

Shooter in Texas massacre said he was targeting ‘Mexicans’

AFP, Washington

The 21-year-old Texan who killed 22 people in an El Paso Walmart told police following his arrest that he was targeting “Mexicans,” according to an arrest warrant published Friday by US media.

The document charging Patrick Crusius, of Allen, Texas, with murder also described the circumstances of his arrest, saying he stepped out of his vehicle when surrounded by police, put his hands up and said “I’m the shooter.”

At police headquarters, Crusius waived his right to remain silent or have a lawyer present and told detectives that “his target (was) ‘Mexicans,’” according to the document, obtained by The Washington Post and others.

Man killed

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The OC claimed they conducted a raid in Karomjatala area of the upazila around 2:00am on information that a group of criminals gathered there for robbery.

Sensing the police presence, the criminals opened fire, forcing the law enforcers to retaliate, he further claimed.

At one point, Chan sustained bullet injuries and died on the spot. Later, his body was handed over to family members after conducting an autopsy at Patuakhali General Hospital morgue, he added.

Three cops were also injured during the “gunfight” and received treatment at the hospital, he further added.

Police also claimed to have recovered a home-made pipe gun and five sharp weapons from the spot. Two cases were filed in connection with the “gunfight”.

The Daily Star, however, could not independently verify the police claims.

2 killed

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When the microbus carrying Hanif, his family members and supporters reached Kaichail Madhyapara Darul Ullum Madrasa area around 5:00pm, the followers of his opponent attacked them with sharp weapons including machetes and vandalised the vehicle, said locals.

Hanif responded by opening fire on his opponents with his shotgun.

During the 30-minute clash, at least 15 people from both groups were injured, and 10 of them suffered bullet wounds. Rowshan and Tuhin were among those hit by bullets. They died on the way to Faridpur Medical College Hospital.

Contacted, Kaichail union Chairman Kabir Hossain, also general secretary of the union AL, said his supporters were holding a meeting at the spot. At that time, Jubo League leader Hanif opened fire on them without provocation.

Hanif was not available over phone for comments.

Contacted, Hanif’s brother Hasan Mia said the supporters of Kabir first attacked them while they were coming to the village.

He, however, admitted that his brother Hanif opened fire on his opponents.

Shahin Mohammad, emergency medical officer of the medical college hospital, said two bullet-hit persons were brought dead to the hospital around 7:10pm.

Talking to The Daily Star, Mizanur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Nagarkanda Police Station, said police rushed to the spot after hearing the news and brought the situation under control, but no one filed any case till 8:20pm.

Good luck

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in the critical operation.

The twin sisters are now under the care of neuro intensivists from the CMH and Shishu Hospital. They will have to undergo another surgery in two to three months, the ISPR release says.

Hungary-based Action for Defenceless People Foundation supported the critical surgery.

Talking to this newspaper, renowned Bangladeshi burn and plastic surgery expert Dr Samanta Lal Sen said conducting such a surgery was a “milestone achievement” for the country’s medical science as well as for this region.

He said it would take another two to three weeks for them to say whether the babies were out of danger or not, said Sen who attended the press briefing and also coordinated the whole process of the surgery.

Rafiqul Islam, the babies’ father, said both his daughters had been unconscious since being operated on at the CMH.

He said Rabeya on Friday gestured towards her mother as if she wanted to be in her lap.

Doctors were hopeful that Rokeya would gain consciousness soon, Rafiqul added.



Volunteers, local residents and members of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) search for survivors in the debris left by a landslide at Puthumala at Meppadi in the Wayanad district of the Indian state of Kerala, yesterday. Floods have killed at least 100 people and displaced hundreds of thousands across much of India with the southern state of Kerala worst hit, authorities said.

PHOTO: AFP

Nearly 2.5m pilgrims scale Mount Arafat

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pilgrims first braved the blazing sun and then heavy downpours that many welcomed as a blessing.

