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HEADLINE: Judge, Two Others Killed in Courthouse Shooting

BYLINE: Wolf Blitzer, Gary Tuchman

GUESTS: Craig Schwall, B.J. Bernstein, Nancy Grace, Lee Sinclair, Joe Manguno,
John Walzer

HIGHLIGHT:

A Fulton County, Georgia, judge, court reporter and deputy are killed in a courthouse shooting.

BODY:

WOLF BLITZER, CNN ANCHOR: We're going to continue to watch this story unfold this hour on NEWS FROM CNN. We're following, as our viewers know by now, breaking news from Atlanta.

Four people shot, at least three of them fatally, including a judge, inside a courthouse. The suspect is still on the loose. We're live with late-breaking details.

The shootings highlight concerns around the country about security at the nation's courthouses, and specifically for judges. This hour, we'll explore how something like this could happen.

Standing by live at the scene of today's killing, CNN's correspondent Gary Tuchman. He's at the Fulton County Superior Court.

For viewers just tuning in right now, Gary, update them on what we know.

GARY TUCHMAN, CNN NATIONAL CORRESPONDENT: Wolf, sad, tragic story happened three hours ago inside the older building behind me, the Fulton County Courthouse here in the heart of downtown Atlanta, Georgia. A rape trial was ongoing, the defendant who was inside the courtroom was walking in the courtroom to start the day.

There are metal detectors outside the lobby when you go inside the building. He did not have a gun when he went in. But here's what happened.

Inside the courtroom there was a deputy who was carrying a gun for security. This man, 33-year-old **Brian Nichols**, on the eighth floor of the courthouse, grabbed the deputy's gun and shot the deputy. He then held the courtroom hostage.

Was there another deputy with a gun who could have done something in the courtroom? We don't know the answer to that.

We do know that after a few minutes this man, **Brian Nichols**, then shot the judge, Rowland Barnes. That judge is dead. He then shot a court clerk. That court clerk is dead.

And then **Brian Nichols** started running down the steps of this courthouse and ended up on the street here on Martin Luther King Boulevard. At that point he started looking for a getaway car. But before he did that he shot another deputy who was in the street.

One of those two deputies is dead. We're not clear if it's the one inside the courtroom or the one on the street. One is dead. One is in the hospital.

He then tried to get a getaway car, tried to carjack at least three vehicles. What we're told, he then went inside this parking garage right next to the courthouse on the other side of Martin Luther King Boulevard. This is the underground parking garage where lots of tourists park to explore the tourists' offerings here in downtown Atlanta.

He then pistol-whipped a man who was parking his car inside the garage, told that man, who happens to be a reporter with the local newspaper here, the "Atlanta Journal-Constitution," to get inside the trunk. That man very bravely and very smartly decided not to go in the trunk, and the gunman then got away in the car.

It's not clear, though, at this point -- we're just talking to police officers here -- what vehicle this man is in right now. We have been told by police, all the news media here at the scene not to report where this man lives, where his family is, where his friends are, because obviously those are places they are looking. But it's been three hours now; they have not spotted this man.

He's considered armed and dangerous with nothing to lose. And needless to say, yes, Atlanta is a big city, but it's small enough where a lot of people in the downtown area and the surrounding suburbs are very concerned because they know there's a man who has shot four people, killed three, with nothing to lose, who is still on the loose -- Wolf.

BLITZER: And there is a tag for the suspected vehicle. I want to put that up on the screen and show our viewers the car that they're looking for right now. If you're listening on satellite radio it's a Georgia tag.

The number is 6584YN. Let me repeat that, a Georgia tag, 6584YN. It's a green Honda Accord. That's what they're looking for in the area.

Gary, tell our viewers about the lockdown that has now been imposed around where

you are, which is right in the heart of Atlanta.

TUCHMAN: Right. We're in the busy business and tourist district here in downtown Atlanta. We're across the street from the Georgia State Capitol, from the World of Coke, which is a museum that thousands of tourists go to every day. And many of the streets here in downtown Atlanta are shut down because of this.

I want to emphasize, Wolf, yes, that may indeed be the car and the license plate that this man is in right now. But we've just been told by police they can't be 100 percent sure. So they're warning people here in this general area, in the southeastern United States, that this man could be in another vehicle right now.

So not just to look for that license plate, but to look for anything suspicious. Right now they just don't know, and they're certainly greatly concerned over the situation and, more importantly, greatly saddened over the loss of life. BLITZER: And Gary, what do we know about this suspect, 33-year-old **Brian Nichols**?

TUCHMAN: We are being told by people inside the courthouse they've seen Nichols here before. He was on trial for kidnapping and/or rape. We're not exactly sure what the charges were.

We are sure, though, that there was a mistrial in his first trial. So this was his second trial he was going back for. We are told we don't know why it led to this, but he grabbed the gun, shot the deputy, shot the judge, shot the clerk, and then escaped.

Did he have it planned? I mean, to be able to navigate the back steps and end up in the street here and not have anyone encounter you, you must have had some plans. Obviously he's familiar with the courthouse.

What we do want to tell you, Wolf, is that three hours after this happened this courthouse was locked down for a long time. There are still people who are just leaving. We're told that there are hundreds if not thousands of people inside the building. It's a major center for judicial action here in the state of Georgia, and we're being told that there are a lot of people who are in shock, there are a lot of people who are being questioned right now, and there are a lot of witnesses to this case who saw exactly what happened.

BLITZER: And there is no indication there's any other suspect, an accomplice or someone else, who's out there at large right now? This looks like it was just this one individual who may have done this.

TUCHMAN: Well, I'll tell you, right now it looks like there's one individual. But if I'm a police officer, I'm investigating that right now, whether he had any help.

