

# Videotape of Policeman Shooting a Man In the Back and Killing Him? Was it “Self-Defense”?

By [Washington's Blog](#)

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Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

## *The Bigger Picture*

The officer shooting the unarmed man in the back who was running away is – appropriately – front-page news.

But there's a bigger story ...

Initially – as Kit Daniels shows – the [media believed that the officer shot in self-defense](#) ... until the video was released. If the [brave witness](#) hadn't filmed the entire incident on his cellphone, the truth would *never* have been discovered.

*The Intercept* [explains](#):

Because three days elapsed between the shooting and the publication of the video of the shooting, the Scott incident became an illuminating case study in the routinized process through which police officers, departments and attorneys frame the use of deadly force by American cops in the most sympathetic possible terms, often claiming fear of the very people they killed. In the days after the shooting, the police version of events — an utterly typical example of the form — was trotted out, only to be sharply contradicted when the video surfaced. In most cases like this, there is no video, no definitive, undisputed record of much of what happened, and thus no way to rebut inaccurate statements by the police.

The first report of the Saturday afternoon incident, [from Charleston's The Post and Courier](#), followed the usual script: The police department's story portrayed the victim as behaving dangerously, in this case, purportedly struggling to take an officer's Taser as part of a violent altercation. Family and friends of the slain black victim mourned his loss and questioned the narrative offered by authorities.

The pro-police spin continued [two days later](#), when a lawyer for Michael Slager, the officer who shot Scott, said Scott “tried to overpower” his client, who “felt threatened and reached for his department-issued firearm and fired his weapon.” Scott's family and allies could do little more than note that Scott was unarmed, and [call for the truth to somehow emerge](#).

A former U.S. Marshal reveals that law enforcement is *trained* to justify deadly force by *pretending* that they felt threatened by the suspect:

Moreover, police have shot people in the back and killed them as they ran away *many* times

before. Here are a couple of recent examples, which happen to have been caught on tape:

- An unarmed man running away in [Long Beach, California](#)
- An unarmed man in [Muskogee, Oklahoma](#) ([video](#))
- A man in [Pasco, Washington](#)
- An innocent artist in Utah who [liked to dress up in anime](#) (and [see this](#))

Moreover, police [often frame innocent suspects](#).

They also plant weapons on people, as “justification” for shooting them. The practice is so well-known that the New York Times [noted](#) in 1981:

In police jargon, a throwdown is a weapon planted on a victim.

Newsweek [reported](#) in 1999:

Perez, himself a former [Los Angeles Police Department] cop, was caught stealing eight pounds of cocaine from police evidence lockers. After pleading guilty in September, he bargained for a lighter sentence by telling an appalling story of attempted murder and a “throwdown”—police slang for a weapon planted by cops to make a shooting legally justifiable. Perez said he and his partner, Officer Nino Durden, shot an unarmed 18th Street Gang member named Javier Ovando, then planted a semiautomatic rifle on the unconscious suspect and claimed that Ovando had tried to shoot them during a stakeout.

Wikipedia [notes](#):

As part of his plea bargain, Pérez implicated scores of officers from the Rampart Division’s anti-gang unit, describing routinely beating gang members, planting evidence on suspects, falsifying reports and covering up unprovoked shootings.

Here, officer Slager was caught on film planting his taser on Walter Scott after he had already killed Scott:



(This is a [slow motion excerpt](#) from the video.)

Why is this happening?

One reason is that many law enforcement officers consider *failure to comply* with the officers’ demands as a [basis for using lethal force](#).

Police have become [so militarized](#) in modern America that – in the words of civil rights and constitutional attorney John Whitehead – “[the only truly compliant, submissive citizen in a](#)

[police state is a dead one.](#)"

Of course, if we had the rights and liberties guaranteed by the Constitution, this would not be such a problem. Sadly, we've [lost virtually all](#) of those rights.

No wonder you're [55 times more likely](#) to be killed by a police officer than a *terrorist*.

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