

The Virginian-Pilot

Isolation, paranoia  
and a \$3,027 mistake:

A Virginia Beach  
engineer's path  
to mass murder

VIRGINIA BEACH — If the walls in De-Wayne Craddock's office could talk, they would tell co-workers as much about Craddock as he did.

Nothing.

They were bare.

And then, shortly before he died, a sign of life.

Craddock, an engineer for the city of Virginia Beach, put up a poster for the zombie TV show "The Walking Dead."

He pointed it out to a co-worker shortly before he committed the most violent act Virginia Beach has ever seen. The colleague, Charlene, had joked previously that she was going to decorate his walls with engineering plans if he left them blank.

"Look, Chene," he said, calling her by her nickname. "I got something on my wall."



**COMING WEDNESDAY:**  
How the events of May 31 unfolded

"Well, that's a start," she replied.

Just days after that encounter, Craddock stalked the corridors of the city building where he worked, shooting 16 people and killing 12 of them before police fatally wounded him.

The Virginia Beach police and the Chicago firm that conducted an independent investigation into the mass shooting have stressed that they haven't uncovered a definitive motive for Craddock's actions.

But while Craddock didn't leave behind a note, his actions and words leading up to the May 31 shooting paint a fairly clear road map.

First, he suffered from paranoia, believed others were out to get him and wasn't

See SHOOTER/Page 6

BY TIM EBERLY, PETER COUTU AND ALISSA SKELTON

From Ford to Kennedy, lessons learned

Construction of new carrier, to be christened Saturday, is ahead of schedule and less costly

By HUGH LESSIG  
Staff writer

A few years ago, Mike Butler was all ears when a rigger suggested a way to cut construction costs on the aircraft carrier John F. Kennedy.

Instead of using cranes to assemble giant ship pieces at the Newport News Shipbuilding yard, a forklift with an extendable boom could do some work faster and just as well, the rigger said.

After some thought, Butler went forklift shopping.



JONATHON GRUENKE/STAFF

The aircraft carrier John F. Kennedy, built at Newport News Shipbuilding, will be christened this Saturday by Caroline Kennedy, the daughter of the ship's namesake.

"If I don't act on these kind of things, it'll never happen," Butler recalled thinking at the time. "We went out and did it. And today, five

Inside

Two former captains look back on their time leading the original Kennedy. Page 4

years later, we've probably got half a dozen of them out there."

Butler is the program director for the Kennedy, or CVN-79. The ship will be christened at the Newport News Shipyard this Saturday, when Caroline Kennedy smashes a bottle of sparkling wine against a gray steel hull that is longer than three football fields.

It is the only place in the country where a ceremony like this happens. The shipyard, a division of Huntington Ingalls Industries, is the sole builder of nuclear-powered aircraft carriers for the U.S. Navy.

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ODU DROPS FINALE

The Monarchs' season, and perhaps the tenure of coach Bobby Wilder, ends with a loss to Charlotte. SPORTS

Cloudy, rainy

High: 64. Low: 41

Details on the back page of Sports



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# SHOOTER

Continued from 1

getting mental health treatment. He and his wife divorced. His performance at work had dropped to the point that he had a documented paper trail of his missteps.

And two days before the mass shooting, Craddock faced a crisis at work. He had screwed up again, so much so that he considered using his own money to make the problem go away.

Instead, he chose a path that appeared to have been on his mind for a while — murder.

“When I heard about the shooting, I just said, ‘You know, I bet that was DeWayne,’” said a former co-worker of Craddock’s at a private engineering firm, speaking on condition of anonymity. “We all kind of felt like he was a loose cannon. It made sense in my mind.”

## Control and order

Try to find someone at his workplace who was close to Craddock.

You won’t. Dozens of interviews with city workers who knew Craddock didn’t turn up a single close friend. And those who could shed light on who Craddock was as a person — including his mother and ex-wife — aren’t granting interviews.

So the portrait of the 40-year-old Craddock, like the story of his rampage, must be stitched together by people who only knew him a little — and none who knew him a lot.

Charlene, who asked to be identified only by her first name, said she befriended Craddock because she felt like he needed a friend. He was one of the only black engineers in the city’s public utilities department, she said.

A former co-worker, speaking on condition of anonymity, said he made a concerted effort to talk with Craddock, even though conversation didn’t come easy.

“I kind of felt that he needed to be treated gentler than the others,” the engineer said. “I just kind of felt that he was a little more vulnerable.”

