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Alabama Gunman Kills 10 People

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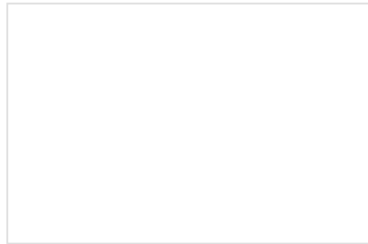
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By ALEX ROTH and COREY DADE

GENEVA COUNTY, Ala. -- A gunman killed 10 people, including relatives and random passers-by, in a bloody spree that spanned several neighboring communities in rural Southern Alabama, authorities said.



The suspect, Michael McLendon, a 28-year-old who lived with his mother, eventually killed himself inside a metals plant where he once worked. He was armed with at least three weapons, including an AK-47 assault rifle, another rifle and an automatic weapon, according to Kirke Adams, district attorney of Geneva and Dale counties.

Investigators are trying to piece together why a lone gunman went on a killing spree, Fox News reports.

The shootings were believed to be the worst mass killing by a single gunman in

Alabama's history.

"Obviously it goes without saying that this is a tragedy, the worst that I can remember," said Wynnton Melton, mayor of Geneva, where the suspect shot himself at a metal shop. "I'm 67 years old and I don't know anything to compare it to."

The killings happened Tuesday afternoon in a mostly rural area near the Alabama-Florida border. Coffee County Coroner Robert Preachers told the Associated Press that the suspect set fire to his mother's house in Kinston. The woman was found dead in the house, but no cause of death has been determined.

The gunman then headed about 12 miles southeast to the town of Samson, in Geneva County, where he pulled up in front of a relative's house and opened fire, killing his aunt, uncle, great-uncle and several cousins, Mr. Adams said. He also killed the wife of a sheriff's deputy and her 18-month-old infant, who happened to be visiting Mr. McLendon's relatives, Mr. Adams said.



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"He just got out of the car and just, in cold blood, opened fire," Mr. Adams said.

Mr. McLendon then drove to a nearby convenience store, where he shot and killed a woman standing near a gas pump, Mr. Melton said.

At two separate points, the suspect exchanged gunfire with police, firing a shot that grazed Geneva Police Chief Frankie Lindsey, Mr. Melton said. Mr. McLendon eventually entered a Geneva

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metal shop, Reliable Metal Products Inc., where he killed himself, authorities said.

Mr. Adams said Mr. McLendon worked at the plant at one point but that "it's unclear whether he was fired, laid off or quit. Those details are sketchy."

According to AP reports, Mr. McLendon quit his job at a sausage plant days before the deadly spree. Manufacturer and distributor Kelley Foods said in Mr. McLendon voluntarily left the position last Wednesday, one he had held for nearly two years. Kelley's plant is located in Elba, about 25 miles north of where most of the killings took place. The plant didn't say what Mr. McLendon's job was, but said he was a "reliable team leader" who was well liked.

Mr. Melton said he spoke to someone who coached the suspect in Little League and who described the suspect as extremely nice and quiet. "People are just absolutely floored," Mr. Melton said. "Just goes on to the mystery of what happens in people's minds."

Write to Alex Roth at alex.roth@wsj.com and Corey Dade at corey.dade@wsj.com

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