

AMERICAN ICON

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

TWO CHILDREN, MANY BULLETS

When multiple bullets from an AR-15 strike one body, they cause a cascade of catastrophic damage. ¶ This is the trauma witnessed by first responders — but rarely, if ever, seen by the public or the policymakers who write gun laws. ¶ The Post determined that there is a public interest in demonstrating the uniquely destructive power of the AR-15 when used to kill. ¶ What follows is a detailed depiction showing the impact of bullets fired from AR-15s at two young victims. It is based on autopsy reports for Noah Pozner and Peter Wang that The Post obtained through public records. ¶ Because of the unusual visual nature of the presentation, The Post took the added step of seeking

— and receiving — the consent of the victims' families before proceeding with this account. The Post offered the families the opportunity to view the depictions in advance of publication, which they declined to do. ¶ The families also declined to be interviewed for this story, but a spokesperson for the Wang family offered a statement explaining why Peter's parents, Hui and Kong Wang, provided their consent to The Post. ¶ "Peter's parents want people to know the truth," said Lin Chen, their niece and Peter's cousin. "They want people to know about Peter. They want people to remember him." ¶ This presentation may be disturbing to some people.



FAMILY PHOTO

Noah Pozner, 6

Newtown, Conn.

Noah was found dead on the floor of Classroom 8 at Sandy Hook Elementary on Dec. 14, 2012. He was 6. He was wearing a red Batman sweatshirt, black pants and black sneakers.

He loved Batman. He was full of energy, his family said, curious and imaginative. He wanted to be an astronaut, and he also wanted to manage a taco factory, because he loved tacos. Noah would tease his sisters that when they went to bed, he was going off "to his third shift" at the factory, so convincingly that they would wake up to make sure he was still in bed.

It was cold that morning when his father, Lenny, dropped him off at school, "but he jumped out not wearing his jacket and he had one arm in one sleeve and his backpack in his other arm, and he was kind of juggling both and walking into the school that way," Lenny Pozner would later testify.

"And that's the last visual I have of Noah."

The first visual that Connecticut State Police Sgt. William Cario has of Noah is this: 15 children and two educators are piled on top of one another in a small school bathroom on the southwest corner of the classroom. Cario proceeded to pull them out one by one. All were dead.

One of them was Noah.

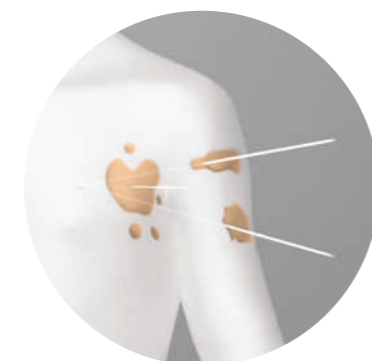
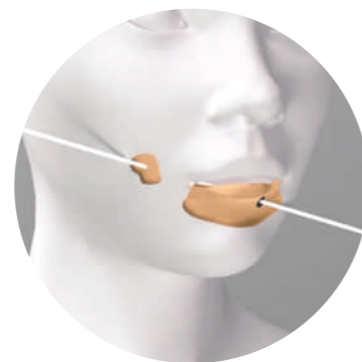


FAMILY PHOTO

Noah Pozner in his Batman Halloween costume in 2010.

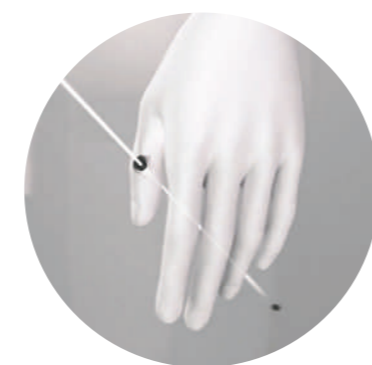
Noah was shot **three times**. The shooter took his mother's AR-15 rifle to the school and fired 80 rounds into the bathroom. Here are the wounds that killed Noah.

The bullet that hit Noah's face caused an almost "complete destruction" of the **lower lip and jaw**, according to 2019 court testimony from chief state medical examiner Wayne Carver.



The bullet that struck Noah's **back** crossed through the center of his **chest**, filling it with blood. It broke apart into fragments.

