

Virginia news crew killed on live TV

Associated Press

MONETA, Va. — A TV reporter and cameraman were shot to death on live television Wednesday by their former colleague, a journalist who also recorded himself carrying out the killings and then posted the video on social media.

The gunman, who was fired in 2013 from WDBJ in Roanoke, Virginia, fled the scene and went online, posting the video on Facebook and Twitter. He also reportedly faxed a 23-page manifesto and “suicide note” to ABC News, describing himself as a “human powder keg” that was “just waiting to go BOOM!!!!”

Vester Lee Flanagan II, 41, who appeared on WDBJ as Bryce Williams, had evidently been planning the attack for some time, authorities said. As he fled, he switched vehicles, picking up a rental car he had previously reserved at an airport. Troopers caught up with him hours later and hundreds of miles away after he fatally shot himself and ran off the road.

The live spot by reporter Alison Parker and cameraman Adam Ward was nothing out of the ordinary: They were interviewing a local official at an outdoor shopping mall for a tourism story. Then, at about 6:45 a.m., morning show viewers saw her suddenly scream and run, crying “Oh my God,” as she fell. Ward fell, too, and the camera he had been holding on his shoulder captured a fleeting image of the suspect holding a handgun.

WDBJ quickly switched back to the anchor at the station, her eyes large and jaw dropping as she said, “OK, not sure what happened there.” The station later went live again, reporting on their own staff as the story developed.

Parker and Ward died at the scene after the gunman fired about 15 shots. Their interview subject, Vicki Gardner, was in stable condition later Wednesday after surgery for her wounds.

Video posted on Bryce Williams’ Twitter account and Facebook page hours later showed an outstretched arm holding the handgun. The shooter walked up to the victims and stood a few feet away, but with all three in the midst of the live TV interview, none seemed to notice. The gunman waited until Ward’s camera was pointed at Parker, and then fired repeatedly.

Flanagan was described by Jeffrey Marks, WDBJ’s president and general



In this framegrab from video made by the camera of WDBJ-TV cameraman Adam Ward, Vester Lee Flanagan II stands over Ward with a gun after fatally shooting him and reporter Alison Parker during a live on-air interview in Moneta, Va., Wednesday.

manager as “an unhappy man” and “difficult to work with,” always “looking out for people to say things he could take offense to.”

“Eventually after many incidents of his anger coming to the fore, we dismissed him. He did not take that well,” Marks explained, adding that police had to escort him out of the station when he was fired.

Ward, 27, was engaged to a producer at the station, Melissa Ott, who was celebrating her last day on the job. Parker, 24, had recently moved in with another co-worker, WDBJ anchor Christ Hurst.

Hurst wrote online that they hadn’t shared their relationship publicly but “were very much in love.” He said they had just moved in together and wanted to get married. “I am numb,” he said.

Others at the station said it was particularly hard for Ott, who watched the shooting unfold from the control room.

“Adam was our go-to guy. He pretty much was available to do anything that we asked,” said WDBJ spokesman Mike Morgan. “He did live shots during our morning show for several years.”

Tweets posted on Williams’ Twitter account Wednesday described workplace conflicts with both victims. They say Williams filed a complaint with

the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission against Parker, and that Ward had reported Williams to human resources.

Marks said Williams alleged that other employees made racially tinged comments to him, but said his EEOC claim was dismissed and none of his allegations could be corroborated.

“We think they were fabricated,” Marks said.

ABC News reported that a man claiming to be Williams called the network, saying he had just shot two people, and was faxing them a 23-page document. That document is being analyzed by investigators, Franklin County Sheriff W.Q. “Bill” Overton Jr. said at a news conference.

According to the network, the man claiming to be Flanagan says in the “suicide note” that he bought a gun two days after the Charleston, South Carolina church shootings, seeking revenge for racial discrimination, sexual harassment and workplace bullying he said he suffered as a gay black man.

“This gentleman was disturbed at the way things had turned out at some point in his life. Things were spiraling out of control,” Overton said.

The shooting happened around 6:45 a.m. at Bridgewater Plaza in Franklin County, as Parker interviewed Gardner about a local tourism destination.



AP Photo/Darko Vojinovic

Migrants from Syria look at a fence on the Serbian border with Hungary before border police officers showed up and directed them to use a gate about a mile away near Hajdukovo, Serbia, Tuesday.

Hungary’s border fence proves futile in slowing migrant flow

ROSZKE, Hungary (AP) — Clambering over the razor-wire fence or crawling under it, migrants surged Wednesday across the Serbian border into Hungary. Then they jostled to formally enter the country so they could quickly leave it, heading toward more prosperous European Union nations on a desperate quest to escape war and poverty.

In Roszke, a Hungarian border town, police used tear gas to break up a brief scuffle involving about 200 migrants requesting asylum, mostly from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. Police said the migrants were growing impatient with registration delays.

