

Texas gunman kills seven people before being shot to death by police

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A gunman later identified as 36-year-old Seth Aaron Ator of Odessa, Texas, went on a shooting rampage Saturday after being stopped by state police for a traffic infraction. He killed seven people, ranging in ages from 15 to 57, and wounded 22 before he was himself shot to death by police from Odessa and neighboring Midland.

The mass shooting began on Saturday afternoon when Texas state police pulled over Ator's gold Toyota Tercel on the highway between Midland and Odessa, reportedly for driving erratically and failing to use the turn signal. Ator allegedly opened fire on the two cops with a semi-automatic AR-15 assault rifle, wounding one of them, before driving off at high speed.

As Midland and Odessa police gave pursuit, Ator drove back towards Odessa, firing randomly from his moving car. At some point in Odessa, he pulled up next to a US Postal Service vehicle, shot to death a young postal worker, 29-year-old Mary Granados, and took off in her mail truck, continuing to shoot at passers-by.

The switch in vehicles led to erroneous media reports that there were two gunmen involved in the attack, which escalated the panic caused by the event throughout the Odessa-Midland area, a small urban center with a population of 263,000 that is dominated by the oil and gas industry.

The gunman then drove down 42nd Street in Odessa, one of the city's main thoroughfares with a number of large retail stores, including Walmart, Target and Home Depot, firing at vehicles and pedestrians along the way. Hundreds of people fled through parking lots and back into the stores to escape the gunfire.

Ator was finally shot and killed outside the Cinergy movie complex in Odessa, after travelling more than 10 miles in the two vehicles, firing frequently. Besides Ator himself and Granados, only four victims have been publicly identified: 15-year-old Leila Hernandez,

shot to death; Rudolfo Arco, a truckdriver shot on the highway; 17-month-old Anderson Davis, seriously wounded in the mouth but expected to survive; and Midland policeman Zack Owens, whose injuries were also said not to be life-threatening.

One of those wounded was still in danger, according to hospital officials in Odessa and Midland. The Texas Department of Public Safety officer who stopped Ator and was shot by him was described as in serious but stable condition. An Odessa policeman was also shot but survived.

No motive has yet been presented publicly for Ator's rampage. The 36-year-old white man had minor brushes with the police in 2001-2002, when he would have been in his teens, with arrests for breaking and entering and public intoxication. There were apparently no further police contacts since then.

On Sunday afternoon, FBI agents were seen entering Ator's home in Odessa, after obtaining a search warrant. Some 130 FBI personnel and another 45 federal agents flooded the Midland-Odessa area, along with local and state police, but there were no indications as yet that Ator had any connection to organized groups of any kind.

Odessa is the second mass shooting in Texas in the month of August, following the August 3 massacre at a Walmart in El Paso, where a fascist gunman motivated by hatred of Mexican immigrants murdered 22 people. Texas Governor Greg Abbott, at a news conference, listed other recent mass shootings in the state, including downtown Dallas, Sutherland Springs, Santa Fe and El Paso, and admitted, "I have been to too many of these events."

Abbott and other politicians, Democratic and Republican alike, issued routine, and completely empty, declarations of outrage and sorrow, as well as

the usual appeals for prayer. But there was no discussion from the authorities or in the media about the underlying social causes for the incessant eruptions of mass murder in America.

An AP/USATODAY/Northeastern University mass murder database—the very fact that such a database had to be created is an obscenity—found that with Odessa, the number of mass shootings in the United States this year has reached 25, as many as all of 2018. The combined death toll of all these massacres is 142, already exceeding the total in 2018 with four months still to go.



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