

# FBI Director James Comey's apology for police murder

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In an October 23 speech at the University of Chicago Law School entitled “Law Enforcement and the Communities We Serve,” FBI Director James Comey declared that “something deeply disturbing is happening all across America.”

What Comey found so disturbing was not that hundreds of unarmed people in the United States are gunned down by the police every year, and that every day in cities and towns across the country cops abuse and attack workers and young people. No, what he denounced as “deeply disturbing” was the fact that these crimes are being exposed by means of videos posted on the Internet and opposed by protesters demanding that killer cops be brought to justice.

In his speech at the University of Chicago, as well as a follow-up speech on October 26 at the International Association of Chiefs of Police conference in Chicago, Comey argued that increased scrutiny of the police in the aftermath of the August 2014 killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri has led to a nationwide increase in violent crime.

He complained of a “chill wind blowing through American law enforcement over the last year,” and declared that “in today’s YouTube world,” officers are “reluctant to get out of their cars and do the work that controls violent crime.” He attributed this to a “political leadership” that “has no tolerance for a viral video,” and warned of “profound consequences” should this trend continue.

The clear implication of Comey’s argument is that those who uncover police criminality, whether a bystander with a cell phone camera or a newspaper that exposes police corruption, serve to promote violent crime and should be suppressed. It is, in essence, an argument for a police state.

Comey’s statements are a full-throated defense of the

reign of police violence in working-class communities across the US. Tens of thousands of people have lost friends, family and loved ones at the hands of cops who routinely get away with murder. Residents of poor and working-class neighborhoods confront in the police a massively armed occupying force that functions as a law unto itself.

On Monday, the same day that Comey addressed the police chiefs’ convention, the world was shocked to see footage of a police officer, in the middle of a math class, brutally grabbing and dragging a 16-year-old South Carolina girl, still seated at her desk, and throwing her across the floor.

In keeping with Comey’s views, the assaulted girl’s classmate was arrested for having had the courage to record the incident on video.

The following day, officials in Seneca, South Carolina announced that no charges would be filed against the police officer who fatally shot 19-year-old Zachary Hammond in July, even as they released footage clearly showing that the cop was in no danger when he fired two bullets, point blank, into the young man’s head.

The previous week, the *Guardian* newspaper revealed that 7,000 people had been secretly detained at the Chicago Police Department’s Homan Square torture facility, twice as many as the newspaper had previously reported.

On Monday, White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest distanced the Obama administration from Comey’s remarks. But on Thursday, following an unannounced Oval Office meeting between Comey and President Obama, the White House declared its unequivocal support for the FBI director. Earnest told the press corps that Comey would continue at his post and enjoyed the “full confidence and support of the

president.”

In his own speech on October 27 to the chiefs’ convention, Obama did not mention Comey’s remarks and reiterated his administration’s defense of the police. He began by eulogizing the police, declaring, “You serve and protect to provide the security so many Americans take for granted.” He concluded, “May God protect our cops.”

He criticized the media for focusing “on the sensational and the controversial” in its reporting on police violence, and commiserated with the police chiefs over the fact that to millions of Americans “every police officer is suspect no matter what they do.”

He decried the fact that 32 officers have been shot and killed in 2015, while making no mention of the fact that nearly a thousand people have been killed by the police in the same period.

He alluded to his role in supplying police departments with military-grade weapons such as assault rifles, armored vehicles and helicopters. “Over the past six-and-a-half years, my administration has invested more than \$2 billion to retain or hire 10,000 police officers,” he said, and added, “Right now, we’re helping make sure departments throughout the country have the equipment they need.”

Obama’s speech—and more importantly, his record in supporting cover-ups of police killings and the exoneration of killer cops, and his endorsement of police-military crackdowns against protests in Ferguson, Baltimore and elsewhere—demonstrate that his differences with Comey are of an entirely secondary and tactical nature.

The Obama administration has sought to obscure its unequivocal support of the police with hypocritical gestures of sympathy for the victims of police violence and two-faced statements of solidarity with “communities of color.” This is part of a calculated effort to enlist the civil rights establishment and pseudo-left purveyors of racial politics in containing and dissipating social protest over police brutality by keeping it bottled up within the orbit of the Democratic Party.

The prevalence of police violence is not a mere aberration. It cannot be explained away as a matter of a few rogue cops or “bad apples.” The fact that it is such an ingrained feature of American life testifies to its

being deeply rooted in the structure of social relations.

Is it any mystery that in a country where the wealthiest ten percent of the population controls more than 75 percent of the national wealth, and 95 percent of income gains go to the top 1 percent, the ruling class feels the need for a massive and brutal repressive force?

All the more so under conditions where the political system can offer no solutions to the growth of poverty and decline in living standards of broad masses of people.

The police are an agency of the state, which is, in essence, an instrument of the ruling class to hold down those it exploits, the working class, ultimately through the organized application of force. Under conditions of ever-rising social inequality, and, consequently, the growth of social discontent and opposition from below, the corporate-financial elite builds up its police force and arms it to the teeth. This is how it prepares for the inevitability of social upheavals.

One can trace the parallel trajectory of rising inequality and the transformation of the police in America over the past half-century into a paramilitary occupation force in working-class cities devastated by plant closures and budget cuts.

The endless wave of police killings is an expression of the contradictions and crisis of American capitalism. That is why putting an end to the reign of police terror and defending democratic rights requires nothing less than the independent social and political mobilization of the working class in opposition to the capitalist system.



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