

Massive police mobilization ends in killing of Christopher Dorner

Joseph Santolan
16 February 2013

On Friday, the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) identified the charred remains of the body found in the cabin in Big Bear, California as Christopher Dorner. The weeklong manhunt reached a violent culmination on Tuesday evening. The body was so badly burned that he had to be identified by his dental records. The LAPD stated that the cause of death is as yet unknown and may not be known for weeks.

Details of the events surrounding the standoff at the cabin on Tuesday have become clearer over the past three days. It appears that Dorner had broken into and occupied a vacant cabin in the mountain community of Big Bear, in Southern California, not far from the local police headquarters for the manhunt in the area. When on Tuesday, the owners of the cabin had returned to clean it, Dorner tied them up at gunpoint and took their vehicle. The couple was able to get free almost immediately and phoned the police.

Wardens from the Department of Fish and Wildlife spotted and chased Dorner until he crashed into a snow bank. Dorner commandeered a second vehicle at gunpoint, and fled to a cabin on Highway 38.

Hundreds of police quickly converged on the scene. A thirty-minute shootout ensued. Later in the afternoon, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department fired incendiary CS tear gas canisters into the wooden cabin, causing it to burst into flame. The police ordered the media to remain at a sufficient distance, ensuring that no footage of the event was captured. They repeatedly ordered the fire department not to put out the fire.

When the cabin had burned to the ground, the police located the charred human remains that they have now claimed were Christopher Dorner.

It is clear that the fire was started deliberately. "We didn't intentionally burn down that cabin to get Mr. Dorner out," spokesperson for the San Bernardino

Sheriff's Department, John McMahon, told the press on Wednesday. There is, it seems, a touch of truth to this denial. The fire was not started to get Dorner out, but to kill him.

Incendiary CS tear gas canisters use an explosive device to generate an intense heat that instantly aerosolizes the solid tear gas chemical. It will always set flammable materials, including a wood cabin, on fire. Similar canisters were used in 1993 to burn down the compound of the Branch Davidian cult in Waco, Texas, in the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) and FBI massacre of at least 80 people.

Recordings of the police radio transmissions at the time of the start of the fire capture voices saying "Burn this motherf-cker," "Burn it down," and "Shoot the gas."

That police had no intention of capturing Dorner alive was already evident from the two separate incidents in which vehicles were recklessly shot up during the early stages of the manhunt. The police fired from 30 to 60 rounds into a truck occupied by two women delivering papers, also hitting nearby buildings and trees. In the second case, they pulled over a truck, suspecting it of being occupied by Dorner, and then released it, when a second police officer rammed into the truck and began firing repeatedly into the occupied vehicle.

The police denials of the calculated murder of the occupant of the Big Bear cabin have been half-hearted and weak. One senses from the mainstream media the tacit acknowledgement that this was an extrajudicial killing, and produced a variety of talking heads who applauded the police dispensing with due process.

CBS interviewed California State Assemblyman Todd Spitzer who stated, "A type of justice was served tonight... thankfully we don't have to go through an arrest, a trial and 25 years of appeals on death row."

“Well said,” his interviewer responded.

The *Los Angeles Times* interviewed two so-called experts on the subject. The first, David Klinger, a “use-of-force expert,” stated, “What difference does it make if one of the officers puts a...round in his head, drives the armored vehicle over his body when they are knocking the building down, or he dies in a conflagration?” The second, Geoffery Alpert, a specialist in police tactics, stated, “I don’t understand what the big deal is... This man had already shot two officers and was suspected of murdering other people. He wasn’t responding in a rational manner. The actions you take have to remove the threat and if it requires extreme measures, then so be it.”

Christopher Dorner is being hailed by the online communities as a sort of folk hero. He is nothing of the sort. There was nothing progressive about Dorner’s ideas or his behavior. The so-called manifesto which was released online is a confused mishmash denouncing police corruption, and praising the presidencies of Barack Obama and George H.W. Bush, as well as Michelle Obama’s bangs, Ellen Degeneres’ sense of humor, and offering some football advice to quarterback Tim Tebow.

What is most significant in the Dorner case is the extraordinary police mobilization in the manhunt that led up to his killing.

Thousands of police units were mobilized across three states. The highly armed search involved hundreds of SWAT personnel, numerous helicopters equipped with thermal imaging technology, and a multitude of agencies across three states and in two countries.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife, the US Border Patrol, every local police and sheriff and fire department, the California Highway Patrol, the FBI, the US Marshals Service, the Federal Aviation Authority, and at least some sections of the military, were deployed, heavily armed in the hunt for Dorner.

Apartments and homes in three states were raided. Hundreds of police converged on several public locations, locking them down for hours, and backed up by SWAT and police helicopters. The search crossed into Mexico where the US Marshals Service raided an apartment in Tijuana.

Even the Department of Motor Vehicles and state universities were employed in this hunt, using their

electronic billboards to make announcements in the hunt for Dorner’s vehicle.

The LAPD deployed six officers around the clock to guard each of the fifty police personnel mentioned by name in Dorner’s manifesto. That is a total of 900 officers deployed for bodyguard detail alone.

An electronic search was also conducted. The police obtained a warrant to search through Dorner’s Facebook account, those of his friends, groups and networks to which he was connected. They also obtained a court order barring Facebook from revealing that they had gone through its records.

A record \$1 million reward was offered for information leading to the capture of Dorner. The reward was funded by the police, several large corporations and wealthy individuals in an appeal to the population to assist the police efforts. It now appears that any claimants for the reward will be denied, as, of course, Dorner was not captured. He was killed.

The mainstream media played a deeply complicit role in this entire process, parroting each new police statement without question, no matter how contradictory each succeeding press release. At several points in the course of the manhunt the LAPD issued statements to the press instructing them not to ask questions of any member of the police force involved in the manhunt. Most press outlets complied.

On the day of the standoff, the LAPD issued instructions to the press to stop posting any updates about the events to Twitter. Again, almost all sections of the press complied with this direct censorship.

The manhunt for Christopher Dorner reveals the advanced state of the militarization of the police force. The massive simultaneous coordinated mobilization of all of the agencies of the state and the wholehearted collaboration of the media with their dirty business are a measure of the underlying social tensions that are emerging.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact