

Lessons Learned from the Robb Elementary School, Uvalde, Texas School Shooting

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Abstract

Since the country was first shocked by the Columbine school shootings on April 20, 1999, there have been 337 school shootings. One of the most recent examples was in Uvalde, Texas, where on May 24, 2022, a mass murderer entered Robb Elementary School with a Daniel Defense Armalite Rifle. He fired 140 rounds in total, killing 19 children and 2 teachers. The subsequent review of the actions taken by the independent school district (ISD), local and federal Law Enforcement, the media, and the parents has shown several missteps and lapses in judgment. The greatest threat to future mass murder events in schools is complacency. We explore lessons learned from Uvalde and other school shootings, with an emphasis on steps educators and law enforcement can take to ensure preparedness and reduce the likelihood that tragedies like Uvalde are not repeated. In particular, we explore how educators can combat a false sense of security, and emphasize the “five D’s” (deny, deter, detect, delay, and destroy) of security.

Keywords

School Shooting, School Security, Safety

1. Introduction

Children, the youth of America, are this nation’s most valuable resource. The future of the country is based solely on the youth of America. As guardians of that future, educators must protect that posterity, and schools should be among the safest places for children and youth. Nevertheless, [White and Daniel \(2000\)](#) noted:

Schools are perhaps superseded only by the family in their importance in maintaining and perpetuating the culture and communicating the values, beliefs, and norms of the society. Consequently, schools are often perceived

of [sic] as safe havens to which students experiencing even the worst of home or community environments may turn for comfort and direction. However, one need look [sic] only very perfunctorily at the condition of schooling today to determine that schools are not always the safe havens for youth we wish them to be. (p. 3)

Media reports and popular culture are replete with reports of violence and psychologically and physically unsafe environments in schools. WARL News reported on October 4, 2023, and updated the story in December of 2023 that approximately 46% of the nation's schools have seen an increase in violence (Wilkins, 2023). Many children and youth are victims of physical aggression and fighting, verbal abuse, bullying (including cyberbullying), and unwanted sexual advances during school hours. Although these problems are indeed worrisome and need to be more effectively addressed, perhaps the most heinous of all violent activities on school campuses are active shooter incidents. Columbine, Sandy Hook, Parkland, Uvalde—a mention of these and other incidents involving active shooters and student and teacher deaths—especially among educators or parents—results in deep reflection, melancholy, and concern.

CNN reported that as of March 6, 2024 there had been 16 school shootings this year (Matthews, 2024). Matthews (2024) further reported that each year since the pandemic has seen a record increase in school violence. School shooting incidents are high profile and capture attention of the media, even in cases in which no one is injured or killed. Incidents involving injury and/or death gain substantial attention and often result in major debates about school safety, violence prevention, gun control, and other related topics (Böckler et al., 2013). After careful analysis of 37 school-based attacks involving guns or knives from 1974 through 2000, Vossekuil et al. (2004) concluded that attacks were preplanned, often in detail. The attacker(s) did not suddenly snap and launch into violence. Rather, in each instance, the attacker, often a current or prior student at the school, carefully planned and orchestrated the event with the specific goal of causing harm and even death of people at the school. In many cases, others were aware of the attacker's plans, and frequently "those who knew were other kids—friends, schoolmates, siblings and others," but these other children generally had not called the attacker's plan to the attention of an adult (Vossekuil et al., 2004: p. 32).

The incident we focus on here involved a perpetrator very much like those studied by Vossekuil et al. (2004). On May 24, 2022, at 11:30 AM in the border community of Uvalde, Texas, a school district's duty of protection failed as a mass murderer (the names of the mass murderers have been purposely withheld and will not be mentioned) entered Robb Elementary School rooms 111 and 112 killing 19 third and fourth graders and two teachers. This murderer wounded an additional 17 people, including three law enforcement officers (LEO). At 1:06 PM, Law Enforcement Officers reported that the murderer had been killed by law enforcement (Jacobo & El-Bawab, 2022). The entire event within the school lasted 77 minutes. The mass casualty event at Robb Elementary was not the first

school shooting in the country and will not be the last. This paper explores the shortcomings within the Uvalde Consolidated Independent School District, the UCISD Police Department, local, state, and federal law enforcement, the media, and the parents, and the decisions within this incident. It must be stated at the forefront that there is but one wrongdoer, in this case, the murderer himself.

