



NEWS RELEASE

HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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Police release findings in Columbia Mall shooting

Howard County Police are releasing details discovered during the investigation into the Jan. 25 shooting at the Columbia Mall, including a timeline of events, video images, photos and computer evidence. While the investigation will continue for an unknown duration due to ongoing analysis of evidence, police are offering a look inside the case in an effort to share information and bring closure to the community.

Police have confirmed that there was NO CONNECTION between the shooter, Darion Marcus Aguilar, 19, and the two victims, Brianna Benlolo, 21 and Tyler Johnson, 25. Extensive searches of computers, cell phones and other records showed no indication that the shooter knew the victims or targeted them in any way.

Investigators found thousands of searches on Aguilar's computer for mass murder, homicidal thoughts, school shootings, buying and shooting a shotgun, gun shops, mental illness, suicide, homemade explosives, and bombs, among other things. They also found numerous photos related to similar topics on a Tumblr account linked to Aguilar's computer, which has since been deactivated by Tumblr.

Based on evidence from the computer, it appears to investigators that Aguilar may have had a fixation on the 1999 shooting at Columbine High School. Police have confirmed Aguilar waited inside the mall for over 40 minutes after being dropped off by a cab, and believe he may have been waiting to begin his shooting at the same time that the Columbine massacre started, at 11:14 a.m. Aguilar's weapon, attire, backpack containing explosives, and method of suicide were all similar to those used in the Columbine incident.

The investigation shows that Aguilar entered the Zumiez store on the upper level with a disassembled shotgun in his backpack, went into a dressing room and assembled the weapon. He then exited the dressing room, shot Benlolo once and Johnson multiple times, before stepping into the hallway. He fired two shots across the hall, striking a woman in the foot. He fired one shot into the lower level food court, striking a wall, and one shot into the Zumiez storefront glass at a mannequin. He then re-entered the store and took his own life.

Officers found two homemade explosive devices in the shooter's backpack in the Zumiez dressing room; both were rendered safe. Police conducted a search of the mall through the night using 20 K-9 units from various law enforcement agencies and found no other devices.

Also inside the backpack, officers found a video camera that contained short videos displaying the shooter's shotgun and ammunition. The videos appeared to have been recorded in his bedroom. He is never seen on camera.

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Investigators served a search warrant at the shooter's home in College Park and found a journal containing additional information about his state of mind, including references to death, suicide and killing people.

Detectives also learned that the shooter had visited a doctor last year and received a referral to see a psychiatrist, but detectives have found no record that he ever scheduled or went to an appointment.

In addition to the police response of hundreds of patrol and tactical officers from local, state and federal law enforcement agencies, the criminal investigative response to the incident involved 27 Howard County police detectives and more than 320 work hours in the initial stage of the case. Since then, there have been 10 to 12 detectives working the investigation daily.

The case remains open as investigators continue to analyze data and other evidence. Although the case may not be officially closed for some time, police are releasing as much information as possible now in an effort to share a clearer picture of the incident and the events leading up to it. Detectives do not expect any new, significant information to be discovered or released in this case.

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