

Active Assailant

UNLV Campus Shooting

December 6, 2023



What Happened?

On December 6, 2023, a gunman opened fire on the campus of the University of Nevada Las Vegas, killing three faculty members and wounding another before being shot dead by police.



Timeline of Events

- At 11:45 a.m., reports of shots fired sent police swarming onto the campus while students and professors barricaded themselves inside classrooms and dorm rooms.
- Students and faculty were quickly alarmed by texts and social media messages urging them to “RUN-HIDE-FIGHT.”
- Police said the shooting started on the fourth floor of the building that houses UNLV’s Lee Business School. The gunman went to several floors before he was killed in a shootout with two university detectives outside the building.

Timeline of Events

- Authorities gave the “all clear” about 40 minutes after the initial report of an active shooter.
- Las Vegas Metro and UNLV police, in coordination with the FBI, spent the remainder of the day, up until almost 8 p.m. sweeping and evacuating each of the buildings on the university campus.
- Three other people were transported to a local hospital due to anxiety attacks; two police officers were injured during the building sweeps.



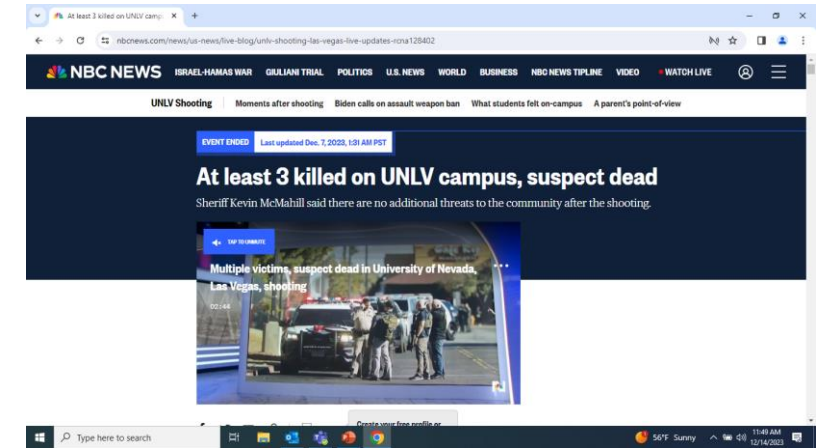


What We Know Now?

- The shooter was identified as 67-year-old Anthony Polito, a former college professor who taught school at East Carolina University in North Carolina and who resided in Henderson, NV.
- Police say Polito had tried to get a job at UNLV but was rejected.
- Polito allegedly had a list of targets at the school and more than 150 rounds of ammunition.
- He was also later found to have mailed 22 letters of an unidentified white powder to other faculty members at schools around the country.