Craddock was the kind of man who liked things just so. He was a meticulous dresser and kept himself in tip-top physical shape. When police searched his Virginia Beach condo, it was in pristine condition.

That need for control might have played into the unraveling of his marriage. His ex-wife told police that Craddock increasingly kept her from seeing friends and family during their relationship, according to a source with knowledge of the investigation. Toward the end of their marriage, Craddock was “crazy” and “schizophrenic,” the ex-wife told police.

If Craddock craved control and order, the last few years of his life were anything but. He and his wife separated in 2016. She got their two dogs in the divorce and moved to Durham, North Carolina.

He stayed in the condo, stopped attending family gatherings and began stockpiling weapons.

Though never a superstar at work, Craddock’s work performance slipped a few years ago.

He got dinged in January 2017 for failing to deposit 13 checks from vendors, then got put on a performance improvement plan five months later. Among the issues raised that year with Craddock: making inappropriate remarks to co-workers, being insubordinate at times and not communicating well with citizens about city projects.

He successfully completed the improvement plan, but his work troubles continued. He received a written reprimand in July 2018 for poor performance. A month later, he got an “improvement required” on his annual evaluation, the first time he had received such a score.

Craddock believed he was being “railroaded” and “sandbagged,” according to an investigative report about the mass shooting by security risk management firm Hillard Heintze. He felt he was being held to higher standards than oth-



SARAH HOLM/STAFF FILE

People gather at a memorial near the municipal center for the Virginia Beach shooting victims on June 2.

ers at his pay grade, that he was underpaid and didn’t get the recognition he deserved.

He also expressed concerns about racism at work — not the first time he felt that way at a job.

“I feel that I am being placed at a different level of scrutiny than my peers,” he wrote in response to his 2018 evaluation, according to the Heintze report. “I [sic] clearly being asked in some cases to meet a level of expectation that did not exist with the performance of my job.”

Craddock filed a formal grievance, but halted the process. It’s not clear why he didn’t follow through, but the Heintze report said the city’s grievance process might leave employees feeling as if “they have little recourse to address what they perceive as unfair or abusive actions.”

The general take on Craddock by his colleagues is that he was somewhere between an average and subpar engineer. A former co-worker said Craddock took meticulous notes. Others said he struggled to find solutions when his projects had hiccups.

But he did have a hand in some of the department’s key projects, such as overseeing the massive Lake Gaston pipeline, which can deliver millions of gallons of water to Virginia Beach daily.

Most co-workers didn’t know that Craddock’s marriage had fallen apart. Only after the shooting did they look back and notice that the already standoffish Craddock had become more withdrawn around that time.

## “Something started being off”

Even compared to other engineers — they consider themselves an introverted bunch — Craddock wasn’t a social butterfly. If his office door wasn’t closed, he’d keep it open only a crack, as if to tell co-workers, “Come in, but only if you must.”

Looking back, Charlene said she saw the change in Craddock. When she would joke with him, the most he would give her in return was a faint smile.

“Something started being off,” said Charlene. “He just seemed distressed. Something had changed.”

It got worse around the end of 2018 or early 2019. Craddock inexplicably stopped talking to her for months, refusing to even acknowledge her presence when she popped her head in his office to say hello.

“Finally, I just quit saying hi to him,” she said.

Beginning the year he and his wife separated, Craddock purchased a total of six firearms — four .45-caliber handguns and two rifles.

He also appeared to develop an interest in mass shootings. In the year prior to his death, he conducted at least five searches on his cellphone to websites that contained articles about shootings in places like Texas and North Carolina.

Armed to the teeth at home, Craddock still avoided confrontation at work — even eye contact. To some, he was just the oddball who ignored them when they passed in the hallway. But his cold behavior rubbed some the wrong way.

One construction inspec-

tor, speaking on condition of anonymity, said he had harsh words for Craddock on the first project they worked together.

He said Craddock wouldn’t make eye contact with him or make any effort to engage in conversation about the project. Craddock would just stare at his computer while the inspector talked. The third time that happened, the inspector closed the door to Craddock’s office and gave the engineer a piece of his mind.

“I told him that his mannerisms and attitude to me are telling me that you would just as soon wish I’d shut up and get the (expletive) out of your office,” the inspector said.

Craddock told him he avoided eye contact because he didn’t like confrontation, the inspector said.

“I said, ‘It’s not being confrontational to have eye contact. That’s respect. Man to man, you talk to each other. I want to see that you’re engaging in conversation and feel some worth in what I have to say,’” the inspector said.

