

Atlanta-Area Shooting Leaves 8 Dead, Many of Asian Descent

A series of shootings over nearly an hour at three Atlanta area massage parlors left eight people dead and raised fears that the attack was yet another hate crime against people of Asian descent.

Police arrested a 21-year-old Georgia man and said the motive wasn't immediately known, though many of the victims were women of Asian descent.

The attacks began Tuesday evening, when five people were shot at Youngs Asian Massage Parlor in Acworth, about 30 miles (50 kilometers) north of Atlanta, Cherokee County Sheriff's Office spokesman Capt. Jay Baker said. Two people died at the scene, and three were taken to a hospital where two died, Baker said.

About an hour later, police responding to a call about a robbery found three women dead from apparent gunshot wounds at Gold Spa in Atlanta's Buckhead neighborhood, which is home to many tattoo parlors and strip clubs. While there, the officers learned of a call reporting shots fired at another spa across the street, Aromatherapy Spa, and found a woman who appeared to have been shot dead.

"It appears that they may be Asian," Atlanta Police Chief Rodney Bryant said.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said President Joe Biden has been briefed on the "horrific shootings" and administration officials have been in contact with the mayor's office and the FBI.

Surveillance video recorded a man pulling up to the Acworth business about 10 minutes before the attack there, authorities said. The same car was spotted outside the Atlanta businesses. A manhunt was launched, and Robert Aaron Long, of Woodstock, was taken into custody in Crisp County, about 150 miles (240

kilometers) south of Atlanta, Baker said.

Video evidence “suggests it is extremely likely our suspect is the same as Cherokee County’s, who is in custody,” Atlanta police said in a statement. Authorities haven’t specified charges.

South Korea’s Foreign Ministry said in statement Wednesday that its diplomats in Atlanta have confirmed with police that four of the victims who died were women of Korean descent. The ministry said its Consulate General in Atlanta is trying to confirm the nationality of the women.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who is in South Korea meeting with Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong, mentioned the killings during an opening statement.

“We are horrified by this violence, which has no place in America or anywhere,” he said, noting that four of the women were believed to be of Korean descent.

The killings came amid a recent wave of attacks against Asian Americans that coincided with the spread of the coronavirus across the United States.

“Our entire family is praying for the victims of these horrific acts of violence,” Gov. Brian Kemp said Tuesday evening on Twitter.

FBI spokesman Kevin Rowson said the agency was assisting Atlanta and Cherokee County authorities in the investigation.

Crisp County Sheriff Billy Hancock said in a video posted on Facebook that his deputies and state troopers were notified Tuesday night that a murder suspect out of north Georgia was headed toward their county. Deputies and troopers set up along the interstate and “made contact with the suspect,” he said.

A state trooper performed a PIT, or pursuit intervention technique, maneuver, “which caused the vehicle to spin out of control,” Hancock said. Long was then taken into custody

“without incident” and was being held in the Crisp County jail for Cherokee County authorities who were expected to arrive soon to continue their investigation.

Due to the shootings, Atlanta police said they dispatched officers to check nearby similar businesses and increased patrols in the area. {eoa}

Associated Press writers Kim Tong-hyung in Seoul and Zeke Miller in Washington contributed to the this story.

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