

Sheriff's Columbine Report Released

By Robert Weller

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GOLDEN, Colorado. (AP) - The sheriff's department Monday released a minute-by-minute account of the Columbine High School bloodbath, concluding the 12 students killed by the teen-age gunmen were dead within 16 minutes.

The timeline appears to support the department in disputing claims by victims' families that the officers could have saved lives if they had acted more quickly.

But the report also confirms that teacher Dave Sanders, who died in a science room, and some of the 23 people wounded waited for hours until the SWAT team finished evacuating the school after the April 20, 1999, attack.

The first shots were fired at 11:19 a.m., according to the report. The gunmen killed themselves 49 minutes later, two minutes after SWAT teams entered the school.

There was no evidence that there was a third shooter or that anyone had prior knowledge of the killers' plans, the report said.

Jefferson County Sheriff John Stone distributed the report from the 13-month investigation to victims' families and the news media under an order issued by a judge hearing nine lawsuits filed by 15 families of slain or wounded students.

The voluminous CD-ROM report, with about 700 pages of text plus photos and audio and video clips, was based on as many as 5,000 witness interviews and about 10,000 pieces of evidence.

Many of the details already have been published or broadcast, including the gunmen's movements through the school, firing at will, as hundreds of students fled or cowered underneath tables, in bathrooms and cupboards.

The investigation determined that the gunmen didn't intend to end up in the library but apparently changed their plan when bombs they had brought didn't explode and police officers arrived at the school.

The report said the gunmen were in the library for 7.5 minutes.

"In that time, they shot and killed 10 people and wounded 12 more. They carried more than enough ammunition to kill all 56 people in the library," according to the report, released by Stone.

The report said the teen-age gunmen, Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris, also intended to kill 488 people in the cafeteria through the use of two bombs.

According to the timeline set out in the report: Harris and Klebold took the bombs into the school in duffel bags and back packs the morning of the attack. When the bombs didn't explode, they went back to their cars and got the guns.

Seven minutes after the first shots were fired, Harris exchanged fire with a school resource officer outside the school, the report said.

The resource officer called for help, and the first police arrived at 11:26. By 11:35, 12 students were dead and 34 were wounded. It would be half an hour more before SWAT team members entered the building at 12:06.

A camera in the cafeteria showed Klebold and Harris surveying the damage at 11:57. At noon, they returned to the library, and at 12:08, they killed themselves, the report said.

SWAT teams began escorting students from the building at 2:30 p.m. but didn't reach the library for another hour. Patrick Ireland, who became one of the most enduring images of the attack, crawled out the library window into the waiting arms of SWAT team members at 2:38 p.m., the report said.

“While this report established a record of the events of April 20, it cannot answer the most fundamental question - why,” Stone said in a statement. He declined to answer additional questions.

According to the report, the gunmen's yearbooks, videotapes, journals and computer files listed 67 people they disliked for various reasons, but only one of these people was wounded, “and there is no evidence that he was specifically targeted on April 20.”

Victims' families contend that the sheriff's office has stonewalled them on details of the shootings and has taken too long to complete the report.

Judy Brown, whose son escaped unhurt from Columbine, said the report excludes important information about the two gunmen.

The sheriff and his deputies are “going to release the best version of this that is going to do the best for their lawsuit,” she said.