

THE ROOT

At least 6 Ferguson Cops Named in Civil Rights Suits

Killing a mentally ill man with a Taser, pistol-whipping a child, and choking and hog-tying a child are just some of the charges lodged against the officers.

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Besides Darren Wilson, the Ferguson, Mo., officer who killed unarmed Michael Brown earlier this month, six others on the same force have been named in civil rights lawsuits alleging the use of excessive force, the Washington Post reports.

Killing a mentally ill man with a Taser, pistol-whipping a child, choking and hog-tying a child and beating a man who was later charged with destroying city property because his blood spilled on officers' clothes are just some of the allegations lodged against the officers in complaints and four federal lawsuits, including one that is on appeal, the Post writes.

About 13 percent of officers with the Ferguson Police Department, including Wilson, have faced excessive-force investigations, the report says. In all but one of the cases, the victims were black. Among the officers involved in the cases, one is African American, the Post says.

The Ferguson Police Department and city officials declined to comment on the cases. But police officials from outside Ferguson and plaintiffs' lawyers told the Post that the nature of such cases suggests there is a systemic problem within the Ferguson police force.

Comparable data on excessive force investigations is not available, the Post writes. "But the National Police Misconduct Statistics and Reporting Project, funded by the libertarian Cato Institute, estimated on the basis of 2010 data that about 1 percent of U.S. police officers — 9.8 out of every 1,000 — will be cited for or charged with misconduct," the newspaper says. Half of those cases involve excessive force.

Department of Justice officials said they are considering a wider investigation into whether there is a pattern of using excessive force that routinely violates people's civil rights.

And the Post notes that U.S. Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr., the Justice Department has initiated twice as many reviews of police departments for possible constitutional violations as the next most prolific of his predecessors.