## He “believed everybody was against him”

In a September public briefing about the investigation, Virginia Beach police said they hadn’t uncovered a motive for Craddock’s actions, a deputy chief reported to the City Council.

But the deputy chief also told council members that Craddock’s family members said he was paranoid. It was the most peculiar detail, plopped in the middle of the briefing, with no additional information.

Two months later, the Heintze report offered more about Craddock’s paranoia. Someone close to him said Craddock had the type of personality “that believed everybody was against him.”

At a restaurant once, Craddock believed other patrons “were talking about him and wanted to hurt him,” according to the report.

One incoherent email that Craddock wrote, but never sent to anyone, shed some light on the demons in his head.

“Now the pattern is to first ingratiate new or remote employees (2 or so contacts) and then have them reject you,” he wrote. “Same as usual, but they are running out of employees to reject you. Generally rejection is the stressor after making you fatigue through sleep deprivation.”

Craddock’s paranoia might have been festering for more than a decade.

About 15 years ago, he worked at the Virginia Beach consulting firm MSA. Just a couple of years removed from college at Old Dominion University, Craddock shared cubicle space with another engineer.

One day, that engineer returned to his desk to find a sticky note on his computer monitor.

“Don’t mess with any of my stuff,” the note read.

The engineer grabbed the note and turned to face Craddock, who was sitting in his chair.

“DeWayne, I didn’t touch any of your stuff,” the engineer told him.

“Yeah, you did,” Craddock said, according to the engineer. “All my stuff’s been moved.”

“DeWayne, I didn’t touch any of your stuff,” the engi-

neer repeated.

Craddock’s paranoia might also explain why he had at least three cameras positioned in windows at his second-story condo, the Heintze report stated.

Adding to his stress might have been a difficult workplace.

During its investigation, the Heintze firm reported that it heard repeated concerns about a hostile work environment, specifically for blacks, who feel the playbook is different for them than their white colleagues.

Employees described the workplace to The Virginian-Pilot as cliquish, unprofessional and sometimes cantankerous. If you aren’t part of the in-crowd, well, God help you, they say.

Make no mistake, Craddock wasn’t an insider. Some people who worked alongside him would make derogatory comments behind his back or roll their eyes when his name came up, said one former department employee. At work-related functions, Craddock would be the employee we’ve all seen before — the one sitting by himself.

Even the employees who

contend the workplace is toxic say those issues don’t justify what he did. Nothing could. If things were that bad, Craddock could have just found a new job, one former co-worker said.

“It’s not hard to find a job (as an engineer),” she said. “Why did you choose death?”

The mistake, which Craddock believed could cost him his job, appears to have pushed him over the edge.

He had submitted an invoice for \$3,027 worth of work performed by a contractor without following the proper steps.

Craddock — who already had a pattern of not following financial procedures — was informed that he improperly authorized the work and had violated a city ordinance.

The night before the shooting, he was shaken up. He sought advice from a co-worker, saying he was too upset to meet with purchasing officials in person and discussed using his own money to resolve the matter.

That evening, Craddock had two other phone conversations that authorities

“When I heard about the shooting, I just said, ‘You know, I bet that was DeWayne.’ We all kind of felt like he was a loose cannon. It made sense in my mind.”

— a former co-worker of DeWayne Craddock’s at a private engineering firm

viewed as goodbyes, with his ex-wife and his mother, according to a source familiar with the police investigation. He hadn’t spoken to either of them for some time, ignoring his mother’s attempts to communicate for several months.

Craddock told his mother he was suffering from insomnia and complained about his supervisors. He told his ex-wife that he wanted to remain friends.

Though Craddock might have feared the worst from his job blunder, he wouldn’t have been fired. And his job performance was on an upward trajectory — he was expected to receive a “meets expectations” score on his evaluation this year and his emails showed some praise from supervisors.

But Craddock didn’t see any of that. Whatever he was struggling with, in his mind, was much bigger. He wasn’t going to just quit his job and go elsewhere. No, that wouldn’t do. He decided that people needed to die. And they wouldn’t see it coming, just as he wrote in the nonsensical email that he never sent.

“(Y)ou don’t threaten when you actually plan to take action, you just do it usually by surprise,” he wrote.

Staff writer Gary Harki contributed to this report.

