick tweeted:

Anxious and weary
While University Medical Center absorbed the worst of the wounded, Sunrise Hospital and Medical Center quickly became overwhelmed, too.

About 12 hours after the ordeal began, Deserie Bohl, 35, sat in the east valley hospital’s small surgical waiting room as her husband underwent surgery. Next to her sat several others, praying and checking their phones. Some paced, looking anxious and weary. The silence was deafening.

Occasionally, a doctor or surgeon would pop in, calling out the name of a patient. Like clockwork, a swarm of loved ones would rush over, huddling to hear the news.

Robert Kyander, of San Bernardino, California, sat in limbo, his head down. His daughter, Lauren, and her boyfriend, Zach, both 21, had been at the festival all weekend. Zach was shot in the back.

Reports from field

Hours earlier, the 55-year-old Kyander had been at home, watching the Sunday night news when headlines about the shooting began ticking across his screen.

Panicked, he bolted to Las Vegas. Just before he left, he got a text from Zach:

“Hey this is Zach, I got shot in the back, but I made your daughter run like hell. I am truly sorry I'm not with her, but she is safe with Jodie. Love you both, I’ll keep you updated.”

When he got to the hospital, Kyander found Lauren waiting in the lobby. He wrapped her in his arms.

“I didn’t want to let go,” he said. “I’m just so glad my daughter was OK.”

Many others never experienced that relief.

MGM offers counseling, other help

MGM Resorts announced Monday that it is making crisis counselors available to guests and employees.

People in need of counseling services can call 702-836-6655 or 877-967-7711.

MGM Resorts also established a hotline for victims, family members and others directly affected by the attack for them to contact the company directly. The numbers are 702-692-2300 or toll-free at 888-634-7111.

MGM Resorts canceled all its shows in Las Vegas on Monday and offered refunds.

Tickets purchased through the company’s website or call center will be automatically reimbursed to the credit cards used for the purchases. Tickets bought with cash must be returned to any MGM Resorts ticket office by the original purchaser.

Suspect’s Mesquite home

As the Las Vegas community hauled itself out of bed to help, collecting water and food for first responders and victims’ families, authorities swarmed the shooter’s Mesquite home.

Inside, they found explosives, 19 additional firearms and several thousand rounds of ammunition, the sheriff said.
Police initially asked the public to help locate Paddock’s girlfriend, Marilou Danley, whom they named as a person of interest. But before dawn, law enforcement had touched base with her and ruled her out as a suspect.

As of late Monday, Paddock’s motive remained a mystery.

As the sun began to set, hundreds of Las Vegas locals and tourists gathered at vigils throughout the valley to mourn, weep and share in their disbelief. Mass shootings

In front of Las Vegas City Hall, sorrowful singing grew into triumphant chants of “Hallelujah” and “Jesus.”

Silverado High School student Ethan Dimayo stood alongside his younger brothers holding a sign that read “We Are Strong, We Are Battle Born.”

“It’s really inspiring to see all these people come out and pray,” he said.

Tony Barber heard about the shooting Monday morning. He took his 5-year-old grandson to the vigil.

“It’s important to pay homage and lend support to the city as a whole,” Barber said.

In the central valley, at the International Church of Las Vegas, faith and community leaders from several different backgrounds comforted a crowd of about 150.

Many attendees sniffled between sermons and speeches from Clark County Commissioners Chris Giunchigliani and Steve Sisolak. One woman sat on the far end of a back-of-the-room bench, a stack of balled-up tissues to her right.

“I think there’s great value in being with community at these times,” said Wendy Kraft, 57, an involved member of the Jewish community. “I’m saddened to my core. ... I feel so very helpless.”

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The brother of Strip killer Stephen Paddock wept Monday morning as he reacted to the news of Sunday’s mass shooting on the Strip. “We have no idea how this happened,” said Eric Paddock, 55, of Orlando, Florida. “It’s like an asteroid just fell on top of our family.”

Police said Stephen Paddock, 64, opened fire on an outdoor music concert from a Mandalay Bay hotel room late Sunday, leaving at least 59 people dead and injuring at least 527. Paddock killed himself as police closed in on his room.

“There is no reason we can imagine why Stephen would do something like this,” his brother said.

“All we can do is send our condolences to the people who died. Just no reason, no warning.”

The brother of Strip killer Stephen Paddock repeatedly described his brother as “just a guy” with no serious health or
money problems. “As far as we knew, he had enough money to live the rest of his life in comfort,” Paddock said, adding that his brother became wealthy off a family real estate business.

Eric Paddock said he was on the phone all morning with Las Vegas police trying to figure out what happened. “We’re lost,” he said. “We don’t get it. This is like someone else did this.” Eric Paddock said his brother lived a quiet life as a retiree in Mesquite, frequently coming to the Strip to play video poker. “It was a job to him,” he said. “He gambled to get comps at the casinos so people would bring him sandwiches and drinks. He went to whichever casinos he could get the best deal.”

