

Notes on police violence in America

Police kill at least 20 people in the past week

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Police throughout the US continued their rampage of murder and violence, killing at least twenty people over the past week, according to a compendium of local press reports compiled by volunteers on Wikipedia. Louisiana in particular has seen three killings in the past two days alone. The courts, meanwhile, continue to whitewash police brutality, no matter how incriminating the evidence.

Grand jury refuses to indict Ohio officer in fatal Wal-Mart shooting

On Wednesday, a grand jury in Greene County, Ohio refused to indict Sean Williams, the officer who killed a young black man carrying a pellet gun in a local Wal-Mart last August, on charges of murder, reckless homicide or negligent homicide.

After the grand jury ruling, officials from the town of Beavercreek immediately sought, and received, an FBI civil rights investigation into the shooting. In addition, officials released surveillance footage of the shooting, which clearly show the victim, John Crawford III, calmly walking through the store with the pellet gun, which he had just taken off the shelf in the store's sporting goods department, periodically swinging it at his side and slinging it on his shoulder while talking on his cell phone. The video directly contradicts the 911 call which claimed that Williams was pointing his "gun" at other shoppers, including children.

Williams shot Crawford twice less than a second after he appears on the surveillance video with another officer armed with an assault rifle. Crawford, still speaking on his phone, was apparently unaware of the police until the moment he was shot.

South Carolina state trooper shoots unarmed man during routine traffic stop

South Carolina state police released a video Wednesday showing an officer shooting an unarmed

man after he reached into his car to get his license. The officer, Sean Groubert, has since been and charged with aggravated assault and battery, for which he faces up to 20 years in prison.

Groubert pulled over Levar Jones for speeding on September 4th at a gas station outside of Columbia. Jones complied with Groubert's demand to get out of his car, and turned back towards his driver's side door to retrieve his license after the officer asked to see it. Groubert, claiming he thought he was reaching for a weapon, fired four shots, striking Jones in the hip. Jones survived the encounter.

In comments to the media, South Carolina Public Safety Director Leroy Smith attempted to portray Groubert as a bad apple: "I believe this case was an isolated incident in which Mr. Groubert reacted to a perceived threat where there was none." However, Groubert was a decorated veteran of the state police, and had been awarded a medal of valor in 2013 for his role in a bank shootout.

NYPD officers tackle pregnant woman while arresting her teenage son

Early Saturday morning, a New York City police officer assaulted Brooklyn resident Sandra Amezcuita, a five-months pregnant woman, tackling her to the pavement on her stomach before arresting her for disorderly conduct.

Amezcuita, who was attacked in full view of her husband Ronel Lemos and several bystanders, was attempting to stop the police from beating her seventeen-year-old son, who was being arrested for possession of a knife. Her son's mugshot shows severe bruising about his face, with one eye entirely swollen shut. Lemos, who was also beaten and then arrested for assaulting a police officer, told the *New York Daily News*, "The first thing I thought was they killed my

baby and they're going to kill my wife."

The entire incident was captured on video by a bystander and posted to the Internet. The video shows a second woman, Sandra's friend and neighbor Mercedes Hidalgo, also being flung to the ground by police. The same bystander, according to Amezcuita's lawyer, last week filmed a police officer beating a Fifth Avenue street vendor while colleagues held the man down. That officer has since been suspended.

The condition of Amezcuita's child is not yet known. However, Amezcuita suffered vaginal bleeding and bruising to her stomach and arm, and still complains of abdominal pains. In the same issue of the *New York Daily News*, Amezcuita said "I was afraid something happened to my baby. I am still afraid that something is wrong."

New York police have since announced a probe into the incident, after the story and eyewitness video became national news.

Police in Savannah, Georgia kill handcuffed man in patrol car

Police in Savannah killed 29-year-old Charles Smith last Thursday after arresting, handcuffing and placing him in the back of a patrol car.

The officers involved claim that Smith, after kicking out a backseat window, somehow obtained a gun. Smith's hands were handcuffed behind his back; police claim that he was somehow able to move them to the front of his body.

The shooting took place in broad daylight in a residential neighborhood. Upset bystanders began to gather around the crime scene, some with makeshift signs expressing their outrage. Clearly unnerved by the events last month in Ferguson, Missouri, the county government sent alerts to its staff warning about a "potential civil unrest situation."

David Jannot, the officer who killed Smith, has been placed on paid administrative leave.

Louisiana sheriff's deputy kills 14-year-old boy

On Tuesday evening, a sheriff's deputy shot and killed 14-year-old Cameron Tillman in an abandoned house in the southern Louisiana city of Houma. Officials from the Terrebonne Parish Sheriff's Office claim that the officer, who they described as an African-American and member of the parish SWAT team, was responding to claims that a group of individuals with weapons were running into the house.

The official report states that the officer "shot an armed suspect" while "attempting to make contact" with Tillman and his friends inside the house. However, the state police, who have taken over the investigation, only confirmed that "a weapon was recovered in close proximity to the 14-year-old's body," suggesting the possibility of a cover-up.

Tillman's family vigorously deny that Charles was armed. His brother Andre, who was also in the house at the time of the shooting, told the media, "My little brother thought somebody was just clowning, because somebody is always clowning by the door. He opened [it] and the man just shot him. He didn't have nothing in his hand."



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