

12 killed in U.S. municipal office shooting

The suspect, a 'disgruntled' public utility employee, was killed by the police after a long gun battle

REUTERS
VIRGINIA BEACH

A disgruntled public utility employee opened fire with a handgun on co-workers at a municipal building in Virginia on Friday afternoon, killing 12 people and wounding at least four before he was fatally shot by the police, authorities said.

The mass shooting in the coastal resort of Virginia Beach was the deadliest instance of U.S. gun violence since November 2018, when a dozen people were slain at a Los Angeles-area bar and grill by a gunman who then killed himself.

Virginia Beach Police chief James Cervera said the suspect, identified as DeWayne Craddock, was armed with a .45-caliber pistol equipped with a "sound suppressor" device and "extended" ammunition magazines he used to reload repeatedly during the attack.

Craddock had worked for the public utilities department for about 15 years, Mr. Cervera said at a news conference.



Difficult times: Officials releasing the photographs and names of the victims on Saturday. ■ AFP

All but one of the victims were employed by the city, officials said, while the other was a contractor seeking a permit.

Survivors recounted scenes of pandemonium and fear that erupted as gunshots rang out, and workers scurried frantically for cover.

"We just heard people yelling and screaming to get down," Megan Banton, a public utilities worker, told television station WAVY-TV, re-

calling that she and co-workers barricaded themselves in their office.

"We put the desk up against the door because we didn't know if they were coming in. We were just hoping that it would be over soon, and then we heard the cops yelling up the steps."

The first victim was shot in a vehicle outside the public works and utilities building at the city municipal centre before the suspect en-

tered that building and "immediately and indiscriminately fired upon all the victims," Mr. Cervera said. Bodies were found on all three floors of the building.

Officer wounded

The chief said the suspect engaged in a "long-term gun battle" with four police officers who confronted him inside, preventing the gunman from "committing more carnage in that building".

One officer was wounded in the shootout, but his bullet-proof vest saved his life, Mr. Cervera said.

Authorities said the gunman ultimately was shot by the police and was declared dead at a hospital.

Mr. Cervera described the suspect as "disgruntled", but declined to say more about what may have precipitated the attack. "We have more questions than we really have answers," he said.

The shooting was believed to be the deadliest act of workplace gun violence in the U.S. since February, when a factory worker shot five colleagues to death in Aurora, Illinois, just after he was let go from his job.

The bloodshed unfolded, according to the police, at Building Two of the municipal centre complex, where office space for more than 400 employees houses IT, public works, planning and utilities departments.

"This is the most devastating day in the history of Virginia Beach," said Mayor Bobby Dyer.

Boris Johnson will make an excellent British PM: Trump

Criticises Theresa May's handling of Brexit negotiations

AGENCE-FRANCE PRESSE
LONDON

U.S. President Donald Trump has said that former British Foreign Minister Boris Johnson would make an "excellent" Prime Minister to replace Theresa May.

Mr. Trump was speaking ahead of the start of a state visit to Britain on Monday, during which he will meet Ms. May.

She is set to resign on June 7 over her failure to deliver a deal to bring Britain out of the European Union.

Asked by the British tabloid newspaper *The Sun* for his opinion on the 12 candidates to replace her, Mr. Trump said, "I think Boris would do a very good job. I think he would be excellent." "I have always liked him. I don't know that he is going to be chosen, but I think he is a very good guy, a very talented person," Mr. Trump said.

He added that several



Boris Johnson

candidates in the Conservative leadership race had asked for his support, without revealing who.

A key Leave campaigner in the Brexit referendum, Mr. Johnson has said he is prepared to take Britain out of the European Union, "deal or no deal".

'Advantage EU'

In the interview, Mr. Trump also repeated his criticism of how Ms. May has handled Brexit negotiations, saying Britain had allowed the EU to "have all the cards".

"It is very hard to play well when one side has all the advantage," he said. "I had mentioned to Theresa that you have got to build up your ammunition."

Ms. May concluded a divorce agreement with the EU in November but her deal was rejected three times by the British Parliament, forcing her to seek a delay in leaving the bloc, now scheduled for October 31.

Commenting on Britain's domestic politics and opining on ruling-party leadership choices at a sensitive time would normally be an unusual move for a U.S. President - but not for Mr. Trump, a former reality-TV star who often speaks his mind. It could however add to tensions during his three-day visit to Britain.

Mr. Trump is to be received in Buckingham Palace on Monday by Queen Elizabeth II.

'U.S. Justice dept. preparing antitrust inquiry of Google'

Probe will look into practices related to web search: report

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SAN FRANCISCO

The U.S. Department of Justice is preparing an antitrust investigation of Internet titan Google, the Wall Street Journal reported on Friday.

The *Journal* cited unnamed sources close to the matter as saying the department would look into Google practices related to web search and other businesses. Justice department offi-

cial share antitrust oversight with the Federal Trade Commission, which conducted a wide-ranging investigation of its own into Alphabet-owned Google that ended in 2013 with no action taken.

Google did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

A new investigation would come as backlash grows against major tech

companies that dominate key segments of the online economy.

Democratic presidential candidate Elizabeth Warren has argued that big firms such as Facebook, Google and Apple should be broken up through antitrust enforcement.

In March, the European Commission had slapped the company with a \$1.7 billion anti-trust fine.

No ceasefire soon, says Taliban leader

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KABUL

The Taliban's leader said on Saturday the insurgents will not call a ceasefire any time soon, even as a U.S. envoy was heading to the region for a fresh round of peace talks.

In a defiant message, Taliban chief Haibatullah Akhundzada boasted that foreign forces in Afghanistan were "condemned to defeat", but said the Islamist insurgents would continue talks with the U.S.

