



On Friday, July 20 after my alarm went off, I reluctantly got out of bed at 5 a.m. in my studio apartment in Washington, D.C. It took an alarm to get me up since my body clock is always naturally on Colorado time so 5 a.m. in D.C. is 3 a.m. back home.

I was still half asleep when I walked over to my dining room table, which doubles as my desk, to turn on my computer to see what the news was in Colorado. What came up was a large picture of the Century Aurora 16 movie theater with its bright red neon sign surrounded by darkness and a title reflecting an emerging national story of a mass shooting in Aurora.

A chill went down my spine and the shock that the mass shooting was not in some community in another state that I had never heard of or been to but that it was in my hometown of Aurora. This was in a theater that I have gone to with my wife, friends and other family members.

My first impression of the attack was remembering the daily sectarian violence in Iraq when I was there in 2006 with the U.S. Marine Corps. These al Qaida inspired attacks would target Shia Arab civilians with the objective of killing as many men, women and children as possible in order to incite hatred with the objective of bringing down the nascent Iraqi government through a sectarian civil war. As insane and as twisted that logic was, it at least served to explain a goal that, in the minds of the attackers, justified their taking of so many innocent lives. However, as the facts have unfolded in the mass murder in Aurora so far, there is no rational or logical explanation for what happened.

Judging from what we know of the killer, it's highly likely that he never had met nor knew anything about his victims. This appears to be a mass killing for the sake of killing.

We will know more in the weeks and months ahead, and it's my sincere hope that we get a complete picture of what happened from the first days of the killer's time as a student on the medical campus; the progression of his mental health treatments and to what degree he began

showing homicidal tendencies during therapy; why his threatening behavior was not reported to local law enforcement; and were there any particular security factors that led him to choose the Aurora theater over other similar public venues.

Once all the facts become fully known, those of us in government — at every level from local, state and federal law enforcement authorities to their respective elected leaders — will be able to use this understanding to see what we can do to help prevent such tragedies from occurring again. No doubt, whatever we do we will never fully protect ourselves from a maniacal killer dedicated to violence. There was a saying that emerged among those trying to craft a domestic security response to the 9/11 attacks, “we have to get it right one hundred out of a hundred times and the terrorist only has to get it right once.”

Until then, we need to thank those who risked their lives to limit the carnage and to focus our attention on helping the victims and their families who so desperately need our support.

By: Rep. Mike Coffman

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