



# **The Report of Governor Bill Owens'**

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COLUMBINE REVIEW COMMISSION

**Hon. William H. Erickson, Chairman**

**MAY 2001**

# STATE OF COLORADO



May 2001

Bill Owens  
Governor

Dear Fellow Coloradan,

On April 20, 1999, two students at Columbine High School southwest of Denver murdered 12 fellow students and one teacher in the worst school shooting in U.S. history. The Columbine tragedy forever changed the way Americans think about the potential for violence in our schools. No one can erase the horror of that day, or restore the losses suffered by the victims and their families. Yet only by learning from Columbine can we hope to prevent similar tragedies in the future.

On January 28, 2000, I signed an executive order creating the Columbine Review Commission, to conduct an independent review of the tragedy that occurred on April 20, 1999. I appointed the distinguished William H. Erickson, former Chief Justice of the Colorado Supreme Court, to chair the commission. The commission's volunteer members spent over a year conducting public hearings and examining thousands of pages of documents before compiling their findings and recommendations.

The full report follows. The report is also posted on the state's website at: <http://www.state.co.us>.

To the members of the commission I extend a heartfelt thanks for the many hours devoted to this difficult task. They have provided a great public service, and we are deeply grateful.

Sincerely,

Bill Owens  
Governor of Colorado



## THE GOVERNOR'S COLUMBINE REVIEW COMMISSION

*Commission members pictured here are:*

**1st row, l. to r.:** Troy Eid, Sheriff George Epp, Raymond T. Slaughter, Hon. William H. Erickson, Pamela Jo Suckla, Professor William T. Pizzi.

**2nd row:** Donald S. Quick, Professor B. James George, C. Suzanne Mencer, Timothy M. Tymkovich.

**3rd row:** Stephen D. Vercelloni, Stanley T. Paprocki, Ruben E. Archuleta, Bill Ritter, Jr., and Dr. Robert F. Wintersmith.

*(Commission members not pictured:* Robert N. Miller, Dr. William J. Moloney, Gale Norton, Dr. John B. Peper, and Aristedes W. Zavaras.)

# THE GOVERNOR'S COLUMBINE REVIEW COMMISSION

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On January 28, 2000, Governor Bill Owens created by executive order a Columbine Review Commission to inquire into the Columbine High School tragedy on April 20, 1999, and to submit recommendations on several matters: (1) law enforcement handling of the crisis; (2) the sufficiency of safety protocols as used at Columbine High School; (3) an evaluation of emergency medical response and evacuation techniques employed at Columbine; (4) the appropriateness of victim assistance efforts at the scene; (5) identification of key factors that might have contributed to the tragedy and of methods that might prevent similar future occurrences; and (6) an examination of other relevant issues relating to the tragedy.<sup>i</sup>

The Columbine High School tragedy was the work of two disgruntled seniors at the school, Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris, who determined to kill as many teachers and fellow students as possible, first, by planting and detonating two 20-pound propane bombs in the school cafeteria and then by shooting survivors fleeing the

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<sup>i</sup>The Governor announced the creation of the Commission on September 28, 1999 and appointed its members and staff at that time. With the benefit of their recommendations, the Commission's structure and scope were formalized in the Governor's order of January 28, 2000.

inferno they hoped to create.<sup>ii</sup> When their explosive devices failed to ignite, the two approached the school and killed one student and seriously wounded a second as they ate their lunches on the grass. They then entered the school building and began firing at students leaving the school cafeteria, wounding five students and deliberately executing one of them.

Klebold entered the school cafeteria briefly but did not fire his weapon inside; he returned outside the building and fired at students near the school parking lot, wounding one of them seriously. Meanwhile, a number of students, two school custodians, and at least one teacher fled to the cafeteria from which, in turn, many either fled from the building or climbed stairs to the second-story library; one teacher and a student were wounded when Harris fired a rifle at them through the school's double glass doors. Emergency calls were made to the 911 number, and teachers urged students in the library to take cover under the tables. Klebold and Harris reentered the building and fired at students in the main hallway and hallway outside the library, wounding one. They also detonated or left for later detonation a number of pipe bombs. Encountering a teacher, Dave Sanders, they seriously wounded him with a shotgun blast. Sanders bled to death from his wounds before medical assistance was provided more than three hours afterwards.

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<sup>ii</sup>Most components to construct pipe bombs are readily available for purchase at nearly every hardware or sporting goods store. Consequently, controls over purchases by or on behalf of minors would be very difficult to impose and implement.

About 15 minutes into their onslaught, the two entered the library where 56 students, two teachers and two library employees had sought concealment. Within seven-and-a-half minutes, Klebold and Harris killed 10 students and seriously wounded a number of other persons by rifle and shotgun fire; they detonated pipe bombs, although without inflicting severe wounds. Several students were deliberately killed execution-style.

Klebold and Harris fired at police from library windows and received return fire. They left the library and moved to the science wing, where they shot at fleeing students. After returning briefly to the cafeteria, the two perpetrators tried again to explode by gunfire the two propane bombs they had carried earlier into the cafeteria, without success, but managed to detonate smaller bombs, one of which was attached to a container of flammable liquid. The resulting firebomb activated the cafeteria sprinkler system, and soon thereafter the sprinkler and fire alarm systems were activated throughout the school building.

The final moments of the perpetrators' lives have not been clearly tracked. Apparently they moved into the office area on the second floor, and then returned to the cafeteria. A surveillance video camera captured their movements there: they seemed to survey the damage to the cafeteria and police activities in the school parking area. From there they went back to the library and exchanged gunfire from

the library windows with police who were protecting paramedics rescuing students wounded outside the school building. At about 12:08 p.m., or 47 minutes after the two had commenced their assault, the two turned their weapons on themselves and committed suicide, having left behind them a trail of 13 dead (12 students and one teacher) and many wounded persons. Because the response teams outside the school building were unaware of their deaths, it required several more hours before officers could secure the building, obtain medical attention for the wounded, and collect the dead.

Since the Columbine High School event left so many important questions to be answered, questions that would not be answered if the Columbine tragedy were simply relegated to the archives of history, Governor Owens entrusted the Commission with the responsibility to identify the lessons that Columbine taught. It could not bring back to life or physical wholeness any of the victims of Klebold's and Harris's depredations. But the Commission's efforts and the disbursement of state funds would be well expended if even one life could be saved by effective law enforcement and rescue responses to a future emergency like Columbine.

Governor Owens appointed William H. Erickson, retired Colorado Supreme Court Justice, to chair the Commission, and designated ten voting members of the Commission:

**Ruben E. Archuleta**, retired chief of police for the Pueblo Police Department.

**George Epp**, Boulder County Sheriff, and a member of Colorado's Peace Officer Standards and Training Board.

**C. Suzanne Mencer**, a retired FBI agent and the current executive director of the Colorado Department of Public Safety.

**Robert N. Miller**, head of litigation at the Denver office of LeBoeuf, Lamb, Greene, & MacRae, formerly district attorney for Weld County and United States Attorney for Colorado from 1981-1988.

**Gale A. Norton**, who served as a Commission member until she became Secretary of the United States Department of the Interior; had been Colorado Attorney General from 1991 to 1999, and was senior counsel at Brownstein, Hyatt & Farber, P.C. at the time of her appointment to the Commission.

**Dr. John B. Peper**, professor emeritus at the University of Texas at El Paso and chair of the College of Education there before his retirement; he served as superintendent of the Jefferson County School District from 1981 to 1990.

**Bill Ritter, Jr.**, District Attorney for Denver County, and a member of the Colorado Supreme Court's Judicial Advisory Council.

**Pamela Jo Suckla**, a rancher from Slickrock, Colorado, with service on the Dolores County School Board and the Colorado School Board.

**Dr. Robert F. Wintersmith**, Director of Research and Education, Colorado Division of Civil Rights; he served earlier as a Director of the Social Services Division, St. Louis, Missouri, Housing Authority.

The ex officio members of the Commission are:

**Troy Eid**, Chief Counsel to Governor Bill Owens.

**Dr. William J. Moloney**, Colorado Commissioner of Education and Secretary for the Colorado State Board of Education.

**Stanley T. Paprocki**, senior consultant for the Colorado Department of Education.

**Donald S. Quick**, Deputy Attorney General of Colorado for Criminal Justice.

**Aristedes W. Zavaras**, Manager of Safety for the City and County of Denver; former Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Public Safety.

The staff members of the Commission are:

**Keith C. Coffman**, a Denver-based writer and reporter who has covered criminal justice and legal issues for several major national and international news outlets for over 15 years.

**Professor B. James George**, professor of law emeritus, New York Law School, and minister of pastoral care, First United Methodist Church of Castle Rock, and a reporter for the Commission.

**Professor William T. Pizzi**, professor of law at the University of Colorado Law School, and reporter for the Commission.

**Raymond T. Slaughter**, Director of the Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, within the Colorado Department of Public Safety.

**Timothy M. Tymkovich**, a partner in the law firm of Hale, Hackstaff, Tymkovich & ErkenBrack; he served as Colorado Solicitor General (1991-1996).

**Stephen D. Vercelloni**, paralegal assistant, Division of Criminal Justice within the Colorado Department of Public Safety.

More complete biographical information on the above-listed persons may be found in Appendix B of the Commission Report.

The Commission conducted 15 meetings open to members of the public.<sup>iii</sup> Only one meeting, lasting not more than one-and-a-half hours, was closed to the public at the specific request of Jefferson County Sheriff John Stone, who was apprehensive of the possible adverse impact of a public meeting on an ongoing criminal investigation into the Columbine incident; Undersheriff John A. Dunaway and Division Commander John Kiekbusch of the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office presented only a brief overview of the events at Columbine. In the course of its public hearings, the Commission questioned experts from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Colorado Bureau of Investigation, the Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office, the Arvada Police Department, the Lakewood Police Department, the Littleton Fire Department as well as many criminal justice experts. However, it was denied the privilege of interviewing Sheriff Stone and his deputies, even though Sheriff Stone had agreed to appear before the Commission on three separate occasions.

Emergency medical relief personnel and staff members from the six hospitals providing treatment for victims of the Columbine assault testified before the Commission and provided it with valuable information on proper procedures for responding to critical emergencies like that at Columbine High School. Testimony was also received from Littleton Fire Department personnel who provided emergency

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<sup>iii</sup>A list of witnesses appearing before the Commission may be found as Appendix C of the Commission's Report to the Governor.

medical services at the scene. The training and crisis management engaged in by the medical technicians and hospital personnel were exemplary. Experts also testified concerning the victims assistance programs employed in the aftermath of Columbine; their performance was likewise outstanding.

The Commission's assigned duties were to review the events occurring on April 20, 1999 at Columbine High School and to submit recommendations for preventing or handling similar emergencies should they arise in the future. The Commission anticipated, and in most instances found, that subpoenas were not necessary to the completion of its assignment. With the notable exception of the conduct of Sheriff John Stone and a very few others, which foreclosed the Commission from completing its investigation in depth of the law enforcement response at Columbine High School, law enforcement and response agencies were quite helpful in providing most of the information Sheriff Stone had refused to produce for the Commission.

In sum, the Commission received statements from an extensive list of state and local officials and private persons who had experience with or information concerning the Columbine High School event; its staff reviewed thousands of pages of official and nonofficial documents, reports and studies. Its findings, set out at length below, support a number of recommendations for remedial and preventive measures at all

levels of Colorado's governmental structure, and by the executive and legislative branches of state and local government:

**A. *Recommendations Relating to Crisis Response Actions.***

- Law enforcement policy and training should emphasize that the highest priority of law enforcement officers, after arriving at the scene of a crisis, is to stop any ongoing assault. All law enforcement officers who may be first responders at a crisis, and all school resource officers (SROs) should be trained in concepts and skills of rapid emergency deployment, whether or not assigned as members of standing or reserve special weapons and tactics (SWAT) teams, and should have immediately available all weapons and protective equipment that might be required in a pursuit of active armed perpetrators.
- Because the establishment of an incident command system is an essential component of successful planning for emergencies, implemented by well-conceived and frequent intra- and interagency training programs, the Commission recommends a much-increased emphasis on training in preparation for large-scale emergencies. Designated law enforcement command personnel should be trained to take command at the beginning of a crisis, to control assembled personnel, and to communicate incident objectives clearly to their subordinates.

**B. *Recommendations for Improved Communications for Critical Emergencies.***

- Law enforcement agencies should plan their communications systems to facilitate crisis communication with other agencies with whom they might reasonably be expected to interface in emergencies. Because effective radio communications are indispensable to rapid deployment to meet critical incidents, school districts where local police and rescue agencies utilize digital bandwidths for communications should consider the installation of transmission repeaters in larger school buildings to facilitate communications from within those buildings to outside receivers.
- To promote interoperability of communications among agencies responding to a critical emergency, the Commission recommends that Colorado continue to develop a single statewide digital trunked communications system. The Commission also recommends that agencies in parts of the state not yet within the statewide system should receive state funds for the purchase of TRP 1000 or similar systems, enabling at least one of them to be available in the event of a serious catastrophe in any part of the state.

**C. *Recommendations for Advance Planning for Critical Emergencies.***

- Appropriate officials in each Colorado County should prepare and keep current a major critical emergency response plan addressing large-scale crises, including those arising at local schools; the appropriate contents of such a plan

should include assessments of public and community response resources, the location and availability of needed resources, and the operational requirements to cope with such emergencies (for example, designation of officers to be in charge of a command post and crime-scene processing, procedures to be followed in evacuating injured persons and in designating medical facilities to which they are to be transported, and assignment of responsibility for extinguishing fires and disposing of incendiary and explosive devices).

- Regular planning sessions should be held, participated in by representatives from federal, county and local law enforcement entities, fire and rescue agencies and local school administrators, to focus on preparations for a range of foreseeable emergencies (including worst-case scenarios), based on the county's critical emergency response plan. Participating officials and agencies should base interagency training and disaster-response rehearsals on the current plan.
- Every school in Colorado should develop an emergency crisis plan tailored to meet the particular safety concerns at that school. In drawing up such a plan, school administrators at each school should solicit advice from local law enforcement and rescue agency personnel. School safety planning likewise should take into account the needs and expected responses to emergencies not

only of students, administrators and faculty, but also of custodial staff, clerical personnel, cafeteria workers, nurses, bus drivers and other school employees.

- School district officials should consider requiring local school administrators to assemble an appropriate number of emergency kits, depending on the size of the school, to include such things as school diagrams with exit routes clearly indicated; information about procedures to shut off alarms, sprinkler systems and utilities within the building; important telephone numbers; and a current school roster. District school officials should review the safety plan for each school in the district to ensure that it is appropriate for that school.
- Because school-based training and preparedness rehearsals are critical components of an effective emergency plan, preparedness requires that key members of each emergency response team know the roles they will be required to play in the event of a crisis and that they practice or rehearse those roles. Each school should schedule crisis drills at least once a year, and preferably once each school term. It is desirable to include police and rescue agency personnel in preparing for scenarios in which those agencies would likely be involved.

***D. Recommendations Bearing on Interaction with Media Representatives.***

- Because substantial media coverage of major critical emergencies is to be expected, each major response agency should designate a public information

officer of command rank, experienced and trained for the role, who will respond promptly to notice that a major critical incident is in progress at which personnel of his or her response agency are present. The official in charge at an incident command center should designate a principal public information officer if two or more such officers arrive together at the center; otherwise, the first-arriving public information officer should serve as the official liaison with media personnel at the scene.

- Police, fire and rescue agencies, hospitals and victim support agencies, as part of their planning for serious future crises, should prepare themselves to cope with a spate of media attention that probably will become manifest well before a crisis has ended. It would be well to include media representatives in that planning process.

***E. Recommendations Concerning Tasks of School Resource Officers (SROs).***

- The primary tasks of SROs are to enforce the law and to protect the public safety. SROs and school authorities alike must understand clearly that SROs are law enforcement officers and, as such, should normally be in uniform whenever assigned to a school. SROs should be trained like other first-responders in rapid deployment tactics in case of a school emergency. If SROs are to ensure the safety of persons within a school, school administrators should provide them with all relevant information about students at the

school, unless the information is privileged by law. Police command officials should transmit to SROs all information relevant to school safety, including reported criminal conduct on the part of students at the school.

***F. Recommendations Concerning Detection by School Administrators of Potential Perpetrators of School-Based Violence and Administrative Countermeasures.***

- School officials should continue to work to change the “code of silence” dimension of the prevailing student culture, by emphasizing to students that loyalty to fellow students has its limits, one of which is that statements or conduct carrying with it a possible threat of violence, even an indirect threat, must be reported to school authorities. Students, teachers, administrators and parents also must be reminded that many perpetrators of school violence are quite young. Therefore, threats of violence must not be discounted because a student issuing a threat is young. School authorities should make it quite clear to students and their parents that all threats of violence, whether of violence to others or to the person making the threat, and whether direct or indirect, will be taken seriously and evaluated. Students and their parents should be brought to understand that threats of violence are never appropriate even as jokes, and may well have consequences for students who utter them. If a threat relates to a specific person, it should not matter that the person toward

whom the threat was directed does not wish the matter pursued; it should be evaluated like any other threat.

- Each school district should establish a mechanism like an anonymous telephone line, through which students and others may anonymously report statements or conduct that worries them. The Commission endorses the efforts of the Colorado Attorney General and others to develop a statewide hotline number that students and others can use to report threats and other forms of behavior that concern them. Whatever the mechanism for anonymous reporting eventually established in a school district, it is important that students learn of it and be advised of its importance to their safety and the security of school premises.
- All schools in the state should adopt one or more of the bullying-prevention programs that have already been tested and proven effective. Every school administration should adopt a code of behavior that sets forth clearly the rights and responsibilities of both students and adults within the school community, and should ensure that its code is enforced equably against all violators. Because it is difficult for administrators in large schools to create a supportive atmosphere for students, if fiscal and other concerns do not allow for the continuation of smaller schools, communities should explore the use of alternative approaches in larger facilities like schools-within-a-school.

- A state task force should be created to develop model threat-assessment plans, standards and training programs.
- A threat assessment team should be established at every Colorado high school and middle school, responsible for evaluating threats of violence reported by students, teachers, school staff or law enforcement personnel. All reports of verbal and written threats, “hit lists,” or other indicia of future violence should be taken seriously by a team. Each team should include a school staff member like a counselor or a vice-principal who knows the students and the student culture at the school, and who is able to gather information at the school useful in assessing each threat. It is desirable, if feasible, to appoint to each threat assessment team a trained mental health professional, for example, a school psychologist, and someone with a background in law enforcement. Members of each threat assessment team should receive training on such matters as threat assessment, suicide prevention and the law relating to student confidentiality. To ensure that a threat assessment team acquires all information needed to evaluate threats, each school should be expected to maintain accurate records about earlier threats and crime incidents there. Every school should adopt an effective violence prevention program that meet the needs of that school, including both in-school programs and community-based programs, to which students and their families can be referred.

- All agencies that possess specific information regarding threatening behavior of a juvenile, the potential for violent behavior by a juvenile or other delinquent acts of a juvenile, should share that information with other agencies dealing with that juvenile, to the extent allowed by law. Agencies that deal with juveniles, including law enforcement, courts, probation, schools, social services, and mental health agencies, should familiarize themselves with the Colorado juvenile information exchange laws in order to understand what is required under the law. Those agencies should then work to implement protocols to ensure a full and timely exchange of appropriate information regarding juveniles.
- Although security devices can effectively deter certain forms of school crimes, including theft, graffiti, and gang violence, they have not yet been proven to be cost-effective in preventing major school violence like that experienced at Columbine High School. Therefore, the Commission does not recommend the universal installation of metal detectors, video surveillance cameras and other security equipment as a means of forestalling school violence generally; for the present, such security devices can serve only to offer transient solutions to specific problems at individual schools.

***G. Recommendations Concerning Medical Treatment for Attack Victims.***

- Medical facilities in a given area should consider the advisability and feasibility of instituting an intranet system among hospital emergency and critical care units, not only to assist trauma centers in the course of major emergencies, but to promote efficiencies in the routine diversion of patients from one hospital trauma center to another.
- One technique for resolving time gaps between a SWAT team entry and the arrival of EMTs is to include one or more EMTs in SWAT teams so that emergency medical help arrives as a component of each SWAT team. An alternative solution is for one or more members of each SWAT team to be trained in emergency medical procedures and to carry emergency medical equipment with them. Therefore, SWAT teams should include one or more members with emergency medical training to reduce or minimize the time interval between a SWAT team's arrival and primary treatment of injured victims.

***H. Recommendations Concerning Reuniting Attack Victims and Their Families.***

- Command centers at the sites of large-scale emergencies with many victims should include a victim advocate at the command center so that accurate information can be provided more directly to the families and friends of

victims. Adequate provision for staff support and stress debriefing should be a part of each responding agency's planning for a major crisis.

- Families of victims of major emergencies should be assigned to victim advocates whose offices or residences are nearby where they live.

***I. Recommendations Concerning Identification of Victims' Bodies and Family Access to Bodies.***

- In acknowledgment of the human anguish created by occurrences like that at Columbine High School, the procedures for victim identification appropriate to most emergencies perhaps ought to be relaxed to accommodate the immediate emotional needs of victims and their families.

***J. Recommendations Concerning Suicide Prevention in the Aftermath of Incidents Like Columbine.***

- Because suicide constitutes a very serious public health problem in Colorado, and is an observable phenomenon in the aftermath of incidents like Columbine, programs should be developed and implemented to enable teachers and school administrators to discuss with students the subject of suicide before it occurs and not exclusively afterwards. In particular, faculty and staff at Colorado's schools need to be conversant with the common

warning signs for suicide and the appropriate responses and nonresponses to them when observed.

In conclusion, April 20, 1999 memorializes a tragic and lethal school assault that resulted in the deaths of 12 students and a teacher and the wounding of 24 other students who encountered Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris before they turned their own weapons on themselves and took their own lives. The sole purpose motivating the assailants' acts was to kill as many students and teachers as they could before ending their own lives.

The Commission hopes that the recommendations embodied in its report will provide methods of avoiding another Columbine and of more effective responses to such assaults should they occur in the future.

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# REPORT OF THE GOVERNOR'S COLUMBINE REVIEW COMMISSION

## PART I

### FORMATION OF THE COMMISSION

On January 28, 2000, Governor Bill Owens issued Executive Order B00100, which created the Columbine Review Commission. The mission and scope of the Commission's work were set forth in the Executive Order.<sup>1</sup>

The Commission was directed to:

- A. Review law enforcement's handling of the crisis, including overall command structure, procedures, and techniques used by teams at the scene, coordination among law enforcement agencies, and the integration of electronic communications to determine the best response in addressing similar incidents.
  
- B. Analyze the safety protocols used at Columbine High School and how it fared as the crisis unfolded, and possible protocols for the future.

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<sup>1</sup>The Governor announced the creation of the Commission on September 28, 1999 and appointed its members and staff at that time. With the benefit of their recommendations, the Commission's structure and scope were formalized in the Governor's order of January 28, 2000. The Governor's Executive Order is set out at length in Appendix A below.

- C. Review the emergency medical response and evacuation protocols and techniques employed at Columbine to determine what methods should be used in responding to similar incidents.
- D. Evaluate victim assistance efforts at the scene and after the tragedy to determine what procedures should be followed if similar incidents occur.
- E. Identify key factors that may have contributed to the tragedy and to provide a method for avoiding similar incidents.
- F. Examine other relevant issues relating to the tragedy.

Governor Owens issued Executive Order A22199 on September 28, 1999 appointing ten voting, four ex officio (nonvoting), and three staff members to the Commission.<sup>2</sup> All members are uncompensated and serve at the pleasure of the Governor. The Governor appointed William H. Erickson, retired Colorado Supreme Court Justice as Chair. The voting members are: C. Suzanne Mencer, Ruben E. Archuleta, George Epp, Robert N. Miller, Gale Norton, Dr. John B. Peper, Bill Ritter, Jr., Pamela Jo Suckla, and Dr. Robert F. Wintersmith. The ex officio members are:

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<sup>2</sup>See Appendix B below for biographical information on Commission members and staff.

Troy A. Eid, Dr. William J. Moloney, Stanley T. Paprocki, Donald S. Quick, and Aristedes W. Zavaras. Staff members are: Raymond T. Slaughter, Timothy M. Tymkovich, Keith C. Coffman, Professor William T. Pizzi, and Professor B. James George.<sup>3</sup>

The Commission, in making its recommendations to the Governor, is aware that many of them will require costly implementation with no guarantee of success. The National School Safety Center has recognized that Columbine has generated a national movement to make schools more repressive and prison- or reform school-oriented. The Commission does not favor repression or comprehensive regimentation in our schools, or universal use of metal detectors, video surveillance cameras and other security devices to monitor every student in every school. The security program of each school should be tailored to meet the needs of that particular school. Unfortunately, Columbine has forced school administrators generally to consider the use of costly security safeguards. Administrators recognize, though reluctantly, that no school can afford massive security equipment, but that there is no justification for doing nothing whatever to avert the possibility of another Columbine massacre.

The Commission understands that much of what it states and much of what it recommends benefits from hindsight. The members of the Commission were not required to make decisions, often split-second decisions, that teachers and school

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<sup>3</sup>Nathan Ben Coats served as the original reporter to the Commission until his appointment by Governor Owens as a Justice of the Colorado Supreme Court.

administrators, law enforcement personnel and other first responders were required to make on April 20, 1999. In that vein, the Commission's report is meant to inform, to educate, to look forward to ways we might prevent school shootings, or if they should occur, how we might best respond to them. This report is not intended as criticism of any individual or agency because of the decisions made on April 20, 1999. There is no way that the Commission members can fully comprehend the enormity of the Columbine High School tragedy or the impact it has had on those individuals who, through no fault of their own, were drawn into the events of April 20, 1999 and whose lives have been forever changed as a result.

**PART II**

**THE COMMISSION'S EVALUATION OF**

**LAW ENFORCEMENT AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

**TO THE ASSAULT AT COLUMBINE HIGH SCHOOL**

**A. INVESTIGATIVE OBSTRUCTIONS ENCOUNTERED BY THE COMMISSION**

When Governor Owens created the Commission and set out its duties and powers, he anticipated that it would receive full cooperation from all governmental agencies that responded or were involved in the events surrounding the deadly assault made at Columbine High School April 20, 1999. As a consequence, the Commission was not empowered to issue subpoenas, and was not convened as an investigative body that would determine issues of fault, such as negligence, malfeasance or nonfeasance on the part of any of the agencies or personnel that responded or participated in the law enforcement and rescue efforts at Columbine.

When the Commission commenced its work, Undersheriff John A. Dunaway and Division Commander John Kiekbusch of the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office appeared at a closed hearing based upon Sheriff John Stone's representation that his agency was engaged in an ongoing investigation. The two officers provided only a minimal description of the sheriff's response to the events at Columbine High School. Because of Sheriff Stone's request to maintain the confidential nature of the as-yet

uncompleted investigation, no record was made of that meeting, which was of short duration and lasted not more than one hour and one-half.

Thereafter, Sheriff Stone turned over videotapes and evidence obtained in the course of his office's investigation to *TIME Magazine*,<sup>4</sup> which featured the Columbine shooting and contained photographs of Sheriff Stone and his deputies posing with the weapons used by Columbine perpetrators Klebold and Harris. A later *TIME* article<sup>5</sup> addressed the existence of a conspiracy by Klebold and Harris, including a year-old plot to kill students as they fled from bombs exploding in the school cafeteria. When the bombs failed to detonate because of defective fusing, Klebold and Harris, as equal partners, determined to shoot and kill as many students as possible in the course of their suicidal mission.

The greatest death toll occurred in the library after School Resource Officer Neil Gardner exchanged gunfire with Eric Harris, forcing the murderous pair into the school and the library where ten students were shot to death during an uninterrupted 46-minute assault on defenseless students. Two students were shot and killed outside the school. Twelve others were wounded, but survived. A teacher, Dave Sanders, was

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<sup>4</sup>*TIME Magazine*, "The Columbine Tapes," December 20, 1999, an excellent summary of the Columbine tragedy, is reprinted with the permission of the publisher in Appendix E below. *TIME*'s exclusive review of the Columbine tapes was the basis for the cover page: "The killers tell why they did it. The five home videos made before their death. What the families are doing to prevent another tragedy." The news story describes the "Columbine Tapes" and states that in five secret videos made before the massacre Klebold and Harris "recorded their hatreds and lust for fame."

<sup>5</sup>*TIME Magazine*, "The Columbine Effect," March 19, 2001, reprinted with the permission of the publisher in Appendix E below.

shot and bled to death. The 46-minute rampage, which included the use of pipe bombs, other explosives, shotguns, handguns and automatic weapons, ended only when Klebold and Harris committed suicide. During that period, to the Commission's knowledge, no efforts were made to engage, contain or capture the perpetrators.<sup>6</sup>

Although data bearing on the assaults perpetrated by Klebold and Harris at Columbine High School, including the pre-massacre tapes obtained by the Sheriff's Office during its later investigations, were made available to *TIME Magazine*, local news media and other groups and individuals, Sheriff John Stone repeatedly denied the Commission access to those materials,<sup>7</sup> on the ground that civil litigation was pending against the sheriff and other Jefferson County Officials, commenced by victims and their families; it has been asserted that several of the defendants would be prejudiced in the course of that litigation were they to provide the data sought by the Commission.<sup>8</sup> Throughout the course of the Commission's work, Sheriff Stone and

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<sup>6</sup>The report of the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office indicates that Gardner and Harris (one of the two perpetrators) exchanged fire; Gardner fired his pistol at Harris from approximately 60 yards away. Deputy Sheriff Paul Smoker and two Denver officers responding to the emergency call also fired at one of the gunmen.

It is not completely clear what transpired during the next half-hour. It has been suggested that some of the officers wanted to enter the school immediately to pursue the gun-wielders, but that they were ordered to remain outside. The truth of this cannot be established, because lawsuits are pending against the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office, and the Commission was unable to obtain testimony from officers of that agency. Officers from the Denver Police Department also cancelled appearances before the Commission. As a consequence, the Commission has been unable to resolve several important factual questions bearing on the initial police response at Columbine High School.

<sup>7</sup>This was so despite Sheriff Stone's earlier pledge of cooperation and his expressed willingness to assist the Commission in the preparation of its report to the Governor. As of this writing, Sheriff Stone has limited his cooperation to the production of a CD ROM that describes, in part and with some inaccuracies and omissions, the actions of the Sheriff's Office personnel.

<sup>8</sup>The County Attorney for Jefferson County, Frantz Hutfless, in responding to the Commission's request to review the tapes and to question the sheriff, stated in a letter to the Commission on October 19, 2000:

Sheriff John Stone, who has not testified before the Commission by my advice, is an elected official and was acting as the chief law enforcement official of the county. Lawsuits were filed against him, and his legal rights and those of the county and fellow defendants should not be compromised by proceedings of the Governor's Columbine Review Commission - a commission that does not have the same powers as the court. In addition to Sheriff Stone, a number of other defendants

the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office have been singularly uncooperative in assisting the Commission in obtaining the factual information it required, and thereby forced the Commission to acquire its facts through a series of hearings and in the course of a lengthy investigation.<sup>9</sup> In short, the Commission has been unable to garner significant testimony and other relevant data from Sheriff Stone and the Sheriff's Office, the principal law enforcement agency in Jefferson County.<sup>10</sup> When the Governor assigned the Commission its duties, he did not anticipate that information would be withheld which would assist the Commission in completing an accurate and analytical review of the events at Columbine on April 20, 1999, so that the requested recommendations could be made to the Governor.<sup>11</sup>

In contrast, all other agencies contacted by the Commission, apart from the Sheriff's Office and the Denver Police Department, have cooperated by providing testimony and important reports and documents. To all the witnesses who have

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are involved in 10 separate lawsuits, and the county has legal obligation to preserve their rights.

<sup>9</sup>Sheriff Stone agreed on three occasions to testify before the Commission, but has "stonewalled" all efforts to secure information on the Columbine shooting and its background. The county attorney has foreclosed all Commission efforts to secure information from the sheriff or his deputies because of the civil damage litigation that is being prosecuted in the United States District Court for the District of Colorado against the sheriff and others (*see* note 6 above). Therefore, no such testimony has been obtained.

A list of witnesses and experts who testified at one or more of the Commission's 15 public hearings may be found as Appendix C below.

<sup>10</sup>It is now undisputed that Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris were the sole perpetrators of this massive attack on the students and faculty at Columbine High School. The Commission obtained some 11,000 pages of records of the investigation that were filed in a case in which the sheriff is a defendant in the Jefferson County District Court, and which have now been supplemented by records that the court ordered, in April 2001, the sheriff to produce. As noted above, videotapes made by Klebold and Harris reflect their use of the assault weapons they wielded at Columbine and describe the plans and actions that they intended to execute on April 20, 1999. The videos were shown by the sheriff's office to the news media and to the families of the victims and were given to *TIME Magazine*, but were not made available to the Commission.

<sup>11</sup>As indicated in note 6 above, the only information Sheriff Stone has provided the Commission is a CD ROM entitled "The Jefferson County Sheriff's Office Report" that was released to the public for sale a year after the tragedy.

appeared and assisted in obtaining the information for its report to the Governor, the Commission extends its deepest appreciation and respect.

## **B. THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF COLUMBINE HIGH SCHOOL**

Columbine High School, located in suburban Jefferson County at Pierce Street just south of Bowles Avenue, has an average enrollment of 2,000 students. The school building contains 75 classrooms spread through 250,000 square feet of space. It is one of 144 schools in the Jefferson County School District. Frank DeAngelis had been the principal for three years when the assault occurred; he had been a faculty member for 19 years before that and had served as Columbine's baseball coach. There are 120 teachers on the faculty and 20 employees on staff. The school would be classified as an upper-middle class suburban school. The scholastic standards of the school are high and a large majority of its graduates go on to college.

Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, perpetrators of the Columbine High School assault, were above average, if not gifted, students at Columbine.<sup>12</sup> They were characterized as bullies and had been bullied themselves. Columbine, like most schools, has had a significant problem with bullies preying on the weaker students.<sup>13</sup> There was testimony that athletes were granted favored status.

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<sup>12</sup>See Part III below, which describes the backgrounds of Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold.

<sup>13</sup>The problem of bullying and recommended responses to it are addressed in Part VII(F) below.

The school had no crisis plan in place before the events of April 20, 1999, and school resource officers at Columbine High School were employed and controlled by the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office. Prior to their attack on Columbine, Klebold and Harris had been placed in a district attorney's diversion program following their arrests for breaking into an electrician's van and stealing some of its contents. They completed the program without incident, but were bitter about the way they had been treated. Columbine High School administrative personnel apparently were unaware of these matters.

### **C. RESPONSES AND INVESTIGATIVE AFTERMATH OF THE COLUMBINE INCIDENT**

When information was received that Columbine High School was under armed assault, the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office requested assistance from other law enforcement agencies;<sup>14</sup> within a short time there were more than 1,000 officers and emergency medical personnel on the scene.<sup>15</sup> Dave Thomas, District Attorney for Jefferson County, arrived at Columbine High School at 11:50 A.M., not long after the first shots had been fired. He had learned that Klebold and Harris were involved and determined that they had completed a diversion program under the supervision of his

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<sup>14</sup>See County Officers: Sheriff, §§ 30-10-501 - 523 (C.R.S. 2000).

