



Are terrorists targeting police in Ferguson?

By Cliff Kincaid

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Radley Balko, the controversial writer driving much of the media discussion over police "militarization," has a controversial history of getting important facts wrong. We are seeing how wrong he was in the terrorism taking place in Ferguson, Missouri.

Despite all the sensational stories and claims about the "militarized" police department, these local officers, working with the State Highway Patrol, were unable to deal with what Governor Jay Nixon (D) on Monday called "a violent criminal element intent upon terrorizing the community." He referred to "the firing upon law enforcement officers, the shooting of a civilian, the throwing of Molotov cocktails, looting and a coordinated attempt to overrun the unified Command Center."

"Following coordinated attacks last night both on civilians and law enforcement officers," he said, "I signed an executive order directing the Missouri National Guard to help restore peace and order in Ferguson."

On the same day, he referred to "the violent criminal acts of an organized and growing number of individuals, many from outside the community and state..."

It's not unreasonable to describe these coordinated attacks from the "violent criminal element" as terrorism. This is precisely why police agencies have to be "militarized." It is clear in this case that the local and state police could not deal with the threats and violence.

But our media seem not to be concerned about the fact that all of their talk about the "militarization" of the police proved to be completely erroneous, and that more military power is on the way precisely because the criminals and terrorists are becoming too big a problem for the local or even the state police to handle.

As we noted yesterday, Balko's Wall Street Journal article on the alleged "militarization" of the police was so full of inaccuracies that it was later attached to a very unusual 200-word correction. He has been exaggerating the degree to which police agencies at various levels of government have been using military equipment and tactics.

In another case, it took Balko a year to correct some false statements he made about a marijuana investigation and law enforcement visit to the home of someone named Cathy Jordan.

On March 17, he posted "A belated correction" at The Washington Post in which he said, "I did draw some conclusions in the post that I shouldn't have." Balko had claimed that deputies used "paramilitary" tactics and had brought "the boot down upon Cathy Jordan's neck." He now admits these claims were false.

"Finally," he said, "I drew those conclusions based on initial online reports, including one in the Bradenton paper that was later amended. Still, instead of relying on reports from other publications, I should have called the Manatee Sheriff's Department or the Jordans themselves to verify the details."

Orlando attorney John Morgan made claims about the raid based upon Balko's original story in The Huffington Post. PolitiFact looked into the claims and said, "No one was arrested or dragged out of their house by a SWAT team."

The woman's husband, Robert Jordan, referred to "the hyperbole about machine guns and police brutality" coming from Radley Balko's article. He said it was "particularly loose with the facts," adding, "No one asked me, or I would have told them the truth."

Late last year Fred Hiatt and James Downie of The Washington Post announced they were hiring Balko as a blogger, insisting he was "one of the country's top criminal justice reporters." That reputation is now in doubt.

Balko came to The Washington Post from The Huffington Post, and had previously been a senior editor at Reason magazine, a policy analyst at the Cato Institute and an opinion columnist for FoxNews.com.

One biography says he has been published in The Wall Street Journal, Playboy, Time, The Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, Slate, Forbes, ESPN, the National Post, Worth and numerous other publications. It says he has also appeared on the BBC, CNN,

CNBC, Fox News Channel, MSNBC and NPR. He is said to have a degree in journalism and political science.

In 2009, by his own admission, he blocked a blogger known as Patterico from reading his Twitter feed. Patterico had been critical of Balko's articles, focusing on alleged errors and omissions in one particular case.

While Balko has a background of writing or working for libertarian organizations considered to be on the right-side of the political spectrum, he has also become extremely cozy with the far-left. On September 18, 2013, for example, Balko spoke at an event co-sponsored by the American Civil Liberties Union Illinois, Chicago Alliance against Racist and Political Repression, Illinois Campaign to End the New Jim Crow, National Lawyers Guild and People's Law Office.

Once asked if he had been the victim of police misconduct, he said, "I had one incident that was scary, but just a misunderstanding." He said a cop "pulled into my parking lot [on] an unrelated call, looked through my window, and apparently mistook" him and his then-girlfriend "horsing around as domestic violence." He did not go into any more detail.

Balko was pleased in March when he learned that Democratic Rep. Hank Johnson (GA) had introduced a bill to "rein in police militarization." A USA Today column on this topic was written by Johnson, a member of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, and Michael Shank, associate director for legislative affairs at the Friends Committee on National Legislation. Shank previously served as Senior Policy Advisor and Communications Director to Rep. Michael Honda (D-CA), another member of the Congressional Progressive Caucus.

Shank is interested in far more than disarming local police agencies. His website features the following headlines based on his own articles or interviews:

- Gaza Memo to Congress: Talk to Hamas
- Of Drone Strikes and Violence: A Personal Search for Nonviolent Solutions in Yemen
- Ukraine Crisis Underscores Need for Renewables Push
- Sign a Drone Treaty Before Everyone Does as We Do

- U.S. Credibility Around the World Damaged by Afghanistan War

Balko describes Shank as just an "activist," though his far-left agenda is available for anyone to see. He seems to want to "de-militarize" the U.S military.

"Get the Military Off of Main Street Police" was the title of a New York Times column by Shank and Elizabeth R. Beavers, identified as "legislative associate for militarism and civil liberties" at the Friends Committee on National Legislation. "Militarization is a growing national threat," they said. "If the federal government doesn't act to stop it, the future of law enforcement everywhere will look a lot like Ferguson."

Ironically, however, neither the "militarized" police force in Ferguson nor the Missouri State Highway Patrol was able to stop the race riots that got underway. The National Guard has been called in. Are federal troops next?

It might seem like an opportune time for some investigative stories about the identity of these outside agitators conducting these "coordinated" attacks on the police before more people are shot and perhaps killed.

My assumption is that law-abiding citizens are hoping for more fire power for those charged with defending them and their businesses. But they don't seem to have access to the media megaphone.