



## Crime



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## USA Alert: Student kills four, injures nine in shooting at school in Winder, GA on September 4; reflects latent threat of mass shootings at schools, could incite copycat attacks

### Current Situation

- On September 4, Colt Gray, a 14-year-old student, carried out a shooting at Apalachee High School in Winder, GA, killing two students and two teachers. Nine others were injured in the shooting.
- Police forces later arrested Gray after a brief confrontation. A weapon was also recovered from the scene of the shooting.
- The motive of the shooting remains unconfirmed as of writing.
- As per reports, the suspect had been interviewed previously by law enforcement authorities in 2023 after the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) received several anonymous tips about his alleged online threats to commit a school shooting. However, the FBI did not obtain adequate evidence to take further action.

Source: [Washington Post](#)

### Assessments & Forecast

1. With authorities still investigating the incident, at this stage it cannot be ruled out that the shooting was driven by psychological issues, personal grievances with the school, or ideological motives. However, the latter seems less plausible given that a 2023 law enforcement interrogation found no evidence of such motives when the online threats were first reported. Regardless of the motive, the lack of action despite Gray's threats in 2023 is notable as it highlights a gap in law enforcement. Although there was not enough evidence to arrest him back then, criticism of the lack of follow-up monitoring is expected, potentially prompting calls for continuous monitoring of individuals displaying similar intentions.
2. This incident continues to reflect the latent threat of mass shootings at schools nationwide, which, unlike in this case, are oftentimes unpredictable and hard to prevent. With the start of the school year, the wide media coverage of this incident may incite other young students with mental disorders, personal grievances, or harboring extremist views to conduct copycat attacks in the coming months. **FORECAST:** In light of this, and considering that this is the first school mass shooting of the 2024-25 school year and the 24th in 2024, local authorities may increase security measures in and near schools nationwide in the coming weeks. The fact that school staff used badges from an Atlanta-based company to alert authorities during the active shooter threat indicates that similar tools could be adopted by other schools going forward.
3. Meanwhile, the discovery of a semiautomatic rifle is likely to raise concerns about how Gray accessed the weapon. This is especially the case given Georgia's relatively lax gun laws, with Georgia Governor Brian Kemp (Republican Party) having passed a bill in 2022 allowing residents to carry a concealed handgun in public without a permit. **FORECAST:** With gun control expected to be a key mobilizing issue in the 2024 presidential elections, lawmakers in Georgia, mainly from the Democratic party, are likely to push for stricter regulations, such as mandatory background checks for gun buyers and restrictions on access to weapons like rifles and pistols for underage buyers.
4. **FORECAST:** Considering reports indicating that the suspect made online threats and shared images of weapons online, law enforcement is likely to maintain a heightened surveillance of social media and messaging platforms of young individuals. This increased monitoring will likely aim to detect and deter individuals who may be planning similar shootings or spreading propaganda inspired by previous mass shootings, to prevent others from conducting copycat attacks.
5. **FORECAST:** In the coming days, authorities are likely to maintain a presence in the vicinity of the school and other parts of Winder as the investigation continues. Moreover, large-scale vigils are likely to be held in Winder in the upcoming days, prompting localized disruptions to travel.

## Recommendations

1. Those operating or residing in Winder, GA, on September 5 are advised to maintain heightened vigilance in the vicinity of the Apalachee High School as authorities carry out the investigation surrounding the circumstances of the shooting.
2. If alerted to suspicious activity inform authorities immediately.
3. If a potential shooting or similar incident manifests, it is advised to leave the area immediately, if possible, or take shelter at a secure location.