

From VOA Learning English, this is In The News.

Americans are expressing anger and sadness at the latest shooting incident in the United States. This one took place last Monday in Washington, DC, just a short distance from the Capitol building.

Twelve people were killed and several others wounded in the attack at Washington's Navy Yard. Police shot dead the gunman after a search at the base. He was identified as 34-year-old Aaron Alexis, a former Navy Reserve sailor. At the time of the shooting, he was an information technology specialist with a private company that worked for the Defense Department.

His mental condition has become a central issue in the investigation. He had recently told police that he was hearing voices. Mr. Alexis was arrested in two separate shooting incidents in 2004 and 2010. Yet he held a security clearance, which enabled him to enter a secure military area.

This week, many Americans were remembering the victims of the attack. On Capitol Hill, lawmakers suspended debate for a few minutes. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid said a few words.

"My thoughts are with those who are suffering as a result of the loss of their loved ones and also those people recovering from the wounds."

Senator Chris Murphy represents Connecticut, where a gunman killed 26 people at an elementary school in Newtown last year. Since then, he has been the Senate's leading supporter of gun control legislation. He says the Navy Yard shootings show why stronger laws are needed.

“People out there do not understand why Congress does nothing as these shootings continue to mount. I think people in Newtown shake their heads when they see another shooting and further potential indifference from Congress.”

Like Mr. Murphy, Illinois Senator Richard Durbin is a member of the Democratic Party. Mr. Durbin notes that gun control legislation died in the Senate earlier this year. He says the failure was mainly the result of Republican opposition to new restrictions and requirements for gun purchases.

“We have to do everything we can to keep guns out of the hands of those who would misuse them – felons who have a history of misusing firearms, the mentally unstable who cannot be trusted to have a firearm.”

Republican lawmakers have shown little interest in re-opening the gun control debate. But several say the Navy Yard shootings raise other important issues. Senator Lindsey Graham says the shooter never should have been cleared for duty as a military contract worker.

“To me, it is not about gun control. It is about what has happened with our contractor force. How could he pass a background check to get a job with the federal government after he had misused a weapon twice? When you shoot a guy’s tires out because you are mad at him, you are a good candidate not to work for the federal government.”

Another Republican senator, John McCain, had this to say:

“We also should focus our attention on people who show mental instability and whether they should have access to weapons or not. I think all Americans are in agreement on that.”



Congressional members say something should be done to prevent attacks like the one on Monday. But there is no solution acceptable to everyone.

And that's In The News, from VOA Learning English. I'm Steve Ember.