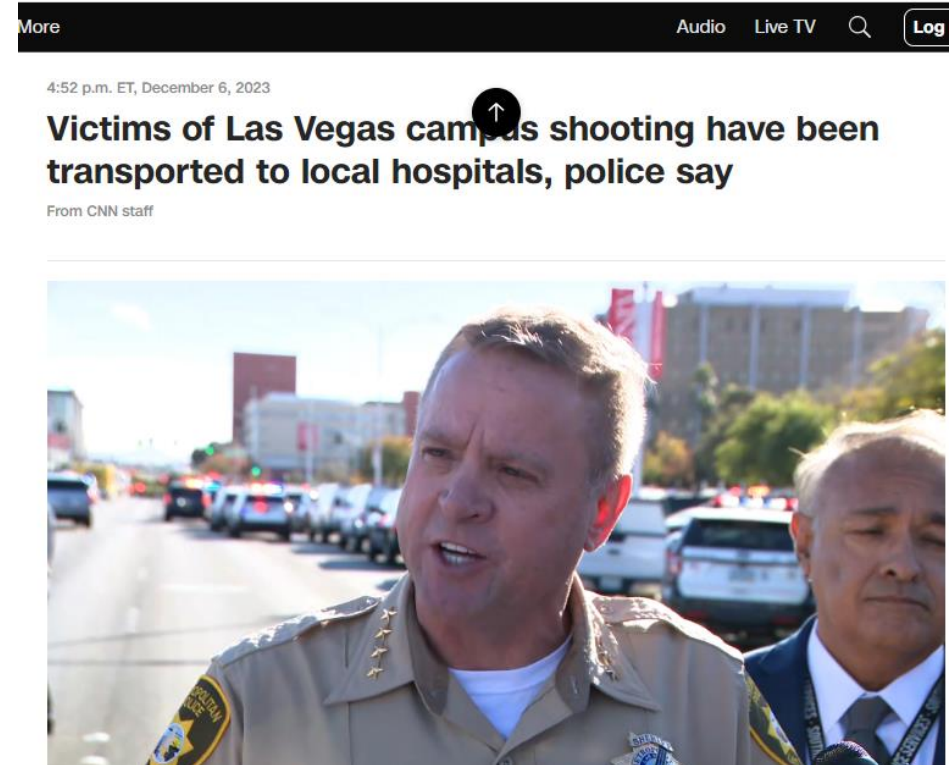
The Media

- Every major news organization along with state and local news carried coverage of the shooting and subsequent updates in real-time.
- NBC News was among those who interrupted programming to deliver the initial report.



The Police

- At 1:52 Pacific time (2 hours, 7 minutes after the shooting was reported), Las Vegas Sheriff Kevin McMahon held his first briefing with reporters near the campus.
- McMahon essentially told residents the threat was over and that victims were being transported.



The Chase

What to know about the UNLV shooting

- The suspect in the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, shooting, which killed at least three people, is a man in his 60s, three law enforcement sources familiar with the investigation told NBC News. There was no immediate information about a motive.
- At least three people were killed, police said. A fourth person is in critical condition at a hospital.
- Police said the suspect has been located and is dead.

- In all the media coverage, NBC News appeared to have someone on the inside of the investigation. They continuously reported new information before anyone else.
- In some cases, Las Vegas Metro then responded by confirming that news.



LVMPD
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#BREAKING: According to our investigators at the scene, we have three deceased victims and one additional victim in critical condition at a local hospital.

The suspect in this [#ActiveShooter](#) incident is also deceased.

We will update as soon as we can with accurate information.



LVMPD @LVMPD

#BREAKING The suspect is contained. This is an active investigation. Please continue to avoid the area and watch for responding emergency units.

3:41 PM · Dec 6, 2023



1.8K



Reply



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Social Media


 **UNLV**
@unlv · Follow

Police ask that you continue to please shelter in place. Police are evacuating buildings one at a time. This remains an active investigation. The suspect has been contained.

12:58 PM · Dec 6, 2023


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UPDATE: a hotline is set up for those impacted by the #ActiveShooter at UNLV.

You can call 702-455-AIDE (2433) for reunification and victim services.


 **LVMPD** @LVMPD
UPDATE: LVMPD Sheriff: There is NO further threat. No idea about motive. A number of victims have been transported to area hospitals. Those details will be available soon. The investigation is active and continuing.

1:46 PM · Dec 6, 2023


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 **LVMPD**
@LVMPD

URGENT: From Sheriff Kevin McMahon: "No more threat to the community. The suspect is deceased. Right now, we know there are 3 victims, but unknown extent of the injuries. That number could change. We will update you when we know more."

 **LVMPD** @LVMPD · Dec 6
UPDATE: a hotline is set up for those impacted by the #ActiveShooter at UNLV.

You can call 702-455-AIDE (2433) for reunification and victim services.
twitter.com/LVMPD/status/1...

