

Chattanooga Shootings Leave Four Marines, Sole Gunman Dead

By Cameron McWhirter , Devlin Barrett and Dion Nissenbaum

A 24-year-old Kuwaiti-born man opened fire at two military facilities, killing at least four Marines and injuring three others before dying from a gunshot wound, authorities said. Photo: Reuters

Updated July 17, 2015 7:17 a.m. ET

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn.—A 24-year-old Kuwaiti-born man opened fire at two military facilities here Thursday, killing four Marines and injuring three others before dying from a gunshot wound, authorities said.

The case is being handled as a terrorism probe, though officials cautioned they still hadn't determined a motive for the shooting. The gunman was identified as Mohammod Youssuf Abdulazeez.

While the Federal Bureau of Investigation has been monitoring hundreds of suspected supporters of Islamic State, people familiar with the probe said Mr. Abdulazeez, who resided in the Chattanooga area, wasn't on their radar as a potential threat.

Investigators are now [scouring the details of Mr. Abdulazeez's life](#), trying to determine if he had help, or if he had associates who also might pose a threat.

The first shooting began at about 10:50 a.m. when a gunman drove up and fired 25 to 30 rounds at a military recruitment center in a strip mall east of downtown Chattanooga, where one Marine was wounded, Pentagon officials said.

Photos: Five Dead, Including Gunman, in Chattanooga Shootings

Investigators scour the scene as makeshift memorials remember the victims

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An April 2015 booking photo released by the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office shows a man identified as Mohammod Youssuf Abdulazeez after he was detained for a driving offense. Officials identified Mr. Abdulazeez as the alleged gunman in Thursday's shootings. *Hamilton County Sheriffs Office via Associated Press*

A family adds to a makeshift memorial near the scene of a shooting at a military recruitment office in Chattanooga, Tenn. A gunman opened fire at two military facilities in the area ...

A car sits tangled in fencing just inside the gate at the Naval Operational Support Center and Marine Corps Reserve Center where a gunman opened fire on Thursday in Chattanooga.
(AP Photo/John Bazemore) *John Bazemore/Associated Press*

An FBI agent on Friday walks to the house of where suspected gunman Mohammod Youssuf Abdulazeez lived in Hixson, Tenn. *tami chappell/Reuters*

An FBI investigator on Friday works at the scene of a shooting outside a military recruiting center in Chattanooga.
John Bazemore/Associated Press

A woman places a balloon and flowers at a makeshift memorial outside a military recruitment center on Friday in

Chattanooga. *John Bazemore/Associated Press*

People attend a prayer service at Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church for the victims of the shootings in Chattanooga on Thursday. *John Bazemore/Associated Press*

A prayer vigil is held at Redemption Point Church for the victims of the shootings in Chattanooga on Thursday. *Doug Strickland/Chattanooga Times Free Press via AP*

A man prays over a sobbing citizen at the site of a shooting attack on a Naval recruiting center in Chattanooga on Thursday. *Alyssa Spirato/WTVB-TV/Reuters*

FBI agents work the scene at the Armed Forces Career Center in Chattanooga on Thursday. *Tami Chappell/Reuters*

Chattanooga Mayor Andy Berke, right, speaks as Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam, left, and Chattanooga Police Chief Fred Fletcher, second from left, listen during a news conference in Chattanooga on Thursday. *Jason Davis/Getty Images*

In this frame from a video, law-enforcement officers detain a woman as they surround a house in Hixson, near the shootings in Chattanooga, on Thursday. *Alex Sanz/Associated Press*

A Tennessee Highway Patrol trooper guards the top of the C.B. Robinson Bridge at Amnicola Highway after the shootings. *Tim Barber/Chattanooga Times Free Press via Associated Press*

Police officers enter the Armed Forces Career Center through a bullet-riddled door after a gunman opened fire on the building. *John Bazemore/Associated Press*

Dozens of police and emergency vehicles crowded Amnicola Highway after the morning shootings. *Tim Barber/TNS/Zuma Press*

Reserve recruitment personnel stand outside at Highway 153 and Lee Highway on Thursday after the shootings. *Tim Barber/TNS/Zuma Press*

In a video still image released by WRCB-TV, authorities responded to the shooting scene on Amnicola Highway near the Naval Reserve Center in Chattanooga. *WRCB-TV via Associated Press*

An April 2015 booking photo released by the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office shows a man identified as Mohammad Youssuf Abdulazeez after he was detained for a driving offense. Officials identified Mr. Abdulazeez as the alleged gunman in Thursday's shootings. *Hamilton County Sheriffs Office via Associated Press*

A family adds to a makeshift memorial near the scene of a shooting at a military recruitment office in Chattanooga, Tenn. A gunman opened fire at two military facilities in the area, killing four Marines and injuring three others before dying from a gunshot wound on Thursday. *Jason Davis/Getty Images*

The shooter then apparently drove 7 miles to a Navy Operations Support Center, ramming his car through a security gate, officials said. He opened fire around 11:30 a.m., killing four Marines and injuring a police officer and sailor, authorities said.

Officials declined to identify the victims at an 11 p.m. news conference. Sen. [Bob Corker](#) (R., Tenn.) said one of the wounded military personnel was "fighting for their life."

ENLARGE

This April 2015 booking photo released by the Hamilton county Sheriff's Office shows a man identified as Muhammad Youssef Abdulazeez. Photo: Hamilton County Sheriff's Office/Associated Press

Mr. Abdulazeez died near that center, either by gunfire from law enforcement or from a self-inflicted wound, said FBI Special Agent-in-Charge Edward Reinhold. He had several weapons in his possession, Mr. Reinhold said.

Though the case is being handled as a terrorism investigation, at the late-night news conference Mr. Reinhold said he couldn't speculate on what the shooter's motive may have been.

"There is nothing that ties him to an international terror organization," he said, adding that it appears he acted alone.

The attacks came as a shock in the city of about 173,000 people on the Tennessee River, near the borders of Georgia and Alabama. "Today is a nightmare for the City of Chattanooga," Mayor Andy Berke said.

President [Barack Obama](#) spoke from the Oval Office, offering the "deepest sympathies to the American people" and calling the deaths "heartbreaking." Ray Mabus, the U.S. Navy secretary, said: "While we expect our Sailors and Marines to go into harm's way, and they do so without hesitation, an attack at home, in our community, is insidious and unfathomable."

As a result of the shootings, Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson said protective measures will be beefed up "at certain federal facilities out of an abundance of caution."

Law-enforcement officials said Mr. Abdulazeez was born in Kuwait and had lived with his family in the U.S. for years. He was a naturalized American citizen, they said.

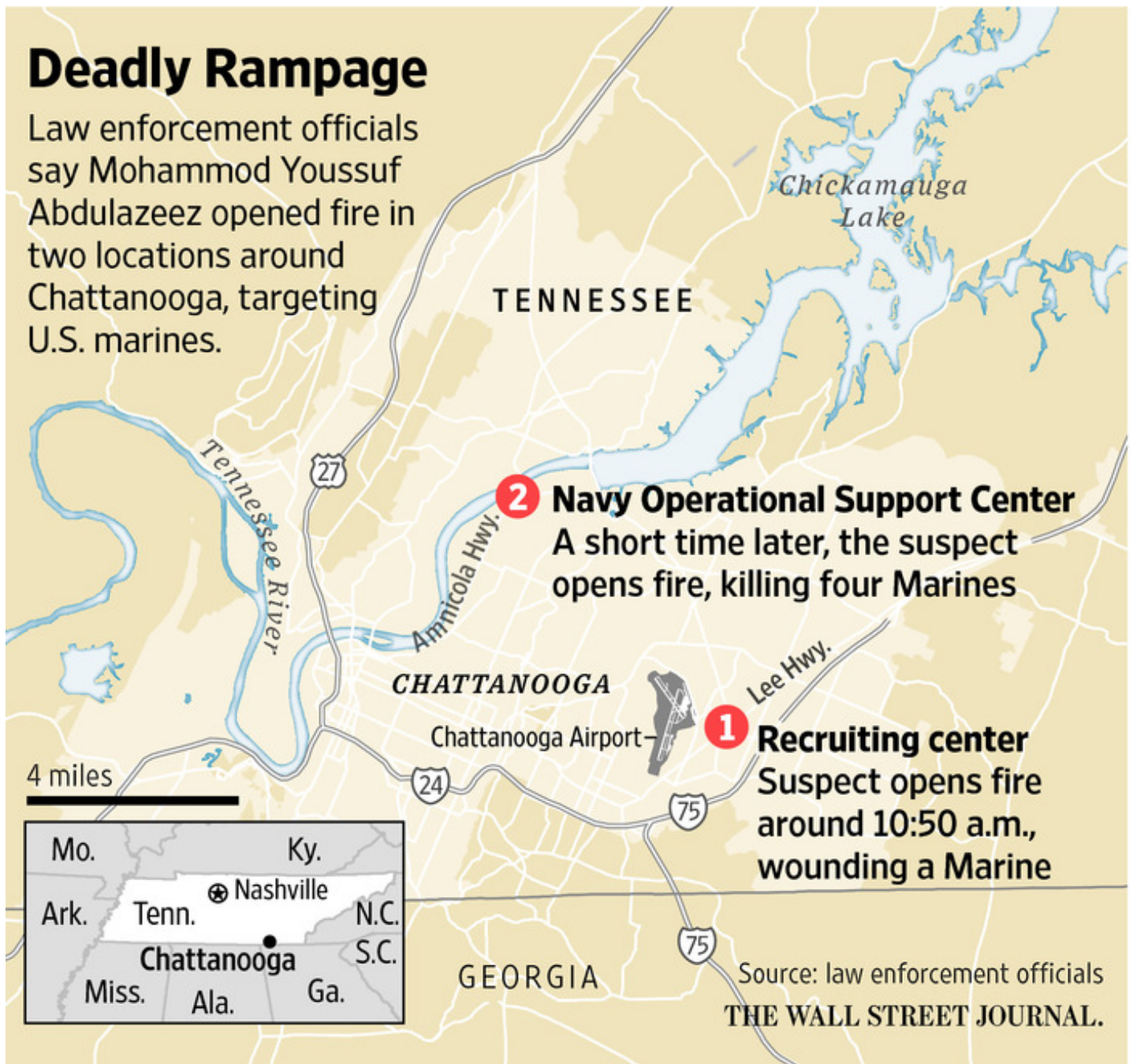
Mr. Abdulazeez graduated from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga in 2012 with a degree in electrical engineering, school officials said. In April, he was arrested for driving under the influence, according to a Hamilton County jail booking report.

