

Video documents torture of teen in Tennessee jail

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A video was released in late last month showing a teenager being restrained and repeatedly tased while in a Cheatham County, Tennessee jail. The video can be seen [here](#).

Eighteen-year-old Jordan Norris was arrested in November 2016 on drugs and weapons charges. He was held in the county jail for several days. While there, he was put on suicide watch. The night of the incident, he was allegedly banging his head against the wall and threatening other inmates.

Sheriff's deputies responded by dragging Norris from his cell and strapping him into a restraining chair. The video, taken from surveillance cameras in the jail, clearly shows Norris's chest, arms, and legs bound to the chair. His mouth is gagged and a deputy is holding up his head.

Another deputy can be seen repeatedly shocking Norris in the chest with a Taser. The deputy can be heard saying, "I'll keep on doing it until I run out of batteries," and "stop resisting," while Norris is flinching in agony from the Taser.

Norris's step-father, William Chapman, told local News Channel 5, "I think he had some sort of breakdown. They said he was feeling suicidal." After the teen's release from jail, Chapman said he had counted more than forty burns on Norris's body.

Sheriff Breedlove declined an interview for the report, but said the deputies followed procedure and used a "dry-stun" to gain compliance. In other words, as far as the police are concerned, it could have been worse.

Norris has filed a lawsuit against the Cheatham County Sheriff's office for use of excessive force.

Cheatham County borders Nashville's Davidson County. While Nashville and some surrounding counties have recently experienced a population boom,

Cheatham County remains relatively small with a population of approximately 40,000. According to the United States Census Bureau, the per capita income in the county is \$23,922, with ten percent of the population living in poverty.

Like most small towns and rural areas across the US, Cheatham County has seen a rise in opioid addiction and the crimes associated with the drug trade. A recent report by the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation revealed that between 2013 and 2014 alone the county experienced an 85 percent increase in drug and narcotics violations.

Sheriff Mike Breedlove was elected in 2014 on a "tough-on-crime" platform of addressing the drug problem plaguing the county. In February, a local reporter from television news channel WKRN rode along with a member of the county's drug enforcement team, Lt. Shannon Heflin. "Nowadays, it's safe to say 99 percent of it [crime] is drug-related," Heflin told the reporter, who added that "Lt. Heflin, a 22-year veteran, says just about every crime they see can be traced back to pain pills and the addiction they fuel." In March, Detective Ken Miller told the news station, "Heroin is taking up 80 to 90 percent of our time. Everything we are dealing with now is related to heroin."

The abuse of Norris is not an isolated event. All over the United States, local law enforcement is becoming more and more militarized. Military grade assault weapons and armor, and armored combat vehicles are becoming a common sight across small-town America.

Crime and addiction are treated simply as the outcome of the character flaws of bad people who need to be removed from society instead of as a broader social phenomenon.

This mindset is apparent on the Cheatham County Sheriff's Office Facebook page. Each week, Sheriff

Breedlove updates the page with “humorous” anecdotes from the week’s crime and arrest reports.

The entries are meant to humiliate and degrade those arrested for crimes and to bias public opinion before the accused are tried in court. One such entry, nonsensical and racist in regard to a man driving on a revoked license, reads:

“A FaceBook representative from Saudi Arabia has offered a round trip ticket for HiNKLE [sic]. They have physicians “on hand” to safely remove both of his hands and reattach them to an All-State Saudi goodwill driver. All for the effort to protect other American infidel drivers from HINKLE’S disregard Sheriffia Law...But, we are America and he’s lucky this is not TEAMSAUDI..”

Breedlove’s entry regarding the arrest of Jordan Norris describes using a SWAT team to storm the teenager’s house in the middle of the night while he was sleeping to arrest him:

“JORDAN NORRIS (2nd pic) let it be known he was going to kill any Deputy who tried to arrest him. He was armed with stolen weapons and on the fast track to live the Thug Life. The team, armed with a search warrant, invited themselves into the “House of Norris” on Little Pond Creek with such dynamic quickness, he became shocked with awe and peed a little bit. Great job Cheatham SWAT!!”

The language employed to describe the arrest, while absurd, is also intended to evoke a military raid in a war zone, complete with the “shock and awe” of the American war machine.

Cheatham County, like many local law enforcement agencies, has increasingly used excessive force and “shoot first, ask questions later” tactics. For example, in January, local resident Charles Holland was shot by deputies. He had emerged from his house with a rifle upon seeing several police cars outside responding to a traffic stop. A neighbor told WSMV news he heard five or six gun shots and Holland’s home was riddled with bullets. Holland, a Nashville firefighter, was taken to a local hospital.



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