

# LOS ANGELES POLICE COMMISSION

## REVIEW OF SUICIDE-BY-COP INCIDENTS



Conducted by the

**OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL**

ALEXANDER A. BUSTAMANTE  
Inspector General

January 21, 2015

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**I. INTRODUCTION.....1**

**II. SUICIDE-BY-COP CASE STUDIES.....2**

**III. ANALYSIS.....10**

**IV. RECOMMENDATION.....11**

**V. DEPARTMENT’S RESPONSE.....11**

**APPENDIX: Department’s Response (full text)**

# OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL'S REVIEW OF SUICIDE-BY-COP INCIDENTS

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) is responsible for overseeing the investigation and review of all categorical use of force incidents by the Los Angeles Police Department (Department) and for reporting to the Board of Police Commissioners (Board) in advance of the Board's adjudication of each case. The OIG's oversight role includes providing the Board with an independent analysis of each categorical use of force incident, addressing both the quality of the Department's investigation and the performance of the involved officers.

In addition to analyzing individual categorical use of force cases, the OIG collates and analyzes data regarding all categorical uses of force with the objective of identifying systemic issues and trends, as well as identifying potential opportunities to improve performance. Such reporting provides the Board an additional layer of information regarding an important aspect of the Department's operations, as well as maintaining the transparency of the Department's operations to the community. In addition to this public reporting, the OIG routinely engages in discussions with the Department regarding apparent trends and issues arising from such analysis, as well as reporting to the Board on recurrent issues or trends warranting the Board's attention.

In this report, the OIG examines the recurrent incident features evident in a significant sub-set of officer-involved shooting incidents involving individuals who cause or attempt to cause officers to shoot them as an apparent means of committing suicide. Such incidents are commonly referred to as "suicide-by-cop."

### Suicide-by-Cop

The American Association of Suicidology identifies three types of suicide-by-cop scenarios. The first is a "direct confrontation" where the individual pre-plans a confrontation with officers in order to be killed by them. The second is a "disturbed intervention" where the individual acts in an irrational, emotionally disturbed manner such that officers are called to intervene. This category may include individuals attempting suicide, individuals engaged in a domestic dispute, or individuals who are under the influence or mentally ill. The final scenario is a "criminal intervention" where the individual has committed a crime (either minor or major) and, after realizing there is no way out, decides to be killed rather than arrested.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> 2013 Suicide by Cop Fact Sheet, American Association of Suicidology (AAS) (available at: [http://www.suicidology.org/c/document\\_library/get\\_file?folderId=262&name=DLFE-833.pdf](http://www.suicidology.org/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=262&name=DLFE-833.pdf)). There are varying definitions of "suicide-by-cop," and the term itself may defy precise definition. The OIG selected the definition used by the AAS to provide an organizing framework for the cases examined in connection with this analysis. A similar typology is used by Robert J. Homant and Daniel B. Kennedy in "Suicide by police: a proposed typology of law enforcement officer-assisted suicide," *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management*, (2000) Vol. 23 Iss: 3, pp.339-355.

The cases reviewed in preparation for this report occurred during a 30-month period (from January 2011 to June 2013) and reflected all three of the above-noted suicide-by-cop scenario types. The purpose of the review was not to re-evaluate the actions taken by the officers but rather to identify recurrent incident features associated with suicide-by-cop incidents.

The Department has developed initial and ongoing training protocols for dealing with mentally ill persons, including consideration of suicide-by-cop factors for both its basic and in-service curriculum. During discussions with the Department regarding this report, it is clear that they appreciate the seriousness of this issue and the importance of ensuring that suicide-by-cop considerations remain a meaningful part of both the initial and in-service training for all officers, as well as civilian personnel in support roles such as initial call takers and dispatchers.

## **II. SUICIDE-BY-COP CASE STUDIES**

In carrying out its analysis for this report, the OIG reviewed already-adjudicated incidents that occurred between January 2011 and June 2013 that involved individuals who apparently exhibited suicidal behavior by engaging officers in an attempt to precipitate an officer-involved shooting (OIS). Approximately 35 cases in this 30-month period contained at least some potential indicators of a suicide-by-cop incident.<sup>2</sup> For this report, the OIG selected 8 illustrative cases that characterize the types of suicide-by-cop incidents officers have encountered.

The following case studies summarize these events and highlight potential suicide-by-cop indicators noted in the OIG's review. The indicators were identified by the OIG based on completed investigations, and some of these indicators were not known to the officers at the times when the shootings occurred. In all of the cases examined for this report, the Board of Police Commissioners found the involved officers' uses of force to be in policy.

### **Case #1**

The subject called 911 and reported a man armed with a gun who had attempted to shoot someone. The subject also provided a physical description of the man, which matched his own description. Officers searched the area but were unable to find evidence of a shooting. After a second call by the same caller with a new location, nearby officers responded but also found no evidence of a shooting.

The caller then made a third 911 call. He gave the same description of the man, provided a third location, stated that the man was drunk and firing a rifle, and that the caller was worried the man would kill someone. After searching the area, officers were unable to find the individual and began driving away when they were flagged down by an individual. When the officers drove up, they observed a second man standing in a driveway who matched the description given by the 911 caller.

---

<sup>2</sup> A total of 122 officer-involved shooting incidents occurred during this period, excluding animal shootings and unintentional discharges.

Once the officers exited their vehicle and took cover behind their ballistic doors, they saw the subject, who was heavily intoxicated, was holding a rifle behind his back with the barrel pointed down. The officers immediately began ordering him to drop the rifle. The man who had flagged down the officers began yelling that the subject was his family member and that he was drunk.

The officers continued telling the subject to drop the rifle but he yelled back, “No, no, no.” The officers warned the subject that they did not want to shoot him but that he would be shot if he did not put down the rifle. The subject became more agitated and the other man yelled that the weapon was only a BB gun and not to shoot the subject.<sup>3</sup> The subject brought the rifle out in front of him, lowered it to the ground, and began manipulating the trigger area. The officers perceived this action as the subject possibly loading the rifle and continued ordering him to drop the gun.

The subject looked up from the rifle at the officers, straightened up and began lifting the muzzle of the rifle upward toward one of the officers. Both officers fired, striking and fatally injuring the subject. The subject’s gun was later determined to be an air rifle containing no ammunition.

#### Potential Indicators of Suicide-by-Cop

- The subject was intoxicated.
- The subject made 911 calls to cause a police response.
- The subject remained at the scene of an “incident” he reported via 911 and was present upon the arrival of police officers.
- The subject did not comply with verbal commands given by police officers.
- The subject possessed an unloaded air weapon, similar in appearance to a firearm, and presented it in a threatening manner toward the officers.

#### Case #2

After observing a subject driving at a high rate of speed, officers conducted a traffic stop for an expired vehicle registration. During the stop, one of the officers smelled alcohol emanating from inside the vehicle and asked the subject if he had been drinking. The subject responded, “Not really,” but stated that he did not want to submit to a breathalyzer examination.

After determining that the subject was on probation for a DUI with priors, the officer asked the subject to exit the vehicle. The officer illuminated the inside of the vehicle with his flashlight and observed the subject retrieve a shiny item from the door’s compartment area. The officer asked what the object was and the subject responded that it was a knife, at which point the officer drew his weapon.

---

<sup>3</sup> A civilian witness also heard him advise the officers several times that the weapon was a BB gun. One of the officers recalled being told it was a BB gun only after the OIS. According to the officer, it looked real and, based on the subject’s actions, he believed it was a real firearm.

The subject exited his vehicle and began walking toward the officer, pointing the knife with the blade extended. The officer stepped back to keep his distance while simultaneously directing the subject to stop and drop the knife. The subject then went down to his knees and made the sign of the cross across his chest. The subject stood up and began walking again toward the officers as they continued backing up and telling him to stop and drop the knife; however, he refused to comply.

After advancing approximately 30 feet, the subject paused and opened his shirt, exposing his bare chest. He then yelled at the officers, repeatedly telling them to shoot him, and began swinging the knife. The subject continued making similar statements, and the officers continued backing up until one of them ended up in the street. The subject then increased his pace, closing the distance between himself and the officers. When he was approximately 12-15 feet away, one of the officers fired, striking the subject and causing him to drop the knife and fall to the ground, injured.

