

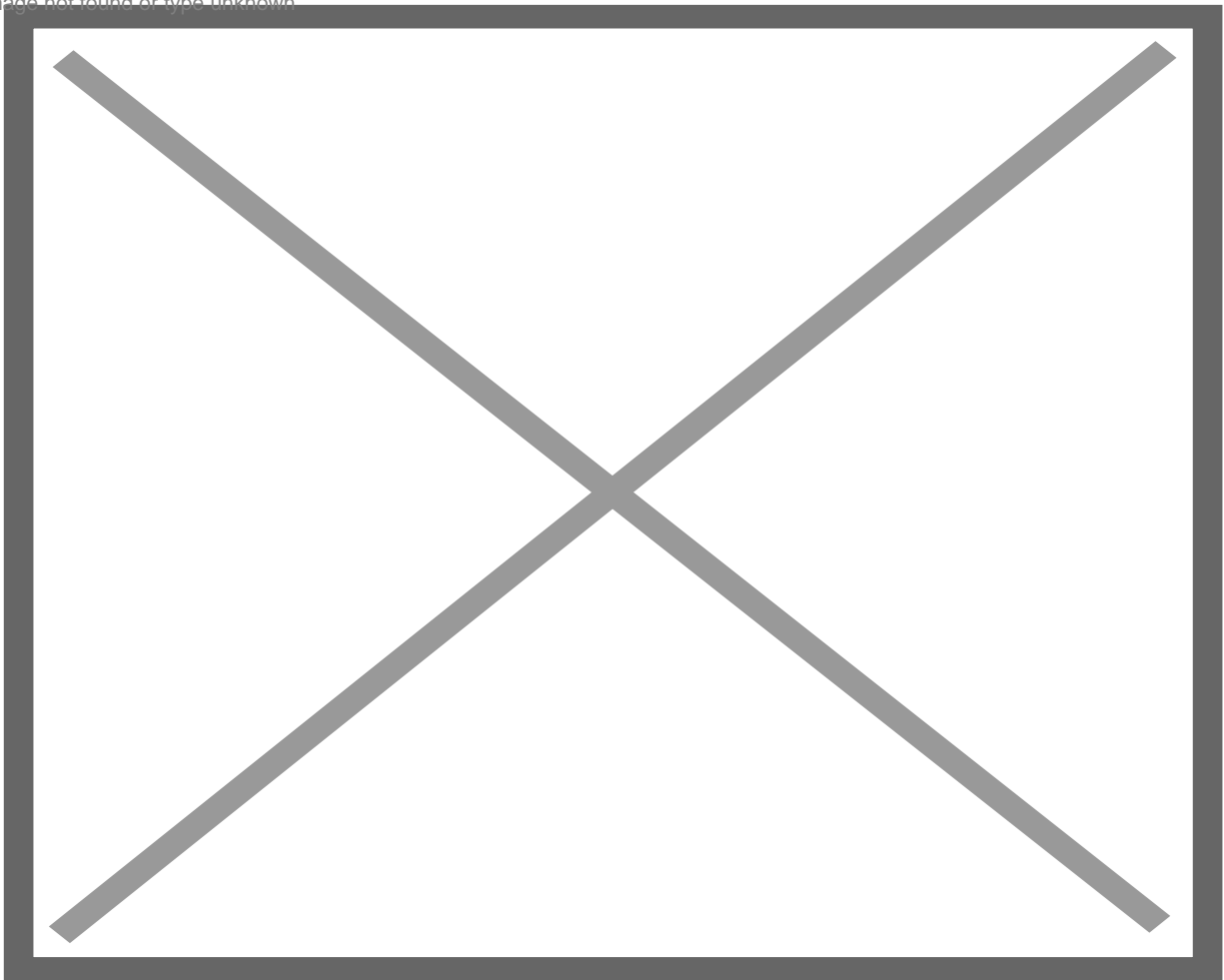
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Security Lapse at JFL Leaves Nurses, Doctors Exposed as Two Individuals Enter Emergency Department Following Shooting: 'We Could Have Been Dead'

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Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center logo. By. ERNICE GILBERT/ V.I. CONSORTIUM

Nurses, doctors and other employees working in the Juan F. Luis Hospital Emergency Department were shaken Monday night following a breach of security that placed their lives in danger. The incident, which involved two individuals entering the ED, followed [a shooting Monday night in Estate Profit](#) that left one man dead and another injured.

That's according to an incident report seen by the Consortium that was sent to hospital CEO Doug Koch. It was written by ED Registered Nurse Michele Montoya, who serves as secretary of the V.I. State Nurses Association Collective Bargaining Unit union. Ms. Montoya was working the night when the security lapse incident occurred.

According to the report, the ED had two gunshot victims Monday night following the shooting, one who died and another who survived. One of the victims was brought to the ED through the waiting area, while the other victim was outside and could not immediately receive care because there was "no security to make sure it was safe."

