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'SOFT' TARGETS FIGHT BACK

THINKSTOCK; MEHDI TAAMALLAH/AP/GETTY IMAGES

Schools, churches and theaters take steps to prepare for unexpected attacks

By Adam Stone

GUNMEN AND TERRORISTS OFTEN target schools and houses of worship. This puts pressure on Shay Amir, the head of security at Manhattan Day School, a Jewish elementary school on the city's Upper West Side.

"We have the crazy guys who shoot for reasons we never understand, and then we also (have to) think about terrorist acts. When you have a religious institution and an educational institution, there are always two threats," said Amir, who works at security firm Global Operations Inc., and was hired independently by the school.

To help protect the 600 students, faculty and staff, Amir uses cameras and motion sensors, and a locking vestibule that requires ID to get through. And if someone takes photos of the school from out in the street, a security guard will quickly emerge to politely ask their business.

While estimates vary, no one disputes that gun violence is on the rise among "soft targets" — schools, churches, shop-

ping malls and medical centers that are wide open to the public, where defenses are scant and civilians unsuspecting.

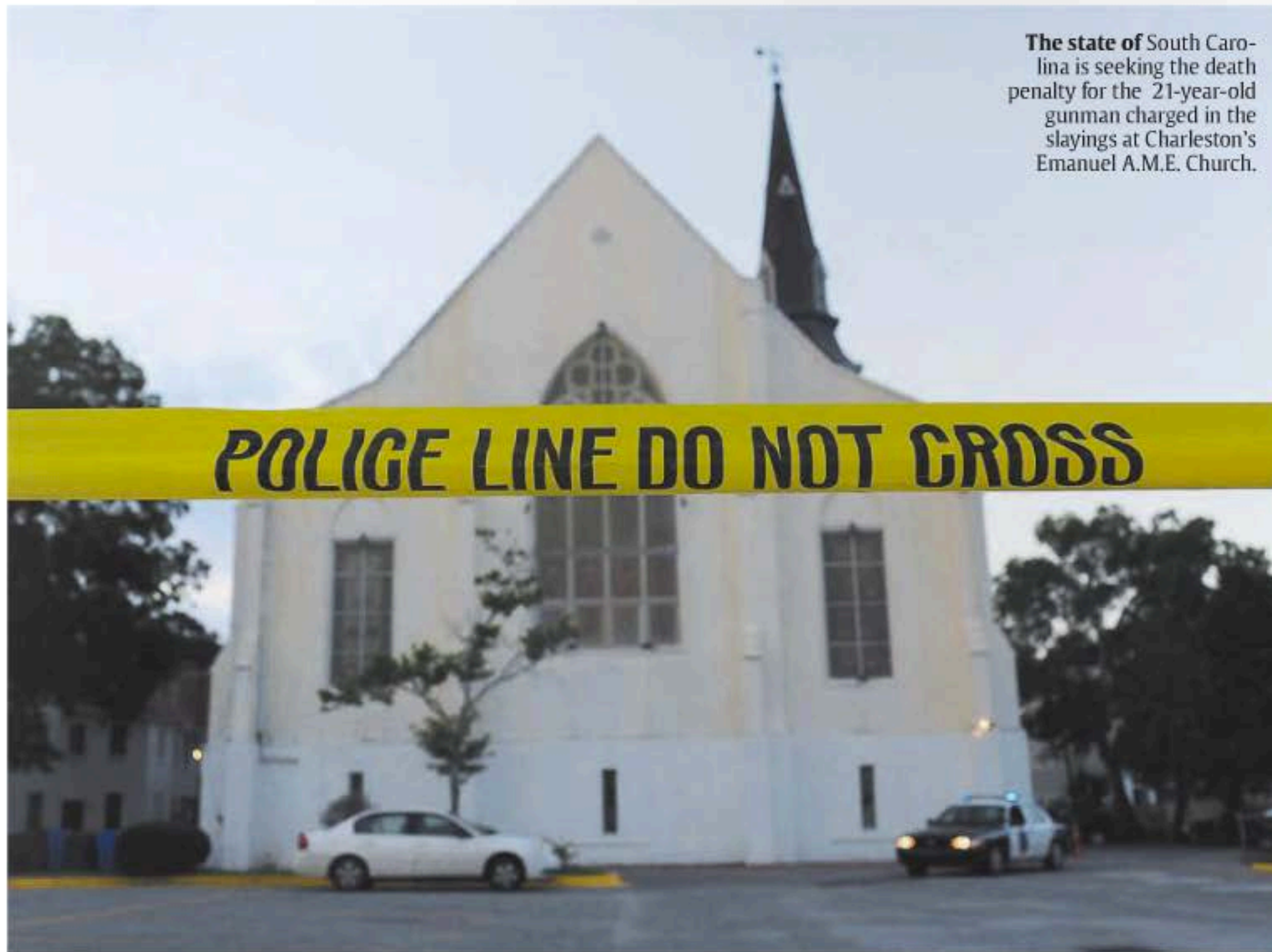
The largest gun violence prevention organization in the country, Everytown for Gun Safety, says there have been at least 160 school shootings in America since 2013. Many media outlets report that at least 74 school shooting incidents occurred between the Dec. 14, 2012, mass tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., and the deadly rampage at Umpqua Community College in Roseburg, Ore., on Oct. 1.