#### Potential Indicators of Suicide-by-Cop

- The subject conspicuously committed a traffic violation in the presence of a patrol unit, causing officers to stop him.
- The subject was intoxicated.
- The subject armed himself with a knife and advanced toward the officers, despite verbal commands to stop.
- When officers attempted to mitigate the threat by moving away from the subject, the subject continued to advance and increased his pace toward them.
- The subject made repeated statements telling the officers to shoot him.

#### Case #3

Officers responded to a report of a mentally ill man who had threatened and injured his family member, who, in turn, had called 911. The comments of the call included a physical description, as well as information that the subject had been having delusional thoughts and was rambling and yelling to himself.

When the officers arrived at the call location, a residential property, they contacted the family member who advised them that the subject had a mental illness. The officers observed injuries to the family member's face, and when asked about them, she stated that the subject had assaulted her. When asked if there were any guns in the residence, the family member replied that she did not know. She also informed the officers that another family member was still inside the residence and that in a prior contact with police the subject had resisted officers.

The officers entered the residence and were directed to the bedroom where the subject was located. The officers observed the subject lying in bed, smoking a cigarette, and watching television, with several bed sheets covering his upper body. When an officer told the subject they needed to speak with him, the subject responded with a profane statement and told them to leave.

Upon seeing the subject make numerous furtive movements under his bed sheets, the officer ordered him to place his hands where they could be seen. The officer aimed his TASER at the subject while warning him that he would be tased if he refused to do so. The subject did not comply and continued looking under his bed sheets. He then reached over to a small wooden nightstand, opened the top drawer, removed an object, and concealed it under his sweatshirt.

An officer advised the others that the subject had a gun and the officers redeployed outside the residence. One of the officers went across the street to retrieve his rifle from the trunk of his vehicle. Shortly thereafter, the subject followed the officers outside, yelling at them to leave. The subject was holding a handgun down at his side, pointed toward the ground, and one of the officers ordered him to drop it. The subject began walking toward one of the officers, and then turned and began walking toward the officer who had gone to get his rifle.

As the subject advanced, the officer ordered him to stop and drop the gun. The subject did not comply and, when the subject was approximately 15 feet away, the officer fired. The round seemed to have no effect and the subject continued moving toward the officer, so the officer fired again. The subject then raised the gun upward, turning back toward the other officers. The same officer fired again, fatally injuring the subject and causing him to fall to the ground. The subject's gun was later determined to be loaded.

#### Potential Indicators of Suicide-by-Cop

- The subject was reported to be suffering from mental illness.
- After the officers redeployed from the residence, the subject came outside in an apparent effort to confront the officers.
- The subject displayed, but did not attempt to use, a firearm.
- The subject advanced toward an officer and did not comply with repeated commands to stop and drop his gun, even when fired upon.

#### Case #4

Two plainclothes officers eating lunch heard a radio broadcast of an armed robbery across the street from their location. The officers observed an individual matching the suspect description leaving the location carrying a bulky trash bag over his shoulder and one hand near his waistband. They followed him, identified themselves as police, and ordered him to stop. He responded with a profanity and continued running away.

During the foot pursuit, the subject dropped the bag and then entered a vehicle, which had a passenger in it, and drove away. As he entered the vehicle, officers observed the subject retrieve a gun from his waistband. The subject sped away and the officers lost sight of the vehicle.

As officers turned a corner they saw that the subject's vehicle had collided with a fence pillar. The driver side door was open and only the passenger was still in the vehicle. A perimeter was established and the subject was located. Officers observed that he had changed clothes and was

talking on a cellular phone. They ordered him to get on the ground and drop the phone. He did not comply and continued walking around within the perimeter. As the subject walked back toward the officers, they observed a handgun in his hand.