<sup>15</sup>Nearly all the law enforcement units that appeared at Columbine High School pursuant to Sheriff Stone's request for emergency assistance have cooperated with the Commission and have made suggestions relating to the procedures that should be followed in dealing with similar incidents in the future. Officers representing the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office, the Lakewood Police, the Arvada Police, and other law enforcement agencies appeared before the Commission and provided invaluable assistance in determining what had occurred at the crime scene. An overview of the facts and opinions presented to the Commission provides a foundation for the recommendations made in this report. See also Part IV below.

office. He advised Sheriff's Office personnel at the scene to obtain search warrants before searching the homes of Klebold and Harris.<sup>16</sup>

The Littleton Fire Department provided emergency medical treatment at Columbine; its personnel had been well trained for the crisis. Six hospitals located within twelve miles of Columbine High School had been alerted to clear their emergency care units and operating rooms for emergency victim treatment and surgery.<sup>17</sup> No victims died who were alive when they reached a hospital. The earlier training undergone by personnel of the Littleton emergency service agencies enabled them to respond effectively to the Columbine crisis, and to provide proper emergency medical treatment for victims suffering both severe and minor injuries.<sup>18</sup>

The Littleton Fire Department also provided the Commission with the testimony of Operations Chief Chuck Burdick and Deputy Fire Marshal Rick Young. Deputy Young

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<sup>16</sup>Bill Ritter, District Attorney for the City and County of Denver and a member of the Commission, was with District Attorney Thomas most of the day and observed the law enforcement efforts to control the situation and to station officers to control the perimeter around the school. District Attorney Thomas had broad interaction with the United States Attorney for the District of Colorado and with the Attorney General of the United States, who visited Columbine a few days after the incident.

Dave Thomas helped establish Leewood Elementary School as the site for parents to wait for their children and the place for children to find their parents. He talked to the parents at Leewood and tried to assist in identifying missing students. Because a body count was not available on April 20, 1999, he served as the buffer for the worldwide media onslaught that followed the explosive and unpredicted violence at Columbine High School. He told the Commission that communications among law enforcement agencies were difficult and that it had been unclear who was in charge at the scene. In his opinion, Klebold and Harris wanted recognition and did everything right; they were very bright. They were masters of deceit, having consistently misled their parents, diversion program officers and others. For the first few days after the shooting Thomas participated in victims assistance efforts and served as co-chair of the Healing Fund sponsored by United Way.

District Attorney Ritter has further assisted the Commission in preparing recommendations to prevent and to better respond to an incident like Columbine, and has submitted to it recommendations on violence prevention in schools, crisis management, and school safety.

<sup>17</sup>Division Chief Wayne Zygowitz described the response as "cut and run medicine within the golden hour" (time between injury and surgery).

<sup>18</sup>The recommendations of the Commission on emergency training are addressed later in this report. See Part V(D) below.

described the explosive devices assembled by Klebold and Harris and emphasized the explosive propensities of propane gas which the two perpetrators had intended to use to blow up the school library and cafeteria. He and other experts had defused the many devices that the perpetrators had placed in different parts of the building. In his opinion, had it not been for defective fusing of the explosive devices, particularly the two propane tanks, the death toll at Columbine High School would have exceeded a thousand. More than 90 bombs were recovered in the aftermath of the Columbine domestic terrorism attack. The recommendations and lessons learned from Columbine bearing on these problems are the focus of later sections of this report.<sup>19</sup>

Colorado Bureau of Investigation Deputy Director Peter Mang testified that 75 members of the CBI staff had participated in the Columbine High School crime-scene analysis, working closely with the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office. CBI issued 50 search warrants that resulted in the seizure of 19 computers and other material evidence. The CBI's greatest contribution was in providing forensic laboratory support for the investigation.<sup>20</sup> The CBI officials commended to the Commission many of the law enforcement agencies involved in the Columbine High School investigation for their coordination and cooperation in assisting in the completion of the investigation.

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<sup>19</sup>See Part VI(B) below.

<sup>20</sup>CBI agents accomplished the greater part of the crime analyses and prepared 2,700 exhibits, most of which related to firearms.

#### D. PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN MEETING THE COLUMBINE CRISIS

One of the earliest problems faced by law enforcement officers from the different responding law enforcement agencies arose from the fact that nearly all their radios operated on different bandwidths;<sup>21</sup> the resulting inability to communicate among themselves proved a major problem at Columbine. Many police and fire departments use radios that transmit signals on differing bandwidths. Originally, most agencies were equipped with VHF radios, which broadcast on the 150 mhz band, but many departments have now shifted to the 800 MHZ bandwidths.<sup>22</sup> Additional discussion of problems of interagency radio communications appears later in this report.<sup>23</sup>

The Commission reviewed the deployment of SWAT teams<sup>24</sup> in and around the high school building and the failure of school resource officers (SROs) at Columbine to arrest or restrain Klebold and Harris before they could commit their massacre of students in the school library.<sup>25</sup> Some controversy exists as to whether SROs should be

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<sup>21</sup>Gene McGaney from the National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center testified that most radio spectra are used for voice transmission, but that many agencies now devote their channels to data-only transmissions. He produced a videotape prepared by the Department of Justice addressing the problems surrounding public safety radio communications.

<sup>22</sup>Arapahoe County currently uses equipment that coordinates VHF and digital systems to facilitate communication. Boulder County has adopted a procedure based on VHF communication and distribution of handheld radios to personnel from other agencies responding to requests for assistance which eliminates the problem without great expense.

<sup>23</sup>See Part VI(E) below.

<sup>24</sup>Special Weapons and Tactics teams. See Part V(B), note 154 below.

<sup>25</sup>Neil Gardner, a Columbine SRO, and other officers exchanged gunfire with Eric Harris but made no attempt to pursue and contain the perpetrators. See Part V(B) and notes 151-152 below. To understand procedures that should be used under such crisis conditions, the Commission obtained expert opinions from Larry Glick, Executive Director of the National Tactical Officers Association (NTOA), who described appropriate responses to active shooter situations.

controlled by and under the supervision of a sheriff's office or other law enforcement agency, or be solely subject to control and supervision by school district administrators.<sup>26</sup> Recommended procedures for training, regulating and directing SROs are set out later in this report.<sup>27</sup>

Many SWAT teams now include one or more members trained to provide emergency medical treatment if injured or wounded victims are discovered in the course of SWAT operations; Columbine has generated other changes as well in SWAT team tactics.<sup>28</sup> The Commission's recommendations relating to changes relating to preventive or improved response procedures during similar future incidents are the focus of a later section of this report.<sup>29</sup>

The Jefferson County School District has cooperated with the Commission in reviewing the causes of school violence and security issues demonstrated at Columbine and other schools within the district.<sup>30</sup> The Commission also had the benefit of a

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Sergeant Al Preciado, a retired SWAT commander from the Los Angeles Police Department, advised the Commission on rapid response deployment. The currently-recommended procedure is to locate gun-wielders at the earliest possible time, and to pursue and restrain them immediately to prevent further casualties. SROs should be trained to follow rapid-response procedures against perpetrators, in order swiftly to apprehend or restrain them.

<sup>26</sup>Houston and several Florida school districts maintain special school police forces.

<sup>27</sup>See Part VI(F) below.

<sup>28</sup>In the post-Columbine world, law enforcement agencies throughout the United States are adopting new, no-nonsense SWAT team tactics. See T. Harper, "Shoot to Kill," *The Atlantic Monthly* (October 2000), at p. 28.

<sup>29</sup>See Parts V(C), VI(C) below.

<sup>30</sup>Dr. Jane Hammond, Jefferson County School District Superintendent, assisted the Commission with her analysis of the issues relating to the "Columbine Incident, the District Safety Task Force Recommendations" (August 9, 1999), and also provided the Commission with the Lockwood Greene Technologies Report on security (see Part VI(D) below), and the steps taken in the District to protect its schools from future violence.

report issued by the Attorney General of Colorado in August 2000 addressing “Colorado School Violence Prevention and Student Discipline.”<sup>31</sup> The Commission has considered all these recommendations on ways to avoid, address and prevent violence in the state’s schools and has based many of its recommendations on them.

Unfortunately, the cessation of violence does not end the emotional trauma, hardship and suffering that violence like that at Columbine High School precipitates; measures to counter the trauma inflicted in the course of such an event are indispensable. Fortunately, many remedial measures were instituted promptly after the Columbine incident ended that helped victims and their families substantially.<sup>32</sup> The Commission heard the testimony of many of the volunteers and experts who participated in the relief program that provided assistance to many of the victims of the Columbine violence, and will address their work in another section of this report.

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<sup>31</sup>The Commission reviewed, with the opinion of counsel for the district, the matter of statutory limitations on suspension and expulsion of students based on threats and violence (November 1999). It heard as well the testimony of Dr. Mary Ellen O’Toole, Supervising Special Agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation about the Bureau’s report on “The School Shooter: A Threat Assessment Perspective” that provided guidance on dealing with threats by students. To review the issue of school violence generally, and the means of avoiding or preventing violence, the Commission called on Dr. Delbert Elliott, Chairman of the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence at the University of Colorado, and was advised of programs in Europe and in several American states to identify and prevent violence. Dr. John Nicolletti, a co-author of “Violence Goes to School - Lessons Learned From Columbine,” described for the Commission his analysis of the Columbine massacre and his recommendation that schools maintain threat and violence teams to deal with student threats promptly and fairly. Both the Attorney General of Colorado and the FBI have recognized that bullying is a problem in most schools and have developed recommendations that are being considered by the Commission. See Part VII(H) below.

Janet Reno, the then-Attorney General of the United States, provided the Commission the United States Department of Justice report of April 21, 2000 on means for safeguarding our children and an implementing action guide.

<sup>32</sup>A useful resource is the report of “The Governor’s Task Force on Victims Support for the Columbine High School Tragedy” (July 2000), which describes in detail the measures taken to assist persons who had suffered injury and loss as a result of the Columbine incident. See also Part IX(D) below.

## PART III

### BACKGROUNDS OF ERIC HARRIS AND DYLAN KLEBOLD; THEIR PREPARATIONS FOR THE COLUMBINE ASSAULT

#### A. FAMILY BACKGROUNDS

Eric Harris was born in Wichita, Kansas on April 9, 1981, where his father, Wayne Harris, was stationed as a career Air Force officer. Upon his retirement from the military, the elder Harris moved his family to the Columbine area in 1993. Dylan Klebold was born in suburban Denver on September 11, 1981, and grew up in southern Jefferson County. The pair met while attending Ken Caryl Middle School, one of Columbine High School's feeder schools.<sup>33</sup>

Both sets of parents reported normal upbringings for their sons, including their participation in scouting and little league baseball and soccer leagues. As they grew older, both boys became interested in computers and worked at Columbine High School's computer lab. They also were involved in the technical end of some of the school's radio, drama and video productions. Just weeks shy of graduation, Harris spoke with United States Marine Corps recruiters about possible enlistment; Klebold

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<sup>33</sup>Detailed police interviews with Thomas and Susan Klebold are included in the reams of investigative evidence released to the public. Police reports included a synopsis of interviews conducted with Wayne and Kathy Harris in the official police report on the shootings.

and his parents had just visited the University of Arizona in Tucson, where he was admitted for the 1999-2000 school year.<sup>34</sup>

## B. SOCIAL ATTITUDES

In excerpts from a journal released by police, Klebold wrote in 1997 of his depression and social ostracism.<sup>35</sup> Police said Klebold also wrote of obtaining a gun and committing suicide and, in a November 1997 journal entry, Klebold said he wanted to go on a killing spree.<sup>36</sup> Eric Harris apparently had been placed on antidepressant medication, but the Commission was not able to obtain details.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Klebold's parents said they detected nothing unusual in their son's behavior during the four-day Arizona trip, although they reported he "seemed a little sadder" in the last month of his life.

<sup>35</sup>"I swear — like I'm an outcast, & everyone is conspiring against me . . . Fact: People are so unaware . . . well, Ignorance is bliss I guess . . . that would explain my depression."

<sup>36</sup>Harris left a more detailed written record, including a diary and vitriolic writings on his personal Internet Web page, where he wrote of homicidal and suicidal thoughts, and of his bomb making activities, and named people he would like to kill. Like Klebold, he expressed feelings of isolation: "I hate you people for leaving me out of so many fun things," Harris said of his classmates at Columbine.

<sup>37</sup>Because specific information gleaned from law enforcement interviews with Kathy and Wayne Harris is unavailable to the Commission, the Commission cannot determine what they may have told police about their son's problems. However, they evidently knew something was wrong, because he was being treated with the antidepressant drug Luvox, prescribed to treat obsessive-compulsive disorders. However, the nature and scope of Harris' psychotherapy are not publicly known, because confidentiality issues surrounding his treatment are subjects of pending civil litigation. Autopsy results revealed Harris had a therapeutic level of Luvox in his system when he committed suicide, which belied reports that he had stopped taking the medication. Klebold tested negative for all drugs at the time of his death.

Despite reports that Harris' use of Luvox disqualified him from enlistment in the Marine Corps, it was the condition the medication was used to treat that made him ineligible. There was also widespread speculation that Harris' rejection by the Marine Corps was one of the "triggers" for his deadly rampage. In fact, Harris was never notified by the Marine Corps that he was ineligible for enlistment. Marine Corps Staff Sergeant Mark Gonzales met with Harris on April 5, 1999; Harris informed the recruiter in an initial screening interview that he was not taking any drugs. During a later home visit, on April 15, Kathy Harris informed Sgt. Gonzales that her son was on Luvox. Sgt. Gonzales said he would check to see how that would affect possible enlistment, and would let Eric Harris know of his eligibility status. Sgt. Gonzales left a telephone message for Eric Harris on April 17, but the call was not returned.

Irrespective of the drug issue, Harris likely would have been medically disqualified from Marine Corps enlistment because he was afflicted with a congenital birth defect, *pectus excavatum*, a condition commonly known as "funnel breast," an abnormally sunken sternum. Medical records indicated that Harris underwent surgery in December, 1994 to correct the condition, which entailed the removal of cartilage along the sternum and the insertion of a steel strut to brace the area while the chest aligned itself in the proper position. The rod was removed in a second surgery six months later. The Marine Corps views the defect as a disqualifier for enlistment, although potential recruits can request a medical waiver if they can demonstrate the condition would not be an impediment to the physical rigors of boot camp. The fact that Harris did not report the condition, combined with the concealment of his psychological history, probably rendered him ineligible for enlistment under any circumstances.

### C. AVAILABLE DATA INDICATING DANGEROUSNESS

Although Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris outwardly appeared to be typical teenagers – both held part-time jobs and were on schedule to graduate with high school diplomas – there were indications that the pair had suicidal and violent tendencies. However, they managed successfully to mask their true intentions from their parents and school administrators and perhaps from the bulk of their fellow students,<sup>38</sup> although examined after the fact of their Columbine High School assault, there clearly had been actions and the accumulation of data and lethal instrumentalities extending over many months that indicated their dangerousness.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, as a number of their school peers were aware, the two had generated highly significant videotapes,<sup>40</sup> and one of them had written a troubling essay,<sup>41</sup> and

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<sup>38</sup>Although investigators concluded the pair had carried out their deadly attack by themselves, there is evidence that others knew of Harris and Klebold's bomb-making and gunplay. For example, Klebold and Harris enlisted a fellow employee, Philip Duran, to help them buy a semiautomatic assault pistol that was used in the rampage (see notes 58-59 below).

<sup>39</sup>Pipe bombs and bomb-making components were discovered later in both of the boys' bedrooms, and police said they found the barrel of a sawed-off shotgun in Eric Harris' room. Co-workers and the owner of the pizza parlor where the pair worked part-time knew they had ignited fireworks and detonated dry-ice bombs behind the restaurant and on the building roof, and Harris once brought a pipe bomb into the shop.

<sup>40</sup>On homemade videotapes, the killers discussed how their plot had nearly been uncovered when Harris' parents discovered a pipe bomb in a box and confiscated it, but later returned the box which contained sundry bomb-making materials. The pair joked about another close call, when a gun shop employee left a telephone message for Harris on the family's answering machine that stated his ammunition "clips are in." After acquiring firearms, the two used Columbine High School equipment to film themselves and others engaged in target practice with the weapons. Several students later told police they had seen portions of the videotaped target-shooting sessions when Harris played the tapes in the school's video studio.

<sup>41</sup>A Columbine High School teacher had been sufficiently concerned about a violent essay written by Dylan Klebold that she met with his parents and a school counselor about the "ghastly" composition.

the other had created a web page filled with threats.<sup>42</sup> The two also had downloaded information from the Internet about the construction of explosive devices.<sup>43</sup>

#### D. ENCOUNTERS WITH THE JEFFERSON COUNTY JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Both Harris and Klebold had had significant encounters with Jefferson County's juvenile justice system, in the course of which they in fact flagged their dangerous potential. The pair had been arrested for theft after breaking into an electrician's van,<sup>44</sup> and had been suspended from school for hacking into Columbine High School's computer programs. Because of their youth and lack of prior records, the two were placed in a diversion program,<sup>45</sup> which they completed successfully in the opinion of

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<sup>42</sup>On March 17, 1998, the parents of Brooks Brown, who had had an on-again, off-again friendship with Harris, reported to authorities that Harris had written on his personal Internet Web page that he would like to kill or injure people "like Brooks Brown." Brown's parents reported the threat to Jefferson County Deputy Mark Miller, who was one of the officers who had responded to the earlier van break-in incident (see text accompanying notes 44-46 below). Miller filed a "suspicious incident" report from the Browns and took copies of the threatening entries. Sheriff's office personnel later said they could not access the Web pages, and so could not trace the sender; because the Browns wished to remain anonymous, the case was left open, and an application for a search warrant was never pursued to completion. After the massacre, the threatening Web pages were reviewed by staff members of the district attorney's office, who determined that ". . . based upon the information in the report to law enforcement, there would have been insufficient basis to legally support a request to obtain search or arrest warrants." Information about the threat also was forwarded to Jefferson County Deputy Neal Gardner, Columbine High's school resource officer. Gardner noted no untoward behavior by Klebold and Harris at school, and commented that the pair had "treated him with appropriate respect." A later taped television interview with Gardner established that Gardner did not know and thus could not identify Harris.

<sup>43</sup>At various times, the pair were accompanied by friends when they assembled and tested explosives from bomb-making recipes downloaded from the Internet.

<sup>44</sup>Klebold and Harris were arrested by Jefferson County Deputy Tim Walsh on January 30, 1998 after breaking into an electrician's van and stealing about \$250 worth of items. Walsh came upon the pair in Harris' car going through the stolen articles. They were cited for criminal trespass, theft and criminal mischief. In written statements to police, Harris blamed Klebold for suggesting they break into the van, while Klebold said the pair had mutually decided to smash the passenger side window and steal the van's contents. Columbine has resulted in legislation in Alabama, California, Texas and Virginia that requires police to notify school authorities within 24 hours of the arrest of a student.

<sup>45</sup>They were assigned to the juvenile diversion program offered through the Jefferson County District Attorney's Office, which allows nonviolent, first-time offenders to receive deferred judgements and sentences if they make complete restitution to victims, undergo counseling and perform community service.

the officials administering it.<sup>46</sup> They also were accused of making dangerous threats against a fellow student.<sup>47</sup>

On several occasions while they were being dealt with by Jefferson County authorities, the two gave overt indications that they were dangerous; regrettably, a failure among authorities to share the information they had about the two allowed the pair to cloak their deadly intentions from law enforcement officials, prosecutors, and school teachers and officials. As an example of the data available to authorities, while Klebold and Harris were participating in the probationary diversion program for juvenile offenders because of the vehicle break-in, authorities became aware of, but did not act on threats made by Eric Harris against another Columbine student.<sup>48</sup>

Despite the fact that the two had successfully completed the terms of their sentences, they were manifestly embittered by their arrest.<sup>49</sup> This they made clear, for example, on their videotapes made shortly before their assault on Columbine High

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<sup>46</sup>Klebold and Harris both completed the terms of their sentence, and were given early release by their diversion officer, who gave positive reports on the pair: "Dylan is a bright young man who has a great deal of potential. If he is able to tap his potential and become self motivated he should do well in life," the officer wrote of Klebold. The same officer viewed Harris as ". . . likely to succeed in life . . . and should seek out more education at higher levels. He impressed me as being very articulate and intelligent."

<sup>47</sup>The parents of Brooks Brown had reported to authorities threats against their son on Klebold's Web site (see note 42 above). Days after the Browns filed their report, Klebold and Harris appeared before Jefferson County Magistrate John DeVita on the theft charges. Wayne Harris and Tom Klebold attended the hearing with their sons. DeVita lectured the teens and placed them in the diversion program, but was not informed of Harris' recent Web page threats toward Brown. On April 11, 1998, the Browns reported more online threats and spoke with Jefferson County Investigator John Hicks, who ". . . saw no computer crime violation and referred them to the District Attorney's Office for clarification," according to the sheriff's office.

<sup>48</sup>Renewed television coverage in April 2001 indicated awareness on the part of other students that the two perpetrators had constructed and detonated pipe bombs in open areas.

<sup>49</sup>Klebold wrote in Harris' 1998 yearbook that, "My wrath for the January incident will be godlike." On the homemade videotapes, Klebold hurled invectives at Deputy Walsh and said the pair had been arrested because "we didn't fucking plan it." He also chided police for arresting the pair when "they could've been busting niggers."

School.<sup>50</sup> They expressed clear hatred for society in general and, beyond that, for all humankind.<sup>51</sup> That hatred translated into contempt for both individuals and groups.<sup>52</sup> Although both youths thought well of their parents<sup>53</sup> and, in general, their siblings,<sup>54</sup> Harris in particular was not happy about the moves his family had made and their impact on him.<sup>55</sup>

#### **E. HARRIS'S AND KLEBOLD'S PREPARATIONS OF AN ARSENAL**

For some time before their April 20, 1999 assault, the two perpetrators had spent much time and energy preparing explosive devices and gathering firearms for their

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<sup>50</sup>In addition to their writings, Klebold and Harris left behind a series of homemade videotapes made in the weeks leading up to the massacre. The videotapes and the complete writings of the pair are under court seal while issues of ownership of the material are resolved; although the tapes have been viewed by the victims' families, certain news media and others, as of this writing they have not been made available to the Commission.

On the videotapes, the pair detailed how and why they would storm their school, displayed their arsenal of explosives and firearms, and acted out a dress rehearsal of an assault on Columbine High School. In hours of rambling discourse, they talked of their hatred for classmates who had offended them, and absolved their friends and families of any knowledge or involvement in the massacre.

<sup>51</sup>They noted that they had evolved above "you humans." The two seemed fascinated with the notion of natural selection: "Whatever happened to natural selection?" Klebold said on the tapes as he spoke of his hatred for the human race. On his Web page, Harris called natural selection ". . . the best thing that ever happened to the Earth. Getting rid of all the stupid and weak organisms . . ." Harris also inscribed in a female friend's 1998 yearbook that "natural selection needs a boost, like me with a shotgun." At the time of his death, Harris was wearing a T-shirt with the words "Natural Selection" printed across the front.

<sup>52</sup>They used profane and vulgar terms to describe those for whom they had contempt, which included working women, homosexuals, racial minorities, Christians and athletes.

<sup>53</sup>On the videotapes, Klebold said that his parents ". . . always taught me self-awareness and self-reliance. I always loved you guys for that, . . . I'm sorry I have so much rage . . . you can't understand what we feel, no matter how much you think you can." Harris apologized repeatedly to his parents for the upcoming massacre: "My dad's great and my mom's so thoughtful . . . it sucks that I'm doing this to them."

<sup>54</sup>Both spoke of their older brothers, but viewed them differently. Harris praised his brother for being "motivated," but Klebold blamed his for having "ripped" on him, which he said "added to the rage." Klebold's brother described his younger sibling to police as a "pissed off teenager."

<sup>55</sup>Because the Air Force had transferred his father frequently, Harris complained about having to move and start all over making new friends as "the scrawny white kid." On one of two videotapes in which he filmed himself alone, Harris talked about his friends in Oscoda, Michigan where the family had lived between 1989 and 1992. He began to cry, and then quickly shut off the camera. In another of his monologues, Harris named several girls whom he said "never called me back. You know who you are. Thanks, you made me feel good."

attack at Columbine High School. When they stormed the school, Klebold and Harris were armed with dozens of explosive devices of varying potency,<sup>56</sup> seven knives,<sup>57</sup> two illegal sawed-off shotguns,<sup>58</sup> a 9 mm semiautomatic assault pistol<sup>59</sup> and a 9 mm

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<sup>56</sup>Bomb investigators testified before the Commission that Klebold and Harris had assembled 99 explosive devices of various sizes and magnitudes in preparation for their attack. Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms agents found receipts for some of the bomb components among the killers' effects, and retrieved other items used in the making of the explosives, readily available at local hardware stores. Seventy-six of the devices were located in and around the school, thirteen were discovered in the killers' cars in the parking lot and eight more unexploded bombs were found in their homes. Two diversionary bombs (backpacks loaded with pipe bombs, aerosol canisters and propane tanks) had been partially detonated in a field about three miles southwest of the high school. The killers planted two twenty-pound propane tank bombs in the cafeteria and armed them with timers, but because of faulty wiring and fusing the devices failed to explode inside the crowded cafeteria. Harris and Klebold also booby-trapped their cars with timed explosives, and set them to go off sometime after the planned cafeteria explosions, but they likewise failed to detonate properly. In writings seized by police, Harris implied that he didn't have enough time to test all of the explosive devices before the attack.

Within the arsenal the two brought to the school were dozens of hand-held bombs, including twenty-seven pipe bombs and forty-eight carbon dioxide bombs. The pipe bombs were comprised of six-inch segments of galvanized steel packed with gunpowder and laced with nails and BB pellets. Investigators also found on the bodies of the killers or in their cars seven other containers with forty gallons of jellied gasoline, a crude form of napalm used as fuel for fire bombs and as detonators for the failed propane-tank bombs. The killers affixed match striking patches to their forearms to ignite the hand-held bombs, which were fashioned with three strike-anywhere matches protruding from the top of each device. One pipe bomb detonated when a match ignited while bomb technicians were placing the devices into a bomb removal vehicle on the evening of the attack. Two officers nearest the explosion managed to avoid the effects of the blast and were not seriously injured.

<sup>57</sup>Witnesses in the library where ten students died reported hearing the killers mention stabbing people during their murderous spree, but there was no evidence they had used their knives on any of the victims.

<sup>58</sup>Robyn Anderson, who attended the school prom with Klebold days before the massacre, bought two shotguns and the carbine at a Denver gun show in November 1998, using funds supplied by the two. Colorado law allows adults to transfer long guns to juveniles. Investigators concluded there was no evidence that Anderson knew of the killers' plans for using the weapons, so that she was not charged with any crimes related to the gun purchases. Anderson told investigators that she went with Klebold and Harris to the gun show and bought the firearms from three private sellers who were not licensed federal firearms dealers. Federal law prohibits a person from buying firearms for someone who is otherwise ineligible, but applies only to licensed gun dealers. Anderson said one of the sellers asked Klebold and Harris "if they brought someone 18 years old this time" when they approached his table.

The shotguns bought by Anderson and used by Klebold and Harris were two Savage-Stevens 12-gauge pump-action models, and a double-barrel, breech-break model. The two illegally sawed off the barrels and stocks of the shotguns down to six inches in length to increase the spray of buckshot. The carbine was a 9 mm semiautomatic rifle manufactured by Hi-Point Firearms of Mansfield, Ohio.

<sup>59</sup>Klebold and Harris enlisted a co-worker, Philip Duran, to acquire the 9 mm handgun for them. Duran introduced them to a friend of his, Mark Manes, who sold the pair a TEC DC-9 assault pistol for \$500. The TEC-9, manufactured by Intratec Firearms of Miami, was made illegal by the Brady Act, a 1994 federal gun control law. Investigators seized videotapes showing Klebold and Harris along with Manes and Duran, among others, firing the illegally sawed-off shotguns and the TEC-9 in the Rampart Range foothills southwest of Denver. Duran later forwarded a partial payment from Klebold to Manes for the TEC-9, and the night before the massacre Manes bought 100 rounds of 9 mm ammunition for Harris. On other videotapes seized by investigators, Klebold and Harris thanked Manes, Duran and Anderson for helping them obtain the firearms, but absolved them of any knowledge of their plot to attack Columbine High School.

Although Manes and Duran cooperated with authorities, both were charged with illegally providing a handgun to a minor and possessing an illegal or dangerous weapon, related to the firing of the illegal weapons. Both pleaded guilty to the charges; Manes was sentenced to six years in prison, and Duran received a four-and-a-half year term. They are the only two people charged with any crimes directly related to the Columbine High School massacre.

semiautomatic carbine rifle,<sup>60</sup> as well as a substantial supply of ammunition for them.<sup>61</sup> The specific uses made of this arsenal are described in Part IV below.

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<sup>60</sup>Because Klebold and Harris were both minors when they sought firearms for their deadly plot, they turned to a friend older than 18 to purchase weapons for them (see note 58 above).

<sup>61</sup>Underneath their trenchcoats, Harris and Klebold wore utility belts with pouches to hold spare shotgun shells. Their cargo pants had large pockets that were stuffed with 9mm ammunition clips and hand-held bombs. They also carried a backpack and a duffel bag filled with more explosives.

## PART IV

### CHRONOLOGY OF THE COLUMBINE INCIDENT

#### A. THE INITIAL ACTIONS OF DYLAN KLEBOLD AND ERIC HARRIS AT COLUMBINE HIGH SCHOOL

After a year of planning, during which they assembled bombs, practiced target shooting with their firearms and fueled one another's apocalyptic vision of revenge, Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris launched their attack on Columbine High School on the morning of April 20, 1999. The first action of the two, both seniors at Columbine and scheduled to graduate in three weeks, was to plant two large duffel bags containing 20-pound propane bombs in the school cafeteria, timed to detonate at 11:17 A.M., when nearly 500 students would be packed inside the crowded room. The two killers planned to kill as many classmates as possible in the fireball they anticipated after the two devices exploded, and then to shoot survivors fleeing from the inferno with a hail of shotgun blasts and semiautomatic gunfire.

The exact time at which the two placed their propane bombs inside the cafeteria cannot be determined,<sup>62</sup> although student Aaron Wright reported seeing

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<sup>62</sup>The school's security videotape had been stopped at 11:14 A.M. while a school custodian rewound the videotape. When the tape resumed at 11:22 A.M., the duffel bag concealing one of the devices is visible, thus limiting the time to eight minutes within which the explosives were planted.

Harris carry a duffel bag along the sidewalk leading to the cafeteria about 11:15 A.M.<sup>63</sup> After positioning the duffel bags near the cafeteria exits, Klebold and Harris left the building and waited in their cars, which they had parked strategically so that persons fleeing from the school building would be caught in a crossfire of bullets. Realizing after a few minutes that the large propane bombs had failed to detonate, the two teen-aged perpetrators marched on the school in search of the victims they expected to come toward them.<sup>64</sup>

Students sitting close to the cafeteria's west-side windows reported hearing loud "pops" in the parking lot, which they thought at first were fireworks set off by school pranksters. Witnesses said they saw Klebold close to the window, walking up the slope leading to the school's upper level. When the two perpetrators reached the top of the exterior steps, they each removed their firearms from under their jackets and began to fire at students at random. According to the sequence of events as police officers later reconstructed it, the first gunshot victims were Rachel Scott and Richard Castaldo, who had been eating lunch on a patch of grass near the upper west entrance to the school.<sup>65</sup> Police concluded that Harris then trained his 9 mm carbine down the incline toward students who were emerging from the cafeteria at the lower

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<sup>63</sup>The bag appeared to be heavy because Harris was carrying it with both hands, according to Wright. Cafeteria witness Sarah Slater told investigators she had observed a heavy blue duffel bag and had asked her friends sitting at the table with her if it belonged to any of them. She tried to move the bag out of the way with her foot, but it was too heavy and so she stepped over it instead of moving it.

<sup>64</sup>The two had armed themselves with 12-gauge shotguns, semiautomatic firearms and dozens of bombs.

<sup>65</sup>Castaldo survived the attack, despite having suffered several serious gunshot wounds, but Scott died from her multiple gunshot wounds. Castaldo told police he remembered hearing Scott crying after she was shot, so it is unclear whether the 17-year-old girl died immediately.

level of the school and fired, wounding students Daniel Rohrbough, Sean Graves and Lance Kirklin.<sup>66</sup>

The two gunmen then fired directly west of their position at a handful of students who had started running when they heard and saw what was happening; they wounded two students, Michael Johnson and Mark Taylor.<sup>67</sup> The Jefferson County Sheriff's report concluded that Klebold then descended the steps toward the downed victims Rohrbough, Graves and Kirklin and that Klebold "shot Rohrbough, killing him instantly."<sup>68</sup> Kirklin was shot a second time in the face at close range, and remembered feeling a jolt to his jaw after which his mouth filled with blood as he lay on the ground. Graves, struck in the back with a 9 mm bullet, pulled himself halfway inside the cafeteria door, propping it open. He told teacher Christina Redmerski, "I can't feel my legs."

Klebold stepped over Graves and entered the cafeteria, looked quickly around but did not fire his weapon. He then returned outside where he fired again, wounding Anne Marie Hochhalter, who had been sitting with friends on a curb in the parking lot.<sup>69</sup> Students in the cafeteria observed the perpetrators' actions outside the school

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<sup>66</sup>When the shots were fired, Kirklin recalled trying to catch Rohrbough, then felt himself being shot. All three boys fell to the ground.

<sup>67</sup>Taylor collapsed, unable to move, but Johnson, bleeding profusely from a leg wound and other injuries, managed to take cover behind an athletic equipment storage shed.

<sup>68</sup>The parents of Daniel Rohrbough alleged in a lawsuit filed against the Sheriff's Office that the bullet which fatally struck their son had been fired by a sheriff's deputy, and not by Klebold or Harris.

<sup>69</sup>Hochhalter said she had seen the gunmen at the top of the slope, and was running for cover when she was hit several times and fell to the ground. One of the friends with Hochhalter, Jason Autenrieth, dragged her out of the line of fire to a spot near a school wall.

building.<sup>70</sup> As the students begin to take cover under cafeteria tables, at 11:24 A.M. teacher Dave Sanders was observed running through the cafeteria, warning students of danger, and climbing the stairway to the upper level of the school. Within seconds, students, now aware of their peril, rushed to flee from the cafeteria.<sup>71</sup>

Meanwhile at about 11:25 A.M., someone had made a 911 call to local police, and a school custodian had called Jefferson County Sheriff's Deputy Neil Gardner, who was the school resource officer at the time, to alert him to the fact that there was trouble in the south lot of the school. At about the same time, teacher Patti Nielson, who heard the commotion outside, had gone to the west doors in order to look out and see what was happening. Nielson saw Harris level his rifle and fire through the double doors, wounding her and student Brian Anderson who was beside her. Both were injured from fragments and glass as bullets blasted through the doors.<sup>72</sup>

Gardner arrived at the south lot, left his patrol car and witnessed Harris firing into the west doors, most likely at Nielson and Anderson.<sup>73</sup> Harris then entered the school through the west doors. As Klebold and Harris entered the school, they commenced firing toward students in the main hallway of the building, and also shot

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<sup>70</sup>After the cafeteria security videotape had been restarted at 11:22 A.M, students can be seen looking out the west windows of the cafeteria at the commotion outside. School custodians Jay Gallantine and Jon Curtis are visible on the tape as they moved through the cafeteria warning students of the danger.

