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Exclusive visuals, reporting distinguish Vegas shooting coverage



A woman sits on a curb near the scene of a mass shooting at a country music festival outside the Mandalay Bay resort on the Las Vegas Strip, Oct. 2, 2017.
AP Photo / John Locher

It was just one of the many mysteries surrounding the Las Vegas concert shooting: How did the gunman, perched up on the 32nd floor of the Mandalay Bay resort, fire off as many as 90 rounds onto thousands of concert-goers in just 10 seconds, killing 58 people and injuring hundreds?

Reporters Sadie Gurman and Mike Balsamo found the answer. Through sourcework, they learned that Stephen Paddock was able to carry out his assault in moments because he had used two "bump stocks," devices that allow a semi-automatic rifle to repeatedly fire like a machine gun.

The hub for Las Vegas coverage has so far received more views than any other breaking news hub on APNews.

The scoop was part of an impressive week of coverage by staff in the Las Vegas bureau and across the AP that also included photographer John Locher's dramatic images of police screaming for people to take cover as the gunman sprayed the crowd with bullets.

For their work in bringing critical details and images of the worst mass shooting in modern U.S. history, Gurman, Balsamo and Locher win this week's Beat of the Week prize.

AP photographer Locher knew that the shooting could be bad. He headed to the scene, getting close enough to hear police screaming for people to take cover. For the next 11 hours, he stayed where he was amid the chaos, making images that were among the few that showed the police response to the shooting.

The Vegas bureau mobilized as did staffers from California and as far away as London. Their collective efforts paid off with exclusives, from UGC footage from a concert-goer to interviews with survivors in the hospitals to images of the covered bodies of the slain being loaded onto the coroner's vans.

Balsamo, who works in Los Angeles but quickly deployed to Nevada, and Vegas reporter Ken Ritter scored several scoops, including that Paddock's girlfriend had arrived in LA and was being questioned by the FBI, and that he had wanted to set off a car bomb

In Washington, Gurman, who covers the Justice Department, got a tip about the bump stocks from a source. It was quickly confirmed by Balsamo from a separate source. The devices, which are legal to buy and replace the gun's stock, use the gun's own recoiling action to "bump" the trigger and fire again more rapidly than any human could.

Their scoop on Oct. 2 beat the New York Times by more than 24 hours. Within minutes, AP's Richard Lardner tracked down Sen. Dianne Feinstein on Capitol Hill and pressed her on the issue, because Feinstein had introduced legislation years earlier to outlaw the devices. The Times matched the detail at 12:07 p.m. on Oct. 4.

Gurman additionally was first to report that the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives would not re-evaluate the lawfulness of the devices, kicking the politically sensitive subject back to Congress to amend existing gun laws or pass a new one.

Only on AP: Family - and journalist - rewarded with answers in 40-year-old cold case
Tamara Lush

Only on AP: Family - and journalist - rewarded with answers in 40-year-old cold case



Ruby Williams, second from left, talks about her missing daughter Brenda, with her other daughters, from left, Sandra Walker, Sharon Scott and Sheila Williams, as they hold a photo of Brenda, in Tampa, Fla., Aug. 23, 2017. After decades of waiting to know what happened to Brenda, Tampa police officials told the family that they had a DNA match to a jawbone found in 1986. Brenda Williams, a young mother of two, went missing in 1978.

AP Photo / Chris O'Meara

Resolving cold cases can be thankless work for law enforcement - and an endless emotional journey for the families affected. Tamara Lush used the lens of one Florida cold case, and the relatives of a long-missing woman, to give life to the backlog of such cases nationwide.

After the publication of her first big takeout on an exhumation in a cold case, Lush turned her attention to two sisters who played just a small role in [that piece](#). Lush met the sisters of Brenda Williams at a symposium on cold cases. They'd attended on a whim and become convinced that one of the cases highlighted there was that of their sister, Brenda, who'd been missing for 40 years. Lush was struck by how emotional the sisters became when they saw a bust that so closely resembled Brenda.

Lush set out to tell the story of Brenda and her family - and whether relatives had truly found the answer to the mystery of their missing sister. Over the course of several months, Lush met with the family numerous times - she was with them every step of the way through the drawn-out process of DNA tests, results, periods of

silence from police, the day they finally got some answers about Brenda, and the moment they shared that news with their mother.

Lush and photographer Chris O'Meara captured these moments for all formats - text, photo, video. Even when it seemed the family would never get an answer, Lush stayed in touch, texting the sisters and reaching out to her contacts in the police department and the University of South Florida forensics department.

The story led engagement for AP on the day it published. It appeared on nearly 350 websites and had more than 4,000 engagements on Facebook alone.

Her persistence and patience with the family and all involved paid off - the narrative story, teeming with emotion and details, can't be matched by any competitor. It led in engagement for AP stories the day it published, keeping readers' attention for about 1.5 minutes. It appeared on nearly 350 websites in its abridged and longer forms and had more than 4,000 engagements on Facebook alone.

