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EXCLUSIVE



Surveillance camera video, obtained by the Austin American-Statesman and KVUE, shows the confusion inside Robb Elementary School as police stand outside classrooms. SCREENGAB

ABORTION DEBATE

Coalition asks for response from UT

School urged to 'protect reproductive rights'

Megan Menchaca

Austin American-Statesman
USA TODAY NETWORK

University of Texas student leaders want campus officials to "protect reproductive rights" and take action in response to the overturning of Roe v. Wade and the ban on abortion in Texas.

A statement released Tuesday by the student-run UT Coalition for Reproductive Justice and Rights includes a series of demands, including calling for UT's leadership to expand sex education and reproductive health care resources, support adding an emergency contraceptive vending machine on campus and advocate for reproductive health care access.

"We unequivocally support reproductive rights, justice, and autonomy for all. The right to control our bodies and the ability to make healthcare decisions that should be private should not belong to any government or anyone other than ourselves," the statement said. "We stand in solidarity with all abortion-seekers affected by this decision."

Sameeha Rizvi, vice president of the student-run UT Senate, said the coalition published the statement to emphasize "the lack of response from the university" to the overturning of Roe v. Wade. She said students believed that collective action would help persuade UT to potentially take action on the demands.

"We wanted to really highlight the ongoing issues that we at UT face while Roe v Wade is overturned," Rizvi said. "The situation will not be easy, and it's unfortunate that we have to be the ones to lead this and push for this, but it's important that we do so, and it's just the start of a bigger movement to come in the upcoming year."

A UT spokesperson did not respond to a request for comment on this story.

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Students are pressing the University of Texas to support abortion rights.

JACK MYER/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

Video reveals details

Footage documents officers' delayed response to Uvalde school shooting

Tony Plohetski

Austin American-Statesman
USA TODAY NETWORK

The gunman walks into Robb Elementary School unimpeded, moments after spraying bullets from his semi-automatic rifle outside the building and after desperate calls to 911 from inside and outside the Uvalde school.

He slows down to peek around a corner in the hallway and flips back his hair before proceeding toward classrooms III and II2.

Seconds later, a boy with neatly combed hair and glasses exits the bathroom to head back to his class. As he begins to turn the corner, he notices the gunman standing by the classroom

door and then firing his first barrage.

The boy turns and runs back into the bathroom.

The gunman enters one of the classrooms. Children scream. The gunfire continues, stops, then starts again. Stops, then starts again. And again. And again.

It is almost three minutes before three officers arrive in the same hallway and rush toward the classrooms, crouching down. Then, a burst of gunfire. One officer grabs the back of his head. They quickly retreat to the end of the hallway, just below a school surveillance camera.

A 77-minute video recording

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Exclusive

View the video with this story on statesman.com.

The video tells in real time the brutal story of how heavily armed officers failed to immediately launch a cohesive, aggressive response to stop the shooter and save more children if possible.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Why we chose to publish video from inside Robb Elementary

Manny Garcia

Austin American-Statesman
USA TODAY NETWORK

The American-Statesman is publishing a video account of the delayed police response at Uvalde's Robb Elementary School after a gunman walked into two classrooms and killed 19 children and their two teachers.

The video that we obtained is one hour and 22 minutes long. It is tragic to listen to and watch. Our decision to publish, along with our news partner, KVUE, comes after long and thoughtful discussions.

The Statesman is publishing two versions of the video, one that we edited to just over four minutes and highlights critical moments: the ease of gunman entering the school, how

he shot his way into the classroom, the repeated sound of gunfire, and then the delay by police to stop the killer for 77 minutes as dozens of heavily armed officers stage in the school hallway before a group finally storms the classroom and kill the gunman.

We are also publishing the entire

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Seventh hearing held

Cheney says former President Trump attempted to contact Jan. 6 witness. 4A

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Video

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captured from this vantage point, along with body camera footage from one of the responding officers, obtained by the American-Statesman and KVUE, shows in excruciating detail dozens of sworn officers, local, state and federal — heavily armed, clad in body armor, with helmets, some with protective shields — walking back and forth in the hallway, some leaving the camera frame and then re-appearing, others training their weapons toward the classroom, talking, making cellphone calls, sending texts and looking at floor plans, but not entering or attempting to enter the classrooms.

The Statesman is publishing an edited version of the video to show how the law enforcement response unfolded.

