

Santa Monica, California shooting leaves six dead

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On Friday, a 23-year-old gunman went on a shooting rampage in Santa Monica, California, murdering five and wounding four before being killed by police.

Just before noon, the suspect, John Zawahri, allegedly shot and killed his brother and father at the latter's home. The house burst into flames shortly thereafter. Brandishing a semi-automatic rifle, the suspect then forced two different drivers to stop their cars. He shot and wounded one of the drivers and forced the other at gunpoint to drive him to nearby Santa Monica Community College (SMC).

En route to SMC, Zawahri ordered the driver to stop so that he could shoot at a public bus. He sprayed the bus with several shots, shattering windows and wounding two. He then got back in the car, forcing the driver to take him closer to the college.

Near the college, Zawahri shot at a father and daughter in a SUV. The father died on the scene and the daughter died Sunday from wounds inflicted. The suspect then got out of the car, sparing his driver, and shot and killed his final victim outside the library of SMC.

Zawahri fired throughout the library; however, no one was killed or seriously injured. Three police officers engaged him at this time and, according to police reports, shot and killed him.

Santa Monica Community College was put on lockdown. According to one witness on ABC News, it was as if "every cop in the state showed up."

The militarization and brutalization of American society is evident in such incidents. The gunman was dressed in all black and wore a combat vest. In his black duffle bag he carried 1,300 rounds for his 223 Semi-Automatic Rifle and an old revolver. More than one witness described him as looking like a SWAT team member. Another thought he was a secret service

agent who was stopping traffic for President Obama's nearby fundraising event.

College Employee Joe Orcutt said he saw Zawahri taking aim from the parking lot: "I turn around and that's when he's just standing there, like he's modeling for some ammo magazine," Orcutt said. "He was very calm just standing there, panning around, seeing who he could shoot, one bullet at a time, like target practice."

The police used the event as an opportunity to employ extreme, heavy-handed tactics. Almost instantaneously, hundreds of police and SWAT team member arrived in full armor and riot gear with sharpshooters circling in helicopters overhead. Hundreds of students were ordered by police with automatic weapons drawn to march out with their hands in the air.

On the previous day, the rapidly emerging American police state flexed its muscles on the streets of downtown Los Angeles, as a team of LAPD officers from the militarized Counter Terrorism and Special Operations Bureau conducted drills simulating a "response to a weapons of mass destruction device." The drills included an explosion, officers firing blank ammunition at pretend terrorists, and police helicopters with sharpshooters passing between the skyscrapers.

No clear motive for the shooting has surfaced. However, interviews with neighbors and statements by police give a glimpse of the shooter's life.

According to the *Los Angeles Times*, the gunmen had been hospitalized in a psychiatric ward after physically threatening someone several years ago. The *Times* also reports that anonymous law officers said that the shooter had a mental illness and was upset about his parents' divorce. Zawahri was unemployed and lived with his mother who, at the time of the shooting, was

out of the country. In 2010 he attended Santa Monica Community College.

The tragedy in Santa Monica, a city on the west side of Los Angeles, follows several others from 2012: the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre (December 2012); the Brookfield, Wisconsin shooting (October 2012); a shooting at a small business in Minneapolis (September 2012); a shooting at a Sikh temple (August 2012); the Aurora Colorado massacre (June 2012) and a killing spree at a Christian college in Oakland, California (April 2012). From 2000 to 2010 there were 11 mass shootings in the United States. Since April 2010, there have been 9.

The fact that these tragedies have become such a regular occurrence points to something deeply diseased within American society.



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