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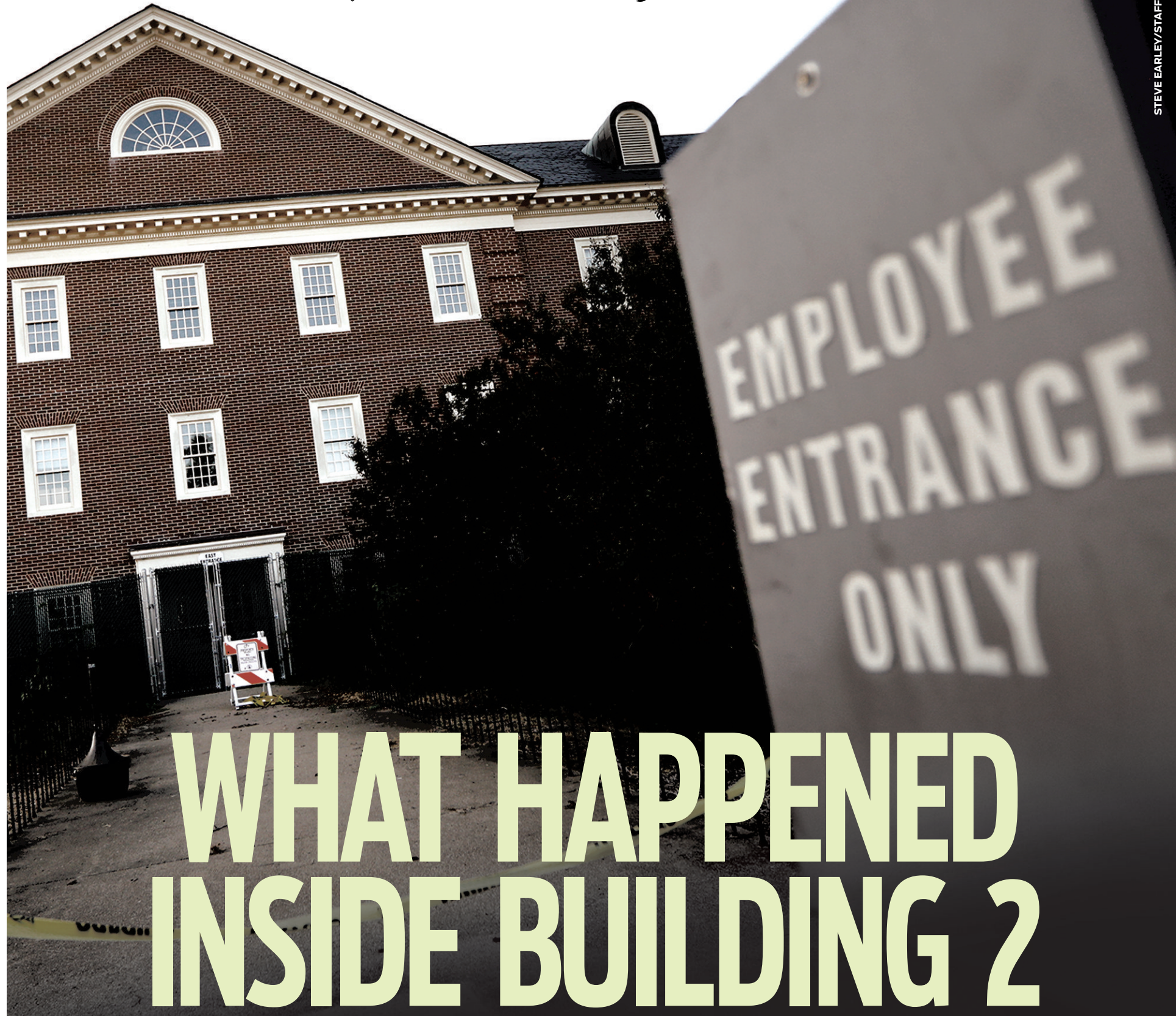
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# The Virginian-Pilot

STEVE EARLEY/STAFF



## WHAT HAPPENED INSIDE BUILDING 2

It was a run-of-the-mill Friday in a sleepy government office. 45 minutes of bullets, bloodshed and terror changed everything.

BY TIM EBERLY, ALISSA SKELTON AND PETER COUTU

**VIRGINIA BEACH** — As the city worker left for home, ready to start her weekend, there was her colleague DeWayne Craddock, standing in the empty hallway with his back against the wall.

