

# America's Next Failure: the Police State

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*Every police force in the nation has cold (unsolved) cases. The War on Drugs has been ineffective for more than forty years. No one knows where a vast number of illegal immigrants even are. The CIA has been unable to locate Osama bin Laden after more than ten years of searching. Your local police cannot protect you from burglaries, drive by shootings, rapes, domestic abuse, or murder—even with the help of most ordinary citizens. The situation is so bad that numerous legislatures have legalized the carrying of loaded weapons so that ordinary people can protect themselves which is a complete abdication of the usual view that people should not take the law into their own hands. So what in the world would make anyone believe that policing can protect us from terrorists?*

Suppose you were a person who painted the exteriors of houses, and that one August afternoon you were close to completing a job when you noticed a thunderstorm looming. Suppose you looked around and saw a police car coming down the street, flagged it down, and asked the policemen to help you finish the job before the storm hit. What reaction do you think you'd get? Do you think you'd get any help?

Now consider this: A person is caught by a surveillance camera robbing a convenience store. The police send the tape to the local television stations, and on the next newscast, the tape is broadcast and viewers are asked to help identify the robber. Say what?

What distinguished this situation from the one described in the first paragraph? The police expect the public to help them do their jobs, but the public cannot expect help from the police. Am I the only person who finds this situation odd?

Things are even worse. Have you ever had your home burglarized? I have. When the police arrived after my call, they dutifully wrote a report. When it was handed to me, one of the officers said, "You realize that all we are going to do is file the report" and advised me to file an insurance claim. Why don't they tell that to the convenience store's owner instead of asking the public for help?

Some will say that getting criminals off the street is a good thing, so so is helping the police identify them. But it's not clear that policing gets criminals off the street. Even when convicted, judges routinely sentence the convicted person to probation. When sentenced to prison, some other convicted criminal is often paroled to make room for the newcomer. So what is it exactly that the police do for you? I don't know the answer.

Because of this, in some communities, people refuse to help the police and frown on anyone who does.

In [Tampa](#), three women heard gunshots. What they did next made them heroes to many

people but outcasts to others – including some of their neighbors.

Rose Dodson was awakened by gunfire and tires squealing that night, June 29. Moments later, her roommate, Delores Keen, watched a man leap over a fence near her apartment. In the distance, at 50th Street and 23rd Avenue in east Tampa, she saw the emergency lights of a police cruiser twirling in the dark, but no officer was in sight. Both knew something was wrong and stepped outside the safety of the apartment to investigate. A friend, Renee Roundtree, who had been walking to a nearby store, joined them. Lying on the ground beside the police cruiser, the women found two officers, David Curtis and Jeffrey Kocab.

Keen called a 911 dispatcher.

Whether making outcasts of these three women is appropriate is for each to decide for her/himself. I am merely making a point about policing in general which is merely that police seem to be unable to do their jobs alone. And this situation applies to the FBI, CIA, Homeland Security as well as the local police. All seem to require help from ordinary people.

For instance, the FBI has claimed to have foiled a number of terrorist plots, all with the help of paid informants. The FBI foiled none on its own. It also regularly issues a ten most wanted list asking for help from the public in finding those listed. The CIA also relies on paid informants even to gather information. The border patrol seems to be equally unable to carry out its functions alone. It has been totally ineffective in providing border security.

Now the nation seems headed toward becoming a police state in which everyone is watched, people are asked to snitch, and information is collected willy-nilly on everyone. But consider these facts:

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In Plato's *Republic*, he describes a political system ruled by an oligarchy of specially trained Guardians. Critics of this system have often poised the question, Who guards the guardians? In Plato's *Republic*, the Guardians guard each other using their special moral sensibilities developed by their educations. But lacking such morality, it is obvious that even guardians must be guarded. In a police state, everyone cannot be watched, especially the police themselves. Likewise, everyone cannot be protected. No police state can function efficiently or effectively. Police cannot succeed without the help of ordinary people and police states ultimately fail because of that. In a police state, money is squandered trying to get the police to do something they can never do. They can, however, make life miserable for everyone.

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