



Terror, again, in school

Expelled teen opens fire on fleeing students in Florida, killing 17, officials say

By Audra D.S. Burch and Patricia Mazzei | NEW YORK TIMES

PARKLAND, Fla. — A heavily armed teen barged into his former high school about an hour northwest of Miami on Wednesday, opening fire on terrified students and teachers and leaving a death toll of 17 that could rise even higher, authorities said.

Students huddled in horror in classrooms and closets, with some of them training the cellphones on the carnage, capturing sprawled bodies, screams, and gunfire that began with a few shots, then more and more. The dead included students and adults; some were shot outside the school and others inside the three-story building.

The gunman, armed with a semi-automatic AR-15 rifle, was identified as Nikolas Cruz, 19, who had been expelled from the school, authorities said. He began his shooting rampage outside Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in this suburban neighborhood shortly before dismissal time around 2:40 p.m. He then went inside and proceeded down hallways he knew well, firing at students and teachers who were scurrying for cover, the authorities said.

“Oh my God! Oh my God!” one student yelled over and over in one video circulating on social media, as more than 40 gunshots boomed in the background.

By the end of the rampage, Cruz had killed 12 people inside the school and three

interview.

The sheriff said he did not know the gunman's motive. He said a football coach was among the dead, and the son of a deputy sheriff among the injured. Twelve of the 17 dead had been identified by Wednesday night, he added, noting that not all of the students had backpacks or wallets on them.

Cruz was enrolled at another Broward County school, officials said.

Israel said law enforcement officials had found material on Cruz's social media accounts that was "very, very disturbing."

Jim Gard, a math teacher at the school, said Cruz was in his class in 2016 and appeared to be a "quiet" student. But Gard also recalled that there was concern about his behavior on the part of the school administration, which e-mailed teachers relaying those fears.

Gard said after the shooting, he learned from several students that Cruz was obsessed with a girl at the school to the point of "stalking her," a point authorities did not raise in news briefings near the scene.

More than 40 "active shooter" episodes in schools have been recorded in the United States since 2000, according to FBI and news reports. Two 15-year-old students were killed and 18 more people were injured last month in a school in rural Benton, Ky.

The shootings have become common enough that many schools, including Douglas High, run annual drills in which students practice huddling in classrooms.

After the gunfire had stopped Wednesday afternoon, students ran out of the school, some in single file with their hands on the shoulders of those in front of them and others in all-out sprints. As the students sought cover, law enforcement officers armed

and condolences to the families of the victims of the terrible Florida shooting. No child, teacher or anyone else should ever feel unsafe in an American school.”

Representative Seth Moulton, a Massachusetts Democrat, then quote-tweeted the president, saying he agreed with Trump’s sentiment, adding: “I invite him to get off his ass and join me in trying to do something about it.”

Parkland Mayor Christine Hunschofsky, a Boston native, described her city as “a very close-knit community, and a very safe community.”

“It shows that something like this can happen anywhere,” Hunschofsky said.

The survivors spoke of sheer horror and frantic confusion. Janet Hughes was meeting with her son, Justin, 16, a junior, and his guidance counselors when the Code Red was announced. “They grabbed my arm and dragged me one way, and they took him in another direction,” Hughes said. “I ended up lying on the floor with the seven other adults in office for 2½ hours. . . . Nobody knew anything.”

Justin was corralled into a small room, where he spent the next 2½ hours crammed with 70 other students.

Denise Loughran was reunited with her 17-year-old son, Liam, within a few hours of the shooting. But they still hadn’t heard from his sister, Cara, a freshman.

“Her phone must be in her backpack, and they made them drop their backpacks when they ran out,” Loughran said. “This has just been chaos. I couldn’t get near the school. My husband took a bike to try to get there, and they ended up sending him to the hotel, where they said they were taking the kids.

“But she’s not there.”