The information for the present study comes from mainstream media sources, publicly available through the internet, and the Texas House of Representatives Investigation on the Robb Elementary shooting. We will review the history of school shootings, what has been done, and what has not been done, and provide recommendations for future prevention of mass casualty events in the nation's schools. This nation has been fighting school shootings since 1764. It is said that to do the same things over again expecting a different outcome is the definition of insanity. Thus, we propose new actions that school and law enforcement officials should take into consideration to prevent actions of this type in the future (Glavin, 2018: pp. 6-9).

2. History

The modern era of mass murder school events began at Columbine High School, Littleton, Colorado, on April 20, 1999. The two male murderers at Columbine High School killed 13 and wounded an additional 20 people (History.com Editors, 2009). However, Columbine was not the first mass casualty event in an American school.

The earliest known school shooting event occurred at the Enoch Brown School on July 26, 1764, some 12 years before the United States became a country (Harris, 2021). In this attack, like in many school shootings, the offenders started their rampage away from the school and went to the school. As part of the Pontiac Wars, four subjects committed the mass murder event in Greencastle, Pennsylvania; they started by killing a pregnant woman and cutting the fetus out of her womb. Then, the four went to the schoolhouse and killed the schoolmaster and 11 students (Harris, 2021). Although this assault was part of the Pontiac Wars and is not generally identified as a school shooting, Pontiac labeled the four men as cowards because they targeted children (Lorenzi, 2012). Throughout the 1700 and 1800s, school shootings involved teachers and administrators being killed by disgruntled parents and students using knives and clubs (Lorenzi, 2012).

The first known mass school shooting where students were explicitly targeted was on April 19, 1891, at St. Mary's Parochial School in Newburgh, N.Y. In this event, the perpetrator walked up to a schoolyard and deliberately aimed his shotgun at the students. No students were killed in this event, but several children were "filled with lead."

The two subjects that carried out the mass murder at Columbine High School had intended to use pipe bombs to increase the number of kills (History.com Editors, 2009). However, again, Columbine was also not the first known use of

bombs to target children. On May 18, 1927, in Bath, Michigan School treasurer started his rampage by killing his wife and burning down his home. The subject then went on to blow up the Bath Consolidated School with dynamite planted in the school's basement, killing 38 people, primarily children. Finally, this man blew himself up in the school's parking lot, killing himself and four others (Farley, 2021). This mass casualty event was the deadliest act of mass murder at a school in the United States, giving this murderer the moniker of being the first mass murderer in the history of the country (Farley, 2021).

3. Characteristics of School Shooters

Through the hundreds of mass murder/school shooting events, there are characteristics of the events which are in common. The first characteristic is that many school shooting events started away from the school and culminated at the school. The Robb Elementary (Burrows et al., 2022), Sandy Hook (CNN Editorial Research, 2022), Virginia Tech (History.com Editors, 2011), The University of Texas Clock Tower (McGraw, 2022), Bath Consolidated (Farley, 2021), and Enoch Brown (Harris, 2021) incidents are just a few examples of how the mass murderer's rampage often begins in one location and finishes at the school.

Another common characteristic of the offenders of mass murder is that the subject is seeking suicide or suicide by a cop. Robb Elementary (Burrows et al., 2022), Sandy Hook (CNN Editorial Research, 2022), Virginia Tech (History.com Editors, 2011), Columbine High School (History.com Editors, 2009), The University of Texas Clock Tower (McGraw, 2022), and Bath Consolidated (Farley, 2021) incidents are examples within the confines of school events of the desire for the offender to end his own life by the end of the event. These offenders had the intent of killing themselves as part of their rampage. The plan for suicide is also found in several mass murder events outside school shootings.

A third significant commonality among the school shooters since Columbine is that the offenders presented warning signs that, if acted upon, would very likely have saved lives. The Robb Elementary School murderer was known on social media platforms as the "school shooter" (Burrows et al., 2022). The murderers at Columbine made a video for school about the trench coat mafia killing several bullies and sexual deviants. The school officials saw this schoolwork but did not act upon the knowledge (Kohn, 2006). The murderer at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, was well known to have disciplinary problems and had been expelled from campus in 2017. It was determined that if the Parkland murderer were seen on campus, a "code red" would be called. Nevertheless, he gained access to the school with an ArmaLite Rifle without being confronted (History.com Editors, 2019).

4. The Gun Control Debate

The debate over gun control, explicitly prohibiting guns in schools, is nothing new. As early as August 3, 1866, in an article titled *Carrying Guns*, the *New York*

Times argued prohibiting firearms from being brought to school because of accidental discharge of the weapons or boys being shot (Newman, 2012). The original 1866 article suggested that anyone bringing guns to school should be severely punished. The last paragraph of the 1866 article used language like the modern “cancel culture,” specifically against women who carry firearms (Newman, 2012).

Any boy who carries a pistol should be ejected from any school, house, or town—any man should be instantly punished to the full extent of the law—any woman, well—should be left severely alone by our sex at least.

This 1866 article, although condemning bringing guns to schools, mockingly provided an alternative answer—arming faculty and staff to protect the students in the school and to ensure that there is just as great a chance of shooting a murderer as being shot by one (Newman, 2012).

We would advise parents to look into it and learn whether shooting is to be a part of the scholastic course which may be practised [sic] on their own boys; or else we advise them to see that their boys are properly armed with the most approved and deadly pistol, and that there may be an equal chance at least of their shooting as of being shot.

The political ambition of the 1866 activists was to banish guns from the nation’s schools. Today, this debate extends to the entire nation, not just on school grounds. After the Parkland mass murder, Governor Scott of Florida raised the age to buy a rifle to 21 (History.com Editors, 2019). After the Robb Elementary rampage, Governor hopeful Robert Francis O’Rourke stated, “I do not believe any civilian should own an AR-15 or AK-47” and is currently campaigning on banning the ArmaLite Rifle claiming it is a weapon of war (O’Rourke, 2022). In response to the El Paso Walmart rampage and the mass spree murder in Odessa, Texas, Republican legislators proposed and Governor Greg Abbott signed constitutional carry into law, stating that people who can legally possess a firearm can carry that firearm without additional permitting (Sparber, 2021). The Gun Free School Zone Act of 1990 made bringing guns on campus illegal, making schools a soft target, a target which those who intend to bring misery to the world can go to destroy America’s future. Since the Gun-Free School Zone Act of 1990, there have been 382 school shooting events resulting in 626 injuries and 313 fatalities (Ballotpedia, 2022). The gun-free zones are intended to make schools safe places for learning (RAND, 2020). The RAND Corporation (2020) states that no qualified studies show that the gun-free zones have made a difference in (i.e., an increase or decrease in) the number of mass casualty events. However, the number of mass murders in school rampages seems to have increased since the schools were made gun-free zones, and the number of deaths in schools has increased (Ballotpedia, 2022). In response, to the pandemic of mass murder within our schools, nine states have passed laws that allow faculty and staff to carry firearms on campus with permission from the school district

(Exstrom et al., 2022).

Forty-five states have authorized armed security and law enforcement to protect school children (Exstrom et al., 2022). However, as in the Robb Elementary mass casualty event, even though this type of security is authorized by state law, not all schools implement security measures (Burrows et al., 2022). The Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC) has reported (2019) that only 49% of the nation's schools have full time armed security in the school, with an additional 20% of schools that have an officer patrol the halls a few times a week to check the security of the doors. Since 1990, schools have been gun-free zones and, even with exemptions, lack of armed security on campus softens the schools and makes them a target for those who wish to bring harm to the community.

In a study conducted by NTAC of the 41 school shootings prior to the publishing of their findings in 2019, researchers found that 61% of the attacks were committed with a firearm; with the remaining 39%, knives were used (U.S. Secret Service Staff, 2019). As indicated, firearms are not the only weapon used in school attacks, yet the narrative has remained that gun control and banning guns is necessary to protect the nation's children (O'Rourke, 2022). However, most of the guns used in these attacks were acquired from home. NTAC has shown that gun owners have failed to secure their firearms, and attackers have been able to acquire weapons from home, even weapons locked in an approved gun safe (U.S. Secret Service Staff, 2019).

5. Lessons Learned

Several areas require improvement in the review of the mass casualty event on the Robb Elementary campus. To repeat this project is not intended to point fingers at any organization beyond the 18-year-old who legally purchased two ArmaLite Rifles and intended to bring as much misery to the world as he could before his death. This assessment is created based on the information known ex post facto about the Robb Elementary attack garnered from official government reports and mass media reports.

Robb Elementary School is located in Uvalde, TX. Uvalde is a crossroads community from Del Rio, Eagle Pass, and Nye Texas border towns to the rest of the country. The roads coming into Uvalde from the border are U. S. Highways 90 and 83. Drive time from the border to Uvalde is about an hour following the main roads. Although this paper focuses on Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, it must be noted that failures and shortcomings exist throughout the nation, not just in a small town in south Texas.

5.1. The School

The greatest threat to the Uvalde Consolidated Independent School District (UCISD) had become complacency. The greatest threat to safety and security is the belief that "it can't happen here," (Lewis, 2020). The narrative that, "This is a

small community; things like mass murder only occur the big cities” is commonly found by small communities advertising why they are better places to live. Although Sinclair Lewis’ book, *It Can’t Happen Here*, is a fictional novel, it is a popular reflection of life. It has led to several other research projects about worldviews and perceptions of where a relaxation of vigilance because of this complacent attitude has led to evil (Oksanen et al., 2010). It can be suggested that because of this worldview, security became lax within the UCISD.

In the Texas House of Representatives report *Investigative Committee on the Robb Elementary Shooting*, written by Burrows, Moody, and Guzman (2022), several issues were identified that support the complacency of “it can’t happen here.”

5.1.1. Perimeter Fencing

First, it is recommended that the perimeter fence should be deterrent for an intruder to gaining access to the school property (Oksanen et al., 2010). The perimeter fence at Robb Elementary was only 5" tall, which provided no meaningful deterrence preventing people from entering school property. Ensuring that the fence presents a deterrent effect for attackers from gaining access will harden the school to ensure that there is only one way to gain access to the school. Without a fence at least six feet tall

5.1.2. Single Entry Access

Second, none of the exterior doors on the north side of the West Building were secured; the door that the subject entered was propped open with a rock.

Third, the administration encouraged faculty and staff to circumvent the security measures of crucial control to accommodate substitutes because of a shortage of teachers and the heavy reliance upon substitutes. Finally, because of the lack of security on the exterior entrances to the school, the offender was unhindered to access rooms 111 and 112 (Burrows et al., 2022).

The school district’s safety and security policy required that all classroom doors be closed and locked during instruction. The lock for the door at room 111 was inoperative and had been for at least two years (Burrows et al., 2022). A maintenance request had been made several times. The UCISD Police Department knew that the lock on the door did not secure the room from the hallway (Burrows et al., 2022). There existed no priority for safety and security issues, as evidenced that the school knew that the door for this classroom could not be secured (Burrows et al., 2022).

Because of the proximity to the border, Border Patrol often chases illegal immigrants from the border to Uvalde. Once the pursuit comes to Uvalde, the fleeing immigrants “bailout” of the vehicle attempting to disappear into the predominantly Hispanic community (Burrows et al., 2022). Every instance there is a “bailout,” the UCISD is placed on lockdown. Between February and May 2022, there were 50 lockdowns called. Because of the numerous lockdowns with no threat posed to the school, when the lockdown was called, faculty and staff

began to ignore the warnings of lockdown because there was a criminal in the area. What happened within the school was a classic case of the “Boy that called wolf.” When the actual threat arrived on campus, many faculty and staff ignored the warnings because it was just another “bailout.” When the alarm went out that a man was on the school grounds with a gun, it was ignored until teachers and students heard the sound of gunfire (Burrows et al., 2022).

Following the security and safety measures alone would have prevented the uninhibited access to room 111. However, the deliberate circumventing of policy by faculty and staff and the implicit encouragement from the administration (Burrows et al., 2022) created an environment of complacency. A new motto needs to be adopted by schools across the nation: “not if a mass casualty event will happen, but when it happens how we will respond as a school?” School administration, faculty, and staff must remain vigilant to protect America’s youth.

5.2. Law Enforcement

In response to the mass casualty event at Columbine High School in 1999, the nation established Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT). Over the last 20 years, more than 200,000 law enforcement officers have been trained to respond to mass casualty events like the one the nation experienced at Uvalde (ALERRT, 2022). The UCISD established an ISD police department in 2019 to ensure the safety of the students in the school district (Burrows et al., 2022). The school board provided a budget to fund six police officers, including the chief for nine schools in the district (Burrows et al., 2022). Robb Elementary did not have a permanent officer assigned, and a roving patrol would visit the school at least once per day, spending about 45 minutes in the school (Burrows et al., 2022).

The two primary goals of ALERRT training exists, which are 1) to Stop the Killing and 2) to stop the dying (ALERRT, 2022). Officers responding to a mass casualty event are trained to respond to gunfire, confront and stop the threat. Through the application of ALERRT, the officer is given the discretion to decide to use deadly force (ALERRT, 2022). The officers from the UCISD received this training as mandated by an executive order directed by Governor Gregg Abbott and conducted an exercise at Uvalde High School in March 2022 (Fechter, 2022). Regardless of how much training a person has to save others when it comes time to put their lives in danger for another, this will be an individual choice (Fechter, 2022).

The Robb Elementary School attacker first shot his grandmother and escaped in the family pickup truck. The subject was in a vehicle accident, crashing the truck into a drainage culvert. After the accident, people from a nearby business came to help, and the subject opened fire against them; the individuals retreated to the safety of the building and notified the police (Burrows et al., 2022). The subject jumped the 5' fence onto the school property. He then ran toward the West building, wildly firing at the building toward a teacher and students on

the playground, although investigators could not determine the attacker's intent (ALERRT, 2022). While the subject was running toward the school building, a police officer radioed dispatch requesting permission to shoot the subject (ALERRT, 2022). This action on the part of the police officer would suggest that he did not have the discretion to implement the ALERRT standards as trained. According to ALERRT, a sworn police officer does not need to seek permission to use deadly force to stop the killing (ALERRT, 2022). Although this account has been disputed by the mayor of Uvalde, claiming that the person the officer was targeting was an athletic coach (Weber, 2022).

After crossing the field, the subject entered the faculty parking lot and began firing toward the school. Another police officer driving his patrol car into the parking lot also received fire from the subject (ALERRT, 2022). This was the second opportunity to stop the massacre, but the officer failed to return fire against the subject, and the subject was able to gain access to the school unimpeded and then to room 111 (Burrows et al., 2022). This narrative has also been refuted by Uvalde city officials (Weber, 2022). When officers were asked why they did not take the shot, they responded that although the shot could have been made, the background included innocent children and the fear of killing an innocent or being prosecuted for killing an innocent made them hesitate (Goodman, 2022).

Upon entry to room 111, which was unsecured because the lock was inoperative, the subject fired 100 rounds within minutes (Burrows et al., 2022). ALERRT has three characteristics of goals to stop the killing and the dying. These include tracking the threat, breaching the threat, and neutralizing the threat (ALERRT, 2022). As expected by ALERRT, officers tracked the subject to room 111 and attempted to breach the room; the subject fired at the two officers wounding one and injuring the second from debris (Burrows et al., 2022). These officers retreated, starting a 77-minute stand-off (ALERRT, 2022). This was a third opportunity lost to stop the killing and to stop the dying.

The Chief of Police for the UCISD, Pete Arredondo, took command of the situation upon his arrival and changed the description of the event from an active shooter to a barricaded subject (Burrows et al., 2022). Within the 77-minute stand-off, over 400 law enforcement officers arrived on the scene. However, as other superior law enforcement officers arrived on the scene, Arredondo stated in a *New York Times* interview that he did not believe himself in command of the response (Goodman, 2022). This vacuum of leadership caused a complete breakdown in communications, and no one took command responsibility. This lack of leadership 1) accounts for the delay in response because no one took charge and made decisions to breach and 2) could be blamed for the additional needless death of students who could have been saved (Burrows et al., 2022).

5.3. Media

In a rush to be the first to report, several news media sources released headlines

without confirming the accuracy of the information. Early reports from the media were incorrect. It was first reported that the subject carried a rifle and a handgun (Guardian Staff, 2022). It would be later learned that the subject had and legally bought two Armalite Rifles with funds he saved from his job (Burrows et al., 2022).

Early reports from several media sources stated that the subject was involved in a running gun battle with police as he stormed the school (Murphy, 2022). However, the reports of being engaged by police were wholly inaccurate. Although the subject did open fire toward the school building and a police patrol vehicle, the police never returned fire nor engaged him as he ran to the school (Burrows et al., 2022; ALERRT, 2022). Furthermore, interviews with the officers on the scene reveal that police hesitated to engage the subject because of a concern about accidentally shooting an innocent child, which could result in prosecution (Goodman, 2022).

Mistakes in reporting create confusion and instill fear in the population. However, the media is essential to the foundation of democracy and to ensure that the government faces accountability (Cincinnati Public Radio, 2022). Unfortunately, when the media misleads, the public can create fear and apprehension (Cincinnati Public Radio, 2022).

6. Prevention

All the training in the world is not going to prepare an individual for the task of taking a life. When it comes to that point, that decision has to be made by the individual to pull the trigger or not. Police officers, it is hoped, would be willing to sacrifice their lives for the safety and protection of children. Parents drop their children off at school expecting those children to be protected by the faculty, staff, and administrators of the school, as well as by the state (McManaman, 2022). When the school administration, faculty, staff, and law enforcement cannot protect the children, parents feel lost and hopeless, as they cannot trust the government (McManaman, 2022). In many cases, adolescents planning an active shooting attack share information with siblings, friends, or other adolescents students at the school (Vossekuil et al., 2004). Students must be taught to share information like this with parents and adults at the school if they learn of it.

The greatest lesson learned from the shootings at Robb Elementary, Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, and Sandy Hook Elementary is that the police will not always act in time or in a manner to save lives. In the case of Robb Elementary, even though police were on campus at the same time as the offender, a proper response was not carried out in a timely way to save lives. Most mass shooting events are over before the police can arrive on the scene and attempt to restore order. Protecting the children in the school's care is the school employees' responsibility.

