

Unarmed man shot dead by police in English village

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In a shopping precinct car park, a man sits in a car. Suddenly, he finds his car blocked in by another vehicle. Rounds of fire from a shotgun disabled the car tyres.

CS gas canisters are set off both outside and inside the car. Then the man is shot and killed by gunmen wearing facemasks—a bullet through his heart fired from a Heckler and Koch MP5 submachine gun.

This is not a description of a mafia hit squad performing a gangland murder, but the scene confronting onlookers in the small Cheshire village of Culcheth near Warrington, when police opened fire on Anthony Grainger at 7:20 pm on March 3. The car park is close to a number of shops, restaurants, bars, and a public house.

The operation was carried out by a police team, dressed in black and wearing gas masks, and driving an unmarked car. It seems likely that the 36-year-old Grainger was unaware that he was the target of a police operation before he was killed by a single shot fired through the windscreen into his chest.

Grainger, a father of two, was unarmed. A detailed search of the stolen red Audi found no weapons, the Independent Police Complaints Commission admitted.

His mother, Marina Schofield-Ahmed, told the press, “I expect to get that the police have murdered my son and if it comes to that conclusion I want the officer charged with murder and I want the other officers charged with conspiracy to murder.

“That’s what I want at the end of the day—if it comes out that this is an unlawful killing, that’s what I hope and pray for.”

Mrs. Schofield-Ahmed was celebrating her 54th birthday when she heard of her son’s death. “I will never ever celebrate my birthday again,” she said. “How could I?”

Police justified the execution by labeling him as part of a group of “highly dangerous men.” They confirmed that it was a “pre-planned operation” based on a tip-off. In view of the dress and behaviour of the squad involved, it would be more accurate to describe it as the work of a paramilitary force tasked with performing a targeted assassination.

Three men—David Totton, 33, Joseph Travers, 27, and Robert Rimmer, 26—have appeared in court charged with conspiracy to commit robbery. All three were remanded to appear at Manchester Crown Court on March 19.

The Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) said a forensic examination of the Audi car in which Grainger had been sitting had found no firearms or any other weapons.

Manchester-based solicitor Keith Dyson, who is providing legal representation for the Grainger family, said, “The family are considering taking legal action. They are very angry about what has happened. We had a meeting with the IPCC and they cannot give us any answers why.”

Grainger’s girlfriend Gail Hadfield wrote on Facebook that the police “should never have fired on a man sat in a car in the corner of a car park”.

Eyewitness Jessica Brown, aged 15, who was in a nearby shop with a group of friends, described the scene to reporters as being “like something off a film... A couple ran into the shop and told us to stand back against the wall so we weren’t seen or hurt by anything.”

She saw people in the street running for cover, after which she heard several gunshots.

Her father, Anthony Brown, told Sky News that his daughter had come back home “hysterical ... She was crying her eyes out.”

“You don’t want the kids outside when there’s mad men running round with guns shooting”, he said.

It is only a matter of months since Mark Duggan was shot to death by police on August 4, 2011. He too was unarmed. The disinformation spread by police after the shooting, and the lack of any real investigation or charges against those responsible, sparked last summer’s riots in England’s major cities.

During those disturbances, youth from Warrington and Northwich (not far from the site of the recent shooting by police) were handed down sentences of four years each for simply posting comments on Facebook. In contrast, the police officers who carry out executions of unarmed men in public places face not so much as an appearance at a public inquiry, let alone a trial.

While the police shooting of Grainger was widely reported, the media did what it could to present him as a dangerous criminal—using quotes taken from police about body armour they claim to have found at his house and citing his previous conviction for handling stolen cars. They explained the shooting as the result of “an error of judgement” for which the policeman responsible was “remorseful,” while failing to mention any of the similar cases or the lack of any prosecutions of those responsible.

Between 1990 and 2011 police shot dead 53 people. Amongst these police fatalities was the innocent 27-year-old Brazilian worker Jean Charles de Menezes in July 2005. De Menezes had just boarded a train at Stockwell Tube station in London when he was confronted by armed plainclothes officers, two of whom fired 11 shots. Eight of these hit de Menezes, seven in his head.

Shootings in public are only the most high-profile example of the ability of the police to kill with impunity. In January, the Bureau of Investigative Journalism (BIJ) uncovered evidence that official figures claiming to show a fall in the rate of deaths involving police restraint had been manipulated. A number of such deaths had been excluded from the statistics.

The campaign group Inquest found that between 1997 and 2007 there were over 530 deaths involving the police in England and Wales. Inquest stated, “These were as a result of police shootings or following contact with the police, and more than 320 deaths in police

vehicle incidents.”



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