

Media, politicians seize on Ferguson shooting to blackguard protests against police violence

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The US media and political establishment have seized upon the wounding of two officers in Ferguson, Missouri on Wednesday night to reiterate their support for the police amid widespread hostility to the wave of police killings in America.

US President Barack Obama, making an appearance Thursday on the late-night television program Jimmy Kimmel Live, declared that police “have a terrifically tough job,” and added that “there was no excuse for criminal acts.” He added, “They’re criminals, they need to be arrested.”

These claims come despite the fact that, by their own admission, police have no information as to who fired the shots that wounded the officers, or whether the police were even the target. The shots were reportedly fired from up to 150 yards away.

By contrast, the Obama administration’s own report on the Ferguson Police Department revealed a “pattern” of criminal activity by police officers and officials. Obama was not referring to any cops as “criminals” or calling for their arrest. Instead, the Obama administration decided not to bring charges against Darren Wilson, who shot Michael Brown last August.

Prior to the shootings on Wednesday, the police had been on the defensive, following the release of footage showing the horrific killing of Charley Leundeu Keunang in Los Angeles on March 1; 19-year-old Tony Robinson in Madison, Wisconsin on March 6; Anthony Hill in Atlanta, Georgia on March 9 and many others.

The Justice Department’s report on the Ferguson Police Department, released last week, documented numerous crimes, including beating and arresting people and imprisoning the poor in order to compel them to pay fines.

Shortly before the shooting, Ferguson Police Chief

Thomas Jackson announced his resignation, while the Missouri Supreme Court said it would place a state judge in charge of the city’s court system. These moves followed the announcement earlier in the week that Ferguson City Manager John Shaw would resign.

Ferguson Mayor James Knowles used the killings as an opportunity to take aim at the Justice Department report. He told NPR Thursday that “there continues to be hostile language coming out of the Justice Department—or rather, from Eric Holder, specifically.”

On Thursday, Rudy Giuliani, the former Republican mayor of New York City, denounced Obama for not going far enough to directly ally himself with the police. Giuliani declared that it is “the obligation of the president ... to explain to the American people and the world that our police are the best in the world; they are the most trained; they are the most restrained.”

This in reference to a police system that kills approximately 1,000 people every year.

Giuliani added that the shooting of unarmed Brown by Wilson was “a justifiable homicide.”

The most vociferous response to the shooting came from Jeff Roorda, head of the St. Louis Police Officers Association, who told Fox News on Thursday that the shootings showed the intention of demonstrators to kill police.

“Dead cops, that’s what they want,” he declared. “Let’s not pretend like they wanted [Ferguson Police Department Chief] Tom Jackson’s resignation or they’re mad because Mayor Knowles is still there. They want dead cops. That was their goal all along and that was their goal last night.”

The attempt to shift the public discourse away from police criminality is far from confined to the most rabid defenders of the police. The *Los Angeles Times* declared in an editorial that the shootings are “a

reminder of the dangerous job police have.” The newspaper added that “angry protests do have the potential to turn violent, just as they can provide cover to criminals.”

The two officers were released from the hospital Thursday. One was shot in the face, the other in the shoulder, but neither injury was life-threatening.

Police in military battle dress carried out a nighttime SWAT raid Thursday on the house of a demonstrator who lived near the police station. Iresha Turner said that she and her son had red laser sights pointed at their chests as they emerged from their house with their hands up.

Turner told the *Guardian*, “It was 3am and we were lying in bed. Suddenly there’s banging at the door. We hear ‘it’s the police it’s the police we know you’re in there come out.’ I look outside and there are six or seven police, they had a tank-style vehicle, a truck and a helicopter it was ridiculous. We were forced outside. I looked down at my chest and there was a red dot on my chest. I said ‘I surrender, I surrender, please don’t shoot me.’”

Lamont Underwood, another demonstrator who was staying at Turner’s house, told the *Guardian*, “I kept telling them I didn’t know anything about who shot the cop... It was terrifying. It was disturbing. They had guns drawn and were yelling you’re the reason we are here. We need you. I kept telling them ‘I ain’t seen nothing. I ain’t seen who shot the police.’ Period. I heard gunshots and people started running.”

The aftermath to the latest shooting is patterned on the official response to the killing of two police officers in Brooklyn in December by a mentally troubled man. In the aftermath of that shooting, police unions sought to paint New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio as being responsible for the killings because he had earlier made remarks sympathetic to the protests.

In that case, Giuliani was brought onto national television to denounce de Blasio for being insufficiently deferential to police, while the head of New York City’s police union declared that De Blasio had “blood on his hands.” Police Commissioner Bill Bratton, the mayor’s own appointee, declared that de Blasio had “lost” the confidence of police officers.

De Blasio responded to these developments by insisting on his absolute support for the police and calling for an end to demonstrations. Dozens of people

were subsequently detained throughout the country for making “threatening” statements about the police.

The media and political establishment are attempting to repeat the same operation, this time on a nationwide scale, demonizing demonstrators as “violent” while whitewashing and facilitating the reign of police violence that has taken more than 200 lives so far this year.



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