

Mass shooting at gay nightclub in Colorado leaves at least 5 dead and 25 injured

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As of this writing, at least five people are dead and 25 more are injured following the latest mass shooting in the United States, which occurred late Saturday evening.

The shooting took place at the Q Club, the longest operating and largest gay nightclub in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

In a press conference Sunday, Colorado Springs Police Chief Adrian Vasquez said that emergency services began receiving multiple calls concerning a shooting at the club at 11:56 p.m. and that police were on the scene by midnight.

Vasquez acknowledged that police did little to stop the rampage, noting that by the time police arrived, two people inside the club had already subdued the gunman.

“We owe them a great debt of thanks,” Vasquez said Sunday morning.

Police have identified the suspected shooter as 22-year-old Anderson Lee Aldrich, a local resident. This author was unable to locate any social media profiles linked to Aldrich. However, this is not the first time Aldrich has had significant police contact and there is no question police knew of Aldrich before Saturday’s incident.

In June 2021, Aldrich was arrested on multiple and serious charges after his mother called the police and, according to a statement from the El Paso County, Colorado, Sheriff’s Office, warned that “her son was threatening to cause harm to her with a homemade bomb, multiple weapons, and ammunition.”

The police statement said that Aldrich’s mother was not home at the time she made the call and that she did not know where her son was. Police were able to locate Aldrich at a separate residence about one mile away from his home and about 15 miles from where Saturday’s massacre took place.

In the incident last year, according to police, once Aldrich was located he refused to surrender, prompting the police to evacuate a quarter-mile radius around the

residence as a precaution, due to the suspected bomb threat. Eventually, after nearly two hours, Aldrich surrendered to the police.

In their statement, the cops said they did not find any explosives in either residence. Notably, the police did not indicate whether any ammunition or weapons were located or seized.

In the 2021 incident, Aldrich was charged with two counts of felony menacing and three counts of first-degree kidnapping. However, the charges were later dropped and, according to a report in the *Gazette*, Aldrich called an editor at the newspaper this past August and requested that the story be removed or updated because the “entire case was dismissed.” The *Gazette* reported that the case has since been sealed by the 4th Judicial District Attorney’s Office.

The police have refused to confirm that the two incidents are related. Neither have they denied a connection.

In a second press conference, held Sunday night, Vasquez confirmed that the shooter had yet to speak with police and did not appear to have said anything at the crime scene. Vasquez confirmed that police investigators recovered a pistol, an AR-15-style semi-automatic rifle, additional rounds and magazines at the club following the shooting.

Vasquez said that the club did not garner a lot of attention from the police, noting that it was “low-key” from a “police perspective,” and was “not on our radar as a high volume of calls or anything like that.”

In a report on the shooting in the *New York Times*, owners of the club, Matthew Haynes and Nic Grzecka, confirmed after viewing security camera footage that an unarmed patron stopped the shooter.

“He saved dozens and dozens of lives,” Haynes said. Grzecka told the *Times* that the shooting lasted less than two minutes before the gunman was subdued with the

help of another person.

Haynes said the gunman entered the club with “tremendous firepower” and was apparently wearing a military-style flak jacket.

Joshua Thurman, a patron who was in the club during the shooting, described the terrifying situation to local media. “This is our only safe space here in The Springs,” Thurman said. “So for this to get shot up, what are we going to do now? Where are we going to go? Yea we can ‘rebuild’ and ‘come together,’ but what about those people who lost their lives for no reason?”

According to Gun Violence Archive (GVA), this year in the US there have been at least 602 mass shootings, which are defined as shootings in which at least four people, not including the gunman, are shot.

So far this year, per the GVA, nearly 18,000 of the more than 39,000 gun deaths in the US are due to homicide, while over 21,000 people used a gun to commit suicide. There has not been a single week in the US this year without at least four mass shootings. In July alone, the GVA recorded 89 mass shootings.

Colorado Springs, with a population just under half a million, is the second-largest city in Colorado. It is home to major US military installations.

This includes Fort Carson, a sprawling 137,000-acre Army base and home of the 4th Infantry Division, Peterson Air Force base, Schriever Air Force Base and the United States Air Force Academy, the premier officer training installation of the US Air Force.

The city is home to a growing Christian nationalist movement, heavily linked to the Republican Party and the military. The website MinistryWatch.com, which brands itself as a website “Empowering Donors to Christian Ministries,” noted in a 2021 article that more than “500 ministries call Colorado Springs home.”

It notes that organizations based in Colorado Springs “bring in over \$2.5 billion a year,” with one of the “most well known” being Focus on the Family, the far-right Christian fundamentalist organization founded by James Dobson in 1983 after close consultation with the Ronald Reagan White House.

For decades, the organization has worked closely with Republicans in shaping anti-gay and anti-abortion messaging, while ginning up the vote for Republican candidates.

On November 27, 2015, Christian terrorist Robert Lewis Dear, animated by right-wing smears against Planned Parenthood promulgated by Republicans and their allies on the religious right, attacked a Planned

Parenthood clinic located in Colorado Springs, murdering three people including a police officer, and injuring nine others.

During his trial, Dear proclaimed, “I am guilty, there’s no trial. I’m a warrior for the babies.” He added, “Kill the babies, that’s what Planned Parenthood does.”

In an interview on Fox News Sunday, Colorado Springs Mayor John Suthers, a Republican, confirmed that at least 19 of the injured victims had gunshot wounds. Suthers said that other patrons suffered injuries trying to escape the carnage. He characterized the attacker as a “lone gunman” and said it was “premature” to determine a motive for the shooting.

However, he did acknowledge that the incident had “all the appearances of a hate crime.”

The mayor confirmed that the person who stopped the shooting did so by grabbing a handgun from Aldrich and bludgeoning him with it. “It was quite something,” Suthers told the *Times*. “It happened quite quickly.”

Colorado Springs is politically dominated by the Republican Party, which has increasingly made anti-gay agitation a part of its right-wing propaganda, creating an atmosphere conducive to such acts of homicidal violence.

So far this year, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) has documented “more than 300 anti-LGBTQ+ bills” introduced in 23 states by Republicans, aimed at limiting the rights of transgender persons. This includes Florida’s “Don’t say gay” bill, enacted earlier this year.

Deadly attacks against LGBTQ persons have continued throughout 2022. Last Wednesday, HRC reported that at least 32 transgender people had been murdered in the US thus far in 2022, compared to 57 last year. HRC notes that the figures are likely a vast undercount, given that many trans persons are misgendered following their death.



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