The bullet that struck Noah's **left thumb** caused the smallest of his wounds. His hand was badly mangled.



Noah's **wounds** were not survivable, Carver testified. "This particular kind of projectile, it's got so much energy that it just breaks up." The pattern of metal over a wide area, he said, "would give me a marker of ... what organs were destroyed and how completely."

Peter was shot **13 times**. The shooter used an AR-15 he bought legally and fired at least 139 rounds. Here are the wounds that killed Peter.

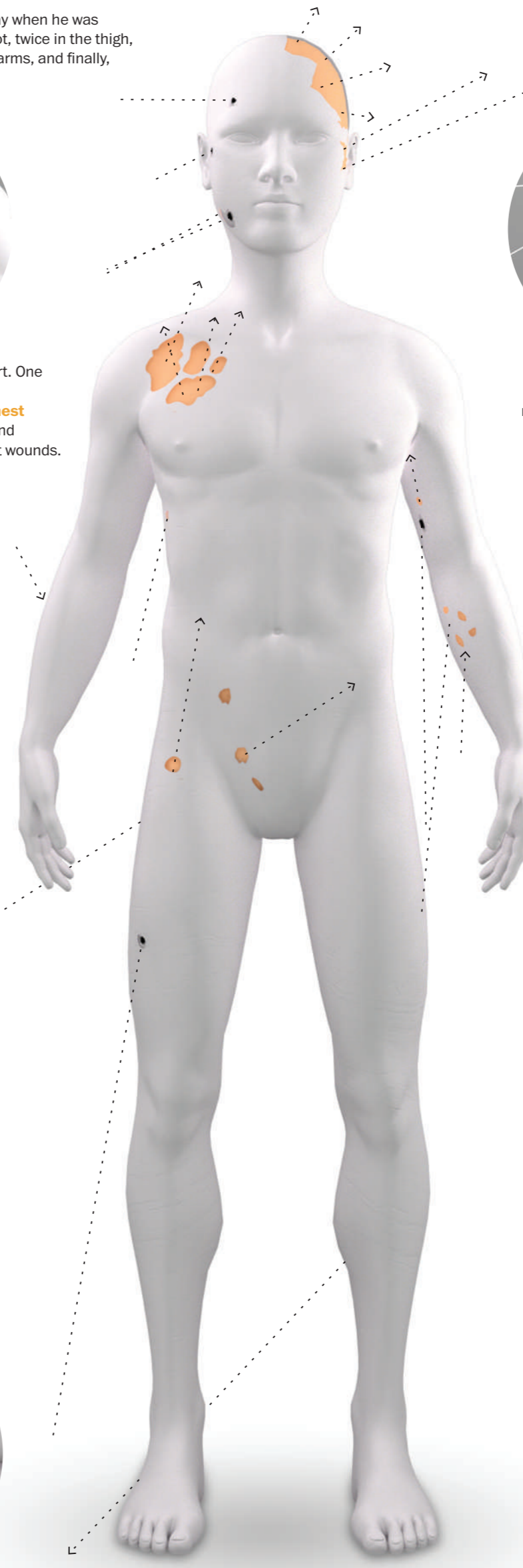
Peter was running down the hallway when he was shot. He was struck once in the foot, twice in the thigh, once in the torso, five times in his arms, and finally, four times in the head.



Two bullets tore Peter's **chest** apart. One entered his torso and flew upward, fragmenting and perforating his **chest muscle**, which bruised his lungs and created a cluster of three large exit wounds.

The other struck the back of his **upper right arm**, pierced the shoulder joint and opened up a gaping hole on the way out.

One of the bullets that hit his thigh fractured his **hip bone** and then broke partially apart before exiting through his **abdomen**.



The four bullets that obliterated Peter's **head** were the last four he received, medical examiner Wendolyn Sneed, who performed the autopsy, testified at Cruz's sentencing trial last year. Surveillance video showed that the killer came closer to him and fired rapidly.

The combined energy of those bullets created exit wounds so "gaping" that the autopsy described his head as "deformed." Blood and brain splatter were found on his upper body and the walls. That degree of destruction is possible only with a high-velocity weapon.



