

13. December 2013.

## The Sandy Hook Tragedy, One year after

December 14, 2013 is one year after the tragic shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. Twenty small children and six adults, including the shooters mother, were killed before the shooter, Adam Lanza, committed suicide.

Connecticut's Division of Criminal Justice and lead investigator, State Attorney Stephen Sedensky III, issued a report 25. November 2013. The report does not establish a conclusive motive for the mass murder.

### **The Report does, however, highlight:**

- The shooter's "obsession with mass murders" and strong interest in firearms
- The shooter's severe developmental disorder: Asperger's Disorder, Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD) spectrum behaviors and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

### **The Report states, that**

- "It is known that the shooter had significant mental health issues that affected his ability to live a normal life and to interact with others, even those to whom he should have been close. As an adult he did not recognize or help himself deal with those issues."
- "The shooter refused to take suggested medication and did not engage in suggested behavior therapies."

### **The Report of the State's Attorney concludes:**

- "The shooter acted alone and was solely criminally responsible for his actions of that day. "
- "the shooter's mental status is no defense to his conduct as the evidence shows he knew his conduct to be against the law. He had the ability to control his behavior to obtain the results he wanted, including his own death. This evidence includes his possession of materials related to mass murders, his removal of the GPS from his car, his utilization of ear plugs, the damaging of the hard drive and waiting for his mother's return from New Hampshire."

- “The existence of an extreme emotional disturbance for which there is a reasonable explanation or excuse is also not present in this case. It is clear that the shooter planned his crimes in advance and was under no extreme emotional disturbance for which there was a reasonable explanation or excuse.”

## **Why?**

A central question in the Report is: Why did the shooter murder twenty-seven people, including twenty children? Did he have a motive? The Report does not give an answer, but says: “This investigation, with the substantial information available, does not establish a conclusive motive.”

## **Obsession**

However, the investigation reports, that the shooter had an obsession with mass murders and familiarity with and access to firearms and ammunition. A large number of firearms were found in the home that also contained many edged weapons, knives, swords, spears, etc.

Items from the shooter’s possessions include:

- A New York Times article from February 18, 2008, regarding the school shooting at Northern Illinois University;
- Three photographs of what appear to be a dead human, covered in blood and wrapped in plastic;
- Photocopied newspaper articles from 1891 pertaining to the shooting of school children
- Bookmarks pertaining to firearms, military, politics, mass murder, video games, music, books, Army Ranger, computers and programs, ammunition, candy, economic books
- Two videos showing suicide by gunshot
- Commercial movies depicting mass shootings
- The computer game titled “School Shooting” where the player controls a character who enters a school and shoots at students
- Images of the shooter holding a handgun to his head
- Images of the shooter holding a rifle to his head
- Five-second video (dramatization) depicting children being shot
- Images of shooter with a rifle, shotgun and numerous magazines in his pockets
- A document written showing the prerequisites for a mass murder spreadsheet

- A spreadsheet listing mass murders by name and information about the incident
- Large amount of materials relating to Columbine shootings and documents on mass murders
- A Christmas check from the mother to the shooter to purchase a CZ 83 firearm

## **Developmental disorder and health issues**

The Report of the State's Attorney describes many details, including:

- “In 2005, the shooter was diagnosed with Asperger’s Disorder and was described as presenting with significant social impairments and extreme anxiety. It was also noted that he lacked empathy and had very rigid thought processes. He had a literal interpretation of written and verbal material. In the school setting, the shooter had extreme anxiety and discomfort with changes, noise, and physical contact with others.”
- ” The shooter disliked birthdays, Christmas and holidays. He would not allow his mother to put up a Christmas tree. The mother explained it by saying that shooter had no emotions or feelings.”
- “When the shooter had his hair cut, he did not like to be touched and did not like the sound of clippers, so they were not used much.”
- “The fifth grade was also the year that, related to a class project, the shooter produced the “Big Book of Granny” in which the main character has a gun in her cane and shoots people. The story includes violence against children. There is no indication this was ever handed in to the school.”
- “ In high school the shooter would have “episodes” and his mother would be called to the school. The episodes would last about fifteen minutes each. There were no signs of violence during any of these episodes and the shooter was more likely to be victimized than to act in violence against another. “
- “In preschool his conduct included repetitive behaviors, temper tantrums, smelling

things that were not there, excessive hand washing and eating idiosyncrasies. “

- “In 2006 the shooter had an overall IQ in the average range. He had no learning disability. Depending on the psychological test taken he could be average, below average or above average. Testing that required the touching of objects could not be done. It was reported that his school issues related to his identified emotional and/or Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD) spectrum behaviors. His high level of anxiety, Asperger’s characteristics, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) concerns and sensory issues all impacted his performance to a significant degree, limiting his participation in a general education curriculum. Tutoring, desensitization and medication were recommended.”
- “Over the years his mother consistently described the shooter as having Asperger’s syndrome. She had a number of books in the home on the topic. She also described the shooter as being unable to make eye contact, sensitive to light and couldn’t stand to be touched. Over time he had multiple daily rituals, an inability to touch door knobs, repeated hand washing and obsessive clothes changing, to the point that his mother was frequently doing laundry.”
- “The shooter refused to take suggested medication and did not engage in suggested behavior Therapies.”

### **Mental health professionals**

It is clear from the Report, that the shooter was seen by mental health professionals. The Report provides no information on why the shooter, who had a severe diagnosis and was seen by mental health professionals, could refuse to take suggested medication and not engage in suggested behavior Therapies.

The Report of the State’s Attorney highlights, that:

“It is important to note that it is unknown, what contribution, if any, the shooter’s mental health issues made to his attack on Sandy Hook Elementary School. Those mental health

professionals who saw him did not see anything that would have predicted his future behavior.”

The report *does not* conclude, that the shooter’s mental health issues and autism spectrum disorder did not have any impact on the shooter’s conduct.

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The Report concludes, that the investigation is closed.

Read the Report of the State’s Attorney here:

[http://www.ct.gov/csao/lib/csao/Sandy\\_Hook\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/csao/lib/csao/Sandy_Hook_Final_Report.pdf)

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