

At least 12 dead in Virginia Beach mass shooting

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On Friday afternoon, a longtime public utilities employee opened fire in the municipal building complex of Virginia Beach, Virginia, just east of Norfolk and Chesapeake. At least twelve people were killed and another six were injured.

The shooter has been identified as 40-year-old DeWayne Craddock, a certified professional engineer in the city's Public Utilities Department. News reports from the time show that Craddock had enlisted in the Army National Guard shortly after he graduated high school in 1996.

The shooting took place on multiple floors of Building No. 2 of the Virginia Beach Municipal Center, which includes offices for planning, public works, the police department and City Hall. It is the largest workplace mass shooting since the Aurora, Illinois warehouse shooting this past February.

The names of the victims have not been released as of this writing.

It has been reported that Craddock was killed, bringing the shooting spree to an end, though it is unclear whether or not it was during an extended shootout with police or the result of a self-inflicted gunshot. A .45 caliber handgun, extended magazines and a silencer were reportedly recovered by the police.

Injuries were being treated at Sentara Virginia Beach General Hospital and Sentara Princess Anne Hospital. The *New York Times* reported that one victim had to be airlifted by helicopter to a trauma center at Sentara Norfolk General Hospital, though details on the conditions of the patients are not yet available.

Local authorities were alerted to the situation by an administrative assistant who works in the building where the shooting happened. According to the available police reports, a "disgruntled" employee began firing indiscriminately, though they have not yet

commented on a concrete motive.

As has become common after mass shootings in the United States, politicians, including Democratic Virginia Governor Ralph Northam, have responded with hypocritical laments about the "unspeakable, senseless violence." Former Democratic vice-presidential candidate and Virginia Senator Tim Kaine appealed for Congress to address the "daily scourge" of gun violence.

These words can be given no weight. Northam presides over a state with a heavy presence of all four branches of the US military, the greatest instigator of violence in the world. Kaine was the running mate of Hillary Clinton, who, as secretary of state, oversaw the destruction of Libya and laughed in response to the brutal killing of Libyan head of state Muammar Gaddafi by US-backed militias.

Nor can this latest mass shooting in the United States be treated as an isolated incident of unimaginable evil. According to the Gun Violence Archive, there have been 150 mass shootings in the country since the start of the year, among a total of nearly 22,000 incidents of gun violence more broadly. To date, there have been 16,846 people killed or injured in shootings, including 1,332 children and teenagers.

These numbers speak to a crisis-ridden society rife with social inequality. They reveal as well the vast toll a quarter century of unending war has inflicted on American society. The conditions of life for broad sections of the population are sharply declining and, in the absence of a mass working class movement, such shootings are one of the many negative expressions of the overall social situation.

This killing also occurs a month after the 20th anniversary of the Columbine incident. As shown since then, the response of the political establishment to mass

killings is to militarize the police and increase surveillance, initiatives that only intensify the repressive apparatus of the state.



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