

Initial official story on police response to Uvalde shooting crumbles

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More evidence and new witnesses continue to undermine the accounts given by Uvalde police and Texas state officials about the course of events and the actions taken during the horrific massacre of 19 school children and two teachers at Robb Elementary School on May 24.

A funeral home worker whose workplace is across the street from the school told Telemundo and NBC News Sunday that after he had seen the gunman enter the school with an assault rifle, he had armed himself and was prepared to charge into the school after him but was stopped by police who had cordoned off the building.

Cody Briseno saw the shooter, Salvador Ramos, crash his pickup truck outside the school, and he and a co-worker went to help him. They retreated after seeing the youth was loading his AR-15 assault rifle, and went back inside their workplace.

Briseno called his wife and asked her to bring his gun from home. Once armed, he marched toward the school. He told NBC that a police officer asked him what he was doing, and he responded, “I’m going to go in and try to stop them,” telling the policeman the gunman was already inside the school. The cop told him to stay back and shut up.

The funeral home worker has since given a statement to the Texas Rangers, the agency that is investigating the police response to the Uvalde massacre.

Other accounts confirm that the main concern of the police officials on the scene appeared to be controlling the crowd of parents outside the school and pushing them back, along with the press, not rushing the school to stop the gunman’s rampage. Ramos was not confronted by police and shot dead until 77 minutes after the first police unit arrived outside Robb Elementary.

This policy contradicts standard police doctrine for an active shooter, where the usual tactic is to rush in immediately with whatever officers and equipment are on hand so as to disrupt the attack before it can claim more lives.

This is what is taught in active shooter classes in most police departments including in Texas, where the manual on shootings, released in 2020, declares: “A first responder unwilling to place the lives of the innocent above their own safety should consider another career field.”

This was certainly the attitude of many parents, who were prevented by police from running into the school to save their children with some even being tackled, but apparently not that of the 19 officers, all of whom were required to take the course, or of the men giving them their orders.

After the shooting at Sandy Hook elementary school in 2012, the FBI was given jurisdiction over mass shootings and developed a series of FBI initiatives to train police agencies on how to respond including the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (Alertt) program, which was developed in Texas.

Uvalde Consolidated Independent School District Police Chief Pete Arredondo took the most recent shooter training courses in December 2021. According to the district police’s Facebook page, the department hosted active shooter training at Uvalde High School in March as well, with the post reading, “Our overall goal is to train every Uvalde area law enforcement officer so that we can prepare as best as possible for any situation that may arise.”

The current official explanation for why the police waited is hard to believe. According to the new official story, police were ordered by Arredondo, the incident commander, not to go in because he was treating the

situation as a hostage situation. Believing there was “no risk to other children,” he was waiting for more officers to show up and until they could get a key to the classroom and body armor.

The first call from the child trapped in the classroom came in just after noon. But the 19 officers on scene waited for 47 minutes in the hallway outside the classroom in question until 12:50, at which point federal and local officers finally confronted Ramos and shot him. Additional calls were received from children inside the classroom with some pleading for intervention from the police. All the victims fatally shot were in the classroom in question.

This explanation is only the latest in a series of shifting and contradictory stories emerging from local and state police authorities.

Initially, Texas Department of Public Safety Director Steven McCraw said that following an armed confrontation between a school police officer and soon-to-be mass shooter, 18-year-old Salvador Ramos, a teacher left a back door propped open allowing access to the school building. Ramos then proceeded to go on a shooting rampage until stopped by a team of Uvalde police officers who “immediately breached, because we know as officers, every second’s a life.”

Every element of this has proven untrue. There was no school police officer, and Ramos did not confront one before entering the building. The police did not “immediately” breach but waited more than an hour.

The shooter was not let in by a careless teacher. The Texas Department of Public Safety stated the teacher did close the door and that they had video evidence from inside the school proving this. The teacher herself had made this information public via her attorney, following the accusation she didn’t close the door. The door did not lock, a defect that the TDPS is now investigating.

The police story later shifted to there being a delay of 40 minutes to an hour before Ramos was killed by a Border Patrol tactical unit, but still claiming they intervened immediately and that this “saved other kids,” claiming they kept Ramos “pinned down.”

Texas Governor Gregg Abbott repeated the same claims, claiming officers showed “amazing courage by running towards gunfire for the singular purpose of trying to save lives.”

There are now claims that Arredondo was not

informed about calls that the Uvalde Police Department, separate from his small six-man school unit, was receiving, apparently because of a “system failure” to relay information from one unit to the other.

Abbott has promised an investigation into the shooting to find “exactly who knew what, when, who was in charge” and what they did, claiming, “The bottom line would be: why did they not choose the strategy that would have been best to get in there and to eliminate the killer and to rescue the children?”

TDPS investigators have claimed that the Uvalde School District police chief isn’t cooperating. The Justice Department is conducting a Critical Incident Review of the shooting as well. These investigations will like others of their type seek to exonerate the police force as a whole, and perhaps scapegoat one or another individual actors.

While the official story on what happened is still murky, if anything has been made clear it is that the actions of the police have severely undermined the claims by the political establishment and the corporate media that the answer to school shootings is deploying more police and militarizing the schools even more.

What is consistently ignored in the massive media reporting of the Uvalde massacre, and similar horrors, are the social roots of the violence. The US is a sick society, a country led by a ruling class that has been at war constantly for over 30 years, routinely summarily executes 1,000 people a year in police killings, has sacrificed more than 1 million people’s lives in the pandemic just to keep Wall Street profiting, and is now recklessly escalating the war with Russia, threatening a nuclear holocaust.

It is in this context that these shootings take place, and any real attempt to address them must address the underlying causes of this crisis in the capitalist system itself.



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