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6.45pm GMT

Finnish school gunman 'chatted with US student'

Haroon Siddique and agencies

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A US teenager who admitted plotting a school attack chatted online with a Finnish 18-year-old who last week killed eight people and then himself, the American boy's lawyer said today.

Finnish police said material seized from the computer of Pekka-Eric Auvinen suggested he had communicated online with Dillon Cossey, 14, who was arrested in October for allegedly preparing an attack at Plymouth Whitemarsh High School in suburban Philadelphia.

Auvinen went on a killing spree last Wednesday at his high school in southern Finland after first announcing the bloodbath with a video posted on the internet site YouTube.

Cossey's attorney, J David Farrell, said he showed Auvinen's online screen name to his client today and the teen remembered communicating with him about the 1999 Columbine massacre in Colorado, in which two students

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killed 13 people before fatally shooting themselves.

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"They had discussed certain video games and shared videos with each other," Farrell said. "Obviously, Columbine was a shared topic of interest."

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But Cossey was "horrified" when he found out about the attack in Finland, said Farrell. "My client didn't encourage him in any way," the lawyer said. "He had no indication that somebody he was communicating with actually was formulating an intent to commit a violent act."

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Auvinen's YouTube posting showed a still of his school, which broke apart to reveal a red-tinted man pointing a handgun at the camera.

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The video was dubbed with a song called Stray Bullet by rock band KMFDM, the lyrics of which were also posted on the website of Eric Harris, one of the Columbine gunmen.

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Police in Finland described Auvinen as a bullied teenage outcast consumed with anger against society.

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