

# Texas top cop: Police could've ended rampage early on

BY JIM VERTUNO AND JAKE BLEIBERG

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — Police had enough officers on the scene of the Uvalde school massacre to have stopped the gunman three minutes after he entered the building, and they would have found the door to the classroom where he was holed up unlocked if they had bothered to check it, the head of the Texas state police testified Tuesday, June 21, pronouncing the law enforcement response an “abject failure.”

Officers with rifles instead stood in a hallway for over an hour, waiting in part for more firepower and other gear, before they finally stormed the classroom and killed the gunman, putting an end to the May 24 attack that left 19 children and two teachers dead.

“I don’t care if you have on flip-flops and Bermuda shorts, you go in,” Col. Steve McCraw, director of the Texas Department of Public Safety, said in blistering testimony at a state Senate hearing.

The classroom door, it turned out, could not be locked from the inside, according to McCraw, who said a teacher reported before the shooting that the lock was broken. Yet there is no indication officers tried to open it during the standoff, McCraw said. He said police instead waited for a key.

“I have great reasons to believe it was never secured,” McCraw said of the door. “How about trying the door and seeing if it’s locked?”

Delays in the law enforcement response at Robb Elementary School have become the focus of federal, state and local investigations.

### Commander blamed

McCraw lit into Pete Arredondo, the Uvalde school district police chief who McCraw said was in charge, saying: “The only thing stopping a hallway of dedicated officers from entering Room 111 and 112 was the on-scene commander who decided to place the lives of officers before the lives of children.”

“Obviously, not enough training was done in this situation, plain and simple. Because terrible decisions were made by the on-site commander,” McCraw said. He said investigators have been unable to “re-interview” Arredondo.



Elias Valverde II/The Dallas Morning News-TNS

People visit a memorial outside of Robb Elementary School shooting in Uvalde, Texas, on Sunday, May 29, 2022.

*“I don’t care if you have on flip-flops and Bermuda shorts, you go in.”*

— Col. Steve McCraw, director, Texas Department of Public Safety

The public safety chief presented a timeline that said three officers with two rifles entered the building less than three minutes after the gunman, an 18-year-old with an AR-15-style semi-automatic rifle. Several more officers entered minutes after that. Two of the officers who entered the hallway early on were grazed by gunfire.

The decision by police to hold back went against much of what law enforcement has learned in the two decades since the Columbine High School shooting in Colorado in which 13 people were killed in 1999, McCraw said.

“You don’t wait for a SWAT team. You have one officer, that’s enough,” he said. He also said officers did not need to wait for shields to enter the classroom. The first shield arrived less than 20 minutes after the shooter entered, according to McCraw.

Also, eight minutes after the shooter entered, an officer reported that police had a “hooligan” crowbar that they could use to break down the classroom door, McCraw said.

### Details from the day

The public safety chief spent nearly five hours offering the clearest picture yet of the massacre, outlining for the committee a series of other missed opportunities, communication breakdowns and errors based on an investigation that has included roughly 700 interviews. Among the missteps:

- Arredondo did not have a radio with him.
  - Police and sheriff’s radios did not work inside the school; only the radios of Border Patrol agents on the scene did, and they did not work perfectly.
  - Some diagrams of the school that police used to coordinate their response were wrong.
- State police initially said the gunman, Salvador Ramos, entered the school through an exterior door that had been propped open by a teacher. However, McCraw said that the teacher had closed the door, but unbeknownst to her, it could be locked only from the outside. The gunman “walked straight through,” McCraw said.

Sen. Paul Bettencourt said the entire premise of lockdown and shooter training is worthless if school doors can’t be locked. “We have a culture where we think we’ve trained an entire school for lockdown ... but we set up a condition to failure,” he said.

Bettencourt challenged Arredondo to testify in public and said he should have removed himself from the job immediately. He angrily pointed out that shots were heard while police waited in the hallway.

“There are at least six shots fired during this time,” he said. “Why is this person shooting? He’s killing somebody. Yet this incident commander finds every reason to do nothing.”

Questions about the law enforcement response began days after the massacre. McCraw said three days after the shooting that Arredondo made “the wrong decision” when he chose not to storm the classroom for more than 70 minutes, even as trapped fourth graders inside two classrooms were desperately calling 911 for help and anguished parents outside the school begged officers to go inside.

As for the amount of time that elapsed before officers entered the classroom, McCraw said: “In an active shooter environment, that’s intolerable.”

“This set our profession back a decade. That’s what it did,” he said of the police response in Uvalde.

### Details about the gunman

Police haven’t found anything that would be a red flag in Ramos’ school disciplinary files but learned through interviews that he engaged in cruelty to animals. “He walked around with a bag of dead cats,” McCraw said.

In the days and weeks after the shooting, authorities gave conflicting and incorrect accounts of what happened. But McCraw assured lawmakers: “Everything I’ve testified today is corroborated.”