One officer ordered the subject several times to drop the gun. The subject looked around and then placed the barrel of the gun to his temple. He ignored the officer's commands and yelled at the officer unintelligibly. The subject walked closer to the officer and put the muzzle of the gun in his mouth. He then dropped to his knees, yelled profanities, and moved the gun back to his temple.

The subject stood back up then began walking away from the officers and waving the gun. One of the officers fired at the subject when the muzzle of the subject's gun was pointed directly at the officers. The subject continued waving the gun around and the officer fired again. Another officer fired when the subject moved as if to point the gun in the officer's direction. The subject then bent over at the waist but maintained his grip on the gun. The officer fired again and the subject fell to the ground. While on the ground, the subject raised the gun and pointed it at the officers, who fired again. The subject, who was fatally wounded, then stopped moving. The subject's gun was later found not to contain any live ammunition.<sup>4</sup>

#### Potential Indicators of Suicide-by-Cop

- The subject confronted officers after he unsuccessfully attempted to flee, having just committed a serious crime.
- The subject made threatening movements with his weapon despite being given multiple commands to drop the weapon and continued to do so even after being shot.
- The subject brandished a weapon that, unbeknownst to the officers, contained no live ammunition.

#### Case #5

A family member called 911 to report that his relative was threatening family members with a knife. Officers responded and met with the caller who advised them that the subject was armed with a knife and appeared to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol. While outside the residence, officers observed the subject walk out several feet from the front door; he was sweating profusely, and appeared agitated and disoriented. He then ran back into the residence.

Once additional units arrived, the officers searched the residence but were unable to locate the subject. They were then advised by a neighbor that the subject had entered his home and changed into his clothing. Officers observed the subject moving through different properties in the area and finally reentering the original residence. The subject began yelling at the officers, telling them not to enter the residence, and that he had guns.

---

<sup>4</sup> The subject's gun contained one expended shell casing.



The officers heard a loud noise from inside the residence and observed the subject exit the front door. He walked quickly toward the street waving what appeared to be a handgun. One officer ordered the subject to drop the gun and get down on the ground; however, the subject did not comply and continued to wave the gun. As the subject advanced toward officers with the gun aimed at them, they fired, striking the subject and causing him to fall to the ground. From a seated position, he lifted the gun to his own head and then aimed it at the officers. An officer fired, striking and fatally wounding the subject. The gun was later determined to be an airsoft pistol.

#### Potential Indicators of Suicide-by-Cop

- The subject was acting in an agitated manner and appeared to be disoriented.
- The subject repeatedly told officers that he had a gun.
- The subject exited the residence while holding what appeared to be a firearm, precipitating a confrontation with officers.
- The subject presented his apparent weapon in a threatening manner toward officers, despite being issued multiple commands to drop the gun, and continued to do so even after he had been shot.
- The subject's weapon was, unbeknownst to the officers, not a real firearm.

#### Case #6

A person called 911 to request police assistance with the subject, a family member, who was drunk, verbally abusive, and was making threats to stab his parents. When officers arrived at the call, they were informed that the subject had armed himself with two knives and was in his bedroom. The officers approached the subject's bedroom and the subject was observed with a knife in each hand and a third knife in his waistband.

The subject repeatedly told the officers he would kill them if they entered the room. He also told the officers he would stab himself. The subject was repeatedly told to drop the knives, but he did not comply.

The officers continued telling the subject to drop the knives, but he did not comply and began chanting. The subject then faced the officers, raising both knives away from his sides into a crossed position, and told the officers to shoot him. One officer unholstered a TASER and told the subject that the officers wanted to help him but that if he did not drop the knives he would be tased. The subject refused to drop the knives and continued to yell at the officers to shoot him.

The subject cut both of his wrists, then approached the bedroom door, and slammed it shut. One of the officers then opened the door and continued to tell the subject to drop the knives. The subject then shut the door again, and when the door was opened the second time by an officer, the subject began to approach the officers.

The TASER was discharged at the subject. The TASER probes struck the subject in the torso and he fell to the floor. With the knives still in his hands, the subject got to one knee and then

lunged at one of the officers. The TASER was activated a second time and the subject fell again. As he was getting up, the subject tried to cut the TASER wires and the TASER was activated again. This time the TASER had no effect and the subject was able to stand. A second TASER was discharged at the subject, but it also had no effect. The subject stepped toward the officers, yelling and slashing the knives in front of him. The TASER was activated two more times but had no effect so the officers backed out of the room.

