

# In Praise of Cops

by Earl P. Holt III

Law enforcement is nearly unique as a profession because only fire-fighting and military combat share its defining feature: **each profession must enter highly dangerous situations to confront and eliminate the sources of that danger.** Like the other two professions, the more diligently law enforcement performs its task, the greater the potential risk it incurs for loss of life or serious physical injury.

In all other professions, to incur potentially fatal levels of risk is evidence of negligence rather than diligence, professionalism or heroism. Most jobs in the private sector have a great deal of capital invested to minimize the risk of physical harm. On the other hand, the failure to confront risk is usually an indication of negligence or cowardice in law enforcement.

**This was brought to mind with the tragic murder of NYPD Officer JONATHAN DILLER in late March of 2024. Diller was an exemplary law enforcement officer -- as well as husband and father -- who finished first in his class at the police academy.**



In only his first three years, Officer Diller made 70 arrests and received four department recognitions. He was murdered by a rabid ape with 21 priors while he was investigating what should have been a simple parking violation.

**At a time when nearly any routine “stop-and-frisk” can become a foot chase into unfamiliar, dark and dangerous places -- and almost any traffic stop can become a high-speed vehicle chase -- the cop on the street is expected to pursue such potentially dangerous offenders with little consideration given to his own safety.**

Cops are also expected to occasionally kick in doors without knowing what’s behind them, pursue armed and violent criminals down dark alleys, and engage in those harrowing high-speed traffic pursuits. Any of these situations could prove fatal, as 375 such incidents did in 2023 to U.S. law enforcement killed in the line of duty at all levels. The **National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund** indicates that 586 law enforcement officials were killed in the *line-of-duty* as recently as 2021.



Law enforcement has always been something of a “*political football*” since the earliest days of the Roman Centurions. When a particularly savage crime or series of crimes occur, elected officials, the news media and the public bring a great deal of pressure to bear on police to find and arrest the culprit, and ease the public’s fears by doing so.

**On the other hand, political authorities and the courts are increasingly likely to interfere with the police in the performance of their job. This was a recurring theme in the movie *Dirty Harry*, and it was just as true then as it is now. Political officials, the courts and the police have very differing priorities when it comes to their jobs, and these different priorities frequently and unnecessarily hinder law enforcement.**

Another consideration confounding law enforcement is the hypocrisy inherent in state and federal prohibitions against so-called “*racial profiling*.” While blacks are synonymous with violent crime in America and commit 90% of all murders each year, police must pretend that blacks are no more likely to engage in violent crime than any other demographic. No police officer worth his salt accepts this ridiculous constraint on his conduct, although they must all pay it lip service.



**(Every Day of the Year)**

**As a result, at any given moment the majority of any urban police force is concentrated in areas where most crimes occur, and these are invariably each city's black areas. IN FACT, THE PERCENTAGE OF A CITY OR COUNTY'S BLACK POPULATION IS A BETTER PREDICTOR OF VIOLENT CRIME RATES THAN ANY OTHER VARIABLE EVER STUDIED BY CRIMINOLOGISTS.**

Finally, the availability of video equipment in the form of smart phones or hand-held cameras has added a new complexity to the policeman's already difficult task. As the arresting officers in the Rodney King incident learned to their dismay, dispensing a well-deserved dose of "*street justice*" can be a *career-ender* if it happens to be videotaped.

