

Public Input

Row 1

Name	Julie Pearson
Email	jpearson1252@gmail.com
Form Date Field	06/18/21
Topic	Non-Agenda Item
Comments	<p>REVEALED: 'Airbnb has secretive 'black box' team paying out \$50 million a year to keep disaster stays out of press and gives staff blank checks to help rape victims and clean-up dismembered human remains' • The secretive safety team - known as the 'black box' inside the firm - is made up of around 100 agents across cities including Dublin, Montreal and Singapore • Team members have the power to spend any amount tackling the worst crises at their rentals including sexual assaults, murders and deaths • They are tasked with providing support to guests and hosts and also working to keep the incidents out of the public eye • Nick Shapiro, ex-National Security Council adviser to Barack Obama and deputy chief of staff at the Central Intelligence Agency, worked as crisis manager • Shapiro, who has since left the role, told Bloomberg the crises facing the company reminded him of the White House Situation Room • A rape victim received a \$7 million payout in exchange for agreeing not to 'imply responsibility or liability' on Airbnb or the host • The 2016 incident saw an alleged 'career criminal' use a duplicate key to enter a New York City rental and attack her at knifepoint • In 2018, Carla Stefaniak was murdered by a security guard at a Costa Rica Airbnb, while in 2019 five were shot dead at a mansion party in California • Airbnb has spent an estimated \$50 million every year on crisis payouts By RACHEL SHARP FOR DAILYMAIL.COM PUBLISHED: 10:19 EDT, 15 June 2021 UPDATED: 11:55 EDT, 15 June 2021</p> <p>Airbnb has a secretive team to keep disaster stays out of the press and gives staff blank checks to help rape victims and pay to clean up dismembered human remains, according to a report. The short-term property rental company, which went public in December, has spent an estimated \$50 million every year on payouts to hosts and guests when things go wrong, according to Bloomberg Businessweek which interviewed several former members of the secretive safety team. The team - known as the 'black box' inside the firm - is made up of around 100 agents across cities including Dublin, Montreal and Singapore, several of whom have backgrounds in the military or emergency services. These people have the power to spend any amount tackling the worst crises at their rentals including sexual assaults, murders and deaths - providing support to guests and hosts and also working to keep the incidents out of the public eye, Bloomberg reported. In one incident, a rape victim received a \$7 million payout in exchange for agreeing not to 'imply responsibility or liability' on Airbnb or the host after a 'career criminal' used a duplicate key to enter a New York City rental and attacked her at knifepoint, according to the report. The revelation of the team's existence - and its power to keep the worst incidents out of the press - raises questions about the scale of shocking incidents taking place at Airbnb properties and the company's ability to ensure safety for its guests and hosts. +8Several former Airbnb safety agents described the extent of their tasks, preventing PR disasters for the firm and</p>

providing support to both guests and hosts who fell victim to horrific crimes inside the walls of the rentals. Some said they had to arrange for contractors to cover bullet holes in the walls of properties or hire body-fluid crews to clean blood off the floors, the report said. In extreme cases, they had to deal with hosts who discover dismembered human remains inside their homes. Others said they had to provide support to guests who had been assaulted by guests and had resorted to hiding in wardrobes or running from secluded cabins from the perpetrators. The team has covered costs including for counseling, new accommodation, flights, and sexually transmitted disease tests and health costs for rape survivors among other things, according to the report. Airbnb hired high profile political crises experts to work on the team, including Nick Shapiro, former National Secu

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- The secretive safety team - known as the 'black box' inside the firm - is made up of around 100 agents across cities including Dublin, Montreal and Singapore
- Team members have the power to spend any amount tackling the worst crises at their rentals including sexual assaults, murders and deaths
- They are tasked with providing support to guests and hosts and also working to keep the incidents out of the public eye
- Nick Shapiro, ex-National Security Council adviser to Barack Obama and deputy chief of staff at the Central Intelligence Agency, worked as crisis manager
- Shapiro, who has since left the role, told Bloomberg the crises facing the company reminded him of the White House Situation Room
- A rape victim received a \$7 million payout in exchange for agreeing not to 'imply responsibility or liability' on Airbnb or the host
- The 2016 incident saw an alleged 'career criminal' use a duplicate key to enter a New York City rental and attack her at knifepoint
- In 2018, Carla Stefaniak was murdered by a security guard at a Costa Rica Airbnb, while in 2019 five were shot dead at a mansion party in California
- Airbnb has spent an estimated \$50 million every year on crisis payouts

