

## World News Roundup

## Crime

## 'Angry, frustrated time'

## Mass killings hit new high in 2019, most 'shootings'

By Lisa Marie Pane

The first one occurred 19 days into the new year when a man used an ax to kill four family members including his infant daughter. Five months later, 12 people were killed in a workplace shooting in Virginia. Twenty-two more died at a Walmart in El Paso in August.

A database compiled by The Associated Press, USA Today and Northeastern University shows that there were more mass killings in 2019 than any year dating back to at least the 1970s, punctuated by a chilling succession of deadly rampages during the summer.

In all, there were 41 mass killings, defined as when four or more people are killed excluding the perpetrator. Of those, 33 were mass shootings. More than 210 people were killed.



Densley

Most of the mass killings barely became national news, failing to resonate among the general public because they didn't spill into public places like massacres in El Paso and Odessa, Texas; Dayton, Ohio; Virginia Beach, Virginia; and Jersey City, New Jersey.

The majority of the killings involved people who knew each other — family disputes, drug or gang violence or people with beefs that directed their anger at co-workers or relatives.

In many cases, what set off the perpetrator remains a mystery.

That's the case with the very first mass killing of 2019, when a 42-year-old man took an ax and stabbed to death his mother, stepfather, girlfriend and 9-month-old daughter in Clackamas County, Oregon. Two others, a roommate and an 8-year-old girl managed to escape; the rampage ended when responding police fatally shot the killer.

## Perpetrator

The perpetrator had occasional run-ins with police over the years, but what drove him to attack his family remains unknown. He had just gotten a job training mechanics at an auto dealership, and despite occasional arguments with his relatives, most said there was nothing out of the ordinary that raised significant red flags.

The incident in Oregon was one of 18 mass killings where family members were slain, and one of six that didn't involve a gun. Among other trends in 2019:

■ The 41 mass killings were the most in a single year since the AP/USA Today and Northeastern database began tracking such events back to 2006, but other research going back to the 1970s shows no other year with as many mass slayings. The second-most killings in a year prior to 2019 was 38 in 2006.

■ The 211 people killed in this year's cases is still eclipsed by the 224 victims in 2017, when the deadliest mass shooting in modern US history took place in Las Vegas.

■ California, with some of the most strict gun laws in the country, had the most, with eight such mass slayings. But nearly half of US states experienced a mass slaying, from big cities like New York, to tiny towns like Elkmont, Alabama, with a population of just under 475 people.

■ Firearms were the weapon in all but eight of the mass killings. Other weapons included knives, axes and at least twice when the perpetrator set a mobile home on fire, killing those inside.

■ Nine mass shootings occurred in a public place. Other mass killings occurred in homes, in the workplace or at a bar.

James Densley, a criminologist and professor at Metropolitan State University in Minnesota, said the AP/USA Today/Northeastern database confirms and mirrors what his own research into exclusively mass shootings has shown.

"What makes this even more exceptional is that mass killings are going up at a time when general homicides, overall homicides, are going down," Densley said. "As a percentage of homicides, these mass killings are also accounting for more deaths."

He believes it's partially a byproduct of an "angry and frustrated time" that we are living in. Densley also said crime tends to go in waves with the 1970s and 1980s seeing a number of serial killers, the 1990s marked by school shootings and child abductions and the early 2000s dominated by concerns over terrorism. "This seems to be the age of mass shootings," Densley said.

He and James Alan Fox, a criminologist and professor at Northeastern University, also expressed worries about the "contagion effect," the focus on mass killings fueling other mass killings. "These are still rare events. Clearly the risk is low but the fear is high," Fox said. "What fuels contagion is fear."

The mass shootings this year include the three in August in Texas and Dayton that stirred fresh urgency, especially among Democratic presidential candidates, to restrict access to firearms.

## Attracted

While the large death tolls attracted much of the attention, the killings inflicted a mental and physical toll on dozens of others. The database does not have a complete count of victims who were wounded, but among the three mass shootings in August alone, more than 65 people were injured.

Daniel Munoz, 28, of Odessa, was caught in the crossfire of the shooting that took place between a 10-mile (16-kilometer) stretch in West Texas. He was on his way to meet a friend at a bar when he saw a gunman and the barrel of a firearm. Instinctively, he got down just as his car was sprayed with bullets.

Munoz, who moved to Texas about a year ago to work in the oil industry, said he had actually been on edge since the Walmart shooting, which took place just 28 days earlier and about 300 miles (480 kilometers) away, worried that a shooting could happen anywhere at any time.

He remembers calling his mother after the El Paso shooting to encourage her to have a firearm at home or with her in case she needed to defend herself. He would say the same to friends, telling them before they went to a Walmart to bring a firearm in case they needed to protect themselves or others during an attack.

"You can't just always assume you're safe. In that moment, as soon as the El Paso shooting happened, I was on edge," Munoz said.

