



# Aaron Alexis

- Age 34
- Cleared Contractor with Secret Clearance
- U.S. Navy Reservist
- Worked as an Information Technology contractor supporting the U.S. Navy-U.S. Marine Corps computer network.



## CDSE

Center for Development  
of Security Excellence

# CASE STUDY

## Targeted Violence

### WHAT HAPPENED

FBI video footage showed that Aaron Alexis arrived at the Washington Navy Yard in a rented Toyota Prius on September 16, 2013 at around 7:53 a.m. The video footage and the details of DOD and other agencies' investigations revealed the tragic details of that day. As shown on surveillance footage, he entered Building 197 at 8:08 a.m., carrying a disassembled shotgun in a shoulder bag. Its barrel and stock had been sawed off.

He went to the fourth floor, where he had worked the week prior. There, he assembled the shotgun inside a bathroom, then emerged and crossed a hallway into a cubicle area near the atrium.

At 8:16 a.m., he began shooting. Six persons were hit, five of whom died. The sixth survived wounds to the head and hand.

At 8:17 a.m., the first 9-1-1 calls were made. By 8:20 a.m., Alexis had shot and killed eight persons on the fourth floor. He then made his way to the third floor and killed two more persons within the next two minutes. He also fired at several persons on at least five separate occasions, wounding one woman in the shoulder as she ran up a stairwell.

After firing several shots on the third floor, he went to the first floor. While on the first floor, Alexis moved around randomly before turning around and heading towards the front entrance. He shot and killed Richard Ridgell, the Security Officer stationed there, and took his 9mm Beretta pistol. Two police officers had asked Ridgell to remain at his post and try to stop the gunman if he attempted to leave the building.

Alexis then fired his shotgun at a second security guard and a Navy Military Police Officer on the first-floor atrium, missing both. The security guard fired back, and Alexis fled down a hallway. Shortly afterwards, he fired at two police officers and a Navy Criminal Investigative Service Agent in another hallway before fleeing again.

At 8:34 a.m., Alexis went towards the west of the building where he encountered two men standing in an alleyway. He tried to fire at them with his shotgun, but realized that he was out of ammunition. He switched to the Beretta pistol, killing one of the men, but the other escaped without injury. Police believed the use of the pistol indicated there was a second gunman. Alexis was fatally shot during the police response, making him the thirteenth fatality.

### INDICATORS

- **Psychological Conditions:** Alexis was believed to have suffered from mental illness.
- **Criminal:** Alexis had a criminal record to include shooting at the ceiling of an apartment.
- **Judgment/Character:** Alexis had a history of poor judgment and past misconduct while serving in the U.S. Navy.

## IMPACT

- Aaron Alexis fatally shot 12 persons and injured three others before being fatally shot himself.
- The Department of Justice sued the DOD contracting company that conducted Alexis' background check for the DOD. Due to this and other incidents, the U.S. Government changed its process to one of continuous evaluation in order to identify issues and anomalies that may affect a person's suitability.
- The Washington Navy Yard shooting affected changes in DOD programs and policies, which have led to more effective counter-insider threat programs. Many of the programs implement recommendations from the DOD post-incident findings.

## ADDITIONAL INFO

- DOD released DOD Directive 5205.16, The DOD Insider Threat Program, on September 30, 2014.
- DOD released DOD Instruction 5205.83, The DOD Insider Threat Management and Analysis Center (DITMAC), on March 30, 2017.
- Along with DOD Insider Threat Policy and the creation of a centralized DITMAC, the DOD implemented a new Enterprise-Wide Information Architecture that included expansion of information sharing, as well as increased insider threat training and awareness.

### Questions to Consider:

- If the policies and practices that are in place today had been in place then, would they have prevented the Washington Navy Yard shootings?
- Why were Alexis' previous criminal behavior and potential mental health issues addressed or not addressed? Did they impact his suitability?
- What is the role of today's insider threat programs in deterring such activities?

### Resources for Further Exploration:

- Video Short - Behavioral Indicators of an Active Shooter  
(<https://www.cdse.edu/Training/Security-Training-Videos/Insider-Threat/Behavioral-Indicators-of-an-Active-Shooter/> )
- Job Aid – Active Shooters and the Pathway to Violence  
(<https://www.cdse.edu/Portals/124/Documents/jobaids/insider/potential-risk-indicators-kinetic-violence-jobaid.pdf?ver=XDs5nRMmCQpfi8L2jWCfoA==> )
- Job Aid – Insider Threat Potential Risk Indicators  
(<https://www.cdse.edu/documents/toolkits-insider/INTJ018-insider-threat-indicators-job-aid.pdf> )

## Supporting Through Reporting!

Contact the appropriate POC to report any observed potential risk indicators:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Agency/Department: \_\_\_\_\_  
Title: Supervisor/Security Officer/ITP Senior Official/ITP Manager