



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on February 26, 2018

Media Ignore Real Hero in Florida Shooting: Unarmed Off-duty Police Officer Heinrich

It is Coral Springs Police Department Sergeant Jeff Heinrich (shown) [who deserves most of the credit](#) in ending the shooting spree by Nikolas Cruz, a former student at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School last Wednesday. Unfortunately nearly all media attention has been focused on the “failures” of Sheriff Scot Peterson, entrusted with maintaining safety on the school grounds, and three other deputies who showed up shortly after the shooting began. Those failures included a decision not to confront the shooter for at least four minutes, allowing him to kill 17 people and wound many more. The delay also allowed the shooter to leave the scene in the chaos of students fleeing the building without being noticed or apprehended.



Heinrich is a long-time supporter of the school. His wife is an assistant athletic director, and their son is a student (who survived the shooting). Heinrich was off-duty, unarmed, wearing just shorts and a t-shirt, and watering the baseball field when he first heard the fire alarm go off followed by rifle shots. He immediately ran toward the sound of gunfire. Reporters with the local paper *Tribunist* wrote what happened next:

When the fire alarm went off, he didn't think it was unusual. The panic that ensued changed his mind. When he heard shots, he ran toward the sound of the gunfire.

On the way to the school he found a student who had been shot in the leg. Sgt. Heinrich moved the boy to a dugout and stabilized him with supplies in the baseball team's first-aid kit.

He then ran back to the school. There, he met a Coral Springs SWAT team member who had extra gear. Sgt. Heinrich threw on an extra vest (one that wasn't rated to stop rifle fire). The SWAT officer handed over his sidearm so Sgt. Heinrich wouldn't be unarmed, and they entered the building.

Sgt. Heinrich ran into the chaos. He didn't wait outside. The officers from Coral Springs [Police Department] led the way. Behind them, paramedics were able to triage and treat the wounded [students]. The SWAT medics from Coral Springs provided crucial support.

[Only then did] the Broward County Sheriff's Department [go] in after Coral Springs [people].

Sheriff's Deputy Scot Peterson, sitting at his desk on campus doing some paperwork, heard the same gunfire and also ran toward the sound. However, when he came up to the door leading into the building where the shooter was picking off student after student, he pulled up. Reports indicate that he called in



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for backup, established a “perimeter,” and waited for four minutes while the shooter continued to fire upon unarmed students inside.

Shortly thereafter, three more Broward County Sheriff’s deputies pulled up in their cruisers, unholstered their sidearms, and took cover behind their vehicles. When additional CSPD officers showed up and entered the building hard on the heels of Heinrich, the four deputies remained outside. All this was captured on video with images clear enough for Broward County Sheriff Scott Israel to tell the media:

What I saw was a deputy arrive [Peterson] ... take up a position and he never went in.... [He should have gone] in [and] addressed the killer ... killed the killer.

The next day Israel announced that he had fired Peterson, who then filed his retirement papers and left the building. Two of the other deputies who remained behind their vehicles as other officers were entering the school building were placed on paid leave, pending investigation. Two other deputies were also suspended during an investigation into why various clues that the shooter was dangerous were never acted upon by them.

Broward County Superintendent Robert Runcie was outraged: “I’m in shock and I’m outraged to no end that he [Peterson] could have made a difference in all this. It’s really disturbing that we had a law enforcement individual there specifically for this reason, and he did not engage [the shooter]. He did not do his job. It’s one of the most unbelievable things I’ve ever heard.”

President Donald Trump also expressed outrage: “He [Peterson] didn’t have the courage or something happened. He certainly did a poor job — there’s no question about that.”

After the incident, in which sheriff’s deputies merely stood outside, CNN, and other liberal media, rode the incident for all it was worth with its carefully contrived “town hall” meeting a week later that redirected the conversation to its favorite solution: gun control. Hundreds of students miraculously showed up at the state capital in Tallahassee and in Washington, D.C. over the weekend to demand that politicians enact more gun control laws. Who organized those protests? Who paid for them?

The FBI had received early warnings about potential problems with the shooter, but nothing apparently was done about them. Local law enforcement had recorded dozens of reports of trouble with the shooter, yet he didn’t appear to be on anyone’s “watch” list. How did that happen?

The actions (or inactions) of the sheriff’s department clearly broke with standard protocol of police tactics that were carefully developed following other mass shootings. That protocol demands that officers arriving first on the scene are to engage the shooter immediately rather than to wait for backup and a negotiator.

The string of related incidents makes one wonder if the sheriff’s department was ordered to stand down in case of a mass shooting — either as a result of failing to learn from past school-shooting incidents or as a method to increase the body count of such an incident to boost the Democrat anti-gun line should Cruz snap, as many people warned would happen. Did Israel deliberately contravene standard mass shooting tactics and protocol? Does it make any sense to link Israel’s politics (he’s a Democrat) with Debbie Wasserman Schulz’s, the discredited DNC chair who happens to represent Broward County in Washington?

We may get a clue in further weeks, if the deputies begin claiming that they were merely following protocol.



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The *Washington Post* saw an opportunity to savage the president over his suggestions that armed and trained individuals among victims during such an attack would be able to end it immediately. Wrote the *Post*:

Trump has frequently suggested in response to mass shootings that more law-abiding people with firearms could help stop a shooter and the head of the NRA has repeatedly suggested the same. However, Israel's announcement Thursday suggested that even if a person is armed, trained and available to help, that may not stop a mass killing that unfolds in a matter of minutes.

But if Israel's deputy had gone into the school immediately, he might have ended the shooting in moments. (It should be remembered that more than one adult in the building sacrificed their lives to protect students from gunfire, and they likely would have shot the killer in short order.)

Is all of this a "bridge too far? Was the shooting really an unplanned and unanticipated incident by a clearly mentally unbalanced former student that the media just saw as another opportunity to promote its anti-gun agenda? Or, as the president perhaps unintentionally noted, did "something happen" that only time and additional investigation will reveal?

In the meantime, *The New American* magazine is proud to note the heroism of unsung Coral Springs Police Department Sergeant Jeff Heinrich, who ran toward danger rather than hiding from it. His unselfish actions no doubt saved some lives that ghastly day in Parkland, Florida.

Image: Screenshot from a [video by the South Florida Sun Sentinel](#)

An Ivy League graduate and former investment advisor, Bob is a regular contributor to The New American magazine and blogs frequently at [LightFromTheRight.com](#), primarily on economics and politics. He can be reached at badelman@thenewamerican.com.



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