

## A CRY FOR UNIFORMITY: THE PRESSING NEED FOR CASINOS TO BE ON THE SAME PAGE FOR SECURITY

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Las Vegas has always been known for the glitz and glam that the Strip has to offer tourists. With the beautiful weather and the luxurious casinos, Las Vegas has consistently been a tourist destination that draws people in. Las Vegas thrives off of tourist revenue being circulated through the casinos; from gambling to high-end shopping, tourists have multiple areas where they are able to spend their money within casinos. Thus, Las Vegas has a strong incentive to protect these tourists and keep them coming back.

Tourism in Las Vegas is a sixty billion dollar industry.<sup>1</sup> This industry is what keeps the casinos on the Strip profiting. In 2016, Las Vegas attracted 42.9 million visitors, which was a record high.<sup>2</sup> Of those 42.9 million visitors, more than one-quarter of them were first-time visitors.<sup>3</sup> This industry is vital to the sustainability of the Las Vegas Strip in maintaining its position as a travel destination hot spot.

Casinos rely almost entirely on tourist revenue to maintain a thriving business. To keep tourists coming back, casinos need to do everything in their power to assure the safety and peace of mind of tourists. In light of recent tragedies on the Strip, casinos have the ultimate incentive to protect the tourists that keep the operations afloat. There needs to be actual guidelines that the casinos must follow that are published for tourists to see. These guidelines should be posted in formal rules and regulations to hold the casinos accountable. But to

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<sup>1</sup> Dawn Gilbertson, *Las Vegas Shooting: Will it Scare People Away from the Strip?*, USA TODAY: NATION NOW (Oct. 2, 2017, 6:18 PM), <https://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/nation-now/2017/10/02/las-vegas-shooting-scare-people-away-strip/725192001/>.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

make them more accessible to the average tourist, these rules and regulations should be transmitted into layman's terms on the Las Vegas Tourist website to assure that a tourist can fully understand what having a system like this in place means to the tourist individually. Also, casinos should implement more security measures within their casinos, including more visible officers and bomb-detecting dogs. Visible officers include officers in uniforms regularly patrolling and officers at all entrances and exits including the elevator shafts in each lobby. These small changes by the casinos have the ability to reassure tourists and ease their conscience when they decide to stay on the Strip.

In this paper, I argue that having a more comprehensive, readily available safety plan and guidelines enforced by rules and regulations would be immensely beneficial for all of the casinos on the Strip. These changes will likely have the effect of an increase of tourism stemming from a more at ease class of tourists who feel safer traveling to the Strip. I will begin with presenting a brief history of crime and violence in Las Vegas. I then explain the current crime rates on and around the Strip and the impact these statistics have on prospective tourists. The next section will analyze effects that crime has on tourism based on clinical research. Following the findings of the scholarly studies, I will explain the devastating effects that the violence of Route 91 had on the Strip casinos. For comparison, the next section will compare effects of terrorism on other high-profile tourist destinations in the world. The subsequent section will analyze and critique the current landscape of the Strip casino security policies and practices. Finally, the paper will conclude with a proposed uniform security and safety plan to be made mandatory for all casinos to meet to ensure the safety and flourishing of tourism in Las Vegas for years to come.

## II. HISTORY OF CRIME ON THE LAS VEGAS STRIP

The history of the Las Vegas strip is heavily influenced by crime. Up until the mid-eighties, organized crime groups owned the hotel-casinos on the Las Vegas Strip.<sup>4</sup> With the organized crime groups owning the hotel-casinos, they were able to charge less for food, entertainment, and rooms because they would be able to win enough from the tourists at the tables.<sup>5</sup> The money the organized crime groups got from the gaming within the casinos was easy to skim and send back to the East Coast to be invested in other mob activities.<sup>6</sup>

James "Jim" Ferguson was the first organized crime figure in Las Vegas.<sup>7</sup> He had a brutal style, where he "left a trail of destruction, from death to political

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Green, *Preserving the History of the Mob in Las Vegas*, NAT'L COUNS. ON PUB. HIST. (Mar. 26, 2018), <https://ncph.org/history-at-work/preserving-history-of-the-mob-in-las-vegas/>.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> Robert Stoldal, *The First Mobster in Las Vegas: Part 1*, MOB MUSEUM (Aug. 28, 2018), <https://themobmuseum.org/blog/the-first-mobster-in-las-vegas-part-1/>.

corruption, robbery, burglary and bootlegging.”<sup>8</sup> Ferguson set up a bootlegging plan with the mayor and police chief to sell illegal liquor with the help of these officials to make sure the operation ran freely within the city.<sup>9</sup> The operation crumbled when the police chief shot and killed an 8-year-old boy who was the son of another Las Vegas bootlegger who refused to pay Ferguson’s protection fee.<sup>10</sup> This incident led to the resignation and charging of the mayor and the police chief.<sup>11</sup> Ferguson went to federal prison for robbery charges in 1933 and was not released until 1936.<sup>12</sup> After this, there is no record of him returning to Las Vegas.<sup>13</sup>

Ferguson is just one example of the organized crime individuals who ran the Las Vegas Strip starting in the 1920’s. These individuals had so much control that they could commit crimes usually with little penalty. Over the years, more corporations started investing in and owning hotels on the Strip, leading to a decline in the mob’s presence in the casinos. By the 1980’s, the mob’s influence in Las Vegas tourism had essentially ended.<sup>14</sup> The justice department had indicted and convicted most of the key mob figures,<sup>15</sup> and state regulators had revoked the gaming licenses of those connected to them.<sup>16</sup>

Las Vegas has been home to many notorious crimes throughout history. In 1971, legendary professional boxer Sonny Liston was found dead inside his Las Vegas home.<sup>17</sup> While the official cause of death was reported as an accidental overdose, many believe he was murdered by the mob.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, the head of one of the country’s most powerful unions, Al Bramlet, was kidnapped, robbed, and executed by a disgruntled father-and-son duo.<sup>19</sup>

In 1981, Phillip Cline started a fire in the lobby of the Hilton Hotel that killed eight people and injured more than 200 others who were trapped in their hotel rooms.<sup>20</sup> In 1996, Tupac Shakur was killed in a drive-by shooting at the intersection of Flamingo and Koval, right off of the Las Vegas Strip.<sup>21</sup> This

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<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> Robert Stoldal, *The First Mobster in Las Vegas: Part 2*, MOB MUSEUM (Aug. 29, 2018), <https://themobmuseum.org/blog/the-first-mobster-in-las-vegas-part-2/>.

