Three more New York City police killings last week

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6 October 2014

Officers of the New York Police Department (NYPD) shot and killed three people last week in ongoing displays of police violence in the city.

The first victim, Denis Volchkin, 28, was killed in his mother's house in Brooklyn. His mother initially called the police because he had threatened her, allegedly with knives. The officers filed a domestic disturbance report. According to the NYPD, Volchkin, who was clearly mentally ill, returned later, and when police arrived for a second time, they found him sitting on a couch with several knives next to him. As police spoke to him, he became agitated and picked up a knife. When he refused orders to drop it, one of the cops shot him once in the chest.

In a statement to the media, Volchkin's mother condemned the police for killing her son. "They didn't just kill my son, they killed our whole family. Why shoot him? If you want to shoot, go to Iraq."

In the second incident, police were called to the scene of a domestic dispute, also in Brooklyn, in which they killed 47-year-old Francisco Carvajal and 51-year-old Rafael Laureano. Carvajal had allegedly broken into his ex-girlfriend's apartment and was threatening her with a knife. Laureano, the woman's current boyfriend, helped police break down the door and enter the apartment. According to the NYPD, cops shot Carvajal after telling him to drop a knife he was holding. Laureano was shot in the back of the head. Police originally reported that he had died of stab wounds.

These events come on top of other recent documented incidents of NYPD brutality. One video recorded last month shows police wrestling a pregnant woman, Sandra Amezquita, to the ground after the arrest of her teenage son. The video also shows cops pushing another woman to the ground as she approaches them.

The NYPD has also stepped up the harassment of performers dressed as cartoon characters in Times Square, after an incident in which a performer dressed as Spiderman got into an altercation with the police this summer. The *New York Post* has led a media witch-hunt against these workers.

The growing disgust that millions of New Yorkers have with NYPD violence and harassment has prompted a public relations campaign from the department's Commissioner, William Bratton. Bratton, in a speech to hundreds of top NYPD commanders last week at the new $800,000 NYPD training academy in Queens, announced, "We will seek aggressively to get rid of those out of the department who should not be here, the brutal, the corrupt, the racist, the incompetent." He claimed that the number of NYPD officers who fit this description amounted to one percent or less of the 35,000-member force.

He reiterated the plan for "retraining" officers which he outlined after the police choking death of Staten Island resident Eric Garner by Officer Daniel Pantaleo on July 17. Bratton acknowledged that there had been "eroding trust" between the NYPD and working-class communities in the city.

The New York media, in conjunction with the office of Democratic Mayor Bill de Blasio, have pushed the image of police reform. The *New York Times*, reporting on Bratton's speech, compared his supposedly open response with the defensive posture taken by police in Ferguson, Missouri after the shooting death of Michael Brown in August. The same *Times* article also noted that Deputy Commissioner Joseph Reznick, who oversees the department's Internal Affairs unit which investigates allegations of law-breaking by NYPD officers, announced that the NYPD has started to use the video of the violent treatment of Sandra Amezquita as a part of its training program.

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To help contain the widespread discontent with the brutality of the NYPD, the city has set up an Office of the Inspector General for the department (within the city's separate Department of Investigation), headed by Philip Eure. The position has been aggressively promoted by the de Blasio administration. In recent weeks, the office has announced the launching of a new website on which victims can anonymously report police misconduct, as well as a spate of appointments, including Asim Rehman, a founder of the Muslim Bar Association, as general counsel, and former Manhattan District Attorney's Office prosecutor Sandra Musumeci as deputy inspector general.

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