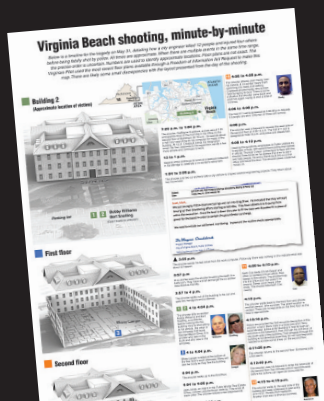
She startled him — he pushed quickly off the wall — but she thought nothing of it at the time. Have a good weekend DeWayne, she said with a wave.

He didn't respond. Here we go again, she thought. DeWayne's being DeWayne. It wasn't the first time Craddock gave her the silent treatment.

So Charlene, who asked to be identi-

**MORE INSIDE:**  
How and why this timeline was assembled. [Page 6](#)

Full-page graphic showing how event transpired. [Page 8](#)



fied by only her first name, turned and headed for the door to the stairwell. Then she heard five “pops” and felt things whizz past her right ear.

DeWayne's messing around, shooting a confetti gun at her, she thought — the kind she remembered from her childhood. She swiveled around to give him a hard time.

But this was no toy. Craddock was standing in a crouch, pointing a real gun at her with both hands. The man she considered a friend was shooting at her.

See [BUILDING 2/](#)Page 6

### LIBERTY TO PAY \$3M, MAKE FRAUD FIXES

Business, Page 18

Mostly sunny

High: 56  
Low: 37



Details on the back page of Sports



## New generation puts tech-savvy stamp on carriers

By **HUGH LESSIG**  
Staff writer

The aircraft carrier John F. Kennedy contains more than 9 million feet of cable. A single strand can generate 50 to 60 pieces of paper to document its route. That is, if you depend on paper.

Ryan Szanto would rather call up those plans on a laptop.

As he stands in a power distribution room on Kennedy, his laptop

**CHRISTENING COVERAGE:**  
Go to [PilotOnline.com](#) Saturday for photos, video and more from the Kennedy's big day.

screen comes to life and lists dozens upon dozens of individual cables in a grid view, like line items in a budget. He taps one and up pops a drawing that highlights its 600-foot path through bulkheads and compartments.

“This is how I learned to pull

cable,” he said.

A network electrician at Newport News Shipbuilding, Szanto started work last summer, part of a hiring wave that saw the company expand its workforce to step up production of nuclear-powered aircraft carriers and submarines.

Relying less on paper blueprints and more on digital plans is a way to pick up the pace, company officials say. As the christening of the Kennedy draws near, officials say this

generational change will allow them to cut costs and increase speed without sacrificing quality or safety.

The high-tech approach has won over veteran shipbuilders who are not digital natives, and for whom reading blueprints was second nature.

“I'm an old salty dog,” said 37-year shipbuilder Jeff Gravely, the

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## BUILDING 2

Continued from 1

Charlene doesn't know how she escaped through the stairwell door. She doesn't know if Craddock fired any more shots at her. The trauma of that moment was too much for her memory to bear. The next thing she remembers is flying down the stairs.

Hers is one of the many harrowing accounts from people in Building 2 when Craddock mowed down co-workers as if life was a meaningless video game.

Some, like Charlene, encountered Craddock while he carried out the May 31 mass shooting and lived to tell the story. Many others hid under desks, barricaded themselves in offices and sent text messages to loved ones not knowing if it would be their last. Some haven't returned to work.

Some are never coming back.

### Premeditation and spontaneity

When Craddock left for work about 7 a.m. that day, there had already been concern at the office about someone bringing violence to Building 2. But it wasn't Craddock people were worried about. It was another man — a co-worker of Craddock's — who had been fired the day before.

Shortly before the shooting, the man stated that it wouldn't be surprising if "someone came in and shot up the place," according to an investigative report about the mass shooting by security risk management firm Hillard Heintze.

Kate Nixon, an engineering supervisor whom Craddock would kill hours later, had considered bringing a gun to work.

She didn't.

Neither did the fired employee.

The one who did is the one many didn't expect.

Though management knew Craddock thought he was being treated unfairly at work — and had gone through a divorce — the Heintze investigation concluded that he didn't exhibit any warning signs that could have alerted the city to the attack. He made no threats, displayed no violent behavior.

Building 2 is a three-story brick building located at Virginia Beach's municipal center in Princess Anne. Even for government, it houses some of the city's sleeper functions, such as managing stormwater drainage and providing water and sewer service.

Nearly 400 employees worked there. Craddock had an office on the second floor, in the public utilities department. He'd been an engineer for the city of Virginia Beach for nine years, making \$83,283 a year.

