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world

Six dead in hours-long New York shootout

● Five of the dead were found inside a store

● NBC television reported that hundreds of rounds were fired

● Detective Joseph Seals, was the first victim

Jersey City | United States

Six people including a police officer and two suspects were killed during an hours-long shootout across a New York suburb not far from the Statue of Liberty, local officials said.

"Our officers were under fire for hours," Jersey City Police Chief Michael Kelly told reporters after the latest high-profile US shooting.

In addition to the officer and the suspects, three civilians were killed in the incident that began around midday at a cemetery and ended in a store, Kelly said.

Bomb squad officers were examining a stolen U-Haul vehicle "that may contain an incendiary device," he added.

No clear reason for the shooting has been given.

Five of the dead were found inside a store, said Kelly.

"We believe that two of them are bad guys," while the other three are civilians, he said,



Hundreds of police from New Jersey and New York, including tactical officers, were deployed during the hours-long shooting in Jersey City, New Jersey

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wounded, Kelly told reporters.

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"I saw people running outside -- men, women, children in the street. These people were scared."

Kelly said the suspects' "movement was rapid and continuous for four hours" during the drama which saw the deployment of hundreds of police from New Jersey and New York, includ-

ing tactical officers armed with rifles and wearing olive-green fatigues and helmets.

NBC television reported that hundreds of rounds were fired.

Media reports said the shooting began when an officer investigating a homicide approached the suspects in the cemetery.

Identified by media as Detective Joseph Seals, he was the first victim.

Asked to confirm whether the officer was indeed probing a murder, Kelly said it is "being looked into."



NBC television reported that hundreds of rounds were fired



A firefighter responds to the emergency, which police said involved at least three locations

The suspects then took refuge in a grocery store where firing continued and the five bodies were later found. US residents have become accustomed to shootings -- everywhere from churches to schools and cinemas -- and firearms were linked to nearly 40,000 deaths of various kinds in 2017, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Taliban attacks Afghan US base



Afghan security forces take position at the site of an attack in a U.S. military air base in Bagram, north of Kabul

Kabul

Taliban suicide bombers targeted a key US military base in Afghanistan yesterday in a major attack that killed two civilians and wounded more than 70 others, officials said, amid renewed peace talks between the United States and the militants.

The early morning assault began when a suicide bomber detonated his explosive-packed vehicle outside a hospital building near Bagram military base in Parwan province, north of the capital Kabul, according to local officials.

Seven more gunmen, some wearing suicide vests are believed to have then entered the

building -- which was under construction and not operational -- in order to use it as a launching pad for attacks against the nearby US base, local officials said.

An Afghan interior ministry spokesman, Nasrat Rahimi, said on Twitter that all the attackers inside the hospital compound were killed fighting Afghan and foreign forces.

At least two Afghan civilians, including one woman, were killed while 73 others were wounded in the explosion that damaged houses up to 300 metres (yards) away, Rahimi said.

A Taliban spokesman later claimed responsibility for the attack, claiming that "tens" of US and Afghan soldiers had been killed or wounded.

Date palm enters UNESCO list

AFP | Dubai

The date palm, which was recognised by UNESCO yesterday, has for centuries played an important role in the establishment and growth of civilisations in the hot and dry regions of the Arab world.

Now date palm-related knowledge, traditions and practices have been inscribed on UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

The tree, whose roots penetrate deep into the soil, allowing it to grow in arid climates, has not only been a source of food but also of economic gain.

"Date palms gather in oases of different densities within desert areas indicating the presence of water levels suitable for irrigation," according to a nomination put forward by 14 countries -- Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestinian Territories, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

"As a result, this aided mankind in settling down despite harsh conditions," said the document.

Until this day, platters of dates adorn tables in homes and businesses across the Arab world, where the symbol of the date palm tree has historically presented prosperity.

The offering of the sweet fruit, coupled with a cup of cof-



A Palestinian farmer picks dates from a palm tree during harvest in Deir al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip in September

fee, is a sign of good old-fashioned Arab hospitality.

According to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, the date palm is probably the most ancient cultivated tree.

It was grown as early as 4,000 BC and used for the construction of the moon god temple near Ur

ous antiquities excavations have resulted in the plant's significant cultural and economic status in numerous regions such as Mesopotamia, ancient Egypt and the Arab Gulf.

The ancient crop also faces some modern challenges. Gulf countries have fought hard to eradicate the red palm weevil, which originally came from Asia and was first detected in the region in the 1980s.

The beetle, which is barely a few centimetres (around an inch) long, produces larvae that feed off palm trunks, killing the trees.

"In Gulf countries and the Middle East, \$8 million is lost each year through removal of severely infested trees alone," according to the FAO.

All parts of the date palm were and are still used in some parts of the region for shelter or to produce a range of products, including handicrafts, mats, rope and furniture.

To celebrate and promote their date palm heritage and palm products, some of the submitting countries hold annual date festivals, most notably the annual Liwa Date Festival in the UAE and the Dates Festival in Al-Qassim in Saudi Arabia.

Both Gulf countries are among the top date exporters, according to the Geneva-based International Trade Centre.