

All In The Future of Law Enforcement

I served in the United States Army, was trained at the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School in Fort Bragg, deployed to Afghanistan, and exchanged small arms fire with the Mujahideen. When I was not on patrol, we regularly took the kind of accurate rocket and mortar fire which would later go on to kill my war buddy Shawn Walsh. I eventually found my calling as a Police Officer and I was the perfect candidate. I have had an excellent career, developed an outstanding reputation, my rookie photos are on my Department's hiring page twice, I have been decorated, trained Recruits at the academy, and was a Field Training Officer on the streets. My thoughts and feelings regarding humanity went viral when I wrote *Shopping Cart Theory*. This career of national and public service culminated in me being offered the prestigious position of Traffic Officer. I would have gone on to receive my own take home police BMW motorcycle, some of the best motorcycle driving training in the entire world, and a well-paying position which would have easily put my income into the six figures. Comparable or better than the salaries of most Police Chiefs and Sheriffs in the United States, the very pinnacle of the Law Enforcement profession.

I turned down the offer.

I quit.

In the wake of the hundred or so calls and texts from coworkers congratulating and bemoaning the loss of a Good Cop I assess my decision as my final shift approaches.

The writing on the wall becomes clearer every day. The Job has been murdered. Stabbed to death on a call. Bleeding out waiting for backup that is not coming.

Hiring freezes which swept us in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis mean many Officers across the country are already eligible for retirement or will be within the next few years. My department has been playing catch up trying to rebuild the ranks as long as I have been there. The hiring process for law enforcement can take three months to a year, then average academy length is half a year, and after that is usually another half a year of Field Training with more experienced Officers showing the ropes. This produces a rookie Officer who is sometimes solo capable but will not truly be prepared to take on all the job has to throw at them until they have been on their own for a year. Total time from date of application to hopefully having a competent Officer is about three years. An Officer who decides they want out can be gone in as little as half a day. The increase in academy class sizes necessary to stem this hemorrhaging manpower would be massive and beyond the capabilities of almost every department in the country.

The training and work demands foisted onto Officers are incredible. Physical fitness, already rare in our obese nation. Legal expertise at every level of the criminal and civil system. Expert marksmanship on demand in any condition. Hand to hand fighting skills capable of subduing opponents without looking too rough on camera. The ability to drive a vehicle constantly, sometimes at high speeds through an urban area. Experience in investigating and making a legal case which will convince a Jury beyond a reasonable doubt the Suspect is guilty in a system which becomes more Byzantine. It has fallen on Law Enforcement to be medical experts in what is by and large the non-criminal act of being mentally ill. Officers are expected to be masters of dialogue, adult and juvenile psychology, as well as their area. Capable of making decisions so fair as to

be the envy of King Solomon. When Qualified Immunity is eroded, they will be expected to carry their own liability insurance like Doctors do. Except Officers are not going to be paid as Doctors, they are going to continue to be paid comparable to a certified forklift driver. They need to have the mental fortitude to endure continuous exposure to traumatic events. They will see substance addiction, sexual enslavement, human misery, grotesque mutilation, violent rape, lonely suicide, brutal murder. My dead baby call stands alone as the single worst experience of my entire life. They will be physically attacked, maybe murdered. They will endure constant judgement, internally and externally. Their life before, after, outside, and within the profession scrutinized. Constantly inundated with criticism, the noise is deafening.

Every traffic stop, every call for service, every second an Officer is wearing the uniform they are taking all their chips, their home, their car, their family, everything they have, and they are putting it on the poker table. They are going all in. Every single hand. Playing what they are dealt. Over and over and over. From day one on the street until they cash out. If by some miracle they make it to retirement what is their typical reward? Death by heart disease at age 57. For what? A department which does not care about the Officer in the slightest and will gladly sacrifice them for "the bigger picture"? The Public? Their opinion of Officers change with the wind if it was ever positive to begin with. How can anyone with concrete concerns for the welfare of themselves and their family rationally decide to risk these precious things for the nebulous idea of the good of a largely uncaring mass of strangers?

My advice to my fellow Officers is simple: The best thing you can do to take care of yourself and your family is to walk away from the table before the dealer decides to clean you out. If you have the skillset to be successful in this profession you will be successful outside of it. You will have as much or greater security for your family than whatever you are gambling with in an environment of self-destructive risk. Get out of the Job before you die trying to arrest some criminal the County Prosecutor was never going to file charges on anyway and the Public does not want you "harassing" to begin with. How long are you going to stand inside a Police Station that is burning down around you? How long are you going to put your life and family second for the people just watching it burn? Some of them are even holding the matches.

Fuck 'em.