

Boston workers denounce militarization of police

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Scenes of the massive force of military vehicles, helicopters, sound cannon, flash grenades, teargas, SWAT teams wielding assault weapons and local cops backed by National Guard troops in Ferguson, Missouri were reminiscent of the massive mobilization of police and military personnel following the Boston Marathon bombings in April 2013.

Boston became a test-bed for what is now taking place in cities across the country. In the space of a few hours, a major American city was transformed into a virtual armed camp and placed under de facto martial law. Blackhawk helicopters, armored vehicles and machine guns were utilized by SWAT teams as a “shelter in place” order was issued by Democratic Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick and later extended to cover some 100 square miles of the Boston metropolitan area and around 1 million people.

The speed of the mobilization of state forces and subsequent lockdown and house-to-house searches in the nearby city of Watertown, with a population of 32,000, pointed to a process of police militarization that is already well advanced and was clearly on display in Ferguson in recent days.

Reporters from the *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to workers in Boston on two recent WSWS Perspective columns: “Ferguson, Missouri: War Comes Home” and “Class, race and the police killing in Ferguson, Missouri.”

Campaigning in Boston’s South End over the weekend, Socialist Equality Party members spoke to Kathleen Berrio. She said, “Nine months ago I was living in Roslindale, and one of our neighbors—because they were upset with us about something else—called the police and said that we had an arsenal of weapons, and a cache of heroin and cocaine, all of which was completely false and made up. So, with nothing more

than that information, the police flash-bombed my house at 4:30 in the morning while everybody was sleeping. They kicked in every door in the house, despite the fact that I opened the door with my hands up, and said we’re right here.

“They immediately grabbed me and the other female in the house, put handcuffs on us and put us in the hallway, and began to physically go after my husband and his friend. In handcuffs and on my knees, I was kicked several times by two different SWAT officers.”

She added, “There was never any retribution, or apology. I don’t even think they replaced the doors that they knocked down.”

Such raids are all too common and have frequently led to innocent people being killed by police. The ACLU report draws attention to one such raid on the night of January 5, 2011 in Framingham, Massachusetts. Eurie Stamp, a 68-year-old grandfather of 12, was shot while laying face down on the floor in a hallway with his arms over his head, as instructed by police. Officer Paul Duncan claimed that his rifle went off accidentally. Middlesex District Attorney Gerry Leone ruled the shooting an accident and found no fault with the way Duncan or the SWAT team performed.

At least 23 people were shot by police in Massachusetts in 2013—11 of them fatally, according to figures provided by Boston and state police, as cited in January 2014 report in the *Boston Globe*.

“From 2008 through 2013, the number of people shot by officers and state troopers has grown every year. Over that time period, there have been 86 shootings, 67 of which were determined to be justified. Two were classified as accidental, and two led to recommendations that the officers be retrained. The rest remain under investigation. Last year, Boston officials investigated six officer-involved shootings, compared

with 1 in 2012. State Police investigated 17 in 2013 compared with 14 in 2012.”



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