

Killings at UPS Alabama facility the latest workplace shooting in US

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The deadly shooting at a United Parcel Service facility in Birmingham, Alabama Tuesday was the latest in a long string of workplace and school killings in the US, which have been occurring at an increased rate over the last seven years, according to a new FBI report.

In this case, the shooter was identified as Kerry Joe Tesney, a 45-year-old UPS driver who was informed that he had been fired after 21 years of service. According to the *Birmingham News*, the married father of two had appealed a decision by the company to fire him last month and was informed by mail on Monday that he had lost the appeal.

One day later Tesney, wearing his UPS uniform, walked into the warehouse near the Birmingham airport and just before 9:30 a.m. opened fire on two supervisors in their office. He then turned the gun on himself.

Doug Hutcheson, 33, a driver supervisor and father of two small children, and Brian Callans, 46, a business manager who worked for UPS for 26 years, were both killed. Hutcheson had reportedly been involved in investigating an alleged infraction by Tesney and had recommended his dismissal.

According to the pastor at the North Park Baptist Church where Tesney lived in suburban Trussville, Alabama, the UPS driver had been “troubled” over his work and financial situation.

The Alabama incident was one of many in the last few months alone. So prevalent have these mass killings become in recent years that the FBI issued a report this week on “Active Shooter Incidents,” which examined 160 such events between 2000 and 2013 that did not involve gang- or drug-related violence or individuals.

The shootings examined included many that attracted

national and international attention, such as the killings at Virginia Tech, Sandy Hook Elementary School, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Fort Hood, the Aurora (Colorado) Cinemark Century 16 movie theater, the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin and the Washington Navy Yard.

These tragedies resulted in a staggering toll of 1,043 casualties, with 486 killed and 557 wounded, excluding the shooters. The study showed that such incidents have become more frequent—with an average of 6.4 annually in the first seven years of the study and 16.4 annually over the last seven years.

The bloodiest year was 2012, with 90 people killed and 118 wounded in 21 incidents, including 12 fatalities at a movie theater in Aurora, Colorado, and another 27 people, mostly children, killed at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut.

Other findings of the study include:

- * All but six of the 160 shootings involved male shooters (and only two involved more than one shooter).

- * More than half—90 shootings—ended on the shooter’s initiative (i.e., suicide, fleeing), while 21 incidents ended after unarmed citizens successfully restrained the shooter.

- * In 21 of the 45 confrontations, where law enforcement had to engage the shooter to end the threat, nine officers were killed and 28 were wounded.

- * The largest percentage of incidents—45.6 percent—took place in a commercial environment (73), followed by 24.3 percent that took place in an educational environment (39). The remaining shootings occurred at the other locations, as specified in the study—open spaces, military and other government properties, residential properties, houses of worship, and health care facilities.

The primary purpose of the study, the FBI said, was to “provide our law enforcement partners—normally the first responders on the scene of these dangerous and fast-moving events—with data that will help them to better prepare for and respond to these incidents, saving more lives and keeping themselves safer in the process.”

Special Agent Katherine Schweit—who heads the FBI’s Active Shooter Initiative—said she hopes the study “demonstrates the need not only for enhanced preparation on the part of law enforcement and other first responders, but also for civilians to be engaged in discussions and training on decisions they’d have to make in an active shooter situation.”

As in the response to virtually every other social problem in America, the focus of the authorities is to beef up police, increase the surveillance of the population and encourage the arming of teachers. Few if any resources are dedicated to examine, let alone offer a solution to, the underlying social causes of such violent eruptions.

This is combined with general perplexity over the levels of alienation and social anger in the population.

“Many active shooters have a real or perceived deeply held personal grievance, and the only remedy that they can perceive for that grievance is an act of catastrophic violence against a person or an institution,” said FBI behavioral analysis expert Andre Simons, who added that the shootings can bring a “moment of omnipotent control and domination.”

According to the FBI website, “Using the results of this study, the Bureau’s behavioral analysis experts will now delve deeper into why these shooters did what they did in an effort to help strengthen prevention efforts around the country.”

The increasing prevalence of a sense of social powerlessness is not only a psychological condition, but is rooted in the social and political structure of America itself.

Nowhere do masses of ordinary people have so little control over their lives. Decisions over whether they work or not, and whether their families will have enough to eat, are made by powerful and faceless economic and political forces oblivious to the needs of the majority. Millions have been tossed into the abyss and official society hardly takes notice, while the financial kingpins are reveling in record amounts of

wealth.

The organizations that once mediated class relations in the United States—the trade unions and the civil rights groups—are run by corrupt and well-heeled functionaries who are part of the establishment and oppose any collective resistance to the daily humiliations on the job, layoffs or devastating wage and pension cuts. The result is that millions of workers are left to fend for themselves.

Notwithstanding the periodic laments issued by political figures after a particularly horrific shooting, these eruptions cannot be separated from the militarism and glorification of mass murder that is given official approval by the Obama administration and both big business parties, as well as the media and entertainment conglomerates.

Under these conditions, the most psychologically fragile snap and erupt in violence. In the end, the underlying cause of this is the brutal character of class relations in America.



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