

WASHINGTON
NAVY YARD



SHOOTINGS AT THE WASHINGTON NAVY YARD

The second-deadliest mass murder on a military base in U.S. history occurred at the Washington Navy Yard on the morning of Sept. 16, 2013. Aaron Alexis, an IT contractor, brought a shotgun into Building 197, the headquarters of the Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) and opened fire at 8:16.

Within moments, NCIS personnel were in Building 197, evacuating wounded NAVSEA workers, directing and leading other employees to safety, and exchanging gunfire with Alexis. A Washington, D.C., Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) officer shot in both legs and critically wounded was carried down three flights of stairs and out the front door to safety by an NCIS Special Agent. MPD Chief Cathy Lanier later credited the agent with saving the officer's life.

As the murderous rampage continued, additional NCIS and U.S. Navy personnel rushed toward the Navy Yard and into Building 197 to assist. The Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Jonathan Greenert, who lives on the Navy Yard, was home

when the shooting started. His security detail—members of the NCIS Protective Operations Field Office—rushed to evacuate him and his wife to safety and then returned to the Yard to assist in the effort to stop Alexis. Sixty-nine minutes after the first shots were fired, Alexis was confronted and killed in a shootout by an MPD officer and a U.S. Park Police officer. When the shooting stopped, 12 NAVSEA employees had been killed and 3 others wounded.

The massive 650,000 square foot facility with four floors, multiple atriums, and thousands of cubicles was the workday home to than 3,000 NAVSEA employees, most of whom dropped everything in their desperate attempt to escape. Everything from classified files to personal items, such as key rings, eyeglasses, cellphones, wallets, purses, and medications, was left behind. Thousands of people found themselves with no identification, no money, and no car or house keys. With no access to cellphones, communicating with family members and supervisors was that much more difficult.

NCIS Special Agents were uniquely qualified to help both employees and NAVSEA leadership. The FBI led the processing of the huge crime scene, but few FBI personnel had the necessary security clearances to handle secret and top secret information. Preserving physical evidence necessary to document the rampage was critical, so non-law enforcement personnel could not enter 197. NCIS assisted in the securing of classified spaces and Special Agents were able to retrieve critical documents that had been dropped when the shooting began. It was a delicate balancing act: lives had been lost and families shattered, but NAVSEA's worldwide operations had to continue.

On June 23, 2014, three Special Agents were awarded the Department of the Navy Distinguished Civilian Service Medal with Valor by Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus. NCIS Special Agents were there for the building's grand opening nearly a year and a half later in February 2015, and Special Agents continue to report there daily, to serve and protect.



▲ SECRETARY OF THE NAVY RAY MABUS ADDRESSES THE MEDIA AT THE WASHINGTON NAVY YARD FOLLOWING THE SHOOTINGS.