

Police kill two men in two days in Detroit suburbs

A reporter
17 April 2018

Police in the northern Detroit suburbs shot to death two men in back-to-back encounters April 9-10. Both of the victims were young white men in their 20s, one apparently suffering from mental illness.

On the morning of Monday, April 9, Troy Police Department officers were called to a home on Saddle Brook Court for the fourth time in less than a year, each time because family members were frightened of threatening and erratic behavior by 23-year-old Robert Issa.

On the three previous occasions, Issa was hospitalized with a diagnosis of manic behavior due to bipolar disorder, and then ultimately released to his family. According to police reports, on at least one occasion the manic episode came after Issa stopped taking prescription medicine for his mental illness.

Police claimed that when they arrived Monday, Issa came at them with knives and attempted to force his way into an unmarked police car, continuing his attack even after being Tasered. One cop then opened fire, hitting Issa four or five times and killing him. Troy police do not wear body cameras, and there has not been a police-involved killing in the Detroit suburb in 20 years.

Issa was well known to the police because of the three previous incidents, one of which he spat on a police officer, although he missed him. The same officer was involved in the third police visit to the family's home. It is not known whether the same officer was involved in the final visit that ended in Issa's death.

The second police killing took place in Royal Oak, near a White Castle restaurant at the intersection of Thirteen Mile Road and Coolidge Road. Police pulled over 28-year-old Antonino Thomas Gordon of Commerce Township for a traffic violation shortly after

6 p.m. on Tuesday, April 10, but he drove off rather than accept the ticket.

A few minutes later, the police officer saw Gordon's vehicle in the drive-through lane of the White Castle, and he pulled his vehicle in front of Gordon to block his exit. When Gordon again attempted to drive off, the officer fired at least four shots, causing Gordon's car to veer into another vehicle and crash. Gordon was pronounced dead at the scene, while the driver of the car he struck suffered minor injuries and was taken to a nearby hospital.

One eyewitness told local television station WDIV, "We saw the cop pull up to White Castle, and we saw him get out and draw his gun immediately. We heard four or five gunshots." The witness continued, describing the victim, "We could see him swerving and driving really slow, and he looked out of it. And then he just started coasting into oncoming traffic, and I assumed that he passed out."

Royal Oak police sought to rebut the logical conclusion—that the police officer shot and killed a man because he was angry over his previous drive-off from the traffic ticket—by releasing Gordon's "criminal" record, which consisted solely of motor vehicle violations, such as driving under the influence and speeding. These were totally irrelevant, since Gordon was not driving his own car and the policeman who pulled the trigger could not have known of them.

Joseph Dedvukaj, an attorney whose niece was married to Gordon, told the press, "There is no question that this officer was not justified in killing him. ... This officer basically became the judge, jury and executioner."

"A police officer is not above the law and must obey the law like any other citizen," he continued. "He knew the difference between right and wrong when he did

what he did yesterday.”

Dedvukaj said Gordon was a construction worker who wanted to go into business for himself. He said that the young man “did not do anything to provoke the police officer to draw his weapon, point it at him and pull the trigger four or more times, killing him.”



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