Safety becomes a primary aspect of life at our nation's schools. The safety of future generations is the responsibility of the administration, faculty, and staff of

each school. Physical security, diligence, and combatting complacency within the school. Employees and students must say something if they see something that could be a threat. Employees must confront any person in the school that does not appear to be authorized to be there. A program called the 5D's Denial, Deter, Detect, Delay, and Destroy has been developed by Lt. Col. Dave Grossman and others. Although the five-tiered plan is called different things by different people. The 5D plan is organized to fight against active shooters, as happened at Columbine High School, Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, and Robb Elementary School (Grossman & Christensen, 2003). Whether part of the administration, faculty or staff there are activities to be completed at each level. School security is not just the requirement of the administration, the faculty, the staff, or security. It will take all members of the school to ensure that students are protected from the next mass murderer.

6.1. Denial

The most significant risk to a school is complacency. People believe an active shooter or terrorist attack would never occur "at their school." Furthermore, an attitude of complacency causes school officials to get comfortable in their daily routine causing a lessoning in the determination to protect student lives. There is a common belief that "it cannot happen here. Mass murder events only happen in the big cities." Complacency also creates a level of denial because nothing has happened in the past, and there is doubt that anything will happen in the future. Denial is the most challenging aspect of preparing to overcome an attack; it is also the most important (Grossman & Christensen, 2003). Accepting that there will come a time when an active shooter will target the local school is the first step in preventing a mass casualty event at a neighborhood school (Grossman & Christensen, 2003). If a member of the school community sees something that is out of place it is important to say something and bring it to the attention of the administration and security. The classroom in Uvalde had an inoperable lock, preventing the teacher from being able to secure the classroom, to protect the children. This broken lock was known about by the school, yet was not addressed because there was no urgency to address the problem.

Vigilance is the second step to overcoming complacency (Total Security Solutions). Robb Elementary School had implemented a safety and security protocol requiring key entry through every door other than the front entrance. School administrators encouraged circumventing the security rules, likely believing that a mass casualty event would not happen in Uvalde. Denying that an event will occur at the school, and turning a blind eye when the safety protocols are circumvented encourages complacency. Ensuring that doors are secure and the security procedures are followed will increase awareness and protection (Total Security Solutions).

6.2. Deter

Deterrence is the first step to preventing any attack. If you can show the attacker

that an attack is futile, they will move on to another target, and you have saved the lives of the children in your school (Grossman & Christensen, 2003). Another term for deterrence is “hardening the facility,” so that the school is safe for children without inconvenience to the patrons who use the school, students, parents, faculty, and staff. The first step to deterrence is establishing a perimeter that will prevent entry. The fence at Robb was only five feet high, easy to scale, and did not provide any meaningful deterrence (Burrows et al., 2022). Making the perimeter fence at least six feet tall will increase the deterrent effect of the fence.

A second deterrent is to ensure that there is only one way to enter the school and subsequent buildings on campus. All other access points should be restricted to exit only and not propped open for easy access. A single entry is inconvenient but ensures that the building remains secure. The subject could access the school through an unsecured door (Burrows et al., 2022). The single entry access should have a checkpoint with a staff member that verifies the business for everyone who enters the school (Grossman & Christensen, 2003). No one should be able to access the school without being confronted by a member of the staff (Total Security Solutions, n.d.).

Physical and electronic surveillance should be established throughout the school (Grossman & Christensen, 2003). Placing cameras throughout all public access areas of the school is essential, including exterior access points, playgrounds, parking lots, hallways, the main office, cafeteria, the gym, and each landing of any stairwells in the building. These cameras should feed to a central monitoring station in the main office under the watchful eye of one of the office staff. However, more importantly, local law enforcement should be able to access the surveillance feed from an external command post in case of an attack (Total Security Solutions, n.d.).

In addition to the surveillance system, armed security must be on patrol on campus. Whether the security is local police, an ISD Police Department, a hired security company, or off-duty police, these officers must be armed and have an active patrol routine. If officers are seen patrolling the school in and around the school, an attacker will be deterred and look for another target (Grossman, 2009). It may also be an effective tool to allow those faculty and staff who want to be armed (Jonson et al., 2021). If the school is large, the faculty and staff can work with officers to ensure campus security. The idea of arming teachers is very controversial and comes up every time there is a school shooting in the nation (Jonson et al., 2021). What is known is that there has been grave resistance to arming teachers and staff, but the mass casualty events continue.

