

## Notes on police violence

# Video shows “firing squad” police killing of Michigan man

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On Monday, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) released a video captured by a police dashboard camera depicting the killing of Milton Hall, a 49-year-old mentally ill homeless man, in July of 2012 by police officers in Saginaw, Michigan. Mark Fancher, a lawyer with the ACLU of Michigan, called Hall's killing a death by “firing squad.”

The video was released as part of testimony by the ACLU to a hearing of the Organization of American States' (OAS) Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on police violence in America.

The video shows eight police officers surrounding Hall in a suburban parking lot with weapons drawn. One officer continually threatens Hall with a snarling police dog, prompting Hall to produce a small pocketknife to defend himself. Hall assumes a clearly defensive posture and at no point does he approach or come within ten feet of any of the officers.

The video shows police unleashing a hail of gunfire in the style of a firing squad, firing over 45 bullets within the space of several seconds, hitting Hall 14 times, and continuing to fire even after he collapses to the ground. One officer then turns Hall over and handcuffs him, pressing his boot against Hall's back.

Despite the fact that the scene was captured on video and witnessed by several bystanders, no officers have been charged. In January, the Justice Department announced that it would not bring charges against Hall's killers, declaring that “this tragic event does not present sufficient evidence of willful misconduct to lead to a federal criminal prosecution.”

The release of the video comes only a few weeks after the family of Tony Mitchell, an unarmed man who was killed by police in northern Michigan on July 14,

filed a lawsuit in federal court.

## **Autopsy of Darren Hunt shows police shot him in the back**

A state autopsy released Tuesday of a young man shot by police in September while he was wearing a costume sword concluded that most of the gunshot wounds he received were to his back. The autopsy found that Darren Hunt, 22, was shot six times, including four times in the back. This new revelation contradicts claims by police that officers had shot and killed the young man in order to protect themselves.

“I think that means they were pursuing him, he was running away. He was probably scared to death,” said Robert Sykes, an attorney for the Hunt family.

Hunt was shot September 10 as he was walking around a strip mall in Saratoga Springs, Utah, dressed as a Japanese anime character. He had been carrying a sword, a part of his costume, which he had purchased at an Asian gift shop. Police allege that they had responded to a 911 call regarding a “suspicious person” wielding a “samurai-type sword.” Officers claim they fired at Hunt when he brandished his sword and then charged at them while swinging the sword.

The stories of the officers do not match with witnesses to the scene, which claim they saw officers shoot Hunt in the back as he fled. Sykes noted that a picture taken of Hunt by a bystander moments before the killing shows him smiling as he talked to two officers.

## **Military armored vehicle deployed to Collect Civil Judgment in Small Town**

Earlier this month, the Marathon County Sheriff's Department in Wisconsin deployed 24 armed officers and a military armored vehicle to collect a civil

judgment from an elderly man. The department used the show of force against 75-year-old Roger Hoepner, who the town had concluded owed \$80,000 in fees over alleged misuse of his property. The dispute arose over the presence of wood pallets and old tractors on Hoepner's 20-acre plot of land, which the town claimed were not in compliance with zoning standards.

“Rather than provide Mr. Hoepner or his counsel notice...and attempt to collect without spending thousands of taxpayer dollars on the military-style maneuvers, the town unilaterally decided to enforce its civil judgment" using a show of force, Hoepner's attorney, Ryan Lister, told the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.

Hoepner called Lister when he saw the deputies and armored vehicle outside his home. As Lister was on his way to Hoepner's house, he was stopped by a roadblock that was kept up until after his client was escorted from the premises. Deputies handcuffed Hoepner and brought him to his bank, where he agreed to pay the civil judgment in their custody.

Marathon County sheriff's officials have refused to apologize for the display of force despite public outcry. Captain Greg Bean, dismissed criticism of his department's action saying, “People may not always understand why, but an armored vehicle is almost a necessity now.”



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