

Gawker

SWAT Team Raids House, Shoots Dogs over 'Small Amount of Marijuana'



A SWAT team raided Jonathan Whitworth's house in February looking for a "large amount of marijuana." They shot his two dogs, killing one. All they found was a pipe, a grinder, and a "small amount" of weed. Now there's video.

With an almost admirable efficiency, the Columbia, Missouri SWAT team knocked down the Whitworth family's door, shot both dogs, and handcuffed Jonathan against the floor while hustling his wife and kid out the door. **They were acting on information that Whitworth had a significant amount of marijuana** he intended to sell. What they found instead was some stoner paraphernalia—a pipe and a grinder—and a "small" (i.e. misdemeanor) amount of the drug.

This unfortunate (and unfortunately common) experience with the war on drugs—one that was shared by the entire Whitworth family, including the seven-year-old son—**made the internet rounds** when it happened in February, but without some kind of audiovisual stimulation it's hard to communicate the sheer terror of a dozen heavily armed men breaking into your house at night and shooting your dogs. Now we have video. Via **Radley Balko**, here's what it's like to be raided by the police:

As Balko points out, there are as many as 100 of these terrifying paramilitary raids per day in the U.S., conducted under the aegis of "the war on drugs," theoretically targeting drug traffickers and other "enemies." Some of the raids turn up significant amounts of illegal substances; others turn up even less than the "small amount of marijuana" the police were able to find at Whitworth's house. Many wind up targeted innocent people. **This map** of "botched raids" gives some indication of the disturbing frequency not just of the operations themselves, but the mistakes, often fatal, that occur during their execution.

Whitworth's pit bull died (according to the YouTube description, the dog was caged), and his corgi (yes—a *corgi*, like the furry little sausages owned by the Queen of England) was shot in the leg and injured. It was a horrifying, tragic experience, but by some fucked-up calculus he was lucky—none of his family members died, which is more than can be said for (for example) Tarika Wilson, who was **killed while holding her one-year-old son** in a raid intended for her boyfriend, or Gonzalo Guizan, who was **killed during a raid based on a single tip from a neighbor**—a raid that produced three glass pipes and a Ziploc's worth of cocaine in addition to Guizan's body.

Whitworth was charged with possession and "child endangerment." The Columbia police's **inquiry into the raid is ongoing**, as is the war on drugs, which we are likely to win any day now.

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