Training is also a deterrence tool. If the ALERRT and SWAT teams practice dealing with a mass casualty event in advance will show possible attackers that this is a hard target and not worth the risk (Grossman & Christensen, 2003). Including faculty and staff in the training scenarios, armed or not, will allow all entities to work on the same page if the worst comes. Hardening the facility will help deter an attacker from committing an act of terrorism on our children, but

that does not mean they will still not try.

6.3. Detect

Deterrence is not enough to prevent an attack; employees must be vigilant and detect things out of place (Grossman & Christensen, 2003). In other words, paying attention to your surroundings is essential, starting in the parking lot. If you notice an unfamiliar car, or a vehicle that is at the school during hours that are not typical, report that car to the School Resource Office or the police (Dolphin, Farr, Lupia, & Perrotta, 2002).

If an adult or unfamiliar individual is found walking around the school, ensure that person is confronted. No one should be given free access to the school without an escort. Because every person visiting the school should have been through the checkpoint at the front of the school, they should have some pass, and employees should request to see it (Dolphin, Farr, Lupia, & Perrotta, 2002). No one should be allowed on the school buses except students with current I.D. cards notifying them that they are supposed to be on a specific bus. Any person attempting to get on the school bus should be refused access, and the police should be called on the bus radio if such an event occurs (Dolphin, Farr, Lupia, & Perrotta, 2002).

Any unattended backpacks or parcels should not be touched (Dolphin, Farr, Lupia, & Perrotta, 2002). An announcement should be made throughout the school to seek out the backpack owner. The item should be treated as a bomb if no owner comes forward within a few minutes. The area should be evacuated, and the police bomb squad should be called to clear the item from danger. The Faculty and Staff of every school are the first line of defense against an attack on schools, and they need to stay vigilant (Grossman & Christensen, 2003). If something does not look right, report it.

With every school-related mass casualty event since Columbine, there were warning signs that the attackers were struggling with issues (Lorenzi, 2012; Kohn, 2006). It was well known that the Robb Elementary attacker had a strained emotional history. He was bullied severely in the fourth grade, ironically in room 111, and experience of being bullied is a common characteristic of school shooters (Vossekuil et al., 2004). The attacker's cousin testified that even a teacher at the school participated in the bullying (Burrows et al., 2022). Part of detecting a threat is the faculty and staff identifying students who are out of character or are threatening violence. The Robb attacker had shared on social media that he would "shoot up a school." A threat to "shoot up the school" or any other similar threat should have been brought to the attention of the authorities and the person making the threat should have been promptly confronted (Vossekuil et al., 2004).

6.4. Delay

Faculty and staff of the country's schools need to remember that they are the

first line of defense and that it will take some time for SWAT to arrive on the scene, and every moment you can delay the attackers could save lives. “Lock-down” is the keyword or behavior to remember during an attack (Dolphin, Farr, Lupia, & Perrotta, 2002). Unfortunately, locking down and hiding in the school is the opposite of what people are taught. When fire drills and bomb scares are sounded, everyone goes into the hallways, into the “kill zones,” which makes it easier for the terrorists to gain control of the school (Grossman & Christensen, 2003). So when there is a school lockdown, teachers and students need to “stay put.”

Once an active shooter starts a rampage, the shooter will not stop until one of three things happens: 1) they run out of ammunition, 2) they run out of victims, or 3) the attacker has been neutralized (Total Security Solutions, n.d.). Every school must practice what to do in an active shooter or terrorist attack. Schools should hold drills to prepare for potential fires, bombs, tornadoes, and active shooters (Grossman & Christensen, 2003). Teachers in classrooms, when a lockdown is sounded, need to lock the door, cover the windows and barricade the students in the classroom until the police arrive. Even when teachers get the urge to evacuate to someplace safe, the people in the school need to sit still until the police come, retrieve them, and take them to safety. The thought is that if an attacker cannot gain access into a room and does not see or hear anyone, they will move on to the next room until they find someone to assault. If an attacker breaks the window to unlock the door and get in, the teacher should use a chair or another weapon to keep the attacker out of the classroom. Once the attacker is neutralized, the class needs to move away from the violence (Grossman & Christensen, 2003). Those faculty and staff not in places of refuge will have to attempt to delay the actions of the attackers by fighting the attackers.

