

## = Uherský Brod shooting =

On 24 February 2015 , a mass shooting occurred at the Dru?ba restaurant in the town of Uherský Brod , Czech Republic . Nine people were killed , including the gunman , 63 @-@ year @-@ old Zden?k Ková? , who committed suicide after a standoff with police that lasted nearly two hours . In addition , one other person was injured . Uherský Brod is 260 kilometers ( 160 miles ) east @-@ southeast of the Czech capital Prague .

The shooting was one of the two deadliest mass murders in the country 's peacetime history , alongside a 1973 vehicular rampage committed by Olga Hepnarová . The circumstances of the shooting led to an examination on the gun politics in the Czech Republic and police rules of engagement against active shooters . Czech media speculated that the rampage may have been triggered by an apparent attempt of the authorities to review Ková? 's mental state .

## = = Background = =

Due to similarities between the perpetrators , the murders were compared by Czech media and experts to a mass murder that took place two years before in Fren?tát pod Radho?t?m , another Moravian town lying 90 km northwards . In the attack , a 57 @-@ year @-@ old man , Antonín Bla?ek , attempted to blow up a block of flats after having been ordered to vacate his flat that had been foreclosed by creditors . He first blocked both exits from the building , and then removed and opened the main gas supply into the building 's corridor . Interrupted , Bla?ek set the gas on fire before the gas could spread throughout the whole building . The explosion and subsequent fire , however , were large enough to demolish part of the building , killing Bla?ek and five other people immediately and wounding eleven others , one of whom died on 17 February 2015 .

Before the murders , Ková? 's family became worried about his mental state to the point that they contacted authorities in connection with his possession of gun license . Just four days before the murders , Ková? had received a police request to present a new health clearance under the threat of revoking his license . Before entering the Dru?ba restaurant , Ková? visited at least two other venues . Those , however , had fewer customers , and Ková? left them immediately after entering .

## = = Murders = =

Ková? entered the Dru?ba building at about 12 : 30 pm , the restaurant 's busiest daylight time . Around 20 people were in the small restaurant at the time . Before he entered the restaurant itself , which was situated on the first floor , Petr Gabriel , who was rushing to the bathroom , got ahead of Ková? on stairs leading to an upper floor .

Armed with a CZ 75B semi @-@ automatic pistol , which is manufactured in the town , and an Alfa 820 revolver , Ková? opened fire without any warning immediately after entering the restaurant , shooting his victims directly in the head . Eight died immediately or soon afterwards . One female victim , who was shot twice in the chest , managed to leave the restaurant , while Gabriel remained hidden in the restaurant 's bathroom . Eight other people escaped the building through the back door . Another customer , Ji?í Nesázel , who took cover under a table , used a moment in which Ková? was reloading , and threw a chair at him , hitting him on the neck . This gave him an opportunity to run out through the front door with two other people .

Authorities received the first distress call from a person who escaped from the restaurant at 12 : 38 pm , and the first police car reached the building at 12 : 47 pm . The policemen were armed with the standard equipment for Czech police officers : holstered pistols ( mostly with variants of CZ75 that was also used by Ková? ) , body armor , and a select @-@ fire rifle stored in car . The first two officers to arrive immediately entered the building with body armor on and guns drawn . Ková? , taking cover behind a bar opposite to the door , opened fire on the officers as soon as they entered . The police noted people lying on the ground and sitting on chairs between them and the shooter . Not knowing the status of the civilians , the police decided not to return fire , covered the exits , and waited for the arrival of a tactical unit . By this time , other police units as well as the first ambulance

car had arrived , taking away the wounded female victim who had escaped .

At 12 : 56 pm , Kováč called a Prima TV station crime news reporter , claiming that he was being harassed by multiple people and that he had hostages whom he threatened to kill . The journalist who spoke to the gunman called the police , who were already sending all available units to the location .

