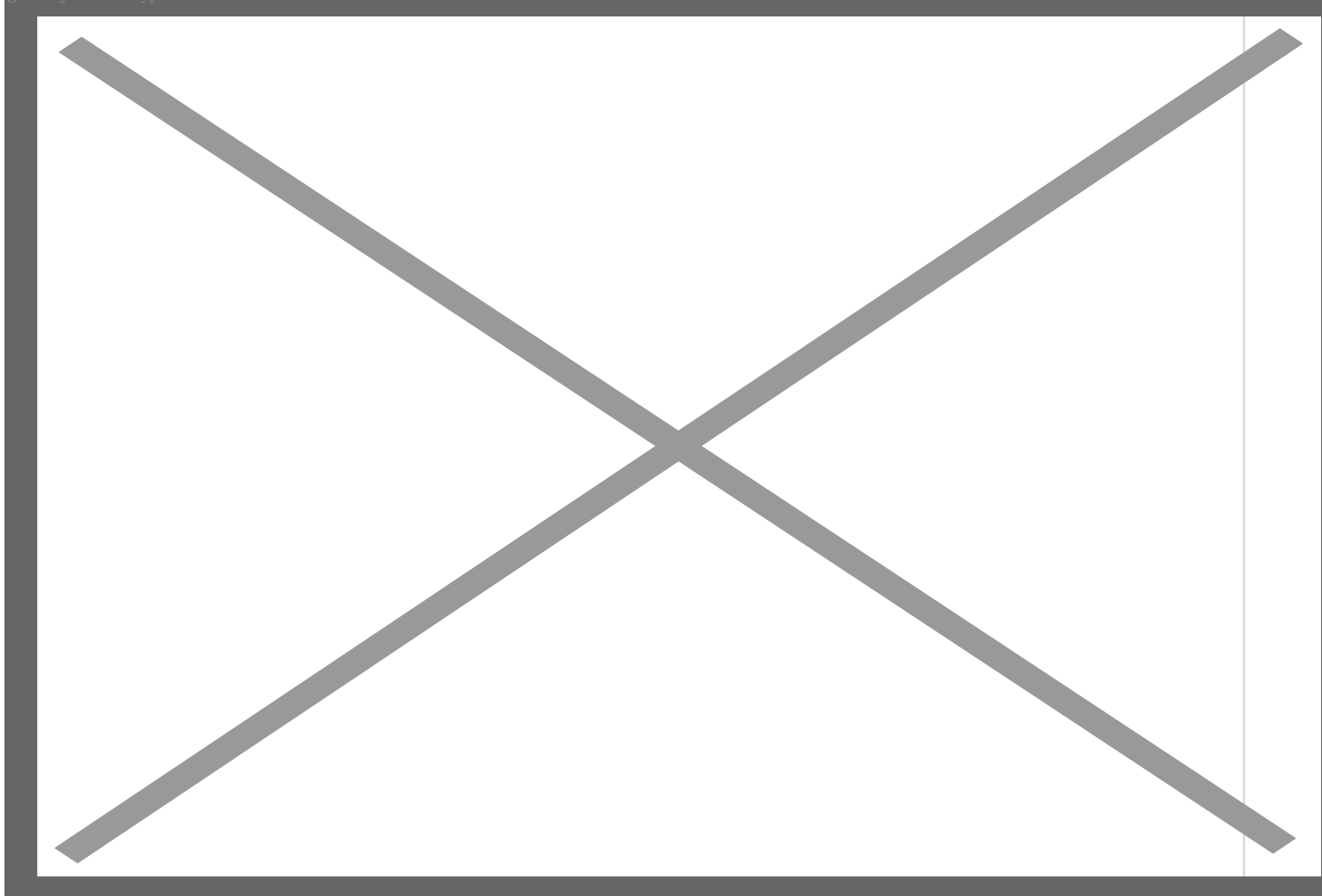


Donald Trump speaks at pro-gun NRA event and insists no gun control necessary

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Former U.S. President Donald Trump addresses the NRA conference in Houston, Texas, May 27, 2022 [Shannon Stapleton/Reuters]

Houston, May 28 (RHC)-- Only a few days and less than 450 km (280 miles) from where a gunman killed 21 people at a primary school in Uvalde, Texas, former U.S. President Donald Trump has headlined a

defiant conference of the pro-gun lobby group, the National Rifle Association (NRA).

Amid growing calls for stronger gun control measures after the massacre in Uvalde, Trump defended the NRA, which rejected calls to cancel its annual convention.

"Every time a disturbed or demented person commits such a hideous crime, there's always a grotesque effort by some in our society to use the suffering of others to advance their own extreme political agenda," Trump said at the event in Houston, Texas, referring to gun reform advocates.

"Even more repulsive is their rush to shift blame away from the villains who commit acts of mass violence and to place that blame onto the shoulders of millions of peaceful, law-abiding citizens who belong to organizations such as our wonderful NRA."

The former president called for beefing up school security instead of focusing on gun reform. "If the United States has \$40 billion to send to Ukraine, we should be able to do whatever it takes to keep our children safe at home," he said.

Previous speakers on Friday, including Texas Senator Ted Cruz and South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem, stressed that regulating guns is not the answer to gun violence. Texas Governor Greg Abbott also addressed the annual event in a video message.

NRA and Republican officials at the event painted the Uvalde attacker as deranged and evil, directing the blame to the gunman himself and away from the ease with which the 18-year-old was able to acquire the semi-automatic rifle he used in the massacre.

Noem said Democratic congressional leaders are calling for more gun laws that "wouldn't have made any difference in stopping the shooter." "They use the tragic situation to push their agenda. And it is all about control. And it is garbage," she said.

Protesters who oppose the NRA gathered outside the convention center throughout Friday.

Demonstrators held a child-sized coffin and carried photos of the Uvalde victims and signs calling for stronger gun-control measures.

"The time for us to stop the next mass shooting in this country is right now, right here," Texas Democratic gubernatorial nominee Beto O'Rourke told protesters.

Demonstrators chanted "NRA go away" and "Shame, it could be your kids today," as NRA supporters arrived at the convention hall.

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