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> Robert Stoldal, *The First Mobster in Las Vegas: Part 3*, MOB MUSEUM (May 3, 2019), <https://themobmuseum.org/blog/the-first-mobster-in-las-vegas-part-3/>.

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> Green, *supra* note 4.

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*

<sup>16</sup> *Id.*

<sup>17</sup> Gabriel L. Grasso, *Las Vegas’ Most Notorious Crimes*, GRASSO DEF., <https://grassodefense.com/las-vegas-notorious-crimes/> (last visited Oct. 15, 2019).

<sup>18</sup> *Id.*

<sup>19</sup> *Id.*

<sup>20</sup> *Id.*

<sup>21</sup> *Id.*

murder devastated his fans and remains unsolved.<sup>22</sup> In 2007, a pipe bomb detonated in the parking garage of the Luxor Casino.<sup>23</sup> The blast killed one person, but the act of violence terrified the community and had the potential to kill many more bystanders.<sup>24</sup>

The notoriety that comes with these crimes lives on for tourists to see. If a tourist is researching the Strip to decide whether or not to visit, these crimes do not leave them with a safe feeling. The tourism industry is vulnerable to both natural and human-caused disasters, including terrorism and crime, and the ramifications can be tragic for the residents of an impacted area.<sup>25</sup> Given that tourism is central to Las Vegas, the city is highly susceptible to such disasters and the problems that accompany them.

Today, Las Vegas is run by corporations and everything is more expensive.<sup>26</sup> Tourists get what they pay for now in Las Vegas; the rooms are more luxurious, and the shows are more elaborate.<sup>27</sup> While crime is not run by organized crime groups anymore, crime is still prevalent on the Las Vegas Strip.

### III. CURRENT CRIME RATES ON THE LAS VEGAS STRIP

The Las Vegas Strip is a hot spot for tourists and coupled with that large influx of people comes an influx of crime. A popular casino and tourist blog graded certain areas of the Las Vegas area for safety and gave downtown Las Vegas and the “Naked City” an F grade for safety.<sup>28</sup> The tourist blog noted that the overall crime rate in Downtown is ninety-three percent higher than the national average overall crime rate, and that tourists have a one in nineteen chance of being a victim of a crime.<sup>29</sup> The blog warns potential tourists of the unspoken crime that is hidden behind the glitz and the glam of the Strip.

Another blogger, Anna Mayler, writing on Quora, explains that tourists should be especially aware of their environment when traveling through high crime areas, including the South, Center and North sections of the Strip, and the

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<sup>22</sup> *Id.*

<sup>23</sup> *Id.*

<sup>24</sup> *Id.*

<sup>25</sup> Sevil F. Sönmez et al., *Tourism in Crisis: Managing the Effects of Terrorism*, 38 J. TRAVEL RES. 16, 16-18 (1999).

<sup>26</sup> *Corporate Las Vegas*, PBS, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/lasvegas-corporate/> (last visited May 7, 2021).

<sup>27</sup> *Id.*

<sup>28</sup> Kevin Horridge, *Places Most Dangerous to Risk Your Life in Las Vegas*, CASINO.ORG: GAMBLING DESTINATIONS, PLACES TO GAMBLE (Jan. 2, 2019), <https://www.casino.org/blog/places-most-dangerous-to-risk-your-life-in-las-vegas/>.

<sup>29</sup> *Id.*

Downtown area on Fremont.<sup>30</sup> Mayler points out that the police department has a bicycle squad which is easily seen throughout the Strip and Downtown areas.<sup>31</sup> This presence of the police force readily seen by tourists likely eases their conscience while walking the Strip. The visual and physical presence of a police force is a deterrent for a lot of crimes that could potentially take place in these areas. Mayler finishes the post by stating that tourists “should feel safe in Las Vegas.”<sup>32</sup> While this is just a blog post on a tourist site, this post was viewed by 10,700 people. That is, 10,700 potential tourists trying to gauge their safety while on the Strip.

Similarly, on smartertravel.com, the website indicates that “[g]enerally speaking, Las Vegas is safe for travelers; some even consider its secure casinos to be among the world’s safest places for tourists.”<sup>33</sup> The website that is frequented by tourists before booking a trip, explains that the well-lit streets, security cameras, and the presence of patrolling police makes the Strip relatively safe for tourists to enjoy themselves.<sup>34</sup>

Because a large number of stakeholders in the local economy depend on outsiders’ perceptions of the community, negative press is extremely detrimental.<sup>35</sup> While this information is coming from travel blogs and travel websites, these are critical resources that tourists utilize before booking a trip. If these sites are indicating that the Strip is not a safe place for tourists, then that could potentially hurt the casinos on the Strip. Tourists want to be assured that where they are going is safe, and they will be able to enjoy their vacation without being a victim of crime.

Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department posts their statistical crime briefings on their website for the public to view. Convention Center area command is the branch of the department that responds to most of the crime happening on the Strip. In their briefing from 2018, there had been a steady downward percentage change for most violent crimes that happen within their area.<sup>36</sup> However, violent crime began to rise significantly in September 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic, with police arresting 1,200 people of the course of three months on the Strip.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Anna Mayler, *What are the most Dangerous Parts of Las Vegas?*, QUORA (Feb. 2, 2019), <https://www.quora.com/What-are-the-most-dangerous-parts-of-Las-Vegas>.

<sup>31</sup> *Id.*

<sup>32</sup> *Id.*

<sup>33</sup> *Is Las Vegas Safe? What Travelers Need to Know*, SMARTER TRAVEL (Nov. 6, 2018), <https://www.smartertravel.com/places-avoid-las-vegas-warnings-dangers/>.

<sup>34</sup> *Id.*

<sup>35</sup> Sönmez et al., *supra* note 25, at 14.

<sup>36</sup> LAS VEGAS METRO. POLICE DEP’T, ANN. REP.: CRIME INDEX, 22 (2019), <https://online.fliphtml5.com/anouh/qyrb/#p=22> (last visited Feb. 10, 2021).