A police negotiator contacted Kováč by phone at 13 : 07 . During negotiations , Kováč claimed to have hostages , although all of the people remaining inside were most likely already dead ( apart from Gabriel , who was hiding at the bathroom unbeknownst to Kováč ) . The hostage claim delayed police entry into the building . Kováč stopped communicating at about 14 : 00 p.m. After attempts to contact him failed , the tactical team breached the building at 14 : 23 p.m. Upon the team 's entry , Kováč immediately shot himself dead .

Apart from stun grenades , the policemen did not fire a single shot . After securing the restaurant , the police let in a large number of medical personnel . The only person alive who remained inside the building was Gabriel , who had been hiding in the bathroom for the entire duration of the incident .

= = Perpetrator and victims = =

= = = Perpetrator = = =

Zdeněk Kováč ( c . 1951 ? 24 February 2015 ) was 63 years old at the time of his death and lived with his wife in a house not far from the scene of the murders . Neighbours described the couple as deranged , both possibly mentally ill , and known for loudness and verbal abuse of their neighbours . Kováč was the son of a worker in the local ?eská zbrojovka Uherský Brod ( ?ZUB ) firearms factory , the largest small arms manufacturer in the country . Formerly an electrician , he had been unemployed for at least ten years .

Kováč had held a gun license since 2000 and legally owned both of the guns he used .

= = = Victims = = =

A total of eight people , excluding the gunman , died in the rampage . This included seven men , aged 27 to 66 , and one woman , aged 47 . Another woman , aged 37 , survived despite being shot twice in the chest .

= = Aftermath = =

As more information about Kováč 's notoriety among neighbors surfaced , focus of investigation shifted towards the circumstances under which he gained and retained gun license and firearms . In order to be granted a gun license in the Czech Republic , a person must pass a qualification exam , receive a health clearance by a general practitioner , who may require a further examination by a specialist , such as a psychological or psychiatric evaluation , and must pass a background check . According to Section 23 of the Czech Firearms Act , an applicant may not be granted a license if he has committed more than one misdemeanor against public order in the previous three years . Similarly , the law further makes gun license inaccessible to people with mental illnesses . The license must be renewed every five years ( every ten years for licenses issued after 1 July 2014 ) . The renewal requires the presentation of a new health clearance , while the police conduct a new background check . Kováč 's license was renewed in January 2015 .

= = = Misdemeanors registry = = =

Kováč applied for a gun license renewal in accordance with the law . According to Kováč 's brother @-@ in @-@ law , neighbors , and a local policeman who had repeated contacts with him , Kováč

and his wife had committed misdemeanors against public order . The municipality of Uherský Brod , which deals with such misdemeanors , did not register them and thus Kovář had an apparently clean history . In turn , this satisfied the requirements and he had his license renewed .

The renewal of his license was due to the fact that while there is a central registry of crimes and of traffic misdemeanors , no such registry exists for other misdemeanors in the Czech Republic . In the case where a non @-@ traffic misdemeanor is solved on the spot ( e.g. fining by a policeman ) , no record of it is made . Only when the investigated person or the police refuse to deal with the misdemeanor on the spot , is an administrative proceeding before a municipal misdemeanor committee initiated and if convicted , then a record of it is made by the municipality .

The Czech government had made a decision to introduce a central registry for all misdemeanors in October 2014 , planning to have the system working within two years . As police are obliged to revoke a gun license when the licensee has committed more than one misdemeanor against public order in a period of three years , the central registry of misdemeanors might have allowed police to effectively revoke the license long before the murders .

= = = Health clearance = = =

At any time , the police may order a new health clearance inspection if they have a reasonable concern that the person is not healthy enough to continue holding their license .

According to the Uherský Brod mayor Patrik Kunar , Kovář 's family members tried to prevent Kovář from having the license renewed by pleading with his general practitioner not to grant him the necessary health clearance , since they felt threatened and considered him mentally unstable . Nevertheless , Kovář received clearance from his general practitioner and presented it as a part of his license renewal application on 19 January 2015 .

After renewing the license in January , the police were contacted by an unspecified person who reported to them on Kovář 's mental state . The police subsequently contacted Kovář 's general practitioner , and psychiatrist , and on 17 February 2015 ordered a health reevaluation . He received the letter on 19 February 2015 , four days before the murders . Under the law , Kovář was obliged to present a new health clearance within a month or lose the license . Czech media has speculated that the apparent attempt of the authorities to review Kovář 's mental state may have triggered the rampage .

A few days after the murders , the Ministry of Interior announced its deliberation about making the gun license registry accessible to psychiatrists in order to give them the ability to report to police possible changes of mental state of their patients having an impact on their eligibility to possess firearms . This was , however , rejected by psychiatric associations . They argued that psychiatrists ' main goal is to cure patients , and that potential patients may be more likely to avoid psychiatric treatment for fear of losing their gun license .

= = = Police response = = =

One of the main topics of debate after Kovář 's rampage became the way police dealt with him , especially whether the first two responding officers were , under the circumstances , supposed to immediately engage and neutralize the perpetrator , and whether the decision to wait for the arrival of the tactical unit was sound . The debate became more vocal after a cook , who managed to escape the rampage , claimed that she heard a slow series of single shots coming from the restaurant after the police had retreated . Another witness , who escaped unharmed , refuted this version of events , saying that shots were fired only during the initial ten minutes leading up to the point of police entry , with no shots heard thereafter .

Police said the first responders decided not to engage because they saw civilians lying and sitting in the line of fire between them and the perpetrator ; they didn 't know their status , and the perpetrator had taken cover behind a bar with only his head and hand holding the pistol visible . According to the Chief of the Zlín Regional Police Department , Jaromír Tkadlec , the Uherský Brod district units present had enough manpower and equipment , including select @-@ fire rifles ,

to engage Kováč? . However , they decided to withdraw due to the perpetrator 's claim of having hostages and stated intent to negotiate their release .

Apart from local units , a special ordnance unit was called in from its regional headquarters in Zlín . It arrived about 30 minutes later . Because there are eight tactical teams covering fourteen Czech regions and none in Zlín , a tactical team from Brno was called in . The team 's fifteen members reached the restaurant by cars in 66 minutes , opting not to use their helicopter that has a capacity of six . Furthermore , a paramilitary anti @-@ terrorist police URNA unit was called from Prague . However , its helicopters didn 't arrive before the end of the standoff . According to Tkadleček , even if URNA had its headquarters directly in Uherský Brod , it would not have changed anything about the timing nor the manner in which the police engaged Kováč? .

Zlín region politicians announced they would call for the establishment of a local tactical team . Meanwhile , the Minister of Interior commented that the police were already in the process of hiring 4 @, @ 000 new officers ( about 10 % of its total manpower ) , thus reversing cuts enacted by previous governments . Experts further pointed out the necessity to provide more CQB training to policemen in small municipalities and at rural areas . This type of training had until that point been largely aimed and directed at police officers in large towns .

On 10 March 2015 , weekly newspaper Respekt published more details of the police engagement . By chance , an emergency motorized police unit , which usually serve as immediate reinforcement to police officers in the field , was conducting exercises not far from Uherský Brod . The unit arrived within twenty minutes of the first emergency call . Heavily armed and well trained , their officer in charge gave order to immediately engage the perpetrator . Within a minute , the local police station chief arrived and ordered them to stand down , began securing the perimeter , gathering information , and preparing an engagement plan . Meanwhile , Kováč? called the emergency line 158 and mentioned he had five unharmed hostages and was demanding the presence of TV Prima . The officer in charge ordered the policemen to stand down just as they were about to enter the building in order to start negotiating . At that time , he could not have been aware of the status of victims inside . Fifteen minutes later , the Zlín region police chief arrived . In total , the command over the operation was passed between five people within the initial 40 minutes . The fact that the police rules allow passing of command during engagement had been condemned a week earlier by Member of Parliament Stanislav Huml , who pointed out to the Czech firemen 's rules , according to which the first person in charge at the place of engagement remains in charge even if a general happens to come to join an operation afterwards . He noted that the passing of command requires briefing which not only leads to loss of time , but often also to subsequent mistakes .

As of May 2015 , the only direct outcome of the inquiry into the police response to the shooting was lowering of wage of a dispatch officer , who advised the policemen on spot over the radio not to engage " so that nothing worse happens " .

In June 2015 , two members of the Security Committee of the Czech Parliament visited Uherský Brod and talked to multiple witnesses . The MPs issued a report condemning handling of the situation by the police . Among other issues , the MPs criticized that policemen parked their cars and put bullet proof vests on within the shooting range of the attacker , initially failed to get information from the witnesses and only later during the intervention attempted to contact them , didn 't cover the back exit and thus potentially allowed the perpetrator to get out of the object and jeopardize other people . The police even let a helicopter land within the shooting range of the attacker . According to MPs , the police left much to be desired in regards of communication and most importantly , they wrongly decided to believe the perpetrator 's claim of having hostage even though the witnesses could have readily confirmed that everyone inside was most likely dead . The policemen didn 't seal the vicinity of the attack until 1 pm and used civilian phones in communication with superior officers instead of using either their own phones or radio transmitters . Minister of Interior Chovanec commented that the MPs failed to interview the policemen and thus didn 't get all the relevant information .

= = = Gun politics = = =

In one of the first reactions on the day of the murders , before knowing whether Kováč possessed the guns he used legally , Minister of Interior Milan Chovanec stated that it was up to debate whether " [ the society ] wants to have so many gun license holders " .

Support for Chovanec 's comments was largely among members of parliament elected for the Communist Party . Others accused Chovanec of abusing the tragedy for his own political benefit . Some members of parliament , such as Miroslav Antl , Chairman of the Senate Constitutional Committee , commented that the licensing process is thorough enough , and pointed out that he considers carrying of concealed firearm as a necessity due to variety of reasons , especially in recent time also due to the rising threat of Islamist terrorist attacks . Roman Váňa , Chairman of the Parliamentary Security Committee and member of Chovanec 's own Social Democratic party , refused Chovanec 's argument , while some other members of parliament went in the opposite direction , claiming that there are too few armed people among the Czech population , since a single armed civilian might have stopped Kováč 's assault . The sentiment was shared also by , for example , Martin Koller , a former ambassador to Kuwait and Iraq , who said that an armed attacker may be stopped only by armed force , and who pointed out to a past well @-@ known Czech case of a machete attack and to the Charlie Hebdo shooting , stating that both might have ended quite differently had the victims been armed .

MF Dnes pointed out that despite the steady rise of firearm ownership in the country since abolition of restrictive Communist legislation after the Velvet Revolution , the number of intentional homicide victims has been steadily falling since its peak in 1994 .

During a press conference on 26 February 2015 , Chovanec introduced five areas that were to be scrutinized in connection with the Uherský Brod attack : the communication of national police with municipal authorities , possible changes in crisis plans , operational range of tactical teams , and enhanced training of policemen . Chovanec didn 't repeat his sentiment regarding the number of gun license holders , and instead specified that one of the issues to be analyzed will be the issuing and revocation of licenses under the existing legislation .

= = Reactions = =

Czech Minister of Interior Milan Chovanec said on Twitter that the shooting was not a terrorist incident but actions of a " crazed individual " .

Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka , who was on a trip to South Korea at the time , said in a statement , " I am shocked by the tragic attack that happened today in Uherský Brod . I would like to express my deepest sorrow and condolences to the families and relatives of the victims . " Uherský Brod mayor Patrik Kunžar also said , " I 'm shaken to the core by this incident . I could not have dreamed something like this could happen here , in a restaurant that I 'm so familiar with . "

The day after the murders , hundreds of people gathered in front of the Družba restaurant and lit candles to honor the victims .