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Section I

Law Enforcement Officers Feloniously Killed

Methodology

When officers are killed in the line of duty, the FBI seeks to gather data regarding the circumstances surrounding the deaths through a variety of methods. In some cases, the local and state law enforcement agencies participating in the UCR Program notify the national Program of duty-related deaths. These contributors submit preliminary data about any officer killed in the line of duty within their jurisdictions. Also, FBI field divisions and legal attaché offices report such incidents occurring in the United States and its territories, as well as those incidents in which a United States law enforcement officer dies while assigned to duties in another country. The Bureau of Justice Assistance, Administrator of the Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program, as well as several nonprofit organizations devoted to supporting the families of fallen officers also provide the Program with information regarding in-the-line-of-duty deaths.

When the FBI receives notification of a line-of-duty death, the LEOKA staff sends inquiries through FBI field divisions to the victim officer's employing agency to obtain additional details concerning the circumstances surrounding the incident. In addition, the FBI's LEOKA staff furnishes the FBI field office that, in turn, furnishes the agency with information concerning two federal programs that provide benefits to survivors of federal and nonfederal law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty. The staff also obtains pertinent criminal history data from the FBI's Interstate Identification Index concerning individuals identified in connection with the felonious killings.

Criteria

Section I of this publication contains statistics on felonious and accidental deaths of duly sworn local, state, tribal, and federal law enforcement officers meeting the following criteria: they are working in an official capacity, they have full arrest powers, they wear a badge (ordinarily), they carry a firearm (ordinarily), and they are paid from governmental funds set aside specifically for payment of sworn law enforcement representatives. In addition, the officers' deaths must be directly related to the injuries received from the incidents.

Data users should also note that trend data presented from the past 5 and 10 years do not reflect the members of law enforcement killed as a result of the events of September 11, 2001.

Overview

In 2004, 57 law enforcement officers were feloniously killed in 50 separate incidents. An examination of data from the past 2, 5, and 10 years showed that the number of officers slain in 2004 was 5 more than the 52 killed in 2003, 6 more than the 51 slain in 2000, but 17 less than the 74 officers killed in 1995. (See Table 1.)

The 50 incidents in which law enforcement officers were killed occurred in 22 states, the District of Columbia, and in the U.S. territories of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Thirty-nine of the slain officers were employees of city police departments, 12 were part of county law enforcement agencies, and 3 were employed by state agencies. Three of the officers killed were employed in U.S. territories. (See Tables 1 and 2.)

Victims

A review of the information regarding the attributes of the victim officers feloniously killed in the line of duty in 2004 revealed the following: the average age of the 57 slain law enforcement officers was 39 years old. Three of the officers killed were under 25 years of age, 9 officers were from 25 to 30 years of age, 21 officers were from 31 to 40 years old, and 22 slain officers were more than 40 years of age. For two officers killed in the line of duty, age was not available. Of the 57 slain officers, 54 were male officers and 3 were female.

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Forty-six of the officers killed were white, 10 were black, and 1 was an Asian/Pacific Islander. The average height of the slain officers in 2004 was 5 feet 10 inches tall, and the average weight was 200 pounds. (See Tables 6, 8, 10, and 11.)

The officers feloniously killed had an average of 12 years of law enforcement experience. Two of the officers had less than 1 year of law enforcement experience, 12 officers had 1 to 4 years of service, and 18 officers had 5 to 10 years of experience. Twenty-three of the officers had more than 10 years of service; the length of service for 2 of the slain officers was not provided. (See Table 7.)

Circumstances Surrounding Deaths

To help data users better understand the situations which lead to officer deaths, the UCR Program presents details collected regarding the circumstances of each incident. Of the 57 officers slain in 2004, 17 were killed in arrest situations. A breakdown of the data regarding the arrest situations showed that 7 officers were murdered while responding to robberies in progress or pursuing robbery suspects, and 2 were killed while responding to burglaries in progress or pursuing burglary suspects. Eight officers died while attempting other types of arrest.

In other circumstances surrounding officers' line-of-duty deaths, 12 officers were ambushed by their assailants, and of these, 6 were victims of unprovoked attacks and 6 were entrapped or victims of premeditation. Ten officers died while investigating disturbance calls. Nine of these officers were killed when called to investigate family quarrels, and 1 officer was slain investigating a person with a firearm. Six officers were murdered while investigating suspicious persons or circumstances, and 6 were slain in the course of stopping vehicles for traffic violations or the resulting vehicle pursuits. Three officers were killed while working to resolve hostage situations or other high-risk tactical situations, and 2 were slain while handling mentally deranged individuals. One officer was killed while handling a prisoner. (See Table 20.)

Types of assignments

Thirty-nine of the 57 officers feloniously killed in 2004 were on assigned vehicle patrol. Of the 39, 10 officers were assigned to two-officer vehicles, 11 were alone in one-officer vehicles, and 18 officers were assigned to one-officer vehicles, but received assistance from other law enforcement officers.

Further, 7 of the murdered law enforcement officers were off-duty but acting in an official capacity when they were killed. Eleven of the slain officers were assigned to other duties, and of these, 7 received assistance. Four of the officers assigned to other duties were alone at the time they were murdered. (See Table 24.)

An examination of data from the last ten years (1995 to 2004) showed that 594 law enforcement officers have been feloniously killed in the line of duty. Of these fallen officers, 390 were assigned to vehicle patrol at the time of the incidents that led to their deaths. A further breakdown of the number of officers on vehicle patrol revealed that 310 were assigned to one-officer vehicles at the times of their deaths. Of the 310 officers, 177 were alone when the incidents leading to their deaths occurred and 133 received assistance during the incident. Eighty slain officers were assigned to two-officer vehicles at the time of their deaths.

Data gathered in the last 10 years also showed that 128 of the victim officers were assigned to other duties, such as special assignments or undercover work. Of these, 97 had assistance, and 31 were alone when they were killed. In addition, 10 officers were on assigned foot patrol at the time they were murdered, 5 of whom were alone, and 5 of whom had assistance. Also, the number of officers killed in the last 10 years includes 66 who were off duty but acting in an official capacity. (See Table 26.)

Weapons

Weapon data reported to the UCR Program in 2004 showed that firearms were the most common weaponry used to kill officers. Of the 57 officers slain, 54 were killed by assailants using firearms. Of these, 36 officers were killed with handguns, 13 were killed with rifles, and 5 were killed with shotguns. In addition, 2 officers died when vehicles were used as weapons, and one was killed with a knife. (See Table 28.)

Of the 57 officers killed in the line of duty, only 11 fired their own weapons during the incidents that led to their deaths. Thirty of the victim officers did not use or attempt to use their weapons, and 9 attempted to use their weapons. For 7 of the victim officers, information regarding whether or not they used their own weapon was not reported. (See Table 13.)

Twenty-four of the 54 officers killed by perpetrators using firearms were within 5 feet of their assailants. Eight were from 6 to 10 feet away, 11 victim officers were from 11 to 20 feet from their killers, 5 were from 21 to 50 feet away, and 1 officer was more than 50 feet away. For 5 officers killed, the distances between them and their assailants were not available. (See Table 35.)

A study of data regarding weapons used to kill law enforcement officers showed that over the past decade, 545 officers have been slain with firearms. Of these, 396 were killed with handguns, 114 were killed with rifles, and 35 were killed with shotguns. Also in this same time period, 28 officers died after a vehicle was used as a

weapon, 9 officers were killed by bomb blasts, and 7 were killed by assailants using knives or other cutting instruments. Personal weapons, i.e., hands, fists, or feet, were used in 3 of the slayings, and blunt instruments were used in 2 of the murders. (See Table 28.)

Of the 594 officers killed from 1995 to 2004, 126 fired their own weapon during the incident that resulted in their deaths, 94 attempted to fire their own weapon, and 293 did not use or attempt to use their own weapon. For 81 of the deaths, whether or not victim officers used their own weapon during these incidents was not reported. (See Table 13.)

Body Armor

In 2004, 31 of the 54 officers slain with firearms were wearing body armor at the time of their deaths. Of these, 11 officers died from wounds to the front upper torso (this number includes one officer who, though the officer's body armor was not penetrated, died from blunt force trauma to the chest as a result of the firearm blast). Five officers died from wounds to the rear of the head, and 5 from wounds to the front head. Three officers were killed after suffering injuries to the neck or throat, 3 died from wounds to the side head, and two from wounds to the rear lower torso or back. One slain officer received fatal wounds to the front lower torso or stomach, and 1 died from wounds in the rear below the officer's waist. (See Table 37.)

