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NINA MOINI: A new *Minnesota Star Tribune* investigation is providing the most in-depth timeline yet of the law enforcement response following the killings of state Representative Melissa Hortman and her husband Mark, and the shootings that injured state Senator John Hoffman and his wife, Yvette. The shootings led to a 43-hour statewide manhunt for the suspect, Vance Peltier, who is currently in federal custody awaiting trial. *Minnesota Star Tribune* reporter Jeff Day wrote the story with a team and joins me now. Thanks so much for being with us, Jeff.

JEFF DAY: Thank you, Nina.

NINA MOINI: I made sure to say with the team because I went to the story online. I encourage everyone to check it out. It's very interactive. It's very detailed. You can tell just how many people's great work went into this. So thank you for that.

Why did you all feel that it was important to go in-depth about law enforcement response, in particular to this tragedy over that time period? And what did it reveal?

JEFF DAY: I think the reason is fairly straightforward. It was such a shocking act of violence. It obviously was unprecedented in this state. It was one of the rare acts of this level of political violence in the country.

And the main reason that we decided to dig into it was because we felt that there were questions that were unanswered from things like the federal indictment against Boelter, from the information that was shared by law enforcement in the immediate wake of these attacks. And I think that has proven out that the more string that we pull, the more questions we find. And then we've just sought to get as much information as we can. And in my mind, I think that that's a worthy cause because of the sheer level of terror that was unleashed and again, the unprecedented nature of who was targeted, how they were targeted, and what exactly was the response to it in real time.

NINA MOINI: And because it was such a long period of time, that 43 hours, and it was in different counties and different areas of the state, this manhunt, so to speak, involved several local, state, and federal agencies together, just to remind our audience. So I imagine you had to put out a lot of different records requests and obtain all of this information, piece it together over time. What was that process like?

JEFF DAY: It was intensive. It involved our attorneys getting involved at times to ask where our requests had gone, why they weren't being handled in a timely fashion. It then required us to circle back with people that we had asked questions of previously once we received new information. I think that we had core questions-- things like basic questions like where were the helicopters to support the search was a big thing in my mind, especially once we learned that 90 minutes had passed between the two shootings, because I don't know if you'll recall.

But prior to who was then acting US Attorney Joe Thompson having a press conference the Monday after Belcher was arrested, the sensation we had was that the Hoffmans had been shot, and then the Hortmans had been shot. And it was only at that press conference that we learned there was this wide swath of time in the middle where, as we know now, law enforcement was rapidly trying to find the suspect who had shot John Hoffman and his wife, Yvette, and had tried to shoot their daughter. So that was where the questions started to arise. And it's just been a process of asking for information and once we get it, asking more questions.

NINA MOINI: Yeah. There's a quote here that the story concludes with that says several missed opportunities that could have prevented the killings or stopped Belcher's escape. So coming to that conclusion is, I think, part of what you were just talking about with some of the different outstanding questions that you and many others, many Minnesotans, have had for some time.

So I want to see if we can break out a couple of those, beginning with the helicopter, the State Patrol helicopter request. And you mentioned that you had wondered about it at the time. Tell us what happened there.

JEFF DAY: So the first request was made just minutes after the 911 call was placed by Hope Hoffman. And that request was denied. And it would take three hours for a helicopter to get in the air and aid the search for Boelter. The reason that we were given was because of the weather.

And this is a big thing here. I am not a law enforcement oversight official. So what we are trying to do is present questions and then give the answers to our readers to allow them to draw conclusions about how they feel about the process.

The State Patrol said that the weather kept them from launching a helicopter. We present what the weather was that night. It was overcast. It was winds under 10 miles an hour.

I have had conversations with people who fly helicopters that have been involved in law enforcement operations. And one of the tricky things is they can look at the weather and say, this looks like an area where you should be able to fly. The ceiling was high enough. There was an extensive rain, but as the State Patrol has told us, all decisions to launch a helicopter into the sky are dependent on various variables.

And so I think that timeline, that wide swath of time, matters. And this, to me, is a what-if story. I think a lot of Minnesotans feel this way, that what if X had happened? Would something else not have?

And to me, the biggest thing with the idea of having a helicopter in the air is that maybe you catch Boelter on that golf course before he escapes and gets out into the state for another 40-some odd hours, because these helicopters are so incredibly powerful at being able to find people in the night. And so that was one of what-ifs that we were trying to figure out.

NINA MOINI: Yeah, and then also, if you want to tell us the information you were able to find just regarding this encounter with New Hope Police that many Minnesotans will recall there was an encounter, but there was confusion.

JEFF DAY: Yes. And I will just say that because I think it's worth noting here, because we've worked so hard on this, that on Friday, we have a lengthy podcast coming out from our *Central Minnesota* podcast where we dig into this because it has taken us a long time, and we have had conversations with a source familiar with what happened in New Hope, who provided us with the best information we have yet on the mindset of that officer.

And the key element here is what did that officer know at the time? Did they interact with this person outside of Senator Ann Rest's home? What did they know afterward, and what information was shared and when?

So we know that the officer interacts with Boelter. Boelter stares straight ahead, does not respond to questions about what he's doing there. The officer leaves to go continue with the check on Ann Rest. When another officer arrives, that initial responding officer basically speaks to the unease they felt about that initial interaction and circles back. The car is gone.

We were told that that officer shared that information with a supervisor within 20 minutes once that officer apparently learned that Boelter was disguised as a law enforcement officer driving a police-style SUV. There is no indication that that information, that that interaction, if it was shared with a supervisor, it was never shared widely. It is not in the incident report that covers all of the police activity in Hennepin County after the shooting at the Hoffmans' or the shooting at the Hortmans'.

And the other thing to note here is that that argument presupposes that the officer that went to Senator Rest's house had no idea what had happened at the Hoffmans', because dispatch was airing everything that was happening in real time, including that the suspect they were seeking was disguised as law enforcement, was driving a police-style SUV, and was potentially wearing a mask. We are doing our best to present what we have been told, and readers are allowed to do with that information what they will.

NINA MOINI: Yeah, you're trying to connect the dots on what communication there was and if agencies are being forthcoming about what happened. And there obviously is so much to the story, and I hope people do check it out. And we can't go through the whole 43 hours. I just want to say for people that there was a period of time where Boelter was on the golf course behind the Hortmans' home. Some of the decision-making around that time is in question still.

Again, though, your story concludes, some of this tragedy could have been prevented based on the information you found. We know several agencies are part of independent reviews about law enforcement response. There was a report that I think has not yet been released, but I think there are also different levels of internal investigations going on or reviews going on. What is your hope for the outcome of this story? Is it legislation? Is it better coordination in the future? What do you think that people can take away from this reporting?

JEFF DAY: I'm strictly interested in information. I think that in doing this job, I sometimes am surprised at how hard it is to get information out of law enforcement offices, and I think they have their reasons for that. But to me, more information gives more clarity. It gives a greater ability for us to determine things that went right or wrong with the services that we all pay for. And so that's where my mind goes to.

I'm also just curious. I think that because this act shocked our state, because, as Joe Thompson said at the time, it was the stuff of nightmares. Trying to understand what happened is not pointing blame. It is simply trying to understand and to have a better comprehension of all of this.

Because if the ultimate blame lies with the person who carried out the act, who committed these killings and these shootings, OK, but I think we still can learn a lot about how our law enforcement officers and departments respond to these types of situations. Yes, it is unprecedented, but that is the nature of, as I have come to understand it, police work. There are often going to be situations that are unprecedented that you're faced with.

NINA MOINI: Jeff, thanks so much for digging into these questions and sharing your reporting with us. We really appreciate your time.

JEFF DAY: And, Nina, before I go, I have to tell your listeners. We have a designer named Ellie Lin who built this incredible map. It is one of the most-- it's one of the most unique things that I think we've done here. And I really hope that they take time to go on their computer and look at it, because it's an extremely impressive piece of digital design work.

NINA MOINI: It's important information the public should know. So thank you so much, Jeff.

JEFF DAY: Thank you very much.

NINA MOINI: That's *Minnesota Star Tribune* reporter Jeff Day.