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VIOLENCE ISN'T DOWN FOR THE COPS

More officers are being murdered. And nearly always, with guns

Officers feloniously killed			
	2023	2024	CHANGE
Total	60	64	6.7%
By gunfire	32	46	43.8%

For *Police Issues* by Julius (Jay) Wachtel. Sixty-nine of the seventy police departments that comprise the Major Cities Chiefs Association have reported their [violent crime counts for 2024](#). Consistent with the favorable trend that many cities are bragging about, violence is indeed down. But as our top graphic illustrates, officer

69 Major Chiefs cities			
	2023	2024	CHANGE
Homicide	7,797	6,520	-16.4%
Rape	30,377	28,672	-5.6%
Robbery	106,158	96,342	-9.2%
Agg. Aslt.	278,182	265,493	-4.6%

safety remains a seemingly intractable issue. According to the FBI's 2024 [LEOKA Special Report](#), four more officers were feloniously killed in 2024 than in 2023. A substantially larger proportion of the victim officers fell victim to gunfire. Using [UCR LEOKA data](#), here's a look-back to 2014:

Officers feloniously killed											
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total	51	41	66	46	56	48	46	73	61	60	64
By gunfire	46	38	62	42	52	44	41	40	30	32	46
Percent	90.2%	92.7%	93.9%	91.3%	92.9%	91.7%	89.1%	54.8%	49.2%	53.3%	71.9%

Yet there is some good news. LEOKA's most recent tally, depicted on the right, reveals that one-third fewer officers were feloniously killed during the first four months of 2025 than during that period in 2024. As one would expect, gunfire remained the predominant cause. LEOKA assigns each episode that leads to an officer fatality to one of eleven categories (*Special Report*, pg. 3). Here's how it apportioned the 64 felonious officer killings in 2024 (frequencies in parentheses):

	2024	2025	CHANGE
January	2	3	50.0%
February	7	6	-14.3%
March	5	5	0.0%
April	10	2	-80.0%
Total	24	16	-33.3%
By gunfire	20	12	
Percent	83.3%	75%	

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- Response to unlawful or suspicious activity (14)
- Traffic stop (11)
- Circumstance unknown / not reported (7)
- Follow up investigation (7)
- Tactical situation (7)
- Pursuit (7)
- Check in with another law enforcement officer (4)
- Routine patrol other than traffic stop (3)
- Warrant service (2)
- Medical, mental health, or welfare assistance (1)
- Out of service [court/dining/etc.] (1)

Murders of law enforcement officers draw considerable attention in the media, and their circumstances, including the motives and criminal backgrounds of the killers, are often explored in depth. Drawing from the *Officer Down Memorial Page* (click [here](#) for 2024 and [here](#) for 2025) and relevant news accounts, we identified a total of seventeen episodes between January 1-April 30, 2024 and ten during that period in 2025 that involved the intentional, felonious killing of at least one law enforcement officer. Gunfire was responsible for all the deaths but two in 2024 (one of the non-gun deaths was a stabbing, the other involved the violent use of a chain.) Also note that the officers killed count is slightly lower than LEOKA's. That's due to our exclusion of officers who died from injuries sustained during earlier periods and from the acts of others, such as crossfire by their colleagues. Here's an overall look:

Year	Episodes	Ofc killed	By guns	Known susps.	Ages	Avg. age	Arrest hist.	Ex- con	Mental
2024	17	22	20	16	22-70	40.1	12	8	6
2025	10	11	11	9	14-60	37.9	7	3	2
Sum	27	33	31	25	14-70	40.8	19	11	8

And here's a breakdown by incident type:

Yr.	Tfc.	Warr. svc.	Disturb., trespass	Domest.	Guns, shtgs.	Susp. person	Mental	Ambush
2024	6	3	3	2	1	0	1	1
2025	2	3	2	1	1	1	0	0
Sum	8	6	5	3	2	1	1	1

Traffic-related episodes were the most frequent. That's to be expected, as they're by far the most common enforcement activity. But warrant service also figured prominently. That likely reflects its intrinsically conflicted nature and the characteristics of its "clientele." According to news accounts, at least nineteen of the twenty-five

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identified cop killers had substantial arrest histories, and at least seven had one or more felony convictions. Here's a summary of the episodes in 2025, using categories of our making:

	Circumstances	Age	Arrest history	Ex-con	Mental
1	Warrant for agg. sexual assault	56	Y	Y	
2	DHS stopped car for Visa violation	21			
3	Brandishes a gun, throws rocks	25	Y		
4	Suspicious person in shopping ctr.	23	Y		Y
5	Tfc. stop expired plates – 2 officers killed	42	Y	Y	
6	Domestic – help woman get things	42	Y		
7	14-yr. old w/gun – other officer wounded	14			
8	Drug search warrant by SWAT team	60	Y	Y	
9	Man misbehaves in market	58			
10	Protection order – other officer wounded	38	Y		Y

We used the *Officer Down Memorial Page* and accounts in the media to take a closer look. Here are the incidents in numerical order:

1. **Brazoria Co., TX Deputy Jesus Vargas** was shot and killed while serving a warrant for aggravated sexual assault. His assailant was a repeat violent offender who had served a 20-year prison term. [ODMP](#) [News account](#)
2. **Border Patrol agent David Maland** stopped a car for a suspected Visa violation. Its occupants, a young woman and a German national, were previously observed attired in tactical clothing. The woman opened fire, killing agent Maland. Her vehicle contained an assortment of guns and tactical gear. [ODMP](#) [News account](#)
3. **North Las Vegas police officer Jason Roscow** responded to a call about a homeless person brandishing a gun and throwing rocks. As he arrived the man started shooting, and in the exchange of gunfire both were killed. Officer Roscow's murderer had been convicted of CCW and arrested for various offenses, including resisting an officer and larceny. [ODMP](#) [News account](#)
4. **Roswell, GA police officer Jeremy Labonte** arrived at a shopping center on a suspicious person call. When approached, the suspect opened fire. Officer Labonte's killer had been treated for mental issues. He had prior arrests for battery and other crimes and a conviction for unlawfully discharging a weapon. [ODMP](#) [News account](#)

5. **Virginia Beach police officers Cameron Girvin and Christopher Reese** were murdered by the driver of a car they stopped for an expired license plate. Their killer had served eight years in Federal prison for drug offenses and being an ex-con with a gun. [ODMP](#) [ODMP](#) [News account](#) [Prior post](#)
6. **Hinds Co., MS deputy sergeant Martin Shields, Jr.** and a colleague were dispatched to protect a woman as she retrieved belongings from a former residence. Her estranged spouse opened fire as soon as they arrived. Deputy Shields was killed, and the woman and another adult female were wounded. The ex-spouse committed suicide. He had 25 arrests, including 8 for felonies, but no convictions. [ODMP](#) [News account](#) [Prior post](#)
7. **Newark police dept. sergeant Joseph Azcona** and a partner drove up to a reportedly armed 14-year old boy who was amidst a group of teens. Before they could exit their car the youth fired “nearly 30 bullets” from a gun that was apparently converted to full-auto. Sergeant Azcona was killed and his partner was wounded. [ODMP](#) [News account](#)
8. **Marysville, CA police officer Osmar Rodarte** and other members of a regional SWAT team served a search warrant at the residence of a major drug dealer. They were met by gunfire. Officer Rodarte was fatally wounded. His murderer, a registered sex offender who was prohibited from having guns, was also killed. [ODMP](#) [News account](#)
9. **Walton Co., FL deputy sheriff William May** responded to a disturbance at a local market. Once he escorted the disorderly person outside, the man pulled a pistol. They exchanged fire, and both were killed. Deputy May’s killer was a CCW permit holder whom police had previously contacted for “minor issues like welfare checks.” [ODMP](#) [News article](#)
10. **Columbia Co., GA deputy sheriff Brandon Sikes** and three colleagues stopped a vehicle to serve its driver with a domestic violence protection order. Their subject, a diagnosed schizophrenic, opened fire with an “automatic weapon.” Deputy Sikes was killed and a colleague was wounded. Their agency had been alerted that the man had machineguns and pipe bombs, and after the shooting these items were found in his R.V. [ODMP](#) [News article](#)

None of these episodes was your archetypal “felony in progress” call. But as cops well know, virtually any activity that brings them into contact with chronically non-compliant citizens can erupt into violence. And these ten killers were indeed non-

compliant sorts. At least seven had substantial arrest records. At least four had a history of violence. At least three were convicted felons, thus legally barred from having guns. Note those entries about illegal weapons and “tactical gear.” And about a *fourteen-year old* slinging a machinegun.

Take another glance at the graphs that lead off this essay. Cops haven’t apparently realized the benefits of that “great crime drop.” Alas, in our gun-suffused society, firearms are literally within anyone’s reach (“[Where do They Come From?](#)”). And concerted efforts are underway to eliminate the obstacles to gun ownership that *do* exist. Seven years ago we posted “[No one Wants ex-Cons to Have Guns.](#)” Back then the title seemed a reasonably accurate expression of the popular will. Who would have thought that the Supreme Court would in time [order a second look](#) at the Federal law that prohibits gun possession by felons convicted of non-violent crimes?

But put the “*whom*” aside. Let’s turn to “*what*”. Perhaps the only factor that can be realistically addressed is the gun. Machineguns, that curse of modern warfare, have been long illegal for civilians to possess. Inevitably, profit-seeking types developed workarounds. Say, [bump stocks](#), which enable a rate of fire that mimics full-auto. Two years after the [2017 Las Vegas massacre](#), in which bump stock-equipped rifles were used to murder sixty, ATF classified the devices as illegal machinegun conversion parts. Problem is, [Federal law](#) defines machineguns as weapons that fire repeatedly from a *single* pull of the trigger. Bump stocks use recoil to *repeatedly* pull the trigger. That conflict led the Supreme Court to strike down ATF’s ban ([Garland v. Cargill](#), no. 22-976, 6/14/24). (State laws that prohibit bump stocks remain in effect.) So what about ATF’s move against “[forced reset triggers](#),” those newfangled gadgets that accomplish the same ends as bad-old bump stocks? Check out [DOJ’s May 16, 2025 announcement](#):



Today, in accordance with President Trump’s Executive Order Protecting Second Amendment Rights, as well as the Attorney General’s Second Amendment Enforcement Task Force, the Department of Justice announced the settlement of litigation between the federal government and Rare Breed Triggers. “This Department of Justice believes that the 2nd Amendment is not a second-class right,” said Attorney General Pamela Bondi. “And we are glad to end a needless cycle of litigation with a settlement that will enhance public safety.”

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[*Rare Breed Triggers*](#) is free to manufacture and sell the devices. But *only* for use in long guns!

Still want to be a cop? [San Francisco's hiring!](#)