

Democrat lawmaker's shooting stuns America

Young gunman who killed a judge and five others was unhappy about illiteracy in Giffords' Arizona constituency.

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Tucson: An assassination attempt on a Democrat congresswoman early on Saturday that left her in critical condition and killed Arizona's chief federal judge and five other people, including a nine-year-old girl, has forced Americans to question the toxic legacy of their divisive politics.

A shaken President Barack Obama called the attack "a tragedy for our entire country" as FBI Director Robert Mueller travelled to Arizona on Sunday to help coordinate the investigation.

Representative Gabrielle Giffords, 40, a three-term lawmaker, was meeting constituents at a supermarket here, when the assailant unleashed a volley of automatic fire. Bystanders tackled the gunman, identified as 22-year-old local resident Jared Lee Loughner.

"He was not more than three or four feet from the congresswoman," Mark Kimble, a member of Giffords' staff said, describing the scene as "just complete chaos, people screaming, crying."

Loughner was described as a pot-smoking loner, and the Army said he tried to enlist in December 2008 but was rejected.

The Pima County Sheriff's department released a photo of a possible accomplice — a white man with dark hair, 40-45 years old.

In YouTube videos, Loughner complained about the illiteracy rate among people living in Giffords' constituency.

Giffords narrowly won re-election in November against a tea party candidate who sought to oust her over her support of the health care law.

During the campaign, Sarah Palin had urged supporters to oust Giffords.

Volunteer Alex Villec said the gunman asked to see the lawmaker but was told to wait. He returned minutes later with a gun.

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