

Gunman wounds GOP congressman, then killed by police

It's estimated that more than 50 shots were fired at scene

By ERICA WERNER and CHAD DAY
Associated Press

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — A rifle-wielding attacker opened fire on Republican lawmakers at a congressional baseball practice today, wounding House GOP Whip Steve Scalise of Louisiana and several others as congressmen and aides dove for cover. The assailant, prepared with "a lot of ammo," fought a gun battle with police before he, too, was shot and later died.

Scalise dragged himself off the infield leaving a trail of blood as colleagues rushed to his assistance.

A government official identified the shooter as James T. Hodgkinson of Illinois. The official was not authorized to discuss the investigation by name and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Shortly after the shooting, Bernie Sanders, the former candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination, said on the Senate floor that the shooter apparently was a volunteer for his campaign last year. Sanders said he denounced the violence "in the strongest possible terms."

Capitol Police officers who were in Scalise's security detail wounded the shooter, who was taken into custody. The attacker later died of his injuries, President Donald Trump told the nation from the White House.

"Everyone on that field is a public servant," Trump said. "Their sacrifice makes democracy possible."

Scalise, 51, the No. 3 House Republican leader first elected to the House in 2008, was in stable condition and undergoing surgery. The popular and gregarious lawmaker is known for his love of baseball and



AP Photo/Cliff Owen
A Capitol Hill Police officer walks past an automobile with the driver's window damaged at the scene of a shooting in Alexandria, Va., today where House Majority Whip Steve Scalise of La. was shot at a congressional baseball practice.



AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite
House Majority Whip Steve Scalise of La. speaks on Capitol Hill in Washington. Scalise was shot today at a congressional baseball practice in Alexandria, Va.

handed out commemorative bats when he secured the No. 3 job of House whip several years ago.

Texas Rep. Roger Williams, who coaches the GOP team, said that one of his aides, Zack Barth, was shot, but "is doing well and is expected to make a full recovery." Two Capitol Police officers were also injured but were expected to recover, along with a former congressional aide who was hospitalized.

Rep. Jeff Duncan of South Carolina said he had just left the practice and encountered the apparent gunman in the parking lot before the shooting. The man calmly asked which party's lawmakers were practicing and Duncan told him they

were the Republicans. The man thanked him.

The gunman had a rifle and "a lot of ammo," said Sen. Jeff Flake of Arizona, who was at the practice.

The shocking event left the Capitol horrified and stunned. The House canceled proceedings for the day. Speaker Paul Ryan of Wisconsin and Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi of California both spoke on the floor issuing calls for unity. "An attack on one of us is an attack on all of us," Ryan said.

The shooting occurred at a popular park and baseball complex in Alexandria, Virginia, where Republican lawmakers and others were gathered for a morning practice about 7 a.m. They were in good spir-



Derik Holtmann/Belleville News-Democrat
James Hodgkinson of Belleville protests outside of the United States Post Office in downtown Belleville, Ill., in 2012. A government official says the suspect in the Virginia shooting that injured Rep. Steve Scalise and several others has been identified as Hodgkinson.

its despite the heat and humidity as they prepared for the congressional baseball match that pits Republicans against Democrats. The popular annual face-off, which raises money for charity, is scheduled for Thursday evening at Nationals Park across the Potomac River in Washington, and will go forward as planned.

The team was taking batting practice when gunshots rang out and chaos erupted.

Scalise was fielding balls on second base when he was shot, according to lawmakers present, then dragged himself into the outfield to get away from the gunman.

Rep. Mo Brooks, an Alabama Republican, said his colleague "crawled into the outfield, leaving a trail of blood."

"We started giving him the liquids, I put pressure on his wound in his hip," Brooks said.

Texas Rep. Joe Barton, still in his baseball uniform, told reporters a shooter came out to the practice and opened fire, shooting at Rep. Trent Kelly, R-Miss., who plays third base.

"He shot at Steve Scalise, our second baseman. He hit Steve Scalise," Barton said, "Scalise's security detail and the Capitol Hill police immediately returned fire, and Alexandria Police also immediately came and began to return fire. They shot the shooter. The security detail saved a lot of

lives because they attacked the shooter."

Barton said the shooting

lasted 5-10 minutes, and there were dozens or more of shots fired.

"It was scary," Barton said. Lawmakers took cover in the dugout. Barton said his son, Jack, got under an SUV.

Texas Rep. Mike Conaway, who was at the game, described what sounded like an explosion, then lawmakers scattering off the field as police roamed in search of the gunman and engaged him.

"The guy's down to a handgun, he dropped his rifle, they shoot him, I go over there, they put him in handcuffs," Conaway said, adding that if the shooter had "gotten inside the fence, where a bunch of guys were holed up in the dugout, it would have been like shooting fish in a barrel."

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