

# Shooter of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson remains at-large

Kevin Reed

5 December 2024

New York City police investigators are continuing their search for the gunman who ambushed and fatally shot the CEO of UnitedHealthcare Brian Thompson on a sidewalk in midtown Manhattan at dawn on Wednesday.

A report by ABC News on Thursday evening said police “appear to be closing in on” the identity of the masked suspect who was captured on surveillance video firing multiple shots from a 9mm handgun into Thompson as he walked toward a hotel entrance to attend a corporate investor conference.

Authorities released several new photos and videos of the suspect—including two that show his face—taken by various surveillance cameras, indicating that his movements before and after the shooting are being pieced together by police.

The ABC News report said, “Authorities on Thursday released images of the suspect taken from a surveillance camera at the HI New York City Hostel at West 103rd Street on the Upper West Side, where it appears the suspect shared a room with two other men, according to police sources.”

Police detectives have determined that the shooter checked into the hostel using a New Jersey license that did not belong to him. Surveillance video also shows someone “who appears to be the subject leaving a 57th Street subway station near the crime scene just before the shooting,” police told ABC News.

Video images also show the masked suspect in a Starbucks on 56th Street, then walking along 55th Street and finally near a parking lot on 54th Street, not far from the location and 15 minutes prior to the shooting.

After he gunned down Thompson at 6:44 a.m., the shooter was seen riding an e-bicycle north into Central Park and another released video shows what appears to

be the suspect riding west out of Central Park on 85th Street. As of this writing, no further information about the whereabouts of the suspect has been released from that point forward.

Police reported they found a water bottle and protein bar wrapper inside a trash can near the shooting that they say the gunman purchased from the Starbucks. These items are being examined by the city’s crime lab for DNA and fingerprints.

The Associated Press reported that New York City police have, “also used drones, helicopters and dogs in an intensive search for the killer, while also interviewing Thompson’s coworkers, searching his hotel room and scouring his social media,” as part of the manhunt for the shooter.

Although a motive remains unknown, important evidence recovered from the scene of the crime points to a possible connection between the shooting and opposition to the practices of health insurance companies. Shell casings and bullets found by police had the words, “deny,” “defend” and “depose” written on them with a Sharpie pen.

An earlier report by ABC News said the words written on the ammunition are “similar to the phrase ‘delay, deny, defend’—the way some attorneys describe how insurers deny services and payment, and the title of a 2010 book that was highly critical of the industry.”

More details about Brian Thompson and his role at UnitedHealthcare have been revealed. The *New York Times* reported that the insurance subsidiary of UnitedHealth Group run by Thompson generated \$281 billion in revenue last year, “providing coverage to millions of Americans through the health plans it sold to individuals, employers and people under government programs like Medicare. The division employed roughly 140,000 people.”

After he assumed the top position at UnitedHealthcare in 2021, Thompson oversaw an increase in the profits of the health insurance giant from \$12 billion to \$16 billion in 2023. Thompson received \$10.2 million in executive compensation in 2023.

The *Times* report continued,

He oversaw significant growth in one of the company's key businesses, the sale of private insurance plans under Medicare Advantage, a program mainly for those 65 and older that receives federal funds and now covers roughly half of the 61 million people signing up.

“He sure as heck had a lot of role in the proliferation of Medicare Advantage,” said Matt Burns, a former United executive who spent several years working for Mr. Thompson, whom colleagues knew as BT.

Stephan Meier, the chair of the management division at Columbia Business School, told the *Times* that the attack could send shock waves through broader health insurance industry.

Meier said, “The insurance industry is not the most loved, to put it mildly. If you're a C-suite executive of another insurance company, I would be thinking, What's this mean for me? Am I next?”

UnitedHealthcare is notorious for its algorithm-driven denials of insurance claims. A report by *Forbes* on Thursday said that the company has the highest rate of claims denials, “refusing an estimated one-third of claims submitted.”

A search of “Brian Thompson” on X (formerly Twitter) yields a torrent of unsympathetic comments and denunciations of the victim, UnitedHealthcare and the corporate health insurance industry more broadly.

For example, Anthony Zenkus, a professor at Columbia and Adelphi universities, posted, “Today, we mourn the death of United Healthcare CEO Brian Thompson, gunned down.... wait, I'm sorry—today we mourn the deaths of the 68,000 Americans who needlessly die each year so that insurance company execs like Brian Thompson can become multimillionaires.”

Another post on TikTok said, “I'm an ER nurse and

the things I've seen dying patients get denied for by insurance makes me physically sick. I just can't feel sympathy for him because of all of those patients and their families.”

The lack of sympathy and, in some cases, enthusiasm for the death of Brian Thompson reflects the widespread revulsion of the public for the corporate and financial interests that control the health insurance and health care industries. The practices of UnitedHealth Group, which have generated billions of dollars for the corporate executives and Wall Street investors while denying urgent and life-saving services and treatments to patients, are not fundamentally the product of the decisions and actions of individuals but are rooted in the profit system.

The criminal policies of corporations like UnitedHealthcare cannot be stopped through individual acts of violence against their executives. The crisis of health care facing masses of people can only be solved by putting an end to the capitalist system. This task requires the building of a socialist movement and the establishment of a workers' government that will establish a public health care system based on human need and not profit.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**