

# Ex-Marine guns down three police in Baton Rouge, Louisiana

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For the second time in 10 days, a gunman has opened fire on police in an American city, causing mass casualties. Sunday's attack took place in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, with three police officers shot to death and three wounded, one severely.

The gunman, 29-year-old Gavin Long from Kansas City, Missouri was an African-American ex-Marine. He was shot to death at the scene of the attack. He was reportedly masked, dressed in black and armed with a long gun when he ambushed the police in the parking lot of a convenience store.

Two of the murdered policemen were Baton Rouge city officers, while the third was a sheriff's deputy from East Baton Rouge Parish (county). As of this writing, only one of the three officers had been identified: 32-year-old Montrell Jackson, himself an African-American, a 10-year veteran of the Baton Rouge police and the new father of a two-month-old boy.

The other two police victims were identified only by their ages, pending notification of next of kin: a 41-year-old Baton Rouge policeman who had been on the force only a year, and a 45-year-old East Baton Rouge sheriff's deputy.

Very little information has yet been released by police about the circumstances of the shooting, which followed a 911 call at 8:45 a.m. reporting a gunman outside the convenience store. It is not clear who placed that call, whether it was part of a deliberate ambush, or what happened when the first police officers arrived and encountered Long.

The ambush site is a little more than a mile from the headquarters of the Louisiana State Police and five miles from the store where Alton Sterling, a 37-year-old black man, was shot to death by Baton Rouge police July 6. There have been numerous protests

against the killing of Sterling since then, which have been brutally attacked by local police and sheriffs' deputies.

As in the case of the July 7 killing of five police officers in Dallas, Texas, the Baton Rouge gunman was a former soldier and veteran of US wars in the Middle East. Long, who turned 29 on the day of the shootings, was in the Marines from 2005 to 2010 and served a tour of duty in Iraq. He reportedly engaged in counterterrorist operations, for which he was awarded a medal and rose to the rank of sergeant.

There were numerous conflicting and largely unverified reports about Long's political views and motivation. NBC News reported that he had ties to an ultra-right group known as the Sovereign Citizens, who reject most government authority. The *Wall Street Journal* reported a connection to an otherwise unheard-of "New Freedom Group," which it described as "anti-government."

Reports based on postings of videos by Long on YouTube indicated that he was a former member of the Nation of Islam and espoused black nationalist views, and that he had traveled to Dallas after the police killings there, before moving on to Baton Rouge.

Whatever the specific motivation of the attack, political or otherwise, the murderous assault on individual policemen is completely reactionary. It does not "avenge" the killing of Alton Sterling. Such acts politically disorient the working class and youth, and serve to strengthen the forces of police violence and repression directed against working people of all races.

This is demonstrated by the political reaction that followed, as Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards, President Obama and the two main candidates to succeed him, Republican Donald Trump and Democrat Hillary Clinton, all issued statements calling for even

more resources to strengthen the police.

Edwards, a Democrat elected last year, called the killings “unspeakable and unjustified” and vowed that “every resource available to the state of Louisiana will be used to ensure the perpetrators are brought swiftly to justice.” He said the FBI and federal Department of Justice had pledged whatever aid was required to bolster the Baton Rouge police.

Obama called the shooter a coward, adding, “For the second time in two weeks, police officers who put their lives on the line for ours every day were doing their job when they were killed in a cowardly and reprehensible assault. These are attacks on public servants, on the rule of law, and on civilized society, and they have to stop.”

Trump sought to connect the killing to Islamic terrorism, although the killer was a Marine veteran of the US military intervention in Iraq. “We are trying to fight ISIS, and now our own people are killing our police,” he said. “Our country is divided and out of control. The world is watching.” He added, “We demand law and order.”

The statement by Hillary Clinton echoed Obama’s, as she declared, “Today’s devastating assault on police officers in Baton Rouge is an assault on all of us. There is no justification for violence, for hate, for attacks on men and women who put their lives on the line every day in service of our families and communities.”

The immediate political impact of the Baton Rouge shootings will be to intensify the police-state atmosphere surrounding the Republican National Convention in Cleveland, Ohio, which opens Monday morning. There were widespread reports of stepped-up police patrols, new restrictions on anti-Trump demonstrators, and increased FBI visits to the homes of protest organizers.



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