

Tennessee Waffle House shooting leaves four dead and several injured

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Four people were killed and several others injured after a man opened fire in an Antioch, Tennessee Waffle House restaurant in the early hours of Sunday morning. The Nashville Police Department identified the suspect as 29-year-old Travis Reinking, who remains at large.

The incident marks the second mass shooting in the Nashville suburb in less than a year. Six people were injured and one killed on September 24, 2017 when Emanuel Kidega Samson opened fire inside the Burnette Chapel Church of Christ.

Reinking reportedly arrived at the Waffle House parking lot in Antioch around 3:19 a.m. According to Nashville Police spokesman Don Aaron, Reinking sat in his vehicle for four minutes before exiting his truck with an AR-15 rifle and fatally shot two people outside the restaurant. He then went inside the restaurant and opened fire, fatally wounding two more.

Reinking fatally shot Waffle House employee Taurean C. Sanderlin, 29, of Goodlettsville and customer Joe R. Perez, 20, of Nashville outside of the restaurant. Akilah Dasilva, 23, of Antioch, who was shot inside, later died at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. DeEbony Groves, 21, of Gallatin, Tennessee, was shot and died in the restaurant.

Shanita Waggoner, 21, of Nashville, and Sharita Henderson, 24, of Antioch, were both injured by gunfire and are being treated at Vanderbilt.

Further catastrophe was avoided thanks to the heroics of a customer who heard the gunshots and hid near the restaurant's restrooms. Police said James Shaw Jr., 29, rushed Reinking, wrestled him to the ground and tossed the weapon over the restaurant counter. Shaw's hands were severely burned from grabbing the AR-15 but he still managed to push Reinking out of the restaurant.

"I saw an opportunity—my window—so I took it. I ran

through the door as fast as I could and just kind of jammed him up with the gun when it pointed down. We started wrestling and fighting for it. I just took it and tossed it over the counter. I pushed him out of the restaurant and he walked off," Shaw told local news station WTVF.

Naked except for a green jacket, Reinking fled the scene. The police discovered two magazines of AR-15 ammunition in the green jacket, which Reinking left behind. "He clearly came armed with a lot of firepower to devastate the south Nashville area," Aaron said.

As of this writing Reinking has not been apprehended. A man believed to be Reinking was last seen in a wood line near Discovery at Mountain View Apartments on Mountain Springs Drive near the Waffle House wearing black pants and no shirt. Authorities attempted to track the suspect with a police dog, but lost the scent.

While police have yet to determine a motive for the shooting, many signs point to the suspect suffering from a long history of mental illness. Reinking had moved from Tremont, Illinois to Nashville in 2017 where he worked on construction jobs. He had been fired from a job earlier this month and had just started with a new company last week when he failed to show up for his second day of work.

Despite repeated encounters with the police nothing was apparently done to provide the obviously distressed young man with appropriate mental health care. His encounters with the police did however result in his gun license being revoked and his guns being taken away from him for a period of time after he was detained last year trying to gain access to the White House.

On July 7, 2017, the United States Secret Service arrested Reinking for unlawful entry after he crossed an exterior security barrier near the White House, said

Todd Hudson, the special agent in charge of the Secret Service's Nashville field office. Hudson said Reinking had refused to leave the area, saying he wanted to set up a meeting with President Trump.

According to a Metropolitan Police Department report cited by CNN Reinking claimed he was a "sovereign citizen" and therefore had a "right to inspect the grounds." A report from an earlier encounter with police in Tazewell County, Illinois noted that Reinking had exhibited "delusional" behavior.

Authorities in Tazewell County, Illinois, and the FBI interviewed Reinking after the incident. At the FBI's request, Reinking's Illinois firearms authorization was revoked, and four weapons—including the AR-15-style rifle used in Sunday's shooting—were taken from Reinking.

The guns were returned to Reinking's father, who told police he subsequently gave them back to his son. Police said they discovered two of his guns following Sunday's shooting, but two others are still unaccounted for.

"Travis is hostile toward police and does not recognize police authority. Travis also possesses several firearms," a police report noted in May 2016 after his parents called 911 to report that their son believed he was being stalked by pop star Taylor Swift and had discussed killing himself. Reinking's father told police he would lock his son's guns away when "Travis was having problems."

In another encounter with police, Reinking filed a report to complain that people were "tapping into his computer and phone" and barking like dogs outside his house. He believed he was being watched and that he was being tricked into breaking the law.



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