This was a pretty elaborate concoction to do all this. And to be able to navigate his way out of this place without being encountered by any other police officer -- and I should mention that he was encountered by one other police officer, and that was the deputy who was on the ground here just right outside this building on Martin Luther King Boulevard.

That police officer apparently came up to him and was shot by this 33-year-old man, **Brian Nichols**. So at least one other person did encounter him, but he was able to get away. And that really is quite amazing when you consider how dangerous this

man was considered, that he was just able to get away, drive away in a car and now three hours later they're still looking for him.

BLITZER: All right. Gary Tuchman is on the scene for us. We'll continue to get back to him as you get more information, Gary. Thank you very much.

Our affiliates in Atlanta have been doing an outstanding job covering the story. One of our affiliates looks like they're covering right now from overhead an active scene of the search. Let's dip in and hear what they're saying.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: ... the last five or six minutes, one just buzzed right below us here. So there is some activity going on here.

Don Johnson, can you see that chopper -- just pull out a little bit. And if you push into the center of your screen, you should see a chopper hovering just above that one sign there for that -- for that hotel. Yes, go to the right a little bit and you will see one of the choppers that is hovering.

A little bit and up. There you should see it in your shot.

So there have been several choppers hovering in this area. We can't confirm from our vantage point that any vehicle has been spotted.

As you heard earlier Sergeant John Quigley from APD said there is no exact confirmation at this point from officials that a car has been spotted. We have heard reports from the scanners to that effect, but we can't confirm it officially at this point.

We can tell you there is a lot of activity in this spot in the northern part of Fulton County, and we're going to be continuing to monitor the situation here. And, of course, we'll divulge exactly where this is going on when the police give us clearance to do so.

For now, we're live aboard News Chopper 2, Jim Strickland (ph), Channel 2 Action News.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Jim, before you go, without being too revealing about your location, can you give us an idea of how all this police activity is affecting lunchtime traffic right now?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Frankly, Warren, I can tell you that things look clean and green on a major...

BLITZER: All right. We're going to dip away from our affiliate coverage.

You look at -- you're seeing that activity. There seems to be some police activity. We're not exactly sure what is going on.

You heard the chopper reporter tell us that there has been some activity, but we'll continue to monitor that and all our affiliates as we try to get more information on this shooting earlier today at the Fulton County Courthouse in Atlanta.

Joining us now from Atlanta, two guests. Judge Craig Schwall, he's a judicial

colleague of Rowland Barnes, the dead judge, the judge who was killed earlier today. Also, attorney B.J. Bernstein, who knew the late Judge Barnes as well.

Let me begin first with you, Judge Schwall. Give us -- give our viewers a sense of this judge. What was he like? What was he all about? JUDGE CRAIG SCHWALL, FULTON COUNTY STATE COURT: This judge was one of the finest judges in Fulton County. And this is a horrible day for the family of the courts, the family of Judge Barnes and for the legal community.

There was not a nicer, more unassuming, friendlier person who served as a judge than Judge Barnes. He just was a delightful person.

And I remember when he got appointed in 1998 by Governor Miller. There was really nobody more deserving of the job, and nobody will speak ill of the man. He was a fine, fine man, and everybody is just in shock and in a state of disbelief.

The man was so loved. He would put on a Christmas party paid for by he and his staff that everybody in the courthouse would love to go to every year. And I had not been able to get downtown before all this had happened because I had been in a meeting, and still you can't get down there. But he's just a fine man. And just so much shock and disbelief.

BLITZER: Judge Schwall, I'm going to have you stand by because I want B.J. Bernstein to weigh in on also on Judge Barnes.

He's 64 years old. By all accounts, B.J., he was highly respected and well loved. He worked hard to get to that position. He finally got there. What a tragic way for his career to end.

What do you remember about this judge?

B.J. BERNSTEIN, ATTORNEY: You know, I remember, you know, as a lawyer, when you go in front of a judge, you really want to be able to put forth your side. And he would let both sides have their say before the judge and then make a ruling.

He would let people feel like and know that he was really considering what you were saying, and he ran his courtroom in such a way he wasn't -- you know how some judges have a reputation of being overly mean or not letting people, you know, speak freely. He would. And then when you would go back in chambers, as you often do in court, where the lawyers go in the back, he was just so congenial, so kind.

I remember working out a case with him one time in the back, and it was a very difficult situation. And yet he handled all the lawyers and everyone to make something that was complicated seem simple. It's very much of a loss.

BLITZER: Judge Schwall, are you surprised that this suspect in this particular case apparently managed to grab the pistol, the gun of a police officer inside the courtroom and kill the judge, kill the court stenographer, manage to get down eight flights of stairs, shoot two deputies, one killed outside the courtroom? Are you surprised that this could happen in the Fulton County Courthouse?

SCHWALL: I'm shocked that this could happen. First of all, the only guns that are allowed in a courtroom are guns that are carried by sheriff's deputies or marshals,

Fulton County marshals. So any police officer who has a weapon has to be checked at the courthouse when they come into the courthouse. That's so that they can monitor who has the weapons in case some tragedy like this does occur.

Now, nobody knows how this happened. And it's easy to play Monday morning quarterback.

Apparently the assailant went down some emergency flight of stairs and was able to exit the street, is my understanding of what happened. I do remember a case in 1997 or thereabouts where an inmate grabbed a sheriff deputy's gun. So I really believe that the sheriff's department has tried to provide the best security possible through metal detectors, through making sure that everyone is thoroughly screened at several entrances to the courthouse.

That's not just one entrance. There's I think about three or four. And it's a difficult task.

We have about 30 judges in that courthouse, and I'm shocked that this occurred. The facts sound atrocious, but can an inmate get near a deputy and grab a gun? Obviously we've seen that can happen.

I don't know what else that could have been done, because there's talk that maybe the inmate should have been shackled. But if the inmate was really there ready for a trial, then the inmate had a right to be in street clothing and unshackled so that he would not appear to jurors that he was guilty or some inference of guilt because he was in shackles or a jail uniform.

BLITZER: All right.

SCHWALL: Now, maybe the solution is, is for there to be no weapons in a courtroom, not even to have the sheriff's deputies have a weapon. This is unthinkable. Can it happen? Obviously it did. But it's unthinkable.

BLITZER: All right. Judge Schwall, stand by, because I want to bring in our own Nancy Grace. She's on the phone with us from New York.

Nancy, I take it you knew this judge.

NANCY GRACE, FMR. PROSECUTOR: Wolf, en route to Atlanta right now. I am heartbroken.

I've been playing softball with Judge Barnes since 1987, when I was a rookie prosecutor. And his court reporter, Julie, had just been up visiting me, staying with me in New York just the past couple of months. And I'm just -- I'm stunned.

Wolf, there were a million times we as prosecutors and judges walk into the courtroom going about our everyday business as public servants. And I am stunned. I am stunned about Judge Barnes' death and Julie's death, and the two deputy sheriffs trying to do their job.

Everybody keeps talking about how maybe there was an accomplice. Listen, Wolf, anybody that's been in and out of that courthouse can figure out the lay of the courthouse. It is what it is.

The man grabbed the gun and unloaded rather than go to jail on a rape charge. That's what happened.

BLITZER: Talk a little bit about Judge Barnes, Nancy. Give us some personal thoughts that are going through your mind right now.

GRACE: Wolf, I can't tell you how many times that I sat in the stands and cheered a softball game of Judge Barnes. He was a state court judge for many, many years, coming up in the ranks like all of us as a trial lawyer.

And Wolf, when he made superior court judge, usually, you know, there are political hacks or appointees. This is a guy that everybody said, thank god somebody like Barnes finally made the bench. This makes it all worthwhile.

All I can say is Barnes was the kind of person that I was proud to practice in front of.

BLITZER: You have to ask yourself, how can these things happen? How can such a tragedy occur to such a good man who worked so hard to do -- to do right in the courtroom? It's just such a painful experience, but it does raise the question of security for judges, security for court personnel, not only in Atlanta, Nancy, but all around the country.

What needs to be done?

GRACE: Wolf, so many times I've sat in the courtroom and I've, you know, looked sitting there unarmed, of course. I was never armed in court.

The deputies would have their guns, and we would have 20, 30, sometimes 50 violent offenders. They were not all shackled, and they were there in the courtroom.

It is a risk that's being taken every day -- in every courtroom in this country. And Wolf, I just -- I just hate that it had to be Judge Barnes and his beautiful court reporter, Julie, that had to pay this horrible, horrible price.

And Wolf, the judge has a girl. He has a beautiful girl. And I'm just -- to have your father killed in this way as a public servant -- I mean, Wolf, this guy has tried so many cases.

He was one of the most decent lawyers I have ever known. And I'm stunned. I can hardly speak -- Wolf.

BLITZER: Nancy, I want you to stand by for a second. I want to explain to our viewers what we're seeing on the screen. And thanks to our affiliates, WGCL, other affiliates, we're showing helicopter shots.

This suspect, **Brian Nichols**, 33 years old, 6'1" tall, weighing approximately 210 pounds, a big guy, he is apparently on the loose right now, still on the loose. Search going on for **Brian Nichols**, and we've been showing our viewers helicopter pictures of active areas where police are undertaking action that may or may not be worthwhile. But clearly a massive search under way in the Atlanta area for **Brian Nichols**, the suspect in the killing of a judge, a court stenographer and one deputy, and the wounding of another deputy. This manhunt continuing to unfold in Atlanta

right now.

Nancy, you say you're on the way to Atlanta right now?

GRACE: Yes, Wolf, I was sitting on a flight to fly out to a victims' right vigil in California at one airport, and I heard about Judge Barnes, and my friend, the court reporter, and got up off the flight. I'm now at another airport coming to Atlanta to the courthouse right now.

BLITZER: So you're on the way to the scene of the -- of this crime?

GRACE: Yes. Wolf, I mean, my very dearest friend in the world is a defense lawyer who was on the calendar call this morning and standing in the back waiting to come into the courtroom when this shooting happened. And I just can't tell you how this has affected everyone, Wolf.

I mean, we go into court as lawyers, as prosecutors, as defense lawyers, as judges unarmed every day. I did it for 15 years, Wolf, never believing that this would happen in a court of law, Wolf.

And all I can tell you now is of all the judges that sat on that bench, Barnes is one of the most decent men I have ever known, Wolf. I just can't stress enough. We take potshots at judges and defense lawyers and prosecutors, but, you know, there are few of them walking around that make us proud to be lawyers, and that is what Rowland Barnes was.

BLITZER: This comes only a couple weeks after the murder of a federal judge's husband and mother in Chicago. And we've been following that story closely, as you have, Nancy. It's going to raise questions around the country, what needs to be done to secure these courtrooms, to secure court personnel, judges around the country.

I assume every jurisdiction right now is taking a close look at their procedures.

GRACE: Yes. You know, Wolf, and the thing is, this is a fairly new facility with metal detectors and trained deputies. There are never inmates in a courtroom when there are not armed deputies.

But the fact that this guy could get so close to the deputy, I'm stunned, and get the gun and unload in an open court of law. It's really a miracle more people were not shot because courtrooms are always full of spectators, witnesses, other defendants, victims, jurors. You know, this could have been a massacre on a much greater scale.