These tragedies are taking a social toll. Twenty-nine percent of U.S. parents said they fear for their child's safety at school, and 10 percent of parents of K-12 students reported that their child has expressed worries about his or her safety at school, according to a Gallup poll released in August.

As public concerns mount, some in the security industry say many facilities are making headway in strengthening their defenses.

"All schools have some kind of training

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The state of South Carolina is seeking the death penalty for the 21-year-old gunman charged in the slayings at Charleston's Emanuel A.M.E. Church.

POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS

THINKSTOCK: MEHDI TAAMALLAH/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

in place. They have protocols in place, they have a chain of command in place to minimize the risk," said Anthony Roman, the founder and CEO of Roman & Associates, a Nassau County, N.Y., global security firm.

Schools also are working closely with local emergency services to analyze risk and develop action plans. At Manhattan Day School, Amir maintains strong relationships with the local police department, and he trains staff and students on how to respond to emergencies.

'DETECT AND DETER'

"The way to do it is by being proactive," said Amir, who used to train agents for the Israeli secret service. "That means doing actions that detect and deter. If you can do that, you can actually get to prevention. You don't sit behind a desk and wait for someone to come to you."

Police culture also has evolved since the Columbine shootings in 1999 first drew public awareness to the risks faced by schools. In that case, police on the scene waited for the arrival of SWAT before moving in.

"That has completely changed," Roman said. "Today, the officers' instructions are to assess, enter, engage the shooter and

eliminate the threat. That is a 180-degree protocol change."

Recently, there's been a push to extend that logic by arming security guards in elementary schools, on college campuses and elsewhere. Advocates for this route say there's nothing that stops a gun better than another gun.

The Umpqua Community College gunman had a 9mm Glock handgun, and four other handguns and a Del-Ton 5.56×45mm rifle. These six guns were found at the scene of the crime and seven more in his home. Opponents ask, how could more guns possibly lead to fewer shootings?

The Department of Homeland Security, which works with communities to deter soft-target threats, votes definitively for plowshares over swords.

"Our kids should be able to go to school without being in an armed environment," said Caitlin Durkovich, DHS assistant secretary for the Office of Infrastructure

Protection. "I would argue that we don't have to go in that direction."

There are other ways to protect. Take for example Southwestern High School in Shelbyville, Ind., possibly the safest school in America. It has bulletproof doors, teachers who wear panic buttons that can set off the school's alarm system and cameras in the hallways that feed directly to the local sheriff's office. In addition, there are smoke canisters in the ceiling that can detonate to visually impair an attacker. But this level of security butts up against an issue that faces every soft target: People still feel the right to come inside.

It's not just a matter of openness, but of commerce as well. "A mall survives in its foot traffic. In the time it would take to ID all those people, to run them through a metal detector, you would bring everything to a halt," said Peter Martin, CEO of security services firm AFIMAC.

However, high-profile attacks in movie

theaters — there have been three since the 2012 shooting in Aurora, Colo., where 12 people were killed — have pushed some legislators to ask whether metal detectors might be an appropriate safeguard. New York Sen. Tony Avella said he would develop legislation requiring either metal detectors or security officers with wands at theaters, stadiums and malls. And in Louisiana, state Rep. Barbara Norton is working on a new bill to make metal detectors mandatory in movie theaters. She added that the extra cost would be worth it.