<sup>37</sup> *Police arrest 1,200 people over three months on Strip*, AP NEWS (Jan. 9, 2021), <https://apnews.com/article/violence-coronavirus-pandemic-crime-arrests-las-vegas-8822df89189f7ae3f13a15ce89868ef3>.

In 2018, two tourists were inside their hotel room at the Circus Circus casino.<sup>38</sup> A man was able to walk into a hotel room in the Circus Circus hotel where two tourists were staying.<sup>39</sup> The man allegedly stabbed the Vietnamese tourists to death and stole a backpack.<sup>40</sup> Police allege that “he routinely walked hallways pushing doors until he found one open.”<sup>41</sup> After investigation, it was found that the door to the tourists room did not latch properly.<sup>42</sup> While this event is isolated, it does raise concerns for potential tourists who might feel as if the casino is not able to keep them safe during their visit.

#### IV. EFFECTS OF CRIME ON TOURISM

Tourism is the bread and butter of Las Vegas. Tourists are the ones who drive the market on the Strip and in turn they hold a lot of power over the casinos. As noted earlier, the safety of the tourists should be a key priority for the casinos since they rely so heavily on return customers. Duha Altindag argues that “when individuals decide about whether to take a vacation and where to go, they would take the risk of victimization into account.”<sup>43</sup> In this regard, the image of Las Vegas and its safety is taken into account by potential tourists. If a tourist is looking at the crime rates in Las Vegas and they feel that they are likely to become a victim, they are less likely to travel here.

Altindag utilizes empirical data that suggests that “violent crimes (homicide, rape, robbery, and assault) are negatively associated with incoming international tourists and with tourism revenue for an average country in Europe.”<sup>44</sup> Translating this to Las Vegas, the idea would be similar. The higher the violent crime is in Las Vegas, the more it negatively effects the number of international tourists willing to come and visit the Strip.

Using the violent crime data from Metro, the posted crime rates are promising for the outlook on tourism. The only violent crime that saw an increase in Las Vegas was aggravated assault, while the most frightening crime, homicide, saw a pretty drastic decrease. If tourists are looking at the violent crime rates of Las Vegas in a comparative model from previous years, then the outlook

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<sup>38</sup> Yasmeen Hassan, *New Security Policy at MGM Grand in Las Vegas*, KTNV (Feb. 06, 2019, 6:34 PM), <https://www.ktnv.com/news/new-security-policy-at-mgm-grand-mandalay-bay>.

<sup>39</sup> *Id.*

<sup>40</sup> Devin O'Connor, *Convicted Felon Charged with Circus Circus Murder Headed Towards Trial, Judge Dismisses Police Tampering Claim*, CASINO.ORG: CRIME (July 18, 2019, 12:23 PM), <https://www.casino.org/news/convicted-felon-charged-with-circus-circus-murder-will-stand-trial>.

<sup>41</sup> *Id.*

<sup>42</sup> *Id.*

<sup>43</sup> Duha T. Altindag, *Crime and International Tourism*, J. LAB. RES., (forthcoming) Dec. 2013, (ms. at 1).

<sup>44</sup> *Id.* at 3.

for a potential tourist is optimistic. With a decrease in violent crime, the potential tourist is less likely to be victimized.

These decreases in violent crime should be advertised more by the tourism industry to attract potential tourists. To show Las Vegas as a safe and welcoming tourist destination would be beneficial to the tourist industry and the casinos. The decrease in violent crimes in Las Vegas from 2018 to 2019 is a step in the right direction in easing the consciousness of potential tourists.

## V. EFFECTS OF ROUTE 91

October 1, 2017 is a day that ended in tragedy on the Las Vegas Strip.<sup>45</sup> Directly across from the Mandalay Bay Casino was a vacant lot that was home to the Route 91 Harvest Festival. The harvest festival was a three-day long event over the weekend where mega country stars would come and perform. Tourists from all over came to the Las Vegas strip and stayed in the casinos to attend this highly anticipated event. On the evening of the last night of the festival during the headliner Jason Aldean's set, a man opened fire on the crowd.<sup>46</sup> This man was set up in a high-rise room in the Mandalay Bay casino, where he was able to shoot off hundreds of rounds of bullets into the crowd of innocent festival goers of Route 91. The tragedy ended with 58 people losing their lives and hundreds of others being injured.

While this tragedy left the city of Las Vegas in mourning, the incident left onlookers and potential tourists terrified of what could happen to them if they were to come and visit. Following the tragedy, the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority posted on its Facebook page addressing the tragedy.<sup>47</sup> Comments on this post stand out highlighting the reservations that tourists now have when they look at a trip to the Strip. One tourist commented "Our family is supposed to begin our vacation to Las Vegas on Wednesday. Is it business as usual, airport and hotels will be open, ready for people coming to stay there?"<sup>48</sup> This tourist is skeptical as to whether the Strip will be open following the tragedy. Another tourist commented "Hope everyone is safe. Looks like I will be cancelling my trip."<sup>49</sup> This tourist's reaction to the tragedy is a tragedy in and of itself for the casinos on the Strip. The notion that people will cancel their trips and decide not to visit Las Vegas is detrimental to the casinos. For a city that focuses so heavily on the tourist industry, a tragedy like this has the potential to have dire consequences.

In the article *Tourism in Crisis: Managing the Effects of Tourism*, Sonomez, Apostolopoulos, and Tarlow highlight that, for a tourist destination, this period can represent a *tourism crisis*, which can threaten the normal operation and conduct of tourism-related businesses; damage

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<sup>45</sup> Gilbertson, *supra* note 1.