1:56 PM · Dec 6, 2023 · 717.7K Views

441 Reposts 58 Quotes 871 Likes 25 Bookmarks

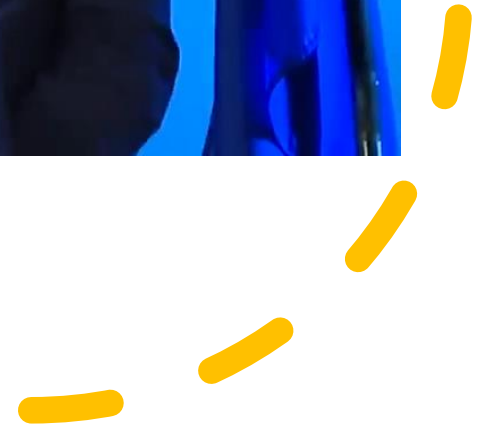
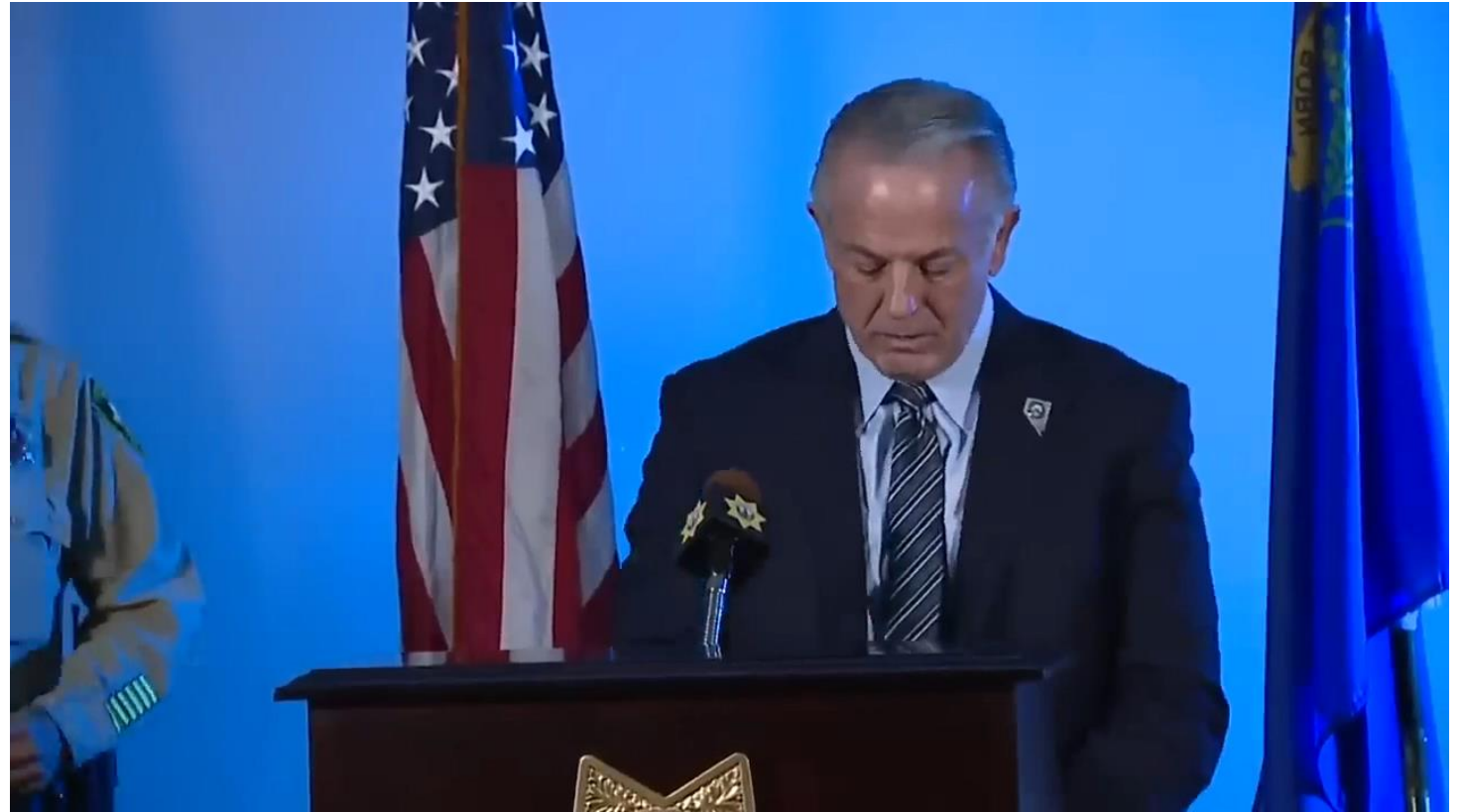
News Conference

- Police scheduled a news conference for 5 p.m. local time (6 hours after shooting/3 hours after initial briefing).
- During the conference, the Las Vegas Sheriff, Governor Joe Lombardo and the UNLV Director of Security spoke.
- No new updates were provided; instead, law enforcement used the opportunity to herald cooperation of responders.