Adding to his anxiety is that, as a convicted felon, he's prohibited from possessing a firearm.

A few weeks later, as he sat behind the wheel of his car, he spotted the driver of an approaching car wielding a firearm.

"My worst nightmare became a reality," he said. "I'm in the middle of a gunfight and I have no way to defend myself." (AP)



This photo provided by the Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources shows a Coast Guard search and rescue team looking over Napali Coast State Wilderness Park for a tour Helicopter that disappeared in Hawaii with seven people aboard on Dec 27. (AP)

## Remains of 6 people found after Hawaii tour helicopter crash

The remains of six people have been found after a helicopter on a tour of one of the most rugged and remote coastlines in Hawaii crashed at the top of a mountain on the island of Kauai, authorities said.

Officials said Friday that there are no indications of survivors and that a search for the last person yet to be recovered would resume in the morning, depending on weather. Those who were recovered have not been identified and their families are being notified, authorities said.

A search began for the helicopter

carrying a pilot and six passengers from two families after it was reported overdue Thursday evening from a tour of Kauai's Na Pali Coast. Two passengers are believed to be minors, the Coast Guard said.

Steep terrain, low visibility, choppy seas and rain had complicated the search, the agency said.

The helicopter company, identified as Safari Helicopters, contacted the Coast Guard about 6 pm Thursday to say the aircraft was about 30 minutes overdue, authorities said. A person who answered the phone at a number

listed for Safari Helicopters declined to comment and hung up.

According to a preliminary report, the pilot said the tour was leaving the Waimea Canyon area, known as the "Grand Canyon of the Pacific," about 4:40 pm, which was the last contact with the helicopter, Kauai police said.

The Eurocopter AS350 has an emergency electronic locator transmitter, but no signals were received. The locator devices are designed to activate when an aircraft crashes, Federal Aviation Administration spokesman Ian Gregor said in an email.

The FAA requires the locators to be able to withstand impact. However, it is possible for the device to stop working in an extreme crash, Gregor said.

He said the agency is looking at the company's safety record but likely won't have a full report until Monday. It's investigating along with the National Transportation Safety Board.

US Rep Ed Case of Hawaii cited fatal accidents over the years, blaming the FAA for not taking NTSB safety improvement efforts seriously and the industry for not regulating itself. He said "innocent lives are paying the price." (AP)

## Politics

## Iowa swung fiercely to Trump

## Will Iowa swing back in 2020?



Democratic presidential candidate former vice-president Joe Biden greets people after taking questions at Williamsburg High School on Dec 27 in Williamsburg, Iowa. (AP)



Putin



Andreev

## Europe

## Poland summons Russian envoy:

The Russian ambassador to Poland was summoned by the Polish Foreign Ministry on Friday after Russian President Vladimir Putin repeatedly blamed Poland in past days for the outbreak of World War II.

The Polish state news agency PAP reported that Ambassador Sergey Andreev was "urgently" summoned to the ministry in Warsaw. He was told Polish authorities strongly oppose the recent "historical insinuation" voiced by Putin and other Russian officials, the deputy foreign minister, Marcin Przydzicz, said.

Przydzicz said Poland considers the views expressed by Putin and other Russian leaders amounted to the "Stalinist historical narrative" and "propaganda of a totalitarian state." "They are also a mockery of the millions of victims of Stalinist totalitarianism, whose victim was also the Russian people," Przydzicz said. It is only the latest dispute between the two Slavic nations over how to remember the war. Poles remember being invaded by both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union at the start of a conflict that left 6 million dead. Warsaw considers both powers to have been aggressors who unleashed suffering and death.

Russia focuses on the Soviet sacrifices that came after Germany invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, which brought the Soviets into the war on the side of the Allies. Some 27 million Soviet citizens died in the fight to free Europe from Nazi terror. Putin has been lashing out in recent days against a resolution adopted by the European Parliament that says that the Soviet Union bears responsibility for World War II. Putin has called that "sheer nonsense."

The war began days after Adolf Hitler and Soviet dictator Josef Stalin agreed to carve up Poland and the Baltic states based on a secret protocol in the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact they signed on Aug 23, 1939.

Putin has been casting the Molotov-Ribbentrop treaty as a move the Soviet Union was forced into following nonaggression agreements some other European nations had signed with Hitler. (AP)

12 killed in jetliner crash: A jetliner with 98 people aboard struggled to get

airborne and crashed shortly after takeoff Friday in Kazakhstan, killing at least 12 people, authorities said.

The Bek Air jet, identified as a 23-year-

old Fokker 100, hit a concrete wall and a two-story building soon after departing from Almaty, Kazakhstan's largest city and former capital, airport officials said.

DES MOINES, Iowa, Dec 28. (AP): Few states have changed politically with the head-snapping speed of Iowa. The question heading into 2020 is whether it's going to change again. In 2008, Iowans voters propelled Barack Obama toward the White House. A year later, the state's Supreme Court sanctioned same-sex marriage. In 2012, Iowa backed Obama again.

By 2016, Donald Trump easily defeated Hillary Clinton in Iowa. Republicans were in control of the governor's mansion and state legislature and held all but one US House seat. For the first time since 1980, both US Senate seats were in GOP hands.

Voters were slow to embrace Obama's signature health care law. The recession depleted college educated voters as a share of the rural population, and Republicans successfully painted Democrats' as the party of coastal elites.

Trump carried Iowa by a larger percentage of the vote than in Texas, and carried counties no Republican since Dwight D. Eisenhower had won.

But now, as Democrats turn their focus Iowa's kickoff caucuses to begin the process of selecting Trump's challenger, could the state be showing signs of swinging back?

If Iowa's rightward swing has stalled, it could be a foreboding sign for Trump in other upper Midwestern states he carried by much smaller mar-

gins and would need to win again.

"This is an actual correction," Tom Vilsack, the only two-term Democratic governor in the past 50 years, said of Republicans.

Iowans unseated two Republican US House members in 2018 during midterm elections where more Iowa voters in the aggregate chose a Democrat for federal office for the first time in a decade.

"I think that leaves little question Iowa is up for grabs next year," veteran Iowa Democratic campaign consultant Jeff Link said.

There's more going on in Iowa that simply a merely cyclical change.

## Suburbs

Once-GOP-leaning suburbs and exurbs have swelled with college-educated adults in the past decade, giving rise to a new class of rising Democratic leaders. "I don't believe it was temporary," Iowa State University economist David Swenson said of Democrats' 2018 gains in suburban Des Moines and Cedar Rapids. "I think it is the inexorable outcome of demographic and educational shifts."

The Democratic caucuses will provide a test of how broad the change may be. For now, that is not a widely held view, as Iowa has shown signs of losing its swing state status.

In the 1980s, it gave rise to a populist movement in rural areas from the left, the ascent of the religious right as

a political force and the start of an enduring rural-urban balance embodied by Republican Sen Chuck Grassley and Democratic Sen Tom Harkin.

After 30 years of Republican dominance in Iowa's governor's mansion, Vilsack was elected in 1998 as a former small-city mayor and pragmatic state senator.

An era of partisan balance in Iowa took hold, punctuated by narrow Iowa wins by Democrat Al Gore in 2000 and George W. Bush in 2004.

After the 2006 national wave swept Democrats into total Statehouse control, Obama's combination of generational change, his appeal to anti-Iraq War sentiment and the historic opportunity to elect the first African American president made Iowa an easy win.

"We were like a conquering army, prepared to negotiate terms of surrender," said Cedar Rapids Democrat Dale Todd, an early Obama supporter and adviser.

Today, in the state Capitol, there are reminders of how much the ground had shifted since those heady days.

Republicans today control all of state government for the first time in 20 years, in line with takeovers in nearby states that were completed earlier but traced their beginnings to the same turbulent summer of 2009. On a Wednesday in August that year, throngs flocked to Grassley's typically quiet annual county visits to protest his work with Democrats on health care legislation.



In this handout photo provided by the Emergency Situations Ministry of the Republic of Kazakhstan, police and rescuers work on the side of a plane crash near Almaty International Airport, outside Almaty, Kazakhstan on Dec 27. Almaty International Airport said a Bek Air plane crashed Friday in Kazakhstan shortly after takeoff causing numerous deaths. The aircraft had 100 passengers and crew onboard when it hit a concrete fence and a two-story building shortly after takeoff. (AP)

The aircraft's tail also struck the runway twice during takeoff, indicating that it struggled to get off the ground, Deputy Prime Minister Roman Sklyar said.

Fifty-four people were reported hospitalized with injuries, at least 10 of them in critical condition, officials said.

The cause of the pre-dawn crash was unclear. Authorities quickly suspended all Bek Air and Fokker 100 flights in Kazakhstan while the investigation got underway. One survivor said the plane started shaking less than two minutes after takeoff.

"At first, the left wing jolted really hard, then the right. The plane continued to gain altitude, shaking quite severely, and then went down," Aslan Nazariyev told The Associated Press by phone.

Government officials said the jet underwent de-icing before the flight, but Nazariyev recalled that its wings were covered in ice, and passengers who used emergency exits over the wings slipped and fell. The weather in Almaty was clear, with temperatures just below freezing. The plane was flying to Nur-Sultan, the capital formerly known as Astana.

Video footage showed the front of the broken-up fuselage rammed against a building and the rear of the plane lying in a field next to the airport. Passengers who survived may have been saved by the fact that the plane crashed at a lower speed and from a lower altitude because it was taking off, and it came down in terrain that may have eased the impact. (AP)