Mr. Abdulazeez's family resides in a subdivision of upscale, mostly brick homes with well-kept lawns on a hill overlooking the Tennessee River in Hixson, Tenn. Police had cordoned off the street where the family lives late Thursday.



Deadly Rampage

Law enforcement officials say Mohammad Youssuf Abdulazeez opened fire in two locations around Chattanooga, targeting U.S. marines.



ENLARGE

Cherie Adkins, a neighbor of the alleged shooter and his family, said Mr. Abdulazeez “wasn’t very friendly” and that the family, including parents and at least three siblings, largely kept to itself. “They never mingled with the people in the neighborhood,” she said.

Though the mother would sometimes wave to neighbors and chat with them, Ms. Adkins said, “the men weren’t very friendly.”

Hunter Bragg, 24, who went to Red Bank High School in Tennessee with Mr. Abdulazeez, said he was shocked by the news.

“He was outgoing. He had a lot of friends,” Mr. Bragg said. “There was nothing negative to say about him until now—that’s why I was so blown away.”

The two were on the high school wrestling team, said Mr. Bragg, adding that Mr. Abdulazeez was “never an outsider.”

Mr. Bragg said he also attended middle school with Mr. Abdulazeez in Red Bank, a small city surrounded by Chattanooga. “When I heard the name I didn’t want to believe it,” said Mr. Bragg, who lives in Chattanooga. “This is a kid I grew up with; now he’s somebody I wish I’d never associated with.”

Mohamed Elbardissy, the owner of an Italian restaurant next door to the recruiting center that was the site of the first incident, said he was sitting in his office when he heard 20 to 30 gunshots. He saw a white man drive a silver Mustang convertible away from the area, he said in a telephone interview. “I didn’t realize what was going on at the beginning,” he added.

At an earlier news conference, Gov. Bill Haslam said it was a “tragic day” for Tennessee. Chattanooga Police Chief Fred Fletcher was asked if officials were concerned about possible retaliation against Muslims in the area. He said he was meeting with officials and community leaders to make sure everyone was protected.

“I can assure you that all agencies—federal, state and local—are working together with the common goal of keeping everybody in this community, across this city, across this state and across this country safe,” he said.

In a statement Thursday, the Muslim Public Affairs Council, a national advocacy group, said “the American Muslim community is shocked and outraged by this senseless attack—particularly on the eve of Eid, our biggest holiday of the year.”

For several hours Thursday, local colleges, businesses and government offices were on lockdown, and government buildings as far away as Nashville were on alert.

U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch offered condolences to the victims of “this shameful and cowardly act of violence.” She said the FBI will lead the national security investigation, aided by law enforcement and intelligence agencies.

Military facilities around the world have been at a heightened state of alert for months as a result of increased threats from extremist groups like Islamic State and al Qaeda.

Last month, Islamic State urged its supporters to carry out attacks during Ramadan, the Islamic month of daily fasting that comes to an end this weekend.

Pentagon officials said Thursday that they hadn’t ordered widespread steps to beef up security, but said that some local commanders could do more if they saw a need. Military officials in Washington said they had no information on the type of security at the Navy center where the Marines were killed.

The most recent post on the center’s Facebook page touted Navy security with a photo of two sailors in silhouette aiming their weapons. “Shipmates protecting shipmates,” the caption reads. “Stay vigilant, stay safe.”

The facility was approved for a \$1.7 million renovation in 2009.

Military officials did say that there was no security at the recruiting center in the strip mall where the first shooting took place. The military leases the office, and Pentagon officials said it would be difficult, and impractical, to establish tougher new security measures at recruiting centers like that one.

Thursday’s shooting had echoes of a similar 2009 attack in Little Rock, Ark., where an American-Muslim convert opened fire on a recruiting center, killing one soldier and wounding another. The attacker was arrested and eventually sentenced to life in prison.

—Arian Campo-Flores, Zusha Elinson, Lindsay Ellis and Lisa Schwartz contributed to this article.

Corrections & Amplifications:

Four people were killed in the second of the two shooting incidents in Chattanooga. An earlier version of this article

incorrectly stated the fatalities occurred in the first shooting incident. (July 16, 2015)

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