Even after hearing at least four additional shots from the classrooms 45 minutes after police arrived on the scene, the officers waited.

They asked for keys to one of the classrooms. (It was unlocked, investigators said later.) They brought tear gas and gas masks. They later carried a sledgehammer. And still, they waited.

Officers finally rushed into the classroom and killed the gunman an hour and 14 minutes after police first arrived on the scene. Nineteen fourth graders and their two teachers died in the massacre on May 24, days before the end of the school year.

The video tells in real time the brutal story of how heavily armed officers failed to immediately launch a cohesive and aggressive response to stop the shooter and save more children if possible. And it reinforces the trauma of those parents, friends and bystanders who were outside the school and pleaded with police to do something, and for those survivors who quietly called 911 from inside the classroom to beg for help.

Texas Department of Public Safety Director Steve McCraw has said that the person he identified as the incident commander, school district Police Chief Pete Arredondo, treated the situation as a barricaded subject, which calls for a slower, methodical response, not an active shooter situation, in which police are charged with doing anything possible to stop a gunman, including putting their own lives on the line. That was a mistake, McCraw has said. Officers should have confronted the gunman as soon as they arrived, carrying enough firepower to breach the classroom and stop the shooting, McCraw has said.

McCraw has singled out Arredondo for blame in restraining officers from going in earlier than they did. But the video shows multiple responding agencies on the scene, including officers from the Uvalde Police Department, Uvalde County sheriff's department, Texas Department of Public Safety, Texas Rangers, U.S. Border Patrol and U.S. Marshals Service.

The video file obtained by the Statesman, part of the investigative file, includes security video footage from a nearby funeral home showing the gunman arrive at the school by wrecking a pickup in a ditch, and includes audio of 911 calls and officers speaking in the hallway, as well as the sound of gunfire.



Flowers and crosses cover the front lawn at Robb Elementary, where 19 children and two teachers were gunned down on May 24.

AARON E. MARTINEZ/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

More gunshots and more delays

At 12:21 p.m., 45 minutes after police first arrived on the scene, four shots are heard and at least a dozen officers move toward the classroom.

An officer can be heard saying, "They're making entry."

Yet they do not.

At 12:30, an officer wearing a helmet and bal-

listic vest pauses to squirt hand sanitizer from a wall-mounted dispenser and rubs his hands together. Other armed officers walk back and forth, and discuss the classroom doors and windows. The hunt for the keys continues. One officer eventually brings a sledgehammer. The audio from the surveillance camera at times is garbled, but it is loud in the crowded hallway.

At 12:41, a man wearing blue rubber gloves and a black shirt, khaki pants and a black baseball cap, with a stethoscope around his neck, arrives and speaks to officers. Other paramedics arrive with supplies. Two officers in camouflage fist-bump each other.

At 12:50, a cadre of officers crouches outside the classroom. A burst of gunfire is heard, and the video ends. Authorities have

said a Border Patrol officer killed the gunman. Investigators are awaiting the results of an analysis from an Austin-based medical expert on how many victims died after police first arrived.

Officials debate video release

The video has been the subject of an intense political debate, with Gov. Greg Abbott and the Uvalde mayor urging its public release and the Uvalde County district attorney opposing releasing it, apparently citing an active investigation into the shooting.

State Rep. Dustin Burrows, a Republican from Lubbock and the chairman of the House committee investigating the shooting, said Tuesday that the committee plans to show the hallway video to members of the Uvalde community on Sunday, as well as discuss the panel's preliminary report. He then plans to release both to the public.

The video that the House committee will make available will not include footage of the gunman walking into the school and the view from

the hallway of the gunman initially firing his way into the classrooms. The video the Statesman obtained includes that footage. Neither version shows children, teachers or the gunman being shot.

Those seeking video's public release say it will bring clarity to the families of victims and others in Uvalde traumatized by the shooting, especially after state leaders, including Gov. Greg Abbott, presented shifting accounts of the police response.

Further obscuring the truth of what happened May 24, local, state and federal officials have denied requests to release documents that could shed light on the police response, including 911 call transcripts, body camera footage, communications among law enforcement officers and arrest records from that day. They have appealed to the office of Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton.

Meanwhile, anger boiled over at a Sunday night march and rally in Uvalde for greater gun restrictions, with some residents saying they no longer trust the local authorities and demanding answers.

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