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PulseFINALFoxReportfortoday

Headline: Graphic Video, Images Shown In Salman Trial

Subheadline: Jury Sees Pulse Attack Timeline, Hears Conflicting Witness Testimony

By: Greg Fox WESH TV

In what may be the most graphic video and still images jury members will see during the trial of Noor Salman, the government this morning showed a “timeline” of events. Salman is the wife of Pulse nightclub shooter Omar Mateen. The video shows Mateen entering the club on south Orange Avenue in downtown Orlando just before 2am on June 12, 2016. On overhead surveillance video, he’s seen walking past the front desk at the entrance, then walking through the club. The overhead video inside the main room shows dozens of people dancing, drinking, chatting, having fun.

Then, the nightmare begins. At 2:01am, Mateen fires the first shots. Bullets fly from his semi-automatic Sig Sauer MCX assault rifle back and forth across the room. All around the room there is no time and no room to run. In an instant you can see more than half of the 49 people killed by Mateen falling to the floor like dominoes. The video is silent, but in your mind you can hear the screams of horror, the screams of pain, the screams of panic.

The overhead surveillance cameras inside Pulse show Mateen moving to another room and then returning where you can see wounded people on the dance floor moving and appearing to cry out for help. Mateen begins firing again, until there is no movement in the room, except for his slow pacing footsteps.

Minutes later you can see the first officers entering the front door to engage Mateen, before he retreats into another area of the building. Awhile later, officers wearing body cams go inside the club and now there’s audio. “If you can move, get out,” yells an unidentified officer. He shouts again, “Are you breathing? Ae you breathing?” They help move as many victims out of the club, rushing across the blood-stained floor as other officers begin looking for Mateen. The officers are later ordered out, after Mateen calls 911 and tells crisis team negotiator Andrew Brennan he has explosives inside the club.

At 5:15, the video from an Orange county Sheriff’s office helicopter shows Orlando police making an explosive breach inside the club, confronting Mateen, and killing him. Because wires were spotted underneath Mateen’s body, two bomb-detection robots were sent into the club. They were used remotely to turn him over and sent back images that appeared he was not wearing explosives, which was later confirmed.

Next to his body, officers found the assault rifle and a Glock semi-automatic handgun. Both were purchased little more than a week prior to the massacre at the nightclub.

FBI agent and bomb expert Paul Castillo testified that two bomb-sniffing dogs “alerted” near Mateen’s van in the parking lot, requiring hours of examination before determining, again, that there were no explosives.

FBI agent Lynn Billings testified that when she arrived at the club, after the scene was deemed safe, she and other agents recovered 39 bodies inside, two at a nearby business, and eight died at or enroute to hospitals. She also positively identified Mateen’s weapons, including a knife. She explained the difficulty in recovering evidence because some cell phones and shell casings “were submerged in blood, mixed with water from a pipe that broke during the police breach of the building.” She said they did find and managed to obtain information from Mateen’s cell phone.

Salman is charged with aiding and abetting a terrorist organization (the Islamic State, to which her husband pledged allegiance) and obstruction of justice. If convicted on both counts, she could be sentenced to life in federal prison.

During afternoon testimony, the Fort Pierce police Lieutenant in charge of the detail sent to the Pulse nightclub gunman’s home, testified he made a “tactical mistake” when he confronted Salman.

Lt. William Hall said slightly more than an hour after Mateen began shooting inside the nightclub in downtown Orlando, his department was notified by Orlando Police that Mateen owned a townhome in Fort Pierce and there was a possibility of “booby traps and explosives.”

Hall said he reached out to Mateen’s relatives, obtained a phone number for Salman and called her while Mateen was still inside the nightclub. He asked her if she would meet him outside and she agreed. Despite the fact that there was suspicion of explosives, Hall and other officers elected not to evacuate some or all of the apartment complex, and instead met Salman near her front door.

When he asked if he could come in, she agreed. When she asked if she could get changed out of pajamas into clothes, Hall agreed and left her alone to change because he did not have a female officer present. That’s when he says he made a big mistake. Salman walked out of the bedroom, with a cell phone in her hand. Hall testified, “I flinched because with a cell phone and talk of booby traps and the fact that phones can set off explosives, I realized a made a big tactical mistake.” He added, “I should not have let her change clothes.” No explosives were ever found in Mateen and Salman’s home and their young son was home when police arrived.

