

# Chicago Mayor Emanuel's police "reform": Increased repression and cover-up

Kristina Betinis  
4 January 2016

Facing a growing political crisis stemming from his role in the cover-up of the October 2014 police murder of Laquan McDonald, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel announced last Wednesday so-called "reform" measures that will, in fact, increase the ability of the police to violently attack workers and youth while doing nothing to halt the wave of police murders.

At the center of Emanuel's proposals is a doubling by June of the number of tasers available to the police. Under the mayor's plan, every patrol car will be equipped with the electric shock device.

In its determination to defend the militarized forces tasked with suppressing the working class, the political establishment in Chicago (and nationally) presents the provision of more instruments of repression as a means of curbing police violence.

Emanuel and Interim Police Chief John Escalante also announced a "de-escalation" program. This consists of urging cops to ask themselves a series of questions in the course of their encounters with the public.

Emanuel went out of his way to signal his support for the police and all but rule out any consequences for those responsible for harassing and brutalizing the working population. "Our police officers have a very difficult and dangerous job," he said. "They put their lives on the line so the rest of us can be safe. And like all of us, they are human and make mistakes. Our job is to reduce the chances of mistakes."

Video of the killing of McDonald, suppressed for over a year by Emanuel's administration and the Chicago police, with the complicity of the Obama administration, showed police officer Jason Van Dyke shooting the retreating and unarmed youth 16 times. This is what Emanuel calls a "mistake."

Van Dyke was finally charged in November of last

year, after a court ordered the release of the video.

Emanuel said Wednesday, "I think obviously if you have eight officers—like in the Laquan McDonald situation—all calling for a taser, and none of them have it, we have a problem, and it has to be addressed."

This is a whitewash of the murder. At issue in the "McDonald situation" is not the absence of tasers, but the cold-blooded, calculated killing of a 17-year-old who posed no danger to himself or anyone else.

Experience has shown, moreover, that tasers are deadly. While they have been promoted as a safe alternative to police firearms, they have been associated with some 1,000 deaths since 2000. According to the *Guardian*, in 2015 at least 47 people died in the US from police tasers, which are often used as a particularly brutal form of torture.

The Chicago mayor added, "With the right policies, the right procedures and the right practices, we can change our officers' perspectives to help them ensure their own safety and the safety of others." That is to say, the spate of police violence and murder is simply a problem of good cops not having the right "perspective."

Emanuel's proposals are intended as a signal to police: You can continue to kill with impunity. We will back you up with more instruments of repression and will defend you at all costs. Emanuel's rationalizations for the actions of Van Dyke—that he did what he did because he did not have proper equipment, including tasers—will likely be used by his legal defense.

The mayor's "reform" proposals are a continuation of the administration's response to the McDonald killing from the beginning. Emanuel's office worked with the police department, the Cook County State's Attorney's office and the City Council to hide the truth behind the false police report of the incident.

Just before midnight on December 31, the Emanuel administration released a 3,085 page bundle of partly redacted emails from 2014 to 2015, sent between the mayor's staffers, police officials and others responsible for handling information on the killing of McDonald. In addition to showing how Emanuel's office, the Chicago Police Department and the so-called Independent Police Review Association carefully coordinated the response to McDonald's murder from the very beginning, the emails also reveal the extensive collaboration between the city and business and religious leaders, community groups and the press in managing the political fallout.

The mayor's announcement comes amid a wave of police shootings in Chicago and across the US. In 2015, police killed 1,199 people in the US according to news aggregator KilledByPolice.net, a 7.8 percent increase over 2014. Emanuel made no mention in his remarks of the recent Chicago police killings of Quintonio Legrier, 19, and Bettie Jones, 55.

The response of the entire political establishment, led by the Obama administration, to public outrage over police killings has been to organize fraudulent "reforms" and "investigations" while ensuring that police continue to have a steady stream of militarized weaponry and an effective license to kill.

In the case of McDonald, the cover-up was coordinated with the Obama administration, which launched an investigation more than a year ago. The Justice Department had access to the video showing the murder but helped prevent its public release.

Now the Obama administration has announced it will carry out a federal investigation of the Chicago police for civil rights violations, along the lines of those carried out in Ferguson, Missouri, Cleveland, Ohio and other cities. These investigations uniformly result in wrist-slap punishments or recommendations for police training, along the lines proposed by Emanuel.

Since 2013, Obama has overseen an increase in police violence and the distribution of military-grade weaponry and vehicles to domestic police departments, including those used in Ferguson, Missouri against the protests over the 2014 police murder of Michael Brown.

Killer cops are almost never prosecuted. Grand juries have been converted into rigged procedures for the purpose of providing a legal fig leaf for the exoneration

of uniformed killers. Late last month, a grand jury failed to indict the cop who murdered 12-year-old Tamir Rice in Cleveland, Ohio in 2014. Aurora, Colorado Officer Paul Jerothe also escaped indictment for the murder of Naeschylus Vinzant, an unarmed black man, in March of last year.

Last month, two Chicago police officers escaped prosecution. Cook County State's Attorney Anita Alvarez declined to press charges against Officer George Hernandez for killing Ronald Johnson, who was shown on video running away from the cops when he was shot. Chicago Police Commander Glenn Evans was acquitted December 14 of charges related to his brutalization of a young man by jamming the muzzle of a pistol into the victim's mouth.

This support for police violence is based in the needs of the ruling class. No reforms or limitations will be placed on the police because the ruling class is keenly aware of the enormous social anger and dissatisfaction with the policies of both the Democratic and Republican parties. They will do nothing to rein in the police, who serve as the front line protectors of the interests of the ruling elite.



To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**