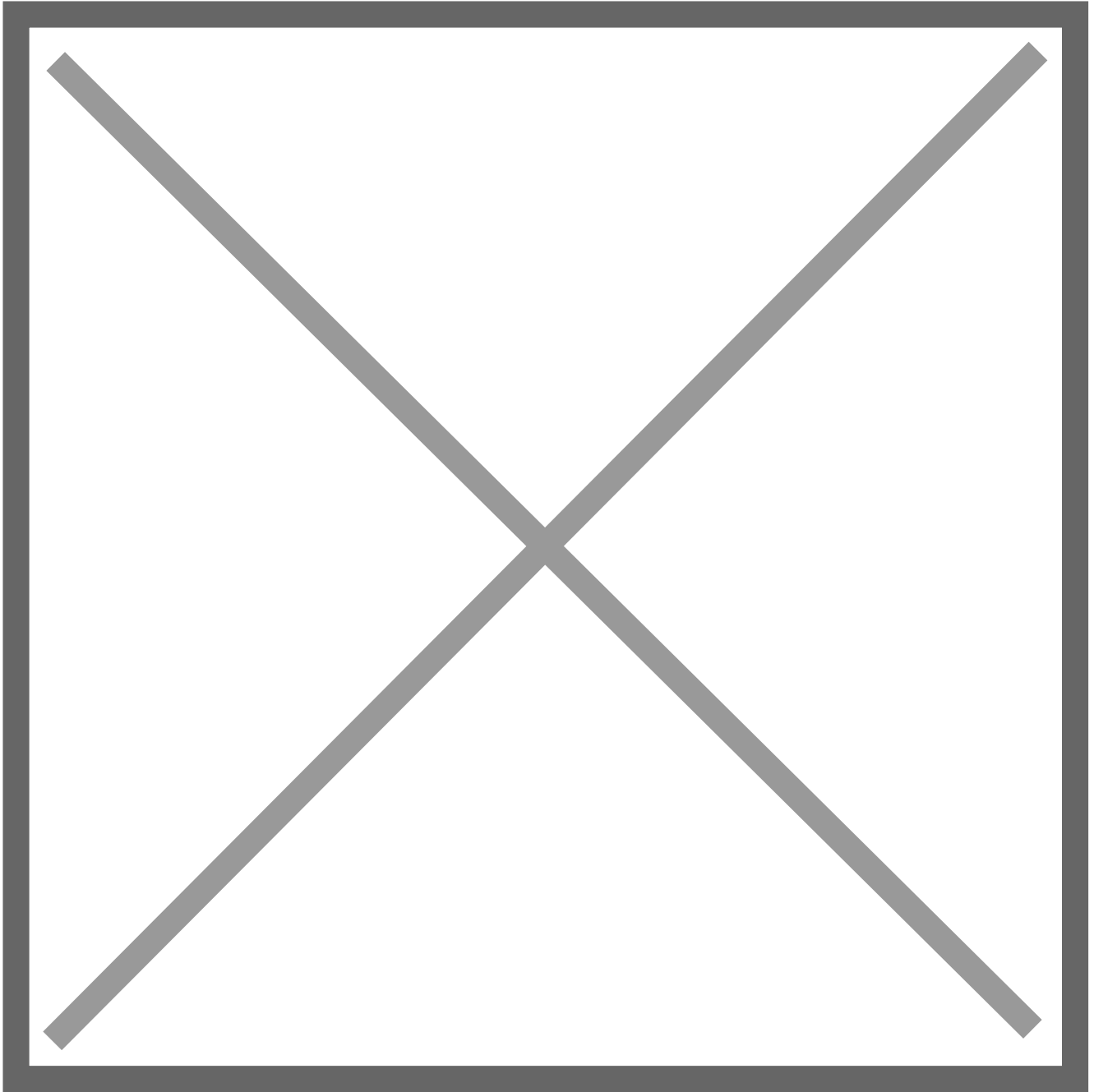


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Law enforcement personnel work at the venue following a shooting incident during the annual White House Correspondents' Association dinner that required the evacuation of President Donald Trump, first lady Melania Trump, and other VIPs in Washington, April 25, 2026. (OSV News/Reuters/Ken Cedeno)

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Washington — April 26, 2026

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Following a gunman's attempted assault on the annual White House Correspondents' Association Dinner, forcing the evacuation of the president, first lady and members of the Cabinet, the head of the U.S. Catholic bishops' conference denounced the violence and called for all to resort to prayer.

"We are grateful the lives of the President, those who protect him, and everyone in attendance last night were spared from serious harm," Archbishop Paul Coakley, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said in a statement April 26.

"Let us all pray for our elected leaders and public officials that they may receive God's blessings," he said. "Because human life is a precious gift, there is no room for violence of any kind in our society."

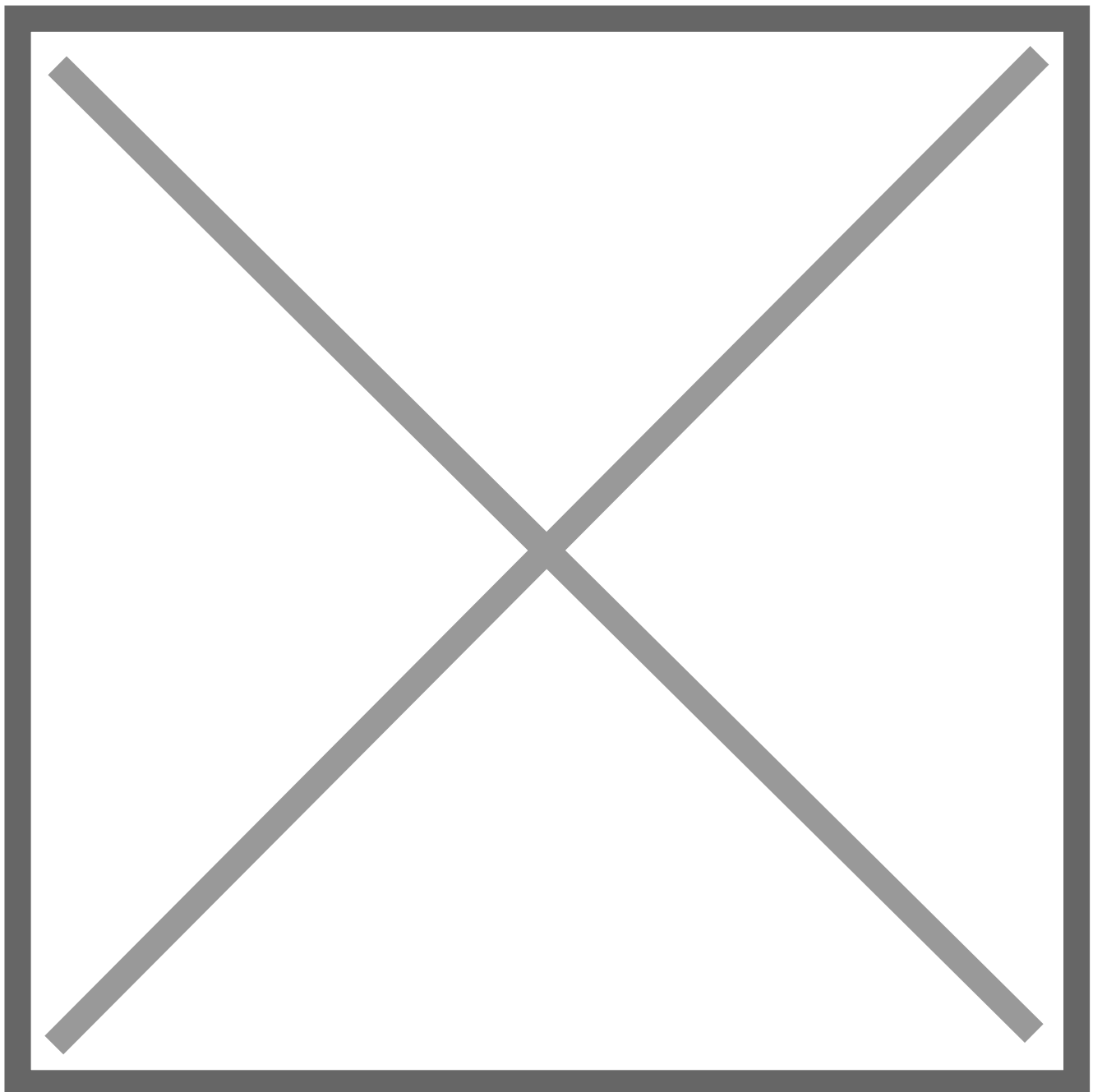
President Donald Trump, first lady Melania Trump, Vice President JD Vance and several Cabinet members were whisked out of the annual dinner with the White House press corps April 25, after a man rushed toward the main ballroom where the event was held and briefly exchanged gunfire with law enforcement.