By [RACHEL SHARP FOR DAILYMAIL.COM](https://www.dailymail.com)

PUBLISHED: 10:19 EDT, 15 June 2021 | **UPDATED:** 11:55 EDT, 15 June 2021

Airbnb has a secretive team to keep disaster stays out of the press and gives staff blank checks to help rape victims and pay to clean up dismembered human remains, according to a report.

The short-term property rental company, which went public in December, has spent an estimated \$50 million every year on payouts to hosts and guests when things go wrong, according to **Bloomberg Businessweek** which interviewed several former members of the secretive safety team.

The team - known as the 'black box' inside the firm - is made up of around 100 agents across cities including Dublin, Montreal and **Singapore**, several of whom have backgrounds in the military or emergency services.

These people have the power to spend any amount tackling the worst crises at their rentals including sexual assaults, murders and deaths - providing support to guests and hosts and also working to keep the incidents out of the public eye, Bloomberg reported.

In one incident, a rape victim received a \$7 million payout in exchange for agreeing not to 'imply responsibility or liability' on Airbnb or the host after a 'career criminal' used a duplicate key to enter a New York City rental and attacked her at knifepoint, according to the report.

The revelation of the team's existence - and its power to keep the worst incidents out of the press - raises questions about the scale of shocking incidents taking place at Airbnb properties and the company's ability to ensure safety for its guests and hosts.

Several former Airbnb safety agents described the extent of their tasks, preventing PR disasters for the firm and providing support to both guests and hosts who fell victim to horrific crimes inside the walls of the rentals.

Some said they had to arrange for contractors to cover bullet holes in the walls of properties or hire body-fluid crews to clean blood off the floors, the report said.

In extreme cases, they had to deal with hosts who discover dismembered human remains inside their homes.

Others said they had to provide support to guests who had been assaulted by guests and had resorted to hiding in wardrobes or running from secluded cabins from the perpetrators.

The team has covered costs including for counseling, new accommodation, flights, and sexually transmitted disease tests and health costs for rape survivors among other things, according to the report.

Airbnb hired high profile political crises experts to work on the team, including Nick Shapiro, former National Security Council advisee to Barack Obama and deputy chief of staff at the Central Intelligence Agency, who was brought on as its crisis manager.

Shapiro, who has since left the role, told Bloomberg the crises facing the company reminded him of the White House situation room.

'I remember thinking I was right back in the thick of it,' he said. 'This brought me back to feelings of confronting truly horrific matters at Langley and in the Situation Room at the White House.' Langley is the home of the CIA.

He was two weeks into the job when the New York City rape happened on New Years' Day in 2016.

The unidentified Australian woman, who was 29 at the time, and a group of friends had rented a first-floor apartment on West 37th Street, close to Times Square.

The group had picked up the keys for the apartment from a bodega close by without having to show any identification, Bloomberg reported.

They went to a party together, but the 29-year-old returned back to the property alone - ahead of her friends.

The suspect, 24-year-old Junior Lee, was allegedly already inside the apartment hiding in the bathroom when she returned.

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In one incident, a rape victim received a \$7 million payout in exchange for agreeing not to 'imply responsibility or liability' on Airbnb or the host after a 'career criminal' used a duplicate key to enter a New York City rental (above) and attacked her at knifepoint

He raped her at knifepoint.

Lee then returned later that night when police were there and was arrested and charged with predatory sexual assault.

Police said he had a set of keys to the apartment on his person at the time.

The incident has remained under wraps until now.

Chris Lehane, a former political operative for President Bill Clinton who was brought on as head of global policy and communications a few months before the incident, was concerned the incident would be used to help push Airbnb out of New York, according to Bloomberg.

It came at a time when the company was banned in New York but that many short-term rentals still featured on Airbnb's platform.

The safety team sprung into action right away, paying to fly the victim's mother over from Australia, housed them in hotels before flying them back home again and offered to pay for health and counseling costs, according to the report.

- **Airbnb CEO Brian Chesky. The short-term property rental company, which went public in December, has spent an estimated \$50 million every year on payouts to hosts and guests when things go wrong, according to Bloomberg Businessweek**

Two years later, Airbnb reportedly paid the victim \$7 million in an agreement that she would not blame or sue Airbnb or the host.

It is not clear how the alleged rapist had keys to the property but, under Airbnb rules, hosts are not required to disclose to guests who has a copy of the key or change codes on keypad locks in between guests.

Airbnb directed DailyMail.com to the company's [pages](#) on trust and safety when asked to comment on the safety team and the 2016 incident. A spokesman said the company talks about its safety team all the time.

Other incidents involving the safety team include one where a guest was found reportedly found naked in bed with the host's seven-year-old daughter, according to the Bloomberg report. In another previously reported incident, a Florida woman Carla Stefaniak was murdered by a security guard at the apartment complex where she was renting an Airbnb in Costa Rica in 2018.

Her partially-buried body was found half-naked and covered in plastic bags by sniffer dogs 200 feet away from her Airbnb.

She suffered a blunt force wound to the head and stab wounds.

Stefaniak had told friends that she thought the accommodation was 'sketchy' and that there was heavy rain and no power.

She said in a FaceTime call that she might ask a security guard at the Airbnb to buy her water because of the storm.

Bismark Espinoza Martínez, 33, was sentenced last year to 16 years for her murder.

Stefaniak's family filed a suit against Airbnb claiming it failed to perform a background check on the security guard, who it transpired was working in the country illegally.

The case was settled for an undisclosed sum.

Stefaniak's body was found half-naked and covered in plastic bags near the San Jose vacation rental she was staying in

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Traces of blood were found left behind in the Airbnb, which she described as 'sketchy'

One year after Stefaniak's murder, five people were shot dead at a Halloween mansion party at an Airbnb in Orinda, California.

More than 100 people had gathered for the unauthorized party when the shooting unfolded.

Members of rival gangs from San Francisco and Marin City were among those at the party, authorities said.

Tiyon Farley, 22, of Antioch; Omar Taylor, 24, of Pittsburg; Raymon Hill Jr., 23, of San Francisco and Oakland; Javlin County, 29, of Sausalito and Richmond; and Oshiana Tompkins, 19, of Vallejo and Hercules, all died.

Airbnb said it would pay for the funerals of the victims.

But Jesse Danoff, the attorney for Hill's mother Cynthia Taylor, told Bloomberg the company did not reach out to the family for more than a week and claimed it pushed back against some of the funeral expenses.

Danoff claimed the company only cared about 'the threat or potential threat of bad PR or a nightmare in the press' and is still negotiating a settlement.

Airbnb told Bloomberg it paid the funeral bills.

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One year after Stefaniak's murder, five people were shot dead at a Halloween mansion party at an Airbnb in Orinda, California. Law enforcement on the scene of the shooting

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Raymon Hill Jr. - one of the victims of the shooting. Jesse Danoff, the attorney for Hill's mother Cynthia Taylor, told Bloomberg the company did not reach out to the family for more than a week and claimed it pushed back against some of the funeral expenses

Despite the critical role the team plays in supporting guests and hosts and helping to evade PR disasters, 25 of its most experienced agents were laid off last year amid the pandemic.

CEO Brian Chesky had announced in May 2020 that around half of all staff were being laid off, according to Bloomberg.

Safety agents slammed the move, arguing they had already sacrificed their mental health to the role.

Chesky later partly walked back the decision, rehiring 15 of the workers on time-and-a-half pay.