News Conference




News Conference



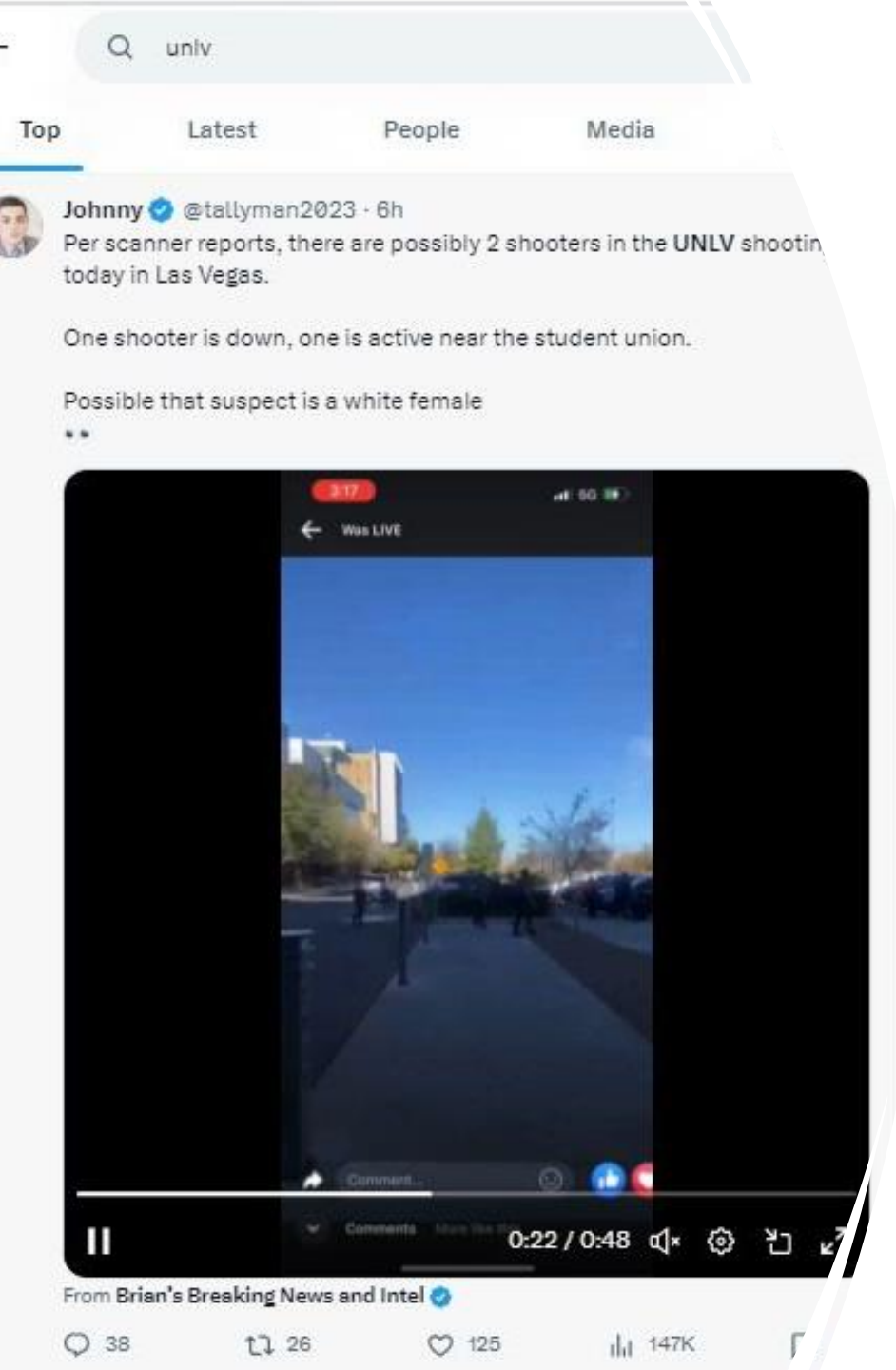
Rumors and Misinformation

Rumors and misinformation about the shooting were posted almost immediately following the shooting.

- A post on X (formerly Twitter) by a user who goes by the name Dr. Jeremiah Emmanuel posted a clip from an earlier news broadcast and claimed there was an “FBI coverup incoming.”
- The message was reposted by more than 600 users and gained more than 1,500 likes despite the account having 839 followers.
- But 790,000 people had seen it by Wednesday night, and it pushed any legitimate news updates further down in the tags — making it harder for people seeking information from official accounts used by the university and law enforcement.

 **Dr. Jeremiah Emmanuel** @JeremmanuelPhD · 7h ...
So the police are saying the shooter is dead, but this eyewitness, who says she has photos, claims she saw the cops detain the shooter and place him in a vehicle. 🤔 And she heard shots after the detainment. @FBI coverup incoming... #UNLV #LasVegas #Shooting



