

# Who Inflicts the Most Gun Violence in America? The U.S. Government and Its Police Forces

By [John W. Whitehead](#)

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*"It is often the case that police shootings, incidents where law enforcement officers pull the trigger on civilians, are left out of the conversation on gun violence. But [a police officer shooting a civilian counts as gun violence](#). Every time an officer uses a gun against an innocent or an unarmed person contributes to the culture of gun violence in this country."—Journalist Celisa Calacal*

Yes, gun violence is a problem in America, although [violent crime generally remains at an all-time low](#).

Yes, [mass shootings](#) are a problem in America, although while they are getting deadlier, they are [not getting more frequent](#).

Yes, mentally ill individuals embarking on mass shooting sprees are a problem in America.

However, [tighter gun control laws and so-called "intelligent" background checks](#) fail to protect the public from the most egregious perpetrator of gun violence in America: the U.S. government.

Consider that five years after police shot and killed an unarmed 18-year-old man in Ferguson, Missouri, there has been [no relief from the government's gun violence](#).

Here's what we've learned about the government's gun violence since Ferguson, according to *The Washington Post*: If you're a black American, you've got a greater chance of being shot by police. If you're an unarmed black man, you're four times more likely to be killed by police than an unarmed white man. Most people killed by police are young men. [Since 2015, police have shot and killed an average of 3 people per day](#). More than 2,500 police departments have shot and killed at least one person since 2015. And while the vast majority of people shot and killed by police are armed, their weapons ranged from guns to knives to toy guns.

Clearly, the U.S. government is not making America any safer.

Indeed, the government's gun violence—inflicted on unarmed individuals by battlefield-trained SWAT teams, militarized police, and bureaucratic government agents trained to shoot first and ask questions later—poses a greater threat to the safety and security of the nation than any mass shooter.

According to journalist Matt Agorist,

“mass shootings ... have claimed the lives of 339 people since 2015... [D]uring this same time frame, [police in America have claimed the lives of 4,355 citizens.](#)”

That’s 1200% more people killed by police than mass shooters since 2015.

For example, in Texas, a police officer sent to do a welfare check on a 30-year-old woman seen lying on the grass near a shopping center, [took aim at the woman’s dog as it ran towards him barking, fired multiple times, and killed the woman instead.](#)

In Chicago, a SWAT team—wearing “[army fatigues with black cloth covering their faces and wearing goggles,](#)” armed with automatic rifles, and throwing flash-bang grenades—crashed through the doors of a suburban home and proceeded to storm into bedrooms, holding the children of the household at gunpoint. One child, 13-year-old Amir, was “accidentally” shot in the knee by police while sitting on his bed.

In St. Louis, Missouri, a SWAT team on a mission to deliver an administrative warrant carried out a no-knock raid that ended with police kicking in the homeowner’s front door, and shooting and killing her dog—[all over an unpaid gas bill.](#) Taxpayers will have to find \$750,000 to settle the lawsuit arising over the cops’ overzealous tactics.

In South Carolina, a 62-year-old homeowner was [shot four times through his front door by police](#) who were investigating a medical-assist alarm call that originated from a cell phone inside the home. Dick Tench, believing his house was being broken into, was standing in the foyer of his home armed with a handgun when police, peering through the front door, fired several shots through the door, [hitting Tench in the pelvis and the aortic artery.](#) Tench survived, but the bullet lodged in his pelvis will stay there for life.

# Man Shot Four Times by Cop thru Front Door says Call the Cops: "I am the Cops"



 by **Ben Keller** Jul 29 - edited \*\*\*

Screenshot from News Maven

In Kansas, a SWAT team, attempting to carry out a routine search warrant (the suspect had already been arrested), showed up at a residence around dinnertime, dressed in tactical gear with weapons drawn, and [hurled a flash-bang grenade into the house](#) past the 68-year-old woman who was in the process of opening the door to them and in the general direction of a 2-year-old child.

These are just a few recent examples among hundreds this year alone.

Curiously enough, in the midst of the finger-pointing over the latest round of mass shootings, Americans have been so focused on debating who or what is responsible for gun violence—the guns, the gun owners, the Second Amendment, the politicians, or our violent culture—that they have overlooked the fact that the systemic violence being perpetrated by agents of the government has done more collective harm to the American people and their liberties than any single act of terror or mass shooting.

Violence has become our government's calling card, starting at the top and trickling down, from the more than 80,000 SWAT team raids carried out every year on unsuspecting Americans by heavily armed, black-garbed commandos and the increasingly rapid militarization of local police forces across the country to the drone killings used to target insurgents.

The government even exports violence worldwide, with one of this country's most profitable exports being weapons. Indeed, the United States, the [world's largest exporter of arms](#), has been selling violence to the world for too long now. Controlling more than 50 percent of the

global weaponry market, the U.S. has [sold or donated weapons to at least 96 countries](#) in the past five years, including the Middle East. The U.S. also provides countries such as Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Pakistan and Iraq with grants and loans through the [Foreign Military Financing program](#) to purchase military weapons.

At the same time that the U.S. is equipping nearly half the world with deadly weapons, [profiting to the tune of \\$36.2 billion](#), its leaders have also been [lecturing American citizens on the dangers of gun violence](#) and working to enact measures that would make it more difficult for Americans to acquire certain weapons.

Talk about an absurd double standard.

If we're truly going to get serious about gun violence, why not start by scaling back the American police state's weapons of war?

I'll tell you why: because the government has no intention of scaling back on its weapons.

In fact, all the while [gun critics continue to clamor for bans on military-style assault weapons](#), high-capacity magazines and armor-piercing bullets, the U.S. military *is passing them out to domestic police forces*.

Under the auspices of a military "recycling" program, which allows local police agencies to acquire military-grade weaponry and equipment, more than [\\$4.2 billion worth of equipment has been transferred](#) from the Defense Department to domestic police agencies since 1990. Included among these "gifts" are tank-like, [20-ton Mine Resistant Ambush Protected \(MRAP\) vehicles](#), tactical gear, and assault rifles.

There are now reportedly [more bureaucratic \(non-military\) government agents armed with high-tech, deadly weapons than U.S. Marines](#).

While Americans have to jump through an increasing number of hoops in order to own a gun, the [government is arming its own civilian employees to the hilt](#) with guns, ammunition and military-style equipment, authorizing them to make arrests, and training them in military tactics.

Among the [agencies being supplied with night-vision equipment, body armor, hollow-point bullets, shotguns, drones, assault rifles and LP gas cannons](#) are the Smithsonian, U.S. Mint, Health and Human Services, IRS, FDA, Small Business Administration, Social Security Administration, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Education Department, Energy Department, Bureau of Engraving and Printing and an assortment of public universities.

Seriously, [why do IRS agents need AR-15 rifles](#)?

For that matter, why do police need [armored personnel carriers with gun ports, compact submachine guns with 30-round magazines, precision battlefield sniper rifles, and military-grade assault-style rifles and carbines](#)?

Short answer: they don't.

In the hands of government agents, whether they are members of the military, law

enforcement or some other government agency, these weapons have become routine parts of America's day-to-day life, a byproduct of the rapid militarization of law enforcement over the past several decades.

Over the course of 30 years, police officers in jack boots holding assault rifles have become fairly common in small town communities across the country. As investigative journalists Andrew Becker and G.W. Schulz reveal, "Many police, including beat cops, now routinely carry assault rifles. Combined with body armor and other apparel, [many officers look more and more like combat troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.](#)"

Does this sound like a country under martial law?

You want to talk about gun violence? While it still technically remains legal for the average citizen to *own* a firearm in America, possessing one can now get you [pulled over](#), [searched](#), [arrested](#), subjected to all manner of [surveillance](#), [treated as a suspect](#) without ever having committed a crime, [shot at](#) and killed by police.

You don't even have to have a gun or a look-alike gun, [such as a BB gun](#), in your possession to be singled out and killed by police.

There are countless incidents that happen every day in which Americans are shot, stripped, searched, choked, beaten and tasered by police for little more than daring to frown, smile, question, or challenge an order.

Growing numbers of unarmed people are being shot and killed for just standing a certain way, or moving a certain way, or holding something—anything—that police could misinterpret to be a gun, or igniting some trigger-centric fear in a police officer's mind that has nothing to do with an actual threat to their safety.

With [alarming regularity](#), unarmed men, women, children and even pets are being gunned down by twitchy, hyper-sensitive, easily-spooked police officers who shoot first and ask questions later, and all the government does is shrug, and promise to do better, all the while the cops are granted qualified immunity.

Killed for standing in a "shooting stance." In California, police opened fire on and killed a mentally challenged—unarmed—black man within minutes of arriving on the scene, allegedly because he removed a vape smoking device from his pocket and [took a "shooting stance."](#)

Killed for holding a cell phone. Police in Arizona shot a man who was running away from U.S. Marshals after he refused to drop an object that [turned out to be a cellphone](#). Similarly, police in Sacramento [fired 20 shots at an unarmed, 22-year-old black man who was standing in his grandparents' backyard](#) after mistaking his cellphone for a gun.

