



Detroit: With Fewer Police and Rising Crime, “Justifiable Homicides” Soar

Living in a city with a substantially diminished police force, a growing number of the residents of Detroit, Michigan, have decided that they can take a “bite out of crime” all on their own, and are using firearms in self-defense to protect themselves from the burgeoning ranks of violent criminals.

Detroit citizens find themselves increasingly left to see to their own defense, as the city’s leadership proves itself to be out of touch with the dangers that face residents every day. A *Detroit News* article ([“Detroit goes vigilante”](#)) highlighted the purported “spin” by Ralph Godbee, Jr. (left), the city’s police chief:



There is a troubling contradiction in the crime stats announcement by Detroit Police Chief Ralph Godbee Jr. The city experienced a 12 percent increase in homicides from 2010 to 2011, he said, but recorded an overall decrease in serious crime.

I wasn’t sure whether he considered murder a serious crime, whether something was lost in translation, or there is a credibility gap in Chief Godbee’s crime statistics. The chief would have you believe his department is taking a huge bite out of crime. ...

Last year’s jump in homicides — from 308 victims in 2010 to 344 in 2011 — was no surprise. Detroit has held — or nearly held — the dubious distinction of “murder capital” every year since the mid-1970s. And the chief appeared to gloss over the fact there were also 1,252 nonfatal shootings last year. But these, I suppose, were not “serious” shootings.

There were fewer reported incidents of rape, assault, robbery, burglary, larceny and auto theft than the year before. But this meager drop in overall crime is nothing to write home about. One must keep in mind that these decreases came from an extremely high plateau. No way do they indicate that the city is notably safer. By any calculation, Detroit is more dangerous than the chief is willing to admit.

The violence of Detroit is all the more troubling when compared to a nationwide trend, which testifies to a substantial decrease in the homicide rate during the same time period in which Motor City has become Murder City.

Nationwide, the homicide rate has dropped rather dramatically in the past 20 years. As [Charles Lane recently wrote for the Washington Post](#), “Between 1991 and 2010, the homicide rate in the United States fell 51 percent, from 9.8 per 100,000 residents to 4.8 per 100,000. Property crimes such as burglary also fell sharply during that period; auto theft, once the bane of urban life, dropped an astonishing 64 percent. And FBI data released Dec. 19 show that the trends continued in the first half of



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2011. With luck, the United States could soon equal its lowest homicide rate of the modern era: 4.0 per 100,000, recorded in 1957.”

The *Detroit News* article highlights the fact that the city leadership knows that violence is out of control — no matter what the police chief might say. “Why else would half the City Council have concealed gun permits while Mayor Dave Bing is chauffeured around with armed security in a bulletproof car?” asks the paper.

The people of Detroit have no difficulty separating the rhetoric churned out by the police chief from the reality they face in the streets of the city, and they are increasingly relying on self-defense to protect themselves from the criminal element which peace officers have proven themselves incapable of keeping under control. In the words of [a February 5 article for TheDaily.com](#):

The people of Detroit are taking no prisoners.

Justifiable homicide in the city shot up 79 percent in 2011 from the previous year, as citizens in the long-suffering city armed themselves and took matters into their own hands. The local rate of self-defense killings now stands 2,200 percent above the national average. Residents, unable to rely on a dwindling police force to keep them safe, are fighting back against the criminal scourge on their own. And they’re offering no apologies.

The 79-percent increase may sound dramatic, but the total number of “justifiable homicides” (i.e., cases in which citizens used lethal force to defend themselves from violent criminals) was 34 in 2011, as compared to 19 in 2010. In other words, the number of “justifiable homicides” was only a tenth that of the murder rate.

However, from the perspective of the city leadership, the actions taken by citizens to defend themselves are part of the problem. Former police chief Ike McKinnon, who critics say appears to share Godbee’s reality-avoidance syndrome, [told WJBK-Fox](#) that such cases of self-defense should be, among other things, included in the city’s murder rate:

Former Detroit Police Chief Ike McKinnon says the spiraling murder rate is bad enough, but we should be alarmed at the number of justifiable homicides. Why? Fewer cops and runaway violence in Detroit is causing people to become the cop, the judge, the jury and the executioner.

“We don’t want that to occur,” McKinnon explained. “We want our police to stop the crime. We don’t want the citizens to stop the crime. We don’t want vigilantes to do so.”

Former homicide detective Mike Carlisle says justifiable or not, 378 people were murdered in the Motor City last year.

“You don’t get the true meaning of what the homicide count means if you’re going to start deleting figures from it. You’re getting a false sense of security, and right now I don’t think a false sense of security is what this city needs,” he said.

McKinnon’s reckless classification of citizens as “vigilantes” if they have the audacity to defend themselves rather than lie down and die when attacked by a violent criminal seems to be indicative of a delusional mindset which permeates the city’s leadership. Self-defense is, by definition, not murder — it is the *justifiable* taking of a life, and is, properly-speaking, absolutely no different from when a police officer takes the life of a criminal while defending the public. Classifying law-abiding citizens as criminals by calling them “vigilantes” and ranking their actions of self-defense right alongside the crimes committed by murderers is a gross disservice to the people of Detroit.



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According to the article from TheDaily.com, the number of police officers in Detroit has dwindled from 5,000 a decade ago to a mere 3,000 today, and the average police response time to a priority call is 24 minutes—an appalling slow response time given a national average well under 10 minutes. The people of Detroit need more than rhetoric from the current and former police chief; they need an effective defense from violent criminals.

The right of self-defense is among the most fundamental rights of all human beings, and such self-defense is specifically among the enumerated rights set forth in the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. If the Detroit police prove themselves capable of defending the city from violent crime, citizens will have less need to act in their own defense. Until then, the city's residents need to understand that they are increasingly on their own.



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