Thirteen of the 54 officers who were wearing body armor died from torso wounds caused by bullets entering their bodies despite wearing the armor. Of those victim officers, 4 were killed with bullets that penetrated through the vest, 3 were killed when the bullet entered above the vest, 2 died when the bullet entered between the side panels of the vest, 2 were killed when bullets entered through the armhole or shoulder area of the vest, and 2 were killed when bullets entered below the vest. (See Table 38.)

Regional Breakdowns

The UCR Program analyzes data geographically by presenting statistics for the Nation by region. The regions are the Northeast, the Midwest, the South, and the West. Among the four regions, the most populous region, the South, had 27 officers feloniously killed in the line of duty in 2004. In the Midwest, 10 officers were slain while performing their duties; in the West, 9 were killed; and in the Northeast, 8 law enforcement officers were slain. The 3 additional officers slain in 2004 were employed by law enforcement agencies outside of the four regions in U.S. Territories.

A breakdown of the regional data collected from 1995 to 2004 showed that 278 of the 594 officers killed were in the South. During this same time period, 121 officers were killed in the West, 107 were killed in the Midwest, and 53 in the Northeast. The 35 other officers killed during this time period were employed in U.S. Territories. (See Table 1.)

Months, Days, and Times of Incidents

Data collected by the UCR Program regarding the dates and times of the felonious incidents which resulted in officer deaths in 2004 revealed the following information:

Months

August proved to be the month in 2004 in which the most incidents occurred that led to officer deaths—8 officers died as a result of attacks during that month. In contrast, May was the month in which the fewest number of incidents occurred—1 that resulted in an officer's death.

In the last ten years, 62 officers were slain in attacks that occurred in April, the month with the greatest number of incidents. During that time period, 32 officers were attacked in November, the month with the fewest number of incidents that led to officer deaths. (See Table 5.)

Days

In 2004, Fridays and Saturdays were the days that had the highest number of felonious incidents that led to officer deaths with 14 officers attacked on each of those days. Two other days, Sundays and Tuesdays, had the fewest number of attacks that resulted in officers deaths. Six officers died from 3 attacks that occurred on each of those days.

The 2004 data closely aligns with the 10-year trend regarding the days of the week in which officers were attacked. The data showed that the greatest number of officers, 99, died from attacks that occurred on Fridays, and the fewest number of officers, 60, were attacked on Sundays. (See Table 4.)

Times of day

In 2004, more law enforcement officers, 17, died as a result of attacks that occurred from 8:01 p.m. to midnight than in attacks at any other time of day. The fewest number of officers, 2, were attacked in the early morning

hours of 4:01 a.m. to 8 a.m.

An examination of data from the past 10 years revealed a similar trend. From 1995 to 2004, 159 officers were killed in incidents that occurred from 8:01 p.m. to midnight, and 49 were slain in incidents that occurred from 4:01 a.m. to 8 a.m. (Based on Table 3.)

Alleged Assailants

Of the 50 incidents resulting in the felonious deaths of 57 officers in 2004, 49 were cleared by arrest or by exceptional means (i.e., where law enforcement could identify the perpetrator, but were unable to make an arrest due to circumstances beyond their control, such as the death or suicide of the subject). Fifty-eight alleged assailants were identified in connection with the 50 incidents. Of these, 39 were arrested and charged, though one of these alleged offenders died while in custody and another was committed to a psychiatric institution. Eleven of the assailants were justifiably killed: 6 suspects were killed by someone other than the slain officer, and 5 were killed by victim officers. Eight alleged assailants committed suicide.

A study of data collected on attributes of alleged assailants revealed that all 58 were male; 30 were black and 28 were white. The average age of the suspects was 32. Three of the alleged assailants were under 18, 17 were from 18 to 24 years old, 12 were from 25 to 30 years old, 13 were from 31 to 40, and 13 were older than 40. (See Tables 40, 41, and 42.)

Data collected concerning the criminal histories of the 58 alleged assailants showed that 47 had been arrested previously and 37 had been convicted on prior criminal charges. Thirty-two of the suspects had received parole or probation on prior criminal charges. Of the 58 alleged assailants, 28 previously had been arrested for crimes of violence, including 2 who had been arrested for murder. The criminal history records for 26 suspects included arrests for drug law violations, and for 23, arrests for weapons violations. Fifteen of the suspects had been convicted of crimes as juveniles, and 14 had been arrested previously for assaulting officers or resisting arrests. (See Table 44.)

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