

Florida shooting suspect charged with 17 counts of murder after high school attack

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VIDEO: Students are evacuated by police from Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School. (ABC News)

An orphaned 19-year-old with a troubled past has been charged with 17 counts of premeditated murder, after the deadliest school shooting in the US in five years.

Seventeen people were killed in the attack at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School.

Fourteen wounded survivors were hospitalised as bodies were recovered from inside and around the site.

The suspect is Nikolas Cruz, 19, a former student of the school, about 72 kilometres north of Miami, who was questioned for hours by state and federal authorities before being charged.

Mr Cruz, still wearing a hospital gown after being treated for laboured breathing, about 180 centimetres tall and weighing in at 59 kilograms, was ordered held without bond and booked into jail.

Students who knew him described a volatile teenager whose strange behaviour had caused others to end friendships with him.

Broward County Sheriff Scott Israel said Mr Cruz had been "expelled for disciplinary reasons".

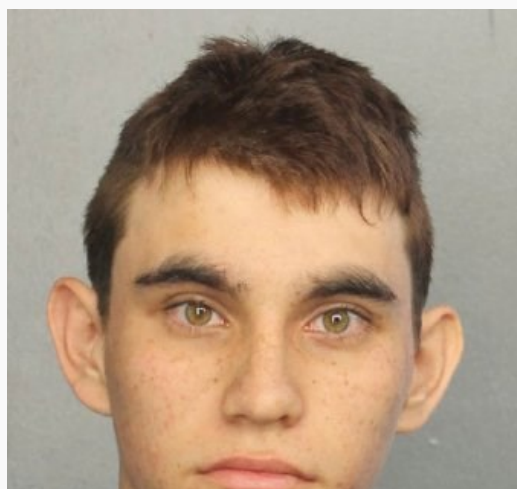
"We are beginning to dissect his websites and things on social media that he was on and some of the things that have come to light are very, very disturbing," he said.

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Key points:

- Suspect Nikolas Cruz is a 19-year-old former student
- 17 people are confirmed dead and several are in surgery
- Stoneman Douglas High School is one of the biggest schools in Florida



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"I don't know anything about the firearm. He had countless magazines, multiple magazines and at this point we believe he had one AR rifle, I don't know if he had a second one."



PHOTO: Nikolas Cruz is a former student at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. (AP: Broward County Jail)



VIDEO: Police arrest man after Florida shooting (ABC News)

US President Donald Trump said in a tweet the suspect appeared "mentally disturbed".

"So many signs that the Florida shooter was mentally disturbed, even expelled from school for bad and erratic behaviour" he wrote.

"Neighbours and classmates knew he was a big problem.

"Must always report such instances to authorities, again and again!"

Sheriff Israel said of those people killed, 12 were inside the building, two were outside the school and one person was on the road.

Sixteen people were taken to hospital but two of them died from their injuries. At least three people remain in a critical condition.



PHOTO: Nikolas Cruz, 19, is arrested by police after allegedly killing 17 people at his former school in Parkland, Florida. (Supplied)




Sheriff Israel said one of the victims who died was a football coach while a deputy sheriff's son had been shot in the arm, but was being treated at a local hospital for non-life threatening injuries.




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"Our district is in a tremendous state of grief and sorrow," said Robert Runcie, superintendent of the school district in Parkland.

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"It is a horrible day for us."



PHOTO: [Medical personnel tend to a victim following the shooting.](#) (AP: John McCall)

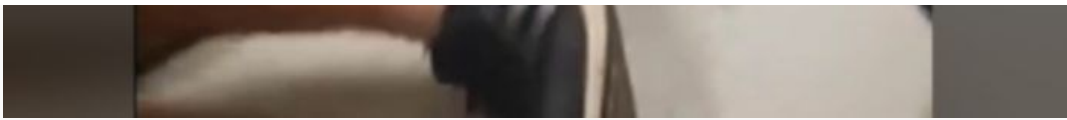
Shooter 'set off the fire alarm'

Florida Senator Bill Nelson told CNN he had been briefed by the FBI that the shooter wore a gas mask and had smoke grenades, but did not know if he had used the grenades.

“

"[He] set off the fire alarm so the kids would come pouring out of the classrooms into the hall. And there the carnage began," Mr Nelson said.





VIDEO: [Student captures Florida shooting on social media post](#) (ABC News)

Teacher Melissa Falkowski said her class was evacuating for what they thought was a fire drill.

"We got maybe 15, 20 steps out of the classroom and we were told that we were 'Code Red'," Ms Falkowski told CNN.

"We ran back inside and crouched down on the floor ... there were kids in the closet."

External Link: [The layout of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida](#)

Ms Falkowski said her friend who was teaching in the freshman building, where the shooting reportedly happened, said she saw three bodies on the floor as she was leaving.

She said the teachers had been trained on how to deal with a shooting just six weeks ago.



VIDEO: [Florida high school students describe hearing gunshots](#) (ABC News)

"If we hadn't had that training, it could have been a lot worse," she said.


"In fact, a lot of us probably thought this was the drill that we were supposed to have this semester to practice. And it wasn't, it was the real thing."




