

As father of Robb Elementary student tells CNN police continue to harass parents

## Justice Department review continues cover-up of law enforcement failures in Uvalde, Texas school massacre

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On Thursday, the US Department of Justice (DOJ) released a 575-page review of the mass shooting at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas on May 22, 2022, in which 19 students and two adults were killed and 17 others were injured.

The DOJ's Critical Incident Review (CIR) is an analysis of the response of law enforcement agencies and individual personnel who allowed an 18-year-old gunman with a semiautomatic rifle to remain inside a pair of connected classrooms full of 9- and 10-year-old students for 77 minutes without intervening to stop the shooting rampage.

When the police finally entered the classroom, they confronted and killed the shooter, Salvador Ramos. But their delay enabled the gunman to continue firing his AR-15-style weapon at terrified students and adults. The DOJ report prominently includes the cries for help from the children, who called 911 during the massacre. In one case, a child pleaded, "I don't want to die. My teacher is dead."

No one has been prosecuted for the criminally negligent police response and only a handful of police have been fired. This de facto impunity has allowed police who were involved in the failure to stop the gunman for more than an hour to continue harassing parents in Uvalde 20 months after the event.

Following the release of the DOJ report, CNN reporter Jim Acosta interviewed Miguel Cerrillo, whose daughter was in one of the classrooms attacked by the gunman and survived. Cerrillo said:

Like I said, it's hard for us every day to see these officers still in the street patrolling and still harassing us every day for no reason. They're just pulling us over for, for no reason. And they still have, they still having them running around in the streets, you know, and not doing nothing, just harassing people...

We got a few families, including myself... They just pull us over for no reason, telling us to leave Uvalde, telling us all sorts of stuff, because they know that the truth was going to come out, and they didn't want us here.

The primary conclusion of the Critical Incident Review, which is based on more than 14,000 documents and 260 interviews, is that there were "cascading failures of leadership, decision-making, tactics, policy and training," at Robb Elementary School on that day.

The most significant failure, according to the review, "was that responding officers should have immediately recognized the incident as an active shooter situation, using the resources and equipment that were sufficient to push forward immediately and continuously toward the threat until entry was made into classrooms 111/112 and the threat was eliminated."

The review further states that the 77-minute gap between "when officers first arrived on the scene and when they finally confronted and killed the subject" was due to the fact that school district police chief Pete Arredondo treated the incident "as a barricaded subject

scenario and not as an active shooter situation.”

The DOJ document is divided into eight chapters that review in great detail the timeline of the massacre, the tactics and equipment used by law enforcement during its response, the police leadership and command, the post-incident response and investigation, official communications with the public after the crisis, and other issues. In all of these areas, there were colossal failures by the nearly 400 law enforcement officers on the scene.

However, this conclusion is not new. The DOJ document provides a new level of detail, but it breaks little new ground beyond the analysis of the mass death that occurred on May 22, 2022 previously made by the Texas House of Representatives in a 77-page report issued two months after the shooting.

US Attorney General Merrick Garland appeared before the media on Thursday in Uvalde. In prepared remarks, he said the law enforcement response was “a failure that should not have happened,” and went on to describe the chaos and confusion that prevailed on the scene during the shooting.

Garland said that because officers treated the shooter as a barricaded subject, “officials prioritized a protracted evacuation of students and teachers in other classrooms,” and attempted “to negotiate with the subject instead of trying to enter the rooms and confront him.”

The attorney general added that “Lives would have been saved, and people would have survived” if officers had acted quickly to confront the gunman.

This, however, is a description of what happened, not an explanation. It serves far more to cover up the reasons for the failures that occurred than to uncover both the motives of those who failed to halt the killings and the deeper causes of their criminally indifferent response. For the most part, moreover, it avoids naming names and holding to account those responsible.

After nearly 20 months and the publication by Texas and the US government of extensive analyses, not a single person has been prosecuted for what happened that day. No political figures or government officials have suffered any consequences.

This horrific tragedy took place under conditions where, according to the American Civil Liberties Union, the US Defense Department has provided \$7 billion in military hardware to nearly 10,000 federal, state and local police organizations—including combat vehicles, rifles, military helmets and so-called “non-” or “less-lethal” weapons—since 1996.

The beefing up of police departments is driven entirely

by preparations to suppress mass political opposition in the working class to corporate and government attacks on social conditions and basic rights, and not the safety of the public.

Meanwhile, the carnage from school shootings and active shooter events continues across the country on a near-daily basis.

It is notable that the DOJ review uncovered the fact that schools police chief Arredondo, who was the “de facto on-scene incident commander,” had been provided with incorrect active shooter training, which “seemed to suggest, inappropriately” that an active shooter situation could become a barricaded subject situation.

After scores of school shootings, going back to the deadly Columbine High School shooting in 1999 that resulted in 15 deaths, how is it possible that such an error could be made?

As explained by David North in the WSWS one week after the Columbine shooting, the source of such horrific events cannot be established by treating them in isolation. Rather they must be seen as toxic expressions of the more fundamental social and political dysfunction of American society.

As North wrote:

Vital indicators of impending disaster might include: growing polarization between wealth and poverty; atomization of working people and the suppression of their class identity; the glorification of militarism and war; the absence of serious social commentary and political debate; the debased state of popular culture; the worship of the stock exchange; the unrestrained celebration of individual success and personal wealth; the denigration of the ideals of social progress and equality.

Nearly a quarter-century later, the truth of this social diagnosis has been more than borne out.



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