



Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on July 18, 2016

Baton Rouge: More Casualties in the War on Police

Following weeks of violent rhetoric from the Black Lives Matter crowd and other social justice warriors, the war on police has claimed more lives. Sunday morning saw three Baton Rouge police officers killed and three others injured in a shooting where officers were — as in Dallas — the targets of a black shooter angry over the deaths of Alton Sterling in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and Philando Castile in Falcon Heights, Minnesota.



The war on police — usually philosophical, academic, and political in nature — has again moved into the real and violent. In the days leading up to the shooting, police in Baton Rouge were investigating a plot to kill officers using stolen guns. The plan was uncovered during the investigation of a pawn shop robbery in which eight handguns were stolen. Police have arrested four so far in connection with that plot. They are all young black men. The oldest is 20; the youngest is 12. Just let that sink in: a 12-year-old boy helped steal guns so that he could kill police officers. The war on police is using child-soldiers.

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While it is not known whether the shooting Sunday morning is connected to that plot, it is certain that both the Baton Rouge Police Department and Sheriff's Office have been on heightened alert since [the death of Sterling at the hands of two officers in the wee hours of July 5](#). Once the plot to steal guns and use them to kill police officers was discovered, that heightened alert took the form of increased police presence, more proactive policing, and more than 100 arrests at a protest in Baton Rouge organized by the Black Lives Matter crowd. According to a statement given to police by one of the suspects in the plot, the protest was to be ground zero in the plan to kill cops. Baton Rouge law-enforcement agencies were keeping the investigation close to the vest until after the protest and the arrest of the fourth — and youngest — suspect.

In a move that surprised no one, the American Civil Liberties Union of Louisiana immediately launched a lawsuit against the Baton Rouge Police Department and Sheriff's Office, alleging that police had "used excessive force, carried out mass arrests and verbally and physically abused protesters," [according to Time](#) magazine. Baton Rouge Police Chief Carl Dabadie said in a press conference that the departments involved "took this as a very viable threat," adding, "We have received questions as to why we used such a show of force during weekend protests, this is why."

Even as news of that plot was beginning to make its rounds, the reality of police being targeted for murder was punctuated by the shooting early Sunday morning. Police responded to a call that a man, later identified as Gavin Long, a 29-year-old former Marine who had served from 2005 to 2010 and had been deployed to Iraq in 2008 — dressed in black and carrying a rifle — was walking along the road near the Hammond Aire Plaza shopping center on Airline Highway in Baton Rouge. Even before police responded, there were reports of gunfire. When police arrived, the man opened fire on the officers. In a firefight lasting 10 minutes, six officers were shot. Three were killed and three others were injured. The shooter was shot and killed.



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The slain officers were Montrell Jackson, 32 (Baton Rouge Police Department); Matthew Gerald, 41 (Baton Rouge Police Department); and Brad Garafola, 45 (East Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff's Office).

The wounded officers have not been named as of this writing, though some details of their injuries are known. A sheriff's deputy, 41, is in critical condition; another sheriff's deputy, 51, underwent surgery for non-life-threatening injuries; and a Baton Rouge police officer, 41, was hospitalized with non-life-threatening injuries which did not require surgery.

In a rare [statement](#) of "support" for police, President Obama called the attack "cowardly" and "reprehensible." He also said, "These are attacks on public servants, on the rule of law, and on civilized society, and they have to stop." He then offered his "solution" in the form of more federal involvement in the affairs of local police matters: "I've offered my full support, and the full support of the federal government, to Governor Edwards, Mayor Holden, the Sheriff's Office, and the Baton Rouge Police Department. And make no mistake — justice will be done."

Perhaps in all of his education President Obama missed this simple lesson: An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. If the rhetoric against police — much of it from the president himself — had not been put forth, those officers would likely be safe at home with their families. Having helped start the fire, the president now wants more federal control on matters that are not in his authority in order to put the fire out and make sure "justice will be done."

"Make no mistake," indeed. The lives of officers lost in Dallas, Baton Rouge, and elsewhere will not be the only casualties in the war on police if the federal government — under Obama or anyone else (I'm looking at you, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump) — continues to encroach into matters which are not its proper province. Concerned Americans need to work to support local police and keep them independent of federal control.

If not, the rule of law will be the biggest casualty in the war on police.

*Photo of a police chaplain praying at a makeshift memorial at the scene of the shooting in Baton Rouge:
AP Images*





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