Eric Paddock said he was surprised to learn that his older brother had an arsenal of more than three dozen firearms at his Mandalay Bay hotel room and Mesquite home. “He might have had a gun or two, but he didn’t have a huge stock of guns,” Eric Paddock said.

**A pilot and gun enthusiast**

His brother was a customer of Guns and Guitars, a Mesquite gun store, said Jan Sullivan, the retired owner. She added that her son now runs the shop and “knew him,” but she didn’t have any other information about him, including his purchase history.

There is no record that Stephen Paddock served in the military, said U.S. Army Major Dave Eastburn, a Pentagon spokesman in Washington, D.C.

Federal Aviation Administration records show Stephen Paddock obtained a private pilot’s license in November 2003.

He rented a hangar for his Cirrus SR20 from the Mesquite Metro Airport from 2007 to 2010, when he ended his lease without any explanation, said Cynthia Godfrey, the airport’s director.

Godfrey said he always paid on time and never gave them any problems. She did not know why he needed the aircraft.

**No criminal history**

Eric Paddock said his brother, who moved to Las Vegas from Florida, was a former accountant, but records show he was not licensed in Nevada or Florida.

Their late father, Benjamin Paddock, was once on the FBI’s Ten Most Wanted Fugitives list, the younger Paddock said.

A Las Vegas FBI spokeswoman said a man identified as Benjamin Hoskins Paddock was placed on the list in June 1969 after he had escaped from a federal prison in Texas, where he was serving time for robbery. He was taken off the list in May 1977 after the FBI determined he no longer fit the criteria required to be on the list, the spokeswoman said.

The wanted poster had described the Paddock patriarch as “psychopathic” with reported “suicidal tendencies.” Both Paddock brothers had little contact with their errant father, who had been convicted of robbing a bank in Arizona, Eric Paddock said.

“The truth is he was a big dumb (expletive),” Eric Paddock said.

Court records show that Stephen Paddock did not have a criminal record in Las Vegas.

In September 2012, Paddock filed a negligence lawsuit in Clark County District Court against The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas over a fall at the Strip resort. He claimed that he “slipped and fell on an obstruction on the floor” and suffered injuries as a result of the “dangerous condition.” The lawsuit, however, was dismissed in October 2014 after both sides agreed to drop it.

**A mysterious safe**

Paddock bought a home in Mesquite in January 2015 for $369,000. His girlfriend, Marilou Danley, once considered a person of interest in the shooting investigation, lived with him in the 2,018-square-foot home, records show.

He also bought a $238,000 home in a Del Webb Community in the Reno area in June 2013, records show.

Police and FBI agents arrived Monday and cordoned off a couple of blocks in Paddock’s northwest Reno neighborhood. SWAT team members gathered outside the house, their truck blocking the view to his entrance. Roads continued to be blocked after 5 p.m.

Dee McKay, who once lived next door to the shooter’s Reno home, said Paddock kept to himself. “He just kept his head down and would go to the clubhouse and come back,” she said Monday.

Neighbors told her that Paddock was a professional gambler.

Danley, his girlfriend, sometimes helped McKay remove long weeds at her home, she said.

One thing that struck McKay as odd was the large safe in his two-car garage. “When you open the garage door, you can see it,” she said. “You shouldn’t let people see your safe. It seemed bigger than me, you know, like a small refrigerator.”

McKay said she never saw what was in the safe.

**Not well-known to neighbors**

In Mesquite Monday morning, box-shaped SWAT
vans drove past an immaculately clean golf course and on the quiet streets of the 55-and-older Sun City community.

Mesquite police spokesman Quinn Averett said his department was assisting Las Vegas police.

Officers executed a search warrant at the house looking for evidence tied to the Strip shooting, and they performed forensics work.

Stephen Paddock lived in one of Sun City’s newer subdivisions. His greenish brown single-family home was one of about four in the subdivision blocked by police to passers-by.

Neighbors had been evacuated, Averett said.

Investigators, he said, found weapons and ammunition in the house.

He said Mesquite officials had no contact with Stephen Paddock or Danley, and he did not know how long the couple had lived in the area.

In Mesquite, only questions

Elsewhere in Mesquite, Hank Thropp, 72, rode into a fast-food parking lot on a motorcycle and with a jacket of expletive-laden patches.

He sat at a table in McDonald’s and discussed the day’s events with three of his friends, all local residents who said they can’t afford to live in Sun City. They mostly had questions.

“What kind of person could do this?” Thropp said. “Sounds like someone I’d never want to meet.”

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The deadliest shooting in modern U.S. history will force the nation’s hotel industry to rethink security procedures, but there may be little new they can do now to prevent such events, experts say.

Hotels can’t install metal detectors or other elements deemed intrusive without damaging the whole concept of hospitality that is at the heart of their business, academics said Monday.

Hotel operators will have to rely even more on the eyes and ears of regular employees such as housekeeping staff and front desk workers to detect and report unusual behavior.

