

Retired Federal Agent May Have Known About Buffalo Mass Shooting Plot

Investigators believe a retired federal agent may have been privy to the Buffalo supermarket shooter's plot more than 30 minutes before he opened fire in the grocer and killed ten people.

The former agent, believed to be from Texas, was one of six people who regularly communicated with accused murderer Payton Gendron, 18, in an online racist hate forum, law enforcement sources told The Buffalo News.

He has not been named, and further details of the exact agency he worked for have not been shared. But the agent and Gendron's other online friends would regularly chat online about their hatred of Jews and non-whites, investigators say.

Sources allege Gendron shared his mass shooting plans and details about the target locations about half an hour before he attacked the upstate New York supermarket on May 14. It is not clear if the agent accepted Gendron's invitation to review his plans or if the individual read them.

However, officials have confirmed that none of the six invitees contacted authorities to warn them about the shooting, which the FBI has called a 'racially motivated [act of] violent extremism.'

The FBI is also trying to unmask the true identity of the individual Gendron referred to as 'Sandman,' and 'Saint Sandman' in his online diaries published on Discord, a social media platform that allows users to communicate through private servers. The gunman's posts suggest Sandman counseled him on weaponry before the massacre.

Gendron, who carried out the attack with an AR-15-style rifle while cloaked in body armor, has been charged with murder and is being held without bail. The shooting is being investigated as a hate crime and the teen still be hit with additional charges.

Investigators believe a retired federal agent may have been privy to Payton Gendron's mass shooting plot more than 30 minutes before he opened fire at a supermarket in Buffalo, NY and killed ten people. Gendron is pictured wearing tactical gear

The former agent, believed to be from Texas, was one of six people who regularly communicated with Gendron in an online racist hate forum. People are pictured hugging outside the grocer the day after the shooting

Law enforcement sources allege the FBI is in the process of locating and interviewing the six people, including the former agent, who may have had prior knowledge about the fatal attack.

The agency's probe hopes to determine if any of the six could be charged as accomplices to Gendron.

'What is especially upsetting is that these six people received advanced notice of the Buffalo shooting, about 30 minutes before it happened,' the insiders said.

'The FBI has verified that none of these people called law enforcement to warn them about the shooting. The FBI database shows no advance tips from anyone that this shooting was about to happen.'

The officials added: 'These were like-minded people who used this chat group to talk about their shared interests in racial hatred, replacement theory and hatred of anyone who is Jewish, a person of color or not of European ancestry.'

Sources allege Gendron shared his mass shooting plans and details about the target locations about half an hour before he attacked the upstate New York supermarket on May 14. Pictured is Gendron's hand drawn map of the supermarket posted to Discord ahead of the attack

It remains unclear exactly how many people may have had prior knowledge about the attack.

The law enforcement sources allege six people are under FBI investigation after Gendron invited them to review the plan, but just last week The Washington Post reported that 15 people had accepted his invitation to a private Discord group where he posted the plans and later live streamed his killings.

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Two other people familiar with the FBI investigation also told The Buffalo News that officials are investigating Gendron's relationship to the former federal agent.

Those sources claim the federal agency is probing whether the retired agent provided Gendron with any information before he went on his killing spree.

None of the insiders disclosed the agent's name or confirmed what federal agency he previously worked for.

Members of the FBI and Buffalo Police Department collect evidence at the Tops in Buffalo on May 15, the day after Gendron allegedly opened fire and killed 10 people

Before the massacre, Gendron detailed and photographed the area he believed he was going to park his car during the shooting. The image was included in his Discord diary

The FBI is also trying to determine the true identity of Sandman, whom Gendron seemingly

praises in his online diaries.

The 18-year-old accused killer claims Sandman offered insight about AR-15 manufacturers and product quality before he purchased the gun used in the shooting.

Gendron, who referenced Sandman three times in his writings, allegedly quoted the individual in a post he made on May 2.

'When the time finally comes to deal decisively with a whole host of society's problems, and not go to prison for it, you'll know. Just be ready. Discord servers have spent your entire life, from the day you were born, right up to this very moment, reading this sentence, coming to where you are right now,' Sandman allegedly told the teen.

'Look around you. Are you content with where you are right now? Are you where you want to be? If so, continue to march. If not, what are you going to do? What's your plan? Get and keep your mind, body, and spirit right. Pray. Lift. Run. Read. Shoot. And teach your kids to do those things.'

The FBI is also trying to unmask the true identity of the individual Gendron (pictured in his booking photo) referred to as 'Sandman,' and 'Saint Sandman' in his online diaries published on Discord

Shortly before the attack, Gendron posted hundreds of pages of writings online, detailing his plans for the assault and his racist motivation.

The diary said Gendron planned his attack in secret, with no outside help, but Discord has since confirmed that an invitation to access his private writings was sent to a small group of people about 30 minutes before the assault began.

Officials have confirmed that some of them accepted the invitation but did not clarify as to how many read what Gendron had written or logged on to view his assault in real time.

Investigators are continuing their work to obtain, verify and review Gendron's online postings and have been examining all of his documents.

Meanwhile, attorneys familiar with the case say it is not surprising an ex-law enforcement agent may have been involved.

'As outrageous as this may sound, based upon what we are finding in our investigation, it is not surprising,' Attorney Terrence M. Connors, who represents several of the victims' family members, told The Buffalo News.

The lawyer declined to provide details about the investigation or found evidence.

Buffalo civil rights attorney John V. Elmore, who represents the family of victim Andre

Mackniel, pointed out that former agent had a duty to report the shooting as soon as he was made aware of it.

'If he had advance notice, he had a moral obligation to get on the phone and try to notify someone about it,' Elmore explained.

Gendron, sporting orange prison fatigues and a white face mask, appeared in Buffalo court last week for his pre-trial felony hearing

Gendron, sporting orange prison fatigues and a white face mask, appeared in Buffalo court last week for his pre-trial felony hearing.

The self-declared white supremacist, who also faces federal terror charges, remained silent throughout the proceeding despite being heckled by a victim's distraught family member who yelled out: 'Payton, you're a coward!'

The first-degree murder indictment, which covers all 10 deaths, was handed up on May 18, Assistant district attorney Gary Hackbush announced in court on May 19.

In New York, prosecutors can charge a defendant with first-degree murder only under special circumstances, including when multiple people are killed in a single incident, like in the Buffalo shooting that claimed the lives of 10 people on Saturday. The single count against Gendron covers all 10 deaths at Tops Friendly Market.

No domestic terror charges have been filed in federal court at this time. Gendron will be back in court on June 9. He is being held without bail.

The courtroom remained quiet until the end as Gendron, cuffed and shackled was escorted out by a heavy security detail, only the sounds of his chains clinking, when one of the victims' family members yelled out angrily at him from the courtroom gallery.

Thirteen people were struck by gunfire at the supermarket on Saturday, most of them black, and 10 of the victims died, before the gunman surrendered to police confronting him inside the store.

Gendron has pleaded not guilty to the single count of first-degree murder.