<sup>46</sup> *Id.*

<sup>47</sup> *Id.*

<sup>48</sup> *Id.*

<sup>49</sup> *Id.*

a tourist destination's overall reputation for safety, attractiveness, and comfort by negatively affecting visitors' perceptions of that destination; and in turn, cause a downturn in the local travel and tourism economy, and interrupt the continuity of business operations for the local travel and tourism industry, by the reduction in tourist arrivals and expenditures.<sup>50</sup> Since Las Vegas is such a publicly known tourist destination, the public pays close attention to the crime that affects the strip and ultimately may cause people to choose not to travel to Las Vegas.<sup>51</sup>

This tragedy, to this day, has the potential to really hinder the \$60 billion-dollar tourist industry of Las Vegas.<sup>52</sup> If people do not think that the Strip is a safe environment for them to enjoy, they will opt out of coming to Las Vegas. Veteran travel industry analyst Henry Hartevelde of Atmosphere Research Group indicates that the Route 91 Harvest Festival "will prompt vacationers and business travelers to rethink their plans."<sup>53</sup> This is the worst repercussion that Las Vegas could endure from this tragedy.

The day after the tragedy, casinos on the Strip immediately felt the repercussions of the act of violence on tourists.<sup>54</sup> Mandalay Bay was the site where the gunman fired down on the crowd, so they were immediately hit with a drop in the market.<sup>55</sup> Mandalay Bay lost around \$909 million from its market capitalization.<sup>56</sup> This immediate hit can likely be a direct correlation with the Route 91 tragedy. The market immediately had a negative reaction to the tragedy associated with this Las Vegas casino giant. Fortune.com reports that "shares of MGM Resorts International (MGM) fell nearly 5% in trading Monday, with the casino company's market capitalization dropping to \$17.8 billion..."<sup>57</sup> From these market responses, it is clear that this act of high crime on the Strip had the ability to immensely hurt a major casino in Las Vegas.

MGM and Mandalay Bay were not the only casinos negatively impacted by Route 91.<sup>58</sup> "It led to the sell-off of casino management companies with heavy presences on the Las Vegas Strip, with shares of Wynn Resorts (WYNN), Red Rock Resorts, Caesars Entertainment (CZR), and Boyd Gaming (BYD) all falling following the news."<sup>59</sup> Essentially, all of the major casinos on the Strip were seeing almost instant drops in response to this crime. It is reported that "the five casino and hotel companies shed a total of \$1.8 billion from their market

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<sup>50</sup> Sönmez et al., *supra* note 25.

<sup>51</sup> *Id.*

<sup>52</sup> Gilbertson, *supra* note 1.

<sup>53</sup> *Id.*

<sup>54</sup> Lucinda Shen, *The Owner of Mandalay Bay Lost Almost a Billion Dollars in Value After the Las Vegas Shooting*, FORTUNE, (Oct. 2, 2017, 10:23 AM), <https://fortune.com/2017/10/02/las-vegas-shooting-mandalay-bay-mgm-stock/>.

<sup>55</sup> *Id.*

<sup>56</sup> *Id.*

<sup>57</sup> *Id.*

<sup>58</sup> *Id.*

<sup>59</sup> *Id.*

capitalizations by midday Monday...”<sup>60</sup> For an industry that centers around and flourishes from tourism, this tragedy had an immensely negative effect for the casinos. This immediate market reaction was explained as “fanned worries about tourists returning to the strip following the tragedy.”<sup>61</sup> This would be the ultimate loss for the casinos, the perception of safety on the Strip has the ability to influence whether or not tourists will visit. At this point after the tragedy, the market showed a dismal outlook for the future of tourists visiting the Strip.

Following Route 91 Harvest Festival, the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority reported that the number of tourists in October 2017 dropped by 115,114 people when compared to October 2016.<sup>62</sup> This seems to be a direct result of the tragedy that unfolded on the Strip. This drastic drop seems to indicate that tourists react negatively to high crime. The casinos on the Strip directly felt the impact of this loss of tourists.<sup>63</sup> In October 2017, casinos lost \$26,076,428.40 in hotel revenue.<sup>64</sup> A major loss like this should incentivize the casinos to do anything in their power to assure tourists that they will be safe when they travel and stay in their casino.

Yet, even though the tragedy was bad for the Strip, Harteveltdt said that it could have been worse.<sup>65</sup> Harteveltdt said “the financial damage to Las Vegas would likely be worse if the shootings had unfolded inside a casino instead of a concert.”<sup>66</sup> “Many more visitors traverse The Strip’s casinos, whether they gamble or not.”<sup>67</sup> This is an important idea that casinos need to take note of. If this tragedy would have actually happened in the lobby of one of the major casinos on the Strip, reluctance to travel to Las Vegas would be much higher. The casinos are an extreme soft spot for crime, so there is a potential chance in the future that a tragedy like this could unfold in the lobby of a casino. Casinos need to be completely prepared for an event like this to unfold within the walls of their casinos, and they need to do everything in their power to prevent it.

In response to Route 91 Harvest Festival, casinos are at the forefront of the discussion of safety of tourists. The main issue that the casinos face is the large area that they are seemingly responsible to cover.<sup>68</sup> “The challenge with the Las Vegas casino hotels is they are so large and they have so many different points of entry that trying to create a security barrier... makes it difficult to implement.”<sup>69</sup> Because people are constantly coming in and out of the large

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<sup>60</sup> *Id.*

<sup>61</sup> *Id.*

<sup>62</sup> Craig Fiegenger, *In Wake of the Shooting, Las Vegas Tourism Drops, Hotel Rooms Empty*, 3 NEWS (Nov. 30, 2017), <https://news3lv.com/news/local/in-wake-of-shooting-las-vegas-tourism-drops-hotel-rooms-empty>.

<sup>63</sup> *Id.*

<sup>64</sup> *Id.*

<sup>65</sup> Gilbertson, *supra* note 1.

<sup>66</sup> *Id.*

<sup>67</sup> *Id.*

<sup>68</sup> *Id.*

<sup>69</sup> *Id.*

casinos, it is incredibly hard to know who is an innocent bystander and who is a potential threat.

