

WILL ALEX JONES ACCUSE DONALD TRUMP OF BEING A CRISIS ACTOR?

"The gun culture's winning, and if we beat 'em on that, we can beat 'em on everything," Alex Jones said about halfway through a rant about the Sandy Hook massacre.

"You know they're going to exploit this tragedy," he said, before getting rich off of it.

The rant was played at the Texas trial which led to a billion dollar judgment for the conspiracy theorist's claims that the act of school shooter Adam Lanza was staged.

Of course, as Jones subsequently conceded, disturbed loner Lanza really did shoot up an elementary school. He really did kill a bunch of children.

In America, one doesn't need to invent Deep State plots for loners to commit seemingly pointless shootings. Sometimes all it takes is an assault rifle.

And it looks increasingly likely that's what Thomas Crooks was: someone who wanted to shoot people, not to achieve some political murder or to help Iran avenge Qassem Soleimani's death, but because that's how America gives some people's lives purpose.

According to briefings given to Congress, Crooks seemed to be casing out both Trump and Joe Biden in advance of his attack.

F.B.I. officials told members of Congress on Wednesday that the gunman who tried to kill former President Donald J. Trump used his cellphone and other devices to search for images of

Mr. Trump and President Biden, along with an array of public figures.

The 20-year-old gunman, Thomas Matthew Crooks of Bethel Park, Pa., also looked up dates of Mr. Trump's appearances and the Democratic National Convention, according to people on two conference calls held to answer lawmakers' questions.

[snip]

F.B.I. officials, speaking on the calls, suggested that his search history indicated he was broadly interested in powerful and famous people, without any obvious ideological or partisan pattern.

Among the other prominent figures the gunman searched for using one of his phones, besides Mr. Trump and Mr. Biden, were the F.B.I. director, Christopher A. Wray; Attorney General Merrick B. Garland; and a member of the British royal family, according to two officials with knowledge of the situation, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss the matter publicly.

Mr. Wray, who was also on the calls, went out of his way to caution that the investigation was still in its early stages.

But the absence of "any political or ideological information" at the house Mr. Crooks shared with his mother and father was "notable" because most people who carry out acts of political violence tend to leave a discernible trail of political views, a top bureau official told lawmakers.

[Note: this story also repeats a claim that Crooks forewarned of something on Steam; that appears to be one of numerous instances of people adopting his identity after the fact.]

While accounts vary, some of his schoolmates describe that he was a loner who was bullied.

Speaking to local news outlet KDKA, some young locals who went to school with him described him as a loner, who was frequently bullied and sometimes wore “hunting outfits to school”.

Another former classmate of his, Summer Barkley, cast him differently, telling the BBC that he was “always getting good grades on tests” and was “very passionate about history”.

“Anything on government and history he seemed to know about,” she said. “But it was nothing out of the ordinary... he was always nice.”

She described him as well-liked by his teachers.

Others simply remembered him as quiet.

“He was there but I can’t think of anyone who knew him well,” one former classmate, who asked to remain nameless, told the BBC. “He’s just not a guy I really think about. But he seemed fine.”

None of this makes the shooting less important. None of this excuses the lapses in Trump’s security that allowed it to happen.

Rather, it makes it rather more ordinary – something that Americans have grown all too used to and done far too little to prevent.

Yet, even so, the shooting has still been used to heighten America’s polarization, with partisans on both sides still trying to find party as the cause of this.

It was only a matter of time before a garden variety American school shooter decided to aim at a higher profile target. And yet we’re still not taking from it the message that everyone of these random shootings are a tragedy. Corey

Comperatore, the firefighter who heroically shielded his family to protect them, is the victim of this shooting, not Trump. But he's no more important a victim than the 20 children killed in Sandy Hook. It's not God that chose this shooting. It is not destiny.

It is, rather, something far darker about America, something that transcends party.

Update: Parkland High father Fred Guttenberg weighs in:



Fred Guttenberg
@fred_guttenberg

This image infuriates me in ways that I cannot express deeply enough. My daughter while running into a stairwell at her school for safety was unlucky by 1 second. Trump was lucky by one second. To mock my loss from AR 15-gun violence is disgusting beyond all measure. As a reminder, someone also died in this shooting that they are mocking and two were critically injured. I have ignored all of the conspiracy theories this week about this shooting and how it happened. Looking now at the way Trump and this crowd are milking this in a staged and produced way does lead me to wonder.



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Update: NYT gets to the school shooter analogy too.

Investigators have uncovered what now could be seen as concerning signs: The gunman's phone showed that he had possibly read news stories about the teenage school shooter who killed four students at Oxford High School in

Michigan. Mr. Crooks received multiple packages, including several that were marked "hazardous material," over the past several months. He looked up "major depressive disorder" on a cellphone later found at his house.

He had also searched a bipartisan roster of political figures, including Mr. Trump, President Biden and Attorney General Merrick Garland, F.B.I. officials told members of Congress. He also looked up both the dates of Mr. Trump's July 13 rally in Butler, Pa., as well as the Democratic National Convention in Chicago.

But investigators have not found any evidence that Mr. Crooks had strong political beliefs or an ideological motivation.

Experts who study the histories of gunmen said the emerging picture of Mr. Crooks looked more like a 21st-century school shooter than a John Wilkes Booth.