“No matter what we do, there are always going to be security issues. The responsibility has to be on every level and not just security personnel. Everyone should be flagging odd behavior,” said Mehmet Erdem, a hospitality professor at the University of Nevada Las Vegas.

By Todd Prince • Las Vegas Review-Journal
Stephen Paddock, a 64-year old Nevada resident, sneaked 16 rifles and one handgun into his room at Mandalay Bay, where he checked in on Thursday. Paddock used them to open fire on a crowd attending a country music concert from his room on the 32nd floor around 10 p.m. Sunday. Police said 59 people are dead.

MGM Resorts International, which owns Mandalay Bay, declined comment Monday, pending an ongoing investigation, on how Paddock got such an arsenal into his room without being detected by security or housekeeping.

While casinos and hotels do not permit people to walk through their private property with concealed or unconcealed weapons, there is little to stop them from letting guests enter with guns hidden in bags.

**Safe street**

Sunday’s massacre tarnished the Strip’s reputation as one of the nation’s safest streets.

Casinos along famed Las Vegas Boulevard have hundreds of surveillance cameras in public places, including in front of the properties and in parking lots.

Casinos have their own private security staff roaming the floors. Metro has a noticeable presence along the Strip as well.

Paddock traveled by car to Las Vegas from Mesquite, a town about a 90-minute ride away, presumably with the guns in his car.

“At all of our properties, we have pretty robust security. In light of what happened, we will review those measures and heighten them as necessary,” said David Strow, a spokesman for Boyd Gaming Corp., which has casinos in downtown Las Vegas.

Casinos will likely add more security personnel in the aftermath of the massacre, said Michael McCall, a professor at Michigan State University’s School of Hospitality.

“Security being present to the extent that they are noticeable would be a disincentive” to criminals, said McCall.

McCall agreed with Erdem that metal detectors would not be a viable solution as it would hurt the guest experience. People will not want to stand in long lines like they do at airport security posts.

“Vacationers want to relax, they don’t want to be reminded of the dangers in the world,” said McCall.

Hotels will need to beef up their training programs so that all employees, and not just security personnel, can learn to detect suspicious behavior, said Erdem. Strip casinos could consult with airlines on how they spot suspicious behavior, he said.

Odd behavior in isolation can often be explained away, but if several employees notice unusual behavior and report it to a central location, hotels can respond before tragedy happens, Erdem said.

McCall said the hotel industry will likely learn “a lot of lessons” from this case and the study of the surveillance tapes.

“This is kind of a wake-up call to the hotel industry. It will change people’s thoughts about hotel security,” he said.

"Contact Todd Prince at tprince@reviewjournal.com or 702-383-0386. Follow @toddprincetv on Twitter."
WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump will visit Las Vegas on Wednesday to meet with law enforcement, first responders and families of victims of America's deadliest ever mass shooting, an act he described as “pure evil.”

In a somber mood, Trump addressed the nation Monday and sought to bring it together. “My fellow Americans,” he said, “we are joined together today in sadness, shock and grief.”

“Our unity cannot be shattered by evil,” he later added. “Our bonds cannot be broken by violence. And though we feel such anger at the senseless murder of our fellow citizens, it is our love that defines us today — and always will forever.”

Trump, who ordered American flags to be flown at half-staff, also praised law enforcement for finding the shooter “so quickly after the first shots were fired,” saying that saved lives.
Before noon Monday, Trump spoke on the phone with Clark County Sheriff Joe Lombardo, Las Vegas Mayor Carolyn Goodman and Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval.

While Lombardo told reporters the shooter appeared to be a lone wolf, Trump said the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security would work with local law enforcement.

The president did not mention U.S. gun violence in his remarks, but gun control advocates were not silent.

Gabby Giffords, the former Arizona congresswoman who was severely wounded in a 2011 assassination attempt that left six others dead, called a press conference to challenge Washington to pass stricter gun regulations.

“This must stop,” she said in a statement. “We must stop it.”

Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., recalled the 2012 Sandy Hook elementary school shooting.

“To my colleagues,” he tweeted, “your cowardice to act cannot be whitewashed by thoughts and prayers. None of this ends unless we do something to stop it.”

Trump has portrayed himself as a strong supporter of gun owners. At an April session of the National Rifle Association Leadership Forum, Trump said to applause, “The eight-year assault on your Second Amendment freedoms has come to a crashing end. You have a true friend and champion in the White House.”

In March, he signed an executive order that rolled back a rule established under President Barack Obama that made it harder for people with documented mental health problems to buy guns.

There was no indication that the suspect in the Las Vegas shooting, Stephen Paddock, had experienced any documented mental health issues, but Trump’s support for gun rights is likely to be an issue as Nevada absorbs the horror of the crime.

“Everyone at the Gun Owners of America was extremely troubled and saddened to see the tragic and terrifying report of the shooting in Las Vegas,” the group’s Executive Director Erich Pratt said. Pratt added, “It is disturbing to see anti-gun politicians and celebrities politicizing the tragedy by calling for further restrictions on guns.”

