

NBC's *Today*

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7:01:03 a.m. [TEASE]

11 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Holiday Horror]

HODA KOTB: And the latest on the investigation. How police tracked down the person of interest and the clues he may have left on social media. We're covering all of it when the mayor of Highland Park joins us.

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7:07:18 a.m.

6 minutes and 21 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Six Killed in Highland Park Parade Attack]

TOM LLAMAS: And this morning there is a lot of anger here because residents say the shooter was troubled for a long time and the content in those social media videos are more than just red flags. They are announcements of what was to come. So many feeling this one could have been stopped, Hoda.

KOTB: Alright, Tom, thank you so much. Joining us now is the mayor of Highland Park, Nancy Rotering. Mayor, good morning. It is good to see you. Yesterday there was an arrest made, a person of interest now, I think, a suspect, in the case was arrested. I know there have been a lot of overnight developments. Why don't you get us up to speed?

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Highland Park Mayor Speaks Out]

NANCY ROTERING: At the moment we're waiting for the charges to be levied against the individual. And frankly, my greater focus this morning, as the sun is rising, is how my community is feeling. The unbelievable sadness. The unbelievable shock. This tragedy never should have arrived on our doorsteps and as a small town, everybody knows somebody who was affected by this directly. And, of course, we're all still reeling.

KOTB: Yeah. I mean, so many people, I'm sure, over the Fourth of July were at small town parades. And so many things struck me about your town. In 2014, you signed an assault weapons ban that was in place and is in place. There are a lot of pieces to put together about what happened. Tells where we are where that's concerned. Do you know anything about where the gun may have come from?

ROTERING: I don't know where the gun came from. But I do know that it was legally obtained. And, I think, at some point, this nation needs to have a conversation about these weekly events involving the murder of dozens of people with legally obtained guns. If that's what our laws

stand for, then I think we need to re-examine the laws.

KOTB: What does it think — what does it tell you about us as a nation? I feel like we see so many shootings. There was — at a grocery store, fourth graders at a school. What does this — what does this tell you about our country?

ROTHERING: Frankly, it tells us that our values are askew. Yesterday, we came together as a community to celebrate independence and freedom after two years of not having a parade. We were ready to come together as a community and celebrate our nation. And, in fact, as a result, because of this gun culture, our nation turned its back on us and turned its back on our celebration. We, as a country, have to have a very strong conversation with ourselves. I don't know how many more of these events need to occur. We've been talking about this literally for a decade at this point. And it's one of those things where you ask yourself: If this reflects the values of who we are, then what does that say about us as a nation?

KOTB: Let's speak about the suspect for a minute. His name is Robert Crimo III. People are trying to piece together who this individual was. There were reports that his father ran for mayor against you, that he was a high school dropout. What do we know about the suspect? Is he known to police?

ROTHERING: I don't believe he was previously known to police until yesterday. I know him as somebody who was a Cub Scout when I was the Cub Scout leader. And it is one of those things where you step back and you say what happened? How did somebody become this angry, this hateful to then take it out on innocent people who literally were just having a family day out?

KOTB: What did you know — I didn't know you were his Cub Scout leader. What did you know about him even at that young age?

ROTHERING: He was just a little boy.

KOTB: Huh. Yeah. You know, there are reports that he posted some chilling and frightening videos. I think a lot of people have already seen them online. There's footage of a young man in a bedroom, in a classroom with cartoons, of — of gunman and people being shot and, you know, when you are putting together that footprint, tell us what — what is going into that part of the investigation?

ROTHERING: I would have to say that we want the police to answer questions specific to the investigation. I — we know that several postings really reflected a plan and a desire to commit carnage for a long time in advance.

KOTB: Mmhmm.

ROTHERING: But I'm hesitant, frankly, Hoda to talk about that. I don't want other people to think that this is something that needs to be glorified. This is something that needs to be diminished. This is something that we need to talk about as — as a hateful impact on our nation. Somebody

clearly had a — a mental breakdown. And — but I don't want to even ascribe it to mental health. I want us to talk about the fact that there are weapons of war on our streets that people can legally obtain these and then take out dozens of people. Our community is never going to recover from this wound. We're a strong, strong group of people. Many, many generations live here together. It's one of those unique things about my hometown that people come back to raise their children. Their grandparents are with them. This is an absolutely devastating blow to all of us, so I'd rather focus on why do we as a nation allow this to happen with such regularity? Why do we say oh, "okay, that was them." I mean, I can't tell you how many mayors I heard from yesterday, mayors I obviously am aware of because of their own tragedies that have come to their own doorsteps. And it was like, "here we are again. "I said to somebody yesterday, "I never thought I would be one of those mayors." Well, none of us ever think we will be one of those mayors. So whether it's Buffalo, New York, whether it's Uvalde, Texas, whether it's Highland Park, Illinois. This is unbelievable to me that this is an acceptable part of who we are as a nation.

KOTB: Well, Mayor Rotering, we're going to leave it with that. Thank you so much for joining us. Know this that our prayers are with you and the whole community and I'm sure the nation's prayers are with you too. We wish you well in Highland Park, thank you.

ROTERING: Appreciate it, Hoda. Thank you.

CRAIG MELVIN: Striking — striking commentary from the mayor about where we are as a country.

KOTB: Yeah. Yeah. She was just saying she can't believe she was on the phone with those other mayors and now she's part of that group and that speaks to a lot of what's —

MELVIN: Cub Scout leader —

KOTB: Yeah.

MELVIN: — to the actual shooter.

KOTB: Yeah.