

More mass shootings in the US

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Since Jason Dalton, a 45-year-old insurance adjuster and Uber cab driver, randomly opened fire on eight people, killing six, in multiple locations in Kalamazoo, Michigan last weekend, at least three additional mass killings have occurred in the US. Shootings in Kansas, Washington state and Arizona have resulted in the deaths of 14 people.

On Thursday evening, Cedric Larry Ford, 38, went on a shooting spree, killing three people and injuring fourteen others in an area approximately 35 miles north of Wichita, Kansas. The attack ended when Ford was killed by police after he opened fire inside the Excel Industries lawn equipment factory in Hesston, where he was employed in the paint shop.

According to the official police account, the shooting spree began around 5 p.m. when Ford fired on two vehicles at an intersection in the city of Newton, injuring one of the drivers. He then drove towards Hesston, opening fire on oncoming vehicles until he and another motorist crashed in a ditch. Ford proceeded to shoot the other driver in the leg and drove his vehicle to the Excel factory, where he carried out the assault on fellow employees.

Workers described a scene of confusion as Ford, armed with an AK-47 assault rifle and a hand gun, first shot an employee in the Excel parking lot and then entered the factory. He fired on those in the front office area of the facility, killing three people and wounding 12 others.

“I heard some popping noises, but I thought it was just a drill,” Tim Kasper, a laser operator, told the *Wichita Eagle*. “Then I heard a three-round burst and I knew it was something real. I got out of there quick. People were running and panicking. It was chaos.”

Kasper reported that his friend and coworker, with whom he had just been chatting, was killed after being shot in the head by Ford. “It’s pretty unnerving,” Kasper stated. “Things can change fast. It was just a

normal day before that.”

Jason Hershberger, a worker on the plant’s mower assembly line, recounted to the *Wichita Eagle* how he and other workers placed a fellow worker who had been shot in the back by Ford onto a wooden pallet and drove the worker out of the factory on a motorized cart.

The attack ended approximately half an hour after it began when a Hesston police officer opened fire on Ford, killing him inside the factory.

According to police, Ford’s rampage began after he had been served with a protection of abuse order requiring him to stay away from his girlfriend, who had accused him of assault. In a petition for the restraining order filed in Sedgwick County court on February 5, a woman who described herself as Ford’s live-in girlfriend, described how Ford had placed her in a chokehold after an argument. “He is an alcoholic, violent, depressed,” she wrote. “It’s my belief he is in desperate need of medical & psychological help!”

Photos apparently posted by Ford on Facebook show him posing with a handgun and an AK-47. A video posted on social media shows Ford firing dozens of rounds from an AK-47 into an empty cornfield.

Ford, originally from Miami, Florida, had a long history of encounters with the police and criminal convictions dating from the time he was a teenager. When he was 18 years old, Ford was charged with carrying a concealed firearm.

Over the next several years of his life Ford was convicted on charges of battery, drug possession, grand theft and multiple parole violations. He received a misdemeanor conviction for engaging in a brawl in 2008.

Mass shootings happen with such regularity that the horror in Kansas was met by a perfunctory statement from President Barack Obama warning that Americans “cannot become numb” to such violence.

On Friday, police in Belfair, Washington responded

to a 911 emergency call from a man who reported that he had killed his family. According to the police, the man shot and killed himself after hours of negotiations. When police entered the home, they found the man and four of his victims. A twelve-year-old girl survived the attack and was taken to a local hospital.

A neighbor told the Associated Press that he heard gunshots the previous night. He also told the press that his neighbor had operated a heating and air conditioning contractor business.

Earlier in the week, on Tuesday, 26-year-old Alex Buckner was shot and killed by police in Phoenix, Arizona after shooting and killing his father, mother and two sisters and setting their home on fire. Buckner had previously been arrested for public intoxication and shoplifting sleeping pills. A family member told the *Arizona Republic* that he had been diagnosed with schizophrenia.

According to the Gun Violence Archive, so far this year there have been 34 mass shootings, defined as incidents in which more than four people have either been killed or injured by a person with a firearm. At least 51 people have been killed and a further 135 injured in such incidents.

Another count by the Gun Violence Archive found at least 191 incidents in which at least one person was injured or killed by gunfire so far this year.

That such mass shootings and killings take place with such regularity in the United States is a reflection of a society riven by economic inequality and mired in a deepening social crisis, compounded by endless cuts in welfare programs and mental health services. The mounting social contradictions of American society, amplified by a sclerotic, right-wing and antidemocratic political system and the absence of any mass organizations that speak for working and oppressed people, leads highly vulnerable and psychologically damaged individuals to crack and resort to irrational individual violence directed against themselves as well as others.



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