At Monday’s press briefing White House press secretary Sarah Sanders chided reporters who asked if Trump might change his views and come to support tougher gun laws.

“It would be premature for us to discuss policy when we don’t fully know all of the facts or what took place last night,” Sanders responded.

Nevada’s congressional delegation also reacted to the massacre in statements that sidestepped gun politics.

“My thoughts and prayers are with the families of those killed and wounded in last night’s vicious and senseless attack outside the Mandalay Bay Resort. I thank the first responders for taking down the gunman and working tirelessly to treat the wounded,” said Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto, D-Nev.

“Senseless, horrifying act of violence in Las Vegas tonight. Praying for all the victims & those impacted by the tragedy,” tweeted Sen. Dean Heller, R-Nev.

“Unfathomable evil,” tweeted Rep. Mark Amodei, R-Nev. “Attacking harmless people who like listening to music — I don’t have the words. Our hearts go out to the victims and families of this terrible tragedy. It’s a sad day.”

“I am grateful for law enforcement’s swift response and the many good Samaritans whose selfless acts of bravery showcased Las Vegas’ values to the world,” Rep. Dina Titus, D-Nev., said in a statement. “We are a resilient and benevolent town that will not be intimidated by acts of violence.”

Rep. Ruben Kihuen, D-Nev., who was in Las Vegas and attended a news briefing with Lombardo and other law enforcement officials, decried the “despicable act of violence” in a statement. At the briefing, he thanked first responders, who spent the night “working tirelessly to save lives.” He also said the tragedy had demonstrated the community’s resilience.

Rep. Jackie Rosen, D-Nev., said in a statement she was “heartbroken over the evil, horrific act of violence that has shaken Las Vegas and taken scores of innocent lives and injured hundreds more.”

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Tuesday, October 3, 2017

Two tragedies, much in common

Strip massacre harkens back to Orlando club killings

By Richard N. Velotta and Todd Prince • Las Vegas Review-Journal

THE HORROR of the murderous attack in Las Vegas on Sunday night was similar in many ways to the incident it supplanted as the worst mass shooting in modern U.S. history: the June 12, 2016, massacre in the family tourism mecca of Orlando, Florida.

Unlike Omar Mateen’s rampage that killed 49 people and wounded 58 others in Florida at the Pulse nightclub, well away from Orlando’s primary theme-park attractions, the Sunday night massacre was on Las Vegas’ most prized tourism real estate: the Strip.

While industry experts believe the incident could be a detriment to the future of vulnerable outdoor concerts and festivals, they say it isn’t likely to damage Southern Nevada’s tourism economy the way 9/11 temporarily demolished visitation and terrorist attacks initially decimated travel to Paris.

“One slight difference is that the Pulse tragedy was away from the heart of Orlando’s tourism district, while this mass murder was right in the heart of
Vegas,” said University of Central Florida economics professor Sean Snaith.

More carnage
“It seems like the scope of carnage is greater,” Snaith said. “But I think the impacts of this thing are going to be more long-lasting for the people of Las Vegas than they will be for the tourism industry.”

Industry watchers like Snaith agree that any damage to Las Vegas will be short-lived.

“In the short run, the shock and the horror of it could affect behavior, but I don’t think this goes on to define Vegas as a tourism destination,” Snaith said. “This is a horrific tragedy, but this is not a regular occurrence that would come to define the destination.”

Short-term effect
Bjorn Hanson, a clinical professor at New York University’s Jonathan M. Tisch Center for Hospitality and Tourism, concurs.

“There is likely to be some short-term effect on tourism, not as much because of concerns about safety, but because the sadness is in conflict with the desire of many leisure travelers for pleasure and relaxation, although some of that effect will be offset by travelers showing their courage and their support for the community,” Hanson said.

“Based on the profile of this tragedy, a single perpetrator from the area, and the image of Las Vegas as safe and with especially effective law enforcement and venue security, there may be some lingering effects of visitor behavior while in Las Vegas, but there should be no long-term effects on overall tourism,” he said.

Professor Michael McCall of Michigan State University’s School of Hospitality Business said the scenario is different from that of France, which has endured a series of attacks against tourists and locals. Besides, he said, gamblers are a resilient demographic, and most tourists recognize that Las Vegas is one of the most-surveilled places in the country.

“Short-term there will be a blip on the screen because it is something that you don’t see happening every day,” McCall said. “People may think of the shooting for a while when they think of Vegas. The average customer may be a bit fearful, but like London, things can continue on.”

Paris down 6.1 percent
The regional tourism committee serving Paris and the surrounding area says that while 2017 tourism is rebounding slightly, the economy was crushed in 2016, with visitor spending down 6.1 percent, or 1.3 billion euros ($1.5 million). Most of the downturn was attributed to terrorism fears from safety-conscious Japanese and Chinese travelers.