For years tourist destinations all over the world have looked into ways in which they can decrease the negative effects of crime and terrorism on the tourism industry.<sup>70</sup> In Egypt, they have responded to terrorist attacks with the utilization of increased security and aggressive marketing promotions.<sup>71</sup> The Egyptian police adopted preventative and proactive measures that eventually helped them find and arrest terrorist leaders.<sup>72</sup> The casinos on the Strip would likely benefit from a similar proactive and preventative strategy mimicking the Egyptian model. In an effort to protect the vital tourism industry of Las Vegas, the casinos are in the perfect position to implement security practices that are proactive to prevent crime rather than reactive and deal with the negative repercussions in the media.<sup>73</sup>

Following Route 91, many of the casinos on the Strip began to look deeper into how their properties were susceptible to possible attacks. As a result, Steve Wynn hired consultants to carry out an assessment of his property which resulted in him recruiting and expanding security by tens or millions of dollars.<sup>74</sup> As one of the top resorts on the Strip, the Wynn likely saw the need to invest in security because the result of losing tourists due to lack of safety would be exponential. An investment in the security of the casino will ultimately pay off in the long run. If a casino has visible security, it becomes appealing to tourists who are timid to travel.

The tragedy that unfolded at the Route 91 Harvest Festival was a big wake up call for the Las Vegas Strip. The mass shooting highlighted the immense differences between security measures taken by all of the casinos on the Strip. The chilling effect that Route 91 had could be counteracted with sound security measures implemented by each and every casino.

## VI. EFFECTS OF TERRORISM IN OTHER BIG TOURIST DESTINATIONS

Many other high tourist destinations have dealt with horrific acts of terrorism that targeted the tourists in that place.<sup>75</sup> London had a man drive a van through a

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<sup>70</sup> Sönmez et al., *supra* note 25.

<sup>71</sup> *Id.*

<sup>72</sup> *Id.*

<sup>73</sup> *Id.*

<sup>74</sup> Todd Prince, *Security Practices Enter Spotlight After Las Vegas Shooting*, LAS VEGAS REV. J.: CASINOS & GAMING (Dec. 2, 2017, 9:59 AM), <https://www.reviewjournal.com/business/casinos-gaming/security-practices-enter-spotlight-after-las-vegas-shooting/>.

<sup>75</sup> *Terrorists Attack London Bridge*, HISTORY, (last updated July 28, 2019), <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/terrorists-attack-london-bridge>; Tobias Salinger, *Paris Terrorist Attack Fugitive Salah Abdeslam Seen Opening Fire with AK-47, Misfiring on Woman's Head in Café Footage*, N.Y. DAILY NEWS (Nov. 18,

large crowd of tourists on the street, resulting in multiple deaths.<sup>76</sup> Paris had multiple men open fire on people inside a café in a tourist hot spot of the city.<sup>77</sup> These types of incidents cast a dark cloud over the tourism industry.

For London, articles indicate that tourism flatlined in 2017 due to terrorism fears.<sup>78</sup> The article states that worries about terrorism are one of the factors for why London tourism had seen a drastic drop.<sup>79</sup> Because of concerns for safety along with other issues, London's tourism has flatlined and lost many of the visitors to neighboring countries.<sup>80</sup> Brown notes, "newly released figures from the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions also show big tourism increases in Northern Ireland, and Scotland in particular."<sup>81</sup> He goes on to highlight, "the overall figures show an average increase of 7.3% on 2016 visitor numbers to UK attractions. In Scotland the increase is 13.9%, in Northern Ireland it is 6.5% and in London 1.2%."<sup>82</sup> This loss of tourism to neighboring countries can partly be attributed to the terrorist attack that occurred in 2017 when these numbers were reported. While it is likely the terrorist attacks might not be the only reason deterring tourists from the big city of London, there is a correlation between the drop-in tourism rates after the terrorist attack.

Similar to London, Paris was the victim of a terrorist attack in 2015.<sup>83</sup> NPR host David Greene highlights, "Paris is often cited as the most visited city in the world, but tourism dropped by 3 million people last year in the wake of those 2015 terror attacks in the city."<sup>84</sup> This is an alarming drop in tourism for another city that thrives off of the tourism industry. While there is no solid proof that this is the only reason for the drop-in tourism to the city of love, it does seem to be correlated. People tend to not visit places where there have been terrorist attacks due to fear for their safety. Nearly a year after the attacks in Paris, Greene has optimism for the tourism industry.<sup>85</sup> "Tourism is on the rebound this year, though. And the French government has plans to make sure it stays that way."<sup>86</sup>

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2015, 7:04 PM), <https://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/paris-terrorist-attack-fugitive-cafe-attack-footage-article-1.2439749>.

<sup>76</sup> *Terrorists Attack London Bridge*, *supra* note 75.

<sup>77</sup> Salinger, *supra* note 75.

<sup>78</sup> Mark Brown, *London Tourism Flatlined in 2017 Due to Terror Fears, Rail Issues and Costs*, *GUARDIAN* (Mar. 15, 2018, 8:01 PM), <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2018/mar/16/london-tourism-flatlined-in-2016-due-to-terror-fears-rail-issues-and-cost>.

<sup>79</sup> *Id.*

<sup>80</sup> *Id.*

<sup>81</sup> *Id.*

<sup>82</sup> *Id.*

<sup>83</sup> Jake Cigainero, *French Tourism Industry Rebounds After Terrorist Attacks*, NPR (Aug. 2, 2017, 5:01 AM), <https://www.npr.org/2017/08/07/541969331/french-tourism-industry-rebounds-after-terrorist-attacks>.

<sup>84</sup> *Id.*

<sup>85</sup> *Id.*

<sup>86</sup> *Id.*

On the radio show, Jake Cigainero states, “French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe calls tourism a national treasure.”<sup>87</sup> Because of this, France has a high incentive, like Las Vegas, to protect and rehabilitate the industry in wake of terrorism attacks. Cigainero highlights, “the prime minister told a press conference that citizens of 10 countries, including Russia, India, and Indonesia, will be able to get tourist visas within 48 hours. This will make it easier to market France, Philippe says, to countries with a reservoir of tourists who want to come more quickly and frequently.”<sup>88</sup> These efforts by the French government are a direct response to help the tourism industry make a comeback after a loss from the 2015 terror attacks.

From the data stemming from London and Paris following the terror attacks in these major tourism destinations, it can be concluded that these terrorism attacks have a strong negative effect on the tourism industry. Both of these cities saw a drastic decrease in tourists. Paris government’s implementation of an expedited visa process is a direct response to help bring more tourists back to the city. For cities that depend on tourism as a major source of revenue, there is a strong incentive to implement new strategies to draw tourists back to their city.