Some burst into tears as they chanted prayers.

Thousands of faithful had spent the night under the stars, sleeping on prayer rugs or pieces of cardboard.

Trucks were parked at regular intervals on the route leading up to the hill, distributing bottles of water and meals.

Thousands of workers prepared to clear the rubbish that littered the ground.

Helicopters criss-crossed overhead, part of the tight security precautions taken by the pilgrimage’s Saudi hosts.

The hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam which every Muslim is required to complete at least once in their lifetime if they are healthy enough and have the means to do so.

“I came last year during Ramadan, now I am there for the hajj,” said Indonesian pilgrim Zakir Uddin.

“It is an honour, praise be to God,” added the 27-year-old cook.

Like other male pilgrims, he wears a seamless white garment that covers

only one shoulder and emphasises unity regardless of social status or nationality.

The women wear loose dresses, most of them white, exposing only their faces and hands.

They are designed to help pilgrims enter a state of purity, called ihram.

Uddin, who works in the Saudi city of Jeddah less than 90 kilometres from Makkah, says he is happy to see so many of his compatriots among the pilgrims.

“Indonesians make up the single largest contingent, such is the will of God,” he said.

Pilgrims travelling from abroad account for 1.86 million of the 2.48 million taking part in this year’s hajj, according to official figures.

After sunset prayers, pilgrims will make their way down Mount Arafat to Muzdalifah, another holy site where they will sleep under the stars to prepare for the final stage of hajj, a ritual “stoning of the devil”.

That marks the beginning of Eid al-Azha, the festival of sacrifice.

Sheep are traditionally slaughtered for the three-day event, a tribute to the prophet Abraham’s sacrifice of a lamb

after God spared Ishmael, his son.

Pilgrims then return to the Grand Mosque to perform a final “tawaf” or walk around the Kaaba.

The scale of the pilgrimage presents vast security and logistical challenges, with tens of thousands of safety officers deployed.

Riyadh faced strong criticism in 2015 when some 2,300 worshippers were killed in the deadliest stampede in the gathering’s history.

This year’s hajj takes place to a backdrop of Gulf tensions following a series of attacks on tankers, the downing of drones and the seizure of ships.

Riyadh blames regional foe Tehran for the attacks on commercial shipping, accusations Iran vehemently denies.

Despite the absence of diplomatic ties between the two countries, some 88,550 Iranian pilgrims are due to take part in the hajj this year according to Iran’s Tasnim news agency.

As in previous years, Saudi authorities have been at pains to stress that the hajj is a religious event and have sought to prevent its politicisation.

US, China step up war of words over Hong Kong

AFP, Washington

The United States and China have stepped up an increasingly harsh war of words over pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong, as Beijing seeks to push its accusations that the mass demonstrations are being fueled by foreign powers.

In the latest exchange, Washington on Friday called out Beijing-backed news outlets for sharing “dangerous” reports after a newspaper revealed personal information about an American diplomat in Hong Kong who met with pro-democracy activists.

“Official Chinese media reports on our diplomat in Hong Kong have gone from irresponsible to dangerous. This must stop,” State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus posted on Twitter.

Beijing has increasingly pitched the anti-government protests in the semi-autonomous city as funded by the West, at one point describing violent

unrest in the city as “the work of the US.”

But China has provided little evidence for the claim beyond supportive statements from some Western politicians.

The Hong Kong-based, pro-Beijing Ta Kung Pao reported that the political unit chief of the US Consulate General in Hong Kong, Julie Eadeh, had met with members of the political party Demosisto -- including prominent democracy activist Joshua Wong.

It shared details on Eadeh’s career as well as her family members’ names.

The Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China in Hong Kong denounced Ortagus’ remarks as “blatant slander against China” that had “again exposed US gangster logic.”

Ortagus, however, said that “Chinese authorities know full well, our accredited consular personnel are just doing their jobs, just like

diplomats from every other country.”

