

At Casino Hotels, Welcome for Guests Makes Security Difficult

Written by Administrator

Wednesday, 04 October 2017 13:06 -

Photo



Law enforcement walked the casino floor at Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas on Tuesday.

Credit

Eric Thayer for The New York Times

LAS VEGAS — *Read the latest on [the Las Vegas shooting](#) with Thursday's live updates.*

When Stephen Paddock pulled his car up to the wide circular driveway at the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino, a half-dozen bellboys and valets were likely to be there to help. When he walked past the two giant stone lions and through the glass doors into the lobby, greeters would probably have ushered him the roughly 50 steps to the wooden doors with frosted glass where high rollers check into the hotel.

When he emerged and walked another 50 feet to the elevator bank, dozens if not hundreds of guests and employees may have passed him. Once on the 32nd floor, he would have walked down a long hallway to his suite, with its minibar, sofas and large bedroom. There, he would have started to unpack some of the 10 suitcases he brought to the hotel, containing the guns that he would use to commit mass murder.

Mr. Paddock appeared to have little trouble bringing nearly two dozen weapons and thousands of rounds of ammunition into his suite at the Mandalay Bay. The hotels and the casinos connected to them, not just in Las Vegas but around the country, are designed to welcome visitors and make it as easy as possible for them to relax and spend money.

Now, hotels, casinos and law enforcement agencies are confronting their security vulnerabilities and trying to figure out what more they can and should do to prevent attacks like the mass shooting in Las Vegas.

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Short of installing metal detectors at all the many entrances, or individually searching arriving bags, though, it may be nearly impossible to prevent visitors from carrying weapons into facilities like the Mandalay Bay, security experts say.

“Because of the open nature of casinos and hotels, it’s almost impossible to do the search you do at an airport,” said Ed Davis, who was the police commissioner in Boston during the Boston Marathon bombing and is now an adviser to the American Gaming Association, the casino industry group. “Unfortunately, Las Vegas is a big soft target,” Mr. Davis said, “and the fact that it hasn’t happened here before is a miracle.”

What seems clear is that Mr. Paddock succeeded in bringing that arsenal into his suite days before the shooting without attracting notice, despite the presence of hundreds of video and surveillance cameras in the casino and security officers and employees who are trained to look out for suspicious behavior. This has prompted questions about what else the hotel could have done.

Photo



Law enforcement officials collected evidence outside the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino in Las Vegas on Tuesday. Credit Jim Wilson/The New York Times

Two spokeswomen for the Mandalay Bay declined to comment on the security at the hotel and casino.

Sheriff Joseph Lombardo of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department pushed back at critics who said the security at the hotel was lax.

“The Mandalay Bay security was fantastic,” Sheriff Lombardo said on Tuesday. “I don’t want anyone to think that it’s not safe to stay at one of our hotels.”

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He then suggested that no amount of planning could have prevented the attack. “The world has changed,” he said. “Who would have ever imagined this situation?”

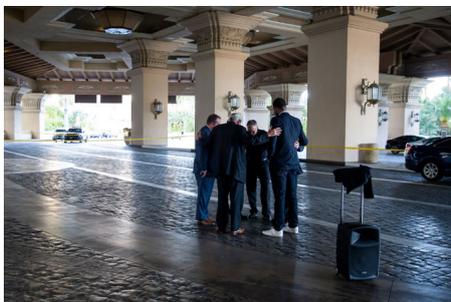
Others suggested that more could be done. Last year, Steve Wynn, the chief executive of Wynn Resorts and owner of some of the biggest casinos and hotels in the city, said Las Vegas was a “target city” because of the tens of millions of visitors who cram its streets, tourist attractions and hotels and casinos. In the past year, he said, he has installed unseen metal detectors and hired former Navy SEALs, F.B.I. and C.I.A. agents to work undercover in his Las Vegas properties.

“You know why we are a big target?” Mr. Wynn asked [in an interview](#) last year with KTNV, a Nevada television station. “This place is chock-full, in a relatively small place between Sahara and Tropicana, of all of those folks, and they regularly congregate at night in 10- and 20,000 bundles. This city is tempting for all of those reasons.”

Mr. Wynn did not mention that the Nevada Gaming Control Board, which licenses casinos in the state, does not regulate security at the hotels attached to casinos. A.G. Burnett, the chairman of the control board, said that a task force was formed several years ago so that his agency, law enforcement agencies and the casino operators could share best practices. The control board, he said, has not had to develop regulations to govern security at the hotels because the operators have done a good job on their own.

“They’ve been so good doing security outside the casino that we didn’t feel we had to go further than that,” he said, but “it will be something we will all look at as a state.”

Photo



People prayed in the entrance driveway at the Mandalay Bay on Tuesday.

Credit

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A spokeswoman for MGM Resorts, Debra DeShong, said in a statement Wednesday that her company had stepped up security at its properties and that its safety procedures were “always improving and evolving.”

Some people who work at Mandalay Bay said they had their doubts that the resort was doing enough.

“It doesn’t seem like there’s a presence, or anything that would deter something,” said Jacque Holmes, who moved to Las Vegas from Farmington, Conn., and works in Paradiso, a women’s clothing shop that faces the casino in Mandalay Bay.

“That’s why kids come here and party,” she said.

Ms. Holmes said the mentality in the hotel is that when a bag is left unattended, it does not raise the same alarm bells that it might in New York.

“There’s no deterrent,” she said, “There’s nothing.”

While the hotel does not allow people to bring guns or other weapons onto the property, a hotel employee said that they could only do so much to prevent people from sneaking them in.

“Technically, every bag could be considered a suspicious bag, because we don’t know what’s inside,” said the employee, who was not authorized to speak on the record. “We’re not allowed to ask guests what’s in their bags. So unless we hear ticking, we cannot query a guest on what’s in their luggage.”

When workers do see that someone is trying to bring in weapons, they alert security, the employee said.

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T.J. Lopez, general manager of Starlight Tattoo, a shop that also faces the casino, said the mind-set in Las Vegas is not to worry too much about what people are doing.

“We don’t want to scare people, because it’s Las Vegas, and we’re so dependent on tourism,” he said. “It’s sad that we didn’t think about it until this happened.”

Correction: October 4, 2017

Because of an editing error, an earlier version of this article referred incorrectly to the timing of the mass shooting in Las Vegas. It occurred late Sunday night, not on Monday.

[Continue reading the main story](#)

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