Killed for carrying a baseball bat. Responding to a domestic disturbance call, Chicago police shot and killed 19-year-old college student Quintonio LeGrier who had reportedly been experiencing mental health problems and was [carrying a baseball bat](#) around the apartment where he and his father lived.

Killed for opening the front door. Bettie Jones, who lived on the floor below LeGrier, was also fatally shot—this time, accidentally—when she attempted to [open the front door](#) for police.

Killed for running towards police with a metal spoon. In Alabama, police shot and killed a 50-year-old man who reportedly charged a police officer while holding [“a large metal spoon in a threatening manner.”](#)

Killed for running while holding a tree branch. Georgia police shot and killed a 47-year-old man wearing only shorts and tennis shoes who, when first encountered, was sitting in the woods against a tree, only to start running towards police [holding a stick in an “aggressive manner.”](#)

Killed for crawling around naked. Atlanta police shot and killed an unarmed man who was reported to have been “acting deranged, knocking on doors, [crawling around on the ground naked.](#)” Police fired two shots at the man after he reportedly started running towards them.

Killed for wearing dark pants and a basketball jersey. Donnell Thompson, a mentally disabled 27-year-old described as gentle and shy, was shot and killed after police—searching for a carjacking suspect reportedly wearing similar clothing—encountered him [lying motionless in a neighborhood yard.](#) Police “only” opened fire with an M4 rifle after Thompson first failed to respond to their flash bang grenades and then started running after being hit by foam bullets.

Killed for driving while deaf. In North Carolina, a state trooper shot and killed 29-year-old Daniel K. Harris—[who was deaf](#)—after Harris initially failed to pull over during a traffic stop.

Killed for being homeless. Los Angeles police shot an unarmed homeless man after he [failed to stop riding his bicycle](#) and then proceeded to run from police.

Killed for brandishing a shoehorn. John Wrana, a 95-year-old World War II veteran, lived in an assisted living center, used a walker to get around, and was shot and killed by police who [mistook the shoehorn in his hand for a 2-foot-long machete](#) and fired multiple beanbag rounds from a shotgun at close range.

Killed for having your car break down on the road. Terence Crutcher, unarmed and black, was shot and killed by Oklahoma police after his car broke down on the side of the road. Crutcher was [shot in the back while walking towards his car with his hands up.](#)

Killed for holding a garden hose. California police were ordered to pay \$6.5 million after they [opened fire on a man holding a garden hose](#), believing it to be a gun. Douglas Zerby was shot 12 times and pronounced dead on the scene.

Killed for calling 911. Justine Damond, a 40-year-old yoga instructor, was [shot and killed by Minneapolis police](#), allegedly because they were startled by a loud noise in the vicinity just as she approached their patrol car. Damond, clad in pajamas, had called 911 to report a possible assault in her neighborhood.

Killed for looking for a parking spot. Richard Ferretti, a 52-year-old chef, was [shot and killed by Philadelphia police](#) who had been alerted to investigate a purple Dodge Caravan that was driving “suspiciously” through the neighborhood.

Shot seven times for peeing outdoors. Eighteen-year-old Keivon Young was [shot seven times by police from behind while urinating outdoors.](#) Young was just zipping up his pants when he heard a commotion behind him and then found himself struck by a hail of bullets from two undercover cops. Allegedly officers mistook Young—5’4,” 135 lbs., and guilty of nothing



more than taking a leak outdoors—for a 6' tall, 200 lb. murder suspect whom they later apprehended. Young was charged with felony resisting arrest and two counts of assaulting a peace officer.

This is what passes for policing in America today, folks, and it's only getting worse.

In every one of these scenarios, police *could* have resorted to less lethal tactics.

They *could* have acted with reason and calculation instead of reacting with a killer instinct.

They *could* have attempted to de-escalate and defuse whatever perceived "threat" caused them to fear for their lives enough to react with lethal force.

That police instead chose to fatally resolve these encounters by using their guns on fellow citizens speaks volumes about what is wrong with policing in America today, where police officers are being dressed in the trappings of war, drilled in the deadly art of combat, and trained to look upon "every individual they interact with as an armed threat and [every situation as a deadly force encounter in the making.](#)"

Remember, to a hammer, all the world looks like a nail.

Yet as I point out in my book [Battlefield America: The War on the American People](#), "we the people" are not just getting hammered.

We're getting killed, execution-style.

Violence begets violence: until we start addressing the U.S. government's part in creating, cultivating and abetting a culture of violence, we will continue to be a nation plagued by violence in our homes, in our schools, on our streets and in our affairs of state, both foreign and domestic.

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