After the surviving victim was brought inside, he was followed by another person who ran through the ED screaming, "he's going to kill me," said Ms. Montoya in the incident report. This individual was followed inside the ED by another man who was stopped by a doctor. The first individual "disappeared into the hospital exiting the ED by the fast track hallway," wrote Ms. Montoya.

Meanwhile, outside the ED, the scene looked chaotic. There was an ambulance with lights and sirens blaring that was being blocked by a truck, and several men were seen pacing the area, Ms. Montoya told the Consortium. When adequate security finally arrived, department employees were able to open the ambulance bay door. At the back of the pickup truck was a gunshot victim who was dead on arrival.

The employees working the ED were shaken by the event, Ms. Montoya said. She said it was unclear whether the two men who entered the ED were armed, and that the situation could have been much different. "There was no LEO [law enforcement officer] or security in the ED or sitting in the cubby by the ED ambulance bay door," Ms. Montoya wrote. "We had to page for security overhead."

Part of the problem, she said, is the department's recently installed ambulance bay door which Ms. Montoya wrote in the report takes 25 seconds to fully close. Another issue is new tints placed on the door, which at nights is a mirror from inside the ED. "You can't see outside but outside can clearly see in," Ms. Montoya wrote.

"We have had in the past as many as 10 people run into the ED at the same time when people are coming from shootouts. The previous doors closed much faster and we still had such events. In 25 seconds any and every one would be able to come into the ED. We do not even know if those first two people who made it into the ED had guns or not," Ms. Montoya wrote. She called on the JFL administration to change the doors and replace the tints to help protect the wellbeing of both hospital employees and patients.

"Administration is aware that these doors take 25 seconds to close. Administration is aware that the tinting that they put on, the nighttime shift can't even see out. We all know that 99 percent of shootouts go down when it's dark. We are in danger here," Ms. Montoya said.

Mr. Koch, the JFL CEO responded to Consortium queries through Shawna Yockey of [M.Roberts Digital](#), who works directly with the CEO and aids with communication. She said the door is designed to close in 15 seconds "in line with industry standards, specifically as it relates to healthcare facilities and hospital entrance sliding doors." She further stated that according to local vendor Eddie's Glass, "the door is operating as designed." During the early morning hours of Friday, however, Ms. Montoya tested the door and said it took 25 seconds to close, which she said falls in line with what other ED employees have reported.

Regarding the tints placed on the door becoming a mirror on the inside at night, Ms. Yockey quoted JFL Director of Facilities, Dennis Lynch, who said the issue is related to the brightness of the light required from bulbs needed to adequately illuminate the Emergency Department.

"It's requisite to the amount of light that the tint is able to block out. To generate the privacy effect that is requested, we will need to change the outdoor lighting from high pressure sodium lights to LED bulbs to generate the daylight effect that is required for the reflective tint to work for the intended purpose," Ms. Yockey said. "The fixtures are currently being sourced to switch out the bulbs. Estimated time for compilation is dependent on access to resources."

Pressed by the Consortium for a replacement timeline, the hospital said, "The Facilities Director is in the process of procuring the appropriate bulbs for the area in question, they are a special-order product and not immediately available on the island. Upon arrival, the bulbs will only take a day to replace."

Relative to the lapse in security, JFL said that "there were the appropriate number of Law Enforcement Officers on campus that were immediately present to respond and safe guard the JFL campus." However, while there may have been adequate individuals on the hospital's campus, Ms. Montoya's incident report stated that none were present in the ED or the cubby located at the ED's ambulance bay.

JFL spoke in detail about efforts being undertaken to strengthen its security, including a partnership with the V.I. Police Department that has resulted in a specially trained police force that is dedicated to supporting the safety and security needs of the hospital. "To date JFL has had 10 successful Police graduates that serve our organization and that ensure the safety and security of all our staff, patients and visitors," Ms. Yockey said.

Challenged by the Consortium to address the security lapse, which resulted in two individuals entering the ED without resistance, JFL said, "We acknowledge that the individual was able to run past security with little resistance as both security guards were appropriately placed and attending to the arrival of the first vehicle during which potential threats were identified and addressed."

To appropriately address the lapses, JFL said an internal and external investigation "is currently in process at this time with the aid of VIPD. Upon completion, any vulnerabilities and opportunities for improvement will be addressed."

Hospital officials also asked residents to respect the ED. "We implore all community members to consider that this is your only emergency room and hospital. Our ability to save lives and care for those in most need is negatively impacted when unfortunate events occur," JFL said.

The hospital went on to praise its security team. "First of all, I would like to thank the security team at JFL for their quick response. This dedicated group of individuals far exceeds the capabilities of most comparably sized hospitals across the country," JFL said. "For obvious safety and security reasons, we will not discuss any specifics as it relates to our internal security response policies."

Yet even after the Monday night incident and JFL promising to beef up security, according to Ms. Montoya, there were no law enforcement officers in the ED Thursday night. "I went out for a break and came back and the guard at the gate was dead asleep and didn't even wake up when I drove through," she said.