So far, no information has surfaced that pinpoints when Craddock decided he was going to carry out the shooting. But evidence indicates he had been planning it for some time.

Craddock ordered a bulletproof vest online about seven weeks beforehand. He searched for maps of Building 2 a week and a half before.

One could make a strong case that, around midmorning that day, Craddock decided that there was no going back. He resigned by email at 10:31 a.m., right after searching the internet again for maps of Building 2.

In an awkwardly written resignation letter, Craddock stated he wanted to "vacant (sic) my position" and, in the next sentence, "relieve" his position due to personal reasons.

Word of Craddock's resignation leaked. Craddock got upset when he found out that others knew.

A co-worker talked to Craddock about his future plans. Craddock told him that he wanted to take some time off before looking for another job. He also said Craddock became emotional, teared up and thanked him for supporting him during his divorce.

Somewhat, though, Craddock went about much of his shift as if it was a run-of-the-mill Friday. He sent a handful of work-related emails and accompanied his supervisor, Randy Allen, and another co-worker to three project sites for routine inspections. The group returned to the office at 3:06 p.m., according to police.

Even Craddock's last work email, sent at 3:55, five minutes before he started shooting people, was all business. It was about a project to install a new pump station.

"We just swung by (the project site) ..." Craddock started off the email.

He went on to mention an aspect of the project that was ramping up the following Monday, with no indication he could very well be dead by then.

Then Craddock brushed his teeth, something he did every day at work. It might have been his final act of normalcy.

Joe Scott, an engineering technician, popped into the bathroom before leaving for the day. Craddock was at the sink. They made small talk. Nothing seemed amiss, Scott said.

"I washed my hands, told him to have a good weekend," Scott said. "He says to me, 'Have a good weekend.' And I walked one way, and he walked the other."

Craddock's actions leading up to the shooting reveal an odd mix of premeditation and spontaneity, as if he was spurred to act sooner than expected. The bulletproof vest hadn't even been delivered yet.

"It seems kind of weird that somebody would brush their teeth, go down to their car, get guns and start shooting people," said Bob Houseknecht, an engineering technician. "I think that if I was in that kind of mood, the last thing I'd be worried about is whether my breath was fresh."

### Editor's note

To explain how the mass shooting unfolded May 31 in Virginia Beach's Municipal Center Building 2, The Virginian-Pilot used the police department's timeline, the report prepared by security risk management firm Hillard Heintze, witnesses who were in the building that day, and other sources familiar with the investigations.

The Pilot has crafted this timeline with an abundance of sourcing and painstaking rigor. Indeed, reporters took so much care that they found and pointed out an error in the police department's timeline, which the police then fixed.

The Pilot also took the extraordinary step of sending its timeline to Virginia Beach officials. They replied that it contained errors but refused to point out what they found to be inaccurate.

After much consideration and debate, The Pilot is publishing its timeline. There is still much we don't know and the sequence of events within time frames may not be precise. Part of any newspaper's mission is to tell the stories of the people in its communities, and to reveal as much of the truth as it can find.

The families of the 12 killed and four wounded during the shooting had their lives shattered. The Pilot has treated them with respect and sensitivity. But they were not the only victims. Many city workers suffer PTSD. Some have found it difficult to return to work. Others simply left their jobs. Their voices deserve to be heard as well.

### 45 minutes of terror

Craddock retrieved two handguns from his car, along with a backpack that had ammunition, around 4 p.m.

The former Army reservist knew how to use a gun. Craddock received weapons training with the Army National Guard and regularly practiced at local shooting ranges, mostly going alone or with a family member.

He shot and killed his first victim in a vehicle in the parking lot. The second was near an entrance to the building. A witness spotted a man bleeding on the ground and a man with a gun in his hand walking into Building 2.

Then Craddock killed administrative assistant Missy Langer, who previously played with Craddock on a beach volleyball team, in a stairwell.

Langer's killing proved particularly traumatic for many who fled the building that day because of how visible she was. Her body, at the bottom of a stairwell, was unavoidable for those descending the steps, as they had to step over her to get past.

If Craddock's actions were fueled by grudges against people with whom he worked closely — he did shoot several engineering supervisors — it's notable he went to the third floor first.

Some initially said that Craddock had been passed over for a job in the Public Works Department, which resides on the third floor, and was exacting revenge on those who prevented him from getting it.