6.5. Destroy

A proverb in the Bible states, “There is no greater love than to lay down your life for a friend” (Houck, 1991). As guardians of America’s youth, the proverb must be changed. “No greater love exists than those willing to take a life to protect a child’s life.” Police officers are expected to be willing to give up their lives in defense of others, and they are also expected to neutralize an attack with any force necessary (ALERT, 2022). Unfortunately, police response will take precious time that many innocents do not have before they are killed, even longer if there is no armed security on campus. More often than not attacks are stopped by means other than law enforcement intervention (Vossekuil et al., 2004). In many cases, the first outsiders to arrive at the scene of an active shooting may be armed citizen responders (ACR), parents or other concerned citizens licensed to carry a firearm who have strong emotional investment in the safety of children and adults at the school (Buerger & Buerger, 2010).

The attacker at Sandy Hook continued killing until he heard the police were getting close to him, and he took his own life (CNN Editorial Research, 2022).

Faculty and staff not in places of refuge need to stand up and become heroes. These members of the staff and faculty must go on the offensive and destroy the attacks with whatever weapons are available to them to fight with (Grossman & Christensen, 2003). Every morning, parents send their children to school expecting them to be protected. If children are at risk of imminent danger, it is imperative that faculty and staff put a chunk of metal in their hands and fight to destroy the attackers and not wait for the police to respond.

There must be armed security in schools. Unarmed security is pointless. It makes no sense to hire a security guard to protect our children and then not allow that security the tools to protect the nation's children. Campus security must be armed and given the tools and training to protect the school until reinforcements arrive. Allowing a few teachers to be armed might also be a good idea though we acknowledge that this idea is controversial. Those teachers must complete the same training as armed security guards and participate in the training programs (Grossman & Christensen, 2003). Arming teachers in the current political environment might be asking for a bit too much. However, when a school is fighting an active shooter who believes they are going in against an unarmed enemy, it could make all the difference in the world.

7. Conclusion

Since the Gun-Free Schools Zone Act was signed into law in 1990, attempting to curb the number of mass casualty events in schools, the nation has witnessed 382 events with 626 injuries and 313 deaths (Ballotpedia, 2022). The worst of these deadly encounters were Columbine High School (13 dead), Red Lake High School (7 dead), Sandy Hook Elementary (26 dead), and Robb Elementary School (21 dead) (Ballotpedia, 2022). It is thought that people should be able to depend upon the police to protect them from harm. In 1989 the United States Supreme Court ruled (5-4) in *DeShaney v Winnebago Department of Social Services* (1988), "The Due Process Clause does not impose a special duty on the State to provide services to the public for protection against private actors if the State did not create those harms." (para 3). A mass murderer will continue to murder until one of three things occurs; 1) they run out of ammunition, 2) they run out of victims, or 3) they are neutralized. Because we know that any response to an active shooter will take time, it is vital that the faculty and staff of the nation's schools do what they can to neutralize the attacker and decrease the number of casualties.

This paper hoped to explore the actions and responses of government agency during the Robb Elementary School shooting. Additionally, it was shown how schools and law enforcement should respond to an active shooter situation. There were several times in the life of the mass murderer at Robb Elementary that an intervention made by another person could have saved so many more lives on May 24, 2022. People in the community knew that this individual was planning on committing a mass murder event and did not intervene. This actor was bul-

lied while in attendance at Robb Elementary and the school administration did nothing to protect the student. It is important that school administrators take bullying seriously. This actor's trigger can be tracked to bullying that occurred in the very classroom in which he committed his heinous crime. Providing mental health support at school could have given the actor a positive way to enable his emotions.

Complacency by faculty, staff and administration led to lax security compliance intended to keep the children safe created an environment that led to the events of that dreadful day. There were several errors in judgment made by the employees of the Uvalde CISD which if followed written policy could have saved lives. To protect schools the employees of the school need to keep safety, top of mind.

Communication and leadership within law enforcement failed to properly respond to the active shooter event. The Chief of Police for the School District assumed command and then just believed that someone else had taken over the incident command. The lack of command communication extended the amount of time for a response. AALERRT's mission is to stop the killing and then to stop the bleeding. The delayed response because of a lack of command and control failed to stop the killing and the bleeding.

Responses from school administration and law enforcement need to be decisive and consistent. Lives were lost because of inaction and not following policy. The biggest threat as mentioned is complacency and the belief that a mass casualty event will not occur in our neighborhood because it has never happened before. There had never been a mass casualty event in Uvalde, Texas until there was. Every community must expect and plan for such an event to occur and officials must follow those protocols to ensure lives are saved.

Above all, it was the offender that brought this evil to Uvalde, Texas, and beyond this actor, there is no single person to blame. There were a lot of single things that combined to create a disaster. Yet this disaster could have been avoided if a single person stood up and said something when they saw something.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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