



OFFICE OF THE DALLAS COUNTY ATTORNEY  
Jeannine R. Ritchie, County Attorney

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Ronald C. Forsell  
*First Assistant*

October 17, 2024

Steven L. Cooper  
*Assistant Attorney*

Eric E. Breitsprecker  
*Assistant Attorney*

DISCLAIMER: "The following content may be upsetting to some readers as it contains sensitive topics such as violence, trauma or graphic descriptions. Discretion is advised."

Jordan W. Rude  
*Assistant Attorney*

Andrea L. Lovig  
*Assistant Attorney*

RE: Perry High School Shooting

Madison A. Warder  
*Assistant Attorney*

On January 4, 2024, at Perry High School, a 17-year-old gunman shot and killed two persons and injured six others before taking his own life. The shooting was captured by the school's surveillance system, a livestream initiated by the shooter, and the body-worn cameras of responding police officers. This release examines the facts and circumstances of that morning. At the request of the Perry Police Department, the Dallas County Sheriff's Office, and the Dallas County Attorney's Office; the Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) led the investigation into the events of January 4th. This incident has understandably raised many questions and concerns in our community, and we share the collective desire to see the situation resolved swiftly and justly. This statement summarizes the DCI's findings. It is being released in the spirit of transparency to help provide answers, dispel rumors, and assist the community and victims.

Caleb E. Rahn  
*Assistant Attorney*

Some details known about the shooter, his planning and methodologies, school safety measures, and the names and specific injuries of some victims is being withheld. This practice ensures the integrity of the investigation is maintained and the privacy of those involved is respected. In a situation like this, it is paramount we strive to mitigate future shootings and violence in our schools and communities.

Nils A. Johnson  
*Assistant Attorney*

On the morning of January 4, 2024, at 7:12 a.m., 17-year-old Perry High School student Dylan Butler entered the school through the main entrance with a pump-action shotgun, revolver, knife, and an improvised explosive device (IED). The weapons were concealed and hidden from view of surveillance cameras, students, and staff. Butler moved through the sparsely populated commons area, down a hallway, and into a student restroom. He remained there for more than twenty

minutes. As the school began to fill with students and staff, he posted on social media and began livestreaming his actions.

At approximately 7:35 a.m., with more than 50 students and staff in the commons area, Butler emerged from the restroom with the shotgun and began firing. Within the first 24 seconds, Butler shot and killed Ahmir Jolliff, a sixth-grade student, and wounded four other students along with Perry High School Principal Dan Marburger. The injured teens, three fifteen-year old males and one sixteen-year old female were able to flee the school on their own.

Upon hearing the initial gunshots, Principal Marburger and Assistant Principal Brad Snowgren, who were in the commons, moved towards the source of the gunfire. Mr. Snowgren promptly activated the School Emergency Alert Response System (SEARS), which alerted the Dallas County Communication Center to an active shooter situation. This alert was triggered 10 seconds after the first shot and 25 seconds before the first 911 call.

As Butler moved through the commons, Principal Marburger, with disregard to his own injuries, called out to Butler by name and pleaded with him to stop shooting. Butler continued firing, and Principal Marburger retreated from the immediate area. Butler moved through the school, firing at staff members, into secured classrooms and down vacant hallways. It was during this time that two staff members, one of whom had ran into the school after the shooting began to help evacuate others, were struck by gunfire. During the shooting, there were more than 15 students and staff who took shelter in safe and secure places throughout the school. None of those who sheltered in those secure locations were injured.

One minute and forty seconds after the shooting started, Principal Marburger, despite being near an exit, again confronted Butler and urged him to stop. Butler, responded by shooting Principal Marburger. This was the last shot to strike a victim. Critically injured, Principal Marburger, exited the school on his own accord.

The response from law enforcement and emergency responders was immediate and unrelenting. Perry Police Officer Micaela Zagar, the first officer on the scene, entered the school without hesitation, one minute and twenty-eight seconds after being notified of the SEARS alert. Officer Zagar was inside the school two minutes and fifty-nine seconds after the first shot was fired. This is a clarification from previous releases which stated that law enforcement entered the school in “less than seven minutes.” At 7:39 a.m., Butler took his own life, prior to any contact with law enforcement.

Four minutes and twenty-one seconds elapsed between the first shot and the shot that ended Butler’s life. Butler fired twenty-three rounds, all from the shotgun, wounding three staff members and five students. The immediate self-evacuation, secure sheltering, and selfless acts of students and staff to lead others to safety, mitigated the number of injuries and deaths. As a result, no students were shot outside of the commons area, and no students or staff were shot after law enforcement arrived inside the school.

In response to the shooting and the request for assistance, emergency responders from dozens of agencies, many from outside of the immediate area, descended upon the school to render aid and ensure the safety and wellbeing of students and staff. Those injured during the shooting were taken to

medical facilities via ambulance, helicopter, and personal vehicle. Ten days after the shooting, Principal Dan Marburger, succumbed to his injuries. In total, this senseless act of violence claimed two lives, physically injured six, and impacted hundreds.