Hall said the conversation continued and became more bizarre. “I told her that her husband was involved in something and other (law enforcement) agencies would be looking to talk with her,” Hall testified. He said she replied this way without any prompting: “She said her husband was very careful with guns and would never hurt anyone.” Later Hall said she asked him, “Are we going to Disney World?” Hall said he thought to himself, “That was strange.”

Under cross examination, defense attorney Charles Swift worked to discredit Hall, the work of his officers and his testimony.

Swift: “Did you ask her if there were any explosives in the home?”

Hall: “No Sir.”

Swift: “If you asked where her husband was, would that be relevant?”

Hall: "Yes."

Swift: "When did you last see your husband? That would be relevant, right?"

Hall: "Yes"

Swift: "Whether she could help talk him out of the nightclub, that would be relevant right?"

Hall: "Yes"

Swift: "But you didn't ask any of those questions right?"

Hall: "That's correct."

The last witness of the day provided some of the most contentious testimony. FBI special agent Chris Mayo was the first to question Noor Salman about her husband. He said that she deliver conflicting, and... at times... odd statements.

Under questioning by prosecutor Sara Sweeney, Mayo said he met Salman and the couple's three year old son at their Fort Pierce townhouse, after it was secured by local police. He arrived at 5:45am. She told him her husband left the night before to meet with his friend, identified in court documents prior to trial only as "Nemo." When Mayor asked her for more information about "Nemo" she said she never met him, but Mayor testified she later gave a physical description of him.

Mayo said he also said he found it strange that Salman never asked about her husband's whereabouts, whether he was okay, or why, specifically, the FBI was talking to her. Then, Mayo testified that Salman suddenly said, "My husband had no enemies and liked homosexuals." Sweeney asked if Salman had been told, at that point, that Mateen had murdered people inside a gay nightclub, and Mayo responded, "No."

When the FBI special agent asked Salman for permission to search her home, he said she declined. The defense later pointed out that she consented to a search later in the day.

Under cross examination by defense attorney Swift, Mayo was portrayed as an interrogator using "lies, ruses and pressures" to get Salman to cooperate.

Swift: "You had no idea of her personality disorders, her low IQ?"

Mayo: "No, I did not."

Swift: "Before you brought her to the office, you did not tell her that her husband was dead?"

Mayo: "No"

Swift: "So you withheld information from her? Were you afraid she would not go with you or cooperate if you told her?"

Mayo: "No."

Swift also asserted that in Mayo's notes Salman used the word "gay" but in Mayo's report he substituted the word "homosexual" and characterized that as a "slur," a negative term intended to make Salman appear insensitive to the clientele of the Pulse nightclub.

But on re-direct, prosecutor Sweeney asked, "Do you consider the word homosexual to be a slur?" Mayo responded, "No Ma'am." Sweeney asked, "Did you use lies, ruses and pressures to get Salman to speak with you?" Mayo again responded, "No Ma'am."

An 18 person jury made up of 12 women and six men (six of whom are alternates) are hearing the evidence in this case. Trial adjourned for the weekend and will resume with testimony and evidence Monday.

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2pm

The last witness this morning during the trial of Noor Salman, widow of the Pulse nightclub gunman Omar Mateen, was FBI special agent Lauren Regucci. She's an organized crime specialist and a member of the Jacksonville FBI office Evidence Response Team (ERT). She testified that her team's responsibilities following the nightclub attack in June 2016, was to examine the mini van Mateen drove to the nightclub and parked in its parking lot.

She identified evidence found inside and near the van after it was deemed safe by bomb experts.

The items included the rifle case for Mateen's semi-automatic Sig Sauer MCX, the case for his Glock semi-automatic pistol, and a 38 caliber handgun that was not used during the massacre that ended 49 lives and wounded at least 68 others. The handgun was in a case in the van that also contained three "speed loaders" as special agent Regucci called them. When asked what they are used for, Regucci answered, "For quickly reloading a weapon to fire, again, quickly."

Also inside the van were a handful of receipts to, among other establishments, Walt Disney World Parks, Walmart (where Mateen bought ammunition), a gun store (where Mateen bought the rifle and the Glock), and a variety of clothing stores. All of the receipts were signed by Mateen, not Salman.

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10:30am

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FBI agent Lynn Billings testified this morning that when she arrived at the club, after the scene was deemed safe, she and other agents recovered 39 bodies inside, two at a nearby business, and eight died at or enroute to hospitals. She also positively identified Mateen's weapons, including a knife. She explained the difficulty in recovering evidence because some cell phones and shell casings "were submerged in blood, mixed with water from a pipe that broke during the police breach of the building." She said they did find and managed to obtain information from Mateen's cell phone.

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By: Greg Fox

(Orlando)

9:00am

Nine witnesses testified after opening arguments Wednesday in the trial of the widow of the Pulse nightclub gunman. Noor Salman is charged with aiding and abetting a terrorist organization and obstruction of justice in the shooting committed by her husband, Omar Mateen, that killed 49 people June 12, 2016 and wounded at least 68 others.

After opening statements by federal prosecutors and Salman's defense team, two of the witnesses called by the government included Bobby Rodriguez. She described how she hid in fear as the gunman moved through the nightclub and, in testimony that shook those in the courtroom, described how she hid under another victim's body to shield herself, while listening to gunfire and screams throughout the club on south Orange avenue in downtown Orlando. She said she called her mother to tell her she loved her, instead of calling 911.

Another witness, Pinellas County Deputy Sheriff Nelson Rodriguez, testified that when the shooting started he and others ran out of doors to escape a constant spray of bullets from the semi-automatic assault rifle Mateen was firing.

Government witness William Braniff, a counter terrorism expert based at the University of Maryland, explained to the jury how the Islamic State, ISIS, used videos and internet messages to inspire followers globally to commit acts of violence. He suggested this is how Mateen was motivated to carry out the attack.

Prosecutors argue Salman assisted her husband, much like a fully engaged partner in the attack, by scouting out places in Orlando, including Disney Springs, prior to the assault on Pulse. Defense attorneys described Salman as naïve, and unaware of her husband's plans. They will call into question during the trial the tactics used by Fort Pierce police and the FBI in the hours during and following the nightclub massacre to hold and question Salman. In pre-trial hearings, FBI agents testified that they wrote notes, which were initialed by Salman indicating they were true, in which she expressed sadness for not coming forward to report her husband to authorities and try to prevent the attack.

Greg Fox Update

6pm

An FBI agent who was first to question Noor Salman about her husband, the Pulse nightclub gunman, testified that she deliver conflicting, and... at times... odd statements. Special Agent Christopher Mayo was on the stand for more than half of the afternoon prior to court adjourning until Monday. Salman is facing two federal charges of assisting husband Omar Mateen in planning and carrying out the massacre that left 49 people slain, and at least 68 people injured June 12, 2016 at the club in downtown Orlando.

Under questioning by prosecutor Sara Sweeney, Mayo said he met Salman and the couple's three year old son at their Fort Pierce townhouse, after it was secured by local police. He arrived at 5:45am. She told him her husband left the night before to meet with his friend, identified in court documents prior to

trial only as “Nemo.” When Mayor asked her for more information about “Nemo” she said she never met him, but Mayor testified she later gave a physical description of him.

Mayor said he also found it strange that Salman never asked about her husband’s whereabouts, whether he was okay, or why, specifically, the FBI was talking to her. Then, Mayor testified the Salman suddenly said, “My husband has no enemies and liked homosexuals.” A prosecutor asked if Salman had been told, at that point, that Mateen had murdered people inside a gay nightclub, and Mayor responded, “No.”

When the FBI special agent asked Salman to search her townhome unit, he said she declined. The defense later pointed out that she consented to a search.

Under cross examination by defense attorney Charles Swift, Mayor was portrayed as a law enforcement officer using “lies, ruses and pressures” to get Salman to cooperate.

Swift: “You had no idea of her personality disorders, her low IQ?”

Mayor: “No, I did not.”

Swift: “Before you brought her to the office, you did not tell her that her husband was dead?”

Mayor: “No”

Swift: “So you withheld information from her? Were you afraid she would not go with you or cooperate if you told her?”

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Swift also asserted that in Mayor’s notes Salman used the word “gay” but in Mayor’s report he substituted the word “homosexual” and characterized that as a “slur,” a negative term intended to make Salman appear insensitive to the clientele of the Pulse nightclub.

But on re-direct, prosecutor Sweeney asked, “Do you consider the word homosexual to be a slur?” Mayor responded, “No Ma’am.” Sweeney asked, “Did you use lies, ruses and pressures to get Salman to speak with you?” Mayor again responded, “No Ma’am.”

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Lt. William Hall took the stand this afternoon. Slightly more than an hour after Mateen began shooting inside the nightclub in downtown Orlando, Hall said his department was notified by Orlando Police that Mateen owned a townhome in Fort Pierce and there was a possibility of “booby traps and explosives.”

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Salman is charged with lying to the government and helping her husband carry out the attack, specifically, aiding and abetting a terrorist organization (ISIS – The Islamic State).

Testimony resumes at 1pm

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