

Second mass shooting in a week in Chattanooga is one of nine such incidents in the US last weekend

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Three people were left dead and 14 injured in the second mass shooting in Chattanooga, Tennessee within a week. Police suspect multiple shooters opened fire outside of a downtown bar in the early hours of Sunday morning. Two victims died of gunshot wounds while a third person was killed by a vehicle fleeing the scene.

Only a week earlier, six young people were shot when two groups of juveniles exchanged gunfire in the tourism district of downtown Chattanooga where the Tennessee Aquarium, as well as restaurants and other attractions, are located. The victims of the gunfight were bystanders ranging in age from 13 to 15 years old. Two of the six injured in the gunfire are hospitalized in critical condition after patrol officers reported hearing gunfire at around 11 p.m. on May 28.

Sunday's mass shooting in Chattanooga occurred mere hours after gunfire erupted in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania's busy entertainment district killing three people and wounding 14 others enjoying themselves on Saturday night.

According to a CNN report Monday, nine mass shootings had taken place since Friday, June 3. These followed two successive weeks during which 10 people were gunned down by a fascist gunman in a grocery store in Buffalo, New York on May 14 and 19 elementary school children and two teachers were murdered by a high school student in Uvalde, Texas on May 24. Three hospital staff and a patient died when a disgruntled patient opened fire in a Tulsa, Oklahoma medical facility on June 1.

In an interview with Fox News following Sunday's shooting, Chattanooga Mayor Tim Kelly blamed the rise in violent crime in the city on the impact of

COVID-19 on impoverished communities and the sale of "tens of millions" of guns since the beginning of the pandemic.

Mayor Kelly based his speculations on reports of the alarming increase in gun sales since the beginning of the pandemic. According to a CNN report from March 2021, gun sales rose 65 percent in 2020 from 2019. This translates to 23 million gun purchases. Sales rose another 23 percent in the first three months of 2021, adding another 13 million guns to the number of firearms purchased in America during the pandemic. According to the report, the FBI's National Instant Criminal Check System (NICS) conducted just under 12 million background checks for new gun purchases between March and November 2020.

NICS background checks are one of the only ways to track gun purchases but are only required when buying a gun from federally licensed firearm dealers. According to a 2017 study from Northeastern and Harvard universities, an estimated 22 percent of gun sales occur between private individuals and therefore do not require a background check. According to gun sales in 2020-2021, this adds 8 million guns more to the number of firearms purchased during the first year of the pandemic, bringing the total to 44 million.

Surges in NICS requests during 2020-2021 came at moments of acute political and social unrest in the country, starting with the initial impact of anti-COVID public health measures in March 2020, which saw 3.7 million background checks. During the George Floyd protests against police violence, 3.9 million background checks were performed. After the tumultuous 2020 presidential election, background checks totaled 7.5 million in November and December. Finally,

background checks soared to 4.3 million after the January 6, 2021 coup attempt by Trump and his fascist supporters, the third-highest one-month spike on record.

Rather than address the fundamental social tensions that have spurred Americans to arm themselves by the tens of millions in the last year and a half, the response of the Democrats to the recent and horrific escalation of gun violence, in particular the massacre at Uvalde, the second vicious attack on elementary school children in 10 years, has been the usual abortive calls for gun reform, which will soon dissipate as they have so many times already.

The Republicans, meanwhile, have feigned concern for mental health while calling for increased funding for the police and the transformation of schools into facilities more akin to prisons, where teachers are armed to shoot “bad guys.”

In Chattanooga, Mayor Kelly offered a slightly different spin to the accepted nostrums that reduce the current onslaught of mass shootings across the country to individual responsibility when he noted the violence is coming from “a small group of individuals.” He explained: “The fact of the matter is, you know, we’ve got communities in Chattanooga that have been, you know, grindingly poor for generations and generations. And that’s the root cause of the problem.”

The Mayor’s solution to pervasive social inequality? He will “combat” the problem by promising to fund “anything and everything” the Chattanooga Police Department declares that it needs to stem violent crime in the city.

The tough-on-crime policies of both the Democrats and the Republicans over the last four decades have poured countless millions of dollars into militarizing local police forces and building the largest prison system in the world, yet Uvalde was the 19th school shooting in first five months of the year.

The absolute travesty of the heavily armed Uvalde police standing outside of the classroom for 90 minutes while children and teachers were mercilessly terrorized and murdered inside should disabuse anyone of the notion that more police funding can resolve the profound inequalities in capitalist society which give rise to these tragedies.

Meanwhile, the ruling elites have made it absolutely clear that nothing will hamper it from wringing every

last bit of profit from the working class. Over 1 million Americans and counting have been allowed to die during the pandemic, and the Biden administration continues to calculate how many deaths from COVID-19 will remain palatable to voters as the midterm elections loom this fall, all the while insisting the pandemic is over. Meanwhile, corporations continue to tally up record profits every quarter since the beginning of the pandemic.

The ruling class has provoked a war with Russia in Ukraine and are shoveling hundreds of billions of dollars into the coffers of the war profiteers even as historic levels of inflation drive workers further into poverty. The normalization of mass death is hourly splayed across the headlines of newspapers and runs along the bottom of television news shows, all of it blamed on this or that unsavory, power-mad individual who threatens the interests of capitalism.

In the face of the innumerable atrocities wrought by the cataclysmic contradictions of capitalism, the working class is mobilizing in its struggle for social equality and an end to the exploitation of mankind and the environment. Workers forced the initial lockdowns as COVID-19 began its deadly course. Since then, strikes have occurred across the United States and throughout the world. Workers are voting down meager, union endorsed contracts after years of accepting concessions and cutbacks more favorable to management than workers and their families.

The only way to break the cycle of social and political violence is the mobilization of the working class on the basis of a principled socialist program. Workers across the globe have begun to realize that their power can only be liberated by breaking down the barriers erected by the capitalist political parties and their henchmen, the pro-corporate trade unions, and forming independent political rank-and-file committees in their workplaces. Only then will we end mass murder, imperialist war, social inequality and fascism.



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