"Add a few dollars to the price of a movie, citizens will not have a problem with that," she said.

At least one poll has found that partially true. Consumer research firm C4 released a survey of 500 moviegoers that showed 48 percent would be willing to pay at least a \$1 more per ticket for enhanced security. Thirty-five percent said mandatory bag checks would make them feel safer and 34 percent would be reassured by armed lobby security.

Still, the notion of heightened theater security has not gained much ground. Movie industry insiders generally have worried that tighter security would slow the lines and, in the case of metal detectors, add a grim overlay to what is supposed to be a fun night out.

CHURCHES ON ALERT

Houses of worship are also now targets for violence. In June, a 21-year-old gunman opened fire during an evening Bible study at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, S.C., killing nine people, including the pastor.

That incident clearly put churches on alert, but some acknowledge any level of vigilance might not be enough.

At Bethlehem Baptist Church, a 400-member church in Kings Mountain, N.C., an off-duty deputy sheriff watches over the flock on Sunday mornings, Sunday evenings and at Wednesday evening services. "Even as a rural area, we do still have crime," said church member Mark Hughes.

While the deputy sheriff is mostly on the lookout for minor trouble like break-ins and thefts of audiovisual equipment, Hughes has no illusions about the possibility of a bigger incident, and believes deterrence can only go so far.

"My family has been the victims of crimes that could not be foreseen, and I realize that violent crime can occur anywhere, anytime," he said. "You can take some precautions but you can't prevent things from happening."

As the incidents against soft targets have increased and security professionals have sought out solutions, most have hit upon the importance of having a consistent process. Not every school can afford a camera array, much less a dedicated staffer

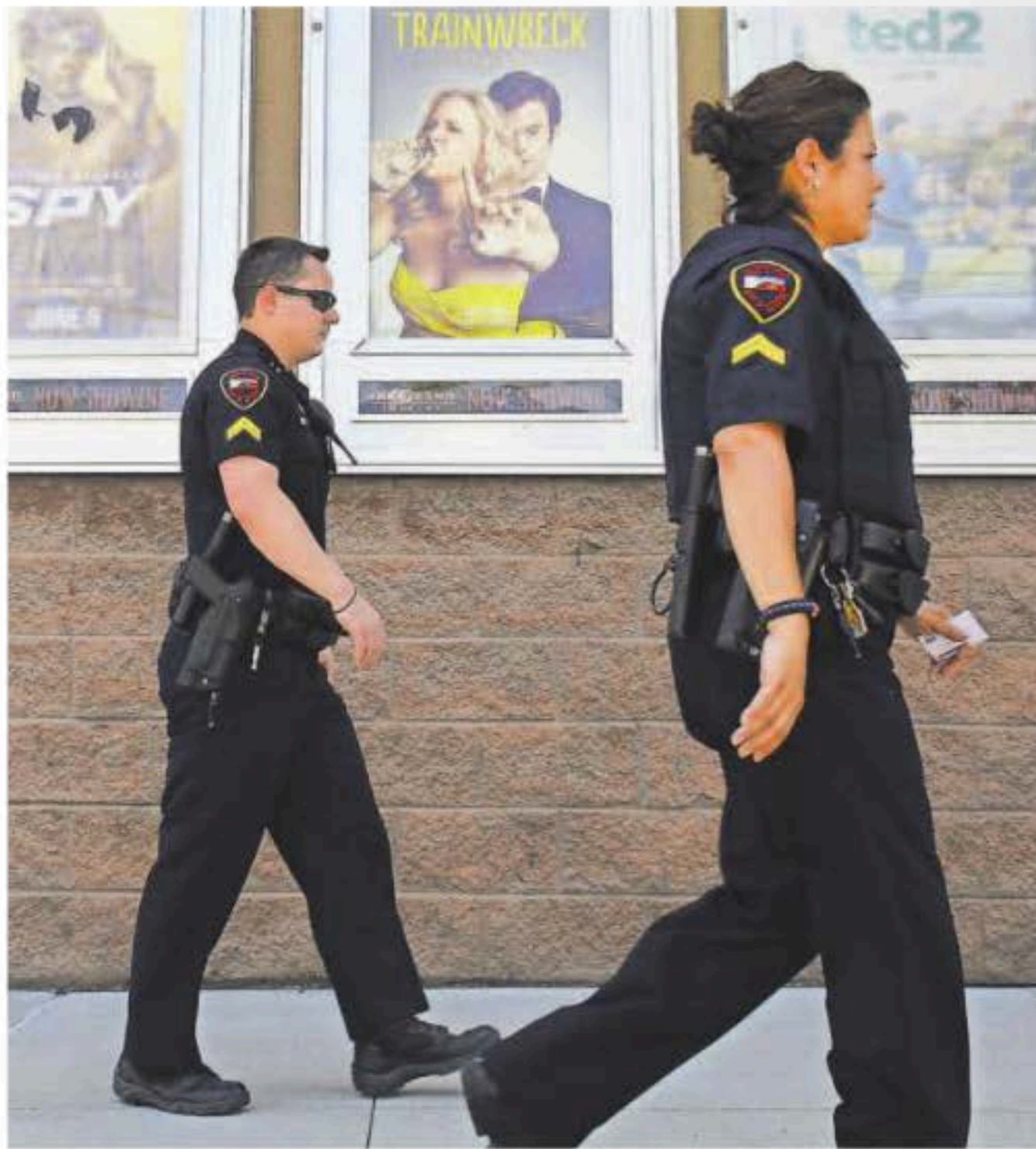
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SCHOOL
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— EVERYTOWN FOR GUN SAFETY