<sup>71</sup>Some of them fled to the upper level of the school and left from the east side of the school, while others sought refuge in classrooms and offices. The warnings given by Sanders, Gallantine, Curtis and others allowed students and staff members to barricade themselves inside several rooms, which no doubt saved many lives, because the two killers never entered any locked room.

<sup>72</sup>Both Nielson and Anderson retreated into the library where Nielson, bleeding from glass shards imbedded in her neck and back, placed a 911 telephone call in which she reported to police dispatchers what was occurring. She ordered the students to get on the floor under the library tables, and stayed on the line with the dispatchers as gunfire and explosions were audible in the background.

<sup>73</sup>Police reported that Harris had fired 10 rounds from his 9 mm carbine at Gardner, who returned the fire.

southward toward the hallway outside the library. They were reported to be laughing as they shot. One student, Stephanie Munson, was wounded in the leg as she fled down the hallway. During this same period of time the gunmen also set off pipe bombs: some were left to explode in hallways on the upper level and some were thrown down into the lower level where the cafeteria is located.

At about the same time, close to 11:25 A.M., teacher Dave Sanders was near the stairwell on the second level directing students to escape from the building through the east exits. Sanders came around the corner from the stairway into the library hallway just as one of the gunmen was moving south in the hallway. Sanders, hit by a shotgun blast, fell forward to the floor face-first, very seriously wounded.<sup>74</sup>

## **B. CARNAGE IN THE LIBRARY**

At approximately 11:30 a.m, Harris and Klebold entered the school library where 56 students, two teachers and two library employees had taken refuge. Most of the students had followed teacher Patti Nielson's earlier command that they get down under the library tables. Nielson, concealed under the front counter of the library as the two entered, was still on the telephone with the police dispatcher; on the tape

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<sup>74</sup>Student Ben Schumann, upon seeing Sanders on all fours and bleeding from the mouth, moved to help the stricken teacher. Sanders waved off aid and, with the help of fellow teacher Rich Long, staggered into the science wing, leaving a trail of blood in the corridor. Inside the science room two students who knew first aid, Aaron Yanacey and Kevin Starkey, began to assist Sanders in an attempt to stop his bleeding.

recording of her 911 call, gunfire and explosions can be heard coming from the hallway outside the library.<sup>75</sup>

As they burst into the library, witnesses reported hearing the two demand that everyone get up, or that “jocks” with white hats stand up. No one responded to the command, so one of the gunmen said, “Fine, I’ll start shooting.” Sophomore Evan Todd was standing near the front counter when Harris spotted him from the library entrance. Todd told investigators later that Harris “racked a round” into his pump-action shotgun and fired twice. As he dove behind the counter, Todd was wounded in the eye by wood splinters from the shattered counter and suffered buckshot wounds across his back. Klebold walked toward the library’s west windows and shot and mortally wounded Kyle Velasquez, who was seated at a computer table. The killers then set down their backpacks filled with explosives, and Klebold took off his trench coat. At that point, Patti Nielson dropped the telephone – leaving the line open – and sought refuge under a desk. Dispatchers could hear the ensuing carnage as the perpetrators in a seven-and-one-half minute killing spree taunted and executed nine more students, while sparing others.<sup>76</sup>

Harris next shot Steven Curnow and Kacey Reugsegger, who were hiding under a computer table on the south side of the library. Curnow died from a single gunshot

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<sup>75</sup>Inside the library, student Lisa Kreutz could hear one of the gunmen say to the other as they entered the library, “Are you still with me? We’re still doing this, right?”

<sup>76</sup>As he crouched under a table with fellow students Makai Hall and Daniel Steepleton, Patrick Ireland heard one of the gunmen say, “This is for all the shit you put us through.” Steepleton recalled similar statements from the killers about “the four years of bullshit you’ve put us through.” Klebold shot toward the table where the three were hiding, wounding all of them. After hearing Makai Hall moaning from his injuries and seeing blood pouring from Hall’s knee, Ireland began to crawl toward him to help when he blacked out because of a gunshot wound to his head.

wound to the neck, while Ruegsegger suffered, but survived, massive wounds to her shoulder. Harris then moved to another table, slapped it twice, said, "Peek-a-boo," and fired under the table, fatally wounding Cassie Bernall. Harris was unable to control his shotgun as he shot Bernall, so that the butt of the weapon recoiled and struck him in the face, breaking his nose.<sup>77</sup> Harris next confronted student Bree Pasquale, who was sitting on the floor in the open, and asked her if she wanted to die. Pasquale's life was perhaps saved because Klebold called Harris over to a table beneath which two students, Isaiah Shoels and Matthew Kechter, were hiding. Klebold spewed racial epithets at Shoels, who was black, as he begged for his life. Harris fired under the table, killing Shoels with a shotgun blast to the chest. Klebold also fired under the table, inflicting fatal chest wounds on Kechter.

The two perpetrators continued moving through the library, hurling pipe bombs and shooting victims.<sup>78</sup> Harris peered under a table beneath which two girls were cowering. "Pathetic!" he said, and walked on to another table, where he fired at students John Tomlin and Nicole Nowlen, wounding them both. As Tomlin crawled from under the table, Klebold shot him a second time; Tomlin died from his wounds. Harris next shot and fatally wounded Kelly Fleming, and fired a salvo under the table where Lisa Kreutz and Lauren Townsend had already been hit by gunfire. Townsend and Kreutz were struck again, and another student, Jeanna Park, was wounded.

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<sup>77</sup>Pasquale reported seeing blood pouring from Harris' nose, and thought that Harris was dazed from the blow.

<sup>78</sup>One ignited bomb landed near the wounded Makai Hall, who tossed the explosive away from himself and others to the south end of the library where it exploded out of harm's way. Firing his pistol as rapidly he could, Klebold wounded student Mark Kitgen, who is afflicted with cerebral palsy. Moments later he shot and wounded students Valeen Schnurr and Lisa Kreutz and inflicted fatal wounds on Lauren Townsend. Schnurr began to cry out, "Oh my God" after she had been shot, prompting Klebold to taunt her about her faith in God.

Detecting a student hiding underneath another table, Harris told the person to “identify yourself.” The student, John Savage, was acquainted with Klebold and asked Klebold what he was doing. “Oh, just killing people,” Klebold said. Savage asked Klebold if he was going to kill him. In comments similar to those Harris had made to Brooks Brown before the rampage started, the killers told Savage that they liked him, and ordered him to flee, which he did.

In the final moments of terror in the library, Harris and Klebold shot four more students, wounding Austin Eubanks and Jennifer Doyle, and killing Daniel Mauser and Corey DePooter, although a student reported hearing DePooter moaning for some time after being hit. Before they left the library, Klebold confronted Evan Todd, who had been wounded in the opening salvo of gunfire in the library, and taunted him for being among the Columbine athletes whom the killers detested.<sup>79</sup> The pair decided to let Todd live, said they were going back to the commons, and left the library.

Moments after police later concluded the gunmen had left the library, Jefferson County Sheriff’s Deputy Neil Gardner, who by then had been joined by Deputy Paul Smoker, saw rounds being fired from a rifle barrel protruding from the upper west doors of the school. Both officers returned fire. Three Denver SWAT officers who had

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<sup>79</sup>Todd told Klebold he never had a problem with either him or Harris, and that he did not want any trouble. Klebold replied, “You don’t know what trouble is!” Klebold told Harris he could kill Todd if he wanted. Todd thought Harris still was disoriented from his broken nose and did not seem to grasp Klebold’s comment.

just arrived on scene and were yards away from the west doors also reported seeing the rifle muzzle.<sup>80</sup>

After the killers had left the library for the science area on the upper level of the building, surviving students began to flee through an emergency exit. However, two wounded students, Lisa Kreutz and Patrick Ireland, were unable to escape from the library because of their serious injuries.<sup>81</sup> Klebold and Harris continued to wander through the school hallways, igniting more pipe bombs, some of which they threw down into the cafeteria area. Law enforcement personnel outside the building observed explosions racking the cafeteria windows.<sup>82</sup>

The two gunmen departed from the second-floor science area at 11:44 A.M. and went downstairs, where they appear once more on the cafeteria surveillance tape. Harris rested his carbine on a railing and fired at the propane tank bomb in the duffel bag in an effort to detonate it. Klebold is visible as well lobbing a pipe bomb toward the unexploded propane device. Although they were unable to detonate either of the propane bombs, they did ignite several smaller bombs, one of which was attached to a container of flammable liquid. The ensuing fireball activated the cafeteria sprinkler system, and shortly thereafter the sprinkler and fire alarm systems throughout the school also began to go off.

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<sup>80</sup>Two of the Denver officers fired at the doorway, but it is not known why the Denver officers, who were fully equipped with high-powered weaponry and body armor, took no further action.

<sup>81</sup> Seeing wounded student Mark Kintgen being jostled around in the surge to escape from the library, Evan Todd, though wounded himself, picked Kintgen up and carried him to an athletic equipment shed where Jefferson County deputies had taken cover along with fleeing students. Todd then administered first-aid to wounded student Mike Johnson, who had been wounded in the leg during the opening salvo of gunfire outside the school, until police began evacuating students some time later.

<sup>82</sup>The explosions are also visible on the cafeteria surveillance videotape.

The movements of the two perpetrators during the last minutes of their lives are somewhat unclear. They apparently left the cafeteria once again and returned to the upper level of the building, passing through the office area of the school at the southeast corner of the building. They then returned down the stairs to the cafeteria where they were again captured on the cafeteria videotape.<sup>83</sup> At approximately noon, the two left the cafeteria a final time and returned to the upstairs library; they moved to the library windows from where they exchanged gunfire with law enforcement officers from several agencies who were covering paramedics while they rescued students wounded outside the school. Investigators believe that at approximately 12:08 P.M. Harris and Klebold turned their weapons on themselves and committed suicide.

### **C. INITIAL ARRIVAL OF JEFFERSON COUNTY OFFICERS**

At 11:21 A.M., Jefferson County Deputy Paul Magor answered a dispatcher's call advising of a fire and explosion on Wadsworth Boulevard between Chatfield and Ken Caryl Avenues, and drove to that location. At the same time, Deputy Neil Gardner, who was Columbine's school resource officer, was eating lunch with Andy Marton, an unarmed school security guard, in his patrol car when a call from a school custodian on the school's two-way radios advised that Gardner was needed on the "back lot of

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<sup>83</sup>As they stood in the cafeteria, the two appeared to be surveying the damage in the cafeteria and looking at the police response activities taking place in the school parking lot.

the school.” Two minutes later, Gardner and Marton arrived at the senior parking lot, where they heard another transmission over the school radio, stating that there was “a shooter in the school.” There was so much traffic on the police radio that Gardner later said he had been unable to advise dispatchers that he was on the scene.

As he left his patrol car, Gardner saw a gunman, later identified as Eric Harris, firing a 9 mm carbine rifle into the west doors of the school.<sup>84</sup> Gardner stated afterward that Harris had turned toward him and fired about ten rounds before his weapon apparently jammed. Sensing an opening as Harris appeared to unjam the carbine with the barrel pointed down, Gardner leaned over a car and fired four rounds from his .45-caliber semiautomatic pistol at Harris, who spun to the right. The quick movement led Gardner to believe he had wounded the gunman, but seconds later Harris began firing at Gardner again and then ran into the school. Gardner radioed the dispatcher at 11:26 A.M., requesting help and advising that there had been “shots fired in the school.”<sup>85</sup>

Meanwhile, the Jefferson County dispatcher had received a 911 call from a Columbine student at 11:23 A.M., reporting “a female down in the south parking lot” of the school; “I think she’s paralyzed,” the caller said. The victim was later identified as Anne Marie Hochhalter. Magor heard the call, broke off the bomb-related call and proceeded to the east side of the school, arriving there at 11:27 A.M. Magor

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<sup>84</sup>Gardner, who was not wearing his prescription eyeglasses, estimated that Harris was about 60 yards away from his position.

<sup>85</sup>Marton’s account varies from Gardner’s version: he reported that he had heard gunshots from the library before the gunfire exchange between Gardner and the gunman.

blocked the exit from the student parking lot and remained there for the duration of the assault.

Motorcycle Deputy Paul Smoker was writing a speeding ticket on Bowles Avenue north of the school when he heard the warning about gunshots fired at Columbine High School. Cutting across Clement Park, Smoker maneuvered his motorcycle to the west side of the school where he joined Deputy Scott Taborsky, who had just arrived in his patrol car. The two officers approached the school in the patrol car.<sup>86</sup> Deputy Gardner, at a distance of 100 yards, warned the arriving officers, “There’s one of them. He’s at the door.” Smoker saw a male in a dark jacket standing behind the shattered panes of the west entrance doors, and reported seeing a rifle barrel protruding from the broken window and a “couple of rounds” of gunfire being fired from the weapon. Smoker said he returned fire with “three to five rounds” from his Glock model 17 semiautomatic pistol before the gunman disappeared into the school.<sup>87</sup> Smoker and Taborsky then moved to an athletic equipment storage shed northwest of the school doors to aid in the evacuation of wounded students and others fleeing from the school.<sup>88</sup>

At 11:29 A.M., Deputy Rick Searle arrived at the northeast parking lot where an adult woman fleeing from the school yelled at him, “The west entrance in the

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<sup>86</sup>As they neared the school doors, Smoker reported hearing “loud bangs, bombs, gunshots, bombs going off in the school . . . We were advised that there were two – at least two – suspects in the school that were shooting these kids.”

<sup>87</sup>Gardner also reported firing during this encounter, as did two Denver SWAT officers who had just arrived on scene at 11:35 A.M. Smoker reported seeing bleeding students lying near the cafeteria: “We couldn’t get [them] to us. So we felt it was safer to hold our perimeter.”

<sup>88</sup>Those massing behind the structure included student Michael Johnson, who was wounded in the opening salvo of the rampage. Although bleeding profusely from a leg wound, Johnson was conscious and informed deputies that the person who shot him was “Ned Harris.” Harris’s nickname was Reb, which may account for the confusion.

library.” As he drove through the parking lot, Searle reported hearing explosions, loud pops and glass shattering “on the west doors and windows.” He relayed the information and at 11:30 A.M., the Jefferson County dispatcher transmitted reports of “possible shots fired in the library.” Searle then moved to the equipment shed where he assisted Taborsky and Smoker in the evacuation of the wounded and other terrified students throughout the afternoon.

Deputy Kevin Walker was patrolling nearby in the area of Kipling Street and Chatfield Avenue when he heard the emergency calls; he arrived at the school at 11:30 A.M., taking a position in the southwest parking lot. Walker could see inside the school building from there, and reported by radio the movements of Harris, whom he described as “wearing a white T-shirt and some sort of vest.” Armed with a shotgun, Walker left his patrol car and saw windows from the library being shot out as the gunmen fired on police and rescue personnel in the parking lot below. At 12:05 P.M., he reported seeing a “muzzle flash” from the library windows and fired two rounds from his shotgun at the suspected shooter. He did not hit his target, he said, because he saw the gun-wielder continue to fire. Walker fired no additional rounds and held his position in the school parking lot until he went to the aid of an elderly woman encountered there, whom he transported to the command post at 4:00 P.M. Gardner and officers from other agencies also fired at the library windows after reporting gunfire erupting from there around noon.

In summary, six officers from the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office had arrived on the scene within minutes after the attack had begun. Three officers (Gardner, Smoker and Walker) observed one or the other of the perpetrators and exchanged gunfire with him. Deputies Searle, Smoker and Taborsky were at the equipment shed west of the school for the bulk of the afternoon. Taborsky evacuated wounded student Richard Castaldo in his patrol car after SWAT officers rescued him outside the upper west-side doors about 12:45 P.M. Magor remained in the student parking lot on the southeast side of the school, redirecting traffic on Pierce Street and relaying information from fleeing students and staff.<sup>89</sup> Gardner later said that while he was waiting with the injured student he saw SWAT teams arrive and "observed students fleeing from the school for approximately twenty minutes." However, the official police report quoted him as saying that after his third reported gunfire exchange with a gunman, Gardner helped evacuate 15 students.

#### **D. DENVER POLICE SWAT UNIT REPORTS EXCHANGE OF GUNFIRE**

Four Denver police officers (a Gang Unit member and three SWAT team officers) arrived at Columbine High School in the early minutes of the attack; they reported exchanging gunfire with one or both of the shooters. SWAT officers Henry Bloodworth Jr. and his partner, Tom O'Neil, had been eating lunch at a South Denver restaurant

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<sup>89</sup>Gardner's movements following his three gunfire exchanges remain unclear. In his report on the day of the incident, Gardner said that, following the gun battle, he encountered an unidentified male student who was wounded in the "upper hip area." Gardner thought the boy's injuries "did not require immediate evacuation for lifesaving measures." Yet Gardner reported he stayed with the boy in his patrol car for "approximately one hour" until SWAT teams evacuated the pair from the vehicle in the south parking lot. There is no mention of a wounded student in security guard Marton's account; Marton said he and Gardner held their position until 3:00 P.M., when they were ordered to the command post where Gardner said he "provided information to those present as it pertained to his knowledge of the incident and the layout of the school."

about 11:00 A.M. when they heard about the activity at Columbine.<sup>90</sup> Sergeant Daniel O’Shea, an off-duty SWAT supervisor, happened to be driving in the area when Denver Police division commander Gerry Whitman radioed a request for a SWAT response team at Columbine High School. As Bloodworth and O’Neil sped to the school with light bar and siren activated, O’Shea came on the radio and told them he also was responding to the call.<sup>91</sup> The three were advised by radio of shooting at the southwest side of the school near the cafeteria, and drove to the west side of the school in O’Shea’s vehicle.<sup>92</sup> They left the vehicle and approached the school building on foot. As they rounded the corner of the school near the west side doors, the officers reported seeing two victims, a male and a female, lying on the ground on a patch of grass near the door, with a bomb lying nearby.<sup>93</sup> At that point the three officers saw what appeared to be the barrel of an assault rifle protruding through the west double doors of the school. Bloodworth and O’Neil both fired at the door, although neither could see the shooter.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup>Bloodworth said the pair learned about the incident “not through proper channels, but we found out about it and then we notified our supervisor that they needed assistance, and there was shooting and bombs going off at the school.”

<sup>91</sup>The three officers met on Pierce Street at a cross-street north of the school, and began to gear up. Bloodworth said he put on his bullet-proof vest and armed himself with a .223 Steyr Aug semiautomatic rifle. O’Shea was armed with a Heckler-Koch 9 mm submachine gun, and O’Neil with a Glock model 21 .45-caliber pistol.

<sup>92</sup>The times of the Denver officers’ arrival are not listed in their reports. A timeline released by the Denver Police Department lists the SWAT officers’ deployment at the school at 12:15 P.M., or after it was later believed that Harris and Klebold had committed suicide. However, it appears the exchange of gunfire at the west doors coincided with reports by Jefferson County sheriff’s deputies Smoker and Gardner that they had fired at Harris at 11:36 A.M. Bloodworth and O’Neil stated they arrived at the school about 11:30 A.M., after they had received reports minutes earlier about shots fired at Columbine High School, while they were still some distance away in Denver.

<sup>93</sup>The two victims were Richard Castaldo and Rachel Scott. The officers said they knew at least one of the prone students was alive because they could see one of the victims feebly wave an arm.

<sup>94</sup>Bloodworth reported firing “maybe six” rounds at the doorway; O’Neil fired an unknown number of rounds toward the door before the barrel was withdrawn inside the airlock. O’Shea did not discharge his weapon during the west door engagement, but laid down covering fire as officers and paramedics began evacuating students around noon. O’Shea fired at a gunman as a multi-agency SWAT team attempted entry in the school an hour later, which is detailed in the initial SWAT entry section of this report.

Denver Gang Unit Officer Greg Romero was attempting to serve an arrest warrant at a southwest Denver location when he responded to Columbine. A former SWAT officer, Romero was armed with a Colt AR-15 rifle. He reported joining forces with "other officers" in a four-wheel drive vehicle after arriving at the school. As he left his vehicle, he observed about 25 students, some wounded, hiding in and around the school. One injured student was lying in the open and unable to move. Romero and another officer dragged him to safety behind an athletic equipment storage shed, where others also had taken cover. Romero then spotted Gardner and another Jefferson County deputy near a patrol car in the parking lot down the slope from his location. The two officers were pointing toward the building, and Romero ran to them.<sup>95</sup> After removing "five or six" students to a position of safety, Romero acted as "cover officer because of the fact that I had a long weapon instead of my sidearm up." Noticing another injured student on the ground just west of the library, Romero moved toward the boy and began moving him away from the school. As he was pulling the victim away by the arm, Romero saw some windows of the school blowing out near him and the injured student. He fired four rounds at the windows, but did not believe he had struck anyone, because he "caught a glimpse" of a figure inside the library window.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup>According to Romero, one of them "was down behind the car yelling that he needed some help up there so we drug a couple more people that were out in the open behind his car."

<sup>96</sup>The time of this engagement is unclear, but it appears to coincide with other police reports of officers returning fire after being shot at from the library windows around noon while paramedics removed other students to safety. Romero reported hearing bullets "whizzing" by him from officers firing from behind him, that is, to the west of his location.

**E. JEFFERSON COUNTY SWAT TEAM ARRIVES AND MAKES A FIRST ENTRY INTO SCHOOL'S EAST SIDE**

Jefferson County SWAT commander Lieutenant Terry Manwaring was on duty in the mountains 13 miles away from Columbine High School when a request for a SWAT team response to the school came through the dispatcher. Manwaring arrived at Pierce and Leawood Streets east of the school at 11:36 A.M. and informed the dispatcher that “the command post and SWAT staging area will be set up at that location.” Manwaring told two Jefferson County sheriff’s deputies (K-9 officer Del Kleinschmidt and SWAT officer Allen Simmons) to locate all available SWAT officers on site for an entry into the school “as quickly as possible.” While assembling at the command post, Denver SWAT officers Captain Vincent DiManna and Lieutenant Patrick Phelan arrived with four other Denver SWAT personnel to attempt the first sortie into the school. The officers decided to utilize a City of Littleton fire engine for cover as they approached the school.<sup>97</sup> The SWAT commanders decided that their first entry would be at the east side of the building.<sup>98</sup> Jefferson County sheriff’s deputy Kleinschmidt took the wheel of the pumper; as they approached the main east doors, the SWAT team observed a pair of hands press against an office window, and then disappear.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup>Ultimately, twelve SWAT officers (three Jeffco officers, two Littleton officers and seven Denver officers) were assembled for the mission.

<sup>98</sup>The official police report states that Manwaring was unaware that a recent remodeling to the school had changed its configuration. Manwaring recalled that the cafeteria was on the east side of the school, and police were working under that assumption when reports of gunfire in the cafeteria reached police. Yet school resource officer Neil Gardner was at the scene and presumably knew the school’s layout. In addition, Gardner and other Jefferson County sheriff’s deputies had reported exchanging gunfire with Harris on the west side of the school. Manwaring also reported later asking several students who had fled the school to draw a map so officers would have at least a general idea of the school’s layout. In response, the students drew maps depicting “major rooms and location of suspects and injured.”

<sup>99</sup>“The potential for a hostage situation now existed,” the sheriff’s report noted – the first erroneous assumption that police were dealing with a hostage-taking. Moments later, a male student fleeing from the school ran toward the fire truck. The boy was searched for weapons and placed on the floor of the truck’s rear cab; he told officers that “no other people were in the office area.”

At 12:06 P.M. six officers, led by Simmons, entered the school through a door just south of the main east doors. They were unable to communicate verbally because of the noise of the activated fire alarm system, and were hampered in their movements by smoke and fumes.<sup>100</sup> The six officers split up and began searching classrooms and offices along the east and south corridors. Simmons' three-officer team located two female staff members and evacuated them to the east side of the building, believing it to be the "safest evacuation route."<sup>101</sup>

**F. THE ABORTED ENTRY INTO THE WEST SIDE OF THE SCHOOL AND THE RESCUE OF RICHARD CASTALDO**

Lieutenant Manwaring reported at 12:31 P.M. that the fire pumper on which he and the other SWAT officers were riding was at the north side of the school, moving toward the west side. Three minutes later, the team arrived at the upper level of the school's west side. Officers had reported seeing a pipe bomb adjacent to downed students Castaldo and Scott, so the SWAT team's plan was to ram the west doors with the truck.<sup>102</sup> Using a ballistic shield, Denver SWAT officers DiManna and Phelan moved toward Castaldo and Scott, as Denver SWAT officers Harry Bloodworth, George Gray and Daniel O'Shea, along with Manwaring and Littleton Police SWAT officer Greg

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<sup>100</sup>"They had to operate under the premise that around every corner, and inside every classroom, there was the distinct possibility of confronting armed suspects," according to police.

<sup>101</sup>As other Denver SWAT teams arrived, Simmons waved them into the school to assist in the search, but there were no reports that the newly-arriving units located any other people during their initial search.

<sup>102</sup>The sheriff's report said officers hoped the water inside the pumper would absorb a potential bomb explosion, so that the SWAT team could make entry, even though Richard Castaldo was still alive and would have been in harm's way had a blast occurred. Television news footage, shot from a helicopter hovering above the school, captured the scene as Kleinschmidt backed the truck up toward the west doors. About 25 yards from the doors the pumper became mired in mud in a stretch of grass between two connecting sidewalks. As the entry plan went awry, the decision was made to attempt a rescue of the downed students, including another victim, Daniel Rohrbough, who was lying on a sidewalk down the incline from the west doors and library.

Bohlen, provided cover.<sup>103</sup> Meanwhile, Phelan and DiManna checked on the downed victims. Determining that Scott was dead, the officers turned toward Castaldo, who was closest to the west doors. Phelan, with DiManna holding the shield over the officers and Castaldo, began dragging the student across the grass and sidewalk when Phelan said he observed “several flashes to my right and observed Sergeant O’Shea return fire.” DiManna said he felt “a concussion/heat” on the right side of his face as the officers backed out of the corner and passed the library door.<sup>104</sup>

After retreating behind the pumper, the officers lifted Castaldo onto the bumper of the truck. Jefferson County Deputy Scott Taborsky pulled his patrol car up to the fire truck and Castaldo was placed in the back seat; Taborsky then drove away. Even though they knew Scott was dead, the SWAT officers decided to approach the west doors again to retrieve her body. Taking the same route as they had during the Castaldo rescue, the officers dragged her body behind the truck, later placing it in the open to the side of the vehicle.

Moving along the west-facing outside wall of the school building, DiManna and Phelan led two other officers down the slope toward the third downed student, Daniel

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<sup>103</sup>During the approach, Manwaring, Gray and O’Shea reported discharging their weapons. The officers involved gave varying accounts of what transpired next. Manwaring said as he approached the double doors, he thought he saw the silhouette of an “aggressor” inside the double doors, and fired two rounds from his .223-caliber Colt AR-15 rifle at the “veiled person.” Manwaring later said the figure “could have been a reflection” of the approaching officers.

O’Shea recounted that he was providing cover for the rescue at the open, north-facing library door when “one of the suspects threw an improvised explosive and Sgt. O’Shea fired his weapon,” according to an account by P.J. Doyle of the Jefferson County District Attorney’s office, who debriefed O’Shea. O’Shea also said a gunman “discharged at least 3 rounds in the direction of the SWAT officers.” O’Shea reported seeing the “muzzle flash” of a gun, but not the shooter, and fired rounds from his 9 mm submachine gun into the library door. Gray reported laying down 16 to 18 rounds of “suppression fire” into the west doors, but did not see any gunmen in the building. Officers Bloodworth and Bohlen did not fire their weapons during the rescue of Castaldo and the retrieval of Scott’s body.

<sup>104</sup>“I don’t know what it was,” DiManna said in his debriefing.

Rohrbough.<sup>105</sup> At this point, about 12:39 P.M., SWAT commanders Manwaring and DiManna called off an entry into the west side of the school.<sup>106</sup> It appeared that the two commanders, who mistakenly thought there was at least one gunman still active inside the school, decided to pull back and reassess the situation at the west side of the school.<sup>107</sup> Thus, the mistaken reports of seeing and being fired on by unknown gunmen delayed entry into the school's west side, in the upper level of which a majority of the wounded and all the dead victims were located. Jefferson County Sheriff's SWAT teams finally entered the school's west side through the ground floor at 1:09 P.M. Regrettably, wounded students remained in the library awaiting rescue during the period of time police had postponed entering the school's west side.<sup>108</sup>

#### **G. COMMAND POST ACTIONS; SWAT AND TACTICAL OPERATIONS OF OTHER POLICE AGENCIES**

As he held his position at the southeast corner of the school building, Jefferson County sheriff's deputy Paul Magor encountered students and staff members fleeing from the building; they informed him of the gunfire and explosions inside. At 11:32

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<sup>105</sup>Phelan and DiManna both thought Rohrbough was dead because he was blue in the face, and therefore decided to leave him where he lay on the sidewalk.

<sup>106</sup>Denver officer Gray recounted that after the Rohrbough incident, the SWAT officers reassembled by the fire pumper. Phelan and DiManna wanted "to slow things down a little bit," Gray said, adding that "we wanted to pull, pull back to get into a position where we could help the people inside." DiManna reported after the pull-back that he "left the scene and assisted Lt. Manwaring in the overall tactical response and search." Manwaring recalled holding his position by the west doors for what he thought was about two hours.

<sup>107</sup>The reported sighting and firing at officers by unknown suspects inside the school occurred between 12:35 and 12:39 P.M., according to the Jefferson County sheriff's timeline. By the sheriff's official account, however, Klebold and Harris had committed suicide in the library at 12:08 P.M.

<sup>108</sup>Patrick Ireland, who had been shot in the head while inside the library, was drifting in and out of consciousness; he plunged out the library window of his own accord at 2:38 P.M. Lisa Kruetz, wounded in the shoulder, wrist, ankle and hip, was unable to leave the library after Klebold and Harris had departed following their shooting spree. She was rescued about 3:30 P.M. In addition, teacher Dave Sanders was slowly bleeding to death in the science room, also located in the west wing of the Columbine building.

A.M., Magor requested that the dispatcher issue a call for “mutual aid” at Columbine High School. In response, law enforcement, fire and rescue agencies from throughout the Metropolitan Denver area began to flood the neighborhood. Moments later, Jefferson County SWAT commander Lieutenant Terry Manwaring ordered SWAT teams to the school, and paged the sheriff’s “command structure.” Manwaring, having arrived at Pierce and Leawood Streets east of the school at 11:36 A.M., directed that a command post be established at that site. Manwaring later described a “very chaotic scene,” with panicked and upset students milling around the area.

Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office Sergeant Phil Hy reached the command post three minutes later, and began “identifying and disseminating pertinent information to the initial responders.” Other Jefferson County command officers appeared there shortly afterwards.<sup>109</sup> Undersheriff John Dunaway was at the scene by 11:51 A.M. and authorized SWAT officers to make immediate entry into the school. The first SWAT team penetrated the east side of the school fifteen minutes later.<sup>110</sup>

As noted earlier, law enforcement officers from several jurisdictions had already reached the school, having heard of the shootings from various sources.<sup>111</sup> Littleton police Sergeant Doug Parker, the department’s SWAT coordinator, ordered the Littleton SWAT team paged at 11:41 A.M.; he arrived at the command post “shortly

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<sup>109</sup>Lt. Dave Walcher arrived at 11:45 A.M. and “assume[d] the role of incident commander;” Manwaring was designated as tactical commander.

<sup>110</sup>While en route to the school, Sheriff John Stone telephoned county commissioner Patricia Holloway at 11:52 A.M. to brief her on the shootings.

<sup>111</sup>Littleton police officer Mike Wood, one of the first officers on scene at 11:40 A.M., reported that “no Critical Incident Command Post had been set up;” he established a temporary post in a Littleton patrol car.

thereafter.”<sup>112</sup> As he arrived at the command post at about noon, Littleton SWAT commander Sergeant Bill Black found “an extremely chaotic situation.”<sup>113</sup> After Black finally located Walcher, the incident commander, Black informed him of his action, and Walcher requested that Black assist in the “deployment and direction of the tactical units.”<sup>114</sup>

Ranking officers from the Denver and Littleton police departments, the Arapahoe County Sheriff’s Office, the Colorado State Patrol and the Littleton Fire Department soon descended on the command post to assist Walcher, who began assigning the various agencies different tasks, such as traffic control, SWAT deployment and medical evacuations.<sup>115</sup>

#### **H. SETTING A PERIMETER; REPORTS OF A HOSTAGE-TAKING SITUATION**

One of the police commanders’ first priorities was to establish perimeters around the school, the surrounding neighborhood and adjacent Clement Park, a sprawling sports complex north of the school. The inner perimeter around the school was designed to confine the incident to the school grounds. The outer perimeter was to serve as a “buffer” for the inner perimeter and to provide security for concerned

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<sup>112</sup>Parker said Captain Bob Armstrong of the Arapahoe County Sheriff’s Office then informed him that since the Littleton SWAT team was the closest, “it’s your problem;” he offered administrative assistance as Parker established a SWAT staging area.

<sup>113</sup>Black later said he had been unable immediately to locate an incident commander, and so “began assisting in the arrival and deployment of the various SWAT units,” which by now included teams from the cities of Littleton, Denver, and Lakewood police departments, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Arapahoe and Jefferson County Sheriff’s Offices.

<sup>114</sup>Black said he ordered Parker to work on implementing Walcher’s request. He then directed Littleton officers Daphne Baca and Mike Wood to set up a tactical operations center for the “collection and dissemination of information.”

<sup>115</sup>The report stated that Walcher “would manage the incident minute to minute as it unfolded by using a structured Incident Management System.”

parents, news media representatives and others coming to the school.<sup>116</sup> Lakewood SWAT officers also encountered a confusing scene as they reported to the command post.<sup>117</sup> Hinkle and his officers joined the Denver SWAT officers; the resulting team left the command post at 1:02 P.M. “to begin rescuing wounded students.” Before taking any action, however, Hinkle was ordered to check with the command post. Hinkle’s unit was then given an assignment to search the student parking lots for the suspects’ booby-trapped cars. Lakewood SWAT officer Joe Wray was deployed to the northwest side of the school where Denver police officers had set up “a mini command post.” At 1:45 P.M., while posted near the west doors where officers had reported an earlier exchange of gunshots with the shooters, Wray, two other Lakewood officers and two Denver officers, were instructed to go to the roof of the school to “establish high ground control.” However, minutes later the officers were ordered off the roof so that SWAT teams inside the school would not “mistake our footsteps on the roof as possible suspects.”

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<sup>116</sup>Despite the attention given to establishment of the perimeters, Denver police officer Larry Whitman, assigned to contact a suspicious person at Clement Park, discovered that the “outer perimeter along the southwest portion of the school was not covered.” He and his partner, both officers with the mounted patrol unit, secured the location until 5:00 P.M.

The command post at the east side of the school was continuously bombarded with information as commanders plotted entries into the school. A 12-member SWAT team was selected to attempt the first entries, using a fire pumper as a shield. By 11:55 A.M., the command post had obtained a detailed description and identification of Eric Harris as one of the suspects, just as the multi-agency SWAT team began its approach to the east side of the school. At 12:15 P.M., Sergeant Hy at the command post reported “a possible shooter and hostages at the front door of the school,” after SWAT officers approaching the school reported seeing a pair of hands appear and disappear inside an east window. Arapahoe County Deputy Wayne Belohlavy was informed by Jefferson County officers at the command post that there were at least two shooters still firing and that there were hostages inside the school. Arapahoe County Corporal Michael Kelly was directed by Jefferson County Undersheriff John Dunaway, sometime after 12:20 P.M., to “set up for negotiations in the event of contact with the suspects.”