Following the shooting, the DCI, joined by local, state, county, and federal law enforcement partners, directed an investigation into the events that transpired inside Perry High School and the life and actions of the shooter in the months preceding it.

The DCI-led investigation was exhaustive. It relied on a review of the shooter's written and spoken words; more than 180 interviews involving family, friends, and witnesses; electronic and social media data; video captured at the school that morning; and the examination of collected evidence. The entirety of the investigative report was submitted to the Dallas County Attorney's Office for review.

The examination of facts has led this office to conclude that Butler acted alone in planning and carrying out the events of January 4, 2024. There is no evidence that anyone had specific knowledge of Butler's plans or knowingly provided him with fundamental support or resources before or during the event on that day. The evidence suggests his actions that morning were indiscriminate and driven by a desire to commit suicide with the hostile intent of taking others with him.

The origin of the weapon used in this shooting, a Remington 870 shotgun, remains unconfirmed and may never be substantiated despite exhaustive investigative efforts. It is believed to have come from outside his home and was taken without the owner's permission or knowledge. The investigation determined the revolver was unsecured in the home and accessible to Butler. The IED carried into the school was rudimentarily assembled and if detonated would have caused minimal damage.

The staff at Perry High School had interactions with Butler, that were frequent and documented. There were no reports to school staff regarding Butler's intentions on that day. Butler was not the subject of any prior law enforcement investigations, threat assessments, or intelligence information.

The evidence confirms this was not a spontaneous act but rather the product of significant preparation and planning. The evidence suggests the shooting victims appear to have been chosen based on immediate availability and were not specifically targeted. The investigation determined Butler likely displayed warning signs that were unrecognized or unreported.

#### JANUARY 4, 2024, TIMELINE:

7:12:27 a.m. – Butler entered Perry High School through the school's main entrance.

7:12:55 a.m. – Butler entered a student restroom in a hallway adjacent to the commons area.

7:34:50 a.m. – Butler started a social media livestream broadcast inside the restroom.

7:35:02 a.m. – Butler fired the first of 23 shots from the 870 shotgun, striking Ahmir Jolliff.

7:35:12 a.m. – The SEARS activation from inside the school is received by the Dallas County Communications Center.

7:35:37 a.m. – The Dallas County Communication Center received the first 911 call from a student inside Perry High School.

7:36:42 a.m. – Butler fired his final shot, striking Dan Marburger.

7:36:43 a.m. – Law enforcement officers were notified of the SEARS activation and reports of an active shooter inside Perry High School.

7:37:42 a.m. – The first law enforcement officer, Perry Officer Micaela Zagar, arrived at Perry High School.

7:38:01 a.m. – Officer Zagar entered the school and actively attempted to locate Butler.

7:39:23 a.m. – Butler fired a final shot, taking his own life.

7:40:39 a.m. – Officer Zagar and Perry Police Officer Josh Moore found Butler deceased from a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

On behalf of myself and the office of the Dallas County Attorney, I want to express my deepest condolences to the families of Ahmir Jolliff and Dan Marburger, whose lives were tragically taken during the horrific events at Perry High School. Our hearts have been with the victims, their families, and the entire Perry community as they have endured this unimaginable pain. We also extend our support to the students, staff, and community members who were impacted by this senseless act of violence.

I would like to acknowledge the swift and courageous actions of all law enforcement agencies involved, including the Perry Police Department, the Dallas County Sheriff's Office, and the first responders who arrived on the scene. The total law enforcement response was extraordinary with many near-by and out of area agencies responding. Their dedication and bravery in the face of danger brought a sense of calm and safety. Additionally, the quick activation of the SEARS alert by school staff ensured timely communication with 911, undoubtedly saving lives.

My office has conducted a thorough and detailed review of the investigation into this tragedy to ensure that justice is served. The investigation, conducted in close coordination with law enforcement agencies, was comprehensive and included a detailed examination of witness statements, forensic evidence, and all available information. School shootings have become far too common in our society. Our schools should be safe spaces for learning, not grounds for violence and fear.

The examination of facts has led this office to conclude that Butler acted alone in planning and carrying out the events of January 4, 2024. As the lead prosecutor, it is my duty to hold individuals accountable for their actions when the evidence leads me there. However, in this case the evidence does not support charges at the state level against anyone.

While this decision marks the conclusion of the investigation, the impact of this tragedy on the victims, their families, and the entire community remains profound. We extend our continued support to those affected and will stand by them as the community heals from this devastating loss. I want to reiterate my gratitude to law enforcement, school officials, and first responders who acted with professionalism and dedication throughout this process.

Active parental involvement in a child's life, including open communication, monitoring social interactions, and actively engaging with their school, is crucial in preventing mental health issues and mitigating the risk of school violence. If you see something, say something. We must work together, not only in response in these tragedies but also in our collective effort to prevent them from happening again. School shootings must stop, and it will take all of us—law enforcement, educators, lawmakers

and community members—to protect our children and ensure that our schools remain safe environments for learning and growth.

Thank you.

Jeannine Ritchie, Dallas County Attorney