An officer arrived with a less-lethal beanbag shotgun. Upon reaching the bedroom, this officer observed the subject cutting his own neck with a knife. The officer told the subject to stop cutting himself and warned him that if he did not drop the knives he would be shot with the beanbag shotgun. The subject failed to comply and the officer fired the beanbag shotgun, striking the subject in the torso; however, the subject was not incapacitated. A second beanbag round was fired at the subject, which was also ineffective. The subject then raised the knives above his head and walked toward the officer who had discharged the beanbag rounds at him. The officer stepped back and fired the beanbag shotgun at the subject again, but this round, too, was ineffective.

The subject then lunged with a knife toward the officer and one of the other officers fired a round from his pistol, striking the subject. The subject moved away and sat down on his bed but maintained control of the knives. The officers again told him to drop the knives so they could help him, but the subject just said he wanted to end it and continued cutting himself. The officer fired another beanbag round at the subject, but he did not drop the knives and yelled at the officers that he would kill them if they entered the room.

A supervisor arrived on scene and, after being briefed, told one of the officers to use Oleoresin Capsicum (OC) spray on the subject. The officer sprayed a two-second burst in the subject's face. In response, the subject raised the knife in his right hand and the officer exited the bedroom. The officers then heard the sound of the knives dropping to the floor. One of the officers entered the room and observed that the subject had dropped the knives, which were moved out of his reach. The subject was then detained.

The subject, who had sustained serious self-inflicted knife wounds, as well as a gunshot wound caused by the round fired by an officer, was treated by paramedics and transported to a hospital.

#### Potential Indicators of Suicide-by-Cop

- The subject was intoxicated and exhibited erratic behavior.
- The subject repeatedly told officers he would kill them.
- The subject engaged in serious self-harming behavior in the presence of officers.
- The subject did not comply with numerous verbal commands to drop his knives, despite having a TASER used against him, being shot with less-lethal rounds, and being shot with a firearm.
- The subject repeatedly advanced toward officers while brandishing knives in a threatening manner.

### Case #7

The subject called 911 and reported a suspicious man, but the call was disconnected before it reached Communications Division. The subject then called 911 again to report that there was a man standing outside across the street from a fast food restaurant and that he looked like he wanted to rob it. He provided a physical description of the suspicious man. The description provided was similar to the subject's own appearance.

Approximately half an hour later, an employee of the restaurant called 911 to report a robbery in progress. The call was made at the direction of the subject, who threatened the employee with what appeared to be a handgun. While she was giving a description of the subject, the subject told her to end the call and she complied. The employee made another 911 call to provide a more detailed description of the subject, including the clothing he was wearing.

Numerous officers responded and took up positions near the restaurant. Two responding officers drove into the restaurant parking lot. The subject saw the officers pull in and began walking quickly toward the front door of the restaurant with the gun in his hand.

Fearing that the officers in front of the restaurant did not see the gun, one officer positioned across the street fired his rifle at the subject as he neared the door. The subject, however, continued advancing and the officer fired again as he neared the door. The officers in the parking lot observed the subject's actions and fired at him as he was opening the door with the gun in his hand. The subject was struck and fell to the ground. As the officers approached, they observed that the subject had taped the gun to his hand, so they cut the tape to remove the gun and took him into custody. It was later determined that the gun was an air pistol. A suicide note was found in the subject's possession.

### Potential Indicators of Suicide-by-Cop

- The subject called 911, providing a physical description of himself. When the initial call did not cause him to be contacted by police officers, he caused a restaurant employee to call 911 to report an in-progress robbery.
- The subject remained at the call location and began to exit the restaurant in an apparent attempt to confront officers upon their arrival.
- The subject presented what appeared to be a handgun in a threatening manner.
- The subject continued to advance on officers with his apparent weapon, even after being shot at.
- The subject's weapon, unbeknownst to the officers, was an empty air pistol.

### Case #8

The subject called 911 and reported that a man with a gun had fired at a victim. The subject provided a description of the gunman, describing his own appearance. Officers responded to the location and observed an individual matching the subject's description. Additional officers

arrived and observed a silver object in the subject's hand, which the subject appeared to be attempting to conceal.

The subject moved back and forth on the sidewalk while keeping hands either near his waistband or in his pockets. The officers gave the subject commands to raise his hands, but he did not comply. The subject then began yelling obscenities at the officers and moved behind a large wooden utility pole. At that point, the subject removed an object from his pocket, peered at the officers from behind the pole, and began shifting the object from hand to hand.

One of the officers yelled at the subject that he would shoot him, and the subject yelled back obscenities and told the officers to shoot him. More officers arrived and as they took their positions and continued to issue commands, the subject began running. After running a short distance, the subject stopped, turned back, and took a few steps toward the officers while simultaneously raising and extending his arms in front of him, in a manner consistent with the pointing of a handgun. The officers then fired, striking the subject and causing him to fall to the ground, injured. It was later determined that the object in the subject's hand was a cellular phone.

#### Potential Indicators of Suicide-by-Cop

- The subject made a 911 call, reporting a fictitious violent crime involving the use of a firearm and providing his own physical description.
- The subject remained at the location of the reported crime until officers arrived.
- When confronted by police officers, the subject told the officers to shoot him.
- The subject simulated pointing a handgun at police officers, prompting the officers to shoot him.

### **III. ANALYSIS**

By analyzing the apparent suicide-by-cop incidents reviewed in preparation for this report, the OIG identified a number of recurrent incident features:

- A. The subject calls 911 or takes some other form of action to prompt an encounter with police officers;
- B. The subject does not attempt to leave the scene, but instead actively seeks confrontation with officers;
- C. The subject makes verbal threats to kill officers and/or tells officers to shoot him;
- D. A subject who is not, in fact, armed with a firearm verbally indicates that he has a gun;
- E. The subject brandishes or simulates a weapon in a manner that appears to threaten officers with death or serious injury; and,
- F. When officers do not initially resort to the use of force, the subject does not comply with verbal commands and instead escalates the apparent threat until such time as force is used against him.

Each of the apparent suicide-by-cop cases reviewed by the OIG contained more than one of the incident features listed above. Indeed, many of the incidents reviewed by the OIG followed a similar sequence of events which, if recognized, provide a means of anticipating the steps a subject may take in their attempt to precipitate the use of lethal force by police officers. The recognition of these features, alone or in combination, when they are discernible to responding officers, has the potential to alert officers to the suicidal intent of a subject they encounter and to enable them to factor the subject's suicidal objective into their decision-making process.

In addition to the inherent tragedy of suicide and attempted suicide, suicide-by-cop incidents can traumatize relatives of the suicidal individual, other community members, and the police officers "used" by the subject to enact his or her suicidal ideation. Moreover, the involvement of police officers in shooting incidents, whatever the underlying cause, represents an area of significant risk to the Department. That risk, to the extent feasible, should always be subject to careful management.

Based on the OIG's review, it is apparent that suicide-by-cop incidents represent a significant sub-set of the overall number of officer-involved shooting incidents involving Los Angeles police officers. This highlights the ongoing importance of training for police officers regarding suicide-by-cop incidents, and, more generally, for officers encountering emotionally-disturbed and/or mentally ill individuals.

#### **IV. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Department consider current training relevant to suicide-by-cop scenarios to ensure that officers are prepared to effectively deal with such incidents and that the Department provide a presentation of that training to the Commission.

#### **V. DEPARTMENT'S RESPONSE**

During the preparation of this report, the OIG met with Department officials, including representatives from Use of Force Review Division, Police Training and Education, Behavioral Science Services, and Personnel and Training Bureau. The Department emphasized the importance it places upon training officers in effective encounters with mentally ill individuals. The Department indicated that, in connection with the presentation of this report, it will provide the Board with a presentation regarding this training. Additionally, the Department provided a written response, which is attached to this report as an appendix.

## APPENDIX

### **OIG – Review of Officer Involved Shootings for Indicators of “Suicide by Cop”**

In order to understand these findings for LAPD it was important to identify the trends on a national level or at least to draw comparisons from other large metropolitan departments. Unfortunately, research of numerous public reports indicated that many departments do not keep uniform statistics regarding officer involved shootings or even use of force. Since all incidents leading to a suicide by cop scenario constitute a mental health crisis, the focus for this analysis included an examination of law enforcement uses of force with those who have a mental illness.

As the provisions and systems for those suffering with mental illness have decreased over the years, law enforcement has consistently had to respond to a greater number of calls for service for those in a mental health crisis. This is poignantly displayed by the historical data from New York Police Department (NYPD) on the number of calls for mental health evaluation and hospitalization from 1976 to 1998, which started at 1,000 and then jumped to 24,787 respectively. The number of calls where NYPD police officers had to respond to complaints regarding those who were mentally ill also increased from 20,843 in 1980, to 46,845 in 1985 and then 64,424 in 1998. In 2000, Florida reported more calls for service for mental illness (80,869) than for arrests for driving under the influence (60,337). The LAPD has also seen the increase in the number of service calls for persons in a mental health crisis, from 9,629 in 2006 to 13,051 in 2013.

As for the statistics on the number of OIS's that include individuals who have a mental illness, the national data suggests a range between 36% (Mohandie, Meloy & Collins, 2009) and 65% (Police Executive Research Forum, 2011). In a report by the Department of Justice on the Seattle Police Department (2009-2011), it was determined that 70% of all uses of force involved individuals who were impaired by either mental illness and/or substance abuse. In San Francisco, out of the 51 shootings between 2005-2013, 19 died and 11 of those individuals also suffered from mental illness (58%). Phoenix reported that the number of uses of force with those who were mentally ill increased three times between 1998 and 2003 even while training on mental illness had also increased. For the LAPD, even though the number of mental health related calls have increased over the years, the percentage of calls resulting in a use of force have remained below 2.8% since 2006 (even as low as 1.9% in 2009).

While the LAPD examination is a small number, there were striking similarities with the largest scale North American study of Suicide by Cop (SBC) in officer-involved shootings done in 2009 (Mohandie, Meloy & Collins). This study evaluated 707 OIS's from the United States and Canada and determined that 36% could be categorized as suicide by cop incidents, with an additional 5% that were completed suicide attempts by the subject. In total, 41% of the subjects (n=291) demonstrated the features discussed in this report: intending, attempting, or finally completing suicide during the incident.

Of particular interest in this study is the comparison of SBC incidents to the remaining OIS group that did not demonstrate suicidality (Mohandie, Meloy, & Collins, 2009). The chart below illustrates that for the officer arriving on scene, the situations may be highly emotional and reactive to a police response:

| <b>Incident Factors</b>                            | <b>OIS (%)<br/>(n= 451)</b> | <b>SBC (%)<br/>(n = 256)</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Subject had Weapon:                                |                             | 80%                          |
| Gun                                                |                             | 60%                          |
| Gun, loaded/working                                | (not detailed)              | 86%                          |
| Gun, unloaded or not operational                   |                             | 11%                          |
| Gun, from the officer                              |                             | 2%                           |
| Fired at Officers                                  | 32%                         | 48%                          |
| Knife (some had both gun & knife)                  | 15%                         | 34%                          |
| Unarmed                                            | 36%                         | 20%                          |
| Flee from Police                                   | 66%                         | 33%                          |
| High Speed Pursuits                                | 14%                         | 14%                          |
| Aggression to Police                               | 82%                         | 90%                          |
| Noncompliance to Police Direction                  | 90%                         | 95%                          |
| Threatens to Harm Others                           | 38%                         | 70%                          |
| Harmed Others prior to and/or after Police Arrival | 26%                         | 49%                          |
| Psychotic at Incident                              | 13%                         | 21%                          |
| On Medication                                      | 13%                         | 30%                          |
| Known Mental Illness                               | 22%                         | 62%                          |
| 2 or More Disorders                                | 10%                         | 17%                          |
| Mood Disorder                                      | 21%                         | 48%                          |
| Thought Disorder                                   | 33%                         | 15%                          |
| Substance Use Disorder                             | 30%                         | 17%                          |
| Under the Influence at Incident                    | 6%                          | 24%                          |
| Police Use of Less Lethal during Incident          | 24%                         | 39%                          |
| More rounds fired when deadly force is used        | 8 rounds                    | 15 rounds                    |