Lieutenant Bruce Williamson of the Arapahoe County Sheriff’s Office, who was at the scene on the day of the massacre, testified before the Commission that collecting and disseminating accurate information from all jurisdictions was a daunting task, and that a unified command system had been lacking.

<sup>117</sup>Sergeant George Hinkle said his SWAT squad arrived at 12:45 P.M. Informed by a Lakewood officer who was already on scene that the Jefferson County commanders “were not yet ready to provide a specific mission” for them, the Lakewood officers decided to move on their own. “We had received reports from other law enforcement personnel that there were many victims both inside and outside of the school who were wounded and needed to be rescued,” Hinkle wrote in his report.

At 12:41 P.M., other Jefferson County SWAT officers arrived at the command post. Led by Sergeant Barry Williams, a ten-officer squad was assembled for another foray into the west side of the school. Even among Jefferson County officers, communication proved a problem.<sup>118</sup> Shortly after he arrived at the command post at about 1:00 P.M., Lakewood police officer Burdell Burch concluded that with so many people congregating at the Leawood and Pierce command post, another command site was needed.<sup>119</sup>

At about 12:50 P.M., Williams' squad commandeered a front-end loader from a local construction company doing work in the area and moved from the command post to the west side of the school. At 1:09 P.M., Williams' team entered the school through a ground-floor window opening into the faculty lounge. From there, the officers began clearing the lower level of the school's west side, but it was not until 2:30 P.M. that they located wounded teacher Dave Sanders upstairs in the school's science wing; it required another hour before they uncovered the grisly scene within the school library.

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<sup>118</sup>Williams reported being unable immediately to contact Manwaring, who was still on the west side of the school following the aborted entry and retrieval of the body of Rachel Scott and the rescue of Richard Castaldo.

<sup>119</sup>"It was determined that a SWAT tactical command post was needed near the school and away from the confusion surrounding the incident command post," Burch wrote. "Other agencies were directed to send their tactical commanders to the forward command post in order to coordinate rescue operations at the school."

## I. SWAT TEAM ENTRY INTO THE LOWER LEVEL OF THE SCHOOL'S WEST SIDE

After Williams' team arrived at the west side of the school, they were told by Manwaring and other officers that the suspects had last been spotted in the library. Jefferson County SWAT officer A.J. Andrea reported being informed "that a door leading into the library was blocked by a bomb," so that an alternate point of entry had to be used. The bomb spotted by officers before the rescue of Richard Castaldo was still outside the west-facing double doors, and not at the emergency exit door that led directly to the library, which faces north. Manwaring and other officers had discharged their weapons through both sets of doors during the rescue operation, and at that time had observed the bomb's location.<sup>120</sup> Nevertheless, a decision was reached to eschew immediate entry through either of the upper-level doors. Denver SWAT Sergeant Daniel O'Shea, who earlier had reported exchanging gunfire with a shooter, suggested the cafeteria underneath the library as the best location for an entry. Denver and Jefferson County SWAT team officers broke through the window to the teachers' lounge next to the cafeteria and entered the empty room at 1:09 P.M.<sup>121</sup> After securing the room, the officers opened the door to the cafeteria, where they encountered rising water from the building's sprinkler system, upended chairs and

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<sup>120</sup>The sheriff's report stated that "[b]ecause a 'live' bomb blocked the outside west doors leading into the upper level hallway and entrance to the library, the closest point of entry was into the cafeteria." However, any 'live' bomb blocking an exit door was most likely a small, unlit pipe bomb, not a large, timed explosive device like the diversionary bombs in the perpetrators' cars, or the propane tank bombs planted in the cafeteria. Students fleeing from the library had moved safely through the emergency exit earlier, which the sheriff's report acknowledged when it noted that survivors fled out the library door toward Jefferson County deputies taking cover behind the sports equipment shed near the west doors.

<sup>121</sup>The official police report said the officers were "met with the deafening noise of the fire alarms and the sight of flashing strobe lights, hanging ceiling tiles and three inches of water coming in under the closed door of the cafeteria."

tables, and scattered backpacks left behind by panicked students as they fled the packed lunch room.

As officers secured the cafeteria doors, other SWAT officers moved to the kitchen and food storage areas, and breached the locked doors at 1:26 P.M.<sup>122</sup> Police reported that the 20 to 30 terrified students hiding in the storage room were slow to respond to commands from the SWAT officers, apparently because they were fearful of black-clad men wielding firearms, whose attire was similar to the descriptions of the two gunmen.<sup>123</sup> Once the students had been convinced that the SWAT teams were law enforcement officers, the students were evacuated from the school by the same route the SWAT officers had used to enter – through the faculty lounge window.<sup>124</sup>

Meanwhile, Simmons' east-entry SWAT team continued sweeping the school corridors and rooms, reporting at 1:18 P.M. the evacuation of 30 students and staff from upper-level classrooms on the south side of the building. Williams' west-side team was told at 1:32 P.M. that the suspects' last known location was downstairs by the business classrooms.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>122</sup>To their surprise, the SWAT officers began encountering groups of frightened students hiding in ankle-deep water in the kitchen storage rooms, according to the official police report. However, the son of a Denver police officer, Matthew Depew, had been on the telephone from the storage room talking with a Denver police officer, John Lietz, for approximately ninety minutes, relaying information to Jefferson County dispatchers about the trapped students' location and the killers' whereabouts.

<sup>123</sup>The officers also located janitors Jay Gallantine and Jon Curtis in the kitchen walk-in freezer, where they had sought refuge after warning students and staff to flee the school when the shooting erupted.

<sup>124</sup>The students were ordered to run up the stairs in single file, and past the upper west doors where police had earlier exchanged gunfire with Harris. The escape route also forced the traumatized students to run by the bodies of dead students Daniel Rohrbough and Rachel Scott. Rohrbough's body was lying on the sidewalk at the bottom of the steps leading up the incline and Scott's corpse was lying west of the sidewalk at the top of the hill, where officers had left it after dragging it away from the west doors where Scott had been gunned down. After watching fleeing students run by Scott's body, some even jumping over it, two police officers were seen on news footage dragging Scott's body by its arms across the sidewalk behind the fire engine barrier. There was no apparent effort to remove Rohrbough's body at that time, because officers evidently felt it was still too risky to retrieve it so close to the cafeteria windows.

<sup>125</sup>The officers are first visible on the security tape inside the lunchroom at 1:45 P.M. Williams told his officers to "take it slow" because of the potential threat from explosives in the scores of backpacks that were now floating in the rising water.

Outside the school, Jefferson County sniper Dennis Beery, stationed atop the roof of a house south of the school, reported at 1:45 P.M. seeing a woman inside the science room holding a sign, "I BLEEDING TO DEATH."<sup>126</sup> Lakewood SWAT officers deployed in the south parking lot also observed the sign in the science room window.<sup>127</sup> Inside the school building, the SWAT teams comprised of Denver and Jefferson County officers moved along the lower floor to the business offices where, they were told, the perpetrators had last been seen. A student and a counselor were found in the business area and evacuated. The teams split into separate cells, and began clearing people from other lower-level rooms, including about 120 people in the auditorium and music rooms. Because the officers had seen explosive devices on the lower hallway floor and in locked classrooms, Williams advised the teams to "keep a slow pace for safety reasons." Sometime after 1:43 P.M., Williams received information from the command post that there was a wounded person in the "main floor" science wing.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup>A second Jefferson County marksman, D. K. Hoffman, reported seeing the sign at 2:15 P.M., the official time listed by the sheriff's office for the first observation of the sign. Hoffman said he did not immediately see the sign until he had moved out of the way of a large pine tree blocking his view.

<sup>127</sup>Lakewood officer Donn Kraemer requested permission to form a rescue team, but Lakewood SWAT Sergeant George Hinkle refused; he thought the small size of the Lakewood squad, the open stairway and the unknown location of other SWAT teams all posed extreme danger should the group undertake such an operation. He did relay the information to the command post, but was told that two Denver SWAT teams were clearing the second floor.

<sup>128</sup>The command post was unable to give the SWAT team directions to the science room, Williams wrote in his report without elaboration. He reported difficulty in communicating with the outside command post, but said there had been clear contact with Simmons and his east-entry team, who informed him that Jefferson County, Denver and Littleton SWAT officers were continuing to sweep the east side of the school. At 1:57 P.M., Williams reported that his team had found six students and teachers hiding in the ceiling of the kitchen, and two minutes later asked the command post for "better directions" on how to locate the wounded teacher.

**J. SWAT TEAMS SWEEP UPPER LEVEL OF SCHOOL AND LOCATE DAVE SANDERS IN A SCIENCE ROOM**

As the SWAT teams moved slowly through the hallways searching other classrooms, inside Science Room 3 the trapped teachers and students continued to aid the mortally-wounded teacher, Dave Sanders.<sup>129</sup> Sanders was still conscious and talking, but his breathing became increasingly labored, and he seemed to realize time was running out as the afternoon wore on.<sup>130</sup> Simmons and his SWAT team had cleared the administrative offices on the east side of the school's upper level by 2:28 P.M. They evacuated two female employees from there and then moved to the art and consumer education areas. Two minutes later, Williams' team moved from the cafeteria up the stairway on the school's west side.<sup>131</sup>

The top of the stairs opened into an intersection of two hallways, one leading to the library on the west and the other to the science and foreign language areas straight ahead to the east. A pipe bomb had exploded and singed the carpet in front

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<sup>129</sup>Continuing telephone calls from teachers Alan Cram, Ken Friesen and Teresa Miller kept the command post and dispatchers apprised of Sanders' condition throughout the afternoon. Students Elizabeth Mullen and Michael Rotole told investigators that Miller, who was on the line with dispatchers for two hours, "kept telling students the SWAT team is coming in 20 minutes, but they would not come." Students Aaron Hancey and Kevin Starkey continued to apply pressure to Sanders' wounds, while others tried to keep him conscious by showing him photographs of his family and talking to him.

<sup>130</sup>"Mr. Sanders started talking about SWAT and they better get to him soon or he would have to go down to them," student Eric Parsons later told investigators.

<sup>131</sup>The sheriff's report stated that officers saw remnants of pipe bombs on the landing leading to the upper level. The stairwell wall was blackened from the detonation, and nails the killers had packed into the device were scattered around the area. The report also noted that the stairway was glass-walled, "wide open and provided no protection from any shooter." The official police report also said Williams was aware of the sign in the science room and "reasoned that the person bleeding must be somewhere on the upper level since SWAT had just finished clearing the ground floor." However, the team still did not know which room Sanders was in, but were informed that a rag or T-shirt had been tied on the door handle to mark the location.

The report indicated that the SWAT team moved cautiously because of the exploded pipe bomb and, after clearing the stairs, moved to the upper level of the school. Williams reported observing Simmons' east-entry SWAT team as it moved down the corridor from east to west. According to the sheriff's report, SWAT officers also spotted the telltale rag on the door handle near a "Science Room" sign painted on the wall, but "faced several obstacles" before they could make entry.

of them. Shattered glass lay everywhere. Blood was visible on a large area of carpet in front of them and on one of the windows, and a trail of blood led into one of the other science rooms. Live ammunition rounds and spent casings were scattered over the floor.<sup>132</sup> At 2:40 P.M., Jefferson County SWAT officers finally entered the science wing. Teacher Alan Cram characterized the SWAT officers as “very abusive;” they would not listen to him as he tried to tell them about Sanders.<sup>133</sup> Moments later, Jefferson County officers Kirk Beaulieu and Grant Whitus discovered Sanders and about 30 students inside Science Room 3.<sup>134</sup>

Outside the east side of the school, rescue personnel were becoming increasingly frustrated because of their inability to reach Sanders. Denver police detective Jim Hess said that, at 2:45 P.M., he was assigned to accompany a Littleton ambulance crew who were told to assemble by the main east doors, where SWAT officers would escort them inside the school to treat the wounded. According to Hess, SWAT officers told the paramedics many times to get ready for the victims, but they were “always stopped because of possible danger to the paramedics.” Hess noted that the building had apparently not been cleared, even though he had witnessed several

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<sup>132</sup>The sheriff’s report implied that the officers faced too many unknown hazards for them to move more quickly, but in an interview with a law enforcement trade journal, Williams later stated that the officers “went in with superior weapons. We had HK MP5’s (automatic sub-machine guns), assault rifles, gas guns, shotguns, as well as sidearms. We entered with Army helmets with Kevlar, ballistic tactical jackets with steel plates in the front and ballistic shields.” Despite such weaponry and armor, the record reflected that a burned carpet, spent and unlit ordnance, unfired bullets and broken glass had deterred officers from conducting a swifter search, not only upstairs but also in the lower hallways. As noted earlier, Williams reported telling SWAT officers repeatedly to move slowly through the school because of the pipe bombs spotted in the lower hallways.

<sup>133</sup>Cram stated that the officers pointed their weapons at him, forced him to lie face down on the floor, and put a gun to his head as they frisked him.

<sup>134</sup>Deputy Beaulieu took over applying pressure to Sanders’ wounds and radioed for medical help. The officers then placed Sanders in a chair and moved him to a back storage room where, according to Whitus, they talked to Sanders “until he could no longer talk.”

groups of students being evacuated out the door by which the ambulance was parked.<sup>135</sup>

Denver paramedic Troy Laman finally reached Sanders about 30 minutes after officers first had entered the science wing. Laman told Whitus that Sanders had no pulse, so there was nothing they could do for him. The deputies then left Sanders and Laman and moved to an adjoining classroom where they found another 50 or 60 students and two teachers hiding in a room east of Sanders' location. From there the officers moved toward the library, where they would discover the most devastating carnage wrought by the two killers.

#### **K. DISCOVERY OF WOUNDED SURVIVORS IN THE LIBRARY**

After completing their sweep of the science wing, SWAT officers moved westward down the hallway toward the library – the last room to be searched in the entire building.<sup>136</sup> Protected by a ballistic shield held by a Denver officer, Jefferson County deputies Whitus and Beaulieu were the first to enter the library at 3:22 P.M., and moments later were joined by other Jefferson County SWAT officers. The officers moved to their left and noticed at least three females lying on the floor on the east

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<sup>135</sup>One of the Littleton paramedics with Hess, Captain James Olsen, later stated that his ambulance crew had waited by the east doors for a "seriously wounded injured teacher that we were told would be out in a few minutes." Olsen estimated that his crew had waited at the door for 90 minutes. "We were prepared for any injured student and the injured teacher, which never came." At one point during their wait, Olsen said "it became apparent that the SWAT teams did not have maps of the school" that firefighters had given to a SWAT runner earlier. The sheriff's report acknowledged that the Littleton paramedics were poised with a gurney to move into the school to reach Sanders, but "the hallways and classrooms leading to the science area had not been secured;" Williams requested repeatedly that paramedics respond to the west side of the school, which had been cleared and was being protected by Denver SWAT officers.

<sup>136</sup>Again the official police account noted that officers had observed more "gunshot holes in the windows, bomb fragments and shrapnel on the floor . . . and a pipe bomb embedded in the wall just outside the library door."

side of the library.<sup>137</sup> Beaulieu radioed the dispatcher to summon paramedics to the library, and waited with Kreutz and Sergeant Barry Williams until the paramedics arrived.<sup>138</sup>

The official police report asserted that other officers then worked their way to the open library emergency exit, which leads outside to the school's upper level.<sup>139</sup> This was the same door that SWAT officers said they had avoided entering three hours earlier because a "live" bomb blocked the way. When paramedic Troy Laman reached Kreutz, he rolled the girl on her shoulder to examine her back.<sup>140</sup> She was evacuated through the emergency exit. While medical personnel tended to Kreutz, the other officers in the library discovered the 10 murdered victims, some still lying under desks and tables.<sup>141</sup> In the southwest corner of the library, officers discovered the bodies of Klebold and Harris on the floor, facing each other with their firearms nearby. Both had gunshot wounds to the head.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>137</sup>"One of the females was alive and was holding her hand up toward me," Whitus later recounted. Beaulieu spoke with her; she identified herself as Lisa Kreutz. The officer observed gunshot wounds to her forearm and shoulder, and the girl told him she also had been shot in the foot.

<sup>138</sup>Williams said Kreutz told officers several times, "Don't let me die." Kreutz recalled remaining conscious throughout her four-hour ordeal. At one point she tried to escape but became lightheaded when she stood up, and returned to her hiding place underneath a table. After hearing the 2:30 P.M. class bell ring, Kreutz tried to get up again, but began to hear police officers outside the library. When police reached her, she recalled being told by an officer that she was the only one alive in the library.

<sup>139</sup>Several bombs were lying inside the doorway, but the first priority was to get a team of paramedics into the library to attend to Lisa Kreutz," according to the report.

<sup>140</sup>Kreutz said she felt "excruciating pain," and next recalled being placed on a backboard and hearing someone say they needed "to get her out of there in a hurry."

<sup>141</sup>"All the students had what appeared to be lethal gunshot wounds to them," Jefferson County SWAT officer A.J. Andrea reported.

<sup>142</sup>Autopsy results revealed Harris died from a self-inflicted shotgun blast when he placed the barrel of the pump-action weapon in his mouth and fired. Klebold, who was left-handed, died from a self-inflicted 9 mm bullet wound to his left temple, fired from the TEC DC-9 semiautomatic pistol. Officers also observed "numerous" explosive devices around the killers' bodies and in their ammunition pouches and pant pockets. A Molotov cocktail, with jellied gasoline as its fuel, had been ignited on a table top and had started a small fire that burned itself out or was doused by sprinklers before police arrived.

From her hiding place under a checkout counter in a west room of the library, teacher Patti Nielson heard library employees Lois Keen and Carol Weld call to her about 3:30 P.M. that it was safe to come out. When Nielson emerged from the room, officers noted that she "was badly traumatized and had suffered a shoulder injury." All three women were then evacuated from the library, as was teacher Peggy Dodd, who had sought refuge in the magazine room adjoining the library.<sup>143</sup>

Outside the school, Jefferson County Sheriff John Stone erroneously told reporters at a 4:00 P.M. news briefing that there were "up to 25 dead" in and around the school. The official police report said the mistaken figure came about when the command post added the number of dead in the library to a previous fatality total. Another six victims "already had been sent to area hospitals with life-threatening wounds, some of whom were referred to as probably deceased" and were added to the tally, according to police. All the wounded victims transported to hospitals survived their injuries.<sup>144</sup>

After the Columbine High School building had been cleared of occupants, investigators and explosives technicians began the task of documenting and cataloging the nearly 100 explosive devices found on the school grounds, inside the school and on the bodies of the two killers, as well as in their cars. The first priority was to dispose

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<sup>143</sup>Jefferson County deputy Williams contacted SWAT commander Manwaring to inform him there were approximately 15 dead inside the library, including two who matched the description of the gunmen. At 3:39 P.M., he turned the crime scene over to bomb technicians who had been summoned to the library.

<sup>144</sup>The sheriff's office disseminated the incorrect fatality total 30 minutes before Dr. Christopher Colwell, the attending emergency room physician at Denver Health Medical Center, had been escorted into the library to examine the victims. At 4:45 P.M., Colwell pronounced dead the 10 victims and two perpetrators inside the library. Colwell then examined Dave Sanders in the science room and officially pronounced him dead.

of and defuse the explosives, as SWAT teams from various agencies began sweeping the school a second time, continuing their searches late into the evening.<sup>145</sup>

## L. MEDICAL AND RESCUE RESPONSE

Fire and other rescue teams from throughout the Front Range of Colorado responded to Columbine High School after a mutual aid request was transmitted by Jefferson County authorities. An initial medical triage area was established near the intersection of Caley Avenue and Yukon Street, near the school.<sup>146</sup> All victims transported to the hospitals survived their injuries, although at least one victim reported a delay in receiving medical attention.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>145</sup>At 11:30 P.M., Boulder County SWAT officers, preparing to enter the school "overheard radio traffic that four or five persons in uniform had made an unescorted entry through the east entry door." Several minutes later, the Boulder County officers observed four people with federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) jumpsuits and markings coming out the northwest side of the school. "We were asked to contact the individuals and find out what they were doing," Lt. James Smith later reported. The Boulder officers approached the four ATF agents, who said they had been requested to meet with a SWAT team to search the school for unexploded bombs. "The command post asked us to direct the individuals out of the school building and to the northeast corner," Smith noted in his report.

The Jefferson County Sheriff's report made no mention of an involvement of ATF officers in the search of the school, but only that they were involved in the bomb-making and firearm-acquisition investigations. The report does acknowledge the cooperation of SWAT teams from nearly every Metropolitan Denver police agency that responded to the Columbine High School emergency and that were assigned various tasks. The cities of Lakewood, Littleton, Englewood, Northglenn, Thornton, Denver, Boulder and Commerce City all deployed officers to the scene. In addition, SWAT officers from Arapahoe, Boulder and Adams Counties provided assistance, as did the Federal Bureau of Investigation's SWAT teams and the Colorado State Patrol's tactical unit.

<sup>146</sup>The Jefferson County Sheriff's Office report noted that 17 fire apparatus teams and 50 rescue and ambulance units treated the wounded. There were also two helicopters available to convey seriously wounded victims to area hospitals. A total of 160 victims were diagnosed at the triage locations, and 24 of the wounded were transported to six Denver area hospitals, which had been alerted and were standing ready to treat victims.

<sup>147</sup>The mother of Valeen Schnurr, who was seriously wounded in the library, testified before the Commission that several police officers ignored her daughter's injuries until they realized how grave her wounds were and obtained medical treatment for her.

## M. VICTIMS AND THEIR FAMILIES AT LEAWOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

A significant difficulty authorities faced at Columbine was reuniting students who had escaped the massacre and their parents. Authorities decided to transport students to nearby Leawood Elementary School, and informed parents through the news media to go directly to Leawood to locate their children. Eventually, students were brought into the school gymnasium to their awaiting parents. For parents who had to wait, it was a painful process, and at the end of the day there were still parents whose children had not appeared. Victim support personnel were summoned to Leawood to assist families awaiting word of their children, but no definitive identification of the victims at the school could be given to those waiting on April 20<sup>th</sup>.<sup>148</sup> It was not until late the following morning, April 21<sup>st</sup>, that the coroner was permitted to move the bodies of Rachel Scott and Daniel Rohrbough into the school from where they lay outside it. Early that afternoon, she was allowed to remove bodies from the interior of the school. All this significantly delayed official notifications to families of their children's deaths; it was not until late on April 21<sup>st</sup> that they were officially notified of the deaths of their loved ones.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>148</sup>Because the school was a crime scene and it was not clear if other perpetrators were involved, and the building still harbored a number of unexploded bombs, police did not allow Jefferson County Coroner Nancy Bodelson into the building on the day of the massacre to begin examining the victims.

<sup>149</sup>In fact, the coroner did not release her findings until Governor Owens urged her by telephone to do so.

**PART V**

**LESSONS FROM COLUMBINE:**

**THE CHANGING ROLE OF “FIRST RESPONDERS”**

**A. INTRODUCTION**

Governor Owens’ Executive Order creating the Columbine Review Commission asked that the Commission examine the handling of the Columbine crisis by law enforcement agencies. This Part focuses on the police response at Columbine and then shows the ways in which the training of “first responders” – the patrol officers first at the scene – has begun to change in light of the difficulties the police faced at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado.<sup>150</sup>

**B. POLICE RESPONSE AT COLUMBINE**

The first official inkling that something was disastrously wrong at Columbine High School came from a 911 emergency call to the Jefferson County Sheriff’s dispatch center that there might be “a female down” and “possible shots fired at Columbine High School.” Shortly thereafter, an unrelated call to a school security officer from inside the high school building,<sup>151</sup> as well as visible smoke, loud explosions and the

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<sup>150</sup>A detailed description of the Columbine High School event may be found in Part IV above.

<sup>151</sup>At approximately 11:23 A.M. on the day of the Columbine attack, a school custodian, using a portable school telephone, called Jefferson County Sheriff’s Deputy Neil Gardner to warn him of trouble in the south lot of Columbine High School and that Gardner was needed there immediately. Gardner, then in his second year as the school resource officer at Columbine, was eating lunch in his patrol car parked at the opposite side of the building. Gardner drove around the building and, as he entered the parking lot, saw smoke coming from the west end of the lot and heard several loud explosions as well as gunshots coming from inside the school. As he got out of his patrol car, he received another call on the school radio warning him, “Neil, there’s a shooter in the

sound of gunshots from within the school, gave evidence that violent acts were being committed at Columbine High. Several minutes after the initial call to Gardner, police from Jefferson County as well as from Denver began arriving on the scene. It is clear that there was an exchange of gunfire between the responding officers and the gunmen.

Some citizens appearing before the Commission strongly criticized the first responders at Columbine High School for their failure to enter the school immediately in pursuit of the gunmen.<sup>152</sup> In fairness to the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office, however, it must be noted that some witnesses before the Commission stated that, in setting up their security perimeter around the school, the police at Columbine had done exactly what they had been trained to do.<sup>153</sup>

The police responding to the emergency created their security perimeter around the school because entry into the school was to be carried out by SWAT teams.<sup>154</sup> The first entry into the school took place on the east side of the building at

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school.”

<sup>152</sup>It was reported that at least one student who had managed to escape from the school (and who had carried out a fellow student with him) told the police outside the school that there were only two gunmen and urged that the police go in after them to prevent further killing. But instead of entering the school, the police first began to set up a security perimeter around the school so that the gunmen could not escape.

<sup>153</sup>It is to be emphasized that the situation was extremely chaotic. Witness after witness told the Commission that the events at Columbine were unlike any other natural or human-generated tragedy they had ever experienced. See Subpart D below, text accompanying note 164, on the relevance of traditional police training to the Columbine circumstances.

<sup>154</sup>The acronym “SWAT” stands for “Special Weapons and Tactics.” The concept of training special teams of police officers to handle serious law enforcement crises and providing them with special weaponry for such crises began in Los Angeles in the 1960s, in preparation for the Olympic games there. Law enforcement agencies throughout the country have established them or similar forms of response teams.

SWAT teams respond to many categories of danger, for example, the taking of hostages by armed robbers confronted by police, or deranged gun-wielders barricaded in buildings who threaten to kill anyone who approaches. SWAT teams are specially trained and armed to bring such incidents to a successful conclusion with minimal injury or loss of life. Because innocent lives often are at stake in such high-risk situations, SWAT teams train for emergencies as teams. Each member of a team must know what other members will be doing so that all team members can rely on one another. Entering a building, or a room within a building where a violent perpetrator may be encountered, becomes a choreographed event in which each member of the team has a specific role.

The skills of SWAT team members erode unless they are maintained at peak. Therefore, SWAT teams must train continually to keep their skills at a high level – typically 20 hours a month. Such specialized training is very expensive, in that the 20 hours

approximately 12:06 P.M., according to the Sheriff's Office report. Because so many students, faculty and staff remained in the building – hidden behind locked doors, behind ceiling tiles, even hidden in a freezer in the cafeteria area – the SWAT teams moved slowly through the building as they tried to secure a safe escape for those they came across in the process.<sup>155</sup>

The task of the SWAT teams entering Columbine High School was greatly complicated by their almost total want of knowledge about the building's layout. Many members of the teams were from police agencies outside Littleton and Jefferson County. Hence, their knowledge about the building's interior was limited to hasty sketches drawn for them by local officers.<sup>156</sup>

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monthly devoted to specialized training for SWAT team members take them away from their normal assignments. As a consequence, police departments in small communities seldom establish their own SWAT team.

Because, in Colorado like most other states, SWAT teams are rarely needed in most communities, and because it is expensive to maintain a SWAT team as part of a police department, few communities other than Denver have a standing SWAT team available at all times. Hence, SWAT team members in other Front Range communities than Denver discharge other routine policing duties as a primary responsibility and are called to assemble as a team only in the context of an emergency.

Specially-trained SWAT teams typically are elaborately armed with specialized weaponry and equipment for use in a crisis. Special equipment usually includes long rifles with sniper scopes, smaller rifles without scopes for closer-range use, and entry weapons like submachine guns. In addition to high-caliber weapons, SWAT teams carry as part of their standard equipment diversionary low-level explosive devices called "flashbangs." Teams typically are equipped with breaching tools with which to gain entry, tear gas canisters to force perpetrators from buildings, and other needed specialized equipment like special protective headgear, full-body tactical vests capable of stopping large caliber bullets, bulletproof shields, and special radio equipment.

SWAT teams typically are assigned a large truck, van or trailer in which to transport their special equipment to a crime scene; they may also be assigned a second vehicle: a command-incident vehicle with special radio equipment and other gear, to be used as a central command post during a crisis.

<sup>155</sup>SWAT team entry was further complicated because of a strong concern that the perpetrators had planted bombs already set to explode. Officers knew that an unascertained number of bombs of several different types were in the building – about 90 of them, it was discovered later. They included two large propane bombs powerful enough to collapse part of the building's structure if properly detonated, as well as a number of pipe bombs and small homemade fragmentation bombs that the gunmen had tossed liberally around the building during the first minutes of their attack. These explosive devices and the many backpacks left scattered about by fleeing students made it difficult for the officers to identify safe routes of entry into and exit from the building.

<sup>156</sup>Even officers from Jefferson County had only incomplete and inaccurate knowledge about the interior layout of Columbine High School. There are 144 schools in Jefferson County and some seven police agencies. Consequently, many responding officers were unfamiliar with Columbine High School. Even if some of them had been in Columbine before, their knowledge about the building was inaccurate at the time they entered because Columbine, like many Colorado schools, had undergone major renovations and modifications. Central features of the school, like the library, had been relocated over the years. Indeed, many of the officers seem to have been confused about the location of major facilities within the school, for example, the library where most of the killings were committed, and of the science wing where teacher Dave Sanders bled to death.

Police entry into the building was greatly complicated by difficulty in maintaining radio and visual communications among members of the SWAT teams, and especially from the SWAT teams in the school to the command center.<sup>157</sup> Visual communications were greatly complicated because the school's fire alarm system had been triggered early in the attack by smoke from incendiary devices; indeed, the alarms were not turned off until some six hours later.<sup>158</sup> Consequently, entries into the school and the evacuation of students who had been hiding in the building took place amid smoke and ear-splitting noise and, in the cafeteria area, in ankle-deep water.

SWAT teams experienced substantial difficulty in maintaining radio and telephone communications among themselves while they were in the building and with the command center established outside the building. At times, members of individual teams lost contact with other members of their own team. SWAT teams also found it difficult to communicate with the command center from within a very large building like Columbine High School, which tends to break up digital radio signals, making communication outside the building difficult or impossible.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>157</sup>The Commission does not have the information it would like about activities at the command center at Columbine, for example, about information the center personnel had about the incident in progress and the times at which they acquired that information. Nor can it determine the times of issuance and content of command center orders during the Columbine emergency. This is a further consequence of the lawsuits pending against the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office, because of which personnel of that office declined to appear and testify before the Commission. The time-line records were destroyed by the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office, according to recent media reports about discovery in the pending civil litigation; see Part II(A) above. Ed Bradley, on the Sixty Minutes II telecast of April 17, 2001, reviewed the Columbine disaster and the unfortunate delays in law enforcement response to it.

Unresolved questions include the content of orders issued to the officers who first responded to the emergency, the reasons for a delay in ordering officers to enter the west wing of the building, and the bases for the much-delayed entry into the building by SWAT teams and emergency medical personnel to attend the critically-wounded teacher Dave Sanders, despite signs in the science-wing windows indicating that someone was bleeding to death there.

<sup>158</sup>Apparently, either nobody knew how to turn off the alarms or nobody was able to do so. Although it has been suggested that the alarms were purposely left on because of orders from the command center, that seems unlikely, because SWAT team officers in the building reportedly tried to knock speakers off the walls to stop the piercing alarm noise.

<sup>159</sup>The difficulties encountered in communicating between SWAT teams and officers outside the building are most distressingly illustrated by the case of Dave Sanders, a science teacher who had been seriously wounded by the student perpetrators. When the police finally reached Sanders in the science wing, they did not want to move him because of his critical condition, and so summoned a medical team to the science wing. Apparently, however, they could not immediately get word to an emergency

The difficult logistics of communication aside, police at Columbine High School had only very imperfect information about the actual circumstances of the event, including reports of additional perpetrators, the taking of hostages, and the flight of the perpetrators. This, too, made the tasks of entering and securing the building extremely difficult.

### C. HOW COLUMBINE “BROKE THE MOLD” FOR POLICE EMERGENCIES

Law enforcement experts repeatedly told the Commission that Columbine “had broken the mold;” police training of forty years’ duration covering law enforcement response to instances of violence, particularly by SWAT teams and other special intervention units,<sup>160</sup> was demonstrably inadequate for incidents like that at Columbine High School. Before Columbine, police response to situations involving deadly force centered almost exclusively on SWAT teams. Those teams clearly did not function expeditiously under the circumstances which existed at Columbine High School and as they were intended to do. The first problem was encountered in the relationship between first responders on the scene and the SWAT teams.

Because law enforcement agencies rely heavily on SWAT teams for the resolution of dangerous confrontations, traditional training for police officers covering crisis response emphasized that the task of first responders was to contain and control

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medical team outside the building that it was desperately needed or at least the location within the building where the team was needed. Ultimately, the SWAT teams themselves removed Sanders from the building, but he died shortly afterwards.

<sup>160</sup>See note 154 above.

events until the arrival of a SWAT team. Inevitably, the scene of a critical incident is chaotic and confused, and responding officers are under pressure to accomplish many different tasks. Their training should enable them routinely to contain a situation and keep it from escalating out of control, which involves risk to both law enforcement officers and others present like the students, teachers and staff at Columbine High School.

Regrettably, for reasons canvassed above,<sup>161</sup> the Commission has inadequate knowledge about the initial law-enforcement response to the Columbine High School crisis, for example, the content of the orders under which police officers may have been operating. Nevertheless, without passing judgment on the specific police responses at Columbine, two things must be emphasized: (1) Patrol officers and others who are likely to be the first responders at a crisis like Columbine are not trained as are SWAT teams. (2) Nor are first responders equipped as SWAT teams are. Typically, officers initially responding to crisis circumstances will lack heavy-caliber weaponry, protective gear and other equipment routinely available to SWAT teams. Handguns that are adequate to protect officers during routine street arrests or other close confrontations are not suitable when officers must fire accurately from a distance.

A second unanticipated dimension of the Columbine High School incident was the fact that active weapons users were present together with many potential victims. Experts before the Commission stressed that in most emergencies time is on the side

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<sup>161</sup>See text accompanying notes 152-153 above.

of the police. Usually, robbers who take hostages or distraught family members who threaten suicide can be calmed down and after a time persuaded to surrender without violence. Police who first encounter such situations are trained to surround the location, to call for a SWAT team, and perhaps to try to communicate with the perpetrator and to give reassurances that the police are not a personal threat.

The Columbine situation clearly shattered that part of the mold. Time is *not* on the side of police if one or more active perpetrators are in control of a large public building where there are many potential victims.<sup>162</sup> Time might be less of the essence in large cities and counties like Denver with standing SWAT teams available at all times. But in most communities, SWAT teams are comprised of officers with other regularly-assigned duties and responsibilities. Consequently, if a crisis arises requiring the mustering of a SWAT team, its members must drop whatever they are doing or, if they are off-duty, must assemble at their assigned location, and then proceed to the scene of the critical incident. Obviously, it takes significant time for team members and the vehicle carrying their equipment to arrive where they are needed. At Columbine High School, the response time was less than an hour – roughly 45 minutes

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<sup>162</sup>Although situations involving active shooters have arisen as far back in time as the Texas Tower incident in 1966 on the University of Texas campus at Austin, they have become more common of late. In addition to Columbine, there was a multiple shooting at a Jewish community center in Los Angeles, a few months after Columbine, and other school shooting incidents in Washington State and the San Diego, California area.

