

These Maps Tracking 'Botched' Raids Show The Troubling Law Enforcement Trends Culminating In Ferguson

By Jeremy Bender
August 18, 2014

The Ferguson, Missouri police department's heavy-handed response to protests over the killing of an unarmed teenager follows a long-standing trend of strong-arm, military-style police tactics.

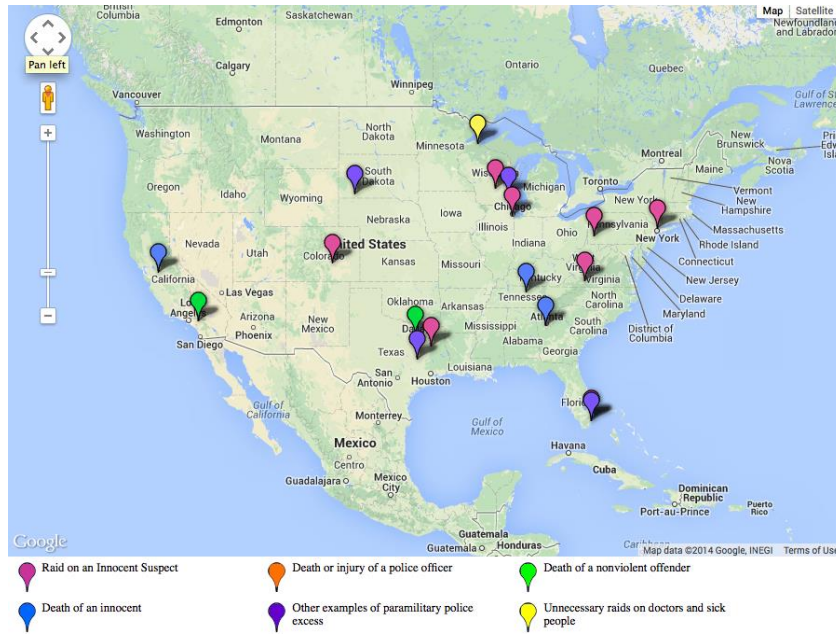
Journalist Radley Balko, now with the Washington Post, covered the "militarization of the police" in his 2013 book "Rise of the Warrior Cop." Balko also helped produce an interactive map online at the CATO Institute, which records instances of botched paramilitary police raids across the nation. Both SWAT and paramilitary police actions are included in his research.

Balko deems a raid as being "botched" when it is conducted on an innocent suspect, results in the death or injury of a police officer or nonviolent offender, targets a doctor or a sick person, or otherwise involves excessive force.

Examples of paramilitary police excess include the use of a flash grenade that caused burns on a toddler, the deaths of household pets, and numerous other violent and non-violent examples of police abuse.

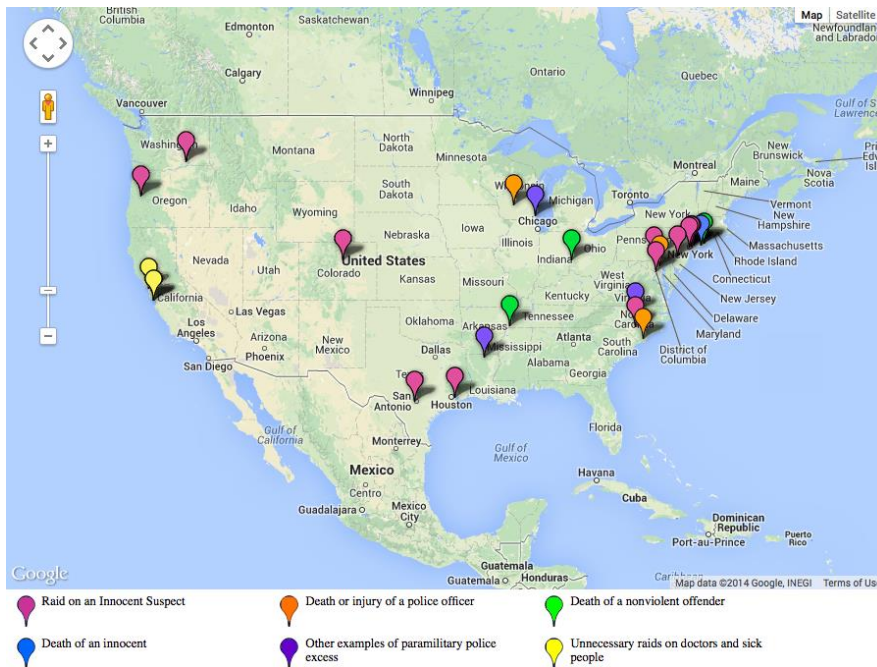
Balko's interactive map spans from 1985 to 2014. Here are some of its more interesting findings — evidence that America's police forces were taking on a more military character long before events in Ferguson brought the issue to the national stage.

In 2000, the majority of "botched" raids were carried out on innocent suspects.



Screenshot/www.cato.org

The number of raids on innocent suspects then increased in 2002.



Screenshot/www.cato.org

Overall examples fell in 2004, although "paramilitary police excess" increased.



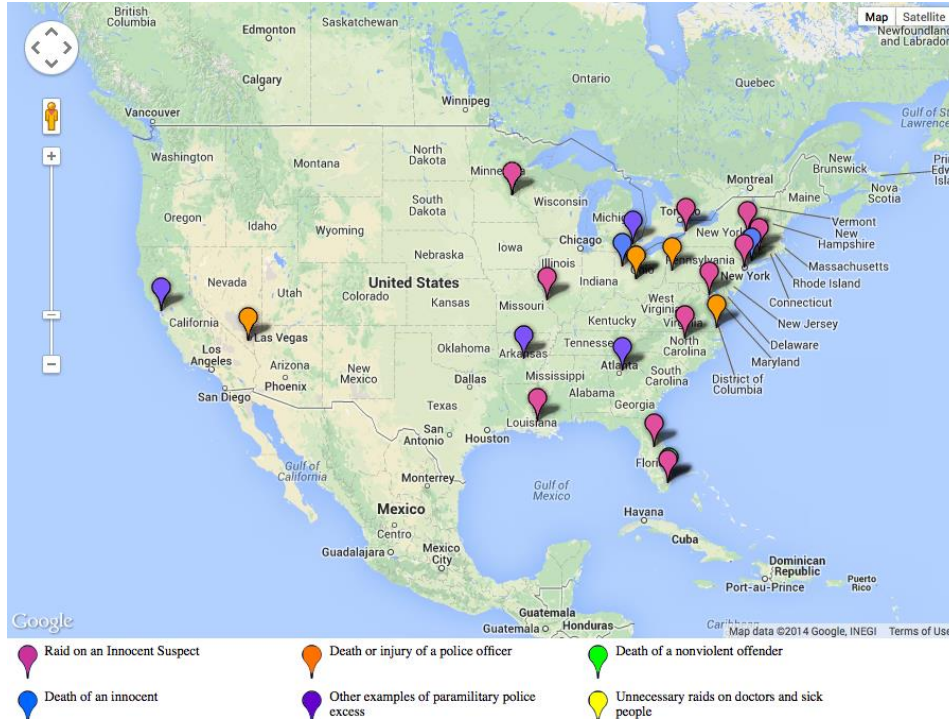
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An 88-year-old woman was killed in a no-knock police raid in 2006, after she fired on police that she believed to be robbers.



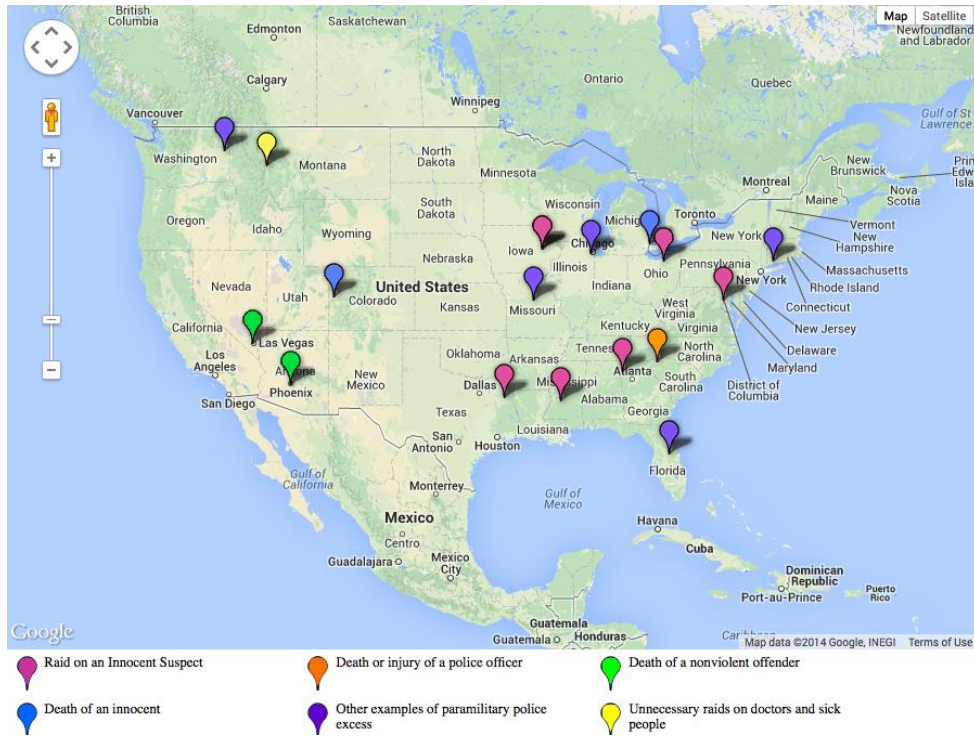
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In 2008, two innocent suspects and a nonviolent offender were killed in police actions.



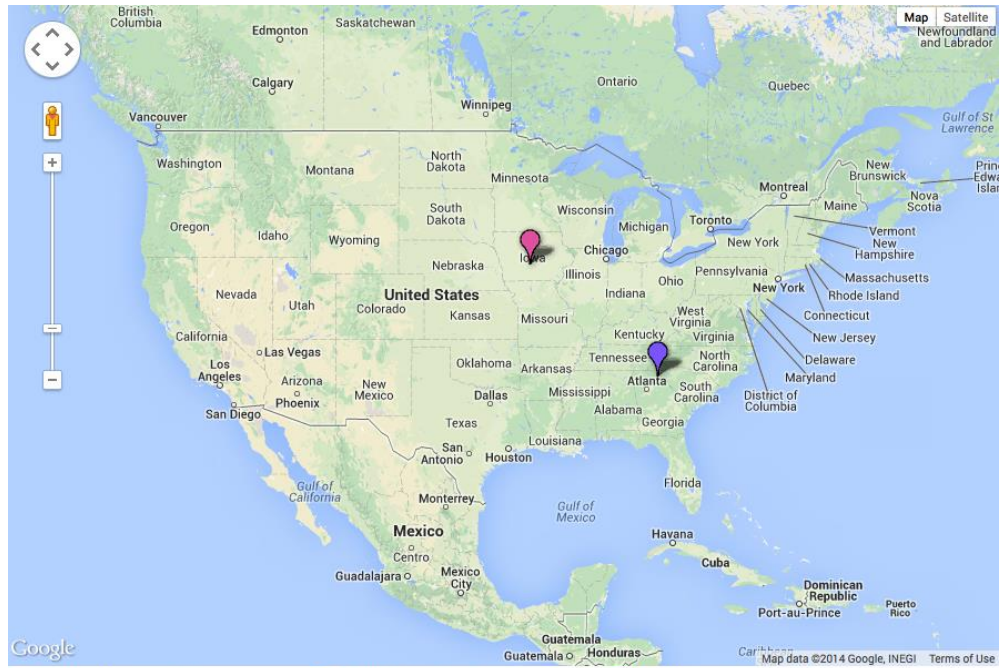
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Five people were killed as a result of militarized police action in 2010, including three innocent suspects.



Screenshot/www.cato.org

So far in 2014, a toddler was severely burned after a flash grenade was thrown by police and accidentally landed in her crib. This map was created before the unrest in Ferguson, Missouri.



- Raid on an Innocent Suspect
- Death of an innocent
- Death or injury of a police officer
- Other examples of paramilitary police excess
- Death of a nonviolent offender
- Unnecessary raids on doctors and sick people