BLITZER: Nancy, I'm going to have you stand by. I know you're on the way to the scene, and we'll be talking with you throughout the day here on CNN, Nancy Grace.

Do you have a final thought you want to say about what we've all seen unfold these past 3.5 hours or so, Nancy?

GRACE: You know...

BLITZER: I think we just lost Nancy's connection. Nancy Grace is on the way to the scene. She'll be covering this for us, for "HEADLINE NEWS PRIME." She'll be doing extensive work. A close personal friend of the slain Fulton County superior court

Judge Rowland Barnes. Nancy Grace on the phone for us on the way to the scene, clearly, clearly upset, distraught over the needless, senseless death of this Fulton County superior court judge.

Courthouses are supposed to be very secure places. So how could today's shooting in Atlanta happen? Joining us now on the phone another guest, Judge Lee Sinclair of Canton, Ohio. Among other things, he teaches a class on courtroom security.

Judge, thanks very much for joining us. Give us your thoughts.

JUDGE LEE SINCLAIR, CANTON, OHIO: Well, thank you for having me on this very sad day.

I agree. I had the opportunity to listen to what Nancy was saying, and there is no doubt that we all take these risks every day throughout the country in every courthouse throughout the United States. Sometimes things just happen irregardless of how careful you've been.

BLITZER: What -- looking at basically what we know, a big guy, 6'1", 210 pounds apparently grabs the gun of a security -- of a police deputy inside the courtroom and starts shooting. Are these security guards, these police officers basically trained enough to handle this kind of situation?

SINCLAIR: Of course every courthouse does their own separate training. But, for instance, in our courthouse, our deputies, the staff at the courthouse have been trained. They have weapons retention training.

Those are things we try to do constantly with them. In fact, when I had the call originally this morning from your office, I was, in fact, meeting with my security people before we even knew this had occurred because of some problems that we had had here in our courthouse, some bizarre letters that we had received that we were trying to figure out what we should do with.

So, I mean, these are things we deal with constantly. And I will tell you, in all honesty, 10 years ago virtually nobody thought about it.

BLITZER: There are reports over the years that some judges have their own pistols, have their own weapons underneath their robes. I don't know what the tradition is where you are. Is that a usual occurrence or very, very rare? SINCLAIR: I would say to you probably 10 years ago that was extremely, extremely rare. Over the last 10 years, you have seen that increase. And I learned this from the judges that I teach around the country.

And I would say to you that it is still probably not a normal occurrence. But it does happen much more than it did 10 years ago.

BLITZER: Is this something that should become more normal? In other words, should judges be trained to deal with weapons?

SINCLAIR: Well, I think judges need to be trained on how to deal with security issues. You know, carrying a weapon is a very personal decision for someone to make as to whether they have that ability to take a life if they had to, if they were forced in that type of a situation. And so that's a very personal thing.

There are many non-lethal types of force that judges can also use like Tasers, OC (ph) spray, things like that. And those are all things we talk about when we teach judges court security.

BLITZER: Because some of these defendants and, apparently, in this particular case, some of these defendants may think they have nothing to lose. They're about to go to jail. They may be executed, and why not go out in a blaze of glory. That seems to be the situation maybe even this time.

SINCLAIR: Well, and there's no doubt about that. And you have to realize also that we deal quite frequently with a segment of society that lives by a whole different -- a whole different set of rules than you and I live by.

And so they don't respect the courthouse, it's not looked at as being the house of the courts. They could care less. And so you're exactly right. These are people who have nothing to lose and they have no respect for the institution of the court system.

BLITZER: I want to just alert our viewers, Judge, that we're expecting a news conference fairly soon over at Grady Memorial Hospital, not far from the courthouse. That's a live picture. The microphones you see.

We know that at least one deputy was shot and brought to this hospital. Another deputy was brought to the hospital, apparently died on the route or in the hospital. We're going to go to this news conference from Grady Memorial Hospital as soon as it begins.

We're also standing by for another news conference. The governor of Georgia, Sonny Perdue, is expected to make a statement. We'll bring that to our viewers as well.

Is there a connection in your mind if one of these incidents occurs, Judge Sinclair, for example, the incident in Chicago a few weeks ago, the husband and the mother of a federal judge and this incident occurs now, is there sort of a copycat situation that could unfold with these kinds of defendants, these kinds of criminals who think they have nothing to lose and just decide to go out and murder people?

SINCLAIR: Well, you also have to remember that there was another incident also in Tyler, Texas, within the last two weeks or so, where they had a major amount of damage done out there, several people killed right outside of their courthouse. And I would say to you that I can tell you that the incident that I was discussing with my deputies today in that incident -- it was over some written correspondence we had received -- it mentioned specifically, specifically the judge's family shot in Illinois. And, of course, that's what perked our ears up right away.

So the answer is, you know, in this particular case in Atlanta, did it have any effect? You know, there's only one person that can answer that for us, and that's the person that perpetrated those acts. But I can tell you that the incident that I was discussing with my court security this morning when we received your initial phone call from your offices, you know, it was specifically in that piece of correspondence.

BLITZER: All right. I'm going to have you please, Judge Lee Sinclair, of Canton, Ohio, please stand by.

I want to bring back Judge Craig Schwall. He's a colleague of the slain judge, Rowland Barnes.

You're listening to this conversation, Judge Schwall, the security situation. You're actually there on the scene. And when you go into the courtroom, are you nervous?

SCHWALL: Let me say this to you, I am a colleague of Judge Barnes in that I'm a state court judge. He and I both were magistrate judges together. In state court, the criminal cases we hear are misdemeanor cases, DUIs, domestic violence, crimes punishable by less than a year in jail. And in superior court are the serious felonies, like murder and rape.