Statistically, situations like these are atypical, but they point up the weaknesses in traditional police reliance on SWAT teams to resolve armed confrontations. It requires time to deploy a SWAT team, and time is essential in such situations. Most experts before the Commission estimated that it normally requires at least one hour to assemble a SWAT team and transport it and its equipment to the site of a critical incident.

– but even 45 minutes is a lengthy period of time when active shooters appear to be in functional control of a crisis scene.<sup>163</sup>

#### D. THE IMPACT OF COLUMBINE ON LAW ENFORCEMENT STRATEGY AND TRAINING

The Columbine incident has greatly impacted law enforcement training. Although earlier occurrences of violence had exposed the shortcomings of heavy police reliance on SWAT teams to handle aggressive use or threat of the use of firearms, the sheer scale of the lethal violence at Columbine High School has provided the needed impetus to move law enforcement in new directions. Programs centering on immediate or rapid deployment of police response teams have emerged as critical to law enforcement training.<sup>164</sup> The Commission is clear that these programs demand

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<sup>163</sup>Equally problematic for the first responders at Columbine was their difficulty in containing the perpetrators when they were within a large building: Columbine High School is a very large structure with many hallways, classrooms, offices, and closets. Although the perpetrators could not have escaped easily through the police perimeter established around the building, they were left free to wreak havoc within the building. We know they moved freely about the building; at various times they were upstairs in the library, in the science wing toward the west side of the building, in the office area in the east portion of the school, and downstairs in the cafeteria area below the library.

<sup>164</sup>Two nationally-recognized experts described such new training programs for the benefit of the Commission. The first witness was Larry Glick, executive director of the National Tactical Officers Association (NTOA). NTOA was founded in 1983 to serve as a national clearinghouse for the sharing of tactical information among police agencies throughout the country. It also evaluates tactical operations and offers tactical training programs. Glick made available to the Commission two videotapes showing new approaches to training officers in rapid deployment methods. A striking feature of the tapes is their focus on preparing responding officers – not SWAT teams – for immediate entry into structures under circumstances similar to Columbine, i.e., active perpetrators in control of a school or other large public building where many potential victims are present. One of the tapes made in conjunction with the Tulsa Police Department in fact dramatizes a school shooting scenario in which the triggering event is panicked children running from the school. The tape shows four responding officers quickly assembling into a team for immediate entry and demonstrates how such a team should go about pursuing an armed perpetrator.

The second tape records a training session led by Lt. Randy Watt at a special training building constructed by NTOA. At the beginning of the tape, Lt. Watt explains that the ensuing training program was developed in response to school shootings like those at Columbine and Jonesboro, Arkansas, to teach officers how to deal with rapidly-developing emergencies in schools where innocent lives are at stake.

Another expert appearing before the Commission, Sgt. Al Preciado, a SWAT trainer and supervisor for the Los Angeles Police Department, testified that in the wake of Columbine, most officers in the Los Angeles Police Department have been trained in rapid deployment, but that it takes time to establish the importance of such training in a department because basically it “reverses what officers have been taught for twenty years.” Nevertheless, in his opinion, law enforcement agencies have begun to recognize the weaknesses inherent in the traditional SWAT model, in which responding officers are trained simply to contain a crisis situation while they await the arrival of a SWAT team. In Sgt. Preciado’s view, that model rarely works well when active shooters are in control of the premises, because shootings usually will have been perpetrated within the first minutes of the incident, well before a SWAT team can arrive at the scene. For that reason, first responders must be trained in rapid deployment procedures that enable them immediately to enter a building and locate perpetrators.

The training programs described for the Commission by Preciado, Glick and other experts differ in their details, of course. For example, one program posits that a team of responding officers entering a building where an active shooter is present should

much of responding officers, both physically and emotionally.<sup>165</sup> School structures today are very large.<sup>166</sup> The pursuit of active armed perpetrators<sup>167</sup> within them is not easy, and difficulties of pursuit are compounded by the fact that officers responding to an emergency must act on the basis of incomplete and perhaps inaccurate information. Clearly, rapid deployment poses risks to innocent victims<sup>168</sup> but, even so, immediate deployment by teams of responding officers to locate and subdue armed perpetrators seems the best alternative among a set of risky and imperfect options in a situation like that at Columbine High School.

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consist of four team members, while another training tape recommends a team of five members, because a group of that size is better able to provide protection for the team should it be attacked from the rear. Clearly, training in rapid deployment is still in the developmental stage, but all these programs share the same purpose: to train all officers who may first respond to a crisis situation to assemble into teams for immediate entry when, in a situation like that at Columbine, one or more active perpetrators are in control of a large building where a number of potential victims are also present.

Officers who participate in such programs are trained how best to enter and sweep through a large building in pursuit of perpetrators. For a public accustomed to viewing action films in which the "good guys" often seem able to kick in doors and enter buildings with ease in order to subdue the "bad guys," with no loss of life to innocent victims, it needs to be emphasized that such changes in police tactics are not without serious risks to responding officers as well as to individuals still in the building. In a rapid deployment situation, officers do not have time to secure all the areas through which they proceed; that leaves them vulnerable to hidden armed perpetrators, who might also harm other victims still in a building after officers have moved elsewhere. Accordingly, to help protect a team, two officers usually are designated as "contact officers" whose task is carefully to watch out for perpetrators in rooms and hallways as the team moves through them. As a means of additional protection for a team, two other officers provide rear-guard surveillance to ensure that team members are not fired upon from behind or from an area they have bypassed. Ideally, all such contact officers should be armed with shoulder-fired weapons.

Officers in rapid deployment programs are also trained to move around bombs and other devices that may pose a threat to them or other persons in the building. Traditionally, SWAT teams have called for incendiary and explosive technicians to examine suspected explosive devices to see the types of fuse used, the presence of a timing device, etc. In circumstances of a rapid deployment, however, there is no time for such expert examinations to be made. Officers are trained to step around an apparent explosive device and to radio to officers outside the building the location of the device, but to keep moving forward in their pursuit of perpetrators.

Revised training programs like these clearly place significant psychological pressures on police officers, because they demand that officers move forward toward armed perpetrators, leaving behind them innocent persons, including frightened school children, who greatly need help and reassurance. Those pressures are even greater when officers are taught to step around or over injured persons as they pursue perpetrators, which is the precise converse of the priorities stressed in traditional police training. A *TIME Magazine* article on rapid deployment described some officers as "blinking back tears" as they were forced to step over and leave behind seriously wounded victims in what was only a simulated training exercise in rapid deployment.

<sup>165</sup>The Commission is mindful of the factors that heighten the risks when police officers engage active shooters. Those risk factors inherent in rapid deployment tactics include: (1) the presence at a location of a possibly large number of innocent individuals; (2) the chaos that typically reigns throughout such an event; (3) the likely ability of perpetrators to mingle with innocent persons; (4) the layout of the building or location where criminal violence is perpetrated; (5) a lack of knowledge on the part of law enforcement personnel about that layout; and (6) the possibility that rapid deployment will heighten the potential for hostage-taking. This is not an all-inclusive list, of course. Moreover, at all times these factors must be weighed against the potential for loss of life if first responders do not rapidly deploy to locate and subdue perpetrators.

<sup>166</sup>Columbine High School is a very large building, but some schools being built today are significantly larger.

<sup>167</sup>"Following the shots," in police vernacular.

<sup>168</sup>See note 165 above.

With that as a background, the Commission recommends that all first-responding law enforcement officers, and especially all school resource officers, receive training in the concepts and skills of rapid emergency deployment.

#### **E. EQUIPMENT FOR FIRST RESPONDERS**

In a growing number of incidents throughout the country, including Columbine, the firepower of criminals has exceeded that of the first responding officers.<sup>169</sup> Consequently, police agencies have begun to rethink the matter of police armament, and many of them now require patrol officers to carry shotguns or other shoulder-fired weapons in the trunks of police vehicles. The Commission makes no specific proposals as to the weaponry and protective gear that responding officers should have with them. Nevertheless, if responding officers are to be trained in rapid deployment tactics enabling them to pursue and apprehend armed perpetrators in large public buildings like a school, the matter of weaponry and protective gear for them must be rethought.

Therefore, consistent with the Commission's recommendation that first responders, including school resource officers, receive training in rapid deployment, the Commission recommends further that all first-responding officers have available

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<sup>169</sup>At Columbine High School, Sheriff's Deputy Neil Gardner, armed only with a handgun, exchanged fire with Eric Harris who was armed with both a semi-automatic weapon and a shotgun.

all weapons and protective equipment needed in their pursuit of active armed perpetrators.

#### **F. IMPROVING COMMUNICATIONS FROM INSIDE PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND OTHER BUILDINGS**

The nature of rapid deployment tactics and, specifically, the requirement that response teams be ready to enter a school or other public structure immediately, place tremendous pressures on school faculty and administrators to prepare themselves for such a crisis if and when it arises. Team personnel will need keys to enter rooms or areas within the structure, and will need them immediately. Consequently, administrators and teachers need to know where keys are kept.<sup>170</sup>

At this point, however, one major problem that emerged at Columbine High School must be addressed and corrected, because it is critical to rapid deployment in schools by first responders: the circumstance of poor communication within and from the Columbine building when SWAT teams entered the building on April 20<sup>th</sup>. Officers entered a building permeated with smoke and shrieking alarms that no one could turn off. As a result, officers found it exceedingly difficult to communicate with other team members and with the command center outside the building.<sup>171</sup> The issue of communications from within school buildings is very important because rapid deployment teams rely very heavily on their radios. Rapid deployment tactics require

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<sup>170</sup>Some of these issues of advance planning are discussed in detail below in the context of planning for large-scale emergencies. See Part VIII(C) below.

<sup>171</sup>As cell phone users well know, digital communications often fail when a phone is used in a large building.

that team members move toward perpetrators, while at the same time communicating to backup units the locations of students, injured victims and explosive and incendiary devices. Backup units must then respond to such emergency needs and summon resources to assist persons needing help. Obviously, effective radio communications are crucial to the success of rapid deployment operations.<sup>172</sup> Moreover, digital signals are broken up in large public buildings, so that persons inside them cannot communicate with others outside. The dangers stemming from this are obvious: Rapid deployment team members moving through a large structure may well be unable to relay information to support units about explosive devices or victims. At the same time, their colleagues outside the structure may be prevented from warning them about new dangers inside or outside the building. That is a completely unacceptable danger. Because police agencies are now expected to use rapid deployment teams in the event of future school shootings, immediate steps must be taken to improve the effectiveness of police radios for use in large public buildings.<sup>173</sup>

Therefore, because effective radio communications constitute a major component of rapid deployment, the Commission recommends that school districts where local police agencies broadcast on a bandwidth such as 800 MHz consider the installation of transmission repeaters in large schools and other public buildings. Until radio communications are improved to the point that digital communications from

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<sup>172</sup>One striking feature of the training videos on rapid deployment, discussed in note 164 above, is that team members are in constant communication with one other while they are in a building, as their eyes sweep the rooms, stairwells, and halls through which they pass. At Columbine High School, the noise of emergency alarms was so loud that members of the SWAT team at times had to communicate by hand signals. This could be extremely dangerous for a rapid entry team, the members of which need to observe their surroundings and not one another.

<sup>173</sup>One way to accomplish this, among others, is to install transmission repeaters in large schools and other public buildings; these strengthen signals from inside a building and transmit them so that they can be picked up clearly by persons outside.

inside large structures can be transmitted effectively to outside receivers, transmission repeaters should be considered necessary safety equipment like fire alarms and sprinkler systems.

## PART VI

### LESSONS FROM COLUMBINE:

#### PREPARING FOR CRITICAL EMERGENCIES

##### A. INTRODUCTION

Governor Owens' Executive Order creating the Columbine Review Commission asked that the Commission (1) assess the police command structure in force at the time of the Columbine occurrence and the mechanisms then in place to coordinate activities by area law enforcement agencies, and (2) inquire into communications difficulties encountered at Columbine High School.

In this Part, the Commission addresses the Governor's request both broadly and in detail. The following text discusses, first, the importance of advance planning for major emergencies and the need for public agencies to rehearse and practice their anticipated operations in advance. Second, it focuses on problems experienced at the command center at Columbine, problems likely to be replicated in future major emergencies unless agencies have engaged frequently in preparatory training exercises. The third point of focus is the so-called problem of "inter-operability" that has plagued law enforcement agencies wherever and whenever major crises have arisen. The problem is generated by incompatible communications systems adopted by different law enforcement agencies. This ultimately impedes or forestalls interagency

transmissions. Finally, the text addresses a most serious problem affecting public school safety, namely, the amorphous relationships between school authorities and police agencies that hamper efforts to further school safety and security.<sup>174</sup>

## B. RESOURCES FOR ADVANCE PLANNING FOR CRITICAL EMERGENCIES

The Columbine event demonstrated that serious catastrophes, whether man-made or naturally created, can emerge anywhere, and that the State of Colorado must be better prepared to meet them when they arise. At the same time, the Commission emphasizes that human agencies can never be perfectly prepared for all possible emergencies. Consequently, any catastrophic event will inevitably present difficult dimensions that no official or agency will have envisioned.<sup>175</sup> Hence, Columbine clearly illustrates the importance of planning for large-scale emergencies.<sup>176</sup>

A major critical incident response plan (*Plan*)<sup>177</sup> should embrace the following elements, in the Commission's view:

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<sup>174</sup>The primary example of this problem used in the text that follows is the ambiguous roles school resource officers are expected to discharge at local schools and the diverse ways in which school administrators treat school resource officers.

<sup>175</sup>Several expert witnesses stressed to the Commission that aspects of confusion, even of chaos, will impact any sudden tragic event, whether it be a natural disaster or precipitated by man. Nevertheless, certain problems are commonly encountered during all such events, so that advance planning is both possible and imperative for the protection of the public and, in particular, students and school staff, in the event of a large-scale emergency, even though one always hopes that such a tragic event will never arise. It is true that the Columbine High School crisis occurred in a part of the State of Colorado well-endowed with substantial resources, including well-equipped and staffed law enforcement agencies, related federal agencies, fire and rescue agencies, SWAT teams, excellent hospitals, trained explosives technicians, and highly competent victim assistance organizations. Regrettably, however, public safety resources required to respond to major crises like Columbine are not to be found everywhere within the state.

<sup>176</sup>Following a summit conference on school violence convened in August 1998, well before the Columbine event, the FBI issued a report entitled *Lessons Learned: An FBI Perspective*. (Joseph A. Harpold & Stephen R. Band, *Lessons Learned: An FBI Perspective*, School Violence Summit, Little Rock, Arkansas, August 18-19, 1998 (Behavioral Science Unit, FBI Academy, Quantico, Virginia)). A recommendation made in the report was advance preparation in the form of a "major critical incident response plan" (hereinafter: *Plan*), to contain the elements summarized in the main text.

<sup>177</sup>See note 176 above.

**Requisite resources.** A *Plan* must assess the public and community response resources, including law enforcement, medical, victim assistance, fire, and communications facilities that might be required in the course of a major critical incident. Such incidents may take many forms: They may involve firearms, explosive or incendiary devices or biological weapons; they may involve hostage-taking; or they may arise from a tornado, flood or other natural disaster. Each *Plan* must rest on a candid assessment of the needs generated by different calamities that might occur at one or more schools within a school district.

**Location and availability of needed resources.** It is a fact of public life that the resources required to cope with very serious crises are not distributed equally throughout the state. Nor are counties and municipalities equally endowed with funds needed to equip police, fire and rescue agencies adequately.<sup>178</sup>

If resources needed to respond to major critical incidents are unavailable in or adjacent to a given county or

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<sup>178</sup>Many counties and municipalities cannot afford the latest and most expensive equipment, and some areas of Colorado are so sparsely populated that the purchase of equipment and the employment of additional personnel needed in critical emergencies makes no economic sense. Yet there are schools (and sometimes large schools), hospitals and other vulnerable structures located in areas lacking the high level of resources available in more populous parts of the state.

municipality, the relevant *Plan* must indicate the locations from which needed personnel and equipment can be summoned should an emergency arise.<sup>179</sup> Moreover, in implementing a *Plan*, memoranda of understanding should be executed beforehand between and among all agencies and facilities that will be relied on to provide emergency resources when needed.

**Advance Crisis Planning.** The Columbine event demonstrated that it is too late to develop a coordination plan after an emergency has arisen. Therefore, each *Plan* must envision, as far as possible, all operational requirements for addressing emergencies like Columbine, including such matters as designation of the officer or officers to be in charge at a command post, the assignment of officers to be responsible for processing a crime scene, the procedures to be followed in evacuating injured persons and the medical facilities to which they are to be transported, and the responsibility for extinguishing fires and disposing of incendiary and explosive devices.

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<sup>179</sup>Such resources might well include additional law enforcement officers, trained SWAT teams, firefighters and special fire equipment, explosives technicians, communications equipment and personnel, computer support, and victim assistance.

In light of the above concerns, the Commission recommends that every county in Colorado prepare a major critical emergency response plan addressing large-scale crises that may be envisioned, including the sort that occurred at Columbine High School.

### **C. THE IMPORTANCE OF MULTI-AGENCY PLANNING AND TRAINING FOR CRITICAL EMERGENCIES**

Many response agencies at Columbine High School performed their tasks outstandingly.<sup>180</sup> Procedures to provide victim support were exemplary.<sup>181</sup> But problems swiftly emerged at Columbine because some of the participating agencies had not worked together earlier on crisis planning.<sup>182</sup> The consequences proved harmful to some of the victims and slowed effective crisis response. Some witnesses

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<sup>180</sup>For example, the participating fire and rescue units worked excellently at transporting injured victims to an appropriate hospital for a particular type of injury and making sure that the emergency facilities at a given hospital were not overloaded. Some of this successful coordination no doubt stemmed from the fact that rescue teams and hospital staff knew one another because they had worked together earlier in the contexts of accidents, fires and other circumstances involving multiple victims. Emergency personnel knew, therefore, the special facilities and treating staff available at different hospitals and were able to operate cooperatively to ensure that victims needing particular forms of medical assistance were transported to appropriate hospitals. In that dimension, Columbine was not unusual in terms of what agencies and hospitals were expected to do. *See also* Part IX(B)(1) below.

<sup>181</sup>Victim support agencies assembled quickly at nearby Leewood Elementary School to provide support to students and their families under very trying circumstances. Victim advocates gathered from the entire Front Range; they achieved excellent coordination despite the paucity of the information available to them and the enormity of the crisis they were confronting. Again, these support agencies had worked together during earlier smaller-scale emergencies and on occasion had shared information and participated in joint training.

<sup>182</sup>One clear example of the problems responding law enforcement agencies faced as they arrived at Columbine High School was their unfamiliarity with the structure of the building; in the midst of the crisis there was no effective way for school officials to convey the needed information quickly and efficiently to the officers. As a result, the task of entering a large public building under the control of armed perpetrators, a dangerous operation under the best of circumstances, was rendered even more dangerous because of the officers' unfamiliarity with the building. Their initial information about the building's layout was in fact based on sketches that school officials made for them, using the hood of a police car as a desk.

Another aspect of the same problem was the inability of officers to shut off the extremely noisy alarm system that had been triggered by the time they entered the building. As a consequence, they were forced to carry out their rescue efforts under a cacophony of alarm signals that served to make their already dangerous task even more hazardous. At times, the deafening alarm noise forced officers searching the building to use hand signals to communicate with one another. The alarm sound also contributed to the communications problems encountered between SWAT teams within the building and the command post outside. There were reports that when the officers finally reached the alarm system controls, one among them tried to break into the control panel by using the butt of a rifle.

before the Commission concluded that sets of plans for the school might have been available on fire trucks arriving at the scene. But, although such plans would have been useful had they been available, it would have made little or no practical difference if other responding agencies were unaware that they existed, or if the plans were not current. For this reason, response agencies not only must plan for crises, but also must have practiced and rehearsed together for major emergencies: building plans do no good if response agencies are unaware of their existence, if they are not current,<sup>183</sup> and if they are not in a format allowing them to be easily transported to a command center. A consequence of defects like these was that police and other rescue personnel seeking to rescue endangered persons within the school were frequently confused about the locations of major facilities within the building, particularly the library and the science wing.

It is evident that some of the agencies which responded to the Columbine crisis had conducted an appreciable amount of planning and preparatory training. Indeed, some had trained together. Yet Columbine revealed critical deficiencies in diverse agencies' advance planning, particularly since such agencies function quite differently but must work effectively together in a major emergency. Beyond that, planning conducted primarily by law enforcement and rescue agencies should have included school officials as well.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>183</sup>In fact, the Columbine High School building had undergone major renovations over the years that were not reflected in the plans available to the responding officers.

<sup>184</sup>For example, in Jefferson County (within which Columbine High School is located) there are 144 public schools, seven independent police agencies and 18 fire and rescue entities. Should a major problem arise at a particular school, quite likely some relevant police and rescue agencies would not be familiar with that school's layout and equipment.

Against this background, the Commission recommends the establishment of regular planning sessions involving federal, county and local agencies, particularly law enforcement, fire and rescue agencies, and local school administrators. Such sessions should focus on preparation for a range of foreseeable emergencies, including worst-case scenarios, and the requisite plan should constitute the basis for interagency training and disaster-response rehearsals.<sup>185</sup>

#### **D. THE IMPORTANCE OF INCIDENT COMMAND STRUCTURES DURING MAJOR CRISES**

The advance establishment of an incident command system, coupled with appropriate agency and interagency training, is essential if diverse public agencies are to respond effectively to any major crisis. Under such a system, a senior officer of a participating agency should be designated in advance as incident commander. An incident commander should be charged with several important responsibilities, including the establishment and location of an incident command center, the determination of response priorities, coordination among all participating agencies, approval of requests for additional resources, and the authorization of release of information to the media. Police and other agencies that respond to major emergencies, like fire and rescue agencies, are usually familiar with the incident command system and are accustomed to working closely with adjacent agencies in the

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<sup>185</sup>The planning process should include the obtaining, sharing and retention of current school floor plans, maps, aerial photos and other information relating to schools and other public buildings. Diagrams of public buildings not only should show a building's structure, but also other important features. Diagrams should include: (1) locations of alarm system controls; (2) methods for shutting off all such alarm systems within the building; and (3) other features of the building like sprinkler systems and water and gas lines.

course of emergency situations. Nevertheless, the problems faced by incident commanders in the course of a large-scale emergency increase exponentially in comparison to more “ordinary” crises.<sup>186</sup>

In particular, the presence of media representatives, who may be few in number at the scene of a minor emergency, becomes a matter of special concern during major emergencies. The presence and activities of reporters and camera personnel pose a significant logistical problem in the course of a major emergency: dozens and even hundreds of reporters and photographers press as close as they can to the building within which a crisis continues to evolve; media helicopters also hover over the scene, and the resulting confusion and noise substantially increase the disturbed conditions under which police and rescue personnel are expected to efficiently discharge their responsibilities.

In light of the experiences involving media representatives at Columbine High School, the Commission recommends that each major response agency designate a public information officer of command rank, experienced and trained for the role, who will respond promptly to notice that a major critical incident is in progress at which personnel of his or her response agency are present. The official in charge at an incident command center should designate a principal public information officer if two or more such officers arrive together at the center. Otherwise, the first-arriving

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<sup>186</sup>As examples, an appropriate location for a command center in a less serious situation may prove inappropriate during a crisis because of the number of agencies and the amount of equipment needed to control the situation. Problems of communication among agencies, avoidable if only a few agencies respond to a crisis, become increasingly difficult as ten to twenty agencies participate.

public information officer should serve as the official liaison with media personnel at the scene.

The Commission received from witnesses a frequent criticism that the incident command center at Columbine was not established quickly and was not adequately staffed to control the emerging crisis situation there.<sup>187</sup> Whatever one's conclusions on such points, it must be emphasized for future planning that certain problems involving the command center at Columbine High School simply reflected the enormity of the crisis and the vast logistical difficulties that any emergency on the scale of Columbine would have generated.

Because the establishment of an incident command system is an essential component of successful planning for emergencies, implemented by well-conceived and frequent intra- and interagency training programs, the Commission recommends a much stronger emphasis on training in preparation for large-scale emergencies.<sup>188</sup> Designated law enforcement command personnel should be trained to take command at the beginning of a crisis, to control assembled personnel, and to clearly communicate incident objectives to their subordinates.

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<sup>187</sup>Because Jefferson County Sheriff Stone and other officers serving in the command center chose not to cooperate with the Commission (see notes 7-8 and 11 above), much remains unclear about the command center's operations, the information available to the center's staff, and the contents of orders and directives issued by command center staff.

<sup>188</sup>To that end, both practical and "table-top" exercises should be conducted regularly, involving all personnel who might be involved in a large-scale crisis. It is essential that first responders as well as those in leadership positions participate in all planning, training, and exercises.

Training and planning should focus on response priorities. Because no one can anticipate all possible scenarios that may arise during a major emergency, trainers need to remind participants that some latitude and flexibility and some deviation from established plans may well be required in the face of unexpected developments.

**E. THE “INTEROPERABILITY PROBLEM” AFFECTING POLICE AND RESCUE AGENCIES  
DURING MAJOR EMERGENCIES**

***(1) An Overview of the Problems***

Large-scale emergencies place serious stress on communications systems.<sup>189</sup> The severity of “overload” problems during more routine large-scale emergencies pale in comparison, however, to a far more serious communications problem encountered during such major emergencies as Columbine: responding agencies often cannot communicate with one another on their incompatible radio systems. They are unable quickly to share information requisite for a coordinated response to the catastrophe – a critical source of danger when time is of the essence and innocent lives are at stake. To forestall that danger, the communications systems used by police, fire and rescue agencies must be “interoperable.”<sup>190</sup> The same problem confronts rescue agencies, the

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<sup>189</sup>For example, telephone circuits serving the Columbine High School vicinity were quickly overloaded and many cell phone circuits were swiftly swamped and became unusable. Police dispatchers were overwhelmed with calls from desperate parents trying to find out about their children and from persons nearby or even inside the school attempting to reach the police. Fortunately, at Columbine, off-duty dispatchers began reporting for duty at their own initiative in response to the crisis, so that the Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office was able to handle the flow of calls to it.

<sup>190</sup>i.e., all transmitting and receiving equipment must operate on shared standard frequencies. That the problem is of nationwide concern is demonstrated by a videotape in the Commission archives prepared in 1998 – well before Columbine – by the National Law Enforcement & Corrections Technology Center, entitled appropriately, *Why Can’t We Talk? When Lives Are at Stake*.

The crux of the problem is the fact that the spectrum of bandwidths over which wireless communications are transmitted is a finite resource that has become increasingly crowded over the years as more users, including telecasters and users of cell phones and other recently-developed transmission technologies, demand to share it. The finite bands within the spectrum are like highways over which all communications must travel. Originally, most police, fire and rescue agencies broadcast at the low frequency end of the spectrum; a commonly-used lower frequency is 150 VHF. But as the low bands became overcrowded, some police and emergency agencies shifted to higher bandwidths. As a result, in some areas neighboring police departments use different bandwidths, as may the fire department and the police in a single city. To illustrate, the Colorado State Patrol and the Boulder County Sheriff’s Office continue to broadcast on the 150 VHF band, while the Denver Police Department broadcasts on the 800 MHz band, and the Adams County Sheriff’s Office utilizes the 400 MHz band.

Normally, the fact that neighboring police or rescue agencies operate radios on different frequencies and thus cannot communicate directly with one another by radio poses no major problem because the agencies are cognizant of their communications problems and can usually work around them. One way to accomplish that, although decidedly a “low-tech” solution to the problem, is for an agency to maintain a reserve of handheld radios that can be quickly distributed to emergency response officers who do not carry issue radios on the same bandwidth. Officers so equipped can speak with members of their own agency on their regular radios, but can then use handheld radios to talk to another agency’s personnel with whom they are coordinating. As an example of major incident-related preparation, the Boulder County Sheriff’s Office keeps in ready reserve 40 handheld radios to be distributed to officers responding from outside the county who do not use an identical bandwidth on their agency’s radio system.

vehicles of which (like ambulances and emergency medical service vans) may be expected to respond to emergencies in urban, suburban and rural areas in cooperation with local agencies broadcasting on several different bandwidths.<sup>191</sup>

## ***(2) Aggravation of the Interoperability Problem***

### ***During Large-Scale Emergencies***

“Low-tech” solutions promoting interoperability, like sharing handheld radios with responders from other agencies, often work well if only a few agencies participate and an emergency is manageable in size. They are not likely to function adequately, however, if multiple agencies respond to a serious emergency.<sup>192</sup> Given the large number of responding agencies at Columbine, it was inevitable they would experience communications difficulties.<sup>193</sup> Certain witnesses before the Commission

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<sup>191</sup>It was reported to the Commission that ambulances in certain cities have had to be equipped with five or even seven separate radio systems so that ambulance personnel can communicate with different police and rescue agencies. This is very expensive, since one radio may well cost more than \$3000. It is not only inefficient, it adds to the danger for victims when rescue personnel are forced to switch radio frequencies smoothly and swiftly under emergency conditions when seconds count.

<sup>192</sup>Two examples of the problems that can arise if police and rescue agencies cannot communicate with each other are canvassed in the *Why Can't We Talk?* videotape (see note 190 above). The first was the crash of a commercial airliner in a neighborhood near Detroit Metropolitan Airport a few years ago. At the site of the crash, the tape relates, the 18 police agencies responding to the emergency proved unable to communicate with one other. That generated serious problems in terms of response time. Perhaps it is not surprising that Michigan is often pointed to today as the state which has been moving most strongly to resolve its inter-agency communication problems.

The second example discussed in the *Why Can't We Talk?* videotape was the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. During their rescue attempts, police and rescue agencies encountered like problems communicating with each other. In the course of their rescue efforts rescue personnel came to believe there was another explosive device within the building about to be detonated, and all rescue personnel were ordered to evacuate immediately. However, command authorities found it impossible to convey that message quickly to some rescue agency personnel because they had to communicate on different and incompatible bandwidths.

<sup>193</sup>The Jefferson County Sheriff's Office, the Colorado State Patrol, and the Littleton Fire Department all use VHF frequencies, but several other responding agencies, including the Denver Police, Littleton Police, Lakewood Police, and Douglas County Sheriff's Office use 800 MHz bandwidths.

Because the Commission was unable to interview officers from the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office who had been in the command center at Columbine, it has not determined clearly whether serious communications problems emerged at Columbine because of a want of interoperability among the radio systems. However, on the basis of testimony by officers from other participating agencies, it appears that interoperability problems indeed emerged, in that some requests for additional support or for specific equipment had to be relayed person-to-person by officers running on foot because the information could not be transmitted on compatible radio frequencies.

The report of the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office is vague as to the extent of the communications problem at Columbine. It describes the problem experienced when different agencies used radio systems on different bandwidths, lists the different bandwidths used by several of the responding agencies at Columbine, and advances the ultimate desirability of personnel performing

have singled out communications difficulties as the most serious problem, or certainly one of the more serious problems, that impacted agency personnel responding to the Columbine crisis.<sup>194</sup>

### ***(3) Improving Inter-Agency Communications in the Wake of Columbine***

As suggested above, Columbine was not the first tragedy notable for the inability of different responding agencies to communicate among themselves. Thus, it would not be accurate to say that Columbine has spurred changes in the field. Rather, it should be viewed as yet another instance of a large-scale emergency in which the officials from various responding agencies were able to effectively communicate among themselves by radio.<sup>195</sup> Solutions to such communication problems are neither easy nor cheap. But the good news is that Colorado is at the forefront of states trying to develop a statewide solution promoting interoperability.<sup>196</sup>

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similar functions, for example, all SWAT teams or all officers charged with maintaining an inner or outer perimeter, being able to communicate on a single channel, thus allowing all of them to share information quickly. The report also suggests that command center staff should establish a single common command channel which all reporting agencies could use. But it is not specific about problems that may in fact have arisen at Columbine High School because of a want of interoperability.

<sup>194</sup>For example, a survey recently conducted by the Jefferson Mental Health Center, the Victim Services Unit of the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office, the victim support unit of the First Judicial District Attorney's Office, and several other organizations and individuals, posed several questions to 17 different agencies that had responded to the Columbine High School crisis in varying capacities. One survey question requested a listing of the greatest challenges encountered at Columbine. The most frequently-reported challenge was the difficulty of using communication systems there. The survey reports:

Many responders indicated that radios and cell phones were useless as a communication method. Airwaves were jammed and calls would not go through. This hampered responders communicating with each other, sharing information within and among agencies, and alerting families of the status of students and staff of Columbine High School. An improved communication system to allow those involved to communicate during a time of crisis is crucial to future responses.

<sup>195</sup>Yet another example, mentioned at Commission hearings, of an emergency during which communications problems arose among multiple agencies was the Cortez manhunt involving some 500 law enforcement officers.

<sup>196</sup>Much of what follows regarding the implementation of a statewide trunking system in Colorado can be found at the state web site on the project, [http://www.state.co.us/gov\\_dir/gss/cits/citscomm.html](http://www.state.co.us/gov_dir/gss/cits/citscomm.html).

Colorado has already begun to develop a statewide digital trunked radio system available to both state and local agencies. The projected result is the creation of a statewide infrastructure utilizing a specified set of standards to which local governments can choose to adhere. If they elect to participate in the state system, they can achieve significant savings compared to the cost of creating an exclusively local radio infrastructure. Because the standards for the system have already been developed, participating local agencies are assured ultimately of the complete interoperability of all their equipment with that of other units adopting the statewide system.<sup>197</sup>

Based on the above circumstances and developments, the Commission recommends that Colorado continue to develop a single statewide digital trunked

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<sup>197</sup>The planning for the statewide project began in the early 1990s, with the goal of improving communications among state agencies. One motivating factor spurring the development of the system was the Pope's visit to Denver in 1993, at which time the many agencies planning for the visit realized that they could better assure the safety of the Pope and other visitors if they could communicate better with one another. In 1995, the plan was altered to permit local agencies to participate in the system along with state agencies. This permits state and local agencies to share certain sites and equipment instead of having to build duplicate sites and purchase duplicate equipment.

In 1998, the enactment of House Bill 98-1068 provided seed money for a pilot project in the amount of \$3.3 million. Local agency participation in the project is voluntary, but nearly 90% of local agencies have opted to join the system in the initial phases of the project. The completed digital trunking system should resolve the technical problems that have plagued multi-agency communications in the course of earlier large scale emergencies, provided participating agencies use communications equipment compatible with statewide system requirements.

Although the first two phases of a seven-phase development plan have now been implemented, it will be several years before the entire system is complete. The cost to the state alone, exclusive of local agency costs, to upgrade agency equipment to meet the new system's specifications will approximate \$73 million. When the statewide system has been completed, Colorado officials project that it will include 120 radio sites, each supporting five channels, and five regional dispatch centers.

Until the statewide system has been established and enough local agencies have upgraded their equipment to meet system requirements, portable equipment is available to support local functions identical to those of the statewide system, called a "multiple agency interoperability system." The model demonstrated to the Commission was the computerized TRP-1000 communications system (although it should be noted that other manufacturers market equivalent equipment). The United States Justice Department has made 61 of these systems available to public safety organizations throughout the country, including the Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office. The system is a closet-sized container of sophisticated computer and electronic equipment designed to be placed in a van or trailer so that it can be transported to and used at the scene of an emergency.

