

New York City Police Pledge “Wartime” Response to Killing of Two Officers

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The fatal shooting of two New York City police officers on Saturday has been followed by a series of extraordinary statements from the police union and its political allies. Charging that New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio has “blood on his hands,” the police are demanding a crackdown on protests and the criminalization of all opposition to police killings.

Officers Raphael Ramos and Wenjian Liu were sitting in their vehicle in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn when, shortly before 3 pm on Saturday, the apparent shooter, Ismaaiyl Brinsley, approached the car and killed both.

Brinsley, 28, had driven from a suburb of Baltimore, Maryland to Brooklyn after shooting and wounding his former girlfriend. The young man, who was clearly mentally unbalanced and evidently suicidal, seems to have been motivated in part by the police killings of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri and Eric Garner in New York City.

After he shot Ramos and Liu, Brinsley was pursued by police into a nearby subway station, where he killed himself.

The response of the police has bordered on mutiny. As Mayor de Blasio walked to a press conference on Saturday, dozens of police officers demonstratively turned their backs on him.

Police have issued a series of denunciations of de Blasio for having indicated some sympathy for demonstrations against police violence held in the wake of a grand jury’s decision not to charge NYPD Officer Daniel Pantaleo for the chokehold death of Garner.

The Sergeants Benevolent Association tweeted on Saturday, “The blood of 2 executed police officers is on the hands of Mayor de Blasio.”

Patrick Lynch, the president of the Patrolmen’s Benevolent Association (PBA), the police union, echoed these remarks while seeking to link the anti-police violence protests to the killings by a mentally unbalanced individual. “Those that incited violence on the street, under the guise of protest, that tried to tear down what New York City police officers did every day. We tried to warn—‘it must not go on, it cannot be tolerated,’” he said on Saturday.

This is nothing less than a call to attack and ban any public criticism of police abuse as an illegitimate incitement to violence.

“That blood on the hands, starts on the steps of City Hall, in the office of the mayor,” Lynch declared.

A twitter post by a managing editor at AOL News reproduced a memo, attributed to the PBA, declaring: “The mayor’s hands are literally dripping with our blood because of his words, actions, and policies. We have, for the first time in many years, become a ‘wartime’ police department. We will act accordingly.”

A PBA spokesman has denied that the memo came officially from the organization.

However, these remarks were immediately endorsed by former New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, who declared on Fox News on Sunday:

“We’ve had four months of propaganda starting with the president that everybody should hate the police. The protests are being embraced, the protests are being encouraged. The protests, even the ones that don’t lead to violence, a lot of them lead to violence, all of them lead to a conclusion. The police are bad, the police are racist. That is completely wrong.”

In response to these fascistic statements, which reek of a police-state mentality, de Blasio released a tepid statement criticizing the “irresponsible, overheated rhetoric that angers and divides people,” while reiterating his support for the police and “the entire NYPD community.”

The pledge of a “wartime” response from the police should be taken as an ominous warning. It is yet another manifestation of the enormous power that has been built up in these state institutions and the deep decay of democratic rights in the United States, fueled by endless war abroad and immense social inequality within the country.

The police forces act more and more as independent sources of authority. They have been given the power to kill with impunity—in the case of Brown, Garner and countless others. In response to popular outrage over these killings, the ruling class has deployed its highly militarized police against demonstrations.

The police themselves work in close coordination with the military and the intelligence agencies. In response to protests in Ferguson, Democratic Party Governor Jay Nixon activated the National Guard, a branch of the Armed Forces, and declared a preemptive state of emergency.

On Saturday, Governor Scott Walker of Wisconsin activated the National Guard in preparation for further protests over the police killing of Dontre Hamilton, an unarmed schizophrenic black man who was shot 14 times by a Milwaukee police officer in April.

De Blasio’s own position is untenable. As the *New York Times* noted on Saturday, he has been “engaged in a high-wire act of sorts,” seeking to balance between the anger of broad masses of New Yorkers over the Garner case and defense of the police. De Blasio’s supposed sympathy for the victims of police violence can only be hypocritical and two-faced, because he fully supports the state apparatus and the interests of the corporate and financial aristocracy.

Obama too has professed a degree of sympathy for protests against police violence, even as

he promotes a further militarization of the police. Earlier this month, in the aftermath of the decision not to indict Garner, the Obama White House gave its full endorsement to the network of programs that have transferred billions of dollars in military equipment to police departments throughout the country, including assault rifles, armored vehicles and even combat aircraft.

Since Saturday, the media has been busy churning out the initial barrage of propaganda aimed at criminalizing opposition to police abuse and killings. In the coming days and weeks, the killing of Liu and Ramos will be used to justify a crackdown on protests in New York and elsewhere and an escalation of police violence.

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