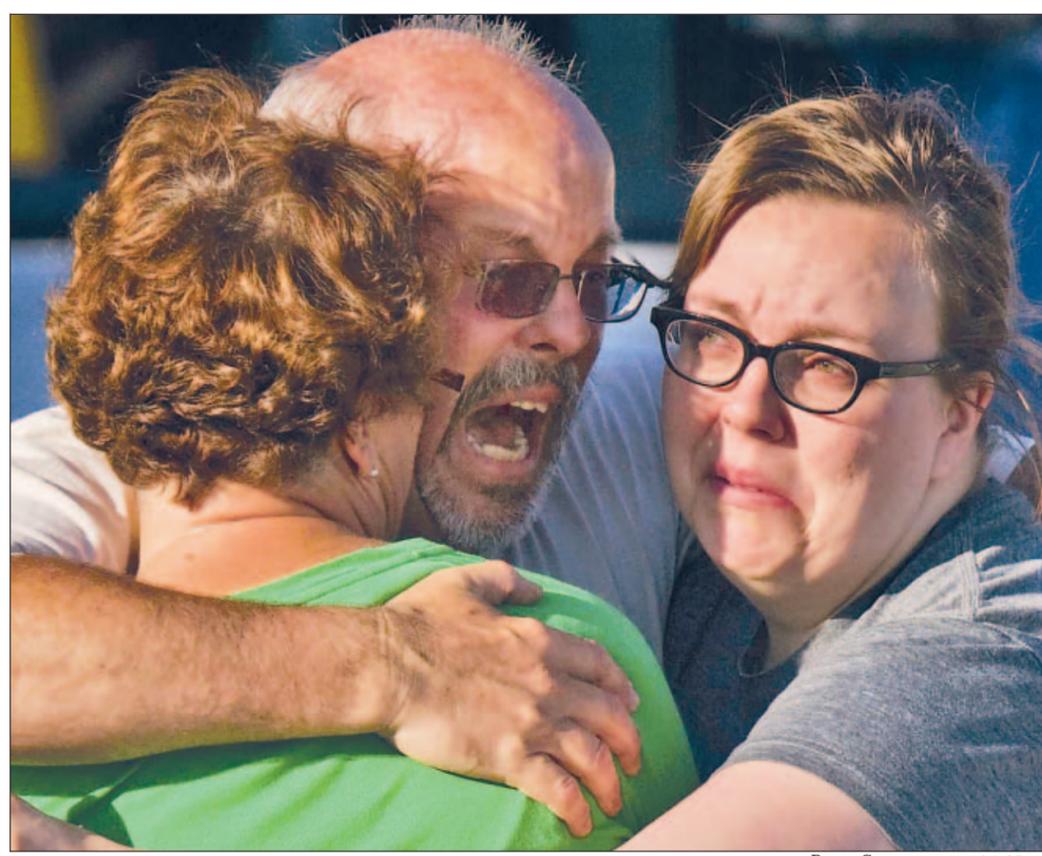


Los Angeles Times

\$1.00 DESIGNATED AREAS HIGHER 84 PAGES © 2012 WST † SATURDAY, JULY 21, 2012 latimes.com

MIDNIGHT MASSACRE

A gunman storms a Colorado movie theater and opens fire, killing at least 12, in rampage that recalls assault at nearby Columbine High



TOM SULLIVAN hugs relatives at Gateway High School, where he was seeking information on his son, Alex, who went to see "The Dark Knight Rises" for his birthday. Some victims remained unidentified Friday.

BY JOHN M. GLIONNA, MATT PEARCE AND MITCHELL LANDSBERG

AURORA, Colo. — It was less than half an hour into a post-midnight screening of the latest Batman movie, "The Dark Knight Rises," when a young man opened an emergency exit door and slipped into a packed multiplex theater. He was dressed in dark, head-to-foot body armor, including a helmet, gas mask, vest and throat guard, and he was armed. "He didn't say anything," said Tayler Trujillo, an 18-year-old moviegoer. "He like kicked the door open with his foot and held it open with his foot, and he threw something and it landed in the row in front of me."

What ensued was several minutes of grisly horror as the intruder, armed with a combat-grade arsenal, set off two gas canisters and sprayed the theater with sustained gunfire. At least 12 people were killed and 58 others injured in a shooting that rekindled memories of the 1999 tragedy at nearby Columbine High School.

Witnesses described the gunman calmly shooting people throughout the theater at the Century 16 complex, seemingly at random, hitting men, women and children in the semidarkness as the movie continued to run behind him. It was a smoky, surrealistic, unimaginable scene, witnesses said, as moviegoers, some in costume for the Batman opening, realized that these bullets were real.

Seconds after the last shots were fired early Friday, police arrested a suspect, James E. Holmes, 24, whose only previous brush with the law appears to be a speeding [See Shooting, A10]

Families wait for news in an agonizing limbo

BY LAURA J. NELSON, JENNY DEAM AND RICK ROJAS

AURORA, Colo. — Jessica Ghawi narrowly escaped a murderous rampage at a shopping center in Toronto last month, deciding to leave a food court where, moments later, a gunman killed two people and wounded six others.

