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Manhunt Underway for Former US Soldier Accused in Montana Bar Shooting That Killed Four

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— Categories: Crime



Authorities in western Montana are searching for Michael Paul Brown, a 45-year-old military veteran, who is suspected of shooting and killing four people at a local bar around 10:30 a.m. on Friday. Police say Brown is armed and extremely dangerous, and they are urging people in the area to stay inside for their safety.

The tragic shooting occurred at **The Owl Bar** in **Anaconda**, a small mountain town about **25 miles northwest of Butte**. Investigators say **Brown** drove away from the scene in a **white pickup truck**, which he later **abandoned**. This led to a **lockdown** in the **Stumptown Road area** as police launched a major search using **both ground teams and helicopters**.

Lee Johnson, administrator of the Montana Division of Criminal Investigation, confirmed that Brown is the sole suspect and emphasized the seriousness of the situation. “While law enforcement has not received reports of Brown harming any other individuals, he is believed to be armed, and he is extremely dangerous,” Johnson said during a briefing late Friday.

As of Friday night, the names of the victims had not been publicly released. Officials are waiting until all next of kin have been notified before sharing further details. Johnson noted the impact the incident has had on the community. “This is a small, tight-knit community that has been harmed by the heinous actions of one individual who does not represent what this community or Montanans stand for,” he said.

Anaconda, home to about 9,000 residents, was historically known for its mining operations and the now-defunct copper smelter stack that still looms over the valley. The town, known for its peaceful atmosphere, was rocked by the violence. Businesses closed their doors as word of the shooting spread, and residents took shelter indoors.

Bar owner David Gwerder confirmed that Brown lived right next door to the establishment. Gwerder was not present during the shooting but said the victims included a bartender and three patrons. He expressed disbelief over the events, stating he was unaware of any disputes between Brown and those killed. “He knew everybody that was in that bar. I guarantee you that,” Gwerder told the Associated Press. “He didn’t have any running disputes with any of them. I just think he snapped.”

Military service records show that Brown served in the United States Army from 2001 to 2005 as an armor crewman and deployed to Iraq between early 2004 and March 2005. He later joined the Montana National Guard, serving until 2009. He held the rank of sergeant at the time of his discharge.

His family echoed concerns about Brown’s mental health. Clare Boyle, his niece, told the Associated Press that Brown had battled mental illness for years, with family members often trying to get him help. “This isn’t just a drunk/high man going wild,” she wrote in a Facebook

message. “It’s a sick man who doesn’t know who he is sometimes and frequently doesn’t know where or when he is either.”

With no signs of Brown at his residence or in the abandoned vehicle, law enforcement teams have focused their search on a wooded area west of Anaconda. A helicopter was seen circling above the terrain as officers moved through dense forest. Retired police officer Randy Clark, a resident of the area, described the heavy police presence around his home.

Local business owners reacted swiftly to the incident. Barbie Nelson, who owns Firefly Café in Anaconda, said she locked up after a friend called her with news of the shooting. “We are Montana, so guns are not new to us,” she said. “For our town to be locked down, everybody’s pretty rattled.”

The investigation remains active, and authorities are urging anyone with information on Brown’s whereabouts to contact law enforcement immediately.