There are, however, several problems with the TRP-1000. First, it is expensive, costing some \$67,000 per unit. Moreover, additional equipment and personnel must be acquired from time to time to keep it operational and ensure its constant availability. A second problem is the time required to transport the system to a site and make it operational. It was suggested to the Commission that perhaps six of these systems should be distributed in different areas of the state. But even if that many units were available, another hour or two or even longer might be needed to bring a unit to the site of an emergency.

Hence, although funding by the Legislature for the purchase of several systems like the TRP-1000 perhaps should be considered, that does not guarantee interoperability during the early stages of a major emergency. In the long run, the preferred solution, though also the far more expensive one, should be a statewide digital trunked radio system like the one Colorado has begun to develop.

communications system. The Commission also recommends that agencies in parts of the state not yet within the statewide system should receive state funds for the purchase of TRP 1000 or similar systems, enabling at least one of them to be available in the event of a serious catastrophe in any part of the state.

**F. A FINAL COORDINATION PROBLEM IN THE COURSE OF SCHOOL**

**EMERGENCIES: THE UNCERTAIN RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL**

**ADMINISTRATORS AND POLICE AGENCIES**

In the Commission's conversations with Jefferson County school administrators about emergency preparedness at district schools, it became evident that the latter were talented professionals who cared deeply about the safety and well-being of the students under their supervision. Nevertheless, those discussions were so general in nature that it was difficult to ascertain the details of school safety programs at given schools within the district. It seems evident, of course, that before the Columbine High School tragedy, no one had envisioned a crisis of that magnitude and therefore had not foreseen the need for comprehensive interagency crisis planning. The district's present emergency plan advises administrators, staff and teachers how they should address common emergencies – a valid beginning point, but Columbine demonstrated that planning of that sort does not go far enough. The character of major emergencies inevitably varies from school to school on the basis of factors such as the number and location of building entrances, a school's geographical placement,

the nature of alarm systems within a building, and the ages of students. Therefore, the Commission entertains doubts about the adequacy of local school planning for emergencies, and of their training and practice drills.

Of particular concern to the Commission in the context of emergency preparedness is the relationship that must exist between a school and law enforcement and other agencies responsible to protect that school. Obviously, school administrators routinely plan for emergencies; police agencies do the same. However, they seldom plan and train jointly for emergencies. School administrators rarely ask law enforcement officials to evaluate a school's emergency plan. Accordingly, school administrators and law enforcement personnel need to work together to prepare both effective school safety plans and crises plans.<sup>198</sup>

The uncertain relationships apparently existing between school administrators and law enforcement agencies are best illustrated by the uncertain status of police officers assigned to high schools and middle schools as school resource officers (SROs).<sup>199</sup> They are the personnel most likely to be disadvantaged by a want of coordinated emergency plan development, implementation and training involving both law enforcement officials and school administrators.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>198</sup>The focus of a school safety plan is the prevention of violence, while that of a crises plan is the response to school emergencies. Advance planning by school administrators and law enforcement command personnel should be embodied in separate school safety and crises plans.

<sup>199</sup>The status of SROs varies in different parts of the country. In some school systems in other states (Texas and Florida were mentioned before the Commission), SROs are school district employees. In Colorado, however, SROs typically are employed by a local police agency and assigned to a particular school by the agency. At Columbine High School, Neil Gardner, a Jefferson County Sheriff's Office deputy, was the assigned SRO on April 20; he exchanged gunfire with Eric Harris very early in the assault there. *See also* note 151 above.

<sup>200</sup>Accordingly, SROs should be involved in the development of school safety plans and crises plans at the schools to which they are assigned.

The Commission was troubled about the unclear as well as nontraditional functions SROs are expected to discharge in Colorado.<sup>201</sup> Therefore, it believes that the status and functions of SROs should be clarified for all Colorado schools, and not left to determination by individual school administrators or SROs. Because Colorado SROs are employees of law enforcement agencies, their primary tasks should be to enforce state law and to protect public safety within each school. All other SRO functions should be ancillary to those two central functions. At the same time, however, SROs serve as useful intermediaries between law enforcement agencies and schools.<sup>202</sup> SROs who maintain good relationships with school administrators can serve

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<sup>201</sup>The Commission noted a lack of clarity as to SRO functions in general. SROs are expected to function as friends, consultants and public relations representatives, roles that generally lie well outside traditional police functions. The *Denver Police Operations Manual* describes the functions of SROs thusly:

Their function is to provide support services to youth and educational organizations through the presentation of lectures, officer involvement within the education system, consultations, use of police authority when appropriate, and a wide range of public relations efforts.

The *Manual* uses similarly broad language in describing the functions of SROs in high schools:

High School Resource Officers are assigned to each of the high schools in the Denver Public School system to act as a law enforcement liaison/consultant/representative with students, faculty, school staff, administration, parents and the school community.

However, the *Manual* is silent as to the priority of functions if conflicts arise between or among the enumerated duties: (1) Is an SRO a law enforcement officer physically present at a school, or a school functionary like a school counselor or administrator, albeit with a law enforcement background? (2) Is an SRO to enforce the law on school property in the same manner as on the street, or is the SRO to temper that approach in order to work within the school's disciplinary system? (3) Should SROs be in police uniform whenever they are on school premises, be uniformed only on certain occasions, or never be uniformed? (Patterns exist for all three alternative responses.)

Difficulties in identifying the appropriate roles of SROs are compounded by the fact that many school districts, like Jefferson County's, administer schools on a "site based management model," which allows school principals within the district considerable control over the way their schools are operated. This may perhaps be the only efficient way to administer multiple schools within a large school district like Jefferson County's, but it manifestly contributes to the difficulty of ascertaining the proper functions of SROs assigned to a given school.

Jefferson County school officials candidly acknowledged to the Commission that some principals and staff members worked very closely with their SROs, treating them like counselors or assistant principals and keeping them informed about problems at the school, but that other principals strongly resented the presence of police officers at their schools, whether designated as SROs or not, and deliberately failed to keep them advised about school administrative matters, including disciplinary problems and safety concerns.

<sup>202</sup>It is clear to the Commission, based on the events at Columbine High School, that police and school authorities must work cooperatively in assessing actual or potential threats to the safety of students and school personnel. Information available before the Columbine event that might have prevented the attack on April 20th was never shared among local law enforcement personnel and school administrators, in large measure because no structure was in place to promote the needed sharing. Personnel may also have been uncertain about the classifications of information that properly could be shared among school administrators and law enforcement officials. A further discussion of the latter issue appears in Part VII(I) below.

Note should be taken of the enactment of S.B. 00-133, which requires each school district board of education ("district board") to adopt a mission statement that makes safety a priority in each public school of the school district. Each district board must adopt a safe school plan that includes a written conduct and discipline code addressing the removal of disruptive students from the classroom, subject to due process requirements; procedures for expulsion of habitually disruptive students; a policy concerning

as conduits between law enforcement agencies and schools enabling all participating entities to share information and concerns about safety. This requires, however, that school administrators inform their SROs of potential or actual problems at each school; this cannot be left for determination by individual school principals. In particular, site-based management must be subjected to clear limits when it comes to school safety and security.

Based on the above considerations, the Commission believes that the primary tasks of SROs are to enforce the law and to protect the public safety. SROs and school authorities alike must understand clearly that SROs are law enforcement officers and, as such, should normally be in uniform whenever assigned to a school. SROs should be trained like other first-responders in rapid deployment tactics in case of a school emergency. If SROs are to ensure the safety of persons within a school, school administrators should provide them with all relevant information about students at the school, unless the information is privileged by law. Police command officials should transmit to SROs all information relevant to school safety, including reported criminal conduct on the part of students at the school.

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searches on school grounds; and a dress code policy that may require students to wear a uniform.

The law also directs each district board to enter into agreements with law enforcement officials, the juvenile justice system and social services to help maintain a safe environment by adopting the following policies: a crisis management plan; a policy requiring annual school building inspections; a policy to share and release information concerning students to the full extent allowed by state and federal law; an open school policy to allow parents and members of the district board reasonable access to observe classes, activities and functions at each public school; and a policy of screening licensed and nonlicensed employees for criminal activity.

## PART VII

### LESSONS FROM COLUMBINE: PREVENTING SCHOOL VIOLENCE

#### A. INTRODUCTION

The Governor directed the Commission to identify key factors that might have contributed to the Columbine High School tragedy, in particular with the prevention of similar future incidents in view.<sup>203</sup> In this Part, the Commission focuses on issues associated with violence prevention in schools.

#### B. KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE PERPETRATORS BEFORE THE COLUMBINE ATTACK

A most disturbing aspect of the tragedy at Columbine High School was the fact that many people had pieces of information about perpetrators Harris and Klebold well before they launched their attack, but that information was never acted upon, in part because at the time no protocols or procedures were in place that would have allowed all of the pieces of information to be assembled in one place and evaluated.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>203</sup>Executive Order B 00100, § 2 E.

<sup>204</sup>The backgrounds of Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold are summarized in Part III above. Certainly school personnel knew significant things about Harris and Klebold before they acted. Klebold had written violent and disturbing essays in an English class that might have suggested a problem. School personnel had disciplined both students earlier for unauthorized access to the school computer and alteration of certain data. It was reported (although school authorities disputed the point) that Harris and Klebold had been the victims of a particularly humiliating incident in which they were surrounded in the cafeteria by other students who squirted them with ketchup, laughed at them, and called them “faggots,” and that teachers were present at the time but did nothing to intervene.

Law enforcement personnel knew many things about Harris and Klebold: The pair had been arrested for breaking into a van in January, 1998 and assigned to a diversion program; apparently they succeeded in convincing their probation officer that they had learned from their experience. But the sheriff’s department also had information that could have alerted them to the fact that the two young men had evinced dangerous and aggressive tendencies. Shortly after their arrest for the break-in of the van, the parents of Brooks Brown, a fellow student at Columbine High School who had been threatened by Harris and Klebold, had gone to the sheriff’s department with information about Harris’ website on AOL. They had no need to go directly to the website themselves because the Browns had supplied them with printouts of the website pages that should have alerted the police to the homicidal and suicidal intentions of the two young men. The contents of the website included a discussion of the pipe bombs Harris and Klebold

C. KNOWLEDGE POSSESSED BY THE PARENTS OF THE PERPETRATORS AND OTHER STUDENTS

The parents of the two Columbine perpetrators must have had inklings that disturbing things were going on, including such suspicious circumstances as the construction and storage of some 90 bombs in the homes of Harris and Klebold, the purchase of weapons by the two, and other evident preparations for an attack.<sup>205</sup>

Students at Columbine High School are not reported to have heard either directly or indirectly from either Harris or Klebold that they were planning an attack at the school. But granted the fact that Harris' website bragged about the bombs the pair had assembled and tested, as well as the fact that the website contents virtually screamed the gunmen's murderous intentions, it would be quite surprising if the two

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planned to use in their attack: several of them are described, along with a report of a successful test explosion. The website was replete with clear warnings about what the two authors intended:

I'm coming for EVERYONE soon and I WILL be armed to the f\_\_\_ing teeth and I WILL shoot to kill. ....God, I can't wait til I can kill you people. Feel no remorse, no sense of shame, I don't care if I live or die in the shoot-out. All I want to do is kill and injure as many of you ... as I can especially a few people. Like brooks brown.

The website pages seethe with suicidal anger and rage. Unfortunately, however, the complaints from the Browns about this disturbing website "fell through the cracks," in the words of John Kiebusch, the division chief in charge of investigations in the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office. Not only was the complaint not pursued; the van break-in and the threats to kill were seemingly treated as unrelated incidents and were never correlated by that department. There was no further pursuit of an application for a search warrant in the matter.

A failure to see clear warning signs of homicidal rage in advance of an attack is, unfortunately, not a phenomenon unique to Columbine. In fact, it is so common in rampage murders that a *New York Times* study of 100 such murders found that most of the killers "left a road map of red flags." But it concluded that:

in case after case...the warning signs were missed...by a tattered mental health care system; by families unable to face the evidence of serious mental turmoil in their children or siblings; by employers, teachers and principals who failed to take the threats seriously; by the police who, when alerted to the danger by frightened relatives, neighbors or friends, were incapable of intervening before the violence erupted.

<sup>205</sup>Because lawsuits are pending against them, the Commission was unable to hear from the parents of Harris and Klebold. But there are indications the parents had some clues. For example, on one of the tapes made by Harris, he reported that a gun shop employee had called the Harris home and told Harris' father, "Hey, your clips are in." The elder Harris replied that he had not ordered any gun clips. Harris speculated that if his father had investigated the reason for the call, Harris' and Klebold's plans might have been uncovered. It is unclear on the tape how Harris learned of the call and of his father's reply to the gun shop clerk, but it seems likely that Harris and his father had had a later conversation about the call.

had not given some indications to fellow students, though veiled and indirect, that they were planning a violent incident at the school.<sup>206</sup>

#### D. THE IMPORTANCE OF "LEAKAGE" ABOUT IMPENDING ACTS OF VIOLENCE

In the wake of the events at Columbine High School and other instances of school violence, many experts, as well as federal agencies including the Secret Service and the FBI, have studied the phenomenon in an effort to understand it.<sup>207</sup> Expert witnesses before the Commission emphasized that instances of school violence do not occur because students "suddenly snapped," due to a particular incident on a particular day. Instead, school shooters usually give very clear advance indications of their violent intentions, so that school officials and law enforcement agencies are in fact able to prevent violence whenever (1) they have information about such threats; (2) they are able to draw together information about dangerous students from a variety of sources; and (3) the authorities understand how to evaluate the threats.

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<sup>206</sup>A study by the Secret Service's National Threat Assessment Center (U.S. Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center, An Interim Report on the Prevention of Targeted Violence in Schools, Safe School Initiative, October 2000) of 40 cases of school violence over the past 20 years found that teenage killers often communicated their plans or shared their feelings with other students (in sharp contrast to the pattern of adult killers who tended to be loners). At times fellow students were told only in a veiled way that "something unusual" or "something big" was about to happen. Sometimes a shooter told other students only that he "dreamed" about committing a violent act at the school. In almost all these earlier instances of shootings by teenagers, fellow students knew some form of violence to be imminent at their school, but none of them came forward to school authorities to divulge what they knew. This may be tending to change in the wake of Columbine, but the Commission suggests below that school administrators must do what they can to break the student code of silence and to encourage students to volunteer information when they become worried about classmates' threats to themselves or to others.

<sup>207</sup>The Commission heard several experts on the topic of school violence, including Special Agent Mary Ellen O'Toole, Ph.D., of the FBI, one of the authors of an FBI study, *The School Shooter: A Threat Assessment Perspective* (Federal Bureau of Investigation Critical Incident Response Group (CIRG), National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC), FBI Academy, Quantico, Virginia 22135); Professor Delbert S. Elliot, Director of the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence at the University of Colorado; and John Nicoletti, a psychologist and co-author with Kelly Zinna and Sally Spencer-Thomas of *Violence Goes to School: Lessons Learned from Columbine* (John Nicoletti, Kelly Zinna, and Sally Spencer-Thomas, Violence Goes to School: Lessons Learned from Columbine, Nicoletti-Flater Associates, Lakewood, Colo., 1999).

Experts who study school violence refer to this spectrum of direct and indirect communications by perpetrators in advance of an event as “leakage.”<sup>208</sup>

**E. THE REASONS STUDENTS FAIL TO COME FORWARD EVEN THOUGH  
WORRIED ABOUT VIOLENCE**

***(1) The Code of Silence***

Granted the probability there had been leakage about the attack at Columbine High School before April 20, 1999, one clear issue concerns appropriate responses on the part of education and law enforcement authorities who have acquired troubling evidence, albeit merely indirect evidence, that violence is threatened in or near a school. Before those authorities can address the issue effectively, however, they must devise means to encourage students, who are most likely to know about impending violence, to come forward to disclose their information to school authorities.<sup>209</sup>

Why have students failed to come forward with their information in advance of the many instances of school violence before and after Columbine? Often, that

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<sup>208</sup>Leakage may be quite subtle. It may be contained in offhand comments to friends, parents or siblings; often such remarks may be quickly minimized with assurances that the statement was “only a joke.” Or leakage may occur in the form of a student essay, an art project, or other student work. It must be emphasized that leakage about violence and threats includes threats to harm oneself. (The attack by Harris and Klebold was, of course, both an attack on others and a planned double suicide.) Suicide is a quite serious problem among Colorado teenagers, although one that is often not recognized or, if recognized, is seldom discussed openly and frankly. See Part IX(F) below. Leakage may identify those who desperately need help as well as those who are in effect pleading for help. Whatever form leakage may take, however, it needs to be taken seriously, reported to school authorities, and evaluated. The FBI *Report* (see note 176 above), based on an analysis of many instances of school violence, asserts that leakage is “one of the most important clues that may precede an adolescent’s violent act.”

<sup>209</sup>This is a very important issue for the future, because law enforcement and school authorities cannot count on the availability of a student website to alert them to what is being planned, as could have been the case at Columbine. They will need the help of other students.

reluctance may stem from a student culture that fosters and enforces a code of silence, under which students cannot be seen to “rat” on their fellow students. Students may well not understand that even jokes about violence or indirect threats of violence may be significant. Schools have begun to work to change this code of silence by talking to students about the limits of loyalty to friends.

Another basis for student failures or refusals to report threats of violence is a fear of repercussions should their worries about violence prove groundless. One way to encourage students to report their concerns about potential violence, without their having to worry about repercussions, is to put in place a mechanism through which students may report their concerns or worries anonymously. The Colorado Attorney General has been working to develop a hotline number students can use to report their concerns or worries about student violence to school authorities.

## ***(2) Youthfulness of Perpetrators of School Violence***

A notable feature about school shooters is their extreme youth – many are only 13, 14 or 15 years old.<sup>210</sup> The Commission stresses the youth of school shooters for several reasons. First, their youth may play a role in the failures of their contemporaries, their parents, or school faculty and staff to identify them before

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<sup>210</sup>Some perpetrators have been even younger: a shooter in Jonesboro, Arkansas in March 1998 was 11 years old. The Columbine High School incident, therefore, was atypical because Harris and Klebold were significantly older than the usual perpetrators of school violence.

their violent acts. Most adults do not tend to associate aggravated violence, often directed at multiple targets, with younger adolescents. The perpetrators often appear to be what they are – children – on whose youthful countenances it is difficult to perceive evil. Perhaps such inherited societal perceptions are changing, however, as we become accustomed to seeing on evening television young persons in jail clothing much too large for their slight bodies, handcuffed to police officers who bulk over them in size. The youthfulness of so many perpetrators may help explain the reluctance of people who knew them to take their threats of violence seriously. Students, teachers, staff and parents need to be reminded that school shooters are often quite young.

A second important aspect of the youth of perpetrators is their extreme immaturity. This is not criticism, but fact. Adults often forget the perpetrators' extreme youth when they endeavor to understand the motivations for school violence. Student-perpetrated violence appears to adults vastly disproportionate to any possible cause or gain. But young perpetrators, almost by definition, lack perspective on both themselves and their acts. Their crimes make no sense to adults because they make no sense to anyone who is not 13, 14 or 15 years old.

A third aspect of the significance of the youth of so many perpetrators of school violence is the difficulty it poses in developing treatment and sanctions designed to deter violence among members of an age group that is emotionally immature. Most mature persons who commit serious crimes try to commit them so as not to be

apprehended and sanctioned. Young school shooters, in contrast, do not adopt the same calculus as mature offenders, perhaps because they act on the basis of rage or other extreme emotion, and thus never calculate the consequences of their activity. Even if they do project those consequences, they sometimes intend to kill themselves or to be killed.

Despite the great difficulty adults have in understanding school violence committed by young perpetrators, the Commission nevertheless recommends that school officials continue to work to change the “code of silence” dimension of the prevailing student culture, by emphasizing to students that loyalty to fellow students has its limits, one of which is that statements or conduct carrying with them a possible threat of violence, even an indirect threat, must be reported to school authorities. Students, teachers, administrators and parents also must be reminded that many perpetrators of school violence are quite young. Therefore, threats of violence must not be discounted because a student issuing a threat is young.

The Commission recommends that each school district establish a mechanism like an anonymous telephone line, through which students and others may anonymously report statements or conduct that worries or concerns them. The Commission endorses the efforts of the Colorado Attorney General to develop a hotline number that students and others can use to report threats and other forms of behavior that concern them. Whatever the mechanism for anonymous reporting

eventually established in a school district, it is important that students learn of it and be advised of its importance to their safety and the security of school premises.

## F. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BULLYING AND SCHOOL VIOLENCE

The Commission heard conflicting testimony about the significance of bullying and related disciplinary concerns at Columbine High School.<sup>211</sup> The Commission's interest in the matter of bullying rests on the fact that victimization by bullies has been increasingly recognized as an important precursor of school violence. It cannot be said that bullying causes school violence, or even that youthful perpetrators of school violence have all been bullied by other students. Nevertheless, bullying is a risk factor in assessing the potential for school violence, in that many of those who have

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<sup>211</sup>Some parents insisted to Commission staff members that bullying was rampant at Columbine High School and that the school's administration did little to control it. One former teacher's aide at Columbine who testified to a serious bullying problem at the school asserted that she had raised the issue of bullying at a faculty meeting but that no one had acted on her complaint. This echoed other complaints that school rules were inconsistently enforced, so that some groups of students were given more lenient treatment than others.

The Commission was told that students at the school were reluctant to come forward at the Commission's public hearings to talk about bullying because they feared peer retribution or embarrassment if they did so. To encourage students to talk candidly about circumstances at Columbine High School, the Commission sent investigators there to interview students in confidence. They spoke with 43 people, of whom 28 were parents and 15 current or former students at Columbine. Those interviewed were strongly critical of the school, felt that a significant amount of bullying had occurred (especially from athletes), and believed that it would have been futile to report bullying to the school administration because no one there would have done anything about it. The investigators' report lists several specific incidents of bullying and similar behaviors.

On the other hand, the school's principal, Frank DeAngelis, testified that bullying was not a problem at Columbine High School, and assured the Commission that the school had acted firmly to punish bullying incidents if they occurred. A number of teachers at Columbine defended strongly the school, its students, and its administration. Some of them had taught at the school for many years, had chosen to teach there because it was an excellent school, and had elected to remain at the school even after the violence there because they believed it deserved their loyalty. They claimed that many of the bullying and other incidents described in the investigators' report either had never happened or had been dealt with appropriately by the school administration. Although they did not claim that bullying had never occurred at the school, they insisted that the Columbine administration had dealt swiftly with it when it surfaced. They insisted that, as faculty members, they had indeed stepped in whenever they observed anything verging on bullying, and that the school's principal had backed them when they had done that.

The county school superintendent also cautioned the Commission that there was indeed another side to some of the reported incidents, but that dictates of confidentiality made it impossible to offer details in support of the appropriateness of the school administrators' responses in the form of imposition of disciplinary sanctions on those involved in bullying.

carried out lethal acts of violence had in fact been taunted and bullied at their schools.<sup>212</sup>

Because bullying is such a pervasive problem in America's schools, and because it has long been a documented dimension of school life, there has been a tendency to minimize its importance or to deny any link between bullying and school violence. Admittedly, most students seem able to tolerate a moderate amount of bullying and taunting. But experts on school violence believe that a significant number of students are less able to tolerate bullying and peer rejection than their fellow students, particularly when that bullying becomes intimidation. These students can become seriously depressed as a consequence of harassing treatment by fellow students, which in turn can lead to an internal building-up of smoldering anger and resentment. Lethal results can ensue when that anger and resentment are set within the matrix of societal factors, for example, an entertainment industry that glorifies violence, news coverage that concentrates on sensational violence, the ready availability of weapons, and even the dissemination of Internet diagrams for the construction of explosive and incendiary devices.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>212</sup>The Commission cannot assert that bullying at Columbine High School *caused* the homicidal attack on April 20, 1999. But it received testimony that the perpetrators had been victims of bullying at the school and had been taunted and rejected by fellow students.

The Commission does not single out Columbine High School as unique in its problems with bullying. To the contrary, bullying has been identified as a pervasive problem in Colorado schools, as it is in schools throughout the country. The State of Washington, for example, having noted the link between bullying and school violence, is considering legislation to help school personnel cope with the problem of bullying. In Colorado, Attorney General Ken Salazar and Professor Delbert Elliott of the University of Colorado have visited schools in every county in the state during the preceding two years, and have talked freely and extensively with students. They have reported that in every school they visited, they were able to identify serious problems of bullying. Those problems did not vary in pattern or frequency because a given school was urban or rural. They estimated that some students – their estimate is 10,000 students every 30 days in Colorado – are so frightened by bullies that they stay home from school. Based on the survey, the Attorney General issued a report on November 16, 2000 containing several remedial recommendations, including a proposal that the Legislature fund programs at Colorado schools to prevent bullying.

<sup>213</sup>Our contemporary society reflects the fact that the social bonds that traditionally have served as a restraint on violence have become weaker, not only in schools, but in society as a whole. There are many manifestations of this: We are all too familiar with increased incidents of "road rage," in which one driver unleashes violence on another driver because of some perceived driving

It is against this broader background that we are forced to view “school rage.” The problem is certainly not confined to the state’s and nation’s schools, but schools seem unable to obtain needed assistance from state or national sources to help them cope with these broader issues.<sup>214</sup>

In the wake of the Columbine High School tragedy, Congress enacted legislation attempting to control Internet sites that can be accessed for information about construction of explosive and incendiary devices. First Amendment issues aside,<sup>215</sup> such legislation reportedly has been almost completely ineffective, and bomb “recipes flourish on the Internet.” As a consequence, information relating to the construction and use of explosive and incendiary devices and firearms is available without restriction to school-age youth as well as adults; school administrators are left to their own resources in addressing the resulting problem, as they are with so many problems generated by contemporary American society.

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transgression. The term “workplace rage” has also become a part of the vernacular, as places of employment have been turned into scenes of terrible violence. Although it is not yet as common as road rage and workplace rage, nevertheless, air carrier personnel have experienced incidents of what is now referred to as “airline rage,” in which passengers have become so uncontrollably angry in flight that they have attempted assaults on cabin and cockpit crews.

<sup>214</sup>To give merely one example, there is nothing encouraging to report about attempts to restrict Internet access by young people to information about designing incendiary and explosive devices. According to experts in the field, the two propane bombs brought into Columbine High School by Harris and Klebold would have been powerful enough to collapse the school’s physical structure, had they in fact been detonated, which would have brought the floor of the library down on the staff and students in the cafeteria below. The two perpetrators also possessed 70 to 80 other bombs which they had designed on the basis of Internet resources.

<sup>215</sup>The Supreme Court has invalidated on First Amendment grounds congressional efforts to protect minors under age 18 from viewing sexually-explicit material on the internet, *Reno v. American Civil Liberties Union*, 521 U.S. 844 (1997), or cable television channels, *United States v. Playboy Entertainment Group, Inc.*, 529 U.S. 803 (2000); *Denver Area Educational Telecommunications Consortium v. FCC*, 518 U.S. 727 (1996), although the creation and possession of so-called child pornography (“kiddie porn”) can be criminalized, *Osborne v. Ohio*, 495 U.S. 103 (1990). The controlling definition of pornographic material lying outside the protection of the First Amendment, in *Miller v. California*, 413 U.S. 15, 23 (1973), is not broad enough to embrace material relating to violence and instrumentalities of violence; it seems unlikely that the Court soon will recognize a public-safety exception to First Amendment protections broad enough to cover the dissemination of information about explosive and incendiary devices and firearms.

The task of coping with school rage is rendered even more difficult by the fact that our schools have become larger and larger in both numbers of students and building capacity. Large schools are generally preferred by state and local governments because of their fiscal advantages in terms of land and construction costs; one large school facility is less expensive to a community than two or three smaller facilities. Nevertheless, recent studies document the fact that a community pays a price for larger schools: Students at large schools tend to feel marginalized and less a part of a school community in comparison to their counterparts in smaller facilities.<sup>216</sup> Still, there are ways to make students feel part of a smaller school community even if they are educated in a large school facility.<sup>217</sup>

It is clear to the Commission that Colorado's schools operate under substantial pressures in the wake of Columbine to safeguard staff and students against all dangers of violence, and are being treated as responsible for problems that in fact are generated by modern American society and not the schools themselves.<sup>218</sup> Regrettable as that may be, officials responsible to maintain safety and security within the state's and nation's schools have no alternative but to create as effectively as they can a supportive environment in which students are listened to, and encouraged to come forward to articulate their worries and concerns. That is a very difficult task under the best of circumstances, and we do not now function under the best of circumstances.

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<sup>216</sup>One expert characterized students in some larger schools as more like "tourists" passing through than like members of a school community.

<sup>217</sup>For example, some large schools have created "schools-within-a-school" by breaking the student body out into smaller units, each with its own school name, student government, yearbook, sports teams, etc.

<sup>218</sup>Such social problems arise, for example, from the culture of violence glorified by popular media, including rap and other popular music, the ready availability of firearms, and video games that desensitize young people to violence and killing.

Accordingly, the Commission endorses the efforts of the Colorado Attorney General to combat school bullying, and recommends that all schools in the state adopt one or more of the bullying-prevention programs that have already been tested and proven effective. It also believes that every school administration should adopt a code of behavior that sets forth clearly the rights and responsibilities of both students and adults within the school community, and should ensure that its code is enforced equably against all violators: students will not voluntarily report bullying or other problems at a school if they feel the school's administrators do not enforce its rules fairly. Finally, the Commission concludes that it is difficult for administrators in large schools to create a supportive atmosphere for students. Therefore, if fiscal and other concerns do not allow for the continuation of smaller schools, communities should explore the use of alternative approaches in larger facilities like schools-within-a-school.

#### **G. THREE MODELS FOR ADDRESSING SCHOOL VIOLENCE**

##### ***(1) The Safe Communities-Safe Schools Model***

Experts on school violence, appearing before the Commission, advanced three models for the prevention of school violence. Although they differ in their emphases, each deserves careful study by school authorities. The first model,<sup>219</sup> entitled "The

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<sup>219</sup>Developed by Professor Delbert Elliott at the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence at the University of Colorado. Its outline can be viewed at the Center's website, <http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/safeschools/Default.htm>.

Safe Communities-Safe Schools Model,” is based on several key components. The first is a safe school planning team, the membership of which should include representatives from the community, business representatives, religious leaders, law enforcement officials, teachers, administrators, and student representatives (depending on the age range of a school’s student body). A fundamental tenet of the model is that an effective safe-school plan must be developed not only by school personnel but by officials and lay representation from the community. Each team should be expected to conduct annual site assessments at each school, to be used as an evaluation and planning tool to ascertain the extent of school safety problems and school climate issues.

A second essential component of the model is the promulgation of internal standards and procedures for each school. The most important of them is a code of behavior that delineates the respective rights and responsibilities of students and adults within the school community. Students, parents, faculty and staff must be informed of the contents of the code and of procedures to be followed in investigating complaints of violations of its terms.<sup>220</sup>

A third important component of the model is the institution of a social support team at each school, to include school administrators and counselors, mental health

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<sup>220</sup>To facilitate student or parental reports concerning violations of the code, or advising school authorities of other concerns like worries about impending violence, the model suggests the establishment of a school or district hotline that can be accessed anonymously to report a threatened violent incident. This is important because, as shown above (see Subpart E(1) above), students often have possessed information about impending violence but declined to report it.

workers, and law enforcement personnel.<sup>221</sup> Each social support team should utilize its combined expertise to gather and review information necessary to identify students at risk and the most appropriate measures of support for each student. Every school should have in place an appropriate violence-prevention program, whether based in the school or in the community, to aid students determined to be at risk.<sup>222</sup>

The final component of the model is the promulgation of an emergency crisis plan outlining the roles and responsibilities of administrators, teachers, students, parents, mental health workers, clergy, local emergency response teams, etc. in the context of various potential crises. The model emphasizes that school communities must practice or rehearse their plans as they do fire drills. A suitable crisis response plan should outline the roles and responsibilities of administrators, teachers, students, parents, mental health workers, clergy, and local emergency response teams in the context of any envisioned school emergency or other crisis.<sup>223</sup>

## ***(2) The John Nicoletti Model: "Violence Goes to School"***

Psychologist John Nicoletti, an expert on school violence who testified before the Commission, has co-authored a book about school violence entitled *Violence Goes*

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<sup>221</sup>Though students, parents and teachers should not serve as members of a team, for reasons of confidentiality, the hope is that they will make referrals to the team regarding specific students and situations.

<sup>222</sup>The Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence lists on its website (see note 219 above) an interesting array of programs that have been tested and proven effective; school administrators should be aware of those programs.

<sup>223</sup>The model emphasizes that each safe school plan must be tailored to a particular school and its special problems. It is not a fixed, one-size-fits-all plan intended to apply at all schools in a given area.

*to School: Lessons Learned from Columbine*,<sup>224</sup> focused on the prevention of violence in the nation's schools. The core of Dr. Nicoletti's plan for preventing school violence is the establishment of school policies, directed at students, faculty, staff and parents, which warn clearly that school administrators will act immediately in response to threats of violence. These policies should be implemented by a threat assessment and violence management team.<sup>225</sup>

Dr. Nicoletti stresses the need for emergency plans at each school, developed before an emergency arises – a feature his approach shares with the safe communities–safe schools model. An essential component of emergency preparedness under the Nicoletti analysis is a siege management kit, to include diagrams of the school with exit routes clearly indicated; information about the cutoffs for alarms, sprinklers and utilities; important telephone numbers; and a current school roster. Several kits should be assembled and stored in different places in a school so that they would be available in the event of a crisis.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>224</sup>John Nicoletti, Kelly Zinna, and Sally Spencer-Thomas, *Violence Goes to School: Lessons Learned from Columbine*, Nicoletti-Flater Associates, Lakewood, Colo., 1999.

<sup>225</sup>Such a team should be multi-disciplinary, comprised of school psychologists, law enforcement officers, and school administrators; each team should receive supplementary training in threat assessment. Dr. Nicoletti's book gives guidance on the functions of such a team.

<sup>226</sup>Another concern canvassed in Dr. Nicoletti's book is the copycat-effect of the Columbine incident. Regrettably, several similar instances of school violence have occurred since April 1999, including an attack in March 2001 at Santana High School in Santee, California, near San Diego.

### ***(3) The FBI Approach to Threats of School Violence***

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has issued a narrowly-focused report placing heavy emphasis on the proper assessment of threats of violence.<sup>227</sup> Much of the report catalogs different forms of threats and discusses the factors that should be taken into account in assessing their seriousness.<sup>228</sup> It recommends that each school appoint one school staff person as a threat assessment coordinator, responsible for coordinating school responses to a threat, and that schools consider establishing a multi-disciplinary threat assessment team to include school staff members, mental health professionals and a law enforcement representative; each team would utilize its collective expertise to evaluate threats and to recommend intervention when appropriate.

#### **H. THE IMPORTANCE OF EVALUATING THREATS**

Although the three models summarized in Subpart (G) above differ in many respects,<sup>229</sup> all of them share one dimension – a multi-disciplinary team in each school competent to handle students who may pose a risk of violence to themselves or

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<sup>227</sup>*The School Shooter: A Threat Assessment Perspective*, Federal Bureau of Investigation (Critical Incident Response Group (CIRG), National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC), FBI Academy, Quantico, Virginia 22135).

<sup>228</sup>Factors that should be considered in assessing threats include the student's personality, dynamics within a student's family, school dynamics and the student's role in them, and the social dynamics enveloping the student.