So generally in our court we don't face the violent felons that Judge Barnes would face. But at times, absolutely, there have been times when I have put someone in jail for stalking or domestic violence that I am very nervous about when they get out. But you can't go into court every day and be scared.

This is an event that is so shocking, that I don't think anybody in the Fulton County Courthouse could ever have imagined this happening. And all of our thoughts and prayers go out to the families of Judge Barnes and to the court reporter's family and the deputies' families.

But I don't know what differently you could do with security, because at times there are 250 to 400 inmates brought to the courthouse every day. And I don't know how many deputies it would take to carefully monitor that.

I do know when I was a magistrate judge that I had an inmate that they caught with a knife in his underwear. And he had undone his handcuffs as they were transporting him up to the -- to the courtroom. I really don't know what else you can do with the volume of inmates and the resources and the number of deputies we have. I know that there's going to be some Monday morning quarterbacking of what else could be done.

Now, in mention about judges carrying guns, I would be surprised if there's any judge in Fulton County's courthouse that carries a gun. But I bet that changes now.

BLITZER: I suspect it will. Judge Schwall, I want you and our viewers to listen to an eyewitness describe what happened in the courthouse. We have this excerpt from this comment courtesy of our affiliate WSB TV in Atlanta. Let's all listen to see what unfolded in that courtroom.

All right. We're having some trouble queuing that up. We'll try to queue that up, get that sound bite as soon as we do. But it was obviously a very dramatic moment inside the courtroom when the suspect, 33-year-old **Brian Nichols**, grabbed the gun of a deputy inside and began shooting, killing the Fulton County superior court judge, Rowland Barnes.

The attorney, B.J. Bernstein, is still with us, as well.

You've been listening to the whole issue of security in the courtroom. You have to go into that courtroom on a nearly daily basis yourself, B.J. Are you scared when you go in there?

BERNSTEIN: You know, I'm not scared. I've been a prosecutor. I've been a criminal defense lawyer. So I've been in the criminal courts for 18 years now.

And I've seen incidents, obviously not like this, but things happen. We are dealing with people who are facing jail, or even not just criminal cases. Civil cases where people are losing custody of their children, things that bring about huge passions. And when that happens, there's always a chance of violence.

But, you know, you just have to go forward. Certainly we feel a sense of security because there is the airport-type security of going through the metal detector when you go into the courthouse.

BLITZER: And this suspect clearly went through the metal detector, was not armed when he went in. But he managed to get the gun of a deputy inside.

Let's listen. Hopefully this excerpt from this eyewitness is now ready. Let's play that tape.

UNIDENTIFIED WSB REPORTER: We have new, fresh information about the deputies that were injured in this melee.

First of all, we have new information that the deputy that apparently lost her weapon in the eighth floor courtroom is alive. She was shot through the mouth. She has just come out of surgery at Grady Hospital. She is expected to be OK. We're going to gather more information about how she lost her weapon, if her training was up to date, that situation, as we get the information.

The deputy that was on the street, we have his name. We're not yet releasing it out of respect to the family. We understand that he has been with the force since 1987. We have his training report here from Georgia Peace Officers Standards and Training (ph), and it shows that this officer...

BLITZER: All right. Well, that was a reporter from our affiliate WSB explaining that the deputy whose gun was taken was a woman, that she was shot, but is in critical condition in the hospital right now. The deputy who was shot outside the courthouse has been shot and killed. We'll continue to watch that for our viewers.

But the fact raised by this reporter from WSB TV suggesting -- the question is, how well-trained was that female deputy inside the courtroom to resist having her gun taken away by this big suspect, **Brian Nichols**, 6'1", 210 pounds. It will be a question that will be closely watched in the coming days and weeks, no doubt.

Let me remind our viewers who may be just tuning in, that this suspect, **Brian Nichols**, is on the loose right now. He is suspected in the killing of a Fulton County superior court judge, Rowland Barnes, highly respected, beloved by so many, 64 years old, inside the courtroom around 9:00 a.m. this morning, Eastern Time, shooting a -- and killing a court stenographer, as well, and two deputies, one killed.

It's a tragic moment in the history of judges in the United States, indeed, and it comes only two weeks or so after another judge, a federal judge in Chicago's, husband and mother were killed in a case that all of us have been following, as well.

Let me bring back Judge Schwall, a judicial colleague of Judge Barnes.

The notion that Judge Barnes was making decisions that would send people to jail presumably for a long time, that's a difficult decision. You say that even when you send someone to prison for stalking, for domestic violence, you're afraid that person eventually's going to come out and come after you?

SCHWALL: Well, yes. I think that, as a judge, you have to have in the back of your mind, that somebody might come after you. I think that that would be a real concern if you're putting someone in prison for long periods of time. I think that if you put somebody in prison for life, you might have a relative that might seek revenge. I mean, I think that as public servants, we all have to be mindful of these risks, and certainly these deputies were mindful of these risks and they put their lives on the line, and have paid the ultimate price, but we all know of these risks -- but, this, again, is just such an unthinkable tragedy -- but I do want to make one point.

In this courthouse, the judges have their own private elevator that you have to have a key card to get on. You cannot get back to a judge's chambers without a person from the judge's chambers looking at you on a video screen and buzzing you back. So, judges' chambers are locked. They're secure. The judges come in and out of a secure parking garage underneath the building that only judges and other high court officials park in.

So, in that aspect, I think the security is phenomenal. And, again, it would be very difficult for somebody to get back to a judge's chambers and do what has occurred today, but, yes, there are risks and, yes, if you're putting someone in jail you certainly have to be very careful and remember that some people that do not play by the same moral rules that we do, could be vengeful.

And I think prosecutors have to feel the same way, and I know Nancy Grace, and I remember when she was a prosecutor. She had some very tough cases, and I could -- I would be -- I think prosecutors have to be of the same mind-set that a judge would, of putting someone in jail. It's a risk, but not one that I think of often, but certainly will now.

The Fulton County courthouse, the Fulton County judicial family will never ever be the same. This is just an unspeakable tragedy, something like 9/11 that you could never have imagined.

BLITZER: What a sad day, not only in Fulton County but across the country as we mourn the death of the Fulton County superior court judge Rowland Barnes and his colleagues, a court stenographer a court reporter and at least one deputy.

The search is on for the suspect **Brian Nichols**, 33 years old. He's got a long, long criminal record. There's a massive manhunt underway in the Atlanta area.

We're going to take a quick break. Much more coverage of this breaking story right after this.

BLITZER: Welcome back to our continuing coverage.

Breaking news out of Atlanta: Fulton County superior court Judge Rowland Barnes, 64 years old, was gunned down inside the courtroom today together with a court stenographer. A deputy was also shot. Another deputy has been wounded in hospital

-- in the hospital right now, Grady Memorial Hospital, not far from the courthouse. There's going to be a news conference there shortly. We're standing by. We'll bring that news conference to you once it begins.

Also standing by to hear from Governor Sunny Perdue, the governor of Georgia. We'll bring that to you as soon as we get it.

The suspect, **Brian Nichols**, apparently carjacked a vehicle and is on the loose right now. These are pictures you're seeing of a massive manhunt underway in the Atlanta, Georgia, area, for **Brian Nichols**. He's 33 years old, 6'1", 210 pounds, a massive manhunt under way for him.

The shooting has caused a severe lockdown in the area of that courthouse which is right in downtown Atlanta, Georgia. Joining us now on the phone is Joe Manguno; he's a spokesman for the Atlanta Public Schools.

I take it a lot of the schools in the area, Joe, have been shut down, have been locked down, if you will. Explain to our viewers what's going on.

JOE MANGUNO, ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS SPOKESPERSON: OK, well, first, I'd like to update you. Just seconds ago the lockdown was lifted on most of the 36 schools. We only have four schools remaining under lockdown. And what lockdown means, it's a restricted lockdown, which means that movement is allowed and is continuing within the schools so that the children can go from class to class, but no one may enter or leave the building without the express permission of the security authorities, who are manning the doors and not allowing anyone in without an escort.

BLITZER: So you're saying 36 schools are now back to normal, but there are four schools with this lockdown, is that right?

MANGUNO: No, there were originally 36 locked down. There are -- 32 of those lockdown orders have been lifted, and only 4 schools of the original 36 remain under lockdown.

BLITZER: And can parents go and pick up their kids and bring them home if they want?

MANGUNO: They are being strongly discouraged from doing so because that would complicate -- it would complicate an already difficult situation and so what we're asking is that the parents please allow that the schools will take care of the situation. They're very secure. They are being taken care of by our security personnel, and there is no imminent danger to these schools or to these students.

This is a precautionary measure that's being taken to guarantee the safety of our students and staff. What we really don't want is people roaming around the vicinity of the schools, either coming in or going out, while Atlanta Police Department is conducting its manhunt.

BLITZER: But you could understand distraught parents worried about their kids, saying you know what, I want to just touch and feel my kid. If there's a dangerous gunman on the loose, a killer, if you will, they're going to want -- their first instinct is to go and grab their kid and bring them home.

MANGUNO: Certainly it is. And we do understand that. All I am saying is we're strongly discouraging parents from doing that, because it would complicate the logistics of our situation as it stands right now.

BLITZER: Joe Manguno from the Atlanta Public Schools. Thanks so much. Good luck to you, good luck to all your colleagues and especially to all the kids in the schools, the teachers and the children. Gary Tuchman, our reporter, is on the scene for us right outside the courthouse where the shootings occurred just about three and a half hours or so ago. What's the latest you're getting, Gary?

GARY TUCHMAN, CNN CORRESPONDENT: Well, Wolf, I want to add a little about your conversation you just had. We can tell you that other schools in the Atlanta area, in the suburbs, private schools and suburban public schools, are still in lockdown as we speak. This is just one small area, downtown Atlanta and even though most of the streets here are closed, this happened, as you just said, three and a half ago. This guy could be absolutely anywhere. So there are still many schools in the Atlanta metropolitan area that are in lockdown.

We can tell you there's a very eerie feeling here in Atlanta, because exactly three and a half years ago today was September 11, 2001. This is March 11, 2005. Three and a half years ago, schools were in lockdown here, too, as they were in many cities across America, because nobody knew what was going to happen that day and once again, here in the Atlanta area, many schools are in lockdown and many parents are very concerned.

Now behind me, where this all occurred, 9:00 this morning, this is the Fulton County courthouse, this whole building behind me. Eighth floor trial taking place. It was a trial for **Brian Nichols** on rape, his second trial. His first one ending in a mistrial. **Brian Nichols** did not have a gun. We are told he lunged at a deputy, took the deputy's gun and shot the deputy. We're then told he either shot another deputy inside the courthouse or on the ground after he escaped. That's not clear yet. We're getting conflicting reports about that. But we are told he shot a court clerk inside the courthouse and then the judge, Rowland Barnes.

Judge Barnes, his court clerk, both pronounced dead. One of the deputies pronounced dead. He then escaped, coming down eight floors of the courthouse onto the street. At that point, he tried to carjack a vehicle, apparently was unsuccessful. After he was unsuccessful, he then went across the street, Martin Luther King Boulevard, to this parking garage right here, found a person coming out of his car, told that person to get in his trunk and he was going to take his car. That person, who's a reporter for the "Atlanta Journal Constitution" newspaper, refused to get into the trunk. He was pistol-whipped. He was injured. He is being treated in the hospital. But we are told then **Brian Nichols** then got away in his Honda Accord.

