US veteran killed by California Highway Police officers

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On May 11, five California Highway Patrol (CHP) officers in Imperial County, California, beat to death Tommy Yancy, a veteran suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, during a routine traffic stop. Yancy left behind a wife and two kids.

A video taken by a witness on her cellphone captured the brutality of the CHP and the death of Yancy. According to witnesses, Yancy was pulled from his car, attacked by a K-9 unit, hit by a Taser, and beaten to death by five officers.

The video, missing the initial altercation with the officers, begins with Yancy being attacked by a Taser while handcuffed on the ground, as an officer jumps on him with his knees. A women in the background can be heard screaming, "I think that is too much excessive!"

While the officers are claiming that Yancy initiated the violence by attacking the K-9 officer, the witnesses in the video said that he was not resisting.

The same witnesses in the video can be heard urging other bystanders to call an ambulance, as the officers attempted CPR on Yancy after the beating. "How long before you guys call an ambulance? Call an ambulance!"

The video ends with Yancy being carried into the back of an ambulance truck. The circumstances and cause of his death are still under official investigation.

While the first report of this event occurred two days after the fact, since then there has not been any coverage from any major news agency outside Imperial County.

The killing of Yancy is the latest in a series of nationwide police killings this year. Just two months ago, police in Albuquerque, New Mexico, shot and killed James Boyd, a homeless man camping in the foothills outside the city. A video of the murder sparked public outrage throughout the city and nationwide.

A similar police killing occurred only a month ago in Coachella Valley, California. Adrian Parra, an honor roll student from Coachella Valley High School, was shot to death by police officers during a traffic stop while Adrian was on his way to a date. The sheriff's department has refused to reveal if the officers' dashboard camera captured the shooting or not. The only explanation given for stopping Adrian was for a "vehicle code violation."

And just this week, police in Salinas, in northern California, shot and killed a man "armed" with gardening clippers in an incident also captured on video. The incident was the third police killing in Salinas since March.

Located in southeastern California, the Imperial County borders Arizona and Mexico. It is one of the most socially devastated counties in California and was hit hard by the 2008 financial crisis. Imperial County has the state's second highest unemployment rate at 22 percent.

Tommy Yancy, a veteran of both the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD can cause psychological disorders such as nightmares and flashbacks, as well as depression and increased emotional arousal, which can lead to suicide or outbursts of violence.

Recent leaks have exposed the disastrous state of veterans' health care and the role of the US Department of Veterans Affairs in denying treatment for veterans, causing the death for an untold number of individuals. Twenty-six facilities are currently under investigation.

A report released by the Department of Veterans Affairs in 2012 found that nearly 30 percent of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans have been diagnosed with

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PTSD. Given the recent revelations of VA malfeasance, it should be expected that the level of PTSD amongst soldiers and veterans is significantly higher.

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