

Five dead after mass shooting in small California town

By Hector Cordon
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Four people were killed and another ten were injured in a mass shooting Tuesday in the small town of Red Bluff in Northern California.

The attacker, whose identity has still not been released by police as of Tuesday evening, was reported to have armed himself with a semi-automatic rifle and two handguns. He also reportedly wore a tactical vest filled with extra gun clips.

Apparently picking out victims at random, the gunman travelled from his home, where neighbors reported a domestic violence incident had occurred earlier, to several locations, including an elementary school, where two children were injured. None of the children were killed.

The first report of a shooter was made to police shortly before 8 a.m. and the suspect was confronted by police approximately 45 minutes later.

The gunman rammed a gate at the Rancho Tehama Elementary School with his vehicle and began to shoot up the school which had been placed on lockdown shortly after administrators received reports of a shooter in the area. Unable to gain access to any of the locked classrooms the gunman fired through the schools' windows and walls of the building for nearly 30 minutes as more than 100 students, teachers, staff and parents hunkered down.

The rampage ended when police shot and killed the gunman as he attempted to flee.

A resident interviewed by local media, Brian Flint, identified the shooter as his neighbor, who he named only as Kevin, and reported that he had killed his roommate and stolen his truck before going on the rampage at the school.

Flint told media that his neighbor was "crazy" and had been recently shooting off hundreds of rounds at his home. "The crazy thing is, is that the neighbor has

been shooting a lot of bullets lately, hundreds of rounds, large magazines. And, you know, we just, we made it aware that this guy was crazy and he's been threatening us," he said.

The responses of Republican Vice President Mike Pence and Democratic California Governor Brown to the latest mass killing, in the context of recent shootings in Texas and Nevada, were banal and perfunctory.

Praising the "courageous" law enforcement officers, Pence later tweeted "We pray for comfort & healing for all impacted." Brown released a brief statement: "Anne and I are saddened to hear about today's violence in Tehama County, which shockingly involved schoolchildren. We offer our condolences to the families who lost loved ones and unite with all Californians in grief."

Since the Sutherland, Texas church shooting less than two weeks ago, in which 27 were killed, there have been 12 mass shootings, including Red Bluff, with 21 more killed and 45 wounded, according to *mass shootingtracker.org*. Over 2,100 people have been killed or wounded in mass shootings so far in 2017. This does not include the more than 1,000 killed by police.

The town of Red Bluff, with a population of slightly more than 14,000, is located 125 miles north of Sacramento. Nearly a quarter of the population lives in poverty. In 2015 the median income was \$31,239 or less than that of half of the state as a whole.

Huge numbers of people in the US live a precarious existence, challenged daily by debt, low-wage jobs, health-care and pension concerns, and subject to the hostile disinterest of official society. What are the social implications of the recent report that three of the world's richest individuals—billionaires Jeff Bezos, Bill

Gates and Warren Buffett—collectively own as much wealth as the lower half of the United States population, approximately 160 million people?

Democrats and Republicans have both presided over a vast redistribution of wealth to the top 1 and 0.1 percent. Trump, with tactical differences from the Democratic Party, has undertaken to enact a massive tax cut that will siphon trillions in social wealth to the coffers of the corporations and financial industry.

Twenty-five years of war has also left its imprint. The increasing influence of the military in American society has culminated in the militarization of the police in the streets and the ascension of generals—General John Kelly, Chief of Staff and James “Mad Dog” Mattis, Secretary of Defense—into the White House.

Any effort at a serious accounting of the epidemic of mass killings in the United States would immediately come up against this social reality: the unprecedented growth of social inequality and a political system in which workers, youth and the poor have no voice.

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