## VII. CASINO POLICIES AND SECURITY PRACTICES

Screening of every person who enters a casino lobby seems to be a necessary security measure that every single casino should be utilizing in response to Route 91. Yet, the security practices of every casino vary. An initiative like this would require a large commitment from the casinos, and the main commitment is centered around financials and manpower.

MGM Casinos are at the center of the controversy surrounding Route 91 because Mandalay Bay is an MGM property.<sup>89</sup> The tragedy that unfolded from inside Mandalay Bay sparked many people to question the security practices within all of the casinos on the Strip. People want to know what the casinos are doing to assure their safety while they are staying there. However, MGM Resorts International, the parent company of Mandalay Bay, has refused to specify how many security guards it has on staff, instead stating it “regularly works with local and national law enforcement and private security consultants to make its security program at its properties up to date.”<sup>90</sup> While the MGM claims they stay up to date with security being a top priority, the effects of Route 91 have brought all of the casino security practices into the spotlights.

Security practices of many of the casinos are kept very low key and the measures are not made public for tourists to know.<sup>91</sup> Casinos are unwilling to share “how many security personnel they have on staff, how many work during

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<sup>87</sup> *Id.*

<sup>88</sup> *Id.*

<sup>89</sup> *See* Todd Prince, *supra* note 74.

<sup>90</sup> *Id.*

<sup>91</sup> *See id.*

a particular shift and exactly what training they receive.”<sup>92</sup> This is mainly because prior to the Route 91, casinos on the Strip were not required by any law to follow any particular guidelines when it comes to security.<sup>93</sup> There are no regulations that determinate how many security guards a Strip casino must have, whether those guards should be armed, or when bomb-sniffing dogs should be required.<sup>94</sup> Further, there are no regulations for how many cameras should be used in nongaming areas or hotel hallways.<sup>95</sup> The lack of guidelines and regulations on the casinos in this area has rarely been challenged, but following a tragedy of this magnitude, casinos are going to have to face stark backlash from the public scrutinizing this lack of uniformity. Instead, the law merely dictates that a casino operator “must act reasonable at all times,” criticized by Las Vegas personal injury attorney Adam Kutner as a “fuzzy notion.”<sup>96</sup> When the law is so vague, casinos essentially have free reign to do whatever they want when it comes to security.

Because of the vague law and lack of guidelines, each casino is allowed to implement security policies as they see fit.<sup>97</sup> Casinos may take into account several factors to determine security needs, including the “number of visits, daily revenue, floor size, quantity of shops, number of exits and building towers.”<sup>98</sup> With all of these factors, casinos weigh their options and crunch the numbers as to the amount of security they think is necessary. However, Kutner says Casinos should also consider the number of crimes committed on their property and in the surrounding area—for instance, the south Strip is quieter compared with the center of the Strip, which means Mandalay Bay and similarly situated casinos might need less security.<sup>99</sup> As noted earlier in this paper, the crime rates on the south end of the Strip are much lower than their counterparts on the north end around the Stratosphere and Circus Circus. While the surrounding crime rates should be a factor, it does not explain why the casinos do not have a threshold amount of security required for all to meet.

This is good for casinos who wish to spend as little as possible for security,<sup>100</sup> yet it comes at the cost of protection of the tourists who stay on the Strip. A typical Strip casino might have between 30 to 50 security employees on duty depending on the day of the week and time of the shift.<sup>101</sup> Yet again, since there are no regulations on this issue, there is a lack of uniformity amongst the casinos and the public does not know how many security personnel are actually protecting them. “The issue of security always comes down to money,” said

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<sup>92</sup> *Id.*

<sup>93</sup> *Id.*

<sup>94</sup> *Id.*

<sup>95</sup> *Id.*

<sup>96</sup> *Id.*

<sup>97</sup> *See id.*

<sup>98</sup> *Id.*

<sup>99</sup> *Id.*

<sup>100</sup> *See id.*

<sup>101</sup> *Id.*

Doug Poppa former head of security at the now-closed Riviera. ”<sup>102</sup> “Surveillance and security is a nonrevenue-producing department,” he added, highlighting that the Riviera had around two-dozen security workers per shift before the budget was slashed in half due to economic problems.<sup>103</sup> The lack of regulations allows the casinos to presumably cut corners in the area of security since this is a part of the operation that does not bring money into the casino. In regard to security, the casino is using a lot of money to make it work and essentially seeing no direct benefit from it financially inside the casino.

Poppa also believed that casinos “lacked some measures such as K-9 explosive detection teams, which might have been able to pick up residue on Paddock’s weapons and ammo.”<sup>104</sup> While this seems like a small measure to make, the implementation of just having the presence of K-9 dogs within the casino could have the effect of deterring some major crimes from occurring. Following Route 91, Las Vegas Sands increased K-9 units at the Venetian, the Palazzo, and the Sands Expo, making it the largest private company K-9 team in the state of Nevada.<sup>105</sup> Security shift manager Thomas Herbert says in a press release statement,

Our biggest challenge is covering the size of our properties. There’s a lot of ground to cover and it’s a lot of space that needs to be monitored, but we make sure we have a presence in as many places as possible. It is the policy for security to not interfere with the guest experience. Our guests have been very accepting of the changes in our security protocol. We’ve received many positive letters from guests and the increase in our security measures really has made a difference.<sup>106</sup>

This positive response indicates that the tourists themselves like the extra security present. This is likely because they saw the noticeable increase in security and felt safer. Sands properties increased the security department from 30 to 63 team members, creating different teams trained for various security situations.<sup>107</sup> While this increase in security likely cost Sands a substantial amount in money, the positive response from the guests reaffirms that this change was in the right direction to protect the tourists.

Following Route 91 and the scrutiny facing casino security measures, many of the Strip properties are hiring consultants to review their security risk management.<sup>108</sup> Steve Wynn stated that he hired security consultants to carry out an assessment of his property, which included former New York City Police

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<sup>102</sup> *Id.*

<sup>103</sup> *Id.*

<sup>104</sup> *Id.*

<sup>105</sup> 3BL Media, *Las Vegas Sands Increases K-9 Unit at The Venetian, The Palazzo and Sands Expo*, MARKETWATCH (Oct. 2, 2018, 5:25 AM), <https://www.marketwatch.com/press-release/las-vegas-sands-increases-k-9-unit-at-the-venetian-the-palazzo-and-sands-expo-2018-10-02>.