VIDEO: [Florida's Governor labels shooting 'pure evil'](#) (ABC News)

'Have you heard from your child yet?'


McKenzie Hartley told Hack her 17-year-old sister was [forced to hide in a closet for more than two hours](#) while the gunman entered the school and shot her classmates.




13



Mom



Madison



"I found out almost immediately because my sister's friend was in one of the first classrooms that unfortunately got shot up," Ms Hartley said.

"Her friend texted her almost immediately saying 'get out of the way, hide — there's someone in the school with a gun'.

"My sister sent me and my mum a text immediately saying, 'Oh my God there's a shooter on campus'.

"Unfortunately she never got evacuated because they suspected he might have been in that building, so she spent two-and-a-half hours just hiding in a closet with her whole class."

Len Murray's 17-year-old son, a junior at the school, sent his parents a chilling text message.

"Mom and Dad, there have been shots fired on campus at school. There are police sirens outside. I'm in the auditorium and the doors are locked."

Those words came at 2:30pm. A few minutes later, he texted again saying: "I'm fine."

Mr Murray raced to the school only to be stopped by authorities under a highway overpass within view of the school buildings in Parkland.

No information was immediately given to parents, Mr Murray said.

"I'm scared for the other parents here. You can see the concern in everybody's faces."

"Everybody is asking, 'Have you heard from your child yet?'"



INFOGRAPHIC: McKenzie got these messages from her sister who hid inside a closet to hide from the gunman (Supplied)

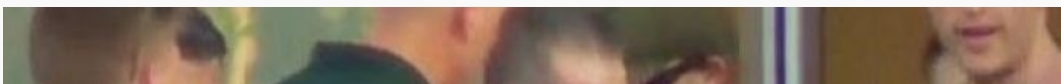


PHOTO: Family member embrace following a shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. (AP: Wilfredo Lee)

Aerial footage showed police in camouflage with weapons drawn entering the school.

Dozens of students could be seen frantically running and others quickly walking out as emergency workers treated those who were injured.

Some students exited buildings in single-file rows with hands raised overhead to show they carried no weapons.



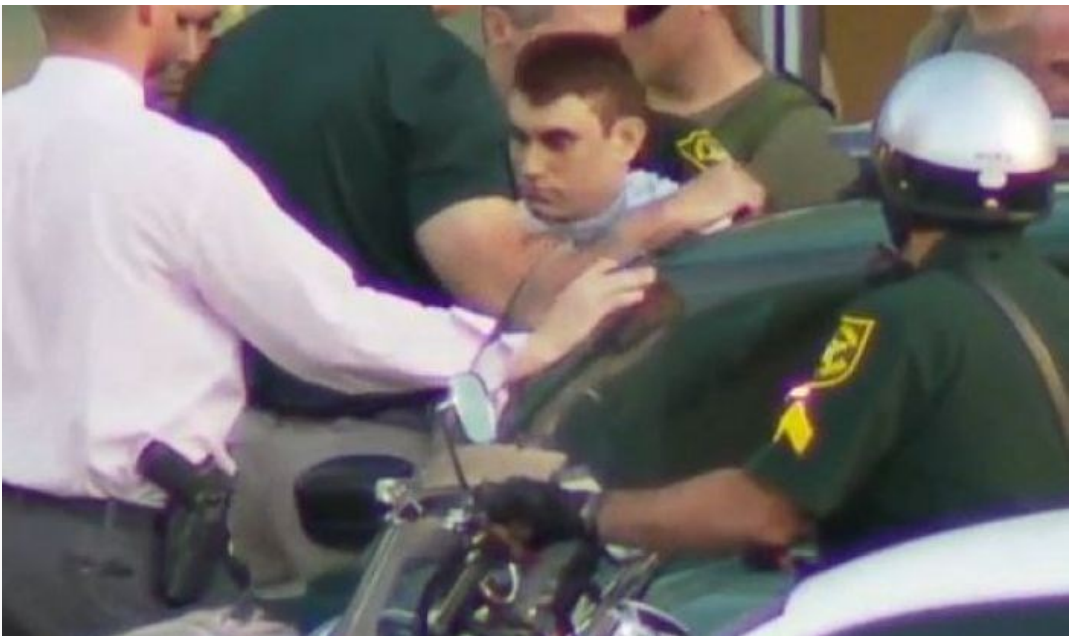


PHOTO: [Florida school shooting suspect](#) [Nikolas Cruz](#) is taken from hospital by police officers. (Supplied: ABC News America)



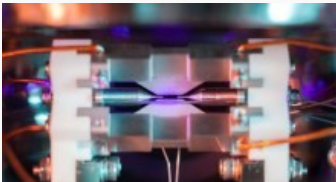
VIDEO: [SWAT officers evacuate Florida high school following shooting](#) (ABC News)

ABC/wires

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ABC News quiz

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US approach to office romances

If politicians think relationships with their staffers are allowed, they're more likely to proposition them, and when things don't work out it's invariably women who pay the steepest price.

Parenting advice

When you child loses interest in their after school activities, is it ok to let them quit?

18th school shooting

Florida has made headlines after 17 people were killed at a high school north of Miami, but this is far from the first school shooting in America so far this year.

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