

Five dead, eight injured in Fort Lauderdale airport shooting; one held

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Florida: Five people were killed and eight others were injured after a passenger opened fire at the Fort Lauderdale, Florida, international airport today.

Authorities said that an Army veteran who landed at the airport with a gun in his checked luggage opened fire in the baggage claim area.

The gunman, who was immediately taken into custody, has been identified as 26-year-old Esteban Santiago, who served in Iraq with the National Guard. He was demoted and discharged last year for unsatisfactory performance.

His brother, according to authorities, said that he had been receiving psychological treatment recently.

"We don't know a motive at this point. This could well be someone who is mentally deranged, or in fact it could be someone who had a much more sinister motive that we have to worry about every day, and that is terrorism," said Sen. Bill Nelson of Florida.

One witness said that the attacker gunned down his victims without a word and kept shooting until he ran out of ammunition for his handgun, sending panicked travelers running out of the terminal and spilling onto the tarmac, baggage in hand.

It is legal for airline passengers to travel with guns and ammunition as long as the firearms are put in a checked bag and not a carry-on and are unloaded and locked in a hard-sided container. Guns must be declared to the airline at check-in.

Santiago arrived in Fort Lauderdale after taking off from his hometown of Anchorage, Alaska, aboard a Delta flight Thursday night, checking only one piece of luggage and his gun, said Jesse Davis, police chief at the Anchorage airport.

"At Fort Lauderdale, after he claimed his bag, he went into the bathroom and loaded the gun and started shooting. We don't know why," said Chip LaMarca, a Broward County commissioner who was briefed by investigators.

In 2013, a gunman with a grudge against the Transportation Security Administration shot and killed one of the agency's screeners and wounded three others during a rampage at Los Angeles International Airport.

Last November, an airline worker was shot and killed near an employee parking lot at Oklahoma City's airport, and in 2015 a machete-wielding man was shot to death after he attacked federal security officers at the New Orleans airport.

"He threw the gun down and laid spread-eagle on the ground until the officer came up to him," Lea said.

On the other hand, Fort Lauderdale-bound flights already in the air were delayed or diverted, and those that had yet to take off from the airport were held on the ground, as police and paramedics rushed in.

The bloodshed is likely to raise questions of whether aviation safety officials need to change the rules.

Meanwhile, President Barack Obama was briefed by his Homeland Security adviser, the White House said.

- With AP Inputs