<sup>106</sup> *Id.*

<sup>107</sup> *Id.*

<sup>108</sup> Prince, *supra* note 74.

Chief Ray Kelly and members of Navy SEAL Team 6.<sup>109</sup> The assessment resulted in him recruiting and expanding his security team by tens of millions of dollars.<sup>110</sup> While Wynn did not note exact numbers on how much he increased by, but it can be inferred from the amount of money spent that Wynn increased and stepped up the security measures within his casinos immensely. Other properties have inquired security consultants to carry out an assessment for any vulnerabilities in their properties as well.<sup>111</sup> This is an essential step for the casinos to make if they want to bring the tourists to their properties. While security might not bring revenue directly to the casino as the tables and machines do, yet the influence it has on the people coming to the casino to visit likely can have a huge effect on the revenue of the casino in the big picture.

The casinos on the Strip need to implement stricter and better crisis management for the sake of the tourist industry that they rely on.<sup>112</sup> As highlighted by Sonomez, Apostolopoulos, and Tarlow “tourist destinations, especially those whose economic viability depends mainly on tourism, have little choice but to implement crisis management strategies to deal with terrorism. It is imperative for destinations to augment their crisis management plans with marketing efforts, to recover lost tourism by rebuilding a positive image.”<sup>113</sup> Las Vegas casinos need to have strict guidelines that apply to all casinos when it comes to crisis management to help reassure the public that the Strip is a safe destination where they can come and relax. Tourists need to know that the casinos have made changes in regard to crisis management, thus as the article indicates, it is imperative to work this into the marketing done by the casinos.

Having a standard way of dealing with a crisis, such as a “crisis management guidebook”, is an imperative strategy that needs to be implemented throughout all of the casinos on the Strip.<sup>114</sup> “This document, which can serve as the only tangible guide at a time of distress and possible panic, can explain how to initiate task force activities, outline responsibilities for task force teams as well as team coordinators, suggest both pre-disaster and post disaster actions in the form of a checklist, and detail various responsibilities delegated to task force members.”<sup>115</sup> While all of the casinos on the daily basis are competing against one another to attract the tourists, this is one area where the casinos must come together and all work together to be able to attract tourists to the Strip. By working together and having a united way of dealing with crime and tragedy, the casinos are increasing their odds of having more tourists come and visit.

Sonomez, Apostolopoulos, and Tarlow note that “in light of societal and global complexities, no destination is immune to negative occurrences, thus adhering to an ‘it can’t happen to us’ philosophy can only be described as naive,

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<sup>109</sup> *Id.*

<sup>110</sup> *Id.*

<sup>111</sup> *Id.*

<sup>112</sup> See Sevil F. Sönmez et al., *supra* note 25.

<sup>113</sup> *Id.* at 16.

<sup>114</sup> See *id.* at 17.

<sup>115</sup> *Id.*

if not reckless. It may be difficult, even impossible, to fully control terrorism, but nations cannot ignore the problem either.”<sup>116</sup> This idea can be tailored to the casinos on the Strip. While the most recent tragedy happened at Mandalay Bay other casinos cannot have the mindset that it can’t happen to them. The reality is that crime and tragedy can unfold anywhere, and all of the casinos need to be prepared to protect the tourists who are vital to their existence.

As Linda Richter explains, “it matters a great deal whether the public and key policy makers are able to grasp the facts that, although tourism may have a frivolous carefree image, the industry is huge, intensely competitive, and has acute social consequences for nearly all societies.”<sup>117</sup> It is imperative for the longevity of the tourism market in Las Vegas for the casinos to have standardized guidelines for them to follow. There needs to be a floor that every casino is required to meet, and no ceiling so casinos are still allowed to implement as strict security measures as they desire. Yet, the current state of no guidelines is not an acceptable state for a destination that relies so heavily on the tourism market. While Las Vegas does have the carefree image associated with it, the tourists need to know that the casinos are not carefree when it comes to their safety.

As to the competitive nature of the tourist industry, there are many other places worldwide where tourists can choose to spend their time and money. Thus, it is imperative for Las Vegas to prioritize the safety guidelines so that it does not lose out on potential tourists due to them being afraid to travel due to crime and terrorism.

#### VIII. HOW TO REFORM AND MAKE POSITIVE CHANGES TO ASSURE TOURISTS’ SAFETY

The first step to enhance the security on the Strip is actual enforcement of safety plans that needs to be monitored by third parties, not just taking the casino’s word on the matter. The current system allowing each casino to do whatever they please for safety plans is not an efficient plan to ensure the safety and security of all individuals who come to Las Vegas.

This idea has recently been embodied by a proposed bill by the Nevada Senate and Assembly.<sup>118</sup> Bill 69 has recently been approved by the Nevada Senate and Assembly in response to the tragic events of Route 91.<sup>119</sup> The bill requires casinos and to file an annual emergency plan to the state, completed in cooperation with law enforcement and fire sectors.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> *Id.*

<sup>117</sup> LINDA K. RICHTER, *THE POLITICS OF TOURISM IN ASIA: AN OVERVIEW* 2–3 (Univ. of Hawai’i Press 1989).

<sup>118</sup> Tamara Tam, *Nevada Governor Approved Law on Casino Security Efforts*, LCB NEWS (June 8, 2019), <https://lcb.org/news/nevada-governor-approved-law-on-casino-security-efforts>.

<sup>119</sup> *Id.*

<sup>120</sup> *Id.*

Essentially, Bill 69 is Nevada's response to the lack of uniformity and lack of enforcement on the casino's security measures. For so long, casinos have not had to report to anyone for the security within their respected casinos, but the tragic events of October 1 illuminated the need for uniformity and enforcement. Bill 69 details what each emergency plan submitted to the state should include.<sup>121</sup> "The emergency plans should include maps of the casino complex and venues, with an explanation of access directions and evacuation plan. All casinos should provide a list of staff responsible for full compliance."<sup>122</sup> These requirements force each and every casino to think through worst case scenarios and the required response necessary for tourist safety.

