

Notes on police violence in America

US police kill 104 people in August

Tom Hall
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In August, US police killed 104 people nationwide, according to a compendium of local press reports compiled by volunteers on Wikipedia. Dozens more have been killed in the first half of September alone as the wave of police violence continued.

These killings are part of a general pattern of abuse carried out by an increasingly militarized police force. These notes are the first in a series on the *World Socialist Web Site* documenting police violence in America.

Police put Missouri teen in coma with taser during traffic stop

Bryce Masters, a 17-year-old high school student from Kansas City, Missouri, was put into a medically-induced coma after police used a taser on him during a routine traffic stop.

Masters was stopped by police officer Tim Reynolds after arriving at a friend's house to play video games. He was unable to comply with the officer's demand to roll down his passenger side window because his power windows lacked electrical wiring. At this point the officer, who discovered that Masters had an outstanding warrant for a traffic violation, decided that the teenager was being "completely uncooperative," according to a police spokesman.

According to eyewitnesses, the officer became enraged, fired his taser at Masters, pulled him out of the car, handcuffed him, dragged him around the car, slammed him to the concrete, causing bleeding in his mouth, and pressed his foot against the youth's back while he began convulsing. Friend and eyewitness Abigail Edwards stated, "They turned him over and he was just blue. How do you not know someone is sitting there not breathing?"

Masters's lawyer says that he went into "full cardiac arrest" as a result of the taser. He was later transported

by ambulance to a local hospital. He is now out of the coma but is suffering from memory loss, according to his lawyer.

Utah police shoot young man carrying costume sword

On September 10, police in Saratoga Springs, Utah shot and killed Darrien Hunt, a biracial youth, at a local strip mall.

Two officers were apparently responding to reports that Hunt was wielding a samurai sword and "acting suspiciously" in front of the Cyprus Credit Union. According to the initial police statement, the officers fired on Hunt in self defense after he "brandished the sword and lunged toward the officers with the sword." This statement was only released last Saturday, after days of silence on the incident.

Two days later, however, the police admitted that Hunt had been shot at multiple times during a brief chase through the strip mall. According to a private autopsy by Hunt's family, police fired six rounds into his back before he finally collapsed in front of the nearby Panda Express. An eyewitness photograph, taken just moments before the first shots were fired, shows Darrien Hunt at ease, smiling with his hands to his side, while the two officers approach.

Police investigators waited a full week after the shooting before interviewing the officers involved. Randall Edwards, an attorney for the Hunt family, expressed skepticism about the impartiality of the investigation, telling local press, "Do we trust the police to do a thorough investigation to find any kind of wrongdoing, and to ultimately punish the wrongdoer? I think the jury is still out on this one."

Police beating of Baltimore man caught on video

Baltimore resident Kollin Truss filed suit Monday against an officer whose vicious assault was caught on

video.

The security footage shows officer Vincent Cosom repeatedly punching Truss in the face and chest during a loitering arrest this June. In the video, Cosom takes repeated, exaggerated wind-ups with every blow while another officer holds Truss down.

Truss is requesting \$5 million in damages. Cosom is still on active duty, according to a spokesperson for Baltimore police.

Kentucky police fire dozens of rounds at suspect during police chase

Last Saturday, police in Lexington, Kentucky fired nearly 50 rounds at a domestic violence suspect, allegedly armed with no more than a taser.

Police arrived at the scene at a Circle K convenience store where, according to police reports, 29 year old suspect Jesse Gibbons punched an officer and stole his taser, before leading officers on a police chase. After Gibbons crashed his car 30 miles south, in Richmond, eight officers fired up to 50 rounds over the course of a minute, striking Gibbons several times. Although media reports describe an “exchange of gunfire,” there is no indication that Gibbons was armed with anything more than the taser he had allegedly stolen from the police officer. No police were injured during the incident.

Alabama inmate dies after being tased by sheriff's deputy

47-year-old inmate Ricky Hinkle was killed in the Jefferson County jail, which covers the city of Birmingham, after a sheriff's deputy used a taser on him. Hinkle had been in jail less than a week for violating his parole. According to the police, Hinkle had threatened the other inmates during lunch time last Saturday, before threatening to harm himself. The prison guards then decided to take him to a cell with suicide monitoring, where Hinkle allegedly became combative with one of the deputies. A second deputy then fired a taser at Hinkle, after which he collapsed to the ground and was unresponsive. He was transported to a local hospital, where he was pronounced dead.



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