McCraw said if he could make just one recommendation, it would be for more training. He also said a “go-bag” should be put in every state patrol car in Texas, including shields and door-breaching tools.

“I want every trooper to know how to breach and have the tools to do it,” he said.

# Baker County CHURCH DIRECTORY

**Elkhorn Baptist Church**

Sunday School 10 AM  
Morning Worship 11 AM  
Evening Worship 6 PM  
Discovery Kids Worship 6:30 PM  
3520 Birch St, Baker City  
541-523-4332

**Harvest Church**

WORSHIP GATHERING  
10:00 AM

Harvest Cafe Open  
9:00 AM - 9:50 AM

3720 Birch St, Baker City  
541-523-4233  
www.BakerCityHarvest.org

**SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH**

Saturday Worship  
11:00 AM

www.bakercitydsda.com  
17th & Pochontas, Baker City  
541-523-4913

**SAINT ALPHONSUS HOSPITAL CHAPEL**

Open to all patients, family and friends for reflection and prayer.

St. Alphonsus Hospital in Baker City

**AGAPE CHRISTIAN CENTER**

Sunday Services  
10:00 AM & 6:30 PM

South Highway 7,  
Baker City  
541-523-6586

**FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH**

Service at 11 am  
Live Streaming on Facebook

1734 Third Street, Baker City  
541-523-3922  
firstlutheranbakercity@gmail.com

**Baker & Haines United Methodist Churches**

Baker UMC, 1919 2nd St, at 11am  
Haines UMC, 814 Robert St, at 9am

To join us on Zoom email  
bakermc@thegeo.net  
and the link will be emailed to you or follow us on Facebook

Pastor Michele Holloway

**CHRISTIAN SCIENCE CHURCH**

Sunday Service  
10:00 AM

www.ChristianScience.com

3rd & Washington, Baker City  
541-523-5911

**St. Francis De Sales Cathedral**

Daily Masses:  
M, T, Th, F 9 AM  
Day Chapel in Cathedral  
Wed Daily Mass 9 AM  
at St. Alphonsus Chapel  
Sat 8 AM at Day Chapel

Baker City Saturday Mass 6 pm  
Baker City Sunday Mass 9:30 am  
St. Therese in Halfway 2 pm Sat  
St. Anthony’s in North Powder  
11:30 Sun  
541-523-4521  
Corner of First & Church, Baker City

**ST. BRIGID’S IN THE PINES COMMUNITY CHURCH**

11:30 a.m. Services  
1st & 3rd Sunday  
Holy Eucharist

East Auburn Street, Sumpter  
541-523-4812  
A Mission of St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church in Baker City

**St. Stephen’s Episcopal**

Services at 9 AM  
1st & 3rd Sundays, Holy Eucharist  
2nd & 4th Sundays, Morning Prayer  
5th Sunday, Morning Prayer

2177 First Street • Baker City  
Entrance on 1st Street  
Corner Church & First Streets  
541-523-4812

**BAKER CITY CHRISTIAN CHURCH**

Sunday Worship  
First Service 8:30 AM  
2nd Service & Sunday School 10:00 AM

Jr. High & High School Youth  
Tues 6:30 PM  
Youth Pastor Silas Moe  
675 Hwy 7, Baker City • 541-523-5425

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

Sunday Worship Service  
10:30 AM

1995 4th Street, Baker City  
541-523-5201  
firstpresbaker.blogspot.com

**Baker City Church of the Nazarene**

Sunday Worship 9:45am  
Sunday School 8:30am

Coffee is 9:15 AM - 9:45 AM

Pastor Troy Teeter  
1250 Hughes Lane, Baker City  
(Corner of Cedar & Hughes)  
541-523-3533  
www.bakernaz.com

**THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS**

9 - 11 AM - Baker City 1st Ward  
10:30 AM - 12:30 PM - Baker City 2nd Ward  
Noon - 2 PM - Baker Valley Ward  
EVERYONE WELCOME

Family History Center  
Everything Free  
Tues & Fri 1-4 PM  
Wed & Thurs 10AM - 1PM  
Wed Evenings 5-8 PM  
2625 Hughes Lane, Baker City  
541-523-2397

**Calvary Baptist Church**

Third & Broadway  
541-523-3891

Sundays  
9 AM Sunday School  
10 AM Worship Service  
Mondays  
6:30 - 8 PM  
Baker Teens Underground  
Wednesdays  
5:30-6:30 PM Dinner & Prayer Time  
Thursdays  
6 - 7 PM Free Community Dinner  
5 - 6 PM Celebrate Recovery  
bakercalvarybaptist.com

The church directory is published once monthly. Information for this directory is provided by participating churches, please call 541-523-3673 for more information.

Thank you to the participating churches and these sponsors:

Whelan Electric, Inc.  
523-5756 • CCB 103032

Cliff’s Saws & Cycles  
2619 Tenth • 523-2412

Coles Tribute Center  
1950 Place • 523-4300

GRAY’S WEST & CO.  
1500 Dewey • 523-3677