

Portland, Oregon, cops resign from rapid response squad after fellow officer charged with assaulting journalist

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Last week, all 50 members of the Rapid Response Team (RRT) of the Portland Police Bureau (PPB) resigned in protest after a grand jury charged a fellow police officer for assault during the mass protests last year. The officers also cited a “lack of support” as a reason for disbanding the special unit.

The RRT is a specialized, entirely volunteer force of the PPB which is responsible for crowd control at protests and other events. Despite the resignations from the team, all 50 of the police officers are still working for the PPB.

The officers’ action was preceded by the resignations of 57 members from the Buffalo Police Department’s special emergency response team in June 2020. The resignations came as a response to two Buffalo, New York, police officers being suspended without pay for shoving a 75-year-old man to the ground, causing him to hit his head on the pavement and suffer serious injuries. The two officers were returned to payroll after 30 days.

On June 15, Multnomah County District Attorney Mike Schmidt announced that a grand jury indicted PPB officer and RRT member Corey Budworth with one misdemeanor count of Assault in the Fourth Degree, which carries up to a one-year jail sentence, for beating photojournalist Teri Jacobs with a baton while she was covering a protest against police violence on August 18, 2020.

Video of the attack shows Budworth repeatedly striking Jacobs with a baton, shoving her to the ground, then, while she was in a sitting position, ramming his baton against her head, whiplashing her backwards.

Budworth is the first PPB officer to ever be indicted for excessive use of force during a protest, despite the

use of excessive force by multiple police officers at the protests against police violence last year sparked by the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis. In all, only three police officers were disciplined last year due to their conduct during the protests.

From May through November 25, Portland, Oregon, police used excessive force more than 6,000 times, including firing less-than-lethal munitions, launching tear gas, and giving beatings with batons, according to a US Department of Justice report.

The Department of Justice also found that the PPB failed to meet four “reforms,” which were mandated after a 2014 settlement agreement over excessive police force against people with mental illness. The PPB has been under federal supervision since 2012.

The Portland police oversight office has also received more than 3,000 “communications” about “police policies or actions.” Of those, 222 of the communications involved use of force, and the office initiated 125 cases of complaints against police officers from May 29, 2020, through April 2021.

The sheer number of complaints hindered the police oversight office from meeting the federally mandated 180-day timeline for completing police misconduct investigations, according to a report by the Independent Police Review office. Additionally, the office was unable to determine which other police agencies were helping the Portland police during the 2020 protests, showing the PPB has little to no real oversight.

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler said on Thursday that he ordered the PPB to prepare mobile field forces in response to the RRT disbanding, while Oregon Governor Kate Brown ordered the Oregon State Police to be on standby.

The Portland Police Association union has denounced the indictment, claiming officer Budworth “has been caught in the crossfire of agenda-driven city leaders and a politicized criminal justice system.” The police union, along with other police officers, has claimed that the PPB has had “no support” from the city government.

The claim that the police have had no support from the city or state government is a lie.

Mayor Wheeler and Governor Brown, both Democrats, have openly denounced the protests and have called for the expansion of the police apparatus.

Wheeler, during a press conference held in January of this year, called the protesters “violent antifa and anarchists,” while giving the police a green light to videotape protesters and “gather intelligence on these small groups of organized criminals.”

Wheeler denounced the protesters as “violent anarchists” who “just want to watch the world burn,” while indicating he wanted the PPB to use “any means necessary” to suppress the protests and ensure that the protesters were legally persecuted.

In July 2020, ex-President Donald Trump ordered federal agencies, including paramilitary agents from Customs and Border Protection, to intervene in the Portland protests. Federal agents shot tear gas and rubber bullets, and used sonic weapons on crowds, all the while illegally grabbing protesters and kidnapping them in unmarked cars.

On September 3, 2020, Michael Reinoehl, a 48-year-old protester, was executed by a federal task force. Reinoehl’s killing came only hours after he was charged with killing far-right Patriot Prayer member Aaron “Jay” Danielson at a Portland protest on August 29. As the WSWS reported at the time, the death of Reinoehl was a state murder, which was fully endorsed by then-Attorney General William Barr and President Donald Trump.



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