FAMILY PHOTO

Peter Wang, 15

Parkland, Fla.

Peter was found dead in a third-floor hallway of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on Valentine's Day 2018. He was 15. He was wearing his Army JROTC uniform.

He kept notes in his bedroom drawer about his plans. He had joined the military training corps, with its mission to "motivate young people to be better citizens," as an important step toward attending the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

Born in New York to parents from China, he was always helping everyone around him, friends and family said. Once, at Disney World, he held a friend's child aloft in a crowd for 20 minutes so she could see a fireworks display.

When gunfire broke out in Parkland, Peter was in study hall, playing chess with a friend. He held the door open for other students to escape.

A few of them made it. He did not.



FAMILY PHOTO

Peter Wang at Walt Disney World in January 2018.

¶ This story has been adapted from The Post's 3D animated interactive that examines the impact of the AR-15 on the body. To explore the project, visit wapo.st/ar15-body-impact

FROM THE EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Why we are showing the impact of bullets from an AR-15 on the human body

BY SALLY BUZBEE

In The Blast Effect, the story above, The Washington Post shows the mechanics of the AR-15 and the toll its high-velocity rounds exact as they move through human tissue, bones and organs.

The catastrophic damage the bullets from AR-15s cause inside human bodies is rarely made public in detail. News organizations do not generally publish graphic autopsy or crime scene photos because the images

could be viewed as dehumanizing, exploitative and traumatizing, or could inflict further pain on the families of victims. As a result, the damage AR-15 fire can do to a human body — a great deal more than handguns — is not widely understood.

When we set out to chronicle the story of the AR-15 in America, we searched for ways to illustrate that effect on bodies in an unflinching but respectful manner. We recognize that this pre-

sentation may disturb readers, but we determined the information it contains is critical to the public's knowledge.

Two principles shaped our approach: to show the impact on a body with precision and to share our findings through visualizations that meet our ethical standards. To accomplish that, we decided it was essential to document and depict actual mortal wounds to actual victims, using illustrations that are

animated online to show the entrance and exit wounds in human figures.

As part of our reporting, we filed 13 public information requests with medical examiners and other authorities around the country to obtain autopsy reports of victims in mass killings. We then scrutinized nearly 100 autopsy reports from five mass killings to analyze patterns of deadly wounds. That analysis revealed that in four of those

shootings, many victims were shot in close proximity, multiple times.

We also conducted extensive interviews with two trauma surgeons, two ballistics experts and a medical examiner about the hallmark indicators of mortal wounds from the high-velocity rounds from the AR-15. We consulted with those same experts to identify several victims whose multiple injuries are typical of the gun's explosive power inside

the body. Among them were two homicide victims: Noah Pozner, who was killed in the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting at age 6, and Peter Wang, who was killed in the 2018 Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting at age 15.

The Post identified the details specific to Peter's death by matching details from anonymized autopsy reports from the Broward County, Fla., medical

examiner's office and the court testimony of Wendolyn Sneed, the medical examiner who performed Peter's autopsy.

Noah's post-mortem examination became public in 2014, when his father, Lenny Pozner, released it to try to counter lies and conspiracy theories that spread about the Sandy Hook shooting.

We decided we would not proceed with publishing the depictions of Noah's and Peter's

wounds without the agreement of their families. Both gave their consent — in Noah's case, through the Pozners' attorney, and in Peter's case, through a cousin who serves as a family representative. They declined to review the presentation before it published online.

Using court testimony from medical examiners and autopsy records, a team of journalists created illustrations that depicted where the bullets hit Noah

and Peter. We selected a monochromatic palette for the presentation and used color only to direct attention to key findings. To focus on the parts of the body that were struck in both the hypothetical scenario of a chest wound and in the models created from autopsy reports, The Post removed some anatomical references from the illustrations.

The first part of the resulting piece models a hypothetical

gunshot to show the effect of a single bullet if it were to hit a person in the chest. The second part features separate illustrations that depict the actual entrance and exit wounds of Noah and Peter, based on the public records we examined.

When writing an autopsy report, a medical examiner meticulously investigates every wound and every inch of a body. We have followed that rigor in creating this account.