

Mark Duggan unarmed when shot by UK police

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21 November 2011

An official investigation into the police killing of Mark Duggan has revealed that the 29-year-old father of four was unarmed when he was shot.

Duggan was killed by a bullet to the chest, after the taxi he was travelling in was stopped by armed police in Tottenham, north London on August 4. He sustained a wound to his right arm from another bullet.

The *Guardian* says that the ongoing Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) has found Duggan was not carrying a gun, as claimed by police at the time and repeated ad nauseam by the media. The IPCC has established that officers from the Metropolitan Police trailed Duggan as he travelled in the taxi. The IPCC report apparently claims that police intelligence had established that Duggan had “obtained” a firearm earlier in the day.

No gun was found on Duggan’s body. However, a firearm was “recovered” 10 to 14 feet away from where Duggan fell, on the other side of a fence, the *Guardian* reported. But no trace of the young man’s DNA or fingerprints have been found on the gun, or the sock that it is said to have been wrapped in. The gun had not been fired, the *Guardian* states.

Duggan’s fingerprints are present on a shoebox said to have concealed the gun, which was found in the back of the car. According to the IPCC report, this is in line with “intelligence” that Duggan had picked up the firearm earlier in the day, causing the police trail.

The *Guardian* says that this latest information paints a “much more complex picture [of events surrounding the police shooting] than first revealed.”

This is a deliberate understatement.

Police had claimed that Duggan opened fire first, with one officer only narrowly escaping serious injury when a bullet was lodged in his radio. They had returned fire in self-defence, the claim went.

This version of events was repeated in initial statements by the IPCC. Later, the body was forced to issue a statement that it might have “inadvertently” misled journalists into believing Duggan had been involved in a shoot-out. It also appeared that the bullet in the radio was fired by a police officer, the IPCC conceded.

It is now clear the initial accounts were a tissue of lies. According to the *Guardian* report, Duggan had been trailed by police from Hackney. The young father appears to have known he was being followed, sending a BlackBerry message at 6.05 p.m. to that effect, less than 10 minutes before he was shot.

As the taxi entered Tottenham, the surveillance team called in special marksmen from the notorious firearms unit, CO19. They halted the taxi, ordered Duggan to leave the vehicle and shot him.

No account has been made of why, having followed Duggan for some time, the police suddenly decided he was dangerous. If the *Guardian* report is correct, and its details of the IPCC investigation so far have not been challenged, a cover-up began immediately after Duggan was shot. Police moved the taxi “before independent investigators examined the scene,” the newspaper states.

More questions are raised.

How is it possible that the gun was found over a wall, while the shoebox remained in the car?

At what point was this firearm discovered, and by whom?

And why have the police officers involved in Duggan’s killing not been suspended, but merely placed on “restricted duties”?

The sequence of events becomes even more curious, given the disclosure that the firearm discovered was reportedly involved in an earlier incident in July. A 29-year-old man has been charged with assault and possession of the BBM Bruni Mod 92 handgun. Two Metropolitan Police officers are under investigation over allegations that they failed to investigate that incident “properly”.

The *Guardian*’s disclosure was immediately attacked by the police. A statement from the Metropolitan Police said that it was “premature” to draw any conclusions about the IPCC’s investigation. While refusing to comment on the newspaper’s claims, the IPCC urged people not to “rush to judgement”. The “complex investigation” would take “four to six months” to complete, it said.

The disclosure is hugely damaging. Just as in the case of Jean Charles de Menezes, the innocent Brazilian worker shot dead in an anti-terror operation in 2006, the Metropolitan Police are once again implicated in a brutal murder, and then feeding misinformation to

conceal their actions.

For months the political establishment and the media denied any connection between Duggan's death and the riots that broke out in Tottenham just days later, spreading quickly through large parts of the capital and elsewhere. While Duggan was denounced as an armed criminal—despite having no convictions—the disturbances were blamed on a “criminal underclass” and “feral youth”, who must be dealt with by state repression.

To date some 4,000 people—mainly young males aged 16 to 24 years of age—have been arrested. They have been subjected to summary justice, tried and sentenced—in some instances within a matter of days.

More than a thousand have received punitive jail sentences, in many instances for petty offences. Only last week, 24-year-old Jamie Counsel was jailed for four years for postings on Facebook supportive of rioting.

Counsel is the third young man to have received a four-year jail sentence, despite the fact that, in all instances, the postings did not lead to any disturbances. The judge at Cardiff Crown Court said that the sentence was justified as a deterrent to others.

The *Guardian's* report on the IPCC is proof that this official version of the riots is a fabrication, aimed at concealing the conditions of police brutality and social deprivation that confront many working class youth.

In what is described as the “first definitive academic analysis” of the riots, research undertaken by Professor Steve Reicher, University of St. Andrews, and Dr. Clifford Stott, University of Liverpool, was released last week.

Entitled, “Mad Mobs and Englishmen?” it concludes that the disturbances were not the outcome of “simple criminality” but arose from “long-standing grievances”, including “insensitive policing” and lack of social opportunities.

Commenting on their research in the *Guardian*, Reicher and Stott note the response of David Lammy, Tottenham Labour MP. Lammy, one of a number of Labour MPs and black “community leaders” who came forward to denounce the riots, declared that the riots were the product of “mindless, mindless people,” demanding harsh repression, including the use of water cannon.

Reicher and Stott state that, in fact, “Mark Duggan's death [was] widely seen by local people as an assassination” that “exemplified antagonisms with the police”. But the rioting “only happened after peaceful protests by friends and family at the local police station had been ignored. No senior police officers were present to meet them. Instead, riot officers poured into the area and tried to force gathering crowds away from the station. In this process a young woman was struck. A cry of outrage went up and antagonism turned into open conflict,” the study found.

“In sum, Tottenham demonstrated all the features of a classic anti-police riot. It was rooted in longstanding grievances and the failure of peaceful protest. It arose out of an incident that exemplified police

illegitimacy and that empowered people to respond ...

“This may not have been a political event in the conventional sense of using power to secure specific gains. But it was profoundly political in the sense of arising out of and seeking to overturn everyday power relations in society.”

Such statements are an anathema to those seeking to conceal the class issues involved in the August riots—not least the self-proclaimed “liberals” who came forward to champion the police repression. Writing on his blog, Craig Murray, the former ambassador to Uzbekistan turned human rights “activist”, denounced the *Guardian's* coverage of the IPCC investigation.

After the report on the IPCC, Murray was incensed. Under the headline, “More Fashionable Left Stupidity”, he said the description of Duggan as “unarmed” was part of efforts by the “fashionable left” to “co-opt and elevate gangsters and violent thieves.”

Duggan had a gun, Murray states as a matter of fact, even if it “was in a shoebox.” “The police were quite right to believe that Duggan was armed. Something went wrong in that Duggan was shot—but it was not an action without reason.”

Why the insistence that any questioning of the police's actions is out of order? Because he is a typical representative of a social layer filled with hatred, contempt and fear of those who are denied everything by the very system that gives him such a comfortable existence.

The remainder of Murray's blog is a diatribe against “young people” with whom he had the misfortune to travel in an “overcrowded” train. They played “loud music”, were rude and “were wearing sportswear”.

“I pondered what a pity it was that they did not kick the old lady to death and go out and smash some more shop windows and steal some more sportswear. Then commenters on this blog could have explained to me they were an enlightened part of the revolutionary vanguard.”



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