

# As death toll rises in July Fourth Highland Park shooting, more evidence emerges linking gunman to pro-Trump fascist circles

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The death toll in the July Fourth massacre in Highland Park, Illinois has risen to seven, amid new information linking the accused gunman, 21-year-old Robert Crimo III, to social media networks steeped in fascist ravings about mass shootings.

President Joe Biden continues to say virtually nothing about the latest eruption of violence in America, following his prepared remarks on Independence Day in which he barely mentioned the bloodbath at the holiday parade in Illinois and instead praised the military and said he was “never more optimistic about America than I am today.”

On Tuesday, Biden said he was “not sure yet” whether he would visit the devastated town of 30,000 people 27 miles north of Chicago.

Later on Tuesday, Eric F. Rinehart, the Lake County state’s attorney, called a press conference to announce that he had filed seven first-degree murder charges against Crimo and expected to file dozens more charges against him in the coming days.

Six of the seven people killed in the fusillade of over 70 rounds fired by Crimo from an AR-style rifle have now been identified.

Jacki Sundheim, 63, was a Highland Park resident and preschool teacher and event coordinator at North Shore Congregation Israel synagogue in Glencoe. She leaves behind her husband and a daughter.

Nicolas Toledo-Zaragoza, 78, a native of Mexico who had moved to the US, was a father of eight and grandfather of many more.

Irina McCarthy, 35, and her husband Kevin McCarthy, 37, both of Highland Park were killed in the attack. They leave behind a now-orphaned two-year-old son, Aiden.

Little information has as yet been released about the other two deceased who have been identified by the Lake County Coroner’s Office: Katherine Goldstein, 64, of Highland Park, and Stephen Straus, 88, also of Highland Park.

The seventh person killed in the attack died at a hospital in an adjoining county and has not yet been named.

At least 38 others, ranging in age from eight to 85 and including four or five children, were wounded. Nine victims of gunshot wounds remain in hospital.

At a mid-day press conference, Christopher Covelli, the spokesperson for the Lake County Major Crime Task Force, said the authorities, who have been holding Crimo since Monday night, believe that he planned the attack on the Fourth of July parade weeks in advance. He said Crimo was dressed in women’s clothes when he fired into the crowd from the roof of a business building and used the disguise to blend in with the fleeing crowd and make his escape.

He walked to his mother’s home nearby, borrowed her car and drove into Wisconsin before returning to Illinois, where he was stopped and arrested by agents who had traced his identity from his assault rifle, which he left behind at the crime scene. A second rifle was found in the car.

Covelli also revealed that the Highland Park police received a call in April of 2019 from members of Crimo’s family reporting that Crimo had attempted to commit suicide. Then, in September of that year, a family member called saying Crimo had knives and a sword and was threatening to kill his family. The police intervened and removed the knives and sword from the home, but neither the family nor the police took any

further action.

Not reported by the authorities is the size of the arsenal seized by the police in September 2019, which included over 15 knives and swords. Despite that incident, Crimo was subsequently able to legally purchase a number of pistols and shotguns.

The mainstream media has downplayed or simply refused to report evidence that Crimo was a Trump supporter and part of the fascistic milieu being built up by the Republican Party. Covelli said at his Tuesday press conference that the police have not established the killer's motive.

However, bloggers have posted still photos and video clips of Crimo attending Trump rallies. And many of the postings on YouTube and other social media by Crimo, who presented himself as the rapper "Awake," include memes and icons associated not only with the glorification of death and violence, but also with fascistic and anti-Semitic groups.

One video Crimo posted featured the song "I Am the Storm," which is associated with the fascist QAnon conspiracy theory. The tech website The Verge reported that Crimo hosted a Discord server that he named "SS."

*Unicorn Riot* posted an image pulled from Crimo's "SS" Discord channel dated January 31, 2021, several weeks after Trump's January 6 coup attempt, which reads "fkn commies." The following day he posted a chat saying, "commies everywhere."

*Unicorn Riot* noted: "Crimo is not the first mass shooter with far-right ties who used Discord before committing a mass shooting this year. On May 14, neo-Nazi Peyton Gendron killed 10 people in a racially targeted shooting in Buffalo, NY. Gendron was 'jimboboiiii' on Discord and before his shooting he used the online chat platform to solicit expert advice about body armor and armor-piercing bullets."

In a 180-page fascist manifesto Gendron posted prior to carrying out his mass shooting, he wrote: "The real war I'm advocating for is the gentiles vs the Jews... Jews are the biggest problem the Western world has ever had. They must be called out and killed..."

There is good reason to believe that Crimo's horrific attack was at least in part driven by anti-Semitism, which has become a stock component of the fascistic remaking of the Republican Party under Trump. Highland Park has a large Jewish community,

estimated to comprise about one-third of the town's 30,000 residents.

Not reported in the US media, but reported by the Israeli press, is the account given by Rabbi Yosef Schanowitz of Highland Park, who reports that the shooter had previously tried to enter his Chabad House, a center for Jewish activities. He told Israel's Channel 2 that Crimo attempted to enter the Chabad during the Passover Seder last April.

"During last Pesach," Schanowitz said, "that person entered the Chabad House. We have an armed security guard sitting in front... I approached him and sternly asked him to leave as I noticed he was not a member of our community." The rabbi added, "There is reason to think that the attack was directed against Jews due to the prominent Jewish presence in the area."

Along with the growth of fascist groups allied, directly or indirectly, with Trump and the bulk of the Republican Party and the surge in mass shootings (309 so far this year)—all symptoms of the malignant decay of American capitalist society—there has been a significant increase in anti-Semitic agitation and violence.

In January, a 44-year-old British citizen brandished a gun and held four people hostage for hours at a Dallas-area synagogue before they escaped. On a live stream that documented the incident, the attacker said he had targeted the synagogue because the United States "only cares about Jewish lives."

On the morning of April 27, known as Yom HaShoah, a Holocaust remembrance day that commemorates the beginning of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943, residents of Highland Park awoke to find anti-Semitic leaflets left on their driveways.

The most recent "Audit of anti-Semitic Incidents" by the Anti-Defamation League, released in April, showed that in 2021 there were "more than 2,100 acts of assault, vandalism and harassment, an increase of 12 percent over the previous year." This was the highest level of such incidents since the ADL tracking began in 1979.



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