

Police killed over 500 people in the US this year

Tom Hall and Andre Damon**12 June 2015**

The number of people killed by police so far this year topped 500 this week as the nationwide epidemic of police violence continued, with cops killing 20 people over the past seven days alone.

The US media largely has ignored the 500-victim milestone, with headlines this week dominated by the attempt to whip up law-and-order hysteria around the massive manhunt to recapture two inmates who recently escaped from Clinton Correctional Facility in New York.

The 500th fatality of the year, according to one database of police killings, occurred Monday night when members of the Maricopa County SWAT team gunned down 69-year-old Richard Warolf, a suicidal man, during a courtesy call requested by his family in Sun City, a suburb of Phoenix.

The following night, a police officer in Des Moines, Iowa shot and killed unarmed 28-year-old Ryan Bollinger through the window of her squad car after a two-minute low-speed chase.

The nine other people killed by police since Monday include: Matthew Wayne McDaniel, a 35-year-old from Florida; Rene Garcia, a 30-year-old California man killed during a traffic stop; Mario Ocasio, a 51-year-old from New York City, killed by a Taser; Jeremy John Linhart, 30 years old from Ohio, also killed during a traffic stop; Ross Anthony, 25, from Dallas, killed by a Taser; an unknown suicidal 45-year-old male from the Houston area; QuanDavier Hicks, 22, from Cincinnati; Isiah Hampton, 19, from New York City; an unknown homeless man from Miami, shot five times by an officer, and Charles Allen Ziegler, 40, from Pompano Beach, Florida.

The judicial system, meanwhile, continues to shield killer cops from prosecution. On Thursday, Cuyahoga County prosecutor Tim McGinty dismissed an advisory

ruling from a local judge that found that the police involved in the shooting of Tamir Rice in Cleveland, Ohio last year could be charged with a crime.

Cleveland Judge Ronald Adrine, in ruling under a rarely used Ohio law, determined that probable cause existed to charge officer Timothy Loehmann and his partner Frank Garmback with murder and negligent homicide for shooting Rice while he was playing with a toy gun in a park and then failing to provide medical attention.

Instead of bringing charges, McGinty reaffirmed his intention to use secretive grand jury proceedings in weighing whether to bring charges against the officers, no doubt hoping to secure an outcome similar to the rigged grand jury proceedings that exonerated the cops who killed Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri and Eric Garner in Staten Island last year.

On Tuesday, the UK's *Guardian* newspaper released its own database of US police killings, giving a more detailed view than any other similar list. The *Guardian* found that American police killed more people in the first 24 days of 2015 than the police forces of England and Ireland have in the past 24 years, and that US police kill more people every week than German police kill in an entire year.

The *Guardian* also found that police in Pasco, Washington (population 67,599), fired more rounds at one unarmed suspect, Antonio Zambrano-Montes, than police in Finland (population 5.4 million) fired in all of 2013.

The *Guardian*'s figures (which closely coincide with data from killedbypolice.net, another independent database) provide even further evidence that the US government's official figures, based on voluntary reporting by local police departments, enormously undercount the victims of police violence. A study by

the Bureau of Justice Statistics this March found that the federal statistics undercounted the real number of police shootings by around two and a half times.

Despite years of demands from civil rights groups, the Obama administration has maintained its opposition to creating a nationwide database of police killings or requiring local police departments to report deaths at their hands on anything besides a voluntary basis.

Despite thousands of police killings over the past decade, only 54 officers have been charged, according to a study in April by the *Washington Post* and Bowling Green State University. A review of these cases shows that police are almost never charged unless there exists unambiguous video evidence of them committing a particularly heinous crime.

The case of former South Carolina police officer Michael Slager, who was indicted Monday for the murder of Walter Scott, was one such exception that proves the rule. The police department initially attempted to cover up the shooting, but was forced to change its story after bystander footage emerged showing that Slager shot the unarmed Scott in the back as he tried to run away, and then planted a weapon on Scott's lifeless body.

At any rate, there is no guarantee of conviction even in cases such as Slager's where there is overwhelming evidence of wrongdoing by the officers involved, as indicated by the acquittal of Cleveland police officer Michael Brelo of voluntary manslaughter charges last month. The judge in that case ruled that "the state did not prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the defendant Michael Brelo knowingly caused the deaths," despite the fact that Brelo fired 49 bullets at unarmed passengers in a stopped vehicle, including 15 through the windshield at point-blank range.

The institutional defense of killer cops extends through every level of government, all the way to the White House. The Obama administration has not prosecuted a single officer for civil rights violations, including most notoriously Darren Wilson, whose murder of Michael Brown sparked mass protests last summer.

Despite releasing repeated damning reports of systematic violence and corruption in city after city, from Cleveland to Ferguson and Baltimore, the Obama administration has steadfastly refused to demand that any of the officers and officials responsible for a

"pattern and practice" of brutality be held criminally accountable. The Obama Justice Department has come down on the side of the police officers in every Supreme Court case involving police brutality, according to a recent survey by the *Washington Post*.



To contact the WSW and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact