

Ten killed in mass shooting in San Jose, California, at public transit maintenance yard

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27 May 2021

Early Wednesday morning in San Jose, California, Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) employee Samuel James Cassidy, 57, opened fire on co-workers at a light rail maintenance yard, killing nine, before committing suicide. It is the bloodiest mass shooting in San Francisco Bay Area history.

Starting around 6:34 a.m., Cassidy shot his victims in two separate VTA buildings, according to the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Within just a few minutes, he had fired a total of 39 shots, including the final shot with which he took his own life. He apparently selected the victims, telling one survivor, “I’m not going to shoot you.”

Security videos from his neighbor showed Cassidy leaving his house in work clothes at 5:39 a.m., taking a large black duffel bag with him in his vehicle.

The Santa Clara County Sheriff’s Office has identified the weapons used as three semi-automatic handguns. Although Cassidy had obtained the guns legally, he carried ammunition in 32 illegal high-capacity magazines.

According to Santa Clara County Sheriff Laurie Smith, “I think he was very deliberate, very fast.”

Smith also reported that Cassidy had set an explosive device in his home before leaving for work. There was a fire at the home, but there are no reported injuries. At one point, police suspected that explosives had also been planted at the VTA facility, but none eventually were found.

The victims were all VTA employees, who had been working at the yard during the busiest time of the day at that facility. They have been identified as Abdolvahab Alaghmandan, Adrian Balleza Jose Dejesus Hernandez III, Paul Delacruz Megia, Alex Ward Fritch, Lars Kepler Lane, Timothy Michael Romo, Michael Joseph “Mikey” Rudometkin, and Taptejdeep Singh, ranging

in age from 29 to 63.

Cassidy himself was a maintenance worker for the VTA. According to the Sheriff’s Office, the motives for the shooting are still under investigation, though they reported that Cassidy “has been a highly disgruntled VTA employee for many years, which may have contributed to why he targeted VTA employees.”

Cassidy’s ex-wife Cecilia Nelms told local media that he had often raged and ranted to her at home about co-workers, including with statements that he would kill them. However, she was unaware of him ever possessing any firearms or taking any steps toward violent acts against anyone.

In 2009, Cassidy sought a Domestic Violence Restraining Order against an ex-girlfriend. In response, the ex-girlfriend accused him of rape, sexual assault, and “enraged” acts fueled by alcohol abuse.

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, Cassidy was detained by United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP) in 2016 upon returning from the Philippines. According to a Department of Homeland Security memo, at the time, Cassidy had “books about terrorism and fear and manifestos...as well as a black memo book filled with lots of notes about how he hates the VTA.”

At noon Wednesday, the VTA suspended its light rail service. As of Thursday evening, according to the VTA website, “VTA light rail service is cancelled until further notice. Bus bridges will be available and we encourage customers to allow more time to complete their travels.” There has been no further explanation regarding the supposed necessity of such a measure.

As thousands of people depend on VTA services, the expected impact from this cancellation of services will be considerable.

The VTA serves Santa Clara County, which includes

Silicon Valley and has a population of about 1.9 million. According to the Federal Transit Administration, the VTA's light rail service had 49,376,217 passenger miles in 2019.

On Monday, the VTA had announced that it was increasing maximum passengers per vehicle in connection with the advancement to the "less restrictive Yellow Tier" of social distancing measures for the COVID-19 pandemic. On Tuesday, the San Jose City Council approved a plan for the construction of a Google "mega campus" in downtown San Jose, which is expected to further impact housing prices and transportation networks.

In recent decades, gun violence has become a persistent feature of social life in the United States. According to the Gun Violence Archive, there have been a total of 114,330 gun violence deaths in the United States since the beginning of 2014, not counting suicides. This means an average of about 15,600 per year or 43 per day. During the same period, the United States has had a total of 167,948 gun suicides, about 23,000 per year or 63 per day.

Just this year, there have been 232 mass shootings in the United States so far. The May 26 San Jose shooting was one of the two deadliest so far, tied with the March 22 shooting in Boulder, Colorado.

According to *gunpolicy.org*, the United States has, by a margin of several times, the highest rate of gun violence deaths of any of the advanced capitalist countries, and the highest rate of gun suicides in the world.

The Democratic Party has long sought to gain political leverage by appealing to public outrage over mass shootings. Their ineffective calls for more-restrictive gun control laws came to the fore following the Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Parkland, Florida, February 2018, which sparked a wave of mass protests throughout the country, including in San Jose.

US President Joseph Biden issued a statement Wednesday in which he pathetically lamented the "epidemic of gun violence in America," ordered that flags be lowered at half-staff, and "urge[d] Congress to take immediate action."

Biden's statement was remarkable for the omission of any mention of the mental health crisis in the United States, of which mass shootings must be considered a

symptom. The mental health crisis is an international phenomenon which has become particularly exacerbated by the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moreover, as the *World Socialist Web Site* has repeatedly emphasized, no establishment politician or major media outlet has ever sought to explain the epidemic of gun violence in terms of deeper social causes. In fact, the consistent tendency has been to avoid any examination of social causes or distort them beyond recognition.

Contrary to the claims of the Democratic Party, the solution to the epidemic of gun violence gripping the United States does not lie in ensuring that only the police and military have guns; indeed, these are the most enthusiastic proponents of gun violence, killing thousands every year in the US and abroad. Deep social inequality, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has escalated social tensions to the breaking point. Whatever their individual motives, the violent outbursts of disturbed individuals such as Cassidy must be seen as the product of the crisis of the capitalist system.



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