'Investing heavily to defend Asian allies'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SINGAPORE

The United States warned China on Saturday against threatening its neighbours' sovereignty and said Washington is investing in new military technology to defend its Asian allies.

Washington and Beijing have been vying for influence in the region, which hosts potential flashpoints such as the South China Sea, the Korean Peninsula and the Taiwan Strait.

Ties between the two powers are once again taking centre stage at the weekend Singapore conference

known as the Shangri-La Dialogue, which gathers Defence Ministers and top military officials from around the world.

"China can and should have a cooperative relationship with the rest of the region ... But behaviour that erodes other nations' sovereignty and sows distrust of China's intentions must end, we stand against a myopic, narrow, and parochial vision of the future, and we stand for the free and open order that has benefit-

ted us all, including China." Washington has been pushing back against Beijing's aggressive militarisation of the South China Sea, where China has staked "indisputable" ownership over almost the whole area and rejects partial claims by Taiwan, Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam.

For the first time since 2011, China has sent its Defence Minister, General Wei Fenghe, to the Singapore gathering. Mr. Wei is scheduled to speak on Sunday, when he is expected to respond to Mr. Shanahan's remarks.

Mr. Shanahan said the U.S. was investing heavily in new military technology to combat fresh threats and maintain its superiority and capability to defend its Asian allies. He said North Korea "remains an extraordinary threat and requires continued vigilance" and stressed Washington would continue to meet its defence obligations to Taiwan. "The Indo-Pacific is our priority theatre. We are where we belong. We are investing in the region," he said, adding that military investments will rise significantly over the next five years.

IN BRIEF



Ocasio-Cortez pushes for minimum wage raise

NEW YORK
U.S. Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez returned to her restaurant roots on Friday, donning an apron and serving drinks in Manhattan in a push to raise the country's minimum wage. Ms. Ocasio-Cortez is calling for a raise to the federal hourly minimum wage to \$15 for service workers. ■ AFP

3 Jaish activists get jail term for terror funding

ISLAMABAD
A court in Pakistan has sentenced three activists of the Masood Azhar-led Jaish-e-Mohammad for five years each in jail for arranging funds for the proscribed terror outfit. The Anti-Terrorism Court found the trio guilty in three separate cases on Friday. ■ PTI

79 people injured in blast at Russian explosives plant

200 buildings damaged; safety violations to be probed

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MOSCOW

A blast at a major explosives plant in central Russia on Saturday injured 79 people and damaged nearly 200 buildings nearby, local officials told Russian news agencies.

The explosion happened at the 'Kristall' factory in Dzerzhinsk, about 400 km east of Moscow, in the Nizhny Novgorod region.

A local Health Ministry official, quoted by the TASS news agency, said 79 people had suffered light or moderate injuries, a huge increase on the initial figure of 19.

"According to the latest information, 79 people asked for medical help after the explosion at Kristall: 38 factory workers and 41 residents of the city. There are



Smoke rising from the blast site in Dzerzhinsk on Saturday. ■ REUTERS

no children among the injured," a Health Ministry statement said.

Fifteen people were hospitalised but none had life-threatening injuries, it said.

Earlier, Health Ministry officials told news agencies that the wounded had "shrapnel wounds of mild and moderate severity" and that they were receiving medical assistance.

The force of the blast damaged five factory buildings and 180 houses nearby.

The Deputy Governor of the Nizhny Novgorod region, Dmitry Krasnov, told Russian state television that two people were missing.

Russia's Investigative Committee said it had opened an investigation into potential violations of industrial safety at the plant.

Local emergency services told news agencies that more than 300 people and 50 technical vehicles were taking part in cleaning the blast site.

Trump bets the U.S. economy on tariffs

President insists change in trade policy poses no economic risk to America

JIM TANKERSLEY
WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump is upending the U.S. economy, and perhaps jeopardising his re-election prospects, with an abrupt escalation of protectionist trade policies.

Mr. Trump announced on Thursday that he would soon impose a 5% tariff on imports from Mexico, which could quickly grow to 25%, unless Mexican officials stop the flow of immigrants across America's southern border.

The move capped a furious month of cross-border tariff threats that has rattled investors and raised economists' concerns about a slowdown in global growth. Just three weeks ago, Mr. Trump increased tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods and started the



Donald Trump

process to tax nearly everything China sends into the U.S. And he said the U.S. was prepared to impose tariffs on autos from Europe and Japan in six months, setting a tight deadline for those governments to reach trade deals with the Trump administration.

In the span of 30 days, Mr. Trump has enacted or threatened what amounts to a

nearly \$200 billion annual tax increase on U.S. businesses and consumers, which would be enough to cancel out the average annual value of the tax cut package the President signed in late 2017. His actions have also further imperilled congressional passage of the new trade agreement he negotiated last year with Mexico and Canada.

Markets have shown clear damage from the escalation. At the start of May, the U.S. economy was riding a strong quarter of growth at 3.2% and investors were bullish on the months to come.

Thereafter, the China talks broke down, and Mr. Trump said he would increase tariffs until a deal was reached. Stocks are down more than 6% since then. "Trump trade policy

might well mean a permanent state of endemic uncertainty and instability in the global trading system," Krishna Guha, vice-chairman of Evercore ISI, wrote in a research note on Friday morning.

Mr. Trump continues to insist that tariff escalation poses no economic risk, saying tariffs boosted U.S. growth earlier this year. He tweeted in May that tariff payments "are partially responsible for our great economic results" - a statement that little evidence supports.

Most economists warn that large and sustained tariff increases, along with likely retaliation from China and Mexico against American farmers and other exporters, will dampen global trade and drag on growth in the U.S. ■ NY TIMES

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