The story earned a rare front-and-center spot on the Tampa Bay Times' website and was featured in the print product the next day. Florida TV stations rushed to try to match the story for their newscasts in the following days.

For her Only on AP story that gave a face to the national backlog of cold cases, Lush wins this week's \$300 Best of the States award.

Discrimination lawsuit hits the Freep

DETROIT (AP) - Four female photo journalists have filed a pay discrimination lawsuit in federal court against the Detroit Free Press. Former and current staff members allege in Friday's complaint that the newspaper underpaid them because they're women.

The lawsuit follows a study this year by the newspaper's union analyzing pay data. It shows the median wage for men was higher than for women in almost every job category at the newspaper.

For example, the lawsuit says male photographers make over \$4 an hour more than female photographers.

Free Press editor and vice president Peter Bhatia says the lawsuit has no merit and the newspaper has a "long-standing commitment" to supporting equal pay. A spokeswoman for newspaper parent company Gannett, also named in the lawsuit, didn't have further comment on Saturday.

New AP Investigations chief

The AssociatedPress has named Michael Hudson, a veteran journalist who has exposed offshore financial secrecy and the origins of the financial crisis, as its global investigations editor, a new role overseeing AP's team of investigative journalists around the world.

Hudson, who shared the 2017 Pulitzer Prize for explanatory reporting for his work on the groundbreaking Panama Papers project, joins AP from the International

Consortium of Investigative Journalists.

As AP's global investigations editor based in New York, Hudson will guide a team of reporters, editors and data journalists worldwide who have consistently produced impactful and award-winning work, such as the [2016 Pulitzer Prize-winning investigation](#) that exposed labor abuses in the fishing industry in Southeast Asia.



"This kind of journalism is at the core of what the AP does," said AP Senior Vice President and Executive Editor Sally Buzbee. "This appointment brings our various investigative teams together under one leader. These folks have been doing fabulous work, and what this reorganization will do is create even more great journalism by fostering a lot more collaboration between AP journalists around the world."

AP Sighting



Kevin Walsh ([email](#)) has the latest AP sighting "in Zurich, Switzerland recently and I did a double take when we saw this AP logo. It turned out to be a boutique store for watchmaker Audemars Piguet," Kevin reports.

"We liked the watches, but they were a little out of our price range. Entry-level options cost about \$20,000 and many models run in the six figures. I guess you get what you pay for. I remember that the minute hand of my last AP watch, a selection for my 20th anniversary, fell off not long after I received it."

NYT issues social media guidelines

The newly expanded guidelines "call for journalists to take extra care to avoid expressing partisan opinions or editorializing on issues The Times is covering," the newspaper said in a note to readers. In the guidelines, Dean Baquet, the Times' executive editor, cautions that while social media can improve reader relations, they also pose risks.

"If our journalists are perceived as biased or if they engage in editorializing on social media, that can undercut the credibility of the entire newsroom," Baquet cautions. Read the entire memo [here](#).

Praying for truth



[Photo pray truth]

Not too long ago, they were praying for rain in Texas. Now Richard Chady ([email](#)) passes along news that some in Puerto Rico are "praying for truth."

The piece in Religion Dispatches reports that CBS reporter David Begnaud has become a virtual saint for his ceaseless and reliable reporting from post-storm Puerto Rico. Read more [here](#).

Tech & Check

Richard Chady ([email](#)) also passed along an interesting piece about the Knight Foundation, Facebook and Craig Newmark (founder of Craigslist) awarding grants to the [Duke University Reporters' Lab](#) for a \$1.2 million project to automate fact-checking.

The Duke Tech & Check Cooperative will bring together teams from universities and the Internet Archive to develop new ways to automate fact-checking and broaden the audience for this important new form of journalism. Read the details [here](#).

Loping off

And so we conclude our week at the helm, welcoming founder Paul Stevens back to the wheelhouse. My apologies to anyone or any contribution I missed or mistreated. Adding another daily task raises the chaos and confusion level which is a bit beyond the norm even in quiet times.

Got a story or photos to share?



Got a story to share? A favorite memory of your AP days? Don't keep them to yourself. Share with your colleagues by sending to Ye Olde Connecting Editor. And don't forget to include photos!

Here are some suggestions:

- **Second chapters** - You finished a great career. Now tell us about your second (and third and fourth?) chapters of life.
- **Spousal support** - How your spouse helped in supporting your work during your AP career.
- **My most unusual story** - tell us about an unusual, off the wall story that you covered.
- **"A silly mistake that you make"** - a chance to fess up with a memorable mistake in your journalistic career.
- **Multigenerational AP families** - profiles of families whose service spanned two or more generations.
- **Volunteering** - benefit your colleagues by sharing volunteer stories - with ideas on such work they can do themselves.
- **First job** - How did you get your first job in journalism?

- **Connecting "selfies"** - a word and photo self-profile of you and your career, and what you are doing today. Both for new members and those who have been with us a while.

- **Most unusual** place a story assignment took you.

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