

Testimony of Texas State Senator Roland Gutierrez
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Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME, TERRORISM, AND
HOMELAND SECURITY

Chair and members of the committee: thank you for the opportunity to speak to you.

May 24th was the worst law enforcement response to one of the worst school shootings in our nation's history.

As policy makers, you and I have to grapple with how much loss of life is acceptable in relation to someone's freedom to obtain and carry a weapon that can inflict so much damage. I have to believe that we as lawmakers can solve this problem, because the alternative is just too evil to contemplate.

This shooter waited until his 18th birthday to secure an AR-15 from the local gun shop, followed by the next day buying hundreds of rounds of ammunition, followed by the next day picking up his internet bought Daniels Defense AR-15 at the same gun shop. Nobody asked questions, nobody called the sheriff, and nobody cared.

On the 24th, he began his shooting spree by shooting and wounding his grandmother. He proceeded to the school and killed 19 children, and 2 teachers.

Let me be clear, police waited outside for 77 minutes while children lay dying, wounded waiting for help that would not come. Injured, huddled on the classroom floor, children called the police as the gunman taunted them to see if they were dead or alive. Brave little girls called 911 while law enforcement waited outside, just a few feet away. Not one law enforcement official took control inside or outside of the building. Radios failed to function inside the building. It is worth noting that this community asked the sitting governor directly and through the DPS for money to fix the radio system 7 years prior to this massacre, the same system Director McCraw acknowledged needed replacing.

The local law enforcement at any level school, city and county police never took command and control. The state police never took command and control even with 91 of its Operation Lonestar troops on the ground including Texas Rangers who stood around and talked to their supervisors over the phone. Supervisors who did nothing, ordered no action. Local law enforcement agents said over and over "DPS is coming". In turn, DPS waited on federal agents to breach the door to the classroom and try to end the suffering of bleeding children. Without direction, law enforcement seemingly waited on each other to do nothing. 77 minutes later, a federal BORTAC team exasperated by inaction used a key to gain entry into a classroom to kill the gunman. 1 minute prior to the breach, DPS Captain Joel Betancourt, issued a radio order to

the team that is about to breach asking them to stand by — how much longer he wanted these kids to wait remains a mystery.

At the end, kids were piled together in two heaps in two classrooms. A teacher lay shielding several children as best she could. She and the children were all dead. Children and bodies were dragged out into a hallway where again officers jammed the hallway seemingly watching the few that were actually trying to administer aid to the remaining 13 children that made it out alive. A child was dragged out of the hallway, her face gone. Hallways and classrooms had blood, like no horror movie you have ever seen. Off camera you could hear grown men throwing up from the site of the horror or perhaps what their failure had caused.

Thirteen injured children survived. Three others and one teacher were taken out alive but died on their way to the hospital - bled out in that golden hour. As troopers tended to their injuries a brave little red haired girl, Khloe Torres, said "i called the police - did you get my calls, was it you i was talking to " she said to the female trooper. she cried as she asked for her friend, the same friend, Amerie, who had covered her body, the friend who had saved her life. she cried asking "shes gone isn't she, i know she's gone".

In the aftermath police pointed fingers at different agencies. We were led to believe this was one incompetent school cop, then led to believe it was an incompetent Uvalde police cop, then led to believe that it was a few officers from dps and their incompetence. There is no transparency and no accountability.

My question to the leaders of this Country is how many children have to be murdered before they are willing to ban the chosen weapon of school shooters? How many people have to be killed before we take reasonable steps to end murder?