<sup>229</sup>The FBI report focuses almost exclusively on the narrow issue of threat assessment, and indicates the ways different forms of threats should be evaluated. John Nicoletti's book on preventing school violence nicely complements the FBI report, because it focuses on the establishment and functioning of threat assessment teams. The Safe Communities-Safe Schools Model addresses the problem of school safety in far broader terms than the other two models; it emphasizes the role communities must play in assuring safe schools, as well as the premise that violence prevention must be rooted in a strong, supportive school environment.

others.<sup>230</sup> If students have threatened to commit acts of violence against themselves or others, many aspects of their personality may well be relevant to and helpful in assessing the seriousness and significance of the threat. A student may be experiencing severe personal or difficult family problems; health issues may lurk in the student's background; or the student may have exhibited violent behavior in settings away from school premises. Assessment of the seriousness of such threats requires that a team of people be in place with the necessary background and training to make a needed evaluation.<sup>231</sup>

Quite evidently, threats of violence cannot be assessed in isolation. A threat assessment team must evaluate any student who has threatened violence, to determine whether that student harbors the intention as well as the ability to carry out that threat.<sup>232</sup> An inquiry into sensitive topics like these can be difficult, but all of them may well have to be considered and evaluated if the members of a team are to understand the extent to which a student's threatening conduct or statements should be taken seriously and responded to.

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<sup>230</sup>Whether such a body is denominated a student support team or a threat assessment team is much less important than whether such a team is in place at each school or, if local schools are small, in all school districts. Before the Columbine incident, local law enforcement was in possession of fragments of information about Harris and Klebold, as were school administrators and the perpetrators' parents. But no mechanism had been devised through which all that information could be assembled and assessed. Those processes underlie the concept of threat assessment teams.

<sup>231</sup>Ideally, each team should include a school counselor, someone with training in mental health like a school psychologist, and a representative of law enforcement. The team's task is to gather together relevant information from a variety of sources and to assess the most promising response to a perceived threat of violence.

<sup>232</sup>Among the factors the FBI suggests should be considered in evaluating threats of violence are: (1) the student's personality; (2) the dynamics within a student's family and the way the student fits into those dynamics; (3) the dynamics among students at the student's school and the subject student's role in those dynamics; and (4) the broader social dynamics of the student outside of school.

## I. THE NEED FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

### AGENCIES TO SHARE INFORMATION

Before the events at Columbine High School, school authorities, law enforcement officials, juvenile authorities, and other persons with relevant information about a student were uncertain about whether they could share that information. Colorado has been endeavoring to clarify the matter, and recently-enacted legislation germane to the issue makes major advances toward its resolution.<sup>233</sup> Conversely, the legislation permits law enforcement personnel to inspect a student's school attendance and disciplinary records under certain circumstances.

Senate Bill 00-133 of course is not the final word in this area, but it constitutes a major improvement when compared to the uncertainty that had existed previously. Although some records that might be helpful in evaluating threatening student conduct remain protected – principally mental health and medical records – a considerable amount of information now can be provided a threat assessment team, including substantial student personal data useful in evaluating a student and information about difficulties he or she may have had with public authorities outside school hours. Threat assessment by competent teams is crucial to school safety, and team members are required to conduct sensitive inquiries into and evaluations of

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<sup>233</sup> Among its other features, the legislation not only permits juvenile justice authorities to inform school authorities when they have filed charges or, in some instances, a student has been adjudicated, but also requires such information to be reported to administrators at the student's school. It also permits school principals to be informed by criminal justice agencies about incidents involving students that give rise to a concern for public safety. This would include information about threats of or commission of criminal acts by a student and known to law enforcement. See also S.B. 00-133, discussed in note 202 above.

extremely private and delicate matters.<sup>234</sup> Thus, selection of the membership of a threat assessment team and their training are matters of great importance.

The Commission acknowledges that we are still in the developmental stage as far as threat assessment models and procedures are concerned. To assist and further the training of threat assessment teams, the Commission recommends that a Governor's task force be convened, composed of school administrators, law enforcement officials and mental health experts, to develop and refine threat assessment models and procedures to implement them. It further recommends that a threat assessment team be established at every Colorado high school and middle school, responsible to evaluate threats of violence reported by students, teachers, school staff or law enforcement personnel. All reports of verbal and written threats, "hit lists," or other indicia of future violence should be taken seriously by a team. Each team should include a school staff member like a counselor or a vice-principal who knows the students and the student culture at the school, and who is able to gather information at the school useful in assessing each threat.

For reasons of confidentiality, no team should include students, teachers or parents, but everyone in the school community should be made aware of the functions of a threat assessment team and the mechanisms through which it can be contacted. It is desirable, if feasible, to appoint to each threat assessment team a trained mental health professional, for example, a school psychologist, and someone with a

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<sup>234</sup>A student can be going through difficult times for many different reasons, and may need help in coping with personal or embarrassing issues. The student's conduct can be a manifestation of family problems or other difficult matters.

background in law enforcement. Members of each threat assessment team should receive training on such matters as threat assessment, suicide prevention, and the law relating to student confidentiality.

The Commission recommends further that school authorities make it quite clear to students and their parents that all threats of violence, whether of violence to others or to the person making the threat, and whether direct or indirect, will be taken seriously and evaluated. Students and their parents must be brought to understand that threats of violence are never appropriate even as jokes, and may well have consequences for students who utter them. If a threat relates to a specific person, it should not matter that the person toward whom the threat was directed does not wish the matter pursued; it should be evaluated like any other threat.

To ensure that a threat assessment team acquires all information needed to evaluate threats, each school should be expected to maintain accurate records about earlier threats and crime incidents there. The Commission believes that each school should adopt an effective violence prevention program that meet the needs of that school, including both in-school programs and community-based programs, to which students and their families can be referred.

## PART VIII

### LESSONS FROM COLUMBINE: PROTECTING CHILDREN AT SCHOOL

#### A. INTRODUCTION

Governor Owens directed the Commission<sup>235</sup> to analyze the safety protocols in effect at Columbine High School at the time of the crisis there, to assess their effectiveness and to recommend future improvements in them. The Commission has been considerably assisted in discharging those responsibilities by the approach to prevention of violence and school safety recommended by the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence at the University of Colorado. The Center, directed by Professor Delbert Elliott, stresses the importance of viewing school safety in broad preventive terms: a safe school fosters a supportive school atmosphere, has strong links to the surrounding community, has in place both programs to prevent violence and mechanisms to allow students to confide to school administrators their concerns about violence and safety, has established a well-trained threat assessment team, and has adopted a strong crisis management plan for use in case of emergencies.

The preceding Part VII of this report adopted a correspondingly broad approach to school safety by focusing on methods to promote school safety through the prevention of violence in schools. In this Part, the Commission responds to the Governor's directives by examining programs through which school administrators can

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<sup>235</sup>Executive Order B 00100, § 2 B.

prepare for nonpreventable school emergencies. It further addresses a related matter bearing on school safety, one that has attracted considerable attention in the aftermath of Columbine, namely, the question of whether school administrators should invest in supplementary security devices like surveillance cameras and metal detectors as means of enhancing the safety of all persons present on school premises.

**B. THE SAFETY PROTOCOLS IN EFFECT AT COLUMBINE HIGH SCHOOL**

It is fair to observe that neither law enforcement command personnel nor school administrators were well prepared to counter the violence that erupted at Columbine High School on April 20, 1999. SWAT team experts appearing before the Commission were candid in admitting that responding SWAT teams never prepared and practiced appropriate police responses to violent assaultive conduct of the magnitude of that at Columbine, because they viewed such an occurrence as too unlikely and too far-fetched to serve as a realistic training scenario. After Columbine, the earlier prevailing assumptions have had to be abandoned; in many communities, new police training facilities have been constructed to resemble Columbine and officers are trained to respond to violent attacks like that launched by the Columbine perpetrators.

Much the same conclusion can be drawn about the school safety plans in effect at Columbine High School before April, 1999. The school emergency manual for

Jefferson County described many different scenarios, for example, the suicide of a student, a school fire, or a heart attack felling a teacher, but no scenario even remotely resembled the horrific violence that actually occurred at the school. Consequently, despite the courage displayed by many teachers, staff and students at Columbine, many problems erupted during the crisis, including major problems of coordination between school administrators and law enforcement agencies, that could not be easily resolved in the midst of crisis.<sup>236</sup>

### C. THE CORE CONTENT OF A VALID SCHOOL CRISIS PLAN

One of the more difficult issues before the Commission has been the precise content appropriate for or requisite to a school safety or emergency plan. School and other officials differ significantly in their views of the appropriate content for such a plan. The Jefferson County emergency management plan (EMP), as revised in the wake of Columbine, provides general guidance on issues like the command structure that should be established at schools in case of serious emergencies, and is organized with a set of tab inserts, each of which guides a faculty or staff member to the procedure appropriate to a given form of emergency, for example, a bus accident, a serious student injury, a bomb threat, or an outbreak of school violence. It is an excellent document as far as it goes. But the Commission continues to be concerned about the

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<sup>236</sup>To name a few, some of which already have been canvassed, no floor plans were available to the command center or to SWAT teams seeking to enter the building; the school's alarm systems and utilities could not be shut off; and SWAT teams sometimes found it difficult to enter locked classrooms, and so they were forced to blast the locks on the doors. Some choices teachers and staff made to direct students to what they hoped would be safe refuges turned out well, but others did not. Lockdown procedures in classrooms probably saved many lives, but the library and cafeteria could not be made secure, and that is where several students were killed or wounded.

implementation of a district-wide plan at individual schools. A school district with more than 140 schools can develop little more than a one-size-fits-all crisis plan covering all of them. Nonetheless, the Commission has concluded that any district-wide plan should now be tailored to ensure that safety problems peculiar to individual schools have been addressed. High schools obviously differ from elementary schools in terms of needed responses to protect the security and safety of students and staff should emergencies arise there. Evacuation plans for a school surrounded by parking lots and open space differ markedly from those applicable to a school bounded by busy thoroughfares. Equipment like alarm and telephone systems will vary at different schools, which impacts on the content of a school's emergency plan. Perhaps ultimately of the greatest importance, each school's emergency plan must be clear about which school personnel will carry out which functions in the course of a crisis; this cannot be done effectively on a district-wide basis.<sup>237</sup>

Not only should each school develop an emergency plan reflecting its location, personnel, and other local characteristics; it ought also to develop its own emergency training program for students and staff, and to conduct periodic emergency-response

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<sup>237</sup>In discussing these issues with Jefferson County school officials, the Commission repeatedly encountered the principle of site-based management, which places vast discretion concerning safety matters in the hands of individual school administrators. As was pointed out earlier in this report, in evaluating the roles of school resource officers (see Subpart VI(F) above), the Commission has been concerned about vesting so much discretion in individual administrators who will differ in their views about the emphasis to be placed on emergency planning.

As mentioned in the preceding Part (see Subpart VII(G)(2) above), Dr. John Nicoletti has urged that each school prepare "siege management kits" to be used if a serious emergency arises, to include such things as school diagrams with exit routes clearly indicated; information about the cutoffs for alarms, sprinklers, and utilities; important telephone numbers; and a current school roster; several such kits should be stored in different places within the school building so that they are available in case of an emergency. It is also to be hoped, in the wake of Columbine, that information of this sort already will be available at police agencies; this sort of information, which can save lives during a crisis, is easily prepared beforehand. There must be assurances, however, that a senior administrator has implemented such measures at each school in a district, especially the larger schools.

Note should be taken of S.B. 00-133, discussed in note 202 above, which requires school district boards of education to adopt safe school plans and implementing agreements with law enforcement officials, the juvenile justice system and social services to help maintain a safe school environment.

exercises in conformity to the school's plan. Even a high-quality crisis plan is of little value if faculty and staff members are not thoroughly conversant with its content and have not practiced beforehand the actions expected of them in the event of an emergency. In short, the Commission wishes to do everything within its power to ensure that Colorado school administrators and staff are thoroughly prepared for emergencies.

Nevertheless, practice drills and rehearsals will likely signify different things at different schools, ranging from a few minutes devoted to reviewing lockdown procedures in the event of a school shooting or exit procedures in case of a fire, to a full day or morning devoted to practice exercises related to a specific crisis scenario, perhaps utilizing personnel from local police, fire and rescue agencies.<sup>238</sup>

In light of its inquiries, the Commission believes that every school in Colorado should develop an emergency crisis plan tailored to meet the particular safety concerns at that school. In drawing up such a plan, school administrators at each school should solicit advice from local law enforcement and rescue agency personnel who will often have expertise that school administrators lack. School safety planning likewise should take into account the needs and expected responses to emergencies

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<sup>238</sup>The Commission was as unclear about practice and rehearsal programs at individual Colorado schools as it was unsure about the content of emergency plans at individual schools. Jefferson County Schools Superintendent Jane Hammond assured it that district school officials had reviewed the safety plan at each school and that each school was required to practice its plans. Nevertheless, despite these assurances, the Commission remains concerned about the level of implementation of school safety plans achieved at individual schools in the state.

not only of students, administrators and faculty, but also of custodial staff, clerical personnel, cafeteria workers, nurses, bus drivers and other school employees.

School district officials should consider requiring local school administrators to assemble an appropriate number of emergency kits, depending on the size of the school, to include such things as school diagrams with exit routes clearly indicated; information about procedures to shut off alarms, sprinkler systems and utilities within the building; important telephone numbers; and a current school roster. District school officials should review the safety plan for each school in the district to ensure that it is appropriate for that school.

The Commission believes that school-based training and preparedness rehearsals are critical components of an effective emergency plan. Preparedness requires that key members of each emergency response team know the roles they will be required to play in the event of a crisis and that they practice or rehearse those roles. Each school should schedule crisis drills at least once a year, and preferably once each school term. The frequency of practice is important because (1) school personnel change rather frequently; and (2) frequent rehearsals can cover a broad range of emergency scenarios that may be envisioned. It is desirable to include police and rescue agency personnel in preparing for scenarios in which those agencies would likely be involved.

#### D. "TARGET HARDENING" AS A TECHNIQUE TO PROMOTE SAFETY IN SCHOOLS

In the aftermath of the Columbine tragedy, some school systems around the nation have devoted considerable resources to so-called "target hardening" security devices, intended to make it more difficult for unauthorized persons to gain entry to a school building or for students to introduce weapons or explosives there.<sup>239</sup>

The issue of whether to recommend the installation of security devices in Colorado schools proved a difficult one for the Commission. There appears to be an epidemic of school violence, some of it clearly reflecting a contagion effect from the attack at Columbine High School. It is very difficult to prevent such attacks. Although encouraging signs have begun to appear that some students now will report threats of violence in an effort to prevent that violence from occurring, nevertheless, two recent shootings at high schools in the San Diego, California area in March 2001 should alert us that even schools which take violence prevention very seriously and strive hard to

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<sup>239</sup>Target hardening devices include metal detectors, surveillance cameras, motion detectors, identification-badge systems, and security gates to block off corridors. After Columbine, Lockwood Greene Technologies, a company specializing in corporate security, conducted a security analysis of Jefferson County schools and recommended the installation or the employment of many such devices. The firm also proposed several fundamental changes in practice designed to increase security at local schools. Some of the proposed practices are relatively inexpensive and would seem to make good sense at many schools. For example, Lockwood Greene Technologies proposes that schools issue identification badges for visitors, which make it easier for faculty and staff to ascertain whether strangers in a building have permission to visit. This, too, would appear to be a sensible plan for many schools troubled by the frequent presence of unauthorized persons within their buildings. Nevertheless, it will not forestall typical cases of school violence because their perpetrators are usually members of the student body, not outsiders.

Lockwood Greene Technologies proffered certain suggestions addressing more directly the Columbine High School situation, in that they recommend the imposition of restrictive controls on items that students are allowed to bring into a school building, and the number of entrances into a building. For example, one proposal would limit main school entrances to two, with school personnel assigned to monitor them at the start and end of each school day, as well as during passing periods and lunch periods. Other school entrances would remain locked against outside entries, and alarms would sound if they were opened from inside the school building. Backpacks would be randomly searched in an effort to deter students from bringing weapons and dangerous devices into the school (although it should be noted that Fourth Amendment problems are presented if such a policy is adopted by a school administration directed at students concerning whom there is no reasonable suspicion at the time of search; *cf.* the Supreme Court's seeming rejection of random drug-usage testing of students not involved in competitive sports activities, *Vernonia School District v. Acton*, 515 U.S. 646 (1995), and of pregnant patients at public hospitals, the results to be transmitted to prosecutors, *Ferguson v. City of Charleston*, 121 S. Ct. 1281 (2001).

prevent incidents of violence still remain vulnerable. Accordingly, proposals to install security devices to prevent the introduction of weapons and explosives into school buildings are increasingly attractive.

Despite those considerations, the Commission adopts a position of caution on public school use of special security devices, for several reasons. First, these technologies can be very expensive to implement, especially if they are designed for daily use. For example, the recommended response of requiring all students to enter a school building through a limited number of main entrances, and the securing of all other entrances against outside entries, would be quite expensive to institute and to staff at many high school and middle school buildings which were not designed to have only one or two entrances. Parking lots, sidewalks, exterior and interior lighting, and even interior hallways might have to be redesigned and extensively modified if movement into and from a school were to be limited to one or two principal entrances.<sup>240</sup>

The Commission also entertained doubts about the effectiveness of random searches in a school setting. Students come and go at varying hours for doctors' appointments, lessons or classes at other schools, competitions, sports events, rehearsals, and the like. At times, they may have to enter their school after normal

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<sup>240</sup>This would not be the only expense such a security system would generate. If entrances are to be monitored and backpacks are to be checked for weapons and dangerous devices, even on a random basis, additional security personnel probably would have to be employed. In a large school like Columbine High School, the time required for random searches of a significant percentage of student backpacks might necessitate a lengthening of the school day. In any event, however, the circumstances and conditions encountered at Columbine High School ought not be used as a litmus test for all security procedures elsewhere.

school hours, sometimes carrying with them musical instrument cases or duffel bags containing sports equipment. Granted the bustle of normal school events, it appeared to the Commission that students bent on doing violence would find it relatively easy to introduce weapons and explosive and incendiary devices into a target school, despite the adoption of special access and security measures.<sup>241</sup>

The Commission struggled with the issue of whether security devices actually serve to deter school violence. Clearly, some security devices do deter certain types of crimes.<sup>242</sup> Doubts remain, however, whether school violence like that which occurred at Columbine High School can be deterred through use of security devices and systems. Violent assaults usually differ from thefts and other typical school crimes in that perpetrators of most school shootings do not care whether or not they are apprehended.<sup>243</sup> In addition, experts on violence prevention told the Commission that at the present time there is no empirical evidence that target-hardening security devices actually reduce the risk of school violence.<sup>244</sup> Compounding the Commission's uncertainty about the wisdom of recommending that schools invest in additional security equipment is its worry that effective prevention of entries by students carrying weapons and lethal devices simply would shift the locus of shootings and

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<sup>241</sup>On the other hand, the Commission was advised of the availability of portable metal detectors that might be used effectively on a random basis to detect and thus deter the possession of weapons. Portable detectors can be placed unobtrusively outside classrooms, and can serve to promote school security without necessitating the expenditures of substantial funds.

<sup>242</sup>For example, the use of improved lighting in areas inside and outside a school building and the installation of surveillance cameras may prevent thefts, graffiti or assaults in those areas.

<sup>243</sup>Admittedly, many questions still remain to be answered with respect to school violence, including the motivations underlying a perpetrators' rage.

<sup>244</sup>Obviously, if violence does not occur, the deterrent impact of preventive efforts cannot be measured. The uncertainty about the deterrent effect of security equipment on school violence aside, several educators expressed concern that a broad use of target-hardening equipment might have a negative impact on the classroom learning environment and on the social atmosphere within schools, if all students are treated as if they were either sources or targets of potential danger.

other violent acts to areas adjacent to school buildings like lawns, parking lots and athletic fields; indeed those have been the locales for several recent incidents of violence.

For all these reasons, the Commission believes that the use of security devices should be viewed as a preventive solution for specific problems at individual schools and not as a broad-based antidote to school violence in general. If gang tensions at a school might erupt into violence or if student possession of guns or knives within a building during school hours has become a problem, the installation of fixed metal detectors or the random use of portable metal detectors might effectively deter students from introducing weapons. Similarly, if painting graffiti or thefts or bullying have taken place in areas of a school building that cannot be easily monitored by faculty or staff, the installation of surveillance cameras may serve to deter future violations. However, the Commission takes the position that currently-available data do not favor a universal installation of security technologies to forestall school violence generally.

Security devices can effectively deter certain forms of school crimes, including theft, graffiti, and gang violence, but they have not yet been proven to be cost-effective in preventing major school violence like that experienced at Columbine High School. Because of its uncertainty about the effectiveness of security devices and its concern about the installation and staffing costs associated with those devices and the possible adverse impact they might have on a school's learning environment, the

Commission does not recommend the universal installation of security devices as a means of forestalling school violence generally; for the present, security devices can only offer transient solutions to specific problems at individual schools.

## PART IX

### LESSONS FROM COLUMBINE: VICTIMS

#### A. INTRODUCTION

Governor Owens' directives to the Governor's Columbine Review Commission<sup>245</sup> included as one of the Commission's goals a consideration of improved procedures to assist and treat victims of incidents like that at Columbine High School, should they arise in the future. This Part reflects the Commission's identification and consideration of three dimensions of effective aid to victims of major incidents of violence.

The first is medical treatment for victims injured in such an attack, including immediate assistance to injured persons unable to escape from a school or other public building. The second is locating and reuniting parents, relatives and friends with students trapped in such a building or, of even greater poignancy, consoling the parents, relatives and friends of students and staff members killed in the course of a violent incident.<sup>246</sup> The third focuses on the allocation and solicitation of public and private monies to help support victims and to meet in part the very substantial expenses generated by such a tragedy.

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<sup>245</sup>Executive Order B 001 00.

<sup>246</sup>The Commission's analysis on the latter rests on the difficulties encountered in notifying and consoling the families of those killed in the Columbine High School attack as they waited at Leawood Elementary School.

## B. MEDICAL TREATMENT FOR ATTACK VICTIMS

### *(1) Triage Sites at the Scene and Hospital Treatment of Victims*

From the earliest moments of the Columbine High School attack it became evident that a number of people had been very seriously injured and would require immediate medical attention. First responders quickly established nearby triage sites<sup>247</sup> where injured persons who had escaped from the school building could receive immediate emergency medical attention.<sup>248</sup> As students fled the school, those who had been injured were carried or made their own way to police officers who then conveyed them to one of the triage sites.<sup>249</sup> After the injured had received emergency medical treatment at a triage site, those requiring additional treatment were transported to one of six hospitals in the area.<sup>250</sup>

Coordination among ambulance and rescue teams and the hospitals was excellent. Personnel who transported victims knew the appropriate hospitals for particular forms of injury.<sup>251</sup> They were also careful that the victims were distributed

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<sup>247</sup>One triage site was located at Yukon Street and Caley Avenue southwest of the school, near Clement Park, and a second site was later established at the east side of the school, where most of the students were fleeing from the building.

<sup>248</sup>In one memorable instance of personal bravery, a student who had managed to escape the perpetrators and flee from the school, returned to retrieve and carry from the building a fellow student who was handicapped and might not have been able to escape otherwise.

<sup>249</sup>A few witnesses appearing at Commission hearings faulted the police in a small number of instances for their failure to recognize the severity of a student's injuries or to convey injured students more quickly to a triage site. However, in the Commission's opinion, medical treatment of victims at the triage sites, and later at area hospitals, was exemplary.

<sup>250</sup>Because a period of time passed from the points at which the hospitals first learned about the attack at Columbine High School to the arrival of victims, they were able to rearrange their emergency facilities and reassign staff to receive and treat an unknown number of seriously injured victims. This preparatory reassignment of already-admitted patients required postponement of nonemergency surgeries so that operating rooms were available, and the immediate removal of all possible patients from emergency and critical care units. The hospitals summoned additional medical personnel to enable them to operate their trauma centers at full capacity once an unknown number of seriously injured victims began to arrive.

<sup>251</sup>Hospitals have different capabilities as far as classes of injuries are concerned, and the trauma centers at different hospitals are rated by state and federal regulations according to their ability to handle different sorts of emergencies.

as equally as possible among all six hospitals<sup>252</sup> so that the staff at each hospital was ready for each injured victim and no hospital was overloaded. Much of this close coordination no doubt stemmed from the fact that the response teams were accustomed to work together during both minor and major emergencies.<sup>253</sup>

Although hospitals labor under very substantial financial and competitive pressures today, nevertheless, when emergencies occur they coordinate closely with one another so that injured victims receive needed care at medical facilities best able to provide it. Usually this is accomplished through radio and telephone communications. Coordination would be improved in all circumstances, including large-scale emergencies generating many casualties, if area hospitals were to establish intranet systems to facilitate quicker and more efficient communications. Such systems would expedite the marshaling of combined medical resources whenever a request for mutual assistance is issued.

The Commission recommends, therefore, that medical facilities in a given area consider the advisability and feasibility of instituting an intranet system among

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<sup>252</sup>The six participating hospitals were: Denver Health Medical Center, Littleton Adventist Hospital, Lutheran Medical Center, St. Anthony Central Hospital, Swedish Medical Center, and University of Colorado Hospital.

<sup>253</sup>It is not unusual under normal circumstances for a trauma center to divert incoming patients to other facilities better able to provide them appropriate treatment. During larger-scale emergencies, perhaps involving victims of a fire or multiple traffic accidents during storms, coordination of police and rescue teams with hospital trauma centers is indispensable. Thus, against that background, the number of the wounded at Columbine and the coordination required among law enforcement personnel, rescue and ambulance teams and hospital emergency staffs were not extraordinary. In fact, hospital staffs had been led to believe the number of victims would be larger than it turned out to be: some 160 victims were treated at the triage sites near the school, of whom 24 were transported to the six hospitals alerted to receive Columbine victims.

Twenty-four victims, some of them very seriously wounded, constitute a large group of victims to treat, but well within the capacity of area hospitals. However, had the two propane bombs gone off as planned by the perpetrators, the number of seriously injured victims would have been many times more than 24, which in turn would have rendered medical treatment far more difficult than it was; the capacities of the operating rooms and emergency care centers at the six hospitals might have been quickly overwhelmed.

hospital emergency and critical care units, not only to assist trauma centers in the course of major emergencies, but to promote efficiencies in the routine diversion of patients from one hospital trauma center to another.

## ***(2) Hospitals, Victims and the Media***

If the Columbine event generated no unusual difficulties for hospitals in terms of the types and numbers of injuries to victims, nevertheless, it differed manifestly from earlier medical emergencies in the intense media interest it generated. Medical centers experienced that media interest as part blessing and part curse. On the positive side, the immediate media coverage of the happenings at Columbine High School provided the hospitals with their initial information about the violence being perpetrated there, which enabled them to prepare to receive a then indeterminate number of seriously injured victims. In fact, media representatives were able quickly to relay information from the scene to the hospitals about the number of injured persons they might expect to receive. But the media also proved a curse as reporters tried to penetrate restricted areas of hospitals to discover the identity of victim-patients, the treatment administered to them, and their prognosis. Although hospitals are able in treating the victims of medical emergencies, they had no earlier experience in confronting the intense media pressures launched by the events at Columbine High School.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>254</sup>Hundreds of media representatives flocked to Colorado from all over the world in the days immediately following Columbine, including many national network representatives, all of them attempting to cover every aspect of the tragedy. At the same time, many victims and families of victims wanted their privacy to be respected. A common concern of all who had helped victims at Columbine was the aggressiveness and intrusiveness of the media at a time of a major crisis. For example, victim

The Commission acknowledges there is no easy solution to the problem of media pressures on police, hospitals and victims at the time of a major crisis.<sup>255</sup> Nonetheless, police, fire and rescue agencies, hospitals and victim support agencies, as part of their planning for serious future crises, should prepare themselves to cope with a spate of media attention that probably will become manifest well before a crisis has ended. It would be well to include media representatives in that planning process.

### ***(3) Problems in Treating Wounded Victims at the Scene***

A serious problem that emerged at Columbine High School was getting medical help to injured victims unable to flee from the building and to be transported to a triage site. At one point early in the attack, medical personnel approached the building in an effort to rescue several wounded students and were fired upon by the perpetrators. Because it required about four hours to bring the Columbine events to a conclusion, for much of that time emergency medical technicians (EMTs) found it difficult or impossible to reach the wounded, many of them in serious condition.<sup>256</sup>

Much of the difficulty arose because of the lengthy period required for a SWAT team

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advocates reported that media personnel immediately interviewed student and staff victims as they were leaving the building, before they could be debriefed or reunited with their families. In their view, the media caused the trauma to the community stemming from Columbine to become more widespread and extensive than it otherwise would have been.

<sup>255</sup>The First Amendment freedom of the press bars exclusion of media representatives from judicial proceedings and records even though that might protect the privacy of crime victims. See *Globe Newspaper Co. v. Superior Court*, 457 U.S. 596 (1982); *Smith v. Daily Mail Publishing Co.*, 443 U.S. 97 (1979). By extension efforts to bar media representatives from all parts of a public medical facility may violate the First Amendment.

<sup>256</sup>The most tragic example of the problem for EMTs was their inability to bring medical assistance quickly to teacher Dave Sanders, who had been wounded early in the attack and was being treated by students in a classroom in the science wing (see note 159 above). It also took a long while for medical personnel to reach Lisa Kreutz and other victims in the school library (see notes 81, 137, 140 above).

to clear a way to the science wing and the even lengthier time it took for emergency medical personnel to reach the scene.<sup>257</sup>

One technique for resolving time gaps between a SWAT team entry and the arrival of EMTs is to include one or more EMTs in SWAT teams so that emergency medical help arrives as a component of each SWAT team. An alternative solution is for one or more members of each SWAT team to be trained in emergency medical procedures and to carry emergency medical equipment with them.<sup>258</sup> In the Commission's view, therefore, SWAT teams should include one or more members with emergency medical training, to reduce or minimize the time interval between a SWAT team's arrival and primary treatment of injured victims.

### **C. REUNITING STUDENTS WITH THEIR FAMILIES**

#### ***(1) Difficulties Faced in the Process***

As concerned parents and relatives began to gather at Columbine High School and as students fled from the building, it quickly became apparent that sites had to be established where students and relatives could be reunited and where Jefferson County School District personnel could disseminate information in the aftermath of

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<sup>257</sup>As discussed earlier (see note 159 above), poor communications from inside the building to the command center further complicated rescue and resuscitation efforts.

<sup>258</sup>The Commission was told that many SWAT teams now include members trained and prepared to provide emergency medical treatment for victims at a crime scene.

the attack.<sup>259</sup> A constant source of difficulty, however, was the paucity of information to pass on to the assembled parents and students; this was frustrating to all.<sup>260</sup> One problem arising from victim advocate assignments at Leawood Elementary School was that some families whose children had not arrived there because they had been wounded or killed had been assigned earlier in the day to victim advocates living outside Jefferson County.

The Commission, therefore, endorses the recommendation of experts appearing before it that families of victims of major emergencies be assigned to victim advocates whose offices or residences are near where the victims live.

Another problem brought to the Commission's attention was the powerful impact of vicarious trauma on personnel responding to a crisis.<sup>261</sup> The need for staff support for responders was evident in the wake of Columbine.

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<sup>259</sup>Two nearby locations were chosen: Leawood Elementary School and the Columbine Public Library. The library was closed at about 6:00 P.M. and the families and students waiting at that location were transferred to Leawood where they joined others still waiting there. The scene at Leawood that afternoon was traumatic and was frequently described as "chaotic," as relatives struggled to learn what had happened at the school and as shocked students and relatives tried to find one another in a crowded gymnasium. Fortunately, the response of victim advocates from Jefferson County and other Front Range counties was exemplary, and they were swiftly assigned to counsel families awaiting their children at Leawood.

<sup>260</sup>One victim advocate finally walked to the command post to get information. (As it turned out, however, at least some of the information she received – that 25 students had been killed – was not accurate.) Eventually, Jefferson County Sheriff John Stone and District Attorney Dave Thomas informed the parents and students in the Leawood gym that some students had been shot, that parents should remain at Leawood School, and that parents who had not yet been reunited with their children should write a description of the clothing worn by their child that day.

The Jefferson County Coroner also explained to parents what her office was trying to do to identify the victims, and asked families who had not been reunited with their children to complete a questionnaire to include such information as telephone numbers, descriptions of clothing, and identifying body features. She also asked them to assemble fingerprints and dental records that could prove helpful should an identification prove necessary.

Late that afternoon, the coroner saw to it that a victim advocate had been assigned to each family who had not been reunited with their child, and that each had been given a pager and cell phone, as well as the private number of the Coroner's Office, so they could call in future questions.

<sup>261</sup>As one witness put it: "We are good at taking care of others, but not always so good at taking care of ourselves."

The Commission suggests accordingly that command centers at the sites of large-scale emergencies with many victims include a victim advocate at the command center so that accurate information can be provided more directly to the families and friends of victims.<sup>262</sup> It also recommends that adequate provision for staff support and stress debriefing be a part of each responding agency's planning for a major crisis.

**(2) Delays in Making Positive Identification and Permitting Family  
Access to Bodies of Dead Victims at Columbine**

In human terms, perhaps the most tragic dimension of the Columbine event was the fact that positive identification of the bodies of victims was much delayed, so that the fact of death was not confirmed to families until the next day.<sup>263</sup> The bodies of those killed in the attack remained inside the school or on the ground outside it until the following day (April 21st), in some instances until the afternoon of that day.<sup>264</sup> Not

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<sup>262</sup>The Commission was told that this is now the practice in the First Judicial District in the wake of the Columbine attack; the Commission thinks this makes good sense in any large-scale emergency.

<sup>263</sup>On the morning of April 21<sup>st</sup>, law enforcement authorities took Polaroid photographs of the bodies of the 12 students that had remained in the school library overnight. It was apparent from the descriptions provided by the families of the missing students that the 12 students reported missing were the 12 decedents whose bodies still remained inside the Columbine building. As noted in the chronology (Part IV(M) above), the bodies of Rachel Scott and Daniel Rohrbaugh were moved from just outside the building into it until their bodies were removed with those of other victims later in the day. Even though the number of the reported missing students and their physical and clothing descriptions matched the information law enforcement personnel had about the deceased students, the Jefferson County Coroner, Dr. Bodelson, was unwilling to give any form of notification to the victims' families until she could identify the bodies positively through fingerprinting or dental records. Before noon on the 21<sup>st</sup>, Governor Bill Owens, Jefferson County District Attorney Dave Thomas and Denver District Attorney Bill Ritter spoke with Dr. Bodelson about the need to provide the families with some form of notice, as quickly as possible, that in all likelihood their child was among the deceased. Dr. Bodelson was unwilling to give even such provisional notification because, in her view, her statutory duties required "positive" identification which could not be made until she had fingerprints or dental records for each child. Following those discussions, District Attorneys Thomas and Ritter themselves undertook to notify the families around noon on April 21<sup>st</sup> that their child was believed to be dead and that positive identification would be provided by the Coroner's Office sometime later that day or the next day. Thomas and Ritter went to Leawood Elementary School to speak with the families waiting there; if families were not there, they notified the victim advocates assigned to the absent parents and requested that the victim advocates give them the information. The two district attorneys personally went to Michael Shoels' home to tell him of the murder of his son Isaiah. All families of murdered students had been given some form of "provisional notification" by 1:30 P.M. on April 21<sup>st</sup>.

<sup>264</sup>There were at least two explanations for this. First, the crime scene was quite extensive, and each area where shootings had occurred had to be examined. Also, because it was thought that other persons than Klebold and Harris might have participated in the Columbine attack, each victim had to be photographed *in situ* before potential evidence was disturbed. Secondly, rescue personnel were deeply concerned about the dangers posed by the hundreds of abandoned student backpacks scattered throughout the building; there was acute worry that some of them might contain other incendiary or explosive devices, or that the perpetrators

even the coroner was allowed to commence medical examinations of the victims until then.<sup>265</sup>

As a result, the families of the deceased victims were caught between the rock of the safety and criminal investigative requirements of law enforcement agencies and the hard place of the coroner's inability to make positive identification without access to the bodies of the victims. The police had to preserve the integrity of the crime scene but, at the same time, the coroner could not provide victim identification unless she felt absolutely sure of the correctness of any such identifications.<sup>266</sup>

In response to the human anguish created by the occurrences at Columbine High School, the Commission suggests that at times the investigative procedures appropriate to most emergencies be flexible enough to accommodate the immediate emotional needs of victims and their families.

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had left behind them one or more unexploded or partially-exploded bombs that might detonate and either kill or injure those still in the building. As a matter of fact, one of the devices did explode late in the evening of April 20<sup>th</sup>, but no one was injured because explosive technicians had taken precautions against that possibility.

<sup>265</sup>The Jefferson County Coroner testified before the Commission that she was not permitted to walk through the Columbine High School building until the morning after the attack and was not allowed to remove any of the victims' bodies at the school until 11:00 A.M. that day (commencing with those slain outside the school). Therefore, identification of the victims and autopsies on their bodies began only after that time. There was further delay because the coroner believed she lacked statutory authority to issue notifications of death to family members. On the giving of informal notice to the awaiting parents by District Attorneys Ritter and Thomas, see note 263 above. The first official notifications to victims' families by the Coroner's Office took place about 3:30 P.M. and concluded late that night.

<sup>266</sup>Most identifications were based on fingerprints provided by the victims' families on the afternoon of the Columbine attack, at the request of the coroner's office.

## D. SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS IN THE AFTERMATH OF COLUMBINE

### *(1) Public Monies for Victims' Support*

The events at Columbine High School generated very substantial financial needs to assist the many persons injured and psychologically traumatized in their course,<sup>267</sup> the bulk of which were met from public funds,<sup>268</sup> but to a limited extent from private sources as well.<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>267</sup>As an example of those needs, in the first two weeks following the Columbine attack, mental health professionals provided more than 50,000 debriefing and counseling sessions to more than 15,000 people.

<sup>268</sup>Governor Bill Owens declared the event a state disaster emergency, which helped assure that appropriate funds, personnel, and other forms of support were made quickly available to commence the healing processes within the Columbine community.

The largest single block of public funding was a \$1,867,422 Victim of Crime Assistance grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, used for direct services to Columbine victims in the form of crisis intervention and counseling. Other large grants included: \$1,343,749 from the Federal Drug Control and Systems Improvement Program (Byrne funds) to reimburse state and local agencies for their extraordinary expenses in responding to the Columbine attack; \$1,000,000 from the federal Bureau of Justice Assistance for school improvement and security projects; \$750,000 from the Colorado Organization for Victim Assistance to support medical, mental health and funeral expenses, and lost wages of victims and their families; and \$500,000 from the Colorado Department of Education for various response expenses associated with Columbine.

<sup>269</sup>The July 2000 report of the Governor's Task Force on Victim's Support for the Columbine High School Tragedy, incorporated in this Commission's materials, describes in detail the public and private funds made available in the wake of Columbine.

## **(2) The Healing Fund**

On the day of the Columbine High School attack, Mile High United Way launched its Healing Fund as a means of effectuating the desire of many members of the public to help the victims of the attack and to aid them in their recovery processes.

Interestingly, although many contributions came from Colorado residents, the majority were given by persons residing outside the state.<sup>270</sup> The determination of priorities in disbursing Healing Fund monies proved a daunting task, simply because of the magnitude of the needs that had to be met; the fund, although substantial, could not possibly have met all those needs, some of them lifelong, of all the victims of Columbine. Accordingly, United Way convened a Healing Fund Advisory Committee, a broad-based group of volunteers with a wide variety of backgrounds.<sup>271</sup> On the whole, the availability of public and private funds probably reduced substantially the indirect

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<sup>270</sup>Contributions came to the Fund from donors in Canada, Great Britain, Peru and The Ukraine. In addition to donations from individuals, many businesses participated, including seven corporations that donated more than \$100,000 each.

When the Healing Fund was closed out on June 30, 2000, over \$4.6 million had been distributed to Columbine victims and their families, and to organizations providing direct services to the Columbine community. United Way underwrote all administrative expenses for the fund; because of that all donated monies eventually were used for victim assistance.

<sup>271</sup>The Advisory Committee was in turn aided by three subcommittees: an executive committee that made policy decisions and drew up distribution guidelines; a victims needs committee that assessed and met the needs of individual victims and their families; and a community needs committee that issued recommendations on grant proposals for community programs and direct services.

The Commission's exhibits include a fact sheet of the Healing Fund, dated August 2000, detailing the distribution of the monies received for the Healing Fund and administered by United Way. Listed disbursements include: \$50,000 to each of the 13 victims killed in the attack; \$150,000 to each of four victims who suffered spinal or brain injuries; and \$10,000 to each of the 21 physically-injured victims of the attack. Later distributions provided \$1.115 million to the 12 individuals most seriously injured in the incident.

Outreach grants from the Fund addressed certain mental health needs of Columbine students, faculty and staff in the wake of the attack; the largest of these was a grant of \$755,000 to the Jefferson Center for Mental Health, of which \$425,000 underwrote a free outreach program targeting the mental health needs of Columbine students, faculty and staff. The remaining \$330,000 funded the operations of the Columbine Resource Connection Center, providing a broad range of activities and support services for Columbine victims. In the end, the \$4.6 million in the Healing Fund was apportioned 67% to victims of the attack, 19% to outreach and direct services, and 14% to community programs.

consequences of the Columbine event to victims, victims' families and the Columbine community. Nevertheless, that blessing may not necessarily have been unmixed.<sup>272</sup>

### ***(3) Other Private Financial Assistance and Other Donations to Victims***

The Healing Fund was not the only source of private financial assistance to victims of the Columbine attack. Other funds were created specifically to assist them, and some funding was made available from existing organizations that received contributions intended for Columbine victims.<sup>273</sup> Because, however, so many different funding sources sought to provide aid to and support for victims of the Columbine attack, a certain measure of coordination was required to avoid duplication of assistance grants. Fortunately, the Jefferson County District Attorney's Office undertook responsibility to assist the some 40 private funds working cooperatively to aid victims.<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>272</sup>As one expert witness before the Commission phrased it, the creation of a large fund like the Healing Fund is a mixed blessing: As a wonderful outpouring of community support for victims, it enables many of the latter to resume their usual lives. Private funds also offer a certain flexibility in disbursements not possible with public monies. Still, as the Commission was reminded, remedial funding may create unrealistic expectations on the part of victims and their families, especially when coupled with assurances from public authorities that all victims' needs are to be met. Obviously, the families of some victims had many more resources on which to draw than did others, and the extent of injuries to victims varied considerably, some requiring long-term assistance, while others needed relatively short periods of time for rehabilitation.

<sup>273</sup>The Patrick Foundation is an example of a fund created in the wake of Columbine to honor the courage of student Patrick Ireland by providing support for Patrick and other Columbine victims needing long-term rehabilitation and vocational support.

<sup>274</sup>It should be noted that many individuals and companies made in-kind donations to further the rebuilding of Columbine High School and the recovery of Columbine victims. As an example, donated labor helped to make private homes wheelchair-accessible for several seriously-injured students.

## **E. UNDERSTANDING THE LENGTHY PROCESSES OF RECOVERY**

Victim recovery following a violent event on the scale of Columbine is a lengthy and complicated process. Experts before the Commission testified that the need for mental health services does not usually peak until about 18 months after such a tragedy. In the instance of Columbine, healing will likely require even more time, because the media focus on the event remains intense and unabated;<sup>275</sup> in such a climate of publicity, wounds reopen again and again.

## **F. SUICIDE PREVENTION**

The subject of suicide is deeply entangled with Columbine. Obviously, the attack at Columbine High School can be viewed from one perspective as a double suicide by two deeply troubled young men. But the possibility of other suicides also has become in Colorado a direct byproduct of the Columbine attack, engendered by its effect on persons other than the perpetrators. Victims of violent attacks often find it difficult to recover from them. Even persons whose lives have been spared frequently have trouble understanding why they were spared and why fate took the lives of others no different from them.<sup>276</sup> Thus, the possibility that Columbine will

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<sup>275</sup>The media have used Columbine as the criterion against which to compare more recent occurrences of school violence. As experts explained the phenomenon to the Commission, following a high-profile tragedy, private grief and loss become mingled with public grief and loss, rendering it difficult for families to keep matters private. The public also has felt impacted by such a tragedy, and therefore feels it has a right to share its grief with victims and the families of victims. The media feed into that dynamic by seeking to meet (and perhaps to augment) the public's hunger for information and by addressing the grief of victims and their families as if it were a commodity.

<sup>276</sup>The Jefferson Center for Mental Health, in the wake of Columbine printed and distributed over 100,000 copies of a booklet designed to teach parents how to help their children cope with a tragedy like Columbine.

harvest future victims is a legitimate matter of concern. As witnesses before the Commission phrased it, all of us are appreciably less innocent in the wake of Columbine than we were before; that is especially true of teenagers.<sup>277</sup>

In this dimension, the impact of the Columbine attack proved national in scope. For young persons attending school at the time, Columbine became, in the words of one college admissions director, “a defining moment for that generation.”<sup>278</sup> Concomitantly with that, adolescent suicide is at present the second leading cause of death for Colorado teenagers; the state’s rate of teen suicide is one of the highest in the United States. Although efforts at suicide prevention have been launched, as a society we have far to go. Suicide traditionally has been something almost everyone is nervous about discussing. Parents have been encouraged by public health officials to talk to their children about sex and about drugs, but probably few parents talk with their children about suicide.<sup>279</sup>

Today, many of the myths surrounding suicide have been shown to be exactly that: myths. For example, the view that no one should dare to discuss suicide with a troubled person has been found to have no basis in fact. In actuality, the teenage

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<sup>277</sup>Columbine taught teenagers that some areas of their lives over which they thought they had control and where they thought themselves safe in fact left them far more vulnerable than they had ever imagined. Teenagers already may feel they have little control over their lives, and often are unable to appreciate the human phenomenon that difficult times come and go for most people. Inevitably, a traumatic event like Columbine adds to their emotional burdens. The Commission was told that the number of adolescent suicides had increased in Jefferson County following the Columbine incident.

<sup>278</sup>Some measure of the impact of Columbine on high school students at the time is provided by the fact that more college applicants in the two years after the attack chose to write essays about it than about any other single subject.

<sup>279</sup>One reason for this is that suicide carries with it a stigma that makes discussing it difficult. Some parents appear to worry that if they broach the subject with a depressed or troubled child, it might implant the idea of suicide in that child’s mind. Another concern parents may have about suicide is that a child who is suicidal will remain suicidal for life. Therefore, the child is left to struggle with the problem alone.

years are very difficult for many young people, and many teenagers have thought about suicide at one time or another. Experts believe that troubled persons who are asked about suicide often will feel relief at being asked the question, for that frequently opens doors allowing troubled persons to discuss their problems with greater freedom. Likewise, the notion that persons once shown to be suicidal always remain suicidal is demonstrably false. Most people entertain suicidal thoughts only briefly, and are able to put those thoughts behind them if they receive appropriate help to confront the problems with which they are struggling at the time.

Even though they remain in their infancy for the moment, suicide-prevention programs are being developed in our communities. Meanwhile, teachers and other school personnel should be made conversant with the problem of adolescent suicide and trained in the recognition of, response to, and appropriate referrals for counseling of students who present a suicide risk. In this context, one must emphasize that suicide is not a problem confined to persons regarded by others as troubled or depressed; suicide takes its toll on adolescents who seem on the surface to be performing well in school, including star athletes and excellent students.<sup>280</sup>

In the Commission's view, therefore, suicide constitutes a very serious public health problem in Colorado, necessitating the continued promotion of public

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<sup>280</sup>In November 1998, in response to the state's high rate of adolescent suicide, the State of Colorado issued an executive document entitled *Suicide Prevention and Intervention Plan* (State of Colorado, Suicide Prevention and Intervention Plan, Executive Summary, November 1998). It urges greater awareness on the part of the public about the problem suicide poses for our youth; it includes a suicide prevention fact sheet discussing the approaches to be taken with those who may be contemplating suicide.

awareness of it, and the development of programs enabling teachers and school administrators to discuss with their students the subject of suicide before it occurs and not exclusively afterwards. The Commission believes that, given the high rate of suicide among Colorado teenagers, neither school personnel nor parents can ignore the problem. Much has been learned about suicide and its warning signs; faculty and staff at our schools need to be conversant with the common warning signs for suicide and the appropriate responses and nonresponses to them when observed.

## PART X

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, April 20, 1999 memorializes a tragic and lethal school assault that resulted in the deaths of 12 students and a teacher and the wounding of 24 other students who encountered Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris before they turned their weapons on themselves and took their own lives. The sole purpose motivating the assailants' acts was to kill as many students and teachers as they could before ending their own lives.

The Commission hopes that the recommendations embodied in its report will provide methods of avoiding another Columbine and of promoting more effective responses to such assaults should, unfortunately, they occur in the future.

**APPENDIX A**

**GOVERNOR OWENS' EXECUTIVE ORDERS**

**A22199: APPOINTING MEMBERS OF THE COLUMBINE REVIEW COMMISSION**

**B00100: CREATING THE COLUMBINE REVIEW COMMISSION**

## APPENDIX B

### COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP AND STAFF

#### The Chair:

**William H. Erickson** was a well-known trial lawyer before being appointed as Justice of the Colorado Supreme Court in 1971. He served on the Supreme Court from 1971 until his retirement in 1996. He was Deputy Chief Justice from 1980-83 and Chief Justice from 1983-85. He has a long distinguished history of service to the bar on both the state and national level. Among the positions he has held are President of the Denver Bar Association; member of the Board of Governors of the Colorado Bar Association; and chair of its negligence and criminal law sections; Chair of the Criminal Justice Section of the American Bar Association; member of the Board of Governors of the American Bar Association; co-founder of the National College for District Attorneys and Defense Lawyers at the University of Houston; director of the National Judicial College; director of the American Judicature Society; fellow and former chair of the American Bar Foundation; fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers; the International Academy of Trial Lawyers, and past President of the International Society of Barristers. He is also a member of the Council of the American Law Institute. He has served on numerous commissions and task forces including the Erickson Commission on Police Shootings in Denver, the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards, and the National Commission for the Formulation of

Standards for Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies. He was chair of the Committee that formulated the American Bar Association Standards of Criminal Justice; chair of the President's National Commission for the Review of Federal and State Laws Relating to Wiretapping and Electronic Surveillance. He was the recipient of the Colorado Bar Association Award of Merit. He was chair of the Colorado Commission on Criminal Justice Standards Goals. He is a co-author of the four-volume treatise on Constitutional Law, W. Erickson and B. George, *United States Supreme Court Cases and Comments: Criminal Law and Procedure* (Matthew Bender 1980-2001).

**Voting Members:**

**Ruben E. Archuleta** was the Chief of Police for the Pueblo Police Department from 1995 until his retirement in 1999. His career in law enforcement began in 1968 when he became a police officer. He was promoted to sergeant in 1973, to captain in 1979, to deputy chief in 1993, and to chief in 1995. He has received training with both the FBI and the Secret Service. He is an associate of the FBI National Academy Associates and is a member of the Southern Colorado Law Enforcement Association.

**George Epp** is the Boulder County Sheriff. He began his career at the Boulder County Sheriff's Department in 1972, and was promoted to sergeant in 1976, to lieutenant in 1978, and to captain in 1986. He was elected sheriff in November 1990 and reelected in 1994 and 1998. He has received extensive professional training, including training in bomb and arson investigation. In 1986 he started the Sheriff's

Department Victim Advocate Program that has assisted more than 2,000 victims of crime. He is a member of Colorado's Peace Officer Standards and Training Board.

**Suzanne Mencer** began her career as an FBI Special Agent in Mobile, Alabama, and then New York City, where she participated in operations utilizing the English and Spanish languages from 1978-1985. She served as a Supervisory Special Agent at FBI Headquarters in Washington, D.C., in charge of investigations in country-specific areas of national security from 1985-1990. She had responsibilities for preparing the congressional budget for the National Security Division of the FBI. Mercer moved to the Denver Office of the FBI in 1990, where she supervised a squad of special agents, analysts, local law enforcement offices, and other federal agency investigators in the Joint Terrorism Task Force. She also supervised investigations dealing with civil rights, foreign counterintelligence, economic espionage, and international and domestic terrorism. She retired from the FBI in 1998, after 20 years of service and has since worked as a consultant providing anti-terrorism training to local law enforcement throughout the United States in cooperation with the Institute for Intergovernmental Research. She has served on the Jefferson County School District Task Force for School Safety and Colorado Commission on Judicial Discipline. She has been trained as a technical assistance provider for the states seeking federal grant monies to combat terrorism from weapons of mass destruction. She taught Spanish in public schools in Florida, Ohio, and Missouri from 1968 to 1978. She is a graduate of Ohio State University and completed graduate courses at the University of South Florida. On July

26, 2000, she was appointed by Governor Owens as the Executive Director of Public Safety for the State of Colorado.

**Robert N. Miller** is the head of litigation at the Denver office of LeBoeuf, Lamb, Greene, & MacRae. His legal career includes being elected district attorney for Weld County in 1972, 1976, and 1980. He was appointed United States Attorney for Colorado in 1981 and served in that capacity until 1988. He has tried a number of major criminal cases. He has served on many governor's task forces including those on Criminal Justice Standards and on the Colorado Law Enforcement Training Academy Curriculum.

**Gale A. Norton** resigned from the Commission after she was appointed by President Bush and confirmed by the United States Senate as Secretary of the Department of the Interior. She was senior counsel at Brownstein, Hyatt & Farber, P.C. Before entering private practice, she was the Attorney General for the State of Colorado from 1991 to 1999. As Attorney General, she represented virtually every agency of state government and has testified many times before Congress. She has been honored as Young Lawyer of the Year by the national Federalist Society and also received the Mary Lathrop Trailblazer Award, the Colorado Women's Bar Association's highest honor.

**Dr. John B. Peper** is a professor emeritus at the University of Texas at El Paso. Prior to his retirement, he was the chair of the College of Education from 1990-97. He has extensive experience in education and was the superintendent of the Jefferson County schools from 1981 until 1990. He has received numerous awards in his

distinguished career, including the UTEP College of Education Outstanding Service Award in 1992 and the Jefferson Medal for Local and National Educational Leadership in 1989.

**Bill Ritter, Jr.** is the District Attorney for Denver. As the chief prosecutor for the Second Judicial District, he has introduced a number of innovative programs including the Denver Drug Court and Victim Service 2000. He has lectured frequently on criminal issues and serves on the boards of the National District Attorneys Association, the American Prosecutors Research Institute, and the National Association of Drug Court Professionals. He is a member of the Colorado Supreme Court's Judicial Advisory Council.

**Pamela Jo Suckla** is a rancher from Slickrock, Colorado in the western part of the state. She was a member of her local school board in Dolores County from 1989 to 1997, serving as Treasurer for two years and as President for four years. She was on the board of the Colorado Association of School Boards (CASB) from 1990 to 1997 and was the President of that board in 1996. She has received numerous awards for her contributions to education, including the 1997 Distinguished Service Award and the 1997 All-State Board Award from CASB.

**Dr. Robert F. Wintersmith** is Director of Research and Education for the Colorado Division of Civil Rights. Before assuming his present position, he was the Director of the Social Services Division of the St. Louis, Missouri, Housing Authority. He has advanced degrees in policy, planning, and public administration and has consulted widely for number of organization including Arthur D. Little, the Ford Foundation, the

Singer Job Corps Center, the United States Department of Justice, and the National Crime Prevention Institute.

**Ex Officio Members:**

**Troy A. Eid** is Chief Counsel to Governor Bill Owens. Before becoming a member of the Governor's Cabinet in January 1999, he clerked for Judge Edith H. Jones of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit; practiced law in Denver with the firm of Holme Roberts and Owen; and was Chief Operating Officer and General Counsel of InfoTest International, an Internet applications consortium founded by Hewlett-Packard Company. He has served on many government commissions and task forces. He was honored as the Outstanding Young Coloradan of the Year by the Colorado Jaycees. And was elected to membership in the American Law Institute in 2000. In 2001, he was awarded an American Marshall Memorial Fellowship in United States-European relations.

**Dr. William J. Moloney**, as Colorado Commissioner of Education and Secretary for the Colorado State Board of Education, has worked with educators, business people, parents, and Democratic and Republican governors and legislators, while playing a key role in shaping his state's nationally-acclaimed program of education. He has been a leading advocate of school reform nationwide. He holds a bachelor's and a master's degree in history and political science and a doctorate in educational management from Harvard University. He has done graduate work in Slavic history at Oxford and the University of London. He has served as a teacher, assistant principal,

principal, headmaster, assistant superintendent, and superintendent in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland, and as Director of the American School in London, England. He has been active as a speaker, consultant, newspaper columnist, contributor to professional journals, adjunct university faculty member, and member of the Board of the Center for Workforce Preparation, The Educational Excellence Network, and the Education Leaders Council in Washington, D.C. He has served three terms on the National Assessment of Governing Board, which sets policy for the National Assessment of Education Progress, more commonly known as “The Nation’s Report Card.” He is co-author of *The Content of America’s Character* and *Education Innovation: An Agenda to Frame the Future*.

**Stanley T. Paprocki** is a senior consultant for the Colorado Department of Education and has a long background in the operation and management of schools. He has headed the Safe and Drug Free Schools initiative. He has been involved with prevention education for many years on a regional, national, local and state level. He has served as the Texas State Director for the Southwest Regional Center for Drug-Free Schools and Communities, an initiative of the United States Department of Education, administered by the University of Oklahoma. He was part of the National Training Team for the Office of Substance Abuse Prevention, United States Department of Health and Human Services, which provided community development training to address risk behavior issues. At the local school district level he contributed to the implementation of a Student Assistance Program with Denver Public Schools. Currently he is a senior consultant at the Colorado Department of Education, Prevention

Initiatives Unit with primary responsibilities in the federal Title IV program, Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities.

**Donald S. Quick** was appointed in January 1999, by Attorney General Salazar to supervise the Criminal Justice Section of the Attorney General's office. This includes overseeing all of the prosecution within the Attorney General's office: Capital crimes, securities fraud, Medicaid fraud, insurance fraud, and complex crimes through the use of the statewide grand jury. He also oversees the Criminal Appellate Division. He assists in the formation of the Attorney General's initiatives concerning criminal justice in areas such as youth and gang violence, domestic violence, victim services, and environmental crimes. He serves on a number of state committees involving witness protection funds, juvenile justice grants, school crime stopper programs, domestic violence policies and substance abuse policies. Governor Owens has appointed him to serve on the Governor's Advisory Team on the Jon Benet Ramsey case. Before joining the Attorney General's office, he was a Chief Trial Deputy with the District Attorney's Office in the Seventeenth Judicial District, which capacity he prosecuted all types of felonies and tried over 100 cases including homicides, habitual criminals, and drug traffickers. He served on the Domestic Violence Task Force and was responsible for the first Colorado District Attorney Fast Track System for the prosecution of domestic violence cases. He chaired the North Metro Gang Task Force and helped implement juvenile initiatives concerning truancy and early intervention against juvenile offenders with the use of a community/restorative justice board. He has been a trial advocacy instructor for many NITA programs and at the University of

Colorado School of Law. He has served on the boards of nonprofit organizations serving the homeless and senior communities. He is a past president of the Adams County Bar Association and served on the Board of Governors for the Colorado Bar Association.

**Aristedes W. Zavaras** was appointed Manager of Safety by Denver Mayor Wellington E. Webb on August 1, 2000. The Department of Safety is the primary agency that formulates public safety policy for the City and County of Denver. As Manager of Safety, he is the City and County of Denver's civilian department head for approximately 1,400 Denver police officers, 850 Denver firefighters, 700 deputy sheriffs, and the Public Safety Cadet Program. There are also 576 civilian employees in the Department of Safety. The Manager's office administers the City and County of Denver's Community Corrections; Pre-Trial Service and Electronic Home Monitoring Programs, the Safe City Program, and the Combined Communications Center. Prior to his appointment as Manager of Safety, he served as the Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Public Safety, as well as Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Corrections. He was the only cabinet member held over from Governor Romer's to Governor Owens's administration. He began his career as a patrol officer with the Denver Police Department in 1966. He progressed through the ranks to become Chief of Police in 1987. As Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Public Safety, he was member of the Governor's Cabinet; interacted with members of the Legislature to address needs of the department; interacted with the Governor's Office to formulate policy-critical issues; and implemented program plans to promote and enhance citizen safety through enforcement, crime and accident prevention and

provide assistance to the criminal justice system, fire safety, and other governmental agencies.

**Staff:**

**Keith C. Coffman** is a Denver-based writer and reporter. He has covered criminal justice and legal issues for several major national and international news outlets for many years.

**Professor B. James George** is Professor of Law Emeritus, New York Law School, and Minister of Pastoral Care, First United Methodist Church of Castle Rock, CO. He is former chairperson, ABA Standing Committee on Association Standards for Criminal Justice, former chairperson and section delegate, ABA Section of Criminal Justice; member, American Law Institute; American Bar Fellow; honorary member, Penal Law Society of Japan (Nihon Keihô Gakkai); visiting expert, United Nations, Asia and Far East Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (UNAFEI) in 1970, 1980, 1982, 1985, 1987, 1990; visiting lecturer, Tokyo University in 1962, 1987; awarded Order of Sacred Treasure with Gold Rays and Neck Ribbon, by Government of Japan, November 1996; and retired elder, Greater New Jersey Annual Conference, The United Methodist Church.

**Professor William T. Pizzi**, the reporter for the Columbine Review Commission, is a professor at the University of Colorado School of Law. He obtained his Juris Doctor degree cum laude from the Harvard Law School and was a member of the Harvard Law Review. He was Associate Dean at the University of Colorado from 1980-1983. He has

been a visiting professor at the Max Planck Institute fur Auslândishes and Internationales Strafrecht, Freiburg, Germany, June 1993; University of Sassari (Sardinia), Italy, Faculty of Jurisprudence, May 1991; University of Perugia, Italy, Faculty of Jurisprudence, April 1991. He was an Assistant United States Attorney for the District of New Jersey, Criminal Division, 1972-1975. He received the Special Achievement Award for Sustained Superior Performance of Duty, 1974. He is the author of *Trials Without Truth* (NYU Press 1999). He has co-authored over 100 articles. He is the recipient of The Faculty Excellence Award, University of Colorado School of Law 1996; Colorado Supreme Court Award for Service on the Rules of Professional Conduct Committee 1992; Colorado Bar Association Ethics Committee Award for Outstanding Service 1990; and Colorado Bar Association Certificate of Appreciation for Service on the Ethics Committee 1990.

**Raymond T. Slaughter** is Director of the Colorado Division of Criminal Justice within the Colorado Department of Public Safety. His responsibilities include the advancement of criminal justice policy for Colorado, as well as oversight of the state's community corrections programs, victims' services programs, criminal justice research, juvenile justice and delinquency policy, drug control and system improvement policy, and community policing efforts. In addition, he serves as the chairman of the advisory task force concerning persons with mental illness in the criminal justice system, and is the director of the Columbine Review Commission. He began his legal career over 25 years ago as a deputy district attorney in Denver. He left that position in the early eighties to become the Executive Director of the

Colorado District Attorney's Council. At the time of his departure, he was a chief deputy district attorney. He served as the district attorney's executive director for a period of 15 years. That tenure was interrupted by a three-year period of service as Chief Deputy Attorney General for Colorado. Before assuming his present position, he was actively involved with the boards and commissions advising the Director of the Division of Criminal Justice. He served on the Juvenile Justice Board, the Victims' Coordinating Committee, the State Victims Assistance and Law Enforcement Board (as chair), and was founding member of the S.T.O.P. Violence Against Women Act Advisory Board. He received his undergraduate degree from Kalamazoo College, and his Juris Doctor degree from the University of Denver College of Law. He has authored many bills on criminal justice that have now become well-established law for Colorado. He has held the position of Director of the Division of Criminal Justice since June 1999.

**Timothy M. Tymkovich** practices law with Hale, Hackstaff, Tymkovich & ErkenBrack. Before entering private practice, he was the Colorado Solicitor General from 1991-96, in which capacity he directed legal policy for the State of Colorado. He has argued frequently before the Colorado Supreme Court and twice before the United States Supreme Court. He has lectured extensively on legal subjects. He is a fellow of the International Society of Barristers and the American Bar Foundation. He is a member of the American Law Institute.

**Stephen D. Vercelloni** is a paralegal assistant with the Division of Criminal Justice, Colorado Department of Public Safety. He is a graduate of the State University of New York at Cortland with a bachelor's degree in communication studies.

**APPENDIX C**  
**LISTING OF WITNESSES APPEARING**  
**BEFORE THE COMMISSION**

The persons listed below shared their experience and expertise before the Governor’s Columbine Review Commission at one or more of its 15 meetings. The State of Colorado extends its gratitude to each of them and the organizations, communities and families which they represented; it was through their contributions that the goals of the Commission will have been achieved and the work of the Commission accomplished. The following listing is based on the chronological order of appearances before the Commission.

Dr. John Nicoletti

Undersheriff John Dunaway, Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office

Chief Investigator John Kiekbusch, Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office

Governor Bill Owens, State of Colorado

Executive Director C. Suzanne Mencer, Colorado Department of Public Safety

Chief Ron Sloan, Arvada Police Department

Professor Kevin Reitz, University of Colorado at Boulder School of Law

Dr. Delbert Elliot, University of Colorado’s Institute of Behavioral Sciences

Dr. Jane Hammond, Jefferson County Public Schools

Ms. Barbara Monsue, Jefferson County Public Schools (Formerly)

Mr. Rick Kaufman, Jefferson County Public Schools

Jefferson County District Attorney Dave Thomas, First Judicial District

Division Chief Wayne Zygowicz, Littleton Fire Department EMS

Operations Chief Chuck Burdick, Littleton Fire Department EMS

Deputy Fire Marshal Rick Young, Littleton Fire Department EMS

Deputy Director Peter Mang, Colorado Bureau of Investigation (CBI)

Sheriff George Epp, Boulder County Sheriff's Department  
Mr. Mike Borrego, State of Colorado Telecommunications Services  
Mr. Gene McGahey, National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center  
Dr. William Moloney, Colorado Department of Education  
Ms. Karen Duffala, Jefferson County Public Schools (Formerly)  
Deputy Neil Gardner, Jefferson County Sheriff's Office  
Deputy Wayne Holverson, Jefferson County Sheriff's Office  
Mr. Ed Ray, Denver Public Schools  
Captain Mark Campbell, Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office  
Lieutenant Bruce Williamson, Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office  
Mr. Emery Reynolds, Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office  
Mr. Gary Wilton, Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office  
Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office TRP 1000 Team  
Chief Agent-in-Charge Robert Armstrong, Colorado Bureau of Investigation (CBI)  
Mr. Dave Hendrickson, Jefferson County Public Schools  
Mr. Stan Paprocki, Colorado Department of Education  
Special Agent-in-Charge Mark Mershon, Federal Bureau of Investigation  
Lieutenant Burdell Burch, Lakewood Police Department SWAT  
Sergeant George Hinkle, Lakewood Police Department SWAT  
Mr. Ray Coniglio, R.N., St. Anthony Central Hospital  
Ms. Debbie Steinbeck, R.N., St. Anthony Central Hospital  
Dr. Guy Clifton, Swedish Medical Center  
Ms. Anne Marie Hamel, R.N., Swedish Medical Center  
Ms. Patricia Tritt, R.N., Swedish Medical Center  
Ms. Anne Clouatre, Littleton Adventist Hospital  
Ms. Kelli Dahl, Littleton Adventist Hospital  
Mr. Curt Johnson, Littleton Adventist Hospital  
Dr. John Riccio, Littleton Adventist Hospital  
Ms. Robin Finegan, Finegan & Flannigan  
Ms. Krista Flannigan, Finegan & Flannigan  
Ms. Jo Anne Doherty, Jefferson Center for Mental Health

Ms. Vista Exline, Victim Outreach Information  
Ms. Amy Greer, Jefferson County District Attorney's Office (First Judicial District)  
Ms. Jean McAllister, Division of Criminal Justice, Colorado Department of Public Safety  
Principal Frank DeAngelis, Columbine High School  
Ms. Stephanie Finley, Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment  
Dr. Jillian Jacobellis, Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment  
Mr. & Mrs. Dar and Dale Emme, Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program  
Ms. Cindy Hoge, Jefferson County Juvenile Assessment Program  
Dr. Nancy Bodelson, Jefferson County Coroner (Formerly)  
Executive Director Bob Brooks, Colorado Department of Local Affairs  
Deputy Director Carol C. Poole, Division of Criminal Justice, Colorado Department of Public Safety  
Ms. Kelly Cahill, United Way  
Ms. Aura Leigh Ferguson, Jefferson County District Attorney's Office  
Mr. Larry Glick, National Tactical Officer Association  
Sergeant Al Preciado, Los Angeles Police Department (Retired)  
Deputy Attorney General Don Quick, Colorado Office of Law  
Assistant Attorney General Matt Karzen, Colorado Office of Law  
Assistant Attorney General Tony Dyl, Colorado Office of Law  
Ms. Susan Schemerhorn, Caplan and Earnest, L.L.C.  
Ms. Patti Stevens  
Mr. Dale Todd  
Mr. & Mrs. Randy and Judy Brown  
Mr. & Mrs. Rich and Sue Petrone  
Mr. Bill Banta  
Ms. Betty Shoels-Hooks  
Mr. Steve Sweitzberger  
Mr. Ron Aigner  
Ms. Shari Schnurr  
Ms. Dawn Anna  
Supervisory Special Agent Mary Ellen O'Toole, Federal Bureau of Investigation

Supervisory Special Agent Dwayne Fuselier, Federal Bureau of Investigation  
Ms. Regina Huerter, Denver District Attorney's Office  
Mr. William Kowalski, Caplan and Earnest, L.L.C.  
Ms. Paula Reed, Columbine High School  
Mr. Lee Andres, Columbine High School  
Mr. Robin Ortiz, Columbine High School  
Mr. & Mrs. Gordon and Ellen Hayes, Columbine High School  
Ms. Cheryl Mosier, Columbine High School  
Ms. Barbara Hirakawa, Columbine High School  
Ms. Claudia Abbott, Columbine High School  
Ms. Sally Blanchard, Jefferson County Public Schools  
Mr. Joe Schallmoser, Jefferson County Public Schools (Formerly)  
Ms. Kathy Sasak, Jefferson County District Attorney's Office  
Ms. Bobbi Spicer, Jefferson County District Attorney's Office

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**APPENDIX E**  
**TIME MAGAZINE ARTICLES ON COLUMBINE**