

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Local residents express anger and frustration as police detail new timeline of mass shooting



Law enforcement gathered outside of Robb Elementary School on May 26 in Uvalde, Texas.

PHOTO: TAMIR KALIFA FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

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UVALDE, Texas—Local residents voiced anger Thursday about the time it took to end the mass shooting at an elementary school here, as police laid out a fresh timeline that showed the gunman entered the building unobstructed after lingering outside for 12 minutes firing shots.

Victor Escalon, a regional director for the Texas Department of Public Safety, gave a new timeline of how the now-deceased gunman, 18-year-old Salvador Ramos, walked into Robb Elementary School, barricaded himself in a classroom and killed 19 children and two teachers.

Mr. Escalon said he couldn't say why no one stopped Ramos from entering the school during that time Tuesday. Most of the shots Ramos fired came during the first several minutes after he entered the school, Mr. Escalon said.

People who arrived at the school while Ramos locked himself in a classroom, or saw videos of police waiting outside, were furious.

“The police were doing nothing,” said Angeli Rose Gomez, who after learning about the shooting drove 40 miles to Robb Elementary, where her children are in second and third grade. “They were just standing outside the fence. They weren’t going in there or running anywhere.”

Mr. Escalon said officers inside the school were evacuating students and school employees from the premises, as well as calling for backup. “There’s a lot going on,” he said.

Department of Public Safety officials previously said an armed school officer confronted Ramos as he arrived at the school. Mr. Escalon said Thursday that information was incorrect and no one encountered Ramos as he arrived at the school. “There was not an officer readily available and armed,” Mr. Escalon said.

Ramos shot his grandmother Tuesday morning and drove her truck to Robb Elementary School, crashing the vehicle into a nearby ditch at 11:28 a.m., according to the timeline laid out by Mr. Escalon. He then began shooting at people at a funeral home across the street, prompting a 911 call reporting a gunman at the school at 11:30. Ramos climbed a chain-link fence about 8 feet high onto school grounds and began firing before walking inside, unimpeded, at 11:40. The first police arrived on the scene at 11:44 and exchanged gunfire with Ramos, who locked himself in a fourth-grade classroom. There, he killed the students and teachers.

A Border Patrol tactical team went into the school an hour later, around 12:40 p.m., and was able to get into the classroom and kill Ramos, Mr. Escalon said.



Kaitlyn Martinez, 10, said three police officers eventually came to the door of her classroom, which was near the one in which the now-deceased gunman locked himself.

PHOTO: ALICIA A. CALDWELL THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Kaitlyn Martinez, a fourth-grader at Robb Elementary, was playing with other kids during recess when Ramos first appeared on school grounds with an AR-15 style rifle.

“We all ran in and they told us to sit down and they turned off the lights and locked the door,” the 10-year-old said, holding back tears, as she laid flowers with her family at a makeshift memorial for victims in downtown Uvalde.

Kaitlyn said three police officers eventually came to the door of her room, which was near the one in which Ramos locked himself. “They told us there was a gunman, so we had to evacuate and we all had to run to the parking spaces,” she recalled.

Outside she found her mother, Gladys Castillon, who had been pleading with police to act more aggressively to end the standoff as she waited.

Ms. Gomez, a farm supervisor, was also waiting outside for her children. She said she was one of numerous parents who began encouraging—first politely, and then with more urgency—police and other law enforcement to enter the school sooner. After a few minutes, she said, U.S. Marshals put her in handcuffs, telling her she was being arrested for intervening in an active investigation.

Photos: Texas School Shooting Plunges Community Into Grief

The people of Uvalde, Texas, mourned the loss of 19 students and two teachers at Robb Elementary School, who were killed by an 18-year-old man who opened ire



A family visited a makeshift memorial on May 26 in Uvalde, Texas. TAMIR KALIFA FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Ms. Gomez said she convinced local Uvalde police officers whom she knew to persuade the marshals to set her free.

A spokesman for the U.S. Marshals Service said deputy marshals never placed anyone in handcuffs while securing Robb Elementary's perimeter. "Our deputy marshals maintained order and peace in the midst of the grief-stricken community that was gathering around the school," he said.

Ms. Gomez described the scene as frantic. She said she saw a father tackled and thrown to the ground by police and a third pepper-sprayed. Once freed from her cuffs, Ms. Gomez made her distance from the crowd, jumped the school fence, and ran inside to grab her two children. She sprinted out of the school with them.

Videos circulated on social media Wednesday and Thursday of frantic family members trying to get access to Robb Elementary as the attack was unfolding, some of them yelling at police who blocked them from entering.

"Shoot him or something!" a woman's voice can be heard yelling on a video, before a man is heard saying about the officers, "They're all just [expletive] parked outside, dude. They need to go in there."

The videos were collected by Storyful, a social-media research company owned by News Corp, parent company of The Wall Street Journal.

Bob Estrada lives directly across the street from the school, which his grandson attends. The 77-year-old said he and his wife walked outside when they heard gunshots and were confused why the police who arrived didn't immediately enter.

"They are trying to cover something up," he said of the information released Thursday. "I think the cops were waiting for backup because they didn't want to go into the school." The Uvalde Police Department couldn't be reached for comment.

Asked at the press conference why law enforcement weren't able to respond in the initial 12 minutes Ramos was outside the school, Mr. Escalon said that was part of the investigation. "Our job is to report the facts and have answers. We're not there yet," he said.

Mr. Escalon also said police aren't sure how Ramos was able to enter the school building. "We will find out more about why it was unlocked—or maybe it was locked—but right now it appears that it was unlocked," he said.

Jay Martin, who lives four blocks from Robb Elementary and walked there after hearing gunfire, said the police's timeline doesn't match what he saw in person and online.

"Nothing is adding up," he said. "People are just really frustrated because no one is coming out and telling us the real truth of what went down."

But Danny Ruiz, whose great-niece died in the attack, said he arrived at the school after hearing gunfire and felt grateful for the police response.

"The Border Patrol agent who took him out, to me, that guy is a hero," said Mr. Ruiz, 51.

After the confrontation at the school ended with Ramos dead, school buses began to arrive to transport students from the school, according to Ms. Gomez. She said she saw police use a Taser on a local father who approached the bus to collect his child.

"They didn't do that to the shooter, but they did that to us. That's how it felt," Ms. Gomez said.

Thursday's expressions of frustration came after more than 1,000 people from this grieving city gathered Wednesday night for [a prayer vigil](#).

"God is here with us tonight," Pastor Tony Gruben, of Baptist Temple Church, told the people gathered at the Uvalde County Fairplex. "God still loves you and God still loves those little children."

Local residents packed the stands, spilled into the aisles and stood on the dirt rodeo floor where the ministers preached from a stage under flags of Texas and the U.S. White cowboy hats dotted the audience along with scores of maroon T-shirts that said "Uvalde Coyotes," the high school mascot.

President Biden and first lady Jill Biden will travel to Uvalde on Sunday to grieve with the community, the White House said.

—*Alicia A. Caldwell and Sadie Gurman contributed to this article.*

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Corrections & Amplifications

A fourth-grader said three police officers came to the door of her room, which was near the one in which Salvador Ramos locked himself. An earlier version of this article incorrectly said her room was next to the one in which Ramos locked himself. (Corrected on May 26) Kaitlyn Martinez laid

flowers with her family at a makeshift memorial for victims in downtown Uvalde. An earlier version of this article incorrectly said she laid a wreath. (Corrected on May 27)

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