So far the Hungarian border fence — which is being hastily built to keep the migrants out — consists of three layers of razor wire along the country’s 109-mile border with Serbia. But it’s hardly a formidable barrier.

One group of migrants, including women and children, crawled under it Wednesday, using blankets, sleeping bags, jackets and a stick to raise the wire. As a police car approached, they dashed through a field.

“(It’s been) very, very diffi-

cult,” Odei, a Syrian migrant from Daraa, said once he reached Hungary. “We were here from yesterday. We are very hungry. There’s no food, there’s no medicine for the children, there’s nothing. We are so tired.”

These migrants are following the Balkans route, from Turkey to Greece by sea, up north to Macedonia by bus or foot, by train through Serbia and then walking the last few miles into EU member Hungary. That avoids the more dangerous Mediterranean Sea route from North Africa to Italy, where dozens of bodies were found Wednesday in the hull of a smugglers’ boat that was rescued off Libya’s northern coast.

Once inside the 28-nation EU, most migrants seek to reach richer nations such as Germany, The Netherlands or Sweden.

In Germany, however, far-right protesters booed and jeered Chancellor Angela Merkel as she visited an asylum center Wednesday in the eastern town of Heidenau that was the scene of weekend riots. Merkel urged Germans to stand up against hatred and vowed zero tolerance for attacks against refugees.

BRIEFLY

U.S. stocks surge, snapping 6-day losing streak

The Dow Jones industrial average rocketed more than 600 points Wednesday, its biggest gain in seven years, snapping a six-day losing streak that had Americans nervously checking their investment balances.

While the surge came as a relief to many, Wall Street professionals warned that more rough days lie ahead, in part because of weakness in China, where signs of an economic slowdown triggered the sell-off that has shaken global markets over the past week.

Heading into Wednesday, the three major U.S. stock indexes had dropped six days in a row, the longest slide in more than three years. The Dow lost about 1,900 points over that period, and more than \$2 trillion in corporate value was wiped out.

On Tuesday, a daylong rally collapsed in the final minutes of trading. On Wednesday, the market opened strong again, and the question all day was whether the rally would hold. It did, and picked up speed just before the closing bell.

The Dow vaulted 619.07 points, or 4 percent, to 16,285.51. It was the Dow’s third-biggest point gain of all time and its largest since Oct. 28, 2008, when it soared 889 points.

The Standard & Poor’s 500 index, a much broader measure of the stock market, gained 72.90 points, or 3.9 percent, to 1,940.51. In percentage terms, it was the best day for the S&P 500 in nearly four years.

The Nasdaq composite rose 191.05 points, or 4.2 percent, to 4,697.54.

Judge upholds Tennessee lethal injection method

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — A Tennessee judge has upheld the state’s lethal injection process for executing inmates.

Davidson County Chancery Judge Claudia Bonnyman said Wednesday

from the bench that the plaintiffs, 33 death row inmates, didn’t prove that the one-drug method led to a painful and lingering death.

She also said the plaintiffs didn’t show during a lengthy trial that there have been problems in states where the method has been used.

There was no immediate comment from attorneys for either side.

Tennessee has not executed an inmate for more than five years because of legal challenges and problems obtaining lethal injection drugs.

Lawmakers have considered proposals to move from a three-drug lethal injection method to a one-drug method and to reinstate the electric chair as a backup. Both changes brought challenges.

State Department officials routinely emailed secrets

WASHINGTON (AP) — The transmission of now-classified information across Hillary Rodham Clinton’s private email is consistent with a State Department culture in which diplomats routinely sent secret material on unsecured email during the past two administrations.

Clinton’s use of a home server makes her case unique and has become an issue in her front-running campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination. But it’s not clear whether the security breach would have been any less had she used department email. The department only systematically checks email for sensitive or classified material in response to a public records request.

In emails about the 2012 attack on a U.S. diplomatic facility in Benghazi, Libya, department officials discuss sensitive matters in real time, including the movement of Libyan militias and the locations of key Americans. The messages were released last year under the Freedom of Information Act and are posted on the State Department’s website.

An email from diplomat Alyce Abdalla, sent the

night of the attack, appears to report that the CIA annex in Benghazi was under fire. The email has been largely whited out, with the government citing the legal exemption for classified intelligence information. The existence of that facility is now known; it was a secret at the time.

In an email sent at 8:51 p.m. on Sept. 11, 2012, Eric J. Pelofsky, a senior adviser to then-U.N. Ambassador Susan Rice, gives an update on efforts to locate U.S. Ambassador Chris Stevens, who died in the attack. The email was marked unclassified when sent. Later, part of it was deemed classified and censored.

In five emails that date to Condoleezza Rice’s tenure as secretary of state during the George W. Bush administration, large chunks are censored on the grounds that they contain classified security information.

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