“The paradox among SBC cases appears to be that unplanned, acute suicidality becomes, within moments, a resolute intentionality to be killed by the police once the engagement begins (Mohandie, et al, 2009).” The resolution of these individuals to complete their suicidal intentions makes them highly lethal, with 97% possibility of being killed, injured, or to take their own lives in the encounter. It is critical to note that the situations surrounding SBC are inherently dangerous for the police and bystanders with a one in three chance of others being harmed by the subject.

#### References and Resources:

Americans for Effective Law Enforcement (AELE). Suicide by Cop. Monthly Law Journal 101. Civil Liability Law Section. August, 2007. Retrieved from <http://www.aele.org/law/2007LRAUG/2007-08MLJ101.pdf>

City of Chicago Independent Police Review Authority. 2014. Statistical Reports - Officers Involved Shooting. Retrieved from <http://www.iprachicago.org/resources.html>

Emslie, A. & Bale, R. More Than Half of Those Killed by San Francisco Police Are Mentally Ill. September 30, 2014. KQED News. Retrieved from <http://www.kqed.org/news/2014/09/30/half-of-those-killed-by-san-francisco-police-are-mentally-ill>

Kim, K. Comparison: APD shoots, kills more than other agencies April 10, 2014. KRQE News 13. Retrieved from <http://krqe.com/2014/04/10/comparison-apd-shoots-kills-more-than-other-agencies/>

Maimon, A. National data on shootings by police not collected. November 28, 2011. Las Vegas Review Journal. Retrieved from <http://www.reviewjournal.com/news/deadly-force/142-dead-and-rising/national-data-shootings-police-not-collected>

Miller, L. Suicide By Cop: Causes, Reactions, and Practical Intervention Strategies. International Journal of Emergency Mental Health, Vol. 8, No. 3, pp. 165 – 174. 2006. Retrieved from [http://www.psychceu.com/miller/Miller\\_Suicide\\_by\\_Cop.pdf](http://www.psychceu.com/miller/Miller_Suicide_by_Cop.pdf)

Mohandie K, Meloy JR. Clinical and forensic indicators of “suicide by cop.” Journal of Forensic Science. March 2000 Volume 45, Issue 2, pp. 384–389. Retrieved from [http://forensis.org/PDF/published/2000\\_ClinicalandFore.pdf](http://forensis.org/PDF/published/2000_ClinicalandFore.pdf)

Mohandie, K, Meloy, J. R., & Collins, P. I. Suicide by Cop Among Officer-Involved Shooting. Journal of Forensic Science, March 2009, Vol. 54, No. 2. Retrieved from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1556-4029.2008.00981.x/abstract>

New York City Police Department Annual Firearms Discharge Report 2012. October 2013. Retrieved from [http://lintvkrqe.files.wordpress.com/2014/04/nypd\\_annual\\_firearms\\_discharge\\_report\\_2012.pdf](http://lintvkrqe.files.wordpress.com/2014/04/nypd_annual_firearms_discharge_report_2012.pdf)

Office of the Assistant Attorney General, United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division Report on Investigation of the Portland Police Bureau. September 12, 2012.

Police Executive Research Forum (PERF). Review Of Use Of Force in the Albuquerque Police Department. June 23, 2011. Retrieved from <http://alibi.com/media/docs/Police%20Executive%20Research%20Forum's%20review%20of%20APD%20shooting%20s.pdf>

San Francisco Police Department. Memorandum: Officer-Involved Shootings from 2000-Present. January 16, 2014.

United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division United States Attorney’s Office Western District of Washington. Investigation of the Seattle Police Department. December 16, 2011.