According to The Associated Press, witnesses at the Washington Hilton heard about 5-8 gunshots. Law enforcement told AP the suspect opened fire before Secret Service agents subdued him. One agent was hit in a bullet-resistant vest, but is expected to be fine.

Attendees — largely hundreds of journalists who cover the White House — took shelter under tables, with some providing moment-by-moment updates to their various outlets amid the confusion.

More details emerged in two evening press briefings held shortly after the ballroom had been cleared, with Trump speaking to reporters at the White House, flanked by Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin and FBI Director Kash Patel.

During the briefing, Trump said the Secret Service officer injured in the attack had been shot from a very close distance.



Guests watch from tables after U.S. President Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump were rushed out of the White House Correspondents' Association dinner by Secret Service agents after gunshots were heard in Washington April 25, 2026. (OSV News/Reuters/Jessica Koscielniak)

A separate briefing was subsequently held at the hotel, where Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser, Jeffrey Carroll, interim police chief of the city's Metropolitan Police Department, and federal law enforcement updated the media.

Bowser and Carroll said the suspect appeared to be a lone actor, with Carroll noting the individual had charged a Secret Service checkpoint outside the ballroom, "armed with a shotgun, a handgun and multiple knives," before being "intercepted" by Secret Service agents.

Carroll also confirmed that "law enforcement exchanged gunfire with the individual," although the suspect "was not struck."

U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia Jeanine Pirro, who was in attendance at the dinner, told media during the briefing that the suspect had so far been charged with two counts — using a firearm during a crime of violence, and assault on a federal officer using a dangerous weapon.

Pirro said the suspect will be arraigned in federal district court on April 28, and that there will be "many more charges based upon the information that we are learning in this very fluid situation."

Media reports have identified the suspect as Cole Tomas Allen, 31, a video game developer and teacher from the Los Angeles suburb of Torrance, California, who recently won a "teacher of the month" award.

After being evacuated, Trump posted on his platform Truth Social that "the shooter has been apprehended," and that he had "recommended that we 'LET THE SHOW GO ON.'"

He commended the Secret Service and law enforcement for acting "quickly and bravely."

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Trump and the White House Correspondents' Association had initially wanted to continue with the program, but deferred to law enforcement's judgement to cancel the event and evacuate. The event is expected to be rescheduled within 30 days.

Tom Bateman, a State Department correspondent for BBC News, reported that one Secret Service agent described the ballroom as a "crime scene" while ordering attendees to vacate it.

The White House Correspondents' Association was founded in 1914, with its first dinner hosted in 1921. The association, which counts close to 900 members from almost 300 outlets, works to ensure robust journalistic coverage of the White House.

Shortly after the incident, Bishop David Bonnar of Youngstown, Ohio, released a statement deploring the attack and calling for prayer.

"The United States is built on freedom and respect for all. There is no room for violence that endangers the life of any human being," said Bonnar.

"Moreover," he said, "the issue of gun violence must be addressed. Violence is never the answer."

Bonnar added, "We all must look deeper into the human heart to build each other up rather than tear each other down. We pray for peace in moments of disagreement and discord."

"As we celebrate our 250th birthday may we live as a nation under God with liberty and justice for all," said Bonnar, who concluded with a prayer of petition: "For the healing of divisions in our country, that we might always strive to be one nation, under God, and that hatred and violence will be cast out from every heart in our land and throughout the world, let us pray to the Lord."