Craddock hadn't applied for any jobs, The Virginian-Pilot confirmed, but he had expressed frustration to someone that management had promoted others who had less time on the job than him.

Others said Craddock had a romantic interest in one of the victims on the third floor and that she had not only spurned his advances but also reported it to a supervisor.

The Pilot hasn't been able to confirm that. The city said it has no record of any formal complaints against Craddock, and the Heintze investigation didn't uncover evidence of unwanted advances.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that LaQuita Brown, 39, was the first victim slain on the third floor.

Summer intern Jack Jones was listening to music while doing data entry when he saw Brown walk past his doorway. They exchanged smiles.

Jones, 21, had only been interning in the office for two weeks, and Brown had been helpful and welcoming.

Walking about two steps behind Brown was Craddock. Jones and Craddock made

eye contact, too. Jones had seen Craddock around, but didn't know his name at the time. He said he doesn't know whether Brown knew that Craddock was walking behind her.

Soon after, Jones heard a bang. It sounded like a nail gun.

He walked into the hallway and saw Craddock standing in Brown's office, with his arm extended toward Brown. Jones couldn't see Craddock's hands — or the gun.

He heard another bang. "The second (bang) was seeing him kill LaQuita," Jones said.

When Craddock turned to leave, Jones saw the gun in his hand.

He ran away, screaming "Gun, gun, gun!"

### Hiding and fighting

Engineer Steven Poe heard Jones' screams from his third-floor office. He turned off his lights and crouched behind his desk.

"Then I started hearing shots," said Poe, 35.

He couldn't tell where they were coming from. He heard some people had gathered around the front desk, not far from his office. Poe felt like a sitting duck — his office didn't lock — so he went out there.

"I was just going to take my chances and see if I could get to an exit," he said.

A couple of the other men near the front desk had a view of a main hallway. Suddenly, one of the men saw Craddock, who walked toward them, aiming his gun and shooting.

"Oh (expletive)!" the man yelled, and they all scattered.

As Poe ran, people popped their heads out of office doorways, trying to figure out what was going on. He ran into a co-worker's office, and they dragged her desk in front of the door and leaned against it.

"In our minds, we thought that he was going door to door executing people," said Poe, a married father of two young boys. "And we were getting ready to give everything we had to brace ourselves against the door."

Craddock killed four others and wounded two more on the third floor, most of them in the area around Brown's office, before going to the second floor.

Engineer Algen Canonizado, who was walking to his second-floor office after using a printer, said Craddock stepped into his field of vision in a hallway but turned and walked around a corner in the opposite direction.

Within a minute, Canonizado, 46, heard six gunshots and a woman screaming. He thinks it might have been Nixon, whose office was around that corner.

Craddock and Nixon had a strained relationship, according to Nixon's husband, Jason Nixon. She told her husband that Craddock was chauvinistic and did sloppy engineering work.

Canonizado, who took cover under his

desk, had left his office door open. A woman came in seeking refuge. On the other side of his office's back wall, Canonizado heard a violent struggle. He believes it was Craddock fighting with Joshua Hardy, one of the deceased whose cubicle was on the other side of the wall.

"A lot of wrestling, struggling, bumping around the cubicle walls," Canonizado said. "I think Josh was trying to grab the gun."

Hiding under a desk, another engineer smelled the gunsmoke that wafted into her nearby office.

"I will never forget that smell," she said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The struggle between Craddock and Hardy might explain why Hardy was shot more times than the other victims — 10, according to his family.

Once it ended, Canonizado heard one of the men, presumably Craddock, taunted the other.

"Gotch you, mother (expletive)," Craddock said, according to Canonizado.

After Craddock moved on, Canonizado heard Hardy praying and asking, "Why? Why?"

### 'I'm going in'

By the time the first 911 call came in, Craddock had moved to the second floor and was shooting Nixon and Hardy — the 11th and 12th people shot that day, according to the police timeline.

Then the city's emergency communications center started getting flooded with 911 calls from employees in Building 2.

In one chilling call, a dispatcher got information from the caller, heard eight loud gunshots, then the line went silent, according to the Heintze report.

It didn't take long for officers to respond; the police department's headquarters is 800 feet from Building 2.

Little is known about the four officers who entered the building first. The police haven't released their names, divulging only that two of them are detectives and two are K-9 officers.

One detail is clear. In a country where mass shootings are becoming more frequent, and where some officers have let fear get the best of them, these four didn't hesitate.

One of the officers could be heard on the police scanner before they went into the building. He sounds out of breath.