“Foreign diplomats in the United States, including Chinese ones, enjoy open access to all elements of American politics, civil society, academia, and business,” she added.

On Thursday, China demanded that US diplomats based in Hong Kong “stop interfering” in the city’s affairs.

In a statement, the Chinese foreign ministry urged the US diplomatic office in Hong Kong to “immediately make a clean break with various anti-China rioters” and “stop interfering in Hong Kong’s affairs immediately.”

Ortagus responded at the time: “I don’t think that that’s a formal protest, that is what a tughish regime would do. That is not how a responsible nation would behave.”

A State Department official told AFP that representatives of the US government “meet regularly with a wide cross section of people across Hong Kong and Macau.”

No foul play behind mass blackout in UK

AFP, London

National Grid, which runs Britain’s power network, said Saturday it was confident of “no malicious intent” behind a major outage Friday that hit nearly one million people and caused travel chaos.

The company has blamed the blackouts, that left more than 900,000 customers without power for several hours and transport systems reeling, on the loss of two generators in quick succession.

It has vowed to “learn any lessons” from what it described as an “unexpected and unusual event”, which saw evening commuters stranded on trains, traffic lights failing and homes plunged into darkness.

“We are already very confident that there was no malicious intent or cyber attack involved,” National Grid director of operations Duncan Burt told the BBC.

“This will require careful study to make sure that we do learn any lessons that come out of it and that the next time this happens disruption

is minimised.”

He said the company would provide a technical report on the outage to industry regulator Ofgem, which on Friday demanded an immediate investigation into the incident.

“Ofgem has asked for an urgent detailed report from National Grid so we can understand what went wrong and decide what further steps need to be taken,” the regulator said in a statement.

“This could include enforcement action.”

Industry experts believe the blackout was prompted by a gas-fired power station in Bedfordshire, north of London, and then an offshore wind farm in Yorkshire, northern England, both disconnecting from the grid.

The outage lasted for several hours, affecting around 300,000 customers in London and the southeast, and 500,000 in the Midlands, southwest England and Wales, according to regional power utilities.

Some 110,000 were affected in Yorkshire and northeast England.

It sparked rush-hour transportation misery, as some traffic lights faltered on the capital’s streets and air traffic was disrupted at the airport in Newcastle.

- Like an ‘apocalyptic film’ -

“All the traffic lights were down, but there were no police present... it was like witnessing something out of an apocalyptic film,” Harriet Jackson told Britain’s Press Association in south London.

Many trains were delayed or cancelled on Britain’s national rail network, with efforts to return services to normal hampered by severe weather on Saturday.

Large swathes of the country were hit overnight by high winds and torrential rain, threatening further travel disruption through the weekend.

Keith Bell, a professor of electronic and electrical engineering at the University of Strathclyde, said the power cut was a “relatively small event” compared to blackouts seen elsewhere around the world.

First

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Ethical concerns were raised over the trial, partly over fears that human stem cells could migrate to the brain.

Angel Raya, of the Barcelona Regenerative Medicine Centre, said experiments on organisms with cells from two species faced “ethical barriers”.

He told El Pais: “What happens if the stem cells escape and form human neurons in the brain of the animal? Would it have consciousness? And what happens if these stem cells turn into sperm cells?”

But Estrella Nunez, of Murcia Catholic University (UCAM) and the project collaborator, said mechanisms were put in place so that if human cells did migrate to the brain, they would self-destruct.

“The results are very promising,” Nunez said.

The research, which was financed largely by the university, was costly. “If we combine the human/plg, human/rat and human/monkey research, it is many hundreds of thousands of euros,” she said.

Dr Raya said scientists have traditionally set a “red line” at 14 days’ gestation, which is not long enough for the embryo to develop a human central nervous system. All chimera embryos are destroyed before that time.