The incident, and her narrow escape, deeply moved her.

"I was shown how fragile life was on Saturday," Ghawi wrote on her blog. "I saw the terror on bystanders' faces. I saw the victims of a senseless crime. I saw lives change. I was reminded that we don't know when or where our time on Earth will end. When or where we will breathe our last breath."

In a wicked twist of fate, the aspiring sports journalist was killed Friday in an early morning massacre in a Colorado theater, along with at least 11 others, by a gunman wielding an assault-style rifle, a shotgun, a handgun and canisters of a noxious chemical. Police said 59 others were wounded.

Officials had not released names of the dead or wounded, but some relatives and friends stepped forward to identify a handful of victims, or used social media to convey their grief.

Ghawi — who went by the name Jessica Redfield professionally — had red hair and a gleam in her eye. She was in her early 20s, with a [See Victims, A11]

Shaken film industry reacts

Theater owners review security, and Warner Bros. cancels events

BY JOHN HORN, BEN FRITZ AND RICHARD VERRIER



A GAS MASK is marked as evidence in the investigation of the theater shooting in Aurora, Colo. The tragedy has cinema chains evaluating security.

The deadly rampage in Colorado shattered a fundamental appeal of moviegoing: a chance to escape the humdrum for a world of fantasy. Now, theater owners and the Warner Bros. studio must figure out whether "The Dark Knight Rises" can still be an entertaining diversion, not a reminder of a tragic mass shooting.

The shooting also raised the specter among moviegoers that they could become targets, leading theater owners and some police forces to step up security measures this weekend.

"It's horrifying what happened in Colorado and it makes me scared about

copycats here," said Katie Gerber, 34, who had tickets for a Friday afternoon screening at the ArcLight in Hollywood. "I'm not nervous to go see the movie now, but it'll be hard not to think

about it during the gun-fighting scenes."

"The Dark Knight Rises" was poised to become one of the summer's biggest box-office hits. The film took in \$30.6 million at midnight

screenings, the second-biggest midnight opening of all time, and box-office experts said the sequel could gross as much as \$200 million in its first three days of release, a mark which only "The Avengers" has surpassed.

In a statement, director Christopher Nolan acknowledged the damage the shooting had done to the sanctity of the moviegoing experience.

"I believe movies are one of the great American art forms and the shared experience of watching a story unfold on screen is an important and joyful pastime," Nolan said in a statement. "The movie theatre is my home, and the idea that someone would violate that innocent and hopeful place in such an unbearably savage way is [See Theaters, A12]



University of Colorado

Southland roots

Shooting suspect James Holmes, above, grew up outside San Diego and earned a UC Riverside degree before moving to Colorado. **LATEXTRA**

Gun control

The attack revives the debate over firearms, but action is unlikely in an election year. **NATION, A13**

State parks had \$54-million surplus as closures loomed

BY CHRIS MEGERIAN AND PATRICK MCGREEVY

SACRAMENTO — California's parks system stashed away nearly \$54 million even as it was cutting services and threatening to close parks, a revelation that prompted the resignation of the department's director Friday.

The hoarded cash remained untapped while the California Department of Parks and Recreation painted a dire picture of the system's health, soliciting hundreds of thousands of dollars in donations in what was thought to be a desperate scramble to keep facilities open.

At the request of Gov. Jerry Brown, the state attorney general's office has launched an investigation into the hidden surplus, which officials believe the department concealed from state bookkeepers, the governor and the Legislature for

at least a dozen years, dating to the tenure of Gray Davis. The governor also ordered a comprehensive audit of the parks system's accounting practices and management.

"This is undeniably disappointing news," said Secretary John Laird of the California Natural Resources Agency, which oversees the department.

It was unclear whether mismanagement or deliberate deceit led to the concealment of the funds.

State auditors found the extra money in two funds, one intended to finance the purchase and upkeep of properties for off-road vehicle recreation, the other for general park maintenance and restoration. The money came from user fees, rentals and fines.

Laird said state officials have not determined why the money was underreported, nor which official would have been responsible for the accounting discrepancy. [See Parks, A15]

COMING SUNDAY



COMMUTERS swamp a train platform in Mumbai. India is expected to pass China in population in the next decade and not peak until 2060, at 1.7 billion.

BEYOND 7 BILLION

The population explosion that began two centuries ago will reshape the planet in coming decades. "Beyond 7 Billion," a five-part series, explores the causes and consequences. With videos, photos and interactive graphics at latimes.com/populationrising.

Weather
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California gains jobs, led by trade and tourism

BY RICARDO LOPEZ

While the nation's job engine sputters, California's is revving up, thanks to another month of solid employment growth with international trade and tourism leading the way.

Employers statewide added 38,300 net new jobs in June with gains in most industries, including construction and professional services, according to a report Friday by the state Employment Development Department.

"It's an impressive number," said Christopher Thornberg, founding principal at Beacon Economics, a Los Angeles consulting firm. "This is very surprising."

The increase in jobs helped push California's unemployment rate down in June to 10.7% from May's 10.8%. The state also revised May's jobs figure up, to 45,900 from the initial report of 33,900. [See California, A16]