

Gunman killed by armed bystander after murdering 3 at a mall in Indianapolis, Indiana

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On Sunday, July 17, around 6:00 p.m., 20-year-old Jonathan Douglas Sapirman opened fire in the Greenwood Park Mall outside of Indianapolis, Indiana, killing three and injuring two more. The victims were Pedro Pineda, 56, and Rosa Mirian Rivera de Pineda, 37, husband and wife; and Victor Gomez, 30. Sapirman was himself shot and killed by an armed bystander.

The identities of the injured victims have not yet been released. There has been no official motive given for the shooting.

According to authorities, Sapirman entered a restroom near the mall's food court close to 5:00 p.m. and stayed there for over an hour. He then exited and began firing into the food court using a Sig Sauer M400, an AR-15 style semi-automatic rifle. Along with the Sig Sauer M400, Sapirman was also carrying another semi-automatic rifle, as well as a pistol and over 100 rounds of ammunition.

All of his weapons and ammunition were bought legally, and, according to UPI, relatives have told police Sapirman often went to a shooting range right outside of Greenwood, Indiana, for about two years before the shooting.

Greenwood Police Chief Jim Ison said originally that the gunman fired for two entire minutes before being incapacitated, but this has since been revised to only 15 seconds. Ison reported that in those few seconds, 22-year-old Elisjsa Dicken of Seymour, Indiana, fired 10 shots from his Glock handgun at Sapirman and killed him.

After the shooting, Dicken was put in handcuffs and taken into custody by Greenwood police. He was released after video footage in the mall confirmed the events as he described them. Dicken is not currently

facing any charges.

Details on Sapirman are being slowly revealed. Unlike the July 4th Highland Park shooter Robert Crimo III, there is little posting or internet history that has been found so far to provide insight into either his mental state, politics or general temperament.

However, there are alleged to be four photographs and one 4chan post published by the shooter. The photos show Sapirman decked out in weaponry and tactical gear, and the post reads, "Name is Jonathan and today seems like a good day to die."

Sapirman resigned from a warehouse job in May and had recently received an eviction notice for his apartment. He had no criminal record but had two run-ins with police as a juvenile: one for starting a fight at school and another for running away from home.

It was reported that as a 16 year old, Sapirman was the subject of a legal dispute regarding his guardianship. His older brother had sought custody of him once his mother lost her job and had to live in a shelter after their parents' divorce. It was alleged Jonathan was living with her in a week-to-week motel. Their mother battled for returned custody after she began training as a nurse. Sapirman's family has now told police that he exhibited "no indications he was violent or unstable" before the shooting.

In the press conference, Ison gave glowing praise to Dicken, proclaiming "his actions were nothing short of heroic. He engaged the gunman from quite a distance, was very proficient in that, very tactically sound. And as he moved to close in on the suspect, he was also motioning for people to exit behind him." Greenwood Mayor Mark Myers joined in, saying in a statement on Monday, "This young man, Greenwood's Good

Samaritan, acted within seconds, stopping the shooter and saving countless lives.”

Guy A. Relford, an attorney for Dicken, released a statement in a similar vein, touting Dicken as “a true American hero who saved countless lives during a horrific event that could have been so much worse were it not for Eli’s courage, preparedness, and willingness to protect others.” There is no indication that Dicken has any military or law enforcement background. He was carrying his weapon legally and obtained it legally but was in violation of the Greenwood Mall’s “no firearms” rule for entry. The state of Indiana requires absolutely no training to carry a firearm.

The implications of Dicken’s actions, and the subsequent praise heaped on him by law enforcement have potentially very serious consequences in a country which is plagued by gun violence and mass shootings.

The *Washington Post* interviewed Jody Madeira, a law professor at Indiana University-Bloomington, who said in reaction to the shooting, “I think you might get more individuals carrying, sort of primed for something to happen, which is particularly dangerous.”

Dicken’s case is a remarkable exception. The likelihood of an armed citizen to successfully engage and overcome an active shooter is, in reality, exceedingly rare. Of the 434 active shooter cases between 2020 and 2021, an armed bystander shot the attacker 22 times, or 5 percent of the time, according to ALERRT data. In 10 of these the “good guy” (a label created by ALERRT to discern the difference between shooters) was a security guard or off-duty cop.

The shooting and deaths of three innocent victims along with the veneration of Dicken for murdering the shooter points to the deep social crisis and reactionary political developments in the United States.

Sapirman’s troubled background, young age and total disregard for human life have similarities to Crimo and scores of other shooters this year alone. The failure of the capitalist system, the promotion of endless wars abroad, economic austerity and the horrific consequences of an ongoing pandemic which has left over a million Americans dead have driven certain sections of youth to nihilism and hopelessness in the face of what appears to be a despairing situation.

On the other hand, there is a grim irony in the “decisive” actions of Dicken compared to the cowardly response of the Uvalde, Texas, police department and

federal law enforcement agencies in delaying for hours while an active shooter slaughtered over a dozen school children at Robb Elementary.

And while Dicken’s action did, in all likelihood, prevent other injuries or even casualties in Greenwood, the veneration of him by law enforcement and the far right is a grotesque exposure of their priorities. Using Dicken as an example of “a good guy with a gun” as a response to an active shooter, authorities have all but condoned the use of violence by private citizens as a laudatory response to mortal danger—perhaps even more effective than the police themselves—in lieu of addressing the deeper social problems which give rise to shootings.

This line of reasoning can only lead to more violence and the proliferation of untrained civilians shooting at whomever seems to be a threat to them. The lack of effective police response to the slaughter of workers and children is indicative of a larger non-response by both the Republican and Democratic parties in Congress.

President Biden’s toothless “assault weapons” bill does nothing to address the issue of mass shootings, while he has urged even more funding for bloated police budgets that have contributed little in the way of preventing mass shootings as police themselves continue to contribute to gun violence, killing more than 1,000 Americans every year.



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