

A Year of Pain: Victims Struggle After Brooklyn Subway Shooting

Introduction

The Brooklyn Subway Shooting on April 22, 2022 has changed the lives of those impacted. Although there was no fatality, at least 23 individuals were injured. On this day, Frank James, the attacker, boarded the subway at the new Utrecht stop; after three stops, smoke grenades detonated by James filled the subway with smoke, after which he opened fire.¹

The lives of those impacted by the mass shooting in the Brooklyn subway station have inflicted psychological and physical wounds that may take time to heal. Rudy Perez, Aroldo Gonzalez, Houari Benkada, and every other person present at the time of the shooting must learn to cope and heal from the negative effects caused by the mass shooting. The Brooklyn subway mass shooting is just one of 648 shootings across the U.S. in 2022, which shows a need for stricter gun policies and surveillance in order to improve safety for the people.¹

Facts about the Case

The “person of interest” was connected to Frank R. James, who had traveled from Philadelphia in a U-Haul van carrying a Glock 9-millimeter handgun, 3 ammunition magazines, a hatchet, fireworks, and liquid gasoline.² Frank James carried out his planned attack on the morning of April 22, 2022. After the shooting took place and the train had stopped, people on board fled along with James.³ Those injured waited for medical assistance to arrive; meanwhile, the suspect was out on the run. James's disappearance led to a major manhunt with a \$50,000-dollar reward for leads on the gunman and concerns for one's safety when using the city's transit systems.² 64-year-old Frank James had since pleaded guilty after turning himself in. He is facing a life sentence on 10 accounts and 10 years for an 11th count for discharging a firearm during an act of violence.⁴

Along with the negative impacts of the mass shooting, other pressing issues emerged that challenged the infrastructure and surveillance system of both Glock and the NYC MTA. Glock, a major weapon manufacturing company, manufactured the weapon used during the attack by James. A victim of the attack filed a lawsuit against Glock. During the time of the shooting, none of the cameras in the subway were in full operation, making it difficult to identify the suspect. Consequently, trust between Mayor Eric Adams and Gov. Kathy Hochul and their efforts to promote the return of the subway system after the pandemic became more complicated. The safety of the city subway system was questioned, especially by New Yorkers who rode the train regularly.³

Epidemiological aspects of the Event

The Brooklyn subway mass shooting claimed no lives but did leave approximately 23 individuals hospitalized. After the smoke bombs detonated, people scrambled together to avoid the smoke, unfortunately making them easier targets for James.³ 10 people suffered from gunshot wounds, and the other 13 suffered from injuries related to smoke inhalation, falls, and panic attacks.² Shootings have taken a dark turn in the United States, with a total of 172 mass shootings in 2023, that represent at least 4 or more people killed or injured.¹ Frank James had shot 33 rounds, and 16 of these bullets struck the passengers⁵, injuring but not killing any of them.

Management of the Event

EMS Services were called upon after the train had stopped to aid those injured by the attack. The first to respond to the scene were four Maimonides Medical Center (MMC) EMS crews.⁶ Assisting the MMC EMS crew were firefighters and police officers in efforts to quickly triage and care for those wounded.

Communications of the Event

There were a variety of publications from the press and major news articles (i.e. The New York Times) the same day of the event and in the period following the event. Most of the publications focused on outlining the major details that happened during and after the mass shooting. Articles published following Frank James's court trials outlined more information about the day of the event and his side of the story. Nonetheless, each publication provided consistent descriptions of the event, the victims' stories, and Frank James's court trial.

Summary

The Brooklyn Subway mass shooting brought out many challenges that are still pervasive across the United States. The lives of those 10 individuals injured in the attack and every single other person present at the time will have to cope and heal from the physical and mental wounds inflicted. The need for a stronger surveillance system within the NYC MTA subway stations is an important issue that must be considered, especially when many New Yorkers rely on this system for transportation. There is still a need for change to ensure the residents of New York City who rely on the city's transport system remain safe from harm, now and in the future.

References

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