



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on March 5, 2018

Broward Sheriff's Office Investigated Dozens of Times for Misconduct, Says Lawsuit

Florida Governor Rick Scott's [investigation](#) into the Broward Sheriff's Office's handling of the February 14 Parkland school shooting is just the latest in a long line of probes into the department's conduct, according to court filings in a civil suit against Sheriff Scott Israel (shown) and his deputies.

Scott, a Republican, initiated his investigation February 25 after it was alleged that as many as four Broward County deputies remained outside Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School while the shooting spree, allegedly conducted by Nikolas Cruz, 19, took place inside. At that time it was also known that the Broward Sheriff's Office had received dozens of calls concerning Cruz over the months and years leading up to the shooting. Since then, there have also been allegations that Broward deputies [prevented emergency medical teams from entering the school](#) to treat the injured.

Israel, a Democrat, tried to deflect blame for his deputies' alleged inaction, [telling](#) CNN's Jake Tapper that "it's not the responsibility of the general or the president if you have a deserter." He also downplayed the number of calls his office had received about Cruz and claimed his deputies had handled most of those calls appropriately. Israel told Tapper he had provided his agency with "amazing leadership."

Israel's "amazing leadership" apparently includes presiding over a department that has been investigated by the Broward County State Attorney's office at least 66 times since 2012 — 40 of them since Israel took office — and is currently being sued by the family of an innocent man shot and killed by deputies whom Israel later presented with awards, reports journalist [Sara Carter](#).

In 2013, Jermaine McBean, an African-American information-technology engineer, was walking home from a store where he had just bought an air rifle, listening to music with earbuds. Unbeknownst to him, the bag covering the rifle had blown off, and a passing motorist called 911 to report seeing a man carrying a weapon; the caller stated that it could have been an air rifle. Three Broward deputies — Peter Paraza, Lt. Brad Ostroff, and Sgt. Richard LaCerra — arrived and confronted McBean.

Carter writes:

According to David Schoen, the attorney representing McBean's family in the civil case against the defendants and Israel, witnesses at the scene said McBean's air rifle was resting on his shoulders,





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with his arms slung over. McBean couldn't hear the officers through the earbuds. According to witnesses and court records he eventually turned around and when he did, Peraza fired the shots that led to McBean's death. Peraza, who had only been working as a deputy for a year, stated to the courts that he feared for his life.

Three months later, Israel [gave](#) Peraza and LaCerra the Broward Sheriff's Office's "Gold Cross Award" for their "selfless, honorable and brave" actions in the McBean case.

After another two years, Peraza was indicted for homicide and suspended from the police force. A local judge dismissed the indictment, but the Florida Supreme Court "has taken the case on review and has vacated the lower court's ruling," notes Carter.

Schoen's court filing in the civil case states: "Approximately 66 [Broward Sheriff's Office] deputies and other employees, including supervisory personnel were arrested for, charged with, and/or convicted of crimes that run the gamut from Armed Kidnapping, to Battery, Assault, Falsifying records, Official Misconduct, Narcotics trafficking, and other crimes involving dishonesty and violence in the years immediately proceeding [sic] 2013 when Jermaine was killed. Most of the offenses on the list occurred in the years 2012-2013."

The list on which Schoen's assertions were based is the Broward County State Attorney's 2014 "Brady Cop List," which identifies police officers who have been investigated for or convicted of crimes. A more recent list would likely identify even more officers, Schoen told Carter.

"Often the cases against [Broward Sheriff's Office] employees are resolved by guilty pleas resulting in short or no period of incarceration and a chance for the criminal record to be cleared after a period of time," he claimed in his filing. According to Carter, "Israel is always shifting blame and 'the buck never stops with him,' Schoen said."

Between the Scott investigation and the McBean suit, the buck may finally be landing — with a thud — in Israel's lap.

Image: Screenshots of the [Broward County Sheriff's Office](#)



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