

At least seven dead in shooting at Sikh temple in Wisconsin

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6 August 2012

At least seven people were killed on Sunday in a mass shooting at the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin in Oak Creek, a suburb of the city of Milwaukee.

The first officer to respond to the scene was wounded in a shootout in which the shooter was killed. Three men are in critical condition and are being treated at a nearby hospital. Witnesses described the shooter as a white male in his mid-30s.

The shooter's motivations are not yet clear. However, Kanwardeep Singh Kaleka, a member of the temple who witnessed the shooting, reported that the shooter had a 9/11 tattoo and "obviously has some animosity about those incidents."

While the number of casualties, killed and wounded is reported to be around 10, the exact number is not known at this time.

A neighborhood in the Milwaukee suburb of Cudahy was evacuated Sunday afternoon as police searched the suspected shooter's home.

The president of the temple, Satwant Kaleka, who was shot in the back, was among those killed. In a statement to the media Ven Bobba Ri, a temple committee member, called the shooting a "hate crime" and characterized it as the work of someone from outside the Sikh community.

Oak Creek police are treating the incident as an act of "domestic terrorism." The FBI will lead the criminal investigation.

In response to the Oak Creek shooting, security has been increased at a nearby Sikh temple in the Milwaukee suburb of Brookfield. In New York City and Chicago, security has been stepped up at Sikh temples, though there are no specific indications that they are targets.

The Oak Creek temple was opened in 2007 to better serve the Milwaukee metropolitan area's Sikh

community. The temple currently maintains a congregation of 400 members. There are approximately 3,000 Sikh families in southeastern Wisconsin.

Sikhism is a monotheistic religion which was founded in the Punjab region of India in the 15th century. It is currently the fifth largest religion in the world, with over 30 million adherents.

Though they are not Muslim, Sikhs in America are often mistaken as such due to their head coverings and long beards. Due to this they have borne a significant share of the post-9/11 anti-Muslim sentiment.

Since September 11, 2001, there have been hundreds of incidents throughout the country where Sikhs were threatened, assaulted, or killed. In the weeks following September 11 in Milwaukee, two Sikh-owned taxis were vandalized and two Sikh men were assaulted.

Last year two Sikh men, Surindur Singh and Gurmej Atwal, were gunned down in Elk Grove, California. In 2003 Dalvir Sangah, a postal carrier in West Sacramento, California, was shot by a high powered air rifle while delivering mail. Four days after September 11, 2001, Balbir Sodhir was murdered in front of his Mesa, Arizona gas station while planting flowers.

The shooting in Oak Creek comes a little more than two weeks after the killing of 12 people in a movie theater in Aurora, Colorado.

The shooting is the fifth mass murder in the state of Wisconsin since 2004. In 2004 Chai Soua Vang, a truck driver from Minnesota, killed eight people while deer hunting in northern Wisconsin. In 2005, Terry Michael Ratzmann killed seven people and committed suicide at a church service in the Milwaukee suburb of Brookfield. In 2007, Forest County Sheriff's Department Deputy Tyler James Peterson killed six people and committed suicide in the northeastern Wisconsin city of Crandon, and in the same year

Ambrosio Analco killed five people in Delevan before committing suicide.



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