

Denver, Colorado, police fire into crowd, injuring six people

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Denver, Colorado, police injured five bystanders early Sunday morning after firing into a crowd in Denver's Lowe Downtown nightlife district. Officers were confronting 21-year-old Jordan Waddy, who allegedly got into an altercation with two other men outside of Larimer Beer Hall. According to a police statement, multiple officers approached Waddy, who began walking away and then allegedly reached into his waistband with "a motion consistent with pulling out a firearm."

The police statement does not describe the officers firing at Waddy, but notes that several shots were fired and that Waddy was injured. It does not claim that Waddy fired a gun, though he was found with a 10mm pistol after being shot.

However, witness testimony confirms that the police did fire into the crowd at Waddy. Guillermo Cortes was a witness interviewed by the *Denver Post*. According to Cortes he saw two men get into a fight who were then followed by at least two police officers. He recounted that he did not see Waddy pull out a firearm nor did he hear them issue a warning to Waddy as he walked away.

He also noted that he heard five gunshots from the officers but did not see or hear any fire from Waddy or anyone else.

Another anonymous witness interviewed by ABC 7 Denver said that he saw police "randomly shoot into a crowd of people."

"It was definitely a little traumatic to see that go down. I heard maybe 6 or 7 shots. I look to my left and I saw a girl who was hit on the thigh and it hit an artery and she was gushing out blood."

The police took a considerable amount of time before reporting to the public on the incident, which occurred at around 1:30 a.m. Police issued an initial statement at

4 a.m. and then did not provide any additional information on the incident until 4:39 p.m. later that day.

Investigators claimed it was difficult to obtain an accurate number of people injured during the incident because several transported themselves to the hospital for treatment and mixed in with victims of other shooting incidents.

Denver police have attempted to deflect blame by questioning how the five bystanders were injured; whether by direct fire, indirect fire, shrapnel or debris, as if the specific cause of injury from police firing into a crowd would make any significant improvement to the situation.

This is the third police shooting in the past week in Denver. A man was shot and killed during a domestic violence incident on Friday and another man was shot and killed on Wednesday after allegedly firing at pursuing officers.

Denver, and Colorado more broadly, have a long history of police violence and killings. Colorado is fifth in the country for police shootings per one million people, in average annual shootings, and in total shootings since 2015. Every year the police in Colorado fatally shoot an average of 35 people, or one every 11 days.

Few of these incidents are ever found to be unlawful by the courts, but studies of Colorado's history of police violence expose the criminality of these fatal shootings. Robert Durán, a professor of sociology at the University of Tennessee, conducted a study of police killings in Denver between 1983 and 2012, and found that only 35 percent could be considered "legitimate," that is that the life of an officer or someone else was in real immediate danger. Additionally, Durán found that the majority of individuals in 12 controversial shooting

incidents were innocent.

The rate of killings in Colorado is a reflection of the social crisis in the state, which is one of the most expensive to live in. A recent study by Colorado Public Radio found that “Most of those shot were white, male, high on drugs—often methamphetamine—or alcohol and carrying a weapon.”

As with police killings nationally, nearly half of police shooting victims in Colorado are white, but black and Hispanic victims make up a disproportionate number in relation to their population.

The instances of police killings in Colorado are emblematic of the national crisis of police violence, including frequent killings of people suffering from drug addiction and mental illness and during raids into the wrong home.

Police departments in Colorado have shelled out significant amounts of cash to settle lawsuits for unlawful incidents of violence. Most notably, two families in Northglenn won a \$9 million settlement after police killed one man and paralyzed a second. Another lawsuit alleges Denver police destroyed a woman’s home after a SWAT team used a flammable grenade during a standoff.

Other studies and reports have noted a startling number of people killed after being shot in the back. A report by the *Colorado Springs Independent* looked through records of police shootings in the local area dating back to 2001. It found that of the 70 incidents, including 35 fatal ones, 11 were shot in the back, all of which were fatal. It also found that “The number of officer-involved shootings has gone up by 90 percent in the last nine years compared to the previous decade, and the number killed has more than doubled.”



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