

Local sheriff in Washington state releases report whitewashing Trump government's targeted assassination of Michael Reinoehl

Kevin Reed
4 April 2021

On March 30, the Thurston County Sheriff's Office (TSCO) in the state of Washington released a statement summarizing the results of its investigation into the shooting death of anti-police violence activist Michael Reinoehl by a US Marshals-led task force on September 3, 2020.

The transparent purpose of the perfunctory document, titled "Weekly Update—Officer Involved Shooting in Thurston," is to justify the extrajudicial execution of Reinoehl and exonerate those responsible for his death.

Reinoehl was hunted down by members of the Pacific Northwest Violent Offender Task Force—made up of 27 federal, state and local police agencies—and killed in a hail of gunfire outside of an apartment building near the Olympia suburb of Lacey in Thurston County, where he had sought refuge.

The TSCO report states that the task force received information as to the whereabouts of Reinoehl and "they responded in an attempt to apprehend him." It goes on to claim that when he was "spotted" outside of the apartment building where he was staying, they "attempted to take him into custody" and he "failed to comply with instructions to surrender."

The report further states that the "Officers were readily identifiable based on their badges, vests and markings." It claims that Reinoehl had a firearm and was "reaching for it." This is followed by the claim that Reinoehl initiated the "exchange of gunfire... from inside his vehicle" that resulted in his death.

As "evidence" supposedly justifying the fusillade of police bullets that killed Reinoehl, the report states that investigators found that a "fired .380 shell casing located in Reinoehl's vehicle was fired from the .380 pistol found in Reinoehl's possession."

Earlier on September 3, the day of his government-organized murder, Reinoehl was charged with second degree murder in connection with the fatal shooting of far-right activist Aaron Danielson four days earlier in Portland, Oregon. Minutes before the task force opened fire on Reinoehl, then-President Donald Trump posted a tweet essentially demanding that he be killed. "Do your job, and do it fast," Trump wrote. "Everybody knows who this thug is."

The day after Reinoehl was fatally shot, then-Attorney General William Barr called his killing "a significant accomplishment in the ongoing effort to restore law and order to Portland and other cities... The streets of our cities are safer with this violent agitator removed, and the actions that led to his location are an unmistakable demonstration that the United States will be governed by law, not violent mobs."

Reinoehl had been active in nightly protests against police violence in Portland that began in the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officer Derrick Chauvin on May 25. Reinoehl was outspoken in his opposition to both racism and fascism, and expressed sympathy for Antifa activists, while saying he was not a member of any organization.

On the morning of the day he was killed, Reinoehl gave an interview to VICE News admitting that he had shot and killed Aaron Danielson, but said he acted in self-defense. He stated, "I mean, I had a choice. I could have sat there and watched them kill a friend of mine of color. But I wasn't going to do that."

Danielson was a member of the far-right Patriot Prayer organization. He had traveled to Portland to participate in a caravan of pickup trucks manned by Trump supporters for the purpose of initiating physical

confrontations with anti-police-violence protesters. The far-right provocation that resulted in the shooting of Danielson occurred in the midst of a weeks-long mobilization of paramilitary agents of the Department of Homeland Security organized by the Trump administration as part of a crackdown against what it called “radical extremists” and “domestic terrorists.” The police-state operation included snatching left-wing protesters off the streets of Portland and driving them away for interrogation.

The fabricated character of the report on Reinoehl’s murder issued by the fugitive task force is shown by the obvious contradictions between the narrative it provides and descriptions of what occurred last September 3 given by eyewitnesses, as reported by the media.

For example, 39-year-old Nathaniel Dingess gave a statement to his attorney saying that he saw Reinoehl walking toward his car and holding a cell phone in his hand, when two unmarked law enforcement vehicles converged on him and began firing immediately without identifying themselves or issuing any verbal commands. Dingess said he never saw a gun in Reinoehl’s possession.

Additionally, it is known that Reinoehl’s weapon was in his pocket when he was pronounced dead at the scene. This means—if the preposterous police account is to be believed—that if he fired his weapon first, to which the officers responded with nearly 40 rounds that hit Reinoehl multiple times and killed him, he managed somehow to put the gun back in his pocket!

Also, as pointed out by others who analyzed the TCSO report, the shell casing was found on the floor of the back seat of Reinoehl’s car, and there was no exit hole on his vehicle’s windshield indicating the passage of a bullet. Moreover, no bullet matching the .380 shell casing has been recovered at the scene by police investigators.

There is also a contradiction in the TCSO report, where it states that Reinoehl initiated the exchange of gunfire by firing first, while at the same time asserting that “Reinoehl had a firearm and he was reaching for it.”

As explained by the *World Socialist Web Site* at the time of Reinoehl’s murder: “The killing of Reinoehl, robbed of his democratic right to the presumption of innocence and a jury trial, and the silence of the

Democratic Party are a serious warning to the working class. These are milestones in the criminalization of left-wing dissent and state support for violent fascist vigilantes.”

The treatment of Reinoehl stands in the sharpest contrast to that of Kyle Rittenhouse, the teenage far-right vigilante who fatally shot two men and injured a third during protests against police violence in Kenosha, Wisconsin last August. Besides being openly hailed as a hero by Trump and his right-wing supporters, Rittenhouse was released on bail, permitted to interact repeatedly with members of the fascistic Proud Boys group, and allowed by the judge overseeing his case to violate the terms of his bail by concealing his whereabouts from the local district attorney.



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact