

Rash of gun violence, arrests follows Connecticut massacre

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A series of bloody incidents and preemptive arrests took place across the United States in the three days following the massacre at Sandy Hook elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut, demonstrating that the conditions that produced the horrible tragedy are by no means unique.

At least two of the incidents involved actual or planned mass shootings.

On Saturday, a 42-year-old man was arrested in the parking lot of a Southern California shopping mall after he began firing from an automatic weapon. Marcos Gurrola, of Garden Grove, allegedly fired at least 50 shots outside the Fashion Island mall in Newport Beach, in the affluent Orange County suburbs of Los Angeles.

A police spokeswoman said no one was injured because the gunman fired into the ground and into the air, rather than aiming at shoppers, but the gunfire caused understandable panic. The mall was crowded with Christmas shoppers, and the parking lot was full. Many stores locked their doors when the sounds of the shooting were heard.

The incident took place only 24 hours after the Newtown massacre, and five days after a gunman killed two people and wounded a third at a shopping mall in Oregon.

A man was arrested in northern Indiana Saturday after threatening to “kill as many people as he could” at a local school. The threats followed a heated argument with his wife, who works at the cafeteria of a local elementary school in Cedar Lake, about 45 miles southeast of Chicago.

Von I. Meyer, 60, also reportedly threatened to set his wife on fire while she was sleeping. He was arrested and charged with seven felony counts, after threatening his wife that he would kill her “at the school” and “would kill as many people as he could before police could stop him.”

Meyer’s wife did not go to work Friday, and police increased security at her school and several others in the neighborhood. Both the threats and the stepped-up security took place before the events in Connecticut.

There is at least circumstantial evidence that Meyer’s threats were not empty. Police found 47 guns and \$200,000 worth of ammunition in his home. Meyer was being held at Lake County jail without bond, pending an initial hearing.

In Birmingham, Alabama, two violent incidents left five people dead. A man suspected of killing three other men in a domestic dispute was shot to death by police Saturday after a car chase and shootout. Romero Roberto Moya, 33, was shot multiple times after he opened fire with an assault weapon on police, leaving one policeman critically wounded.

Moyas was being sought for the killing of three men, believed to be his brothers, at a trailer home in Cleburne County, Alabama, a rural area near the Georgia state line. A two-year-old child was injured in the incident and hospitalized.

The same day, 38-year-old Jason Lett, reportedly upset over his wife's treatment at St. Vincent's Birmingham hospital, attacked the medical facility at about 4 a.m., wounding a policeman and two hospital workers before he was shot to death by another policeman.

In Las Vegas, Nevada, there was a murder-suicide Friday night inside the Excalibur hotel-casino, when a man walked up to the concierge desk inside the main lobby, opened fire and killed a woman working there, and then turned the gun on himself. The incident caused a panic in the casino after the gunfire erupted.

Also on Friday, police arrested a teenager in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, north of Tulsa, for allegedly plotting to shoot and bomb students at a high school auditorium. The 18-year-old student had been researching pipe bombs and the Columbine massacre on the Internet. The arrest was made before the events in Connecticut.

On Sunday morning, in Sumner, Washington, one man was killed and three were wounded when they were shot from a passing car as they stood outside smoking in the parking lot of a local motel. The three wounded men were treated for gunshot wounds at Tacoma General Hospital. The victims, all construction workers from California, said they did not know their attackers.

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