Juan Carlos Izpisua, who created the world’s first human-pig hybrid in 2017 and led the latest experiment, said: “We are now trying not only to move forward and continue experimenting with human cells and rodent and pig cells, but also with non-human primates. Our country is a pioneer and a world leader in these investigations.”

A case filed against OC

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police had complied with the court order and recorded the case.

“The responsibility of investigating into the case had been given to Firoz Ahmed, assistant superintendent of police [ASP], Kushtia Railway Circle. The case is now under investigation,” the letter, signed my ASP Nazrul, read.

The Daily Star obtained a copy of the letter.

Contacted, the accused OC, Osman Gani Pathan, yesterday once again denied the allegation of raping the woman and claimed that he was not present at the police station that night.

On August 2, the woman was detained inside a train by railway police in Phultala Railway Station around 7:30pm. She was then forced to disembark and was taken to Khulna Railway Station, where she was gangraped, the woman’s sister said.

The next day, the alleged rapists filed a case against the victim for possessing five bottles of Phensedyl, after which a court sent her to jail.

On August 4, the victim filed a complaint with the Chief Judicial Magistrate’s court against the policemen.

Kashmir set for Eid

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today whether restrictions would be eased for what is one of the most important Muslim festivals of the year.

After weekly prayers on Friday, about 8,000 people gathered for a protest on the edge of Srinagar that was broken up by security forces with tear gas and shotgun pellets, residents said.

“About 12 people were hurt, but none seriously,” said one witness.

The home ministry denied any protest took place.

Kashmir has been split between India and Pakistan since their independence in 1947. Both have fought two wars over the former kingdom. An insurgency against New Delhi’s rule in Indian-administered Kashmir has claimed tens of thousands of lives in the past three decades.

Islamabad has been infuriated by New Delhi’s moves and has expelled the Indian ambassador and halted the little bilateral trade between the arch-rivals. Pakistani ministers have also halted cross-border transport services.

The last Friendship bus left New

Delhi early yesterday carrying just two passengers for the trip to the Pakistani city of Lahore.

The service had been running since 1999 except for a two-year suspension after a militant attack on the Indian parliament in 2001 carried out by two Pakistan-based groups.

A Pakistan Tourism Department official in Lahore told AFP: “Today was the last day for the Friendship bus service. The bus service is suspended until further notice, we are making refunds to all passengers.”

The last Thar Express train also left the Rajasthan city of Jodhpur early Saturday but had to wait more than 12 hours to get clearance to cross the border, officials said.

The train has run every Friday night since 2006 from Jodhpur to Karachi. It is one of two rail services to cross the frontier between the rival states. The Samjhauta Express was halted on Thursday by Pakistan’s Railways Minister Sheikh Rasheed.

“As long as I am railway minister, the Samjhauta Express and the Thar Express will not operate,” he vowed to reporters yesterday.

Panama ex-president Martinelli acquitted of espionage, corruption

AFP, Panama City

Panama’s ex-president Ricardo Martinelli was acquitted on charges of spying on political foes and misappropriation of public funds in a court decision Friday.

The case marked the first time a Panamanian former president was tried in criminal court.

The 67-year-old supermarket tycoon was accused of spying on some 150 opponents between 2012 and 2014 as well as using state resources in the pursuit, including \$13 million in equipment which subsequently disappeared.

Martinelli “is found not guilty,” said Raul Vergara, one of three judges on the tribunal.

Shouts of joy from Martinelli’s

supporters rang out in the courtroom after the verdict was read.

“Thank you to my lawyers, thank you to the Panama authorities, this was a criminal conspiracy,” Martinelli told journalists and supporters.

After his release, Martinelli held a small party at one of his luxurious properties.

Martinelli -- who was president from 2009-14 and fled to Miami in 2015 to avoid arrest -- claims he was a victim of political persecution by the government of his successor Juan Carlos Varela, a former political ally.

Prosecutors had asked for an “exemplary” sentence of 21 years to set a precedent for corruption cases in Panama.