

Fired worker, an army veteran, kills five in workplace rampage in Orlando, Florida

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On Monday, a former employee returned to his prior workplace in Orlando, Florida and fatally shot five people before turning the gun on himself.

John Robert Neumann, Jr., 45, an army veteran, entered the Fiamma Inc. building at about 8 a.m. and opened fire, apparently singling out his victims.

Monday's deadly rampage came a week before the city marks one year since the Pulse nightclub massacre, when a lone gunman shot and killed 49 people and wounded 53 others before he was killed by police in a shootout.

Orange County deputies arrived on the scene minutes after a 911 call came in at 8:03 a.m. about an active shooting at Fiamma, a business employing less than a dozen workers that manufactures awnings and accessories for recreational vehicles. Fiamma is located in an industrial area northeast of downtown Orlando, which includes textile companies, body shops, kitchen equipment suppliers and other small businesses.

When police arrived on the scene Monday they found four people dead. A fifth person was rushed to a hospital, where he died. The victims were Kevin Clark, 53; Jeffrey Roberts, 57; Robert Snyder, 69; Brenda Montanez-Crespo, 44; and Kevin Lawson, 46. "Most of the victims were shot in the head," Orange County Sheriff Jerry L. Demings reported at a press conference. "Some were shot multiple times."

Neumann entered through a rear door of the building, apparently knowing it was likely unlocked. He methodically sought out his victims, according to one witness who said she was told by the shooter to leave the building and escaped unharmed. Neumann was armed with a semiautomatic handgun, a large hunting knife and possibly some smaller knives, according to police. He roamed the building in search of his victims, reloading his gun at least once.

Neumann's body was found at the scene, killed in an apparent suicide. He had been fired from his job at

Fiamma in April. The Sheriff's Office had also responded to the business in 2014, when Neumann allegedly battered an employee. There were no charges filed at the time and that employee was not one of those killed Monday.

Clark's wife died in 2008 and he leaves behind two children, 14 and 18, according to the *Orlando Sentinel*. He lived in a single-wide trailer in the Lake of the Woods mobile home complex in Seminole County, north of Orlando.

By Monday evening, deputies and US Marshals surrounded Neumann's home, armed and wearing tactical gear, peering with flashlights through windows before going inside to search. Shortly before 8 p.m. authorities loaded up evidence from the home, including stacks of paper and other items in large envelopes, according to the *Sentinel*.

Sheriff Demings described Neumann as a "disgruntled employee" who had a "negative relationship" with at least one of the victims. He was honorably discharged from the US Army in 1999. He had criminal history that included driving under the influence and a minor drug possession charge.

As with other such shootings, what specifically led to Neumann's actions on Monday was likely a complex intersection of psychological, economic and other social factors. What is clear is that such horrific shootings have become a common occurrence in 21st century America.

The Orlando incident was the deadliest single act of workplace violence since the San Bernardino, California attack in December 2015 that left 14 dead, according to Kathleen Bonczyk, a researcher who focuses on workplace violence. She told the *Orlando Sentinel* that there have been 150 employee-on-employee killings since 2010.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there were 417 homicides at workplaces across the country in 2015. Of these, 354 were shootings, a 15 percent increase over

the previous year, and the first time the number of shootings had increased since 2012. Bonczyk told the *Sentinel*, “There used to be a time when an employee shooting someone in the workplace would be a shock. Now it’s becoming common.”

The rash of shootings has spawned an industry in workplace security, advising companies on how to defend their management and workforces and against angry, mentally unbalanced or violent workers and former employees. One such firm is TAL Global, which describes itself as an “international security consulting and risk management firm that specializes in providing expert Protection, Prevention and Security services.”

TAL offers its clients “Threat Assessment Investigations” to protect themselves against workplace violence (WPV) events. “Unfortunately, WPV incidents are on the rise,” the firm writes on its web site. “Many times, these incidents are driven by cultural, economic, social and psychological triggers such as mental illness, drug use, economic hardship, domestic conflicts, communication problems, actual or perceived sense of injustice in the workplace, and even traumatic family events (e.g., death, illness and injury).”

While citing these very real social ills as triggers for workplace violence, however, these firms offer no solutions to these problems aside from beefing up security. They recommend screening employees for behavioral problems, including such “red flags” as financial difficulties, family disputes and substance abuse problems—issues that plague the vast majority of working class families in one form or another.

But it is the growing social crisis in the US—marked by massive economic inequality, unemployment, growing poverty and vastly inadequate social services—that is driving a small but significant number of workers to lash out violently against their employers and fellow workers.

The role of the military, both in promoting a culture of violence and in destroying the mental and physical state of those sent to fight US imperialism’s wars, is also a key factor in workplace shootings.

While there are no statistics to show that veterans are more likely to be responsible for workplace and other shooting incidents, since 2009 there have now been nine times that a veteran of the post-9/11 war era has unleashed a shooting spree. One such case was another incident in Florida, on January 6, when Esteban Santiago gunned down five people at the Fort Lauderdale airport.

Santiago served nearly a decade in the military. After serving in the Puerto Rico National Guard and the Army

Reserve, he was deployed to Iraq from April 2010 to February 2011 as a combat engineer. While in Iraq, he witnessed the deaths of two soldiers in his unit killed by a roadside bomb. Santiago’s relatives say that the war transformed him, beginning his descent into mental illness.

The following is a timeline of mass shootings carried out by post-9/11 veterans since 2009:

November 5, 2009: Major Nadal Malik Hasan, 39, an army psychiatrist, killed 13 when he went on a rampage at Fort Hood, Texas.

March 11, 2012: US Army Staff Sgt. Robert Bales killed 16 Afghan villagers, including nine children, in a pre-dawn attack in southern Kandahar Province.

September 17, 2013: Aaron Alexis, 34, a civilian defense contractor and former Navy reservist, killed 12 in a shooting rampage inside a building at the Washington Navy Yard.

April 2, 2014: Ivan Lopez, 34, army specialist and Iraq war veteran, killed three people and wounded 16 at the Fort Hood military base in Texas.

May 29, 2016: Dionisio Garza III, 25, an army veteran from California, killed one person and injured several others in a shooting rampage at a Houston auto detail shop.

July 7, 2016: Micah Johnson, 25, an army veteran who had served in Afghanistan, ambushed and killed five police officers in Dallas.

July 17, 2016: Gavin Long, 29, a former Marine and Iraq war veteran, killed three police officers in Louisiana.

January 6, 2017: Esteban Santiago, 26, a former combat engineer in Iraq, killed five people at the Fort Lauderdale, Florida, airport.

June 5, 2017: John Robert Neumann, Jr., 45, an army veteran, killed five people at Fiamma Inc., an RV accessory business in Orlando, Florida.



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