"Do we have any idea where the shooter is at?" he asks. "I'm going in."

When those officers entered the building at 4:10 p.m., Craddock was returning to the third floor, where he shot one person, and then quickly went back to the second floor, according to the police timeline.

The officers moved as a team through the building. They heard gunshots on the second floor.

It appears that it took about six minutes for the officers to find and confront Craddock.

The officers' inability to get through doors that required keycard access might have slowed their movement. The police eventually got employee cards, but officers also had to breach doors at times.

Craddock shot two more colleagues — his last victims — at 4:15 p.m. One of those men died; the other jumped out a second-story office window and survived.

Less than a minute later, the officers confronted Craddock. They found him behind a secured interior door with a window, the Heintze report stated.

One of the officers shot Craddock — and Craddock shot one of them — but it's not clear whether those shots were fired through the closed door.

"Officer hit! Officer hit!" one of them said over the radio.

The officer's bulletproof vest stopped the bullet and his comrades dragged him to safety.

"We have the suspect behind a barricaded door," an officer barked on the radio. "We need a keycard access right now."

See **BUILDING 2/Page 9**

"In our minds, we thought that he was going door to door executing people. And we were getting ready to give everything we had to brace ourselves against the door."

Steven Poe, who barricaded himself into an office during the shooting



KAITLIN MCKEOWN/STAFF

Civil engineer Steven Poe sits on his front porch on Oct. 22. Poe survived the shooting by barricading himself in an office. He says the incident changed his perspective. "Very grateful to be here, grateful for every minute I get to spend with my family," he said.

# BUILDING 2

Continued from 6

It's an unsurprising end for the man who avoided confrontation — shooting through a wooden door at officers he couldn't see.

For Craddock, it was a decidedly defensive position, as he shifted from taking peoples' lives to prolonging his own.

The police released a photo of the spot where the gunfight happened. The door Craddock hid behind is riddled with bullet holes, some from bullets that were coming and others that were going.

At some point, Craddock retreated down a hallway, away from the door.

The police department's SWAT Team finally got to Craddock, even though no one had officially requested the team's presence that day. Team members had been at the Oceanfront, preparing for a Memorial Day festival, when they got word of the shooting and "self-deployed," according to the Heintze report.

When officers descended upon Craddock, he still had some fight left in him, kicking at them.

The police haven't offered any details on Craddock's gunshot wound; they've only said that officers tried to save his life once he was in custody.

## A workplace no longer

For city workers in hiding, the sound of police dogs barking was a welcome one. For many, it was the first sign that the police were there. The employees would soon be jarred from their hiding places by officers banging on doors.

Poe and his co-worker weren't sure if it was a ruse to lure them out of their office, so they asked a 911 operator if it was safe to come out. Yes, the dispatcher assured them.

When they came out, "we had to put our hands up and run," Poe said.

As Poe and others were herded out of the building, they caught glimpses of what had become of Building 2.

It was a workplace no longer. Cabinets



STEVE EARLEY/STAFF

The shooting left a mess of debris, bullet holes and blood in Building 2 at the Virginia Beach Municipal Center, seen here in September.

had been toppled. Binders were strewn about. Debris covered the floor. Bullet holes in walls and doors served as ugly markers for the winding path that Craddock took around the building.

And the blood. That was the worst part. It was everywhere, especially the stairwells.

## VB Strong

The shooting was, at the time, the deadliest mass shooting of the year in the United States. Its impact locally was so powerful that some called for the building to be demolished, as if the violence and bloodshed had rendered it uninhabitable.

The slogan "VB Strong" became the

rallying cry for the city, so much so that one can hardly go a day without seeing it somewhere: on bumper stickers, roadside signs, clothing and even tattoos.

The people who worked in Building 2 are recovering at their own pace, seeing therapists, suffering from anxiety or taking medication.

Charlene, the one who somehow avoided Craddock's bullets, is doing all three. She hasn't been to work since that day. She's on medical leave. She said she's been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and has sparingly

## Get the whole story

Go to [PilotOnline.com](http://PilotOnline.com) to read the first part of The Pilot's series on the mass shooting.

left her house over the past five months.

It's difficult enough dealing with the stress of someone you thought was a friend trying to kill you. But there's more to it with Craddock. He killed some people he knew and some he didn't. He came across some on his manhunt, looked right at them, and chose not to shoot. With others, he decided it was their day to die.

And only he knew why.

Staff writer Gary Harki contributed to this report.

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