“The real issue is safety,” McCall said. “If you can convince people that they are going to be safe, they will come back. Vegas, though, is the most-surveilled place in the country. They are going to figure out how (shooter Stephen Paddock) got there. The security teams are going to learn a lot from this, such as how did he create his own gun store in the hotel room. I don’t think we are going to go to metal detectors.

“In the larger scheme, organizers will have to look at outdoor concerts. They have always been vulnerable.” Rossi Ralenkotter, president and CEO of the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, said he’s confident Las Vegas will work through the tragedy.

“This was a horrific yet isolated incident,” said Ralenkotter, whose team opened the Las Vegas Convention Center’s south hall as a family reunification center. “At this time, it is important to allow the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police to conclude their investigation into the incident and to attend to the needs of the victims and their families. Las Vegas is a strong community that will work through this tragic incident.”

Nimble R&R
The CEO and principal of the LVCVA’s advertising consultant, R&R Partners, said his first order of business is to correct misinformation appearing in some media outlets and to reinforce the message that Las Vegas is a safe community. Billy Vassiliadis said it’s unclear how long it will be before a more fun-loving marketing message returns, but R&R’s turn-on-a-dime process is engineered to be nimble.

“Over time, we begin to communicate the message that Las Vegas is truly one of the safest resort areas in the world, that deranged people live and act in many communities and many parts of the world,” Vassiliadis said.

“The other important thing we’ve been doing for the last seven or eight hours is dealing with a lot of the fake stuff that’s out there,” he said. “You know, the Daily Mail running everything as if it were fact. I’d love to see some sense of accountability from TV on how often will they continue to run that video (showing Jason Aldean’s interrupted Route 91 country music festival performance). They have to consider the ramifications of inciting other deranged people, not necessarily in Las Vegas, but all over the world.”

In the meantime, Vassiliadis and R&R will await the right time to switch gears.

“The time to build context isn’t right now, but at some point I think there are some very clear facts about the safety and security of the Las Vegas Strip,
last night’s horrible incident notwithstanding, and between our amazing police department and the security we have on Strip properties. We invest a lot in protecting our visitors,” he said.

“When the time is appropriate for that discussion and the context is right, we’ll be prepared to have it. But right now, the only thing a sensitive and caring community and industry can do is to take care of the folks that are suffering, that have had loved ones hurt or killed and accommodate people that are left behind here is to help get out correct and factual information.”

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Charleston Hartfield, an off-duty Las Vegas police officer and recently published author of a memoir about life on the force, was killed Sunday night in the mass shooting on the Strip.

Hartfield, a 34-year-old military veteran known as Charles, Chucky or “ChuckyHart,” also coached youth football, said Troy Rhett, who told the Las Vegas Review-Journal the two had known each other for about eight years.

Rhett said he sent Hartfield a text message late Sunday night, “hoping he would text me back.” “I figured he was probably busy helping others,” Rhett said. “I don’t know a better man than Charles. They say it’s always the good ones we lose early. There’s no truer statement than that with Charles. ...
Our hearts have just been very heavy since hearing the news. Hartfield posted an image of the Route 91 country music festival on his Facebook page Sunday evening, hours before a gunman shot into the concert crowd, killing at least 59 people. Another friend, Stan King, posted “RIP Brother” on Hartfield’s page Monday morning.

‘True-blue American’

Reached by phone, King called Hartfield “seriously one of the nicest guys ever.” The officer had coached King’s son on the Henderson Cowboys, a boys team with the Nevada Youth Sports program.

King said Hartfield was “the most true-blue American guy” he’d ever met.

Hartfield, a married father of a son and daughter, authored a book published in July titled “Memoirs Of A Public Servant,” whose cover he used as a profile picture online.

On an Amazon page for the book, Hartfield is described as having 16 years of active military service along with 11 years in law enforcement.

The page also describes him as “a public servant from the early age of 18 who is committed to bridging the gap with no filters or shaded perceptions.”

Hartfield was a sergeant 1st class in the Nevada Army National Guard, assigned to the 100th Quartermaster Company, based in Las Vegas.

Brig. Gen. William Burks, adjutant general of the Nevada National Guard, called him “the epitome of a citizen-soldier.”

“Charleston Hartfield lived to serve the public and protect his family,” Burks said in a statement.

“Sgt. 1st Class Hartfield epitomizes everything good about America,” said Brig. Gen. Zachary Doser, commander of the Nevada Army National Guard.

A book-worthy life

A summary of Hartfield’s 208-page book reads:

“Documenting the thoughts, feelings, and interactions of one Police Officer in the busiest and brightest city in the world, Las Vegas. This memoir takes you through the personal interactions experienced by a Police Officer with not only the community he seeks to serve but with his partners and their personalities. Some calls are over in an instant while others stick with you forever. Take a sneak peek into this Pandora’s box and see if perception really is reality.”

The book received 13 reviews, all with the highest five-star rating.

Rhett expressed feelings of shock and disbelief after learning that his friend had been killed.

“There’s really no solace to this other than we know Charles, and he was probably doing his best to make sure others were safe and being helped,” Rhett said.

“He was just so special. He’s going to definitely be missed by many.”

A Cowboys team Facebook post also mourned the loss of their coach.

“Coach Hartfield touched many lives both on and off the field,” the post read. “He was a great man who we all lost way too early. Players and alumni, Coach Chucky would want you to keep to the plan and keep moving forward. Use as motivation and inspiration; not for sadness and sorrow.”

‘Heart of gold’

On Monday afternoon, several people gathered outside Hartfield’s home in Henderson. One man stood in the driveway and said, “A man with a heart of gold lost his life” but declined to speak further.

Another off-duty officer, whose name has not been confirmed, was shot in the neck and shoulder. He was listed in serious condition late Monday afternoon.

The Metropolitan Police Department released the following statement Monday:

“The incident on the Las Vegas Strip has devastated families and friends of victims in this terrible attack. The LVMPD is no different, and our Metro family mourns the loss of an officer and we have employees whose family members have suffered significant injury. Those families are asking for privacy during this tough time as they process and move forward through this event. They are respectfully asking for the media to let them grieve in privacy and not to contact them.”

More than 100 people, including children and coaches from the football program and their families, gathered around midfield at Ed Fountain Park on Monday evening, many holding lighted candles, some wearing the blue-and-white colors of the Cowboys.

They prayed, bowed their heads in a moment of silence for Hartfield and the other victims of the massacre, and released heart-shaped balloons over the electronic marquee that flashed the words “pray for Las Vegas” above an image of the city’s skyline.

“We could not have lost a better person,” fellow coach D.C. Stratton said. “He was an outstanding man all around.”

Review-Journal writer Ben Botkin contributed to this report.
Performers recall race to safety

Country festival acts unharmed but shaken by shooting

By Jason Bracelin • Las Vegas Review-Journal

JORDAN MITCHELL was backstage, enjoying a post-show beer with her bandmates.
Minutes later, she’d be taking cover under the Route 91 Harvest festival main stage, huddled among a number of fellow musicians and crew members, some of them bleeding.
The rising country singer, and Las Vegas native, had performed on the Next from Nashville stage earlier Sunday, then stuck around for the rest of the show.
Mitchell was hanging in the artist’s lounge, getting ready to leave, when she heard what she initially thought were fireworks.
“It didn’t sound like gunfire at all. It was really close,” she recalls. “We didn’t really think anything of it, and then like a minute went by and everyone...
said, ‘Run!’ So we just started running.”

They took refuge between a pair of headliner Jason Aldean’s tour buses. Aldean had been performing when the shooting started.

“At that point, they had just cut the lights and we saw them bring Jason up on the bus,” Mitchell says. “Then security was like, ‘You gotta keep moving,’ so everyone was hiding under the main stage. I couldn’t see the crowd at all. I didn’t know what was going on.”

‘We had no idea’

While seeking refuge beneath the stage, Mitchell texted her manager to figure out what was happening.

His response was short and grim: “Shooter at Mandalay Bay. Stay there.”

But security had other ideas, instructing everyone to head east.

“When security said we had to keep moving, we just kept going,” Mitchell says. “There were police with shotguns running at us from the opposite direction. It was nuts.”

Eventually, the band made it to their van but had trouble trying to exit the grounds.

“We tried to head east, but we dead-ended in, like, one of the private airport parking lots,” Mitchell says. “There was a cop with a shotgun who made us get out, get strip-searched and then he walked us to a hangar.”

After spending several hours there, they were all taken to the Thomas & Mack Center, where Mitchell’s father eventually picked them up.

They got home at 3 a.m. to news accounts of the carnage they had narrowly avoided.

“We had no idea until we got home in the middle of the night,” Mitchell says of the extent of the tragedy. “We just went to bed and woke up to it. I woke up to like 180 messages and pictures of people dead.”

‘We would have been there’

A wrinkle in another act’s normal show schedule spared them a firsthand view of the massacre.

Big & Rich, who hit the Route 91 main stage at 6:35 p.m., left right after they finished their set to head to an after-party at singer-guitarist John Rich’s Redneck Riviera bar in the Grand Bazaar Shops in front of Bally’s.

Rapper Cowboy Troy (Troy Coleman III), who performs with Big & Rich, recalls learning of the mayhem there.

“‘We were doing another performance when we got word from the tour manager,’” he says. “At that particular point, John had requested that the televisions be turned from sports to news. There were off-duty law enforcement personnel in the venue. One was standing watch at the door. All the doors were locked.”

Had this been a regular tour date without the side gig in question, they all would have remained at the festival grounds.

“It was a bit unnerving because had it been our normal show-day schedule, we would have been there,” Coleman says. “John and (singer-guitarist Big) Kenny would have been watching the show from the side of the stage. I would have probably been coming from the merch stand area, which is usually out front, because that’s my custom after each performance. I go sign autographs.

“So I could have easily been walking through the crowd headed back to the bus at the time that was happening.”

‘It’s just a sad thing’

The country music scene is a notoriously close-knit community, and Coleman says everyone spent Monday checking in on each other.

“All the artists are friends with each other, all the road crew guys from each camp are all friends with each other,” he notes. “So far, from what we’ve been able to gather, everybody in the music community is safe.”

But he sounds a far more somber tone when reflecting on the revelers who came to see them all do their thing.

“Twenty-two thousand fans were there, having a good time, enjoying themselves and listening to some good country music,” he says. “It’s just a sad thing.”

Contact Jason Bracelin at jbracelin@reviewjournal.com or 702-383-0476. Follow @JasonBracelin on Twitter.
What witnesses said about the mass shooting in Las Vegas

'I want to get to my people'
Jessica Noble was standing about 30 people back from the concert stage at the Route 91 Harvest country music festival Sunday night when she heard five pops that sounded like firecrackers. A few seconds later, a steady stream of gunfire erupted about 20 feet to her right.

"What made it really real was seeing a girl shot as we started running, We heard it and looked over to our left, and she was on the ground," Noble said. "You knew you had to run with a group. You couldn't be the solo person running."

"He was jamming through the fences so that by the time we got there, they were open and we could get through," she said.

'It was chaos'
Gary Mocnik, of Orange County, was in a suite watching the Jason Aldean concert when he first heard about six shots, he said.

"I'm farther away, but I'm at least on this side of the Strip," she said. "I'm not freaking out or screaming. But I'm shaking, and I want to get to my people."

'I'm not afraid of this now'
Ryan, a 14-year combat veteran, jumped into action when police told bystanders outside the New York-New York to take cover. As people crouched against a cement wall on the sidewalk, Ryan told them to move closer to the wall. A group of young women huddled together, crying. One of the women said she just wanted to go home.

"It was chaos," he said.

Mocnik said victims were being carried in wheelbarrows to try and find emergency vehicles.

People were loading victims up in pickup trucks and taking them to hospitals, he said.

'We got to get out of here'
Concertgoer Chelsea Sullivan, 27, said she heard one shot but initially wasn't sure what it was. "At first no one really moved or did anything and then all of the sudden there was a couple more pops," Sullivan said. "I looked at my friend and said, 'We got to get out of here.'"

She and others jumped an exterior fence leading to the street because they couldn't find an exit.

"As we're jumping the fence, we could still hear shots firing," she said.

'It was like rapid fire'
Geoffrey Williams was alone inside his room on the 27th floor of Mandalay Bay when he heard gunshots from above him and saw people running from the concert grounds from his window.

"I saw no explosion, I saw no lights, I saw nothing lighting up and I was like, 'That's weird. That's not fireworks,'" Williams said.

He said the concert stopped, and he heard screaming. Then "a massive amount of people" ran.

"It was like rapid fire," said Williams, imitating the sound of a machine gun.

'This is not real'
Chip and Lisa Schau of Sacramento stood at the corner of Sunset Road and Las Vegas Boulevard and embraced.

"We got to get out of here'"
Concertgoer Chelsea Sullivan, 27, said she heard one shot but initially wasn't sure what it was. "At first no one really moved or did anything and then all of the sudden there was a couple more pops," Sullivan said. "I looked at my friend and said, 'We got to get out of here.'"

She and others jumped an exterior fence leading to the street because they couldn't find an exit.

"As we're jumping the fence, we could still hear shots firing," she said.

She said she and at least 100 others, one with a gunshot wound to his leg, continued running toward a private airport hangar at Atlantic Aviation LAS. She said they broke into a private hanger and tarmac. They ran as far north as they could on the tarmac until they reached the airport office near Tropicana Avenue.

Sullivan said a man with a pickup was driving through fences so people could keep running.

"He was jamming through the fences so that by the time we got there, they were open and we could get through," she said.

"I'm not afraid of this now'.
Ryan, a 14-year combat veteran, jumped into action when police told bystanders outside the New York-New York to take cover. As people crouched against a cement wall on the sidewalk, Ryan told them to move closer to the wall. A group of young women huddled together, crying. One of the women said she just wanted to go home.

Ryan and a few other people tried to comfort a woman and her young daughter. The girl smiled as one man told her she was safe.

"They were running over people that were injured, and it was, it was terrifying," Lisa Schau said.

The two hid behind cars, waiting for pauses in gunfire to run to another hiding spot. The pauses didn't come.

"I just kept thinking to myself, 'This isn't real. This is not happening. This is not real,'" Lisa Schau said. "I just kept thinking that and over and over. And it was."

'Everyone kept running'
Tracy Miller leaned over and held her husband, Brant Miller, as they waited near the Southwest Airlines ticketing counter. The couple was eager to fly home to Reno after a harrowing night at the Route 91 Harvest music festival.

"We go to Las Vegas all the time," Tracy Miller, 46, said, "but I think it's going to be a long time before we ever come back."
A gunman armed with multiple rifles opened fire from a suite on the 32nd floor of the Mandalay Bay resort shortly after 10 p.m. on Oct. 1. His target was a crowd of about 22,000 people attending the Route 91 Harvest festival across the street.