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YURI GRIPAS/AP/GETTY IMAGES

Security was tightened at the Grand Theatre in Lafayette, La., after two people were killed and nine others were wounded July 25 when a gunman opened fire during a screening of the film *Trainwreck*.

to watch the video feed. Less expensive, and often highly effective, is a solid set of procedures, Martin said.

In an ideal scenario, once school is in session, all the doors lock. A security guard challenges all vehicles at point of entry. Access is restricted to a single door and every entry is recorded. Every visitor is met by a security guard and made to wear a badge. These procedures are neither complicated nor expensive, Martin said, and such measures form the bedrock of any security portfolio.

Others pair the process with training. Teachers and preachers aren't typically up-to-speed on lone-shooter response.

"At a minimum, you teach and train your employees on how to deal with these situations, even in a basic way. If you see a guy wearing a mask, don't wait until he starts shooting," said Michael Bouchard, chief security officer of Sterling Global Operations Inc. and newly elected board member of the security industry association ASIS International. "At the very least, if something bad happens here, they should know where the exits are," he said.

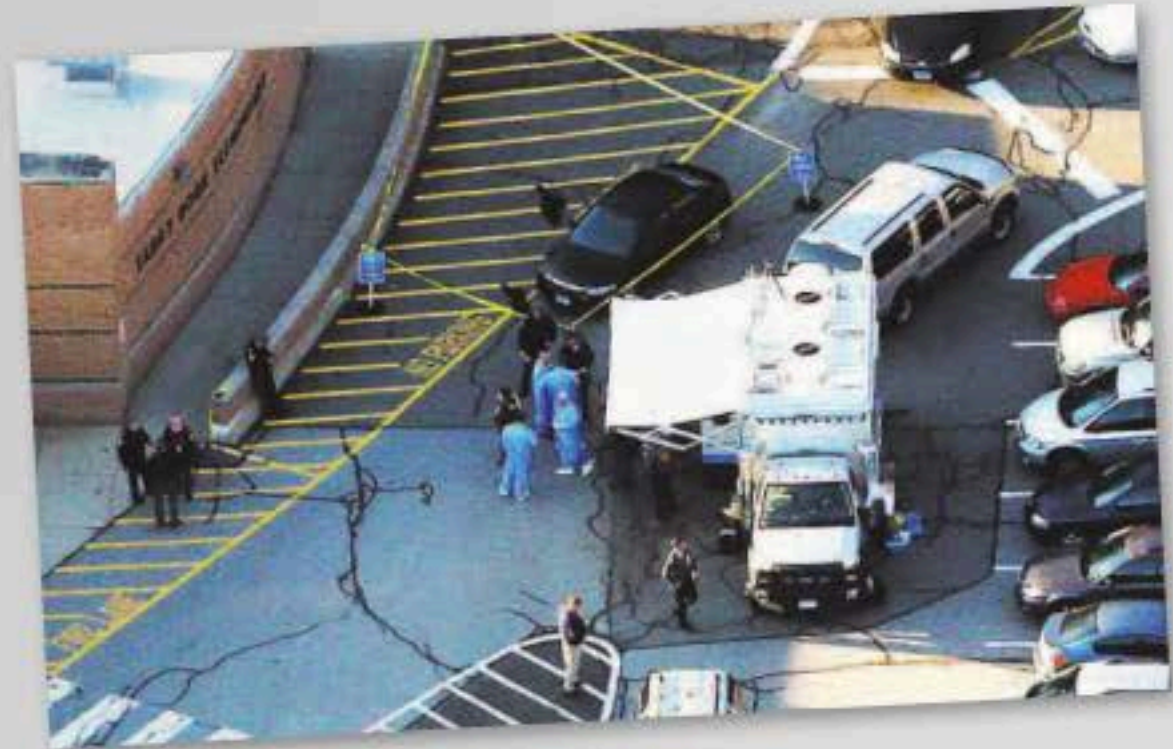
Having a plan is good, and training is

vital, but neither is sufficient. There's one more key ingredient: ongoing practice.

Arguably, all of this has been the foundation of soft-target defense for years. Now, there's an increasing focus on the shooters themselves. Each time an incident occurs, the public gets a clearer insight into the people who do these things. Now, security experts are asking us to point out those people before they head over the cliff.

"You always hear afterwards that they were posting on Facebook, they were showing their increased anger, their decreasing mental state. There are typically signs that people see, but they don't act on them," Bouchard said. "In this country, we try to give people their space, but I think we could do a lot of good if we could educate the public that it doesn't hurt to make a phone call to law enforcement or mental health just to say: This person is changing."

DHS shares the sentiment. "Everyone is responsible and should be reporting suspicious activity," Durkovich said. "The environment today requires an additional level of vigilance. We'd rather hear it, even if it seems small and inconsequential." ●



MARIO YAMA/GETTY IMAGES

The December 2012 mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., demonstrated how vulnerable places like schools, churches, movie theaters and shopping malls can be.

