An Interactive "War on Cameras" Map

Radley Balko | February 28, 2011

Borrowing on the map of botched SWAT raids idea I put together when I was at the Cato Institute, "Dr. Q." at the Cop Block website is working on a similar map plotting incidents in which police have arrested, threatened, or otherwise harassed someone who was trying to record them.

As Dr. Q points out, like the map I put together, he does not claim his map to be comprehensive. These maps are useful and effective at visually demonstrating how common (or rather, "unisolated) these incidents are. They're also good resource for reporters or activists interested in finding incidents in a particular state or city. So it's great to see someone expand the idea to another area of criminal justice.

But I always caution against drawing *too* many conclusions from the map I put together. For example, the maps are much less useful if you want to, say, compare the number of incidents in different areas of the country, or in different cities. For example, one city may have more incidents than another not necessarily because the police are more aggressive or less tolerant of being recorded, but simply because the media may more likely to report such incidents. Or perhaps the police department in the more active city has a better system in place for citizens to register complaints. On this issue in particular, more populated areas will also present more opportunities for citizens with cameras to interact with police.

My feature, "The War on Cameras" here.