



News

Gunman identified in deadly Aztec school shooting

By: KRQE Media ✉ (mailto:webdesk@krqe.com)

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AZTEC, N.M. (KRQE) - New Mexico State Police have identified the gunman in Thursday's shooting at Aztec High School as 21-year-old William Atchison.

San Juan County Sheriff Ken Christiansen says this was a "planned event" for the shooter.

!! NMSP Chief Kassetas says they believe the victims were not specifically targeted, but "in the wrong place as the wrong time.'

The sheriff says that the shooter blended in with students to get into the school Thursday morning as buses were arriving. He then entered the building and walked to the second-floor bathroom to prepare for his attack.

The first victim, Francisco "Paco" Fernandez left class to go to that same bathroom. Police say the shooter ambushed and killed him instantly.

The shooter then walked out of the bathroom and shot the second victim, Casey Jordan-Marquez in the hallway.

After, Atchison went to the computer lab. However, the class had already taken cover in a closet.

He opened fire and shot through the wall, but none of the shots hit the students.

He then turned the gun on himself just as officers were entering the school.

EXHIBIT

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Investigators say that he only had one gun during the shooting with multiple magazines. They also say that he purchased it last month locally and legally.

The San Juan County Sheriff is calling this an act of cowardice.

Investigators found a thumb drive on Atchison. The following letter was found on that thumb drive:

▼ **December 7, 2017**

If things go according to plan, today would be when I die.

I wait until the school buses are detected, then head out on foot disguised as a student.

I go somewhere and gear up, then hold a class hostage and go apesh**, then blow my brains out.

Work suck, school sucks, life sucks.

I just want out of this sh**.

F*** this state, it really is bad. Think I'm insane? I'm actually more rational, peaceful and less loony than a majority of the citizenry of this entire region.

Investigators found another note in a trash can at his home with plans of the shooting that was broken down to the hour.

Officials say Atchison was living in Aztec with his parents, working at a gas station and was a student at Aztec High School at one point. However, he never graduated after moving from Belen, New Mexico.

Belen school officials confirmed he attended Central Elementary and then the middle school before moving away.

One teacher tells KRQE News 13 he was troubled back then and he did all he could to help him.

Former neighbors say they remember Atchison when he was small. They say all they can remember is he was a handful for his mom.

The shooter had caught the attention of the FBI last year after what he posted on an online gaming forum.

"Generally speaking it was, 'If you're going to conduct a mass shooting, does anyone know anything about cheap assault rifles?' Something along those lines," said Albuquerque Special Agent in Charge Terry Wade.

Agent Wade says the FBI interviewed Atchison extensively in March 2016.

Atchinson did not have any guns and assured the FBI he had no plans of an attack. He said he just liked to make outlandish statements to get people riled up.

The FBI investigation was not enough to bar someone from buying a gun, which Atchison did just a few weeks ago.

Federal investigators are sweeping through the thumb drive that the shooter left to see if they can learn anything more.

Local authorities say Atchison was not on the radar and had no criminal record.

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