CAMPUSES FOCUS ON SAFETY

Just as the tragedy at Sandy Hook highlighted the vulnerabilities of elementary schools, the recent shooting at Umpqua Community College in Roseburg, Ore., turned the nation's attention to college campuses. It's a topic Todd Badham knows well, as director of security at the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Wash.

"It's my responsibility to perceive the risk as a high one. I would have my head in the sand if I didn't," he said. "I think about it constantly."

In La Mirada, Calif., Biola University Campus Safety Chief John Ojeisekhoba tills the same stony soil. "No place is immune. Everything we are doing here is to prepare as if it is going to happen," he said.

Colleges are, by nature, open, with few walls or gates to segregate them from the surrounding community. Their populations come and go, with off-campus students routinely entering the grounds. Difficult to secure — but not impossible, as both these men have proved.

Badham starts with access control. Buildings on the campus are locked 24/7 and you need a pass card to gain access. The school just finished a half-million-dollar project to add electronic access to seven academic buildings.

Badham can lock every building on campus with the push of a button. A mass notification system with emails and text addresses is updated daily. Seven outdoor towers can broadcast emergency news through loudspeakers.

Even with these safeguards, security still comes down to people, especially the students, staff and professors. "We are always working to get their buy-in," Badham said.

At Biola, there are 200 cameras on the 99-acre campus. The school spent \$32,000 last year to install locking mechanisms inside classrooms so students can lock themselves in. "You cannot stop somebody from going to a classroom and shooting people," said Ojeisekhoba. "But you have to at least have options for preventing loss of life — or further loss of life — than have no options at all."

In terms of "soft targets," a college campus is not exactly an elementary school, a church or a shopping mall. A large college may have the cash to fund an armed security presence, where ecclesiastic and civic budgets might fall short.

But there are similarities. Locks and cameras have their place, as does an emergency button that connects to the sheriff's office. Most of all, colleges and churches and schools all have the ability to train people to spot warning signs and report concerns.

That kind of vigilance won't stop every incident, but many experts contend that the eyes and ears of the community are the best protection a soft target may have.

— Adam Stone