

# TRAGEDY STRIKES

Community responds with fear and shock following shooting at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood Airport

Esteban Santiago—a 26-year-old lone shooter—opened fire Friday, Jan. 6 at the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport, killing five people and injuring five more.

After flying from Anchorage, Alaska to Minneapolis, Minnesota and then to Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Santiago used the gun from his legally checked gun bag to open fire at baggage claim in Terminal 2 of the airport.

According to federal guidelines, passengers are allowed to check unloaded guns in a locked case. It is also legal to place ammunition in checked baggage. Therefore, Santiago was able to legally check his Glock 9mm semi-automatic handgun, which was used during the shooting.

“[Santiago] was legally in possession of the firearm after legally declaring it and transporting it interstate,” Robert Hutchinson, a former homeland security investigations special agent in charge, said. “He followed the rules like hundreds do everyday, but he took advantage of what the laws and rules are and did something just unbelievably evil.”

Shortly after the 90-second-long shooting, Chenet Nerette, 52, used his phone to record the scene in a viral video. The graphic video showed victims wounded from gunshots, those helping and trying to save the wounded, those on the phone with the police and those in shock and unmoving.

Once Santiago’s gun ran out of ammunition, he calmly set down his weapon and laid on the ground, the police then took Santiago into custody unharmed.

Annika Dean, a Broward County Public Schools art teacher from Parkland, hid under a luggage cart upon hearing the sound of gunshots. While Dean prayed for her survival, Tony Bartosiewicz, a retired electrician from New York, proceeded to climb on top of Dean in attempt to shield her.

“My biggest concern was my kids not having their mother,” Dean said. “I’ve got a 13-year-old and an 11-year-old. They need me.”

Many speculations circulated through the media regarding Santiago’s motive for the shooting and whether a terrorist

group was involved. After the FBI searched through Santiago’s internet and phone usage, it was determined that he was not in contact with any terrorist organization. But, the FBI did know about his mental illness which manifested from a destructive form of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder after his two years in the United States military.

“We have to do a better job of making sure that people with mental illness who could potentially be dangerous with a gun aren’t able to buy guns,” Congressman Ted Deutch said. “But the bigger picture is that we need to take care of people with mental illnesses and make sure that they get the care that they need.”

Claiming he was hearing voices in his head and being forced by these voices to watch ISIS videos, Santiago entered the Anchorage FBI field office and voluntary was treated for his mental illness back in November 2016. Yet, after only a few interviews with friends and family, his case was closed.

After being questioned by the police following the shooting, it was evident that his mental state was in a similar place as it was in November, according to police reports of the interrogation.

Santiago claimed the attack was on behalf of ISIS; the terrorist group has yet to claim responsibility.

In the initial aftermath of the chaotic shooting, immense confusion followed. There were theories of a second shooter, which led to disarray in other terminals as well.

“We thought it was some kind of coordinated terrorist attack,” Dean said, “It was scary because we didn’t know if there was just one gunman, two or more.”

Thousands of people who had just landed from flights into Fort Lauderdale were forced to wait for hours on the airport tarmac as the airport was being searched and deemed safe.

“The shooting happened just before 1 p.m. and we were bussed out of the terminal at 8 p.m. or 9 p.m., but there were some people who didn’t get out of the airport till 1 a.m. or 2 a.m.,” Dean said.

According to Broward.org, 29.2 million passengers traveled through the Fort Lauderdale airport in 2016. Many of these passengers included Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School students.

“I never felt like I could really be affected by these shootings, but now it’s more real,” sophomore Maayan Mizrahi said. “I’m realizing I could definitely be a victim if I was just in the wrong place at



Waiting on Tarmac. Following the shooting, passengers wait on the tarmac until they are given permission from authorities to leave. Photo courtesy of David Santiago/El Nuevo Herald/TNS

the wrong time like those people were.”

Not only has this event been a wake up call for local community members, but also for those who work in airports because of the dangers that they may encounter.

“My dad is a pilot, so I’m so glad that he didn’t end up going to work that day,” freshman Katie Herbert said. “If he did, who knows what would have happened to him. It really just made me realize that something could happen to those I love.”

Knowing how to protect oneself can alleviate common fears among teens and adults. Shootings can occur anywhere, therefore awareness of one’s surroundings is crucial to ensure safety no matter the situation.

“I don’t fear public places because I know how to protect myself; I know how to protect the people I love and others around me,” junior Natalia Lawrence said. “It’s just something you have to go around knowing everyday that a person could have a weapon, and you run the risk of being near someone that does.”

As a result of the event’s close proximity, it has received heavy attention from students and teachers within South Florida. It is often that the stress which accompanies discussions about these kinds of traumatic events can be detrimental to students’ mental health.

“I think this event made people understand that there is serious disrespect to gun ownership and to traveling with guns and ammunition,” Broward County Commissioner Michael Udine said. “It just gives a sense of bringing it home that something like this can happen right in our backyards.”

In response to a recent spike in

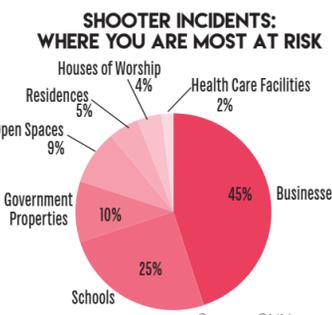
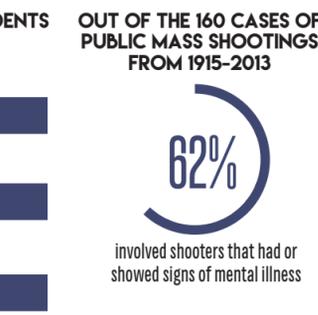
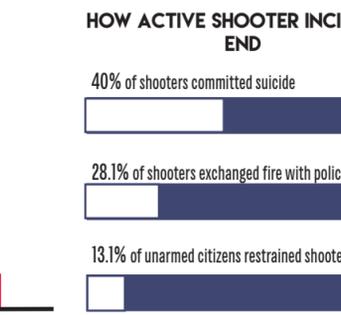
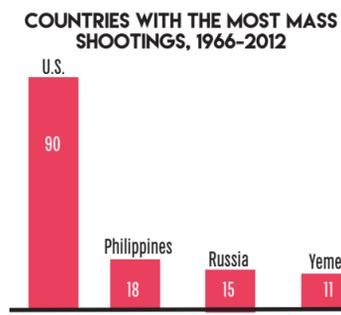
shootings within the past 10 years, Congress has previously attempted—yet failed—to take action regarding U.S. gun control laws.

Deutch, who represents Florida’s 22nd Congressional Districts—which include parts of Palm Beach County and Broward County—is one of the activists fighting for reformed gun laws within the Congress, especially ones regarding individuals with mental illness. However, Congress remains divided on issues of gun violence.

“Last year, we had a sit-in on the House floor,” Deutch said. “We stayed there for 25 straight hours debating the issue of gun control and making sure that everyone knew that Congress wasn’t passing the kinds of laws we need to pass.”

Evidently, the shooting at Fort Lauderdale airport has lasting repercussions that exceed a one day headline. Although the event itself led to heartbreak for many families, it has reopened a debate by Florida’s Legislature regarding gun control. State Democrats and Republicans are working together to find a solution that satisfies both sides.

Santiago was indicted on Thursday, Jan. 26. According to a Department of Justice release, he was charged with 11 counts of performing an act of violence against a person at an airport serving international civil aviation that caused death or serious bodily injury, six counts of use and discharge of a firearm during and in relation to a crime of violence and five counts of causing the death of a person through the use of a firearm. Story by Carly Novell and Rebecca Schneid



# LOADED QUESTION

MSD editorial board debates gun control

## SHOOT GUNS DOWN

Gun control is the first step to a safer county

Gun violence alone kills an average of 36 people every single day. It hurts deeply time and time again to see the deaths of innocent people who left their homes one typical morning expecting to come back that evening, yet never did. From Sandy Hook Elementary, to Aurora, Colorado, to the Pulse nightclub massacre to the recent Fort Lauderdale Airport shooting, many lives have been taken at the sole expense of a psychotic mind with a gun.

How can a country continue to experience the same tragedy over and over again and still not move to end the cycle? It’s almost as if we are at war with ourselves. Citizens who are pro-gun are selfishly looking at this situation; their only real argument is to remind us that the now-outdated Second Amendment of the Constitution allows for the right to bear arms. But that document was written in a time of war and rebellion—when the country was just beginning—when mental issues were not even remotely understood. With a constantly changing and evolving world, ideals change as well—but for some reason, this one has not.

Not even one week into the new year, the country experienced yet another mass shooting. On Jan. 6 at the Ft. Lauderdale airport, an unstable man by the name of Esteban Santiago-Ruiz walked into the baggage claim of Terminal 2, pulled out his gun and killed five innocent people. This man had been diagnosed with

schizophrenia, yet our laws allowed him to, and worse, to check his gun onto a plane. No suspicions were raised either by the fact that his gun was his only luggage when he arrived for his flight. The government should feel ashamed; this man clearly needed help, especially since he went to a federal office to tell them about his disturbing thoughts and feelings. Even with this information, Santiago-Ruiz was still allowed to have his gun.

Yet, in comparison to other mass shootings this country has witnessed, this is not even remotely the worst. On Dec. 14, 2012 a 20-year-old man named Adam Lanza walked into Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut and began firing at innocent teachers and young children, becoming responsible for the deadliest mass shooting at any school in United States history.

He shot and killed 20 children and six adult staff members in a matter of minutes with his automatic weapon, a Bushmaster XM15-E2S and a pistol, a Glock 20SF.

After the incident, it was discovered that Lanza had been diagnosed with obsessive-compulsive disorder, which more than likely contributed to his actions. Although his disabilities are not his fault, it is definitely the government’s fault for allowing him to own a gun. Parents and friends had to digest the fact that their babies and teachers were not

only not coming home, but also that they had to experience such immense fear leading up to their deaths.

In addition, on June 12, 2016 at Pulse, a gay nightclub in Orlando, a man named Omar Mateen easily entered with a SIG Sauer MCX semi-automatic rifle and a 9mm Glock 17 semi-automatic pistol. Within an hour, Mateen was able to kill 49 patrons and injure an additional 53 before being killed in a shootout with Orlando police.

After the shooting, it was proven by an autopsy and the testimony of his wife that he was disturbed, mentally ill, abusive and had been using drugs for quite some time.

Recently, his widow was arrested as well on charges of being complicit with his views and plans. In this country, a deranged and detached man was able to keep his dangerous guns because of his so-called rights, and with them, change the lives of so many. It amazes me how with even an event like this, no change has come in regards to gun control.

Another shooting occurred at the Aurora Theater in Colorado on July 20, 2012. Civilians were enjoying a midnight premier of “The Dark Knight Rises” at a Century 16 theatre. About 30 minutes into the movie, James Eagan Holmes entered the theatre dressed in a costume and wielding his firearms. After throwing canisters emitting gas and smoke into the audience, he began to shoot at the

blinded and unarmed audience with three different automatic weapons, killing 12 and injuring over 70 more.

During the trial, Holmes was proven to be violently depressed, obsessed with killing and possibly schizophrenic. His insanity defense kept him from being sentenced to death, but he was still given 12 life sentences, one for every innocent person he murdered, and over 3,000 more years for all of the other attempted murders. How can somebody so obviously disturbed obtain such powerful and dangerous weapons?

It may be unrealistic to have no guns all together—especially with such a long history filled with U.S. Citizens using guns. The need for self-defense is reasonable. This is where the need for background and mental health checks comes in. Tests must be much more thorough and intense; legally owning a gun should not be taken so lightly and without regards for the consequences.

What we truly need are stricter psychological exams, background checks and a modernization of the Second Amendment. The right to bear arms is a long outdated guideline for this country. If this misconstrued right has been responsible for so many tragedies, then what benefit is derived for the right?

This is the question the government and the American people together must begin to ask themselves. Editorial by Madyson Kravitz.

## STAND YOUR GROUND

Gun control infringes on constitutional rights

Gun control has been a hot political topic in recent years, with different parties polarized on how to handle this controversial issue. Although many would take the side of enforcing stricter gun control, restricting guns will leave us worse off as a whole, especially as guns are needed for the purpose of self defense. With terrorism and crime on the rise, self-defense is an issue that is more important than ever.

It is a common misconception that places with less guns are safer and that they have lower murder and crime rates, but all this misconception does is allow shooters and criminals to take more innocent lives before the police arrive. This situation can be stopped by registered gun owners practicing their Second Amendment rights. There have been many times when potential mass shootings were stopped because people with a legal weapon were nearby.

In December 2012, a man in Clackamas Town Center, Oregon opened fire in a busy mall. The shooter was only stopped

when concealed weapon carrier and off-duty security guard Nick Meli drew his own gun and forced the man into a service corridor, where he would then kill himself. Before that, however, the shooter was able to kill two people and injure one before the confrontation, Meli, using his Second Amendment rights, saved himself, his family and countless others in the mall at the time.

In July 2014, psychiatric patient in the Mercy-Fitzgerald Hospital campus in Pennsylvania, shot and killed a caseworker and wounded Dr. Lee Silverman. Luckily, Silverman had a gun on him at the time and shot the patient three times in the torso, giving nearby doctors and caseworkers enough time to tackle and subdue the gunman. Without Silverman’s quick actions, the situation could have easily turned into a mass shooting.

Although guns have saved countless lives before, people still believe that stricter gun control laws makes for a better and safer society, but in fact, this does not. Places that have little to

no guns at all only make it easier for criminals to claim more victims during a shooting.

One shooting that represents this is the Aurora, Colorado theater shooting on July 20, 2012. A lone, crazy gunman walked into the theater and killed 12 and injure 70 people in the attack before police arrested him in his car afterwards. This was considered the largest casualty shooting until the Pulse nightclub shooting in Orlando four years later.

The psycho who committed this massacre was able to do so with little difficulty due solely to the fact that guns were banned in that Century 16 theater.

This is an example of how banning guns from certain places or areas only makes it easier for shooters to murder without the law-abiding citizens having the ability to use their right of self-defense to stop them. This is due to the fact that law-abiding gun owners follow the law and responsibly use their guns.

Making gun laws stricter will not stop criminals from getting their hands on illegal weapons. This only makes it

unnecessarily difficult for law-abiding citizens to defend themselves—a right granted by the Second Amendment of the Constitution. A prime example of this is Mexico, a country known for having one of the strictest gun control laws in Latin America. Yet, according to 2004 UN estimates, the Mexican homicide rate is 22 people per 100 people, with nearly 13 million unregistered guns in circulation.

With more gun control laws, people will have to rely completely on the police for help instead of being able to defend themselves at that moment. A study by the Department of Justice in 2015 indicates that the average police response time to a call is four minutes, which is enough time for a criminal to have completed their crime.

Imposing strict gun laws will only create more crime and keep guns away from law-abiding citizens who will not be able to defend themselves. Restricting our Second Amendment rights only hurts society and helps no one. Editorial by Ryan LoFurno