Notes on police violence in America

Police kill unarmed man in Chicago, mentally ill man in New York

Marcus Day
5 January 2017

Police in the US began 2017 by continuing their wave of violence and murder against the working class. According to killedbypolice.net, which tracks police killings reported in the media, 12 have died in the first four days of the year because of violent encounters with police. The number, roughly three a day, is roughly in line with the average in 2016, during which police killed at least 1,152 people.

Off-duty Chicago cop kills unarmed man

Monday morning, an off-duty police officer shot and killed a man in Hermosa, a predominantly Hispanic working class neighborhood on Chicago's northwest side. According to witnesses, the two got into an argument, during which the cop pulled out his gun and shot the man, Jose Nieves, 38, multiple times.

Jose's sister, Angelica, told ABC7 that her brother had previously been threatened by the cop, but was ignored when he reported him to the Chicago Police Department. "He would complain about the guy pulling out his gun at him, him coming home from work. More than once, he's called 911. They've gone to the apartment. They've gone there. They don't do nothing about it. He's an officer," she said.

Angelica also indicated that the cop shot her brother in the back, saying, "You got him in the stomach, on the lower body, and the back. So he was turned around when he got him in the back. That's the bullet that killed him."

The off-duty cop, a 57-year-old officer assigned to the city's mass transit unit who has yet to be identified, has been relieved of his police powers and placed on paid administrative leave.

Chicago Police Superintendent Eddie Johnson appeared at the scene of the shooting Monday afternoon, telling reporters, "I have a lot more questions than I do answers at this time. So I came out because I wanted to make sure this investigation was done properly."

Johnson, an African American, was chosen by Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, a Democrat and close ally of President Barack Obama, to replace former Superintendent Garry McCarthy last year. McCarthy had been sacked by Emanuel in late 2015 in an effort to contain the widening political crisis sparked by the cover-up by police and city officials of the video documenting the brutal murder of 17-year-old Laquan McDonald.

Following prominent media coverage over a spike in gun violence in Chicago in 2016, President-elect Donald Trump, set to be inaugurated in just over two weeks, tweeted recently that Emanuel "must ask for federal help." Trump made repeated appeals to bolster "law-and-order" during his campaign, and Emanuel, for his part, is embarking on a plan to hire 1,000 more officers this year.

In another Chicago-area police killing earlier on Sunday night, a sheriff's deputy in Villa Park, a western suburb, shot and killed a teenager, 17-year-old Trevor Johnson. The deputy, responding to a report of a domestic dispute, reportedly got into a fight with Johnson and shot the youth multiple times. Johnson was unarmed, according to his family. The deputy has also been put on paid administrative leave.

Also on Sunday, Chicago police shot an unarmed man after a car chase. The police began to pursue the unidentified man for allegedly running a stop sign, after which his vehicle ran onto the sidewalk and collided with several other cars, include a police car. When the

© World Socialist Web Site

officers approached the man and attempted to restrain him, he struggled, at which point one of them shot him twice in the chest. He was taken to a nearby hospital but is reported to have survived.

New York City police kill two within hours in separate incidents

On Tuesday, police in New York City's Brooklyn borough shot and killed two people within hours of each other in separate incidents.

In the first, police responded to a 911 emergency call from the sister of James Owen, a 63-year-old who was psychologically distressed.

Owen's sister, Daisy Wright, said that she called 911 because her brother, a recovering addict, was feeling woozy. When the police arrived, Owen went into the kitchen and retrieved a knife. The police allege that they attempted to use a stun gun on him after he refused to drop the knife, and when that was unsuccessful, they shot him three times, killing him.

Owen's sister and brother, who were present at the scene, disputed this account, saying that the police did not tell Owen to drop the knife, and did not use the Taser until after they had already shot him.

Daisy told the *New York Daily News* that the police were not in any danger from her brother: "They were about 10 feet away from [him]. He was holding a knife. He wasn't even charging at them. They shot him without any warning ... before he did anything.

"The cops didn't say drop it, didn't try to talk him down, didn't do nothing. They just shot him. They shot him three times." She added, "I was surprised I didn't get shot. I was right behind him, and I could feel the ricochet of the gun."

In another incident later Tuesday night, police on patrol allegedly saw a gun being fired into a club in the Crown Heights neighborhood. After they confronted a suspect, later identified as 18-year-old Joshua Martino, the youth fled.

Police claim that Martino turned towards the pursuing officers with a gun in his hand while running away, at which point they shot him. He was later taken to a hospital and pronounced dead. No one at the club was reported to have been injured.

Twitter video shows North Carolina school officer slamming 15-year-old student to the ground

A widely shared cellphone video on Twitter depicted a school resource officer in North Carolina lifting up a student into the air and slamming her audibly onto a cafeteria floor. After lying stunned briefly on the ground, she is then lifted up by one arm by the officer and led away while she holds her chest. The girl, 15-year-old Jasmine Darwin, is a student at Rolesville High School.

Local police claim that the school officer was responding to a fight in the cafeteria. According to the student who took the cellphone video, however, Jasmine was herself attempting to break up the fight, which was taking place between her sister and another student.

Jasmine's mother, Desiree Harrison, said that her daughter suffered a concussion. She told the media, "That's not how you handle a child. She's only 100 pounds. He could've killed her."

Arizona man dies while in police custody

A man died after being restrained by police in Phoenix, Arizona Wednesday afternoon.

Police responded to a report of the man acting erratically at a community center. According to media reports, the 43-year-old man was a "transient" and had attacked an employee of the center.

After the man refused to leave, somewhere between six to eight officers restrained him. While en route with police from the scene in handcuffs, he began to throw up and become "medically distressed." Police claim they removed his restraints and attempted to perform CPR. He was later taken to a hospital and pronounced dead.

The medical examiner's office is planning to issue a report on the cause of death. The police involved were reportedly wearing body cameras. The department has said it is conducting an investigation into the incident, and is reviewing surveillance footage.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site