The shooting lasted an interminable 10 minutes, and created mass chaos on the Las Vegas Strip. The confusion lasted for hours as concertgoers escaped the assault and law enforcement pinpointed the source. Complicating matters were initial reports of other active shooters at other Las Vegas resorts.

It was the worst mass shooting in modern U.S. history and the Las Vegas Review-Journal massed its resources to provide the community the most thorough and in-depth coverage possible. In the first day after the shooting, the Review-Journal devoted 11 open pages to the massacre and published 40 stories.
How we covered the story

The shooting started at 10:05 p.m. Assistant Metro Editor Marian Green and police reporter Blake Apgar heard frantic reports over the police scanner of an active shooter on the Strip — perhaps the worst nightmare of local law enforcement officials.

Apgar immediately raced toward the gunfire on the Strip while Green alerted Metro Editor Carri Geer, who texted assignments to a group of reporters. Seven responded immediately and were dispatched to the scene; two others heard of the shooting and responded on their own.

Apgar was one of the first to arrive at Mandalay Bay. At 10:35 p.m., he tweeted that “the casino looks empty from as close as I could get.” A short time later, he tweeted that a police officer had advised him to hide.

Reporters arriving at the Strip encountered widespread chaos and confusion. They found people covered in blood screaming, crying and running for cover. Nearly all the witnesses said that at first they thought they were hearing fireworks. It wasn’t until they saw bodies falling that they realized the popping sounds were gunshots.

At 11:09 p.m., barely an hour after the shooting, we posted our first story online, reporting that police were investigating an active shooter situation at Mandalay Bay. This story will be updated with new information at least 40 times in the next 24 hours.

Just before midnight, reporter Max Michor, standing one block from the scene, went live on Facebook to describe the unfolding chaos. We went live a few minutes later, at 12:05 a.m., with a broadcast of the first police briefing of the night. We followed that with live broadcasts of three subsequent briefings.

The Review-Journal went to press at 12:07 a.m. with our first print story, reporting that a gunman had opened fire on an outdoor country music festival, killing at least two people and injuring 24. Our online story also was updated at this time.

Forty minutes later, reporter Rachel Crosby learned from a source that the number of casualties was far greater. At 12:48 a.m., she tweeted that more than 20 people were dead. The Review-Journal was the first to report this number, which was confirmed by Sheriff Joe Lombardo at a 1:30 a.m. press briefing. At 12:54 a.m., the print story was updated to reflect the larger death toll. Page 1A was remade and a new edition was printed. An updated online story was posted at 1 a.m.
The online story was updated again less than an hour later to reflect that more than 100 people were injured and a suspect was dead in a room on an upper floor at Mandalay Bay. The Review-Journal updated its online story again at 3:45 a.m., with news that at least 50 people were dead and more than 200 injured. The updated story also identified the suspect as 64-year-old Stephen Paddock of nearby Mesquite, Nevada.

Two reporters began to scrub the Internet and public databases to learn whatever they could about Paddock. Meanwhile, a reporter and photographer were dispatched to Mesquite, about 80 miles northeast of Las Vegas. Their reporting was a critical component of a story about the shooter published later that day.

It wasn’t long before we learned the gunman had a brother in Florida. A stringer in Florida was the first to hunt down and contact the brother in Orlando, who says “there is no reason we can imagine why [he] would do something like this.” We updated our story and tweeted this news at 6:20 a.m.

Throughout the day Monday, we continued to update our online story. At 8:25 a.m., the story was updated to include comments by President Donald Trump and his plans to visit Las Vegas in two days.

The story changed again at 3:29 p.m. to reflect a growing death toll. The count then was 59 dead and more than 525 injured. Police later clarified that the 59 figure included the dead gunman.

Our story was updated with new revelations at 5:07 p.m.: Police found 18 weapons, explosives and several thousand rounds of ammunition at Paddock’s home in Mesquite. Police also revealed they found bomb-making material inside Paddock’s vehicle parked at Mandalay Bay.

The online story was updated with a complete rewrite at 10:04 p.m. This was the story that would lead the Review-Journal print edition on Tuesday, Oct. 3.

As we chased news leads that Monday, some reporters began the task of identifying the deceased and contacting families. Among the victims was a Las Vegas police officer and volunteer youth football coach: Charles Hartfield. The Review-Journal was the first to con-
firm and report Hatfield’s death at 11:44 a.m. on Oct. 2.

Our coverage of this terrible tragedy was exhaustive and relentless. We threw every resource possible at this story to serve our community and our readers as best we could, and have heard from many from across the U.S. who said the Review-Journal was a valuable source of information during this time.

We are proud of the work produced by the Review-Journal staff, and are pleased to nominate our coverage of the Route 91 Harvest festival shooting for consideration for the 2018 Sigma Delta Chi award for deadline reporting.