



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on March 4, 2013

Florida High School Student Suspended for Disarming Gunman

A Florida teenager was suspended from his high school last week along with two others after forcibly disarming a fellow student who allegedly pointed a loaded gun and threatened to shoot another pupil on a school bus, according to news reports. One of the suspended students, who has not been publicly identified due to safety concerns, said he had “no doubt” that the gunman he helped disarm was planning to kill the intended target.



The event, which occurred in Fort Meyers, has already triggered nationwide and even international press coverage. It has also sparked debate about statutes purporting to create so-called “gun-free zones” at schools, which critics [say make schools into a “magnet” for mass shooters](#). There are currently two bills in Congress to repeal the controversial 1990 “Gun Free School Zones Act.”

The 15-year-old suspected gunman in the Florida case, apparently a football player, was reportedly arrested by the Lee County Sheriff’s Office following the threat and subsequent scuffle, authorities confirmed. At this point, he has been charged with possession of a firearm on school property and assault with a deadly weapon “without intent to kill,” according to a police report about the incident cited in local media reports. The investigation, however, is still underway.

“I think he was really going to shoot him right then and there. Not taking no pity ... he was going to shoot him point blank,” one suspended student, 16, [told](#) Fox4 in Fort Meyers about the incident, adding that he was confused about why he was being punished for disarming a potential murderer. “It’s dumb.... How [are] they going to suspend me for doing the right thing?”

Witnesses, including the victim, confirmed that version of events to another local media outlet, ABC-7. According to the victim’s account, he noticed the 15-year-old suspect had a gun on his lap and then made eye contact with him. The suspect then stood up and the two began fighting, the victim [told](#) ABC-7.

“I said, ‘Are you going to shoot me bro?’ And he said, ‘Yeah, I’m going to whack you,’” the victim told reporters about what happened, adding that other students on the bus then rushed the suspect and grabbed his gun before tragedy struck. “I’m thankful for the people that came to help.... I was scared; I thought my life was in danger.”

The arrest report confirmed that the .22 caliber RG-14 revolver found on the suspect was indeed loaded. It also noted that the 15-year-old alleged gunman, whose name is being withheld from most media accounts because he is a minor, was “pointing the gun directly” at another student and “threatening to shoot him.”

According to witnesses interviewed by local reporters, that is when the 16-year-old student, who was suspended along with at least two others, tackled the alleged gunman and wrestled the gun away from him. The day after the incident, the Good Samaritan received an “emergency” three-day suspension for



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being involved in a situation with a weapon present. Two other students involved in the scuffle were also reportedly suspended.

The mother of one of the suspended students who helped tackle the gunman expressed shock that her son would be in trouble for doing the right thing. Speaking to WFTX under the condition of anonymity, the concerned mom [said she could not understand](#) why her teen would be suspended for potentially helping to save lives. However, she mentioned that her son was refusing to cooperate with the investigation out of fear — one potential reason for his suspension.

“If they wouldn’t’ve did what they had to do on that bus I think there would have been a lot of fatalities,” she explained. “Those kids had to fight for their lives. All the kids that was involved in this they should have a pat on their backs because they did the right thing to save someone from burying their child.”

Local law-enforcement authorities confirmed the general outlines of the story: A 15-year-old student pointed a gun at a fellow pupil and threatened to shoot before being tackled and disarmed by other passengers on the bus. After being arrested at his home, the suspect was taken to the Juvenile Assessment Center for processing.

Officials at the sheriff’s office said the charges were based on current information, but that the investigation was not yet concluded. Presumably, more charges could be added later if law enforcement determines that the gunman did indeed plan to kill the intended victim. “The charges presented to [the suspect] are based on our findings at this time,” Sgt. David Valez [said](#) in a statement.

Authorities say the video camera on the bus was not working at the time, so there is no actual footage of the incident to use as evidence, forcing investigators to rely on witness testimony instead. School district officials, meanwhile, confirmed that three students had been suspended, but declined to comment on the reasons for the suspensions.

“We cannot discuss specifics involving students,” district spokesman Alberto Rodriguez was quoted as saying. “Florida law allows the principal to suspend a student immediately pending a hearing.” The mother of one of the suspended teenagers responded by saying that school authorities should be “ashamed of themselves.”

After the news first broke, the story was quickly picked up by multiple national media outlets including Fox News, [The Blaze](#), [Human Events](#), and others. Even foreign press services have run the story. The U.K. *Daily Mail*, for example, [published a report](#) about the incident on Sunday.

Unsurprisingly, the controversial suspensions have attracted outrage from readers and local Floridians. Critics say the students who helped disarm the gunmen should be applauded, not punished. Even if the Good Samaritans are refusing to cooperate with the investigation out of fear for their own safety — “snitches get stitches” is a common saying among large swaths of American youth — opponents of the suspensions say punishing the teenagers is highly inappropriate.

Of course, this is hardly the first time that school authorities have made controversial decisions related to disciplining students for firearm-related incidents. In recent years, for example — as *The New American* has documented extensively — numerous children have been suspended or disciplined for [things](#) like [drawing guns on paper](#), [possessing “Hello Kitty” bubble guns](#), [making their hand into the shape of a firearm](#) and saying “bang,” or even wearing clothes with pictures of firearms.

However, the latest incident — students punished for stopping a suspected gunman — appears to be



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relatively unique. Analysts say, though, that following the outrage and widespread publicity of the Fort Meyers case, school officials may be forced to reconsider the punishments meted out to the students, who potentially saved at least one life, maybe more.

The case has also re-ignited the public debate about statutes declaring schools to be so-called “gun-free zones.” As countless experts have [explained](#), rules purporting to ban the possession of firearms by law-abiding citizens — teacher, administrators, bus drivers, and parents — on school property only ensure that would-be killers can murder freely and with impunity until armed authorities arrive on the scene.

Following the lead of liberty-minded former Rep. Ron Paul (R-Texas), Rep. Thomas Massie (R-Ky.) has re-introduced the “Citizens Protection Act” ([H.R.133](#)) in Congress that would repeal the 1990 “Gun Free School Zones Act.” Rep. Steve Stockman (R-Texas) also introduced another bill, known as the “Safe Schools Act” ([H.R. 35](#)), to repeal the gun-free zone statute, arguing that school staff should be able to defend children with deadly force if needed — without fear of prosecution.

Gun rights activists have long [suggested](#) ending the controversial policy of ensuring that schools are filled with defenseless potential victims. They argue, among other points, that politicians, celebrities, banks, government facilities, the president, and others are all protected with firearms. School children, by contrast, are “protected” by signs informing people that the facility is a “gun-free zone.”

Despite sounding cliché, the fact remains that criminals do not obey laws — somebody determined to commit murder would hardly be concerned about violating “gun-free zone” rules. In fact, a would-be mass shooter would certainly prefer to target victims he knows are defenseless as opposed to victims who may be armed. That is why experts have called so-called gun-free zones “[magnets for mass shooters](#).” Indeed, [virtually every mass shooting](#) in America has taken place in a “gun-free zone.”

Whether the latest case in Florida will have any serious impact on the national debate about controversial victim-disarmament statutes is unclear. With widespread media coverage, however, commentators have expressed hope that at the very least, the Good Samaritans on the bus will be vindicated for their reportedly heroic actions last week.

Update: After publishing the above story, we saw an email from the principal saying that there is “MUCH more to the story” and that the narrative as portrayed in the media was inaccurate. The New American continued to investigate and published a follow-up story March 13 (to read the story, [click here](#)).

Image: [giving gun from hand to hand on grey wall background](#) via Shutterstock

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