

News Roundup

Author : Shea Denning

Categories : [Uncategorized](#)

Date : August 10, 2012

There has been plenty of criminal law news this week.

1. Jared Lee Loughner pled guilty on Tuesday in federal district court to 6 counts of murder and 13 counts of attempted murder, admitting that he went to former Representative Gabrielle Giffords' January 8, 2011 congressional event armed with a Glock 9-millimeter semiautomatic pistol loaded with 33 rounds of ammunition planning to kill Representative Giffords and others. He admitted to shooting Giffords at close range, and to firing at others with intent to kill. The Los Angeles Times [reports](#) that Loughner's plea ended months of legal debate over Loughner's mental capacity and set the stage for a sentence to life without parole. The presiding judge determined that Loughner, who has been forcibly medicated with schizophrenia drugs since last summer, was competent. Loughner's sentencing is set for November 15.
2. Federal authorities [continue to investigate](#) the motives behind [Wade Page's attack on worshippers last Sunday at a Sikh temple outside Milwaukee](#). Page opened fire with a 9-mm pistol inside the temple, killing six people and wounding three more. According to [this report](#), Page shot and killed himself after being shot and injured by a responding officer. Page, an army veteran, [led a white power rock band](#) and [was being watched by the Anti-Defamation League](#), but apparently had done nothing before Sunday to indicate he posed an imminent violent threat. The FBI has classified the incident as domestic terrorism, a designation that denotes the social or political motivations of the attacker, and [reportedly](#) allows law enforcement officers to "tap the resources of the FBI-led Joint Terrorism Task Forces." One security expert [explained](#) that, in contrast to the Wisconsin murders, the [deadly shootings last July at a Colorado movie theater](#) and Loughner's attack on Giffords and her constituents, appear to have been motivated by mental illness.
3. Regardless of the motives behind these shootings, they all involve a single gunman unloading a spray of ammunition. As a result, they have reignited the debate over gun control. Nevertheless, [this recent CNN poll shows](#) that most Americans' opinions on that subject (which were pretty divided to start with) remain unchanged by recent events. Fifty percent of the people polled favored no restrictions or only minor restrictions on gun-ownership. Forty-eight percent supported major restrictions or a complete ban on gun ownership by private citizens. The New York Times [reports](#) the results of a separate poll revealing that "[m]ost voters in Colorado, Virginia and Wisconsin are not clamoring for stricter state laws covering the sale of guns, with majorities in each state saying more restrictions would not prevent violent attacks like last month's killings in Aurora, Colo."
4. The News and Observer [reports](#) that Academi, LLC, the international security contractor formerly known as Blackwater, has agreed to pay a \$7.5 million fine as part of a deferred prosecution agreement to settle numerous federal criminal charges. Speaking as a person who was a teenager in the 1980s, I'll note that there are some names [you can't ever shed](#). Prince is one. Blackwater (founded by Erik Prince, who so far as I know bears no relation to the aforementioned artist) might be another. The charges against the Company Formerly Known as Blackwater include "possessing automatic weapons in the United States without registration, lying to federal firearms regulators about weapons provided to the king of Jordan, passing secret plans for armored personnel carriers to Sweden and Denmark without U.S. government approval and illegally shipping body armor overseas."
4. Now for some lighter criminal law fare. Had great success with a new diet? Want to share your secrets for losing weight? You might want to keep your advice to yourself. Or at least keep it off of your blog. [That's the message the executive director of the North Carolina Board of Dietetics/Nutrition delivered to Steve Cooksey](#) when he offered advice on [his Web site](#) about the "cave man diet" that he says helped him defeat diabetes. The New York Times reports that

the board's executive director told Cooksey that his dispensing of advice amounted to "[assessing the nutritional needs of individuals and groups](#)" without a [license](#), [a Class 1 misdemeanor offense](#). Cooksey changed his Web site. Then he sued in federal district court, alleging that his First Amendment rights had been violated. Cooksey says the state is trying to prevent him from doing "something Americans have done since the inception of the United States: share advice among friends, acquaintances, readers or family about what is the healthiest way to eat." Here's hoping for a ruling before the family gets together for Thanksgiving.

5. Finally, [Randy Travis was arrested for impaired driving this week](#) after police discovered him lying by the side of the road. That's newsworthy enough, I suppose, but the kicker is that Travis was, well, naked. Notwithstanding his country roots, Travis either missed out on or failed to follow the advice good country grandmothers have dispensed for years: Always wear clean underwear in case you get in an accident. I'm sure this is a low point for [grammy-award winning](#) Travis, but, on the bright side, it could inspire lyrics for a really great country song.