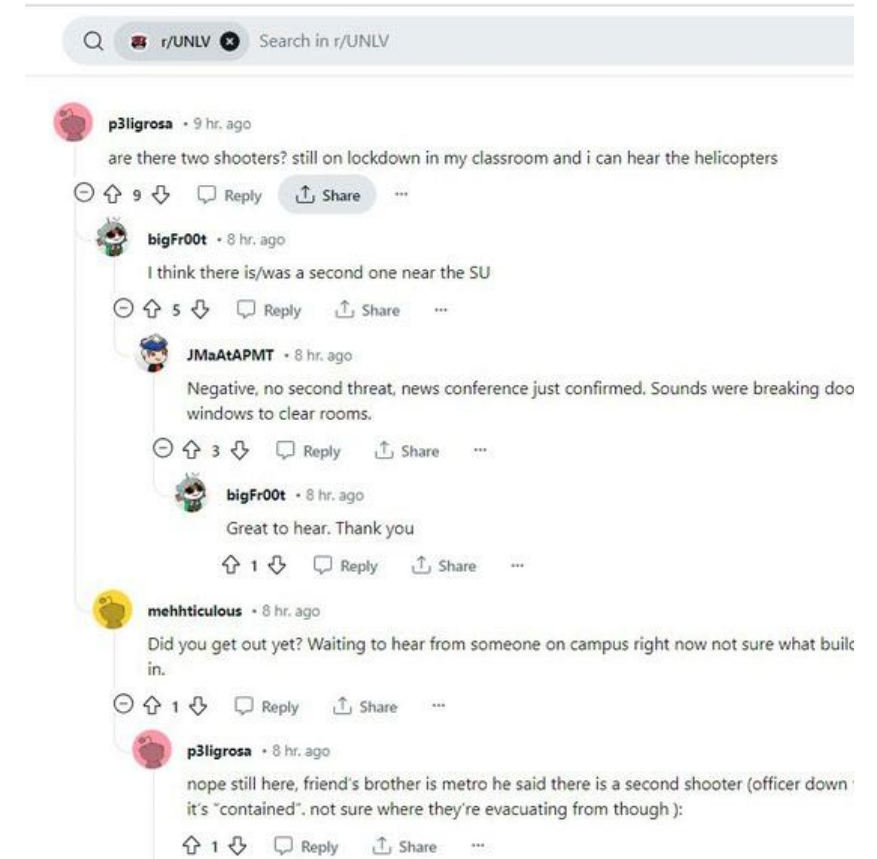


Rumors and Misinformation

- The number of casualties and shooters became so exaggerated that a Metro Police officer working a safety shelter at University Church Las Vegas told the assembled students to wait for updates from law enforcement.
- The officer stressed to not rely on what was being reported on social media, where inaccurate accounts indicated there were multiple shooters and that fatalities were in the double digits.

Rumors and Misinformation

- In a post with “#BREAKING” and “#URGENT,” one account reposted a video of police and SWAT cars racing down the street near UNLV with the caption, “WOW..... Per scanner reports, 28 people shot at UNLV (Las Vegas) in campus shooting. The campus is still on lockdown.”
- It gained 733 reposts, 866 likes and had nearly 500,000 views by Wednesday night. The post was made around 1 p.m. Wednesday by Brian’s Breaking News and Intel, a blue-check-marked account that claimed to have worked at a company called Royal Intel.



Key Takeaways?



2 hours may be too long to provide the public with key information

Airports closed/highways closed
Hospital/emergency activity



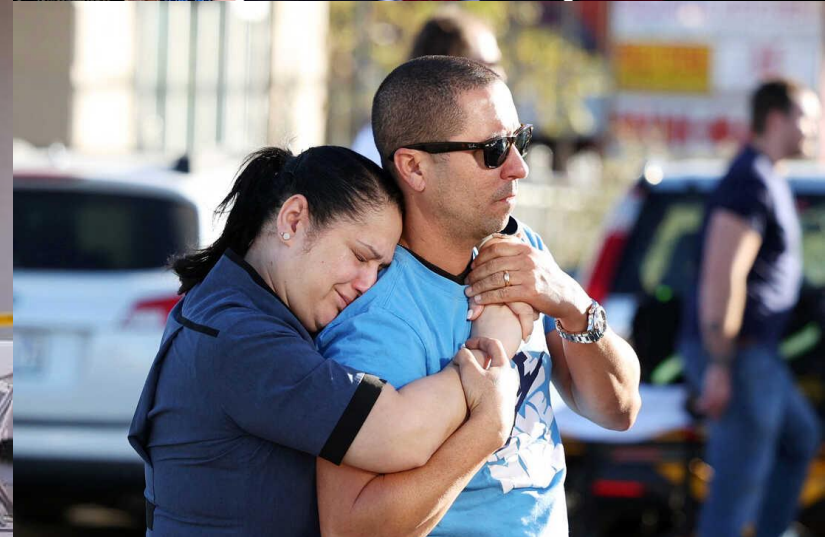
Social media monitoring should be broader in scope



News conference/stagecraft preparation is essential



Good use of phone lines to provide reunification/shelter information



Aftermath

Thank you!

Please contact Jeff Donaldson at
Jeffery.Donaldson@lm.doe.gov with questions.