An important aspect of this Bill is the requirement of staff responsible for full compliance. This means that each casino should create and employ a team of individuals whose only focus, and job is the emergency safety of tourists. To require casinos to create a full new department is not a small undertaking. As Tam highlights, "the plans will incur additional costs for casino operators. However, visitors will enjoy an enhanced level of safety in the future."<sup>123</sup> Additional costs for casinos is never ideal upfront, but, in the long run these additional costs have immeasurable value. The value of having tourists feel safe cannot be understated for an economy that relies so heavily on tourism.

Additionally, Tam explains that Bill recommendations support Nevada Resort Planning Task Force.<sup>124</sup> This task force was implemented in response to Route 91.<sup>125</sup> "If casino operators don't submit emergency plans on time, the task force has the ability to report them to the Nevada Gaming Control Board. It can result in potential fines, license suspension or loss of operation rights."<sup>126</sup> This is the exact type of enforcement that should be required on the casinos. Having a task force that has actual authority and enforcement power against the big casinos is the only legitimate way to require compliance. The threat of license suspension and loss of operation rights are extremely high incentives for the casinos to comply. The threat of being reported to the Nevada Gaming Control Board is the perfect enforcement mechanism to ensure an adequate emergency plan is created and submitted.

According to Fox 5 Local Las Vegas News, Senate Bill 69 requires "resorts and casinos to include a drawing map 'of the layout of all areas within the building or buildings and grounds that constitute a part of the resort hotel.'"<sup>127</sup> These emergency plans will be required to be filed with local law enforcement

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<sup>121</sup> *Id.*

<sup>122</sup> *Id.*

<sup>123</sup> *Id.*

<sup>124</sup> *Id.*

<sup>125</sup> *Id.*

<sup>126</sup> *Id.*

<sup>127</sup> Gov. Steve Sisolak Signs Bill that Requires Casinos to File Emergency Response Plan, FOX5 VEGAS, (June 7, 2019), [https://www.fox5vegas.com/news/gov-steve-sisolak-signs-bill-that-requires-casinos-to-file-emergency-response-plan/article\\_55150ff6-8948-11e9-ba54-dbd14160cc6d.html](https://www.fox5vegas.com/news/gov-steve-sisolak-signs-bill-that-requires-casinos-to-file-emergency-response-plan/article_55150ff6-8948-11e9-ba54-dbd14160cc6d.html).

and fire departments.<sup>128</sup> The requirement of having a plan in place for each casino is a significant step forward departing from the old norm of no standards for the casinos. Additionally, having the local law enforcement and fire departments in the loop and on the same page with the casino's private security teams in regard to the emergency plans. By making the emergency plans more widely known by those agencies who will aid in an actual emergency is the best way to protect people when an emergency might occur.

After signing Bill 69, Governor Sisolak said, "I was proud to sign the legislation into law that strengthens requirements for emergency response plans for cities, counties, schools, and resorts hotels to improve our ability to keep Nevadans and visitors safe."<sup>129</sup> The passage of Bill 69 is an enormous step forward in making the Strip safer for all people who come to visit. The strong support for a safer environment with the emergency plans is highlighted by the bi-partisan support for this bill. This indicates the importance that protection of the tourism industry in Nevada has. The prominence of an issue to transcend party lines for actual legislation to be passed is highly important.

## IX. CONCLUSION

Las Vegas is a city that from its inception has relied heavily on the tourism industry thriving. As an epicenter for all types of tourists, the Strip has had its fair share of crime and terrorist attacks. From the old issues of organized crime running the casinos to the modern era issues of mass shootings, Las Vegas has had to find ways to be resilient in order to bring tourists back to the city.

Currently, the Las Vegas Strip continues to try and combat the issue of crime penetrating the casinos. The 2017 mass shooting at the Route 91 Harvest Festival is a prime example of how negatively a large-scale crime issue can affect the tourism industry. Following the violent act casinos and the tourism industry saw a significant drop in willing tourists coming to visit the city for fun. Thus, this attack posed a threat to the tourism industry in Las Vegas at large and something needed to be done to ensure and reassure tourists safety when they come to the Strip. It is vital for the casinos to come together and do everything in their power to make sure that tourists feel safe while on the Strip to ensure that the industry as a whole can survive the negative press associated with crime and Route 91.

Tourism is a very vulnerable industry to the attacks of crime and violent acts. As indicated by the drastic drop in visitors to Las Vegas following Route 91 and skeptical sentiments from tourists on travel blogs, tourists are extremely influenced by crime and violence when deciding where they wish to spend their time and money. With the negative press that Route 91 brought to the Strip, Las Vegas and the casinos needed to come together to rebuild the trust of potential tourists. The safety of all the tourists who come to visit needs to be the absolute priority to sustain the tourism industry in Las Vegas.

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<sup>128</sup> *Id.*

<sup>129</sup> *Id.*

Bill 69 was passed and signed into law in 2019 as a direct response to this exact issue. The legislature and the Governor recognized the dire need for uniformity when it comes to security and emergency response plans. Prior to Bill 69, the casinos had no laws requiring them to have a certain plan or amount of security on their property. Thus, from a financial point of view, the casinos would not spend as much on security to allow their overall profit to be larger. This makes sense financially, but when it comes at the cost of tourist safety, the profit is essentially depleted.

While Bill 69 is a significant step forward giving some guidelines and enforcement behind emergency response plans for the casinos, I propose that the bill should encompass more requirements for the casinos to comply with. For instance, all of the casinos should have to be required to have a minimum amount of security officers on their property at all times. This kind of uniformity sends a message to tourists that Las Vegas genuinely cares about their safety.

Additionally, Bill 69 should have gone further to elicit the safety of the Strip to all potential tourists. This could have been accomplished by a requirement of safety plans published to tourists on a common medium, such as the Las Vegas tourism website. By publishing the safety plans of the casinos on a website, it sends the message to all potential tourists that Las Vegas takes their safety seriously and that there are proactive steps being taken to ensure safety.

In a community recovering from an unthinkable tragedy that happened on the famous Strip, safety is a priority for all involved. To ensure tourism in Las Vegas can thrive in the future, it is imperative that Bill 69 is fully enforced and pass subsequent legislation that will require uniformity among all casinos on the Strip.