

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Update: Fifty Dead, At Least 53 Wounded In Mass Shooting At Gay Nightclub In Orlando

VIC News / **Published On June 12, 2016 01:23 PM /**

Staff **June 12, 2016**



Update: 11: 47 a.m. -- About 50 people were killed and at least 53 people were wounded after a gunman armed with an assault rifle and a handgun opened fire inside a downtown Orlando gay nightclub, called Pulse, about 2:00 a.m. today, Orlando Police Chief John Mina said.

The attack has been classified as a "terror incident", and "mass casualty event". The gunman was not from the Orlando area, police said. The wounded were taken to three area hospitals.

According to Chief Mina, the gunman was found dead inside the Pulse nightclub, one of the largest in Orlando, about 5:00 a.m. following a shootout with police.

The shooting began inside the club and continued outside when an officer working at Pulse attempted to confront him. The gunman then went back into the club, resumed shooting and took hostages, according to the chief. He said it was difficult to assess the number of clubgoers who were killed because, as of 7:15 a.m., many of the bodies had not been removed.

Mr. Mina said that at 5:00 a.m., police decided to rescue the hostages, detonating a “controlled explosion” to help clear the club. At least nine officers were involved in the shooting with the gunman. One of them was slightly injured, according to police.

Police also said the gunman was carrying a “device,” and that officers were searching the club for possible explosives.

The Orlando Police Department, via a [tweet](#), asked residents to “stay away from area” and said that it was seeking support from local state and federal agencies. Employees in the area were later asked to stay at home if possible.

“Everyone get out of pulse and keep running,” wrote Pulse in a message on its [Facebook page](#) about 3:00 a.m.

Customers streamed out of the club into a chaotic situation with little idea of where to go. “Cops were saying, ‘Go, go, clear the area,’ ” Christopher Hansen told an Orlando television station. “You don’t know who’s what and who’s where.”

As the sun came up, helicopter-shot video showed a situation that seemed to be under control, although windows on one side of the club appeared to be shot out.

According to The New York Times, phone camera videos shot at the scene show police cars, ambulances and other emergency vehicles outside the club on South Orange Avenue in downtown Orlando. Streets around the the club were shut down for several blocks.

In one video, The Times said, shots could clearly be heard as men and women ran from Pulse. Some of the clubgoers told local television reporters that the music was so loud it was difficult, at first, to distinguish the shots from the pulsing beat.

More than 100 people were believed inside the club when the shooting began about 2 a.m.

Many of the wounded were taken to Orlando Regional Medical Center, about three blocks from the club, which was placed on lockdown after receiving several gunshot victims. “Only essential workers are being allowed access into the building,” the hospital said in a statement.

“Out of an abundance of caution, Arnold Palmer Hospital and Winnie Palmer Hospital have also been placed on lockdown,” the statement added.

On Pulse's Facebook page, club officials [promised to post updates as they came in](#): "As soon as we have any information, we will update everyone."

"Please keep everyone in your prayers as we work through this tragic event," the nightclub post said. "Thank you for your thoughts and love."

Local television stations broadcast interviews with people outside the club and the Orlando Regional Medical Center, about three blocks away from the club, anxiously waiting to hear from people who they said were still inside.

WKMG and WESH broadcast interviews with the crowds milling outside the hospital. One woman said she rushed to the area after she got a call from her daughter, who said, "Please come get us and come get us now."

The club, which calls itself "Orlando's Latin Hotspot," hosts an "Upscale Latin Saturdays" party on Saturday night with three D.J.s and a midnight show.

Source: The New York Times.