It is not clear at this time if Nichols is still in that green Honda Accord or if he carjacked another vehicle. But right now, helicopters are flying above us, flying above the suburban skies around Atlanta. Police all over the metropolitan area, population 4.2 million, are on the lookout for a man considered very dangerous, who has shot four people, killed three and is considered -- they're considering the fact that he has absolutely nothing to lose and they're very worried. And three and a half hours have now gone by and they still don't know where he is, although they're getting tips. But they do not have this man in custody.

BLITZER: And Gary, as you know -- and you live in the Atlanta area -- as you know, in three hours, three and a half hours, someone can drive pretty far away from Atlanta and the longer this manhunt continues, the greater the search is going to have to be. The geography just expands with every 15, 20 minutes, given the fact that someone can drive pretty quickly at pretty fast outside of Atlanta.

TUCHMAN: No question about that, but one thing that police are looking at are this man's family and friends in the area. They don't want us to report -- particularly the local news media here in Atlanta, where he lives, where his family and friends are, because they're thinking a man like this may seek them out right now. So they are searching that area. But you're right, after three and a half hours, you figure you're going 70 miles an hour, you could easily have gone 250 miles by now.

BLITZER: All right. We'll continue to watch. Gary Tuchman's on the scene for us. Gary, we'll be checking back with you, clearly, throughout the day.

Joining us now on the phone with more on courthouse security is **John Walzer**. He's former FBI agent. He's now the managing director of investigations at Fortress Global, a private security firm. He's joining us from Great Neck, New York. You've done some work studying courtroom security. What goes through your mind as you see and hear what happened in Atlanta today?

JOHN WALZER, FMR. FBI AGENT AND SECURITY EXPERT: We have, Wolf, and the first thing that comes into my mind or came into my mind is that, sad to say, we live in a violent society and if, yourself included, you've been in and out of courtrooms and there is a lot of activity going on, as one of your guests mentioned before, with regard to defendants, et cetera. And, of course, the real basic issue that violent defendants are not shackled when they come in the courtroom and all of that leads to a problem. Obviously that was displayed today. The officers are trained extensively, but like I say with all that activity, from time to time, you'll see a terrible situation like this.

BLITZER: Are there specific steps, John -- and you've studied this issue closely -- that should be taken or at least considered to beef up security in courtrooms across the country?

WALZER: I don't know that you can get too draconian, to be very candid with you. All of the courtrooms today certainly have protocols. They have the deputies, and the issue to me seems to be the control of the violent individual that comes into the courtroom and to keep down the numbers of people that are milling around in the courtroom, defendants included. As I said before, the numbers are going up, and problems will occur.

BLITZER: Give us your sense of this manhunt that's unfolding right now in the Atlanta area, the search for this suspect, **Brian Nichols**. How difficult do you believe it will be to apprehend this individual?

WALZER: Needless to say, Atlanta area is quite populated, but nonetheless, they have a description of the car. They have the license number. They've alerted all the authorities in the surrounding districts, they've put an all-points bulletin on him, they're checking the residences where he goes. That said, is he going to do any of those things? Go to his local haunts? I doubt it. I would suspect he's probably just in a car somewhere and just heading -- heading out into the area, wherever it is.

BLITZER: Just trying to get away, and if that -- all right. If, in fact, he's apprehended, given the fact that he's armed presumably with that same weapon, that could be a dangerous situation in and of itself.

WALZER: Well, of course. We certainly don't have a crystal ball, but I mean. the violent nature, violent acts that he's caused, the fact that obviously, he does not want to go back to jail, and he has taken these steps, one can assume it's an extremely dangerous situation for the law enforcement authorities and the general public.

BLITZER: All right. John, stand by. Let's go to this news conference over at Grady Memorial Hospital.

SHERIFF MYRON FREEMAN, FULTON COUNTY, GEORGIA: Thank you for coming. I want to confirm a major disturbance this morning at the Fulton County Courthouse. Shortly after 9:00 a.m., a person on trial for rape allegedly came into possession of a weapon and shot four -- shot four employees of Fulton County, including a superior court judge, one confirmed -- I mean, I can confirm that two individuals, including the judge, are dead as a result of the shooting. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families at this difficult hour. We will not be releasing any names at this time, pending the official notification of all the family members.

The alleged shooter is identified as a 33-year-old **Brian Nichols**. It is alleged that Mr. Nichols fled the scene and is currently at large. If you have any -- if you have seen Mr. **Brian Nichols** or aware of his whereabouts at this time, please contact the Fulton County Sheriff's Office at area code 404-730-5129 or contact your local law enforcement agency.

QUESTION: Sheriff, was there any (OFF MIKE) as far the man in the courtroom at the time? Can you give us some details about the struggle?

FREEMAN: Mr. Nichols is considered armed and extremely dangerous and should not be approached. How Mr. Nichols allegedly came into possession of the weapon and the circumstances surrounding the shooting are still under investigation. We have several local and state law enforcement agencies including the GBI, the Georgia State Patrol, FBI, Atlanta, Fulton County Sheriff's Office and other sheriff's offices in the surrounding counties determining exactly what happened this morning at the Fulton County Courthouse. Thank you.

QUESTION: Sheriff, can you give us any indication as to the condition of the deputies who were brought here? Can you confirm that's one of the sheriff's deputies?

FREEMAN: There are three that are dead and one that is wounded. I'm not releasing any names pending the full notification of all family members.

(CROSSTALK)

QUESTION: Sheriff, can you tell us what type of employees, without the names, can you confirm that a sheriff's deputy has died, a second one is being treated?

FREEMAN: That's correct.

QUESTION: What are the conditions of the second one who's being treated?

FREEMAN: In critical condition. Well, I'll turn it over to the doctor here at Grady Hospital. And we'd like to thank them for everything that their staff are doing.

QUESTION: Doctor, could you identify yourself.

DR. JEFFREY SALOMONE, GRADY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL: Sure. Dr. Jeffrey -- J-E-F-F-R-E-Y, Salomone -- S-A-L-O-M-O-N-E, one of the attending trauma surgeons here at Grady. At about 9:24 this morning, we received one Fulton County sheriff's deputy who presented to us with a single gunshot wound to the abdomen. He had no vital signs when he arrived here. And despite our resuscitative efforts we were unsuccessful. He was pronounced dead at about 9:34.

About that time a second Fulton County sheriff's deputy arrived who appears to have a single gunshot wound to the head. The bullet did not enter her skull. She has a small bruise on her brain, and some fractures around her face. It appears that after being shot the deputy perhaps fell to the ground receiving some of those fractures to her head. She is in critical condition, but expected to survive the injuries that she has. And that's all the information that I have at this point in time.

QUESTION: Did you receive two others from the court?

SALOMONE: No. Those were the only two patients who were transported to Grady Hospital.

QUESTION: (OFF-MIKE) can you tell us where were the other two (OFF-MIKE)...

FREEMAN: I don't have that information at this time.

QUESTION: Can you tell us anything about what happened, where the gunman was? Did he -- that he got three...

FREEMAN: That's still under investigation at this time.

QUESTION: Was he in custody or out on bond?

FREEMAN: That's still under investigation at this time. I don't have...

QUESTION: (OFF-MIKE) FREEMAN: No.

QUESTION: Sheriff, can you clear up exactly what kind of vehicle you are looking for right now that the suspect is alleged to be driving?

FREEMAN: I don't have that information.

QUESTION: Sheriff, can you talk about the impact of this day on Fulton County, specifically on your staff?

FREEMAN: This is a very sad day in Fulton County, and as I said, my prayers go out to the families. It's very tragic, but we're going to do everything we can to bring this person to justice. And we've got all the law enforcement agencies out, as I said before, on a manhunt, and we're going to not rest until we find him.

QUESTION: Governor Perdue, what role is the state playing in this?

GOV. SONNY PERDUE, GEORGIA: First of all, it's a sad day when the very foundation of our country, the civil justice system, is threatened by someone creating such a heinous act in the courtroom. All of our state assets are available to Fulton County. They are the lead agency in this investigation and pursuit of this individual.

But our Georgia State Patrol, our Georgia Bureau of Investigation, our aviation assets are all at their disposal in the apprehension of this individual. I hope we find him fast. And we are looking as we speak and hopefully this can be brought to a conclusion.

If that is not the case and we need to pursue longer and a reward is needed, then we stand ready to support the county upon request for a reward if that be the case. Hopefully it will not be.

QUESTION: Governor, since this occurred fairly close to the state capitol, this is a critical day for the legislature, has that been impacted at all by what has happened here?

PERDUE: Well, there is still business going on. I've already issued an executive order that the flags on Capitol Hill be lowered until the funerals of these individuals. And our hearts go out to them. Mary and I offer our condolences to the families of all of these individuals, including the judge and the sheriff's deputies who were killed in the line of duty. And we -- our prayers are with them and business will continue on under the capitol, but not in the same way.

QUESTION: Governor, is there a reason to believe that the suspect is still in the metro area?

PERDUE: You know, I have no reason -- I have no knowledge of that, and no way to know that. We've been here at the capitol and at Grady and we are not on the front lines pursuing the individual, but these professional law enforcement agencies are, and we trust them to do their job. QUESTION: Governor, will you want to see a review of security in Georgia courthouses?

PERDUE: I think we always look for ways to better our safety and security all over the state in courthouses and outside of courthouses. I'm sure there will be ongoing conversation about that.

QUESTION: Sheriff, in your opinion has there been enough security in and around the Fulton County Courthouse?

FREEMAN: Well, I don't want to address that right now. What we're trying to do is make sure that the fact that we find this perpetrator and as soon as we get updated information we will give it to you. Thank you.

QUESTION: Sheriff, I understand there's something with the schools (ph). Can you tell me about the schools (ph)?

FREEMAN: Thank you.

BLITZER: All right. That was Sheriff Myron Freeman of Fulton County, together with the governor of Georgia, Sonny Perdue, and Dr. Jeffrey Salomone, who is the attending physician reporting the information on this one Fulton County sheriff's deputy, a woman who was inside the courtroom, was shot in the head. She's in critical condition, but apparently is going to make it. We certainly hope she does. Another deputy who was outside the courthouse was shot and killed, brought to the Grady Memorial Hospital around 9:30, about half an hour or so after the initial incident occurred, and was pronounced dead at the hospital. The two others, Fulton County Superior Court Judge Rowland Barnes, 64 years old, and the court stenographer, the court reporter shot dead, as well, inside this courtroom.

We're going to continue to watch this story. Once again, the suspect, **Brian Nichols**, 33 years old, a man who was brought before the court on rape charges, has a long criminal record, is on the loose right now, a massive manhunt under way in Georgia in the Atlanta area right now, a massive manhunt under way. He's 6'1", 34 years old, 210 pounds. They're looking for him; understandably all resources, law enforcement, local, state are involved right now in this massive search.

Our coverage of